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Welcome!

Media and communication are vibrant and ever-evolving experiences that shape and reflect who we are. In Nigeria, this dynamic landscape showcases a colourful mosaic of cultures, rich history, and social change. Here, media is more than just content. It is a lively conversation that both influences and is influenced by the pulse of society. Exploring Nigerian media offers an exciting window into how diverse voices create, share, and interpret stories that resonate both locally and globally.

Each issue of the **Journal of Global Perspectives in Communication and Media (JGPCM)** focuses on a specific country, region, or state. By exploring the connections between media, culture, and society, we aim to reveal global patterns and foster meaningful discussions among researchers, practitioners, and students.

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We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the authors and supporters who make this concept thrive. A very special thank you goes to our peer reviewers for their expertise and meticulous evaluations, which uphold the highest standards of academic excellence

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are a reader, author, or curious scholar, we invite you to explore, engage, and contribute to the ongoing conversation about communication and media worldwide, starting with our current focus on Nigeria.

Sincerely,
Ryan Gautreaux
Editor-in-Chief
Georgia State University



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Our Rotating Scientific Steering Committee brings together media practitioners from academia and industry professionals from the humanities, journalism, psychology, and legal. This diverse panel guides the strategic direction of our journal and ensures that we incorporate multidisciplinary perspectives and global insights in our research and editorial decisions.



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Navigating Globalist Influences and Ideological Pressures: The Past, Present, and Future of Media and Communication in Nigeria's Journey

A Foreword by Olatunde Soyombo, Terricia Soyombo, and Ryan Gautreaux

Stepping onto the train from Lagos to Ibadan is stepping into a new chapter of Nigeria's story. Chinese subtitles scroll beneath Hollywood action films on the overhead screens, foreign telecom signals connect our phones, and the train line itself—constructed by Chinese crews—all suggest a nation at the crossroads of a new type of trade among high-stakes international ideologies.

Our Nigerian elders recounted tales of British rule, when education excelled but colonial strings were firmly attached, making it hard not to reflect on how Nigeria's past and future converge with these stark international features.

Today, Nigeria's position as a leader in West Africa reflects the region's broader shifts. As ECOWAS challenges economic influence and neighbouring nations question decades of Western influence, Nigeria navigates complex partnerships with new global powers who are often ideologically at odds. These partnerships, whether reshaping networks or building infrastructure, offer opportunities but also introduce risks of new dependencies, even surveillance opportunities. Nigerians have been shaped by a history of resilience and face these choices with informed rationality, yet the question remains: can these alliances empower the country, or will they replicate the troubling dynamics of the past?

If we focus on the key role of media and communication in its various dimensions, we are offered insight into how these forces shape Nigeria's unfolding story. When we amplify insightful perspectives and shed light on evolving media relationships, we can uncover promise as well as folly and propose pathways forward. With the right lens, we can uncover what it means for a nation to reclaim its narrative amidst the static in a new era of globalist pressures.



Exploring the Nexus of Film and Tourism in Nigeria: A Decade of Destination Nollywood, 2012-2022

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, Nollywood, as Nigeria's booming film industry is widely known, has surpassed both Hollywood and Bollywood with regards to production and consumption size. Due to its commercial success and cultural impact, in recent years Nollywood has often been heralded for its tourism potential within Nigeria and across Africa. However, despite much talk about the *potential* impact of Nollywood on Nigerian and African tourism, relatively little is known about Nollywood's *actual* impact on film tourism and the existing connections between Nigeria's film and tourism industries more generally. This article discusses the connections between Nollywood and tourism and reviews the efforts and opportunities related to Nollywood film tourism, as reported in the public domain. Based on a content analysis of over fifty newspaper articles and other online available materials, such as websites, blogs and forums, it explores the practices and discourses surrounding Nollywood's nexus with tourism in Nigeria and across Africa over the past ten years.

Keywords: Nollywood, Nigeria, Media, Tourism

Introduction: Setting the Scene

In November 2022, the first Global Conference on 'Linking Tourism, Culture and Creative Industries' was held in Lagos, Nigeria. The conference was organized by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) with the aim to explore the connections between tourism and culture, and to promote partnerships between the tourism and creative industries in the country and across the African continent. As Lai Mohammed, Nigeria's Minister of Information and



Culture, put it in his address, “today, more than ever, tourism and the creative industry, due to their economic viability, are in the global spotlight and have their place at the forefront of the national and international development agenda” (*The Guardian Nigeria*, 19 November 2022). Inspired by the conference, the Nigerian government announced the start of a new collaboration with the World Tourism Organization to “strengthen Nigeria’s tourism sector” (*Business Insider Africa*, 11 February 2023). According to Mohammed, the UNWTO had decided to team up with the Nigerian government due to the significant strides the country had made in the creative industries in recent years. Apart from plans to build a tourism academy, the minister stated to have “plans to work with Nollywood,” Nigeria’s prolific film industry, to “positively change Africa’s image” (*BIA*, 11 February 2023). This reflected the remarks made on the conference by UNWTO’s Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili, who stated that the partnership between Nollywood and UNWTO would serve “the promotion of African culture” and “attract tourists to the continent” (*AVI News*, 17 November 2022).

Over the past three decades, Nigeria’s film industry has become a “global powerhouse” releasing hundreds of films each month (*The Circular*, 15 March 2022). Although Nigerian cinema dates back to the 1960s, when the first post-independence era films were made by pioneering Nigerian filmmakers such as Hubert Ogunde, Eddie Ugbomah and Ola Balogun, Nollywood, a portmanteau of Nigeria and Hollywood as well as Bollywood that was coined by *New York Times* journalist Norimitsu Onishi in 2002, came to mark “the plenitude of filmmaking happening in Lagos” from the early 1990s onwards (*TC*, 15 March 2022). Following the success of the 1992 straight-to-VHS film *Living in Bondage*, the Nigerian film industry experienced a popular “home video boom” (Atilola & Olayiwola, 2011) that gained a huge following in Nigeria, across Africa, and among the global African diaspora. In fact, with “an estimated worth of \$6.4 billion as of 2021” (*TC*, 15 March 2022), Nollywood is nowadays considered the world’s second-largest film industry, and even the largest in terms of output and popularity. Producing about 2,500 films annually and reaching an estimated audience of over 200 million people worldwide, Nollywood has seemingly not only surpassed Hollywood but also Bollywood regarding production and consumption size.

Due to its commercial success and cultural impact, from the early 2010s Nollywood has often been heralded as a “rising star in Africa’s tourism industry” (Abiola, 2016, p. 209). For example, in the *Global Trends Report 2012*, the World Travel Market predicted a GDP growth in Africa as a result of “domestic and regional tourism to Nollywood locations” (Abiola, 2016, p. 209). More generally, it was anticipated that the popularity of Nollywood would become “a major growth driver in the leisure sector,” attracting both “film fans and business travelers fascinated by the growing (...) importance of the Nigerian film industry” (Abiola, 2016, p. 210). In 2014, Nigerian writer Ekenyerengozi Michael Chima, similarly stated that Nollywood had the potential to turn Nigerian tourism – which is currently a relatively small industry facing infrastructure and security issues¹ – into “a billion dollar industry” (*ModernGhana.com*, 2 August 2014).

¹ In 2019, before the global COVID-19 pandemic emerged, “the travel and tourism industry of Nigeria represented 4% of total GDP” and “employment supported by tourism totaled 3.3 million jobs” (Tourism Economics 2021, p. 12). Although figures vary per source, it seems that Nigeria, with over 220 million people by far the most populous African country, attracted around four million domestic and two million international tourists that year. In the years following



However, despite much talk about the *potential* impact of Nollywood on Nigerian and African tourism in recent years, relatively little is known about Nollywood's *actual* impact on film tourism and the existing connections between Nigeria's film and tourism industries more generally. Already over a decade ago, Heitmann (2010) observed that it "is yet to be researched (...) to what extent film tourism in connection to Nollywood in Africa has created" (p. 31)– and to date this is still largely the case. This article, then, seeks to discuss the connections between Nollywood and tourism and to review the efforts and opportunities related to Nollywood film tourism, as reported in the public domain. Based on a content analysis of over fifty newspaper articles and other online available materials, such as websites, blogs and forums, we explore the practices and discourses surrounding Nollywood connections with tourism in Nigeria and across Africa over the past ten years.

Nollywood Studies: Themes and Trends in Studying Nigeria's Film Industry

Due to its unique development and popularity, Nollywood has garnered significant scholarly interest since its inception in the 1990s.² From the early 2010s, the phrase 'Nollywood Studies' started to be used to refer to the growing "body of work and academic field" examining the Nigerian film industry (Haynes, 2012, p. 3). As "a dedicated transdisciplinary research niche" (Oguamanam, 2020, p. 518), Nollywood Studies consists of a "conglomerate [of] research practices" (Makhubu, 2014, pp. 416-417) looking at the Nigerian film industry. While covering a wide variety of issues and perspectives, research in the field of Nollywood Studies has largely focused on the three traditional branches of the film industry: *production*, *distribution*, and *consumption*. In addition, over the years quite a lot of work has been done on the *history* and *content* of Nollywood films.

While most scholars in the field locate the beginnings of Nollywood in the 1990s, and hence evaluate "the evolutionary interface between technology and entrepreneurship" (Oguamanam, 2020, p. 518) from that decade onwards, others have traced the history of Nollywood back to "the older national cinema which came into existence upon Nigeria's independence in 1960" (Akande, 2021, p. 34) and even to cultural practices during the colonial era, in particular "theatrical practices that have long existed among Nigerian peoples" (Akande, 2020, p. 456). Specifically, many have claimed that Nollywood grew out of "the Yorùbá Travelling Theatre tradition, which was at its most prominent between the 1950s and early 1980s" (Akande, 2020, p. 456). In fact, Yorùbá performers, such as Herbert Ogunde, Ade Afoloyan (Ade Love) and

the pandemic, tourism flows have remained below pre-pandemic levels, in part due to the increased deterioration of the security situation throughout the country since 2022 (resulting in many negative travel advices).

² Following Akande (2021, 34) and others, we acknowledge that "the term 'Nollywood' is problematic in its use as a cinema category." Most researchers in the field see Nollywood as "arising from the confluence of economic and technical conditions in Nigeria in the 1990s, and (...) therefore, [as] an outgrowth of the older national cinema which came into existence upon Nigeria's independence in 1960" (Akande 2021, p. 34-35). However, Nollywood at times has come to refer to the (Igbo and Yoruba) cinemas of Southern Nigeria or the English-language Nollywood films only, excluding the cinemas of Northern Nigeria and the majority of the Nigerian-language industries made and consumed in the country. For the propose of this article, we adhere to the most common use of the term, i.e. "the various regional video industries that together make up the Nigerian video economy" (Lobato 2010, p. 337), while at the same time being "careful to register its distinctive usage" (Akande 2021, p. 35).



Moses Olaiya (Baba Sala), were largely responsible for the rise of Nigerian cinema in the years after independence (Azeez, 2019). Turning to celluloid film production in the 1970s, they produced and inspired a string of films featuring Nigerian actors, settings, and themes, including *Kongi's Harvest* (1970), *Thing Fall Apart* (1971), *Amadi* (1975), *Bisi-Daughter of the River* (1977), *Kanta of Kebbi* (1978) and *The Mask* (1979). The growth of the Nigerian film industry more or less came to a halt in the mid-1980s, when the country plunged into a severe recession. The resulting crisis not only “put an end to celluloid film production” but also “closed the cinema houses” in Nigeria (Haynes, 2014, p. 53). However, the crisis did mark the beginning of the production of home video films that came to characterize early Nollywood. Although they never achieved the success of *Living in Bondage* and the home videos that followed in its wake, films like *Orun Mooru* (1982) and *Aare Agbaiye* (1984) did pave the way for the home video model that revolutionized Nigeria's film industry in the 1990s.

From the onset, Nollywood films have been examined in terms of their content, particularly regarding cultural representation and identity formation. Over the years, textual analyses of Nigerian video films have scrutinized their stories and styles; portrayals of religion and spirituality; representations of gender and women; narratives of ethnicity and nationalism; discourses of youth, class, and disability; images of Africa and the African diaspora; and discourses of tradition and modernity. While the stereotypical representation of Nigerian and African women has traditionally received quite some attention in content studies of Nollywood films, the depiction of modern (metropolitan and transnational) life, either in Nigeria or abroad, seems to be on the rise in light of the increasingly diasporic and global audience of Nollywood movies. In addition, the (potential) connection between the projection of Nigeria in Nollywood films and the country's nation image has at times been discussed, with that bringing Nollywood film content into the realm of cultural heritage, nation branding, and cultural diplomacy.

Still, although historical and textual analysis has drawn considerable interest among film scholars over the years, the “budding research field” (Ugochukwu, 2013, p. 4) of Nollywood Studies has focused even more so on the political economy of Nigerian filmmaking due to its distinct production, distribution and consumption methods. Being understood as “unabashedly commercial and apolitical, informal, low-budget, and wildly heterogeneous and syncretic” (Garritano, 2016, p. 280), the operational arrangements of the Nollywood industry have been the subject of ongoing scrutiny since its emergence in the 1990s. Following Nigeria's “home video revolution” (Evuleocha, 2008, p. 407), Nollywood researchers have focused on the technological determinants, funding structures, production practices, and distribution networks of the country's film industry. Particularly, the industry's “distinctive informal system of production and distribution” (McCall, 2012, p. 9), which developed without any state support, has received considerable academic attention in Nollywood's first twenty years, known as “the video boom era” (Ezepue, 2021, p. 2).

From the mid-2000s, Nollywood entered a new era of filmmaking. According to Haynes (2014), around 2010 “the phrase ‘New Nollywood’ began buzzing in Lagos and other places where people talk about Nollywood,” describing the attempt by Nigerian producers and directors “to ‘take Nollywood to the next level’ by making better films with bigger budgets” that are aimed for projection in cinemas “rather than being released ... for home viewing” (p.53). Apart from the return of movie theaters in Nigeria (various multiplex cinemas were built in the country since



2004), this strategy largely depended on “transnational distribution circuits including both African diasporic audiences and international film festivals” (Haynes, 2014, p. 53). While the transition from “an informal industry” to “the New Nollywood phenomenon” (Ernest-Samuel & Uduma, 2019, p. 45) has been studied in various publications, particularly Nollywood’s “Afrocentric transnational and diasporic mediascape” (Jedlowski, 2013, p. 171) has attracted considerable scholarly interest. Here, the development of Nollywood as a “global cinema” (Agba, 2014), enabled by digital technologies and global networks, both alternative and dominant, and nowadays including Netflix, has been scrutinized, as well as, and increasingly, the “transnational consumerism” (Garritano, 2014, p. 48) of Nollywood video films. Being watched “in many African countries, in African Diasporas and in some Caribbean climes” (Edong, 2018, p. 77), the consumption and reception of Nigerian films by various populations of Nollywood’s “vast global audience” (Ebelebe, 2019, p. 466) has been the subject of a number of academic publications. At the same time, the “audience perception of Nollywood films in Nigeria” (Agba & Inej, 2011, p. 259), where homegrown films have remained hugely popular to this day, has also been studied, including how watching Nollywood films (potentially) influences behaviour change and national security.

In recent years, the connections between Nollywood and tourism have been discussed, or at least mentioned, in several academic publications. However, while there is said to be “evidence of Nollywood’s impact on local tourism” (Abiola, 2016, p. 209), most of these publications highlight the *potential* impact of Nollywood on Nigerian and African tourism, that is, the opportunities of Nigerian films to motivate travel to the country and the continent, “thus *possibly* stimulating indirectly indigenous and foreign tourism” in the future (Chowdhury et al., 2008, p. 24, emphasis added). In other words, these publications tend to bring forward predictions and forecasts of Nollywood’s impact on tourism, and provide insights and advice on how to develop what could eventually become “Nollywood tourism” (Kim & Reijnders, 2018, p. 3). For example, Iwuh (2015, p. 28) discusses the tourism potential of the Nigerian film industry, arguing that Nollywood “contributes to cultural exports and arrivals in various ways.” According to Iwuh (2015, pp. 28-29), “Nollywood films have traversed the world” and are, in turn, inspiring people from these parts of the world to visit Nigeria and particularly “the sites where these products are created.” Similarly, Oguntoyoyinbo and Adesemoye (2019) argue that Nollywood films “should be utilised as a tool for popular movement in promoting tourism,” (p. 156), thereby recommending “the need for a synergy between the Nigerian film industry and the tourism industry.” (p. 164). However, like most others, they mainly point to the “yawning opportunities” (Iwuh, 2015, p. 37) and “gross prospects” (Oguntoyoyinbo & Adesemoye, 2019, p. 164) for Nollywood tourism, while the already existing or attempted connections between Nigeria’s film and tourism industries, either spontaneous and incidental or intentional and structural in nature, remain largely out of the picture. This article, then, offers an exploration of these connections as they were made in the past decade of New Nollywood and shows how practices and discourses of Nollywood film (and) tourism have been increasingly presented in Nigerian (and international) newspapers and magazines throughout this period.



The Emerging Discourse on Nollywood Film (and) Tourism in the Early 2010s

The idea that Nollywood could promote Nigerian tourism seems to enter popular discourse in the early 2010s. As early as 2012, two industry reports resulting from the World Travel Market appear to have particularly put forth the potential of the Nigerian film industry in positioning Nigeria as “an emerging destination in Africa for tourism” (*Daily Trust*, 24 November 2012) on the country’s public agenda. According to the first report, the *Global Trends Report* (2012), Nollywood was poised to boost intra-regional tourism in Africa, which was subsequently reprinted in various newspapers in Nigeria and across the African continent. According to the report, arrivals to Nigeria were expected to increase by 3% in the coming years, and this was in part attributed to the success of Nigerian films abroad, particularly in African countries: “The popularity of Nollywood will be a major growth driver with the leisure sector, attracting [both] film fans and business travel” (*How We Made It In Africa*, 4 December 2012). In fact, the report already signaled “a boom in hotel openings in Lagos as well as hotel expansion plans in the country” in the year 2012 due to “increasing tourism flows”, which were linked to the many film productions shot in Lagos, “the heart of Nollywood”, as well as to the several film villages that were being developed across the country (*HWMIIA*, 4 December 2012). According to the *Global Trends Report*, emerging film villages such as the Abuja Film Village, Plateau Film City and Lagos Film City were not only aimed to stimulate Nigeria’s film industry by “providing modern film, TV and audio production facilities”, but also to “encourage tourists to visit” the country (*HWMIIA*, 4 December 2012).

Their second report, the *Industry Report* (2012), the World Travel Market similarly stated that Nollywood was to make Nigeria “the highlight of the African tourist industry with Africans (...) visit[ing] the country made famous in the movies” (*Daily Trust*, 24 November 2012). Although most Nollywood films did not feature tourism settings and themes, but rather aspects of daily and religious life, the report stated that Nollywood could contribute to building the country’s “market for pilgrimage and religious tourism” (*DT*, 24 November 2012). Two Nollywood films from the late 2000s that did reportedly include Nigerian tourism sites were *White Waters* (2007) and *The Figurine: Araromire* (2009), both displaying waterfalls (*Trip & Tours*, 25 May 2013). While it was stressed that Nollywood filmmakers usually did not capitalize on this aspect, and instead mainly used “people’s homes” and “eat, clothes and accessories stores,” it was argued that these two films successfully captured “the beauty of waterfalls” and as such created “the much desired tourism effect” (*T&T*, 25 May 2013). The article ended with the call for Nollywood producers to “take advantage of various tourism spots to shoot their movies”, to partner with government officials to “promote tourism sites within their jurisdiction,” and to unlock “the untapped power of film tourism” (*T&T*, 25 May 2013). Interestingly, not much later, it was reported that the Association of Nollywood Core Producers had pledged to use more tourism sites as film locations. According to Nollywood actor Emeka Ike, the association wanted to “create awareness about the enormous tourism potentials in the country” (*BizWatch Nigeria*, 27 September 2013). Ike continued that showcasing Nigeria’s “rich tourism resources” in Nollywood films would arouse “the interest of both local and foreign tourists” (*BWN*, 27 September 2013). This way, Nollywood would be able to confirm its assumed status as the “leading promotor of Nigeria[n] tourism” (*Vanguard News*, 16 November 2012).



A prominent case in point used at that time was *Streets of Calabar* (2012), an early New Nollywood film that was “produced on a significantly higher budget and took months to shoot” (*Nigeria A-Z.com*, 18 September 2012). This acclaimed comedy thriller featured various “tourist magnets” in Nigeria as well as images of a safe nation due to “its portrayal of strong local law enforcement” (*Chanters Lodge Livingstone Blog*, 23 February 2013). According to Paz Casal, at the time travel and tourism analyst at Euromonitor, *Streets of Calabar* portrayed Nigeria as “a good tourism destination (...) with adequate security” (*CLLB*, 23 February 2013). The film, which was supported by the Cross Rivers State government, was by some considered a “signature for change” in terms of the obvious promotion of Nigerian tourism and the explicit collaboration between the country’s film and tourism industries (*CLLB*, 23 February 2013). Others, however, argued that Nollywood films like *Streets of Calabar* would not increase tourism as long as Nigeria’s public safety would remain a critical issue. According to Peter Tarlow, a specialist in tourism risk management, for tourism to “really grow, you need political security, political security and physical security” – “just filming a film is not going to bring people to Nigeria,” first “get your safety under control” (*CLLB*, 23 February 2013).

In 2014, Ekenyerengo Michael Chima, editor and publisher of the Nollywood Mirror Series, reinforced the call for Nigerian filmmakers to use “exotic tourist attractions in Nigeria for their film locations” (*Modern Ghana*, 2 August 2014). According to Chima, Nollywood should follow Hollywood and Bollywood in using film as “a vehicle for the promotion and appreciation of Nigerian tourism” (*MG*, 2 August 2014). While there “may not be any big film studio” and “no awesome movie sets” in the country, he argued that “the entire Nigeria,” with all its tourist attractions, should be considered “the location of Nollywood” (*MG*, 2 August 2014). More concretely, Chima advised the Nigerian Film Corporation and Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation to synergize with Nollywood filmmakers to “produce movies that will boost the Nigerian film industry and tourism” (*MG*, 2 August 2014).³ In the days after the publication of Chima’s article, the question of Nollywood as a tourism promotion tool was widely discussed on *Nairaland Forum*. Various participants in the discussion challenged the idea that Nollywood would be able to advance Nigerian tourism, thereby stressing the film industry’s quality and piracy issues as well as the lack of tourism infrastructure, organised cities, and safety and security provisions in the country. A few years later, PricewaterhouseCoopers, in their *Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2017–2021* (2017), more or less identified the same challenges on the side of the film industry, notably the level of professional and creative capacity, the lack of formal distribution channels, copyright infringements, and piracy.

Within the Nollywood film industry, the capacity, distribution, and piracy issues were increasingly being acknowledged and addressed, this time with the help of the Nigerian government. In the early 2010s, when Nigeria allegedly “became Africa’s largest economy”, several state-supported efforts were undertaken “to combat piracy and to improve the legitimacy of the film industry” (*The Worldfolio*, 19 March 2015). In 2011, then President, Goodluck Jonathan, “pledged a \$200 million government loan for the film industry” to help “distributors to

³ Two years later, Adeniyi Ogunfowoke gave similar advice on how Nollywood could promote Nigerian tourism. Apart from the familiar recommendation to have Nollywood films shot at tourist sites, Ogunfowoke shared three other ideas on “how Nollywood can promote the hospitality industry,” i.e. write scripts that portray the “culture, unity, and diversity of Nigerians,” have Nollywood stars become “tourism ambassadors”, and showcase “Nigeria’s food and dress culture” (*Business Post*, 8 October 2016).



establish new legitimate distribution channels” (TW, 19 March 2015). In addition, the government invested millions in training to enhance “the quality of scripts, acting and other technical aspects of Nigerian film”, foster “a more business-oriented approach among filmmakers,” and “improve IP awareness within the film industry” (TW, 19 March 2015).⁴ At the same time, the early 2010s witnessed the rise of various “legal online streaming sites” (TW, 19 March 2015) specializing in African content, such as iROKOtv, iBAKAtv and Pana TV. These and other streaming services were reportedly supported by the “proliferation of the internet in Africa” and “growing popularity of Nollywood movies” across the continent and the rest of the world, and stimulated the making of higher budget, higher quality, and higher profit Nollywood productions (TW, 19 March 2015). However, since the majority of Nollywood movies in the 2010s still went “straight to DVD”, the “illegal distribution of DVDs” remained rampant as well, with pirates “selling boot leg copies for a fraction of retail price[s],” often “within hours of a film’s release” (TW, 19 March 2015).⁵ It was believed that, until a serious “crackdown” by means of regulation and IP laws was initiated by the government, pirates would continue “to thrive and to take the lion’s share of [the] profits” within the Nollywood film industry (TW, 19 March 2015).

The Call to Government Intervention in Nollywood Film and Tourism in the Late 2010s

With the growing production of high-concept and star-led blockbusters for international theatrical or streaming release, in the late 2010s the idea of viewing Nollywood films as tourism promotion tools became increasingly widespread among government, both inside and outside Nigeria. In 2017, allegedly for the first time, the Nigerian government entered into a partnership to “promote tourism in the country through the Nollywood industry” (*The Defender*, 4 May 2017). Apart from the government, the “tripartite partnership” involved the UNWTO and CNN and was intended to exploit the country’s “competitive advantage in film production, through Nollywood, to promote tourism in Nigeria,” as Alhaji Mohammed, Nigeria’s Minister of Information and Culture, announced (TD, 4 May 2017). Although the Nigerian government had supported Nollywood before, boosting the film industry for tourism promotion purposes was, according to Mohammed, “a path we have not trodden before” (TD, 4 May 2017). Two years later, Otunba Segun Runsewe, Director-General of Nigeria’s National Council for Arts and Culture, similarly stressed the need to use Nollywood as a vehicle to promote Nigeria’s cultural heritage to attract tourists. He called on Nollywood filmmakers “to use their works in showcasing Nigeria’s rich cultural tourism” (*Independent*, 11 September 2019).

Around the same time, other governments also took notice of Nollywood’s tourism potential as well. In 2017, the Nollywood romantic action comedy *10 Days in Sun City* (2017) not only became the “highest-earning film in Nigeria” that year so far, but also marked “the official

⁴ In addition, in 2012, the Lagos State Government launched the so-called Nollywood Upgrade Project, which was aimed to “improve the production quality and formal distribution of movies” (*The Worldfolio*, 19 March 2015).

⁵ Although investors “spotted an opportunity in producing big-budget blockbusters” following the “growing popularity of Nigerian movies across Africa and throughout the world”, by the mid-2010s most of the Nollywood films were still being “made in as little as 10 days on shoestring budgets of between \$25,000 to \$70,000” (*The Worldfolio*, 19 March 2015).



partnership between South African Tourism and the Nigerian film industry” (*Eyewitness News*, 25 August 2017). Shot on location in and around Lagos and Johannesburg, and specifically at Sun City, a luxury holiday resort in South Africa, the country’s state tourism agency celebrated the Nigerian production as “a shining example of how entertainment and tourism can converge” (*The African Courier*, 21 August 2017). The CEO of South African Tourism, Sisa Ntshona, was “thrilled” that so many of the country’s tourism attractions had “a prime starring role” in the film (*EN*, 25 August 2017). Apart from the fact that *10 Days in Sun City* was being watched all over Nigeria, “one of South Africa’s most important tourist source markets in Africa,” the film was released in “20 cinemas across South Africa” (*EN*, 25 August 2017) and was “slated for distribution” in various countries across Africa, Europe, and North America (*TAC*, 21 August 2017). Such worldwide distribution could, it was believed, potentially stimulate South Africa’s domestic, intra-regional and international tourism. According to Ntshona, the partnership between the Nigerian blockbuster and South Africa Tourism spoke to “the core functions and priorities set by the two countries in future collaborations” in film (*EN*, 25 August 2017).

In a similar vein, Dubai’s Department of Tourism & Commerce Marketing (DTCM) entered into a partnership with Nollywood production company EbonyLife to support their new comedy dramas *Wedding Party* (2016) and *Chief Daddy* (2018). Apart from being in line with DTCM’s “mission to help boost the Nigerian film industry,” the agency’s sponsorship was intended to showcase “the beauty of Dubai to Nigerians as one of the leading visitors to the magnificent city in the United Arab Emirates” (*This Day Live*, 23 December 2018). While *Wedding Party* and *Chief Daddy* were both set in Nigeria, their sequels, *Wedding Party 2: Destination Dubai* (2017) and *Chief Daddy 2: Going for Broke* (2018), which were also supported by Dubai Tourism, were both partly shot at “glamorous locations” in UAE’s biggest city (*The Nation Online*, 5 December 2018). The promotion of Dubai tourism through Nollywood films continued with *Omo Ghetto: The Saga* (2020), one of Nigeria’s highest grossing movie of 2020, which became the first Nollywood film to receive a theatrical release in the United Arab Emirates. While being largely set in Lagos, the film contained “a few scenes shot in Dubai” and was therefore deemed to be of “high quality and interest to UAE film distributor Gulf Film” (*The National News*, 21 January 2021).

Not only Nollywood locations, but also Nollywood stars increasingly came to be seen as tourist motivators in the late 2010s. Already in 2013, Penny Biram, a spokeswoman of Nigerian hotel company, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, predicted that Nollywood movie stars would become “another attraction for tourism in the region” (*Chanters Lodge Livingstone Blog*, 23 February 2013). One year later, then President Jonathan even described Nollywood’s actors and actresses as “the greatest ambassadors of Nigeria” (*All Africa*, 24 December 2014). While these statements were made with the idea that tourists from other African countries and beyond would come to visit Nigeria because of their appreciation of Nollywood stars, Nigerian actors and actresses also started to tour abroad to promote their films and having film fans travel to these locations. For example, in 2019, Nollywood film studio, ROK Studio, took “a grand tour across Southern Africa” where “superfans in key locations across South Africa and Zambia” could connect with “their favourite Nollywood stars,” before “proceeding to West African cities” (*Glitz Africa*, 21 May 2019). The so-called ROK ME Tour was joined by various “top stars” from the Nollywood television series *Festac Town* (2014-present), *Husbands in Lagos* (2015-2017) and *Single Ladies* (2017-present), who visited several cities in southern and western Africa to connect with



“Nollywood lovers via exclusive Meet and Greet events and VIP dinners” (GA, 21 May 2019). While the fans who came to see them could be seen as film tourists, the Nollywood stars also became tourists in their own right, experiencing “some of the best tourist destinations in each city” (GA, 21 May 2019). Nollywood had, at least to a certain extent, become a tourist attraction within Nigeria and across Africa, with Nollywood films and stars being increasingly recognized and called upon by industry and government for their potential to encourage “intra-African tourism” (GA, 21 May 2019).

In 2020, like in most countries around the world, the film and tourism industries in Nigeria were brought to an abrupt halt by the COVID-19 pandemic. Arguably in combination with the rise of “online streaming giant” Netflix, Nollywood entered a “deep-set demise” as a result of the measures introduced to contain the spread of the virus (*Curiosity Shots*, 11 November 2020). Still, despite the nationwide lockdown, behind the scenes the collaboration between Nollywood and tourism remained sought after by the Nigerian government. For example, in June 2020, the Lagos State Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture sought to engage “some key Nollywood personalities” to see how the film industry could work together with the state government to portray “Lagos and Nigeria in a positive light” (*The Culture Newspaper*, 29 June 2020). Uzamat Akinbile-Yusuf, at the time Nigeria’s commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, once again urged Nollywood practitioners to be “deliberate in filmmaking” by having “the strength, values and the resilience of Nigerians” reflected in their films (*TCN*, 29 June 2020). In addition, several directions were proposed to institutionalize Nollywood with the aim to advance the film industry in the post-COVID-19 era. First, Akinbile-Yusuf revealed advanced plans of the Lagos state government to “establish a film village to assuage the challenges faced by the filmmakers during film production” (*TCN*, 29 June 2020). In fact, the commissioner disclosed that “100 hectares of land” were already “earmarked and secured for the village” in Lagos State (*TCN*, 29 June 2020). Second, Bolajo Amusan, President of the Theatre Arts and Motion Pictures Practitioners Association of Nigeria, urged state governments to “revive community cinemas” as a way of “rekindling the interest of residents” and generating “revenue for the government” (*TCN*, 29 June 2020).

One month later, various Nigerian tourism stakeholders called on Nollywood to “showcase Nigeria’s tourists’ sites in movies to attract visitors and grow the [tourism] industry” (*Independent Newspaper Nigeria*, 19 July 2020). According to them, Nollywood had “all it takes to project Nigeria’s cultural heritage and tourism potential beyond the shores of the nation” (*INN*, 19 July 2020). Apart from projecting Nigeria’s tourism sites in Nollywood films, Ngozi Ngoka, Founder of the Tourism Consultant Forum, advised tourism operators to engage renowned Nollywood actors as “influencers to visit tourism sites within the country” (*INN*, 19 July 2020). At the same time, the view was expressed that the Nigerian government needed to “render some level of support” by upgrading the tourism infrastructure, such as “the road network to each site” (*INN*, 19 July 2020). Not much later, Goge Africa, a Nigerian-based, pan-African tourism and cultural TV show “with over a 40 million viewers” (*The Nation Online*, 13 June 2022), brought together tourism stakeholders, Nollywood filmmakers, and government representatives to discuss film as “a vantage point for promoting tourism” (*Goge Africa*, 12 August 2020). Fidelis Ducker, former President of the Directors Guild of Nigeria, argued that Nollywood had indirectly been promoting tourism through featuring “key monuments in films,” but that government intervention was needed to “effectively boost tourism traffic” through



Nollywood (GA, 12 August 2020). According to Ducker, the Nigerian government could, for example, provide subsidies for films featuring tourism destinations, infrastructures to get to these destinations, and legislation making it easier to film on locations that are considered a security risk. These collaborative efforts, according to Rollas, would steer “tourism through films” to “a new phase” (GA, 12 August 2020).

Concluding Remarks: Nigeria’s Unstable Nexus of Film and Tourism

By the early 2020s, most of the recommended government interventions to establish “the nexus between film and tourism” in Nigeria (GA, 12 August 2020) have not (yet) get off the ground. For example, to date, none of the planned film villages across the country, which were to be public-private partnerships, reached full completion.⁶ However, the Lagos State Government (LASG) did recently sign an agreement with Del-York International Group and its US partner Storyland Studios for an “ultra-modern film city in the heart of Lagos” (*News Agency of Nigeria*, 26 October 2022), with the construction of the “\$100m African Film City” being slated for October 2023 (*Vanguard*, October 14, 2023). The film village, which has been named Kebulania, is designed as a 100 hectare “fully-resourced entertainment industry campus and film lot” in the Epe area of Lagos where filmmakers and other industry personnel “can live and work” (*Blooloop*, 20 October 2022). Upon completion, which will not be before the late 2020s, Kebulania would become the “first-of-its-kind studio city on the African continent”, set to “revolutionise the Nigerian film industry” and further establish the country as “a leading destination for filmmaking and creativity throughout all of Africa” (*Blooloop*, 20 October 2022). Notably, apart from being an “all-in-one facility” with “multiple sound studios, backlot sets, water tanks, workshops, and production offices,” the film village will also have a tourist district in a “theme park setting” featuring “rides, tourist attractions, movie museums, and a walk of fame” (*Punch*, 26 December 2021). Aiming for “5,000 to 10,000 daily visitors”, Kebulania is predicted to generate significant tourism revenue for Nigeria and, according to Matt Ferguson from Storyland Studios, to become “one of the most popular tourist destinations in Africa” (*Blooloop*, 20 October 2022). While the realization of the film village remains uncertain, with its construction having already faced multiple delays, it does seem to indicate a growing political will of the Nigerian government, or at least the Lagos State Government, to support the film and tourism industries.

Still, most of the sporadic film tourism initiatives in Nigeria seem to emerge without state support. For example, Nollywood filmmaker Kunle Afolayan has nearly completed the Kunle

⁶ The Abuja Film Village, a public-private partnership with Abuja’s Federal Capital Territory Administration, has not witnessed significant development since its announcement in 2012. The film village was envisioned as a 50000-hectare one-stop shop for film production featuring, among other things, “a studio for film and television” and “university for film, television and radio” (*Oxford Business Group*, 13 June 2012). However, at present the village is still at the planning stages with the owners seeking investors to take up construction. Similarly, the Plateau Film City, a 100-hectare film village planned in the Miango district of Plateau State featuring “film production facilities, upmarket hotels, residential estates and leisure facilities”, would be facilitated by the Nigeria Film Corporation and the Plateau State Government, but seemingly never moved beyond the “under development” stage (*OBG*, 13 June 2012). In addition, the Lagos Film City, a 100-hectare project located in Lagos’ Epe area at Ejirin City, did not materialize in the remainder of the 2010s and first years of the 2020s.



Afolayan Production (KAP) Film Village Studio and Resort. The objective of this private film village in South West Nigeria is to provide professional support to the Nigerian film industry as well as encouraging tourism, since the facility doubles as a hotel resort. In early 2023, Afolayan stated that KAP Film Village and Resort had attained the two-thirds completion mark – and his latest film, *Anikulapo* (2022), was already entirely shot at the film village. Then, in 2022, Nollywood star and talkshow host Monalisa Chinda-Coker announced “a deal to boost tourism in West Africa” (*The Nation Online*, 13 June 2022). According to Chinda-Coker, her popular TV show *You and I with Monalisa* had partnered with Goge Africa and others to visit tourist attractions in Nigeria and across West Africa “to shine the light on destinations” and “revamp and revitalise tourism” there (*TNO*, 13 June 2022). Finally, in 2023, TripAdvisor, for the first time, made mention of a Nollywood film tour in Lagos. The 2-day tour, called ‘Explore Nigeria’s Nollywood Industry’, reportedly consists of visits to Nollywood film locations, theatres and villages as well as the Idumota Film Market, traditionally one of the major distribution hubs for Nollywood home videos. Although the tour has not received any reviews on TripAdvisor yet, according to the description it affords participants “the opportunity to have a one-on-one and direct assessment of the Nollywood industry”, including a meet-and-greet session with Nollywood filmmakers.

In the past decade and into the 2020s, the idea of using Nollywood as a tool to boost tourism has gained traction in Nigeria’s public domain. From the early 2010s onwards, the potential role of Nollywood in positioning and promoting Nigeria and Africa as a tourist destination has become increasingly commonplace in the country’s news and political discourse. Since most Nollywood films did not focus on tourism settings, Nollywood filmmakers were called upon to utilize tourism spots as film locations. In addition, there have been calls for Nollywood celebrities to become tourism ambassadors and endorse Nigeria’s natural and cultural tourist attractions in their productions and promotions. To-be-built film villages across the country were expected to become tourist attractions in themselves. However, despite these high expectations, which form part of a wider celebratory discourse of the creative industries worldwide (Martens 2023), film tourism related to Nollywood seems to have remained limited. Despite growing government attention and support to Nollywood and its potential for tourism, most state initiatives in this direction did not (yet) materialize. In fact, it seems that other countries, such as South Africa and Dubai, have seized upon more opportunities for collaboration with Nollywood films and stars to attract Nigerian and other African visitors to their destinations.

Within Nigeria, both the film and tourism industries continue to face various challenges that hinder the development of Nollywood tourism. While the Nigerian film industry still suffers from quality and piracy issues, the country’s tourism industry has to deal with so many challenges – notably a lack of tourism infrastructure and security issues – that the promotion of film locations and the creation of film villages alone do not seem to be able to establish Nigeria as a major tourist destination. The current plan of the Kebulania film village sounds promising for the country’s film and tourism industries, but it has to be seen to what extent ‘Destination Nollywood’ is really able to come to fruition as long as the structural issues underlying the development of Nigerian film (and) tourism are not sufficiently addressed.

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Assessment of the Nature of Communication Between Kaduna State Government and its Residents in Disseminating Urban Renewal Messages

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Abstract

Communication is multifaced; it can be vertical, transactional, two-way or participatory, depending on the actors and the context. It is invaluable to the success of any institution be it family, organizations, socio-economic and political spheres. The success of any state or nation, lies on its ability to communicate its functions and policies to its relevant publics and stakeholders with an avenue for feedback. The nature of communication matters in assessing the efficacy of the communication act between and among the parties involved. It is against this philosophical view this paper explores the nature of communication between the Kaduna State government and its residents in the dissemination of messages on its Urban Renewal Project. Survey Method and In-depth Interview were adopted with a total of 400 copies of questionnaire administered to residents of the State using Multistage Cluster Sampling Technique. The Interview was conducted with Communication experts of the various components of the Urban Renewal Project. The study found the nature of communication between the government and the residents as a two-way traffic with the residents fully aware and engage with the various communication tools adopted by the state in disseminating these messages through various media platforms including radio, social media handles, and face-to-face enlightenment, amongst others. The study recommends the need for Kaduna State government to expand the avenues for



participatory communication to enhance citizen's engagement, which would in turn create more awareness on developmental projects.

Keywords: Communication, Nature, Urban Renewal, Kaduna, Nigeria.

Introduction

Communication is the key to successful interaction and a vital tool for exchanging ideas and fostering understanding and collaboration. Establishing an adequate information flow between the Government and its citizens is crucial. The Government should listen to the needs of its citizens and acknowledge its shortcomings in meeting citizens' expectations. This commitment fosters transparency within the Government (Adeyemi, 2011).

Communication can take various approaches, such as participatory, horizontal, or vertical (Theophilus, 2022). It can be two-way, upward, downward, transactional, or conversational (Kumar, 2023). Good Communication provides an avenue through which the government can inform the citizens of specific roles to achieve the administration's aims and objectives for the betterment of the citizens and society.

According to a World Bank-sponsored article published in ComGap in 2009, the Government's three primary communication functions are informing, advocating or persuading for policies and reforms, and engaging citizens. These communication functions are responsible for improving effectiveness, building broad support and legitimacy for programs; responsiveness, knowing citizens' needs and responding to them; and accountability which involves explaining government stewardship and providing mechanisms to hold governments accountable. Communication also helps update the citizens on the Government's activities, allowing them to voice their opinions on its policies and achievements. This goes a long way in determining how the citizens will perceive the Government, which can be effectively achieved through the mass media (Selano & Kep, 2023).

Relatedly, the World Bank's 2009 ComGap report on enhancing the quality of the public sphere notes that good governance is distinguished by state capability, responsiveness, and accountability, with Communication playing a pivotal role. Consistent Communication can impact policy and reforms, coordinate inter and intragovernmental relations, and lead to an efficient and effective governance system. However, many countries lack effective Communication with the public and do not adopt the right communication strategy.

Thus, beyond just communicating with the people, the nature of the Communication goes a long way in determining the efficacy of the Communication between the Government and the people and the multiplier effect on governance, further strengthening and solidifying the relationship between the Government and the people they serve. The nature of Communication, whether participatory, vertical, two-way, transactional, conversational, or participatory, has varying impacts and produces different effects on the recipients and the overall efficacy of the communicative act.



Against this backdrop, this article explores the nature of Communication between the Kaduna State government and its residents regarding the communication messages designed and disseminated for the implementation of the State Urban Renewal Project.

The Urban Renewal Project is the brainchild of the immediate past Governor of Kaduna State, Nigeria, Nasir El-Rufai. Its aim is to rebrand and transform the State, and this idea stems from the administration's 2015 campaign manifesto. The Urban Renewal Project initiative is segmented into distinct components: roads, Mass Transit, Housing and enhanced land use, Street Lights, Parks and Recreational Centers, Markets and Neighborhood Centers, and Waste Management. Different bodies are responsible for implementing the plan in accordance with the Kaduna Infrastructure Master Plan (KADIMP). The State's Master Plan was first published in 1967 and updated in 2010 to provide a suitable environment for residents (KDGS, 2019).

In the realm of public policy, effective Communication serves as a crucial instrument in realizing policy objectives. The ongoing emphasis on transparency and proactive public policy communications remains essential in the current working agendas of many developing countries' governments. In the Central Region of Vietnam, public policy communications exhibit distinctive features influenced by unpredictable patterns of policy adoption, geographical distance, and economic disparities compared to the capital city, Hanoi.

Studies across different countries revealed a correlation between the nature of Communication and the success of government-funded projects and programs. For example, a study by Aji, Tsuroyya, and Dewi (2017) explored bridging Communication between the public and Government with a focus on Kelompok Informasi Masyarakat (KIM) Surabaya, which found that KIM contributes to the two-way exchange of information. Its role includes disseminating programs and forwarding complaints and suggestions from the public to the Government while recommending the utilization of various channels in communicating with the public.

Similarly, a 2013 study on citizens' participation and technology by the National Democratic Institute, conducted across seven countries, revealed that Communication and media can effectively establish platforms and opportunities for citizens to voice their opinions, noting that a deficiency in both political will and technical capacity in numerous democracies hinder efforts to engage citizens in policy-making or furnish them with precise data on government performance. Communication is therefore important in development.

Just as effective communication tools are instrumental in achieving government policies, inadequate communication can significantly disrupt their effectiveness (Canel and Sanders, 2013). Exploring and examining the nature of Communication between policy makers and the people in the implementation of public policies, projects, programs, and reforms is essential to the success of the project.



Statement of Problem

There have been studies and public analysis on the Urban Renewal Projects of the Kaduna State government from different perspectives such as infrastructure, development, socio-economic and political angles. However, an extant literature search on the subject returned no article from the angle of Communication and media.

The nature of Communication plays significant role in the implementation of government policies, projects and programmes. While there are existing studies on the role of Communication in project implementation for development in various countries, there is a notable absence of such research with a focus on Kaduna State. This paper, therefore, looks into the nature of Communication adopted in disseminating messages on the Urban Renewal Project of Kaduna State Government with a view to ascertaining how this impacts the Urban Renewal Project.

Literature Review

Understanding Urban Renewal

Urban renewal is a purposeful endeavour to transform the urban environment through planning and extensive adjustments to existing city areas, aligning them with current and future demands for urban living and work. This process constitutes a comprehensive community neighborhood redevelopment program that entails substantial improvements to the city's physical structure. The aim is to enhance the aesthetic quality and overall liability of urban life (Smith, 2021).

In its operations, urban renewal plays a pivotal role in reconstructing aging urban spaces, contributing to the improvement of physical, socio-economic, and ecological aspects within urban areas (Du, Zhang, Wang, Zhi and Huang, 2020, p. 12). It serves as a proactive measure against the proliferation of slums and blight by focusing on rehabilitating and conserving deteriorated areas. Beyond the renovation and upgrade of existing infrastructure, urban renewal operates as a strategic framework, addressing the challenge of segregation between social classes and working concurrently towards integrated development and social equity.

Urban renewal has been in operation since the inception of permanent human settlements. Evolving alongside the course of history and the passage of time, established cities undergo a perpetual process of transformation, inevitably encountering the need for continuous regeneration (Wu, 2010). It wasn't until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that there emerged relatively coordinated endeavors involving local governments, reform groups, and business interests. Their aim was to eradicate the tangible signs of urban decay (Macdonald, Malys and Maliene, 2009).



The revitalization of Paris by Haussmann is considered the inaugural large-scale urban renewal project. Nevertheless, the United States was among the pioneering nations to establish dedicated national programs for urban renewal (Roberts, 2000). The issue of declining urban neighborhoods has been acknowledged in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century, prompting substantial efforts over the years to combat decay and revitalize cities nationwide. Various developed nations of Europe and Asia embraced the urban renewal process, redeveloping and restructuring to a high standard compared to what they were decades ago. The developing nations are currently undergoing various Urban renewal projects, Nigeria inclusive. This study, thus, focuses on Urban Renewal efforts of the Government of Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Communication and the Nature of Communication between the Government and the Governed.

In a communicative relationship, when a government engages with the public, political power acts as a facilitator, delivering content that aligns with the principles of equality and freedom for the people. These communicative dynamic underscores that equality and freedom are inseparable from the exercise of political power. According to Kumar (2023), by nature of Communication, at least two parties are involved. One way "involving information style and sender to be able to receive only" or two-way process . . . the receiver doesn't present his or her reaction to sender." With two-way Communication, the receiver sends his feedback to the sender after receiving the message." It can also be conversational, in a variety of styles, for example, upward direction, down the way and horizontal. Kumar further submits that Communication is media or channel based which could be common and non-verbal or mixture of spoken and non-verbal media.

By nature of Communication, according to an article by Nomad University, we are looking at a process, which is constantly changing. It is reciprocal and alternating, response from one communiqué triggers a stimulus from the other and becomes a communicate in its own right. The article added that Communication is a social process - the interactive nature of the act, as human beings are social. Communication is an interdependent process, which vary based on actors involved and the contextual nature of it. Communication also involves many actors- someone to start the Communication, somebody to receive, the message to share, the channel to connect the encoder and decoder together.

Communication between a state and its citizens should be objective, two-way, and effective, as a government's decision-making is enhanced by the input from the people. When citizens actively monitor their Government, there is an improvement in both decision-making and the formulation of sound policies. Communication serves as a crucial tool in improving governance, and certain key instruments include media, civic activism, and electronic governance. These tools contribute to enhancing the capability, accountability, and responsiveness of governments. For example, Communication through civic activism, by fostering increased interactions between civil society and raising citizens' awareness, leads to heightened transparency in government operations.



Media plays a role in communicating between the Government and the governed. Government officials are being interviewed by journalists to know how far they are going in carrying out their responsibilities assigned to them. The media serves as platforms where citizens express their opinion on what they feel about the Government. Additionally, via various media outlets, the Government can use it to send messages to the citizens on the various works it does for their benefit and development and that of the State and country at large. When there is Communication between the Government and the governed it creates room for transparency (ComGap 2007; Pasquier, 2018; Kaizen Institute, 2024; IPR, 2024).

Ethics of Government-Citizen Communication

The process of governing in democracy relies on constant exchanges of information and Communication about public policies, ideas and decisions, between members of the Government and political parties and also between those who govern and those who are governed. According to Fairbanks et al. (2007) "A healthy democracy requires an informed public and a government that is transparently accountable for its actions to those who elected it". Lee (2012) is of the view that providing information and accountability are established goals as "the democratic purposes of government public relations: media relations, public reporting and responsiveness to the public as citizens" (2012:12). These goals can be implemented directly or indirectly. Directly, when governments inform citizens through public relations, which is the most common way of transmitting information about public policy and the use of public funds. The growing computerization of government functions (e-government) has been guided by the same goal: facilitating direct contact between citizens and boosting the Government's ability to respond to their questions and criticisms

The "democratic purposes" of government public relations may also be achieved indirectly through news coverage. This can either be the result of the Government's initiative, normally through press office strategies (e.g. press releases, press conferences, interviews), or when news stories arise from journalists' investigation with government information sources (e.g. PR professionals) or non-official sources (e.g. politicians or civil servants).

The responsibility for drawing up and spreading government messages normally falls on the desk of communication professionals and stakeholders. Civil servants may belong to a communication department/service within different government organisations at national, regional or local level. They are in charge of keeping citizens informed, boosting public knowledge about public policy and the way it is created, as well as enhancing bidirectional Communication and feedback with journalists and citizens (Garnett, 1992; Grunig, 2008; Lee et al., 2012).

Thus, the ethics of government-citizen relationship in governance, is to a great extent, determined by the nature of Communication between the two parties.



A study by Maculan and Moro (2020) on strategies for inclusive urban renewal recommends that urban renewal projects should prioritize the creation of pluralized spaces that respect regional culture and prevent the displacement of residents, noting that residents' participation in the urban renewal process, contributes to achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for both the Government and the residents. Relatedly, a study by Coffey International Development (2007) on "Communication between the government and the governed," pinpoints the fundamental elements of good governance as capability, accountability, and responsiveness, reinforced through the exchange of information within the societal subsystems such as religion, State, political parties, family, etc.). This idea is in tandem with the assertion that effective flow of information and dialogue among citizens, governments, and other actors is crucial for strengthening these pillars, as articulated by Luhmann in 1990. Furthermore, the study asserts that Communication, information dissemination, and dialogue play integral roles in governance, assuming a positive correlation between Communication and good governance.

Relatedly, study by Shen, Wang, Xu and Li (2024) on unveiling citizen-government interactions in urban renewal in China, focusing on spontaneous online opinions, regional characteristics and government responses, adopts a text mining method and regression model to evaluate unstructured user-generated data and explore the determinants of government responsiveness in urban renewal. The results revealed more public opinions on urban renewal in economically developed regions than in less developed regions with project progress inquiry and quality problem related topics having significant positive impacts on response timeliness. The study recommended bottom-up participation as it generates valuable public feedback and opinions, promoting transparency and accountability in the urban renewal program.

Theoretical Framework: Participatory Communication Theory

The study adopts Participatory Communication theory. Participatory Communication is about involving all the stakeholders in the development activity with the aim of achieving social change and empowerment. According to Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009), it allows for sharing of information, perceptions and opinions among stakeholders, thereby facilitating their empowerment. It focuses on dialogical Communication rather than linear Communication; it promotes bottom up Communication (Prakesh and Karki, 2022) to allow for the participation of all and sundry. The theory views participation of all stakeholders as a tool to achieve a pre-established goal defined by someone external to the community involved. In social movements or reforms, participation itself can be a goal as an empowering process.

Participatory Communication is an approach based on dialogue, which allows the sharing of information, perceptions and opinions among the various stakeholders and thereby facilitates their empowerment, especially for those who are most vulnerable and marginalized. Participatory Communication is not just the exchange of information and experiences; it is also the exploration and generation of new knowledge aimed at addressing situations that need to be improved (Ali and Sonderling 2017).



To be genuinely participatory and truly effective, Communication should occur among all parties affected, ensuring all have similar opportunities to influence the outcome of the initiative. Optimally participatory Communication would be part of the whole project process, from beginning to end. This approach promotes the active involvement of stakeholders in investigating options and shaping decisions regarding development objectives and facilitates empowerment (Subedi and Karki 2022). The emphasis is on participatory and collective processes in research, problem identification, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of change.

The participatory communication process in reforms and policy implementation involves, communication assessment, communication strategy design, implementation of communication objectives and monitoring and evaluation of the outcome of the communication campaign.

Participatory Communication Theory provides the foundation for this research by highlighting the importance of inclusivity and dialogue. It aligns with the study's goal of assessing how the Kaduna State Government communicates with residents and fosters participation in urban renewal initiatives. It provides a participatory platform for stakeholders to receive information and contribute to discourse on issues, especially on topics of general public interest. It empowers marginalized or less-represented groups by ensuring their involvement in decision-making processes. The theory, therefore, underpins the idea that Kaduna State residents should have a platform to air their views and opinions on the urban renewal projects since the project directly affect their lives.

The theory further emphasizes reciprocal Communication where feedback from residents is valued and acted upon. This aligns with the research's focus on evaluating the nature of Communication between the Kaduna State Government and its residents.

Methodology

The study adopts mixed method, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a robust framework for understanding the nature of Communication between the Kaduna State Government and its residents, with survey as methodology while questionnaire and In-depth Interview as techniques of research and data collection instruments. Residents of Kaduna State were sampled using Multi Stage Cluster Sampling Technique, involving the researcher dividing the samples into groups at various stages, after which the simple random sampling was employed.

The study focused on two senatorial zones of the three senatorial zones of the State- Kaduna North and Kaduna Central. Four local governments were selected from each of the two senatorial zones initially clustered, bringing a total of eight local governments selected for the study. Specifically, in Kaduna North Senatorial Zone, the study selects Ikara, Makarfi, Lere, and Zaria local governments while in Kaduna Central Senatorial Zone, the study selects Igabi, Kaduna



North, Kaduna South, and Chikun local government areas. According to the Kaduna State Bureau of Statistics, the population of its residents is 9.4 million. Using the Taro Yamani formula which is $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$; which 'n' is the sample size; 'N' is the population size and 'e' is the margin of error which is 0.05; with a confidence level of 95%, a total of 400 participants were randomly selected and administered the questionnaire. Response rate was 394 questionnaires retrieved and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

For the in-depth Interview, five (5) Communication Experts from the Urban Renewal Components were purposively selected and interviewed to provide information on their agencies, after which the data were analyzed.

The methodological design effectively captures both the frequency and nature of Communication between the Kaduna State Government and its residents. By integrating quantitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from interviews, the study provides a holistic understanding of the dynamics of the nature of Communication. This approach highlights the strengths of the Government's communication strategies.

Data Presentation and Analysis

To understand the nature of Communication between the Kaduna State government and residents of the State on the Urban Renewal Project, the study explores questions on the demographic variables of the respondents and other questions relating to the research topic. Specifically, the study probed on awareness of the communication tools used in disseminating messages on urban renewal projects, frequency of receipt of the messages, whether the residents have opportunities to express themselves to the Government, communication tools used by residents to provide feedback to the Government, nature of Communication used in disseminating information on the urban renewal project, and whether the Government of Kaduna State listens to the residents.

Below is the analysis of the responses to the questions posed:



Table 1: Awareness of the communication tools used in disseminating messages on urban renewal projects

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	345	87.9	87.9	87.1
No	49	12.1	12.1	99.0
Total	394	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey, (2023)

From the table above, the findings show that majority of the respondents are aware of the various communication tools/ platforms used in disseminating Urban Renewal Projects by Kaduna State Government. Respondents who answered "Yes" 87.1%, while those who answered "No" 12.1%, total 100%.

The interview with the Communication officer of the Kaduna Capital Authority corroborates this finding:

Extract 5: *"We have robust community engagement; we have what we call the ambassador program where we have a representative from the community who provides information regarding happenings in their various communities. We engage with community heads, and hold workshops; we have various social media accounts like Twitter handle, Instagram, Facebook, and a website, we also call for press briefings. We believe that there is a disconnect between the citizens and the government; the government is out to bridge the gap by engaging highly with the residents on various happenings of the state, especially on Urban Renewal".*

From the findings above, despite the fact that the government has adopted various means of communicating with the residents such as through X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram as well as its official website, it acknowledges a slight disconnect between the citizens and the government.

Table 2: Frequency of Receiving the Messages

Frequency of Receiving Messages	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Daily	94	23.9	23.9	23.9
Weekly	76	19.3	19.3	43.1
Biweekly	41	10.4	10.4	53.6
Once a Week	65	16.5	16.5	70.1
None of the Above	113	28.7	29.9	100.0



Frequency of Receiving Messages	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Total	394	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the table above, the result shows that 23.9% of the respondents receive messages on urban renewal daily, 19.3% receive it weekly, 10.4% receive it Biweekly, 16.5% get it once a week, while 28.7% answered none of the above.

The result in table 2 above is in line with the interview conducted with the Communication Officer 2 of Kaduna State Urban Planning Development Agency:

Extract15: "we have our unit handled by the PRO handling Communication with the public, we have a Twitter handle, Facebook, website which we communicate with our audience almost daily. We do press releases from time to time, we do periodic radio programs on weekly basis updating the public regarding the urban renewal project of Kaduna State."

Table 3: Whether the respondents have opportunities to express themselves to the Government

Opportunity to Express to Government	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	288	73.1	73.1	73.1
No	106	26.9	26.9	100.0
Total	394	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 shows 73.1% of the respondents, a significant number, have the opportunity to express themselves to the government; while 26.9% of the respondents do not have the opportunity to express themselves to the government.

Table 4: Communication Tools respondent used to express themselves to the Government

Communication Tool	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Social Media	143	36.0	36.3	36.3
Radio/Television	27	6.8	6.9	43.1



Communication Tool	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Newspapers/Magazines/News Bulletins	6	1.5	1.5	44.7
Interpersonal/Group Communication	19	4.8	4.8	49.5
All of the Above	46	11.6	11.7	61.2
Some of the Above	153	38.5	38.8	100.0
Total	394	99.2	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the table above, the findings show that 36.3% of respondents use social media to express themselves to the Government, 6.9% use Radio/Television, 1.5% use Newspaper, and Magazines, 4.8% use interpersonal/Group Communication, 11.7% use all of the above platforms to express themselves to the media, and 38.6% use some of these platforms.

This corresponds with the interview conducted with the Communication Officer of Kaduna State Road Agency:

Extract 8: "like I said earlier we use various media outlets to communicate with residents of Kaduna State on Urban Renewal Project the Road Component which is my area of specialty. There is a phone program conducted where we allow residents to call and express their opinions regarding happenings in the state, especially on Urban Renewal. Also, via our social media platforms residents reach out to us and we respond immediately we get their messages."

The finding in Table 4 indicates a digital divide, with social media having the highest percentage with high accessibility in urban areas. A significant percent of resident indicate that they use some of the platforms which are the social media, conventional media, interpersonal and group communication to get information on urban renewal messages. The implication of this is those with limited internet access may not benefit much from the much use of the social media channel as source of news on the urban renewal project.

Table 5: The Nature of Communication used in disseminating information on the urban renewal project

Nature of Communication	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Participatory/Interactive	112	28.4	28.4	28.4
Two-way/Horizontal	118	29.9	29.9	58.4
One-way/Vertical	69	17.5	17.5	75.9



Nature of Communication	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Sure	95	24.1	24.1	100.0
Total	394	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the table above, the result shows 28.4% of the respondents view the nature of communication used in disseminating Urban Renewal message as Participatory/ interactive, 29.9% view it as two-way/horizontal, 17.5% view it as one-way/vertical, while 24.1% are not sure.

The implication is the nature of communication is mostly participatory and interactive and a two-way process which gives room for the participation of the residents in the project as well as room for feedback.

Table 6: Whether the Government of Kaduna State Listens to the Governed

Government Listen to the Governed	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	227	57.6	57.6	57.6
No	167	42.4	42.4	100.0
Total	394	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 found majority of the respondent 57.6% perceive the government of Kaduna state as responsive, while a significant proportion 42.4% believe the government does not listen to them. The dissatisfaction from a significant percentage of the respondents indicates a disconnect between the government and the governed, which can be attributed to factors such as digital divide in form of unequal access to digital tools or devices, and the internet. This can serve as barrier to information sources, can hinder citizens' participation in governance and can affect feedback mechanism. When the people cannot hear and be heard, it can lead to public criticism or resistance, which can negatively impact on the success of government policies.

Thus, although the government actively adopts and deploys social media in disseminating information on the urban renewal project, the digital divide may prevent equitable access to these tools. Residents in rural or underserved areas, or those without internet access, may not benefit from the government's online communication efforts.



Table 7: Age Groups and Media Preferences

Age Groups	Social Media	Radio/TV	Newspapers	Group Communication	All of the Above	Some of the Above	Total
18–24	50	5	2	4	10	30	101
25–34	60	8	1	5	15	40	129
35–44	25	10	2	6	10	35	88
45+	6	23	1	4	5	41	80
Total	141	46	6	19	40	146	394

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the table above, it shows that Social Media was the most used medium, with 141 respondents (35.7%) across all age groups positioning it as the most preferred media platform. “Some of the Above” received the second-highest responses, with 146 respondents (37.0%) combining multiple media channels. Other categories like Radio/TV (46 respondents, 11.6%), Newspapers (6 respondents, 1.5%), Group Communication (19 respondents, 4.8%), and All of the Above (40 respondents, 10.1%).

Interestingly, Social Media appeared as the most preferred media for the age groups 18-24 and 25-34, with 50 and 60 responses, respectively. Age group 35-44 and 45+, went with the option “Some of the Above,” and “All of the Above,” with 35 and 10 responses, respectively, implying they prefer some of the media, a combination of social media and mainstream media. This reflects a shift toward diversified media consumption.

Other types of media such as group communication, radio and tv and newspapers are the least preferred with the newspaper as the least favorite media across all four age groups- 18-24 (2), 25-34 (1), 35-44 (2), 45+ (1). Additionally, it is worth noting that 45+ age group prefer Some of the Above,” with 41 responses, with radio/tv as most preferred media, and the least (6) in terms of social media preference.

Thus, reflecting on the media preference of the residents of Kaduna State, it can be deduced that younger age groups are more reliant on digital platforms for communication and information. Older age groups, particularly 45+, show a preference for combined or multiple media channels, reflecting a more traditional and diverse approach to media consumption. Also, the high percentage of respondents who chose “Some of the Above” suggests that many individuals prefer a mixed-media approach, rather than relying on a single platform.



This is also in line with the interview with the communication officer of Kaduna State Road Development Agency on the nature of media consumption by residents of Kaduna State:

Extract10: *"All these strategies are effective because they cut across all the residents of Kaduna State. When we want to get to the youth we use Social Media because they are very active on the platform, when we target the elderly we make use of conventional media. So, we try our best to see we simultaneously combine all these platforms to get to various residents of Kaduna State".*

Discussion of Findings

From the findings of the research, it is evident that the nature of communication between the Kaduna State Government and its residents in disseminating Urban Renewal message is mostly participatory/interactive and two-way, evident in the dominant percentage of the respondents who choose these options. This is in line with the participatory communication theory that emphasizes a two-way and inclusive communication rather than a linear communication.

It was also found that a high percentage of the residents believe they are given opportunities to express themselves to the government, and they mostly do so through the social media platforms, where they engage with the handles of the State government. Others engage through radio programmes, television, newspapers, bulletins, and interpersonal/group platforms. The study further revealed a digital divide with some resident having a feeling of not being heard. Therefore, there is need for the provision of internet access such as free hot spots, for some residents of urban areas who cannot access the internet, especially those residing in urban-slums so they can receive information and be heard, too.

The study concludes that no doubt, there is two-way communication between the government and the residents of Kaduna State on the Urban Renewal Project. The government uses different communication tools to disseminate information on the project to the residents and the residents interact with the government through the same media tools and platforms. This is in line with a study by Aji et.al (2017), which found that KIM Surabaya media, plays a role in the two-way flow of information between the government and the people.

Additionally, the finding of this study is consistent with study by Maculan and Moro (2020) on strategies for inclusive urban renewal, which recommended that urban renewal projects should prioritize the creation of pluralized spaces that respect regional culture and prevent the displacement of residents, noting that residents' participation in the urban renewal process, contributes to achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for both the government and the residents.

The finding further correlates with the outcome of a study by Coffey International Development (2007) on Communication between the government and the governed, which pinpoints the



fundamental elements of good governance as capability, accountability, and responsiveness, reinforced through the exchange of information within the societal subsystems such as religion, state, political parties, family.

Conclusion

The nature of communication between Kaduna State Government and its resident in disseminating urban renewal messages is two-way, with residents having the opportunity to express themselves to the government while the government is able to monitor feedback and respond to them, accordingly. Additionally, understanding that residents are aware of and engage with communication tools indicates that the government can strengthen participatory governance by increasing transparency and encouraging feedback and listenership. It goes a long way in improving trust between the government and residents, fostering better cooperation.

Recommendation

This article can serve as a reference for future studies on public communication strategies and for practitioners designing similar frameworks in other regions. It is hoped that it will broaden the knowledge of researchers, policy makers and members of the public interested in exploring the nature of communication between the government and the governed in policy and project reforms and implementation.

The study recommends government to continue to open doors for citizens engagement and feedback and government policies and programmes targeted at the welfare and wellbeing of the people – the main beneficiaries of any public project. There is need for the expansion of internet access and promotion of digital literacy programs in the cities and rural areas to include more citizens in participatory governance and to address the issue of digital divide. A Periodical review and analysis of the effectiveness of communication tools and processes is recommended. Campaigns to educate residents on using digital tools for government communication and the importance of Urban Renewal should be organised. Research should be encouraged on the barriers to effective communication to identify key obstacles and strategies to address them. On a final note, the impact of communication on government policy implementation in Kaduna State and Nigeria should be further explored.

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Influence of Source Credibility on COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance and Hesitancy in Selected States of South-East Nigeria

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Abstract

Vaccination remains one of the effective ways of stopping the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19. However, people have shown resistance and hesitancy towards these vaccines because of lack of trust in the vaccines fueled by misinformation and fake news about the vaccines as well as distrust of some sources of vaccine information. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of source credibility on COVID-19 vaccine acceptance and hesitancy in selected states of South-East Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research method with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. A sample size of 384 respondents from three states in Nigeria's South-East was used. Findings showed that social media and health practitioners were mostly used in sourcing information on the vaccines. Also, the respondents had a positive attitude towards the vaccines. The social media, traditional media, blogs, health practitioners, family and friends, WHO, and pharmaceutical companies were considered as credible sources of vaccine information, while opinion leaders, religious leaders, and NCDC were regarded as non-credible sources. Similarly, all the sources perceived as credible by the public influenced the acceptance of vaccination while those perceived as less credible boosted hesitancy. Based on the findings, it was recommended, inter alia, that vaccine messaging campaigns should be shared more through the social media and health practitioners; social media



platforms should be more active and transparent in fact-checking misinformation on their sites; government and mass media should leverage credible sources in disseminating accurate COVID-19 vaccine information using the 6-point guideline of the CERC Model.

Keywords: Source, Credibility, COVID-19, Vaccine Hesitancy, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Vaccine hesitancy, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), was one of the top 10 threats to global health in 2019 (WHO, 2020). It has been defined as the delay in acceptance, reluctance, or refusal of vaccination despite the availability of vaccination services (WHO, 2020). Vaccine hesitancy and in some cases outright refusal, is not something peculiar to COVID-19 as this had been identified as a challenge with previous immunisations with proven track-records of safety and effectiveness, such as measles or polio vaccines (Allcott *et al.*, 2020).

Available literature shows that hesitancy towards vaccination across the world is a product of many factors such as religion; culture; gender; socio-economic, political and geographical barriers; uncertainty about their safety, potential side effects and efficacy, sometimes triggered by misinformation and disinformation across various media sources and lack of trust in government and medical systems (MacDonald *et al.*, 2015; Figueiredo *et al.*, 2020; Martinez-Bravo & Stegman, 2021).

The media are believed to be important vehicles for spreading vaccine-related information, improving awareness and preparing the public for well-informed decisions about health (Casciotti *et al.*, 2014). The information received from the mass media has the capacity to mould the public's perception of issues and events, opinions, attitudes and even behaviours (Cacciatore *et al.*, 2012; Priest, 2013). It therefore becomes a problem when the mass media also become the vehicle and carrier of fake news, misinformation and disinformation on health-related matters. One of the effects of such unverified and distorted information will be lack of trust resulting in hesitancy or outright refusal of vaccination as the case is with the COVID-19 vaccines.

Trust is vital in mobilising compliance with public health measures (Devine *et al.*, 2020; Jennings *et al.*, 2021). Since the media have the power to mobilise people to comply with public health measures through the information, they share on a given issue, it behooves the media at all times to provide scientific, factual and data-based information on health-related issues leveraging on source credibility. This is because it is believed that information disseminated via source(s) perceived as credible have a better effect than the same information delivered by sources not perceived as credible (Hovland *et al.*, 1953; Telg *et al.*, 2012; Lamm *et al.*, 2016).

Hovland *et al.* (1953) defined source credibility as the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of an information source. The expertise dimension shows the level to which the receiver sees the source as possessing knowledge or skill in the subject area of the message (Lowry *et al.*, 2014), while source trustworthiness is “the degree of confidence audience has in a given source to



communicate, factual, scientific and data-driven information"(Lamm *et al.*, 2016). Source credibility and credible source are used interchangeably throughout the study.

Although researchers previously looked at "source" from the angle of "the message communicator," the increase of computer-based communication studies has blurred the line of the initial theoretical differentiation that existed between the source and the medium of a message. The source and medium have been examined by some researchers to be a similar or related construct in technologically mediated communication studies such as the following cited in Hocevar *et al.*, (2017) – (Metzger *et al.*, 2003; Sundar & Nass, 2001 and Wathen & Burkell, 2002).

For instance, in the case of a health website, someone may regard both the source and the medium of a message disseminated to be the website on which it is shared. The differences between the source and the medium thus may not have much importance in research on credibility in the modern-day media space than it had in the mid-20th century when most of the research on credibility and persuasion began. This study chooses to approach information source from both the angles of source as the "medium" and the "communicator." Therefore, this study holds that when COVID-19 vaccine information is relayed to the public through perceived credible sources, there is high likelihood that people would accept vaccination.

2. Statement of the Problem

With the level of damage caused by the novel coronavirus globally, it would have been expected that the arrival of vaccines would be embraced by the public with excitement as the best means of tackling the pandemic. However, COVID-19 vaccines were met with high levels of resistance and hesitancy in different countries, including Nigeria. Fake news, rumours. and conspiracy theories on the vaccines spreading in the media and lack of trust in various information sources have been identified as some of the factors triggering such vaccine hesitancy.

Credibility of information sources is vital in the mobilisation of the public towards taking health-safety measures like vaccination. This is because people are more likely to be persuaded when the sources of information are seen as credible. Therefore, this work seeks to examine the influence of source credibility on COVID-19 vaccine acceptance and hesitancy among residents of selected states of South-East Nigeria.

3. Research Questions

The following questions were raised by the study:

1. What are the media/source(s) from which the public gets COVID-19 vaccine information most?
2. What is the attitude of the public towards COVID-19 vaccines?
3. Which of the information sources does the public consider credible?



4. Does the source credibility of messages on COVID-19 vaccines influence public acceptance or hesitancy towards the vaccines?
5. What other factors, besides source credibility, contribute to public acceptance or hesitancy towards COVID-19 vaccines?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Source Credibility

Source credibility has been identified as one of the most vital factors that distinctly affect people's attitude and behavioral intentions in communication (Haley, (1996) in Hu (2015). Most of the credibility research and theory arose from persuasion literature. The findings of many studies showed that a source or message with high credibility will induce more persuasion and attitudinal change (e.g., Berlo et al., 1969; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Pornpitakpan, 2003).

The development of the concept of source credibility began from Aristotle in his book, *The Rhetoric*, in which he separated persuasive means into three groups: ethos, logos, and pathos. In his view, ethos which plays the most crucial function in influencing people's thoughts and beliefs deals with the perceived expertise, knowledge or trustworthiness of the message source in the eyes of the audience (Umeogu, 2012). Logos deals with the content and organisation of an argument and how to create logical connections through arrangement of facts in an argument. Pathos on the other hand is concerned with making appeals to the values and beliefs of the audience to get them emotionally tied to the speaker. The overall objective is to emotionally sway the audience to make them accept the speaker's position. While these three rhetorical appeals play important roles in persuasion, our study is more concerned with ethos which dwells on source credibility.

Source credibility was highlighted by Hovland, Janis and Kelly in 1953. According to them, there is greater tendency to influence or persuade the audience if the message source presents itself as credible. To test this assumption, Hovland et. al., (1953) carried out studies on the influence of sources in persuasion by presenting both credible and non-credible sources. Their findings confirmed the assumption that credible sources of information create the desired attitude or behaviour in the audience (Umeogu, 2012). Similarly, McCroskey *et al.* (1974) showed that information sources with high perceived credibility elicit more respect and acceptance.

Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) view source credibility as the extent to which the source is viewed as having the expertise relevant to the communication topic and can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the subject (cited in Selman & Sims, 2022). It has also been described as judgments made by a receiver of a message regarding the believability of a communicator (O'Keefe, 2002).

Having understood the relevance and effect perceived source credibility has on people's behaviours and attitudes, scholars began developing source credibility measures in different



areas of communication. For instance, Ohonian (1990) held that the credibility of a celebrity endorser could be seen from three dimensions: expertise, source attractiveness and trustworthiness. Expertise is associated with the source's competence and knowledge, skills or experience in a specific field (McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Ericsson & Håkansson, 2005). For example, using an athlete to endorse sports-related products or using a medical doctor when endorsing pharmaceutical products are perceived as more persuasive than using ordinary people for such endorsements. Furthermore, Ohonian (1990) saw attractiveness in source credibility as something to do with physical characteristics perceived of the information source. These include facial and body looks, the way the source dresses, and postures (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Caballero & Pride, 1984). These characteristics of a source are said to induce likeability which early literature suggested as the first dimension of attractiveness. That is to say, receivers are more likely to be influenced by sources they find likable (Ericsson & Håkansson, 2005).

It is important to note that Li & Yin, (2018) suggested another dimension of attractiveness which they identified as "closeness." While acknowledging the importance of what the eyes can behold of a source, the scholars explained that closeness has to do with the effective bond that may exist between the source and the receiver. Closeness is seen from two angles, namely, similarity and familiarity (McQuire, 1985; 1989). Similarity connotes resemblance between the source and the receiver while familiarity deals with the receiver having knowledge of the source through exposure (Eredogan *et al.*, 2001). This gives us an understanding that receivers of a message who share similar features with a message source or are familiar with the source, having known the source overtime, are likely to be persuaded to act positively towards the message received (Kareklas *et. al.*, 2015; Lamm *et. al.*, 2016; Hocevar *et. al.*, 2017).

It cannot also be denied that many people in this modern age fall back on the internet to seek for health-related information even though the information may come from different sources with varied accuracy. With this rise in people utilising the internet as a means of getting health-related and other information, scholars have shown interest in putting to use areas of the persuasion literature to help in guiding studies of credibility assessment online. As a result, there has been research over time to further understand the influence of source credibility, especially from the angle of expertise, given the rise in the usage of social media and user-generated information (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013; Warnick, 2004). For example, having qualifications like medical degrees or clinical experience are still used as criteria for the assessment of source expertise in online information. But personal experience of someone who has a health problem has the capacity of giving some levels of perceived expertise to those who disseminate information using the internet but do not have the traditional credentialed expertise (Eysenbach, 2008; Eysenbach *et al.*, 2002). This credibility attached to a source based on their experience has been identified as having the ability to potentially influence the way online user-generated information is evaluated (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). Although experiential credibility can be attached to offline sources of health information like friends and family, or fellow patients, most of the time people may likely not have offline friends and family in their close social circle with whom they share very similar health experiences. As a result, people may be specifically pulled to reading about the experiences of others who share health information that they are interested in online (Sillence *et al.*, 2007). A ready example could be an ordinary person who suffers from the same health problem (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013).



Online information providers on health-related issues who do not possess the skills or expertise can be assigned experiential credibility. Some research dealing with experiential health information provision shows that while source credibility is perceived to be higher for a credentialed health institution, experiential information from an ordinary person can have a tremendous effect on attitudes and self-efficacy towards health behaviours (Neubaum & Kramer, 2014). Also, because the social media and websites carry more of the information from these types of information providers, experiential expertise may have significant influence on health information seekers.

Other source factors such as the likeability, familiarity and similarity have also been examined as possible influences on persuasive effects both online and offline. Research shows that sources perceived as having similarity with the receiver influence credibility judgment over different topic domains, online and offline inclusive (Hocevar *et al.*, 2017). For instance, the similarity that exists between the source and the receiver has been found to positively predict credibility judgment of user-generated online information as well as the tendency that the evaluators will also act on the information received (Flanagin *et al.*, 2013).

In spite of the foregoing studies, it seems there is no generalised measure for the construct of source credibility with respect to all its dimensions (Berlo *et al.*, 1969; O'Keefe, 2002) as different angles of source credibility might work differently depending on the circumstances (Cronkhite & Liska, 1976). Nevertheless, there was an agreement on two dimensions of source credibility; perceived expertise and trustworthiness (Whitehead, 1968; Berlo *et al.*, 1969; McCracken & Teven, 1999; O'Keefe, 2002; Umeogu, 2012; Hocevar *et al.*, 2017). These two dimensions of credibility are said not to necessarily be empirical realities but perceptions that can be formed. In other words, while the credibility of a source may be associated with the receivers' notion of the message's accuracy, it may still not have such a bearing on the message's factuality (Umeogu, 2012; Metzger & Flanagin, 2015; Hocevar *et al.*, 2017). This helps us better understand McLuhan's proposition that "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1966). McLuhan was not trying to undermine the power of the message in persuasion but to stress that the user's perception of a message is shaped by the source through which it is experienced.

Since evidence from previous research showed that a source perceived as credible influences audience attitude or behaviour positively towards a desired goal, it is important that while communicating health-related issues such as COVID-19 vaccines, perceived credible sources of information dissemination should be greatly utilised bearing in mind that this pertains to both the communicators and the platforms used to communicate the messages.

4.2 Review of some Related Studies around the World

Anorue *et al.* (2021) examined knowledge and attitude towards COVID-19 vaccine safety media messages. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey method using structured self-administered questionnaire to collect data from 399 respondents in both rural and urban communities of South-East, Nigeria. Their result revealed that 35% of the respondents were exposed to COVID-19 vaccine information through social media; 26.3% via radio; 21.8% via TV and 16.5% through friends and families. This implies that the majority of the people relied on social media as their information source on COVID-19 vaccine. They also reported that



respondents' attitude towards the vaccines were negative as 15.89% of the respondents had a positive attitude towards the safety of the vaccines while 60.10% had a negative attitude, and 24.01% of the respondents were not sure.

Similarly, Bara *et. al.* (2021) conducted a study in Harare Zimbabwe among healthcare workers in which they tried to find out the people's perception and confidence on COVID-19 vaccines. The study used an analytical cross-sectional research method with structured questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The findings showed that out of 513 respondents, 88 used social media, 67 used television, 53 used radio, 51 respondents relied on health workers, 39 respondents relied on workmates, 38 used newspapers, while 8 respondents used ministry of health outlets. The implication of this is that the majority of the respondents use social media as their information source. Findings also showed that fears about COVID-19 vaccine safety constituted the major challenge for vaccine acceptance, while sex was a predictor of vaccine willingness.

Also, Fakonti *et. al.* (2021) investigated COVID-19 vaccination intention among nurses and midwives in Cyprus using an Internet-based cross-sectional survey method and questionnaire as instrument for data collection. The study showed out of the 437 respondents sampled, 35% selected the internet and social media as their source of information while 22% and 17% selected colleagues/associates and educational conferences/seminars respectively as their primary source of information. These findings show that the internet and social media are the major sources of information for COVID-19 vaccines. Also, 70% of respondents were hesitant to accept vaccination. This implies that the majority of the population had a negative attitude towards COVID-19 vaccines.

Similarly, El-Elimat *et. al.* (2021) carried out a study which aimed at investigating the acceptability of COVID-19 vaccines and its predictors and attitudes towards these vaccines among the public in Jordan. The study adopted an online, cross-sectional survey method using questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. Findings showed that out of 3,100 respondents, 2,062 (66.5%) strongly agreed/agreed that it was necessary to get a vaccine to keep people safe from COVID-19; about 1,819 (58.7%) agreed that pharmaceutical companies will be able to develop safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. One thousand, five hundred and thirty-eight (49.6%) accepted that side effects will keep them from receiving a COVID-19 vaccine and that 1,528 (49.3%) will refuse to accept COVID-19 vaccines once licensed. It can be deduced from the above findings that the majority of the respondents had a positive attitude towards COVID-19 vaccines. Findings also showed that out of the 3100 respondents, (45.4%) trusted healthcare providers as their source of information on COVID-19 vaccines, (30%) respondents trusted pharmaceutical companies, (17%) trusted the internet while (16%) trusted the media sources of information on COVID-19 vaccines. This implies that the majority of the people see healthcare providers as the most credible source of information on COVID-19 vaccines. Concern for vaccine safety, affordability and availability, influenza vaccination during the past season, age, employment, belief in the conspiracy theories on COVID-19, gender, and lack of trust in the Jordan government were also found out as factors encouraging or discouraging COVID-19 vaccination.



In addition, Hajure, *et. al.* (2021) carried out a review aimed at assessing healthcare workers' attitudes toward the COVID-19 vaccination and its contributing factors globally. This they achieved by peer-reviewed surveys through electronic databases. Out of 24 studies reviewed, two-thirds of the respondents in the studies demonstrated 50% positive attitude toward COVID-19 vaccination while in about one-quarter of the studies, a 50% negative attitude against vaccination was reported. This implies that the majority of the studies showed a positive attitude towards COVID-19 vaccines. The study also recommended the need for increased efforts to change the attitudes of the uncertain healthcare workers in order to boost the uptake of the vaccine and deal with the varied impact of infection. The findings of the study also showed that factors such as sex, age, profession, worries about how safe the vaccines are and fear COVID-19, trust in the correctness of the measures taken by the government, comorbid chronic illness, race, education, living with nuclear family, income level, history of recommendation, and depression signs in the past week, absence of adequate clinical trials and lack of adequate time for the decision, workplace, being vaccinated against flu during the previous season, and willingness to take a rapid test were the factors behind the acceptance and hesitancy towards the vaccines.

AFRICA CDC (2020) carried out a study in 15 countries on the perception of people on COVID-19 Vaccine. The study adopted a mixed methodology with a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviewing approach of data collection and found out that across the 15 countries studied, (64%) of respondents selected television as one of their most trusted sources for information about COVID-19 vaccine; (51%) choose radio; (41%) chose online sources, (23%) chose health bodies while (18%) chose government sources as their most trusted sources of information except for Morocco and Tunisia that chose government sources and healthcare bodies as one of their most trusted sources of information. This finding shows that the majority trusted the mainstream media most. Also, it was found that among the hesitant groups, online channels, specifically social media, was their most trusted source of information. In addition to their findings, the common factors for not wanting to accept the vaccines were lack of trust in the vaccines, belief in the nonexistence of the disease, vaccine safety concerns, not feeling at risk and not having sufficient information to make decisions.

Again, Malik *et. al.* (2020) conducted a study on determinants of COVID-19 vaccine acceptance in the United States. The research adopted the survey method using online questionnaire as instrument for data gathering. The findings showed that the majority (67%) of the respondents have a positive attitude towards the vaccines as they are willing to accept vaccination. Trust in healthcare professionals (75%) ranked highest, as a credible source of COVID-19 vaccine information with (21%) trust on social media as a reliable source.

Allington, *et. al.* (2021) did a study on "Coronavirus conspiracy suspicions, general vaccine attitudes, trust and coronavirus information source as predictors of vaccine hesitancy among UK residents during the COVID-19 pandemic." The study centred on whether coronavirus vaccine hesitancy will have a negative relationship with reliance on mainstream media together with national government, scientists and medical professionals as a source of COVID-19 vaccine information and whether it will also have a positive reliance on the use of social media as a source of COVID-19 vaccine information. Their findings showed that those who relied on the mainstream media, scientists, medical professionals and government showed a strong negative relationship with COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy while those that depended on social media



showed strong positive relationship on vaccine hesitancy. This is as a result of misinformation and disinformation flying across social media handles. These findings imply that credible sources such as mainstream media, scientists, healthcare providers and government increased vaccine acceptance while the less credible source such as the social media increased vaccine hesitancy.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1 Source Credibility Theory

Source credibility theory was propounded by Hovland *et al.* (1963). The theory posits that consumers of a message are more likely to be persuaded when they see or perceive the information source as credible. Source credibility theorists approached the credibility of a source from different dimensions such as expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness.

The expertise dimension deals with how experienced or knowledgeable a source is in the field of discussion (McGinnies & Ward, 1980). Trustworthiness angle of the source's credibility speaks of the integrity and honesty of the source and the attractiveness dimension considers the likeability, similarity and familiarity of the source to the receiver (Ohanian, 1990; Hocevar, *et al.*, 2017). In sum, therefore, this theory holds that information that is delivered by a source considered to be credible will probably have more influence on receivers (Telg *et al.*, 2012).

The theory is relevant to this study as its tenets imply that COVID-19 messages delivered by sources perceived to be credible are expected to have more influence on vaccination than the same messages delivered by sources perceived to be less credible and this influence is needed to overcome hesitancy towards COVID-19 vaccination. Thus, this theory draws attention to the fact that disseminating COVID-19 vaccine-related information leveraging on credible sources of information will likely influence and persuade the people to accept vaccination.

5.2 Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Model

Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) model (Figure 1) is a five-stage theory that combines established public health practices with tenets of crisis communication (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). The model was introduced by the US Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2018, but it was fully developed in 2022 as a response plan in time of crisis. It has been adapted by the WHO's guidelines for disease outbreak communication. CERC is based on the idea that the public demands immediate and credible communication in real time during a crisis response. It has been employed to analyse both traditional and new media reporting on several outbreaks of disease such as Ebola, bird flu, winter storm and depleted uranium exposure (Kieh *et al.*, 2017; Vos & Buckner, 2016; Rice & Spence, 2016; Thomas *et al.*, 2016). CERC models divide public health crises into five stages: pre-crisis, initial event, maintenance, resolution, and evaluation stages and stipulates that communication strategies to be used at each point for effective public response (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005, cited in Miller *et al.*, 2021). The model holds that lives can be saved when the right message is communicated at the right time from the right source (Manuel, 2014). For effective communication during crises, the model holds six principles: (a) be first, (b) be right,

(c) be credible, (d) express empathy, (e) promote action, and (f) show respect (US Dept. of Health and Human Services and CDC, 2018).

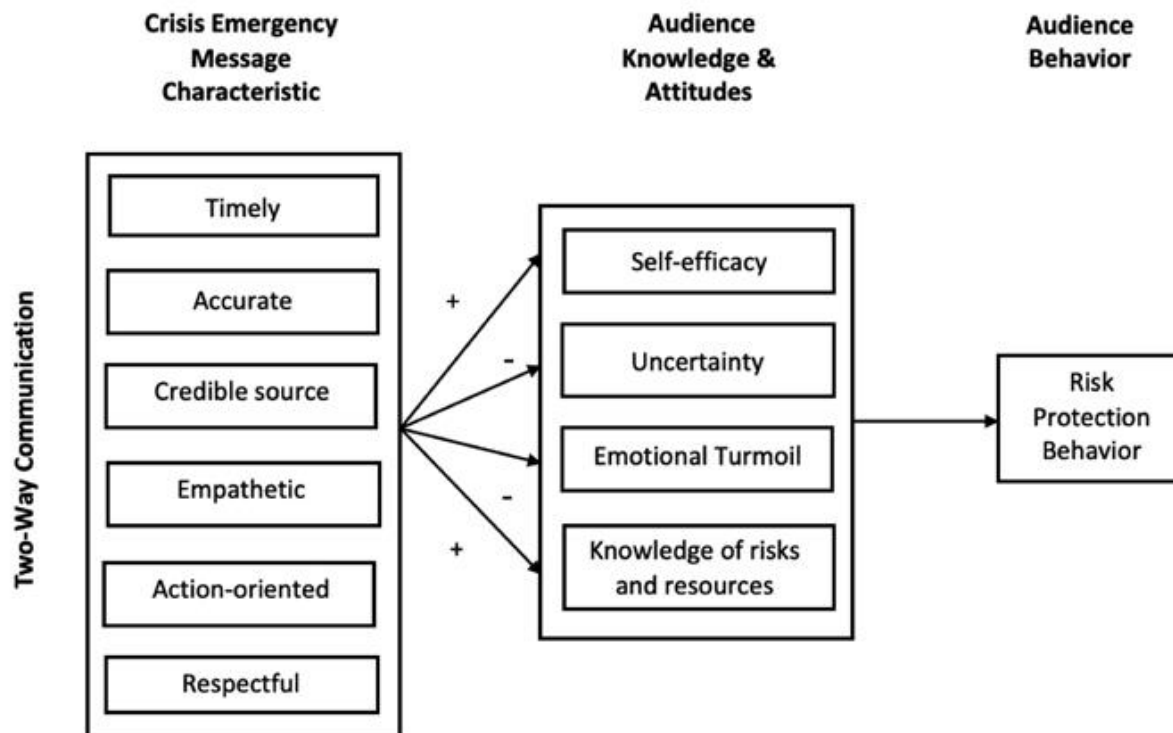


Figure 1: CERC Model Diagram (Source: Miller *et al.*, 2021)

This model relates to the study given that COVID-19, a health crises issue, requires mass vaccination as a quick response measure. Since the public already have fear and mistrust in the vaccines resulting in vaccine hesitancy as a result of information from various sources, employing the tenets of CERC Model will enable the media to communicate timely, factual, and credible COVID-19 vaccine information. This will in turn douse public fear and build public trust in the information disseminated thereby influencing or persuading them to take health safety measures such as vaccination.

6. Methodology

This study adopted the survey research method with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The survey research method was used because it is best suited for determining audience responses on issues such as vaccine hesitancy and acceptance. The questionnaire contained 23 items comprising both open-ended and close-ended questions, including a 4-point Likert scale to test the respondents' attitudes towards the COVID-19 vaccines. The responses to the items were coded as 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree. The decision mean was set at 2.0, implying that the mean scores that are significant would be greater



than 2.0. Thus, higher scores indicate greater agreement while lower scores mean greater disagreement with the statement.

Nigerians residing in the selected states of South-East Nigeria, namely, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Anambra formed the population of this study. Going by the 2006 Nigeria national census figures, the three selected have a total population of 9,622,612. However, we adopted a projection of 15 years using an annual growth rate of 3.2 per cent (UNDP) to arrive at the total population of 14,241,465. Based on this projected population, a sample size of 384 respondents derived from Cochran (1977) sample size formula was used. The choice of this formula is informed by the fact that the study has a heterogeneous and finite population.

Sampling Technique

This study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique. The three states, Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu were selected from the five South-East states in Nigeria using the simple random sampling technique in which the five states were wrapped and put in a bowl and afterwards, three out of the five states were picked. Simple random sampling was done to give the states an equal chance of being selected. Since the states already contain clusters known as senatorial districts, the simple random sampling technique which allows for equal chances for all the senatorial districts to be picked was used in selecting one senatorial district from each of the states which gave a total of three (3) senatorial zones. Thereafter, two local government areas (LGAs) were selected from each senatorial district using simple random sampling technique. This gave a total of six (6) LGAs for the study. One community was subsequently selected from each LGA using the simple random sampling technique to give six (6) communities in general. Convenient sampling technique was used in administering the questionnaire to the respondents in the communities studied.

The validity of the instrument was established through face validation. It was submitted to three lecturers at the Mass Communication Department of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to ensure the questions raised were relevant and appropriate for eliciting the required information. The reliability of the instrument was ensured through the test re-test approach. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to 20 respondents. After two weeks, the same number of copies of the questionnaire was administered to these subjects again. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to subject the two sets of observations to a reliability test. With the aid of SPSS version 22, the reliability was determined to be 0.085, which was considered high reliability.

Three research assistants were trained for one week to facilitate the gathering of data in each state. Information gathered from the respondents formed the basis for the quantitative analysis of data which was done using tables, frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The results from the analysis were used to answer the research questions as well as draw inferences for the study.

7. Results and Discussions

For proper analysis and discussion of findings, we go back to the research questions raised at the beginning of the study.



1. RQ1: What are the media/source(s) from which the public gets COVID-19 vaccine information most?

To establish the predominant media sources of COVID-19 vaccine information, we adopted, first, two broad categorisations of these sources into: social media and traditional media. From the responses generated, the social media were the most used source of COVID-19 vaccine information for the public, as indicated by 238 (62%) of the respondents, while 146 (38%) got COVID-19 vaccine information from the traditional media. In addition to these two broad categories, we tested for how “other” sources accounted for COVID-19 vaccine information. Results in Table 1 show that health practitioners (26.5%) were the most used source of information on COVID-19 vaccines.

Table 1. Other sources of COVID-19 vaccine information

Sources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Health Practitioners	102	26.5
Family and Friends	87	22.6
Opinion Leaders	16	4.2
WHO	98	25.5
Pharmaceutical Companies	4	1.0
Religious Leaders	11	2.9
NCDC	66	17.1
Total	384	100

The findings imply that the majority of the respondents got COVID-19 vaccine information mostly from social media (62%) and health practitioners (26.5%). The social media ranking highest could be an indication of their popularity for sourcing and dissemination of information in recent times by the public. In the case of health practitioners, COVID-19 is a health matter, therefore, people are more likely to be cautious to get the right information about the vaccines from those they consider as having adequate knowledge and expertise on the vaccines. This could possibly explain why health practitioners were mostly used more than the other sources. This finding is consistent with prior studies (Anorue *et al.*, 2021; Bara, *et al.*, 2021; Fakonti *et al.*, 2021). However, it contradicts the finding of Belsti *et al.*, (2021) who reported that the mainstream media was the most used source of information by the public on COVID-19 vaccines.

RQ2: What is the attitude of the public towards COVID-19 vaccines?

We test this question using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” Data presented in Table 2 indicate that all the items except “I will encourage family and friends to accept COVID-19 vaccines” had their mean range above 2.0. This implies that the public attitude towards the vaccines was significantly positive.

Table 2: Public attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccines



Response item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean (SD)	Decision
I believe COVID-19 vaccines are reliable for tackling the disease	55	182	84	63	2.93(.92)	Significant
I will accept vaccination if made compulsory by the government	51	189	57	87	2.8(.99)	Significant
I will encourage my family and friends to accept COVID-19 vaccines	34	38	103	203	1.77(.89)	Not Significant
I believe the vaccines have serious side effects	134	118	120	12	2.97(.89)	Significant
I believe COVID-19 vaccines reduce the chances of contracting the disease	82	208	53	41	2.86(.87)	Significant

The findings on the attitude of the respondents towards COVID-19 vaccine show that the majority of the respondents have a positive attitude towards the vaccines. Nevertheless, most of the respondents would not encourage their family and friends to receive vaccination. This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents believe that the vaccines have serious side effects and only reduce the chances of contracting the disease. This finding could have several implications, one of which is the necessity for the media to focus their public health campaigns on increasing vaccine advocacy within social circles and providing clear and accurate information about vaccine safety data as well as addressing potential side effects to alleviate these worries and increase vaccine acceptance.

The findings therefore show that the respondents have a positive attitude towards the vaccines even though fear of the side effects could possibly prevent them from accepting vaccination unless made compulsory by the government. This finding is in line with what was reported by Danabal *et. al.*, (2021) that half (50%) of those sampled in their study had a positive attitude towards COVID 19 vaccines. Similarly, it supports the findings of El-Elimat *et al.*, (2021) who also found out that 66.5% of their respondents had a positive attitude towards the vaccines. Our result, however, is in contrast to some prior studies that indicated that the majority of their respondents had a negative attitude towards the vaccines (Fakonti et al, 2021; Anorue et al., 2021).

RQ3: Which of the information sources does the public consider credible?

Table 3 presents the answer to this research question. Except religious leaders, opinion leaders and NCDC, all the other sources of information on COVID-19 vaccines were considered credible as their scores were all significant.

**Table 3: Public trusted sources of information (TSI) for COVID-19 vaccines**

Response item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean (SD)	Decision
Social media are ⁺ CSI for COVID-19 vaccines	98	143	96	47	2.76(.99)	Significant
traditional media (Radio, TV, Newspapers, Magazines) are CSI for COVID-19 vaccines	93	234	46	11	3.07(.69)	Significant
Blogs are CSI for COVID-19 vaccines	35	160	160	29	2.52(.76)	Significant
Opinion leaders are CSI for COVID-19 vaccines	6	75	102	200	1.88(.55)	Not Significant
Health practitioners are CSI for COVID-19 vaccines	245	108	22	9	3.53(.71)	Significant
Family and friends are CSI on COVID-19 vaccines	35	184	141	24	2.60(.74)	Significant
WHO is a CSI on COVID-19 vaccines	140	192	40	12	3.20(.75)	Significant
Pharmaceutical companies are CSI on COVID-19 vaccines	58	184	119	23	2.72(.79)	Significant
Religious leaders are CSI on COVID-19 vaccines	34	38	182	138	1.97(.79)	Not Significant
NCDC is a CSI on COVID-19 vaccines	13	50	193	128	1.96(.87)	Not significant

(⁺CSI = Credible Source/s of Information)

From Table 3, all the sources except religious leaders, opinion leaders and NCDC were perceived as credible. The above findings support what was reported by AFRICA CDC (2020), Malik *et al.*, 2020, El-Elmat, 2021 and De Freitas *et al.*, 2021. They all showed that TV, health practitioners and the WHO were the major perceived credible sources.

It is somewhat surprising to see respondents list the social media among the credible sources of information on COVID-19 in our study as it is contrary to the results of prior studies in this domain. For one thing, the social media have been indicted for spreading fake and unverified information about COVID-19. For instance, Malik *et al.* (2020) found out that only (21%) of the respondents trusted the social media as a reliable source. Elimat *et al.* (2021) also recorded the same result with just 16% trust on social media. A full-length study is required to establish why our respondents chose to express trust in the social media as sources of credible information on COVID-19 vaccines.



RQ4: Does the source credibility of messages on COVID-19 vaccines influence public acceptance or hesitancy towards the vaccines?

Table 4 shows that except religious leaders, NCDC and opinion leaders, all the other sources of information (which had been indicated as credible in Table 3) were more likely to induce public acceptance of COVID-19 vaccines.

Table 4: Influence of a message source on public acceptance and hesitancy towards COVID-19 vaccines

Response item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean (SD)	Decision
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the message is from health practitioners	76	204	89	15	2.88(.76)	Significant
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the message is coming from opinion leaders	34	130	182	38	1.42(.79)	Not Significant
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the information is from WHO	114	190	55	25	3.62(.84)	Significant
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the message is from NCDC	25	81	111	167	1.90(.83)	Not significant
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the message is from pharmaceutical companies	22	156	135	71	2.34(.84)	Significant
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the message is from religious leaders	10	87	162	125	1.96(.81)	Not Significant
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the message is from family/ friends	31	135	169	49	2.39(.81)	Significant
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the message comes from traditional media (radio, TV, newspapers, magazines)	42	162	150	3	2.56(.79)	Significant
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the information comes from social media	79	191	83	31	2.17(.85)	Significant
I will accept COVID-19 vaccine if the information comes from Blogs	23	60	182	119	2.97(.84)	Significant

The results show that perceiving health practitioners, WHO, pharmaceutical companies, family and friends, traditional media, social media and blogs as trusted sources on COVID-19 vaccine



information lead to public acceptance of vaccination. On the other hand, considering opinion leaders, NCDC and religious leaders as less credible sources leads to hesitancy towards the vaccines. This implies that the more the public considers a source of information for COVID-19 vaccines to be credible, the more they will be encouraged to accept vaccination and the less they perceive a source to be credible, the less they are likely to accept vaccination based on the information coming from them. This finding supports the theory of source credibility which assumes that perceived credibility of a message source influences the acceptance of the message from the source. This also supports the findings of Allington, *et al.*, (2021) that those who perceived the mainstream media, scientists, medical professionals and government as credible were more likely to accept COVID-19 vaccination.

RQ5: What other factors, besides source credibility, contribute to public acceptance or hesitancy towards COVID-19 vaccines?

As seen in Table 5, apart from religious beliefs, all other response items were significant.

Table 5: Factors (apart from source credibility) responsible for public acceptance or hesitancy towards COVID-19 vaccines

Response item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean (SD)	Decision
Rapid pace of COVID-19 vaccines development discourages me from accepting vaccination.	30	125	156	73	2.29 (.83)	Significant
My religious beliefs prevent me from receiving COVID-19 vaccines.	21	27	138	197	1.83(.41)	Not Significant
Concern that COVID-19 may be a hoax hinders me from receiving vaccination.	77	179	105	23	2.81(.82)	Significant
I will take the vaccine when I see my family and friends being vaccinated.	42	154	113	70	2.84(3.68)	Significant
Concern about safety, efficacy and side effects of the vaccines discourages me from accepting vaccination.	196	124	46	18	3.30(.86)	Significant
Fear of contracting COVID-19 makes me want to receive vaccination.	66	114	133	71	2.46(.98)	Significant



The findings in Table 5 show that people are discouraged from receiving the vaccine due to the rapid pace of its development, concern about safety, efficacy and side effects of the vaccines. This suggests that addressing these concerns through transparent communication about vaccine development processes and side effects could mitigate hesitancy by building public confidence in the vaccines. The use of testimonials can add impetus to efforts to increase public acceptance of vaccination as some advertising studies have shown about celebrity endorsement (Berkvist & Zhou, 2016). Our results corroborate those of Erubami *et al.* (2022), Sato (2022) and Dabla-Norris, (2021) who also found out that fear of the side effects of the vaccines boosted hesitancy towards the vaccines.

Although we report that religious beliefs did not have significant influence on vaccine acceptance, it is necessary to consider that this may be different in other geo-political zones in Nigeria. The people of South-East Nigeria are mostly Christians. The result may differ in other geo-political zones where the population is mostly Muslim. Also, results dismissing COVID-19 as a hoax hinders vaccination highlights the need for countering misinformation through effective risk communication and providing accurate information about the disease's symptoms, morbid effects and fatality rate to promote vaccine acceptance. It also underscores the importance of the use of the CERC model for effective communication during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, as this study has demonstrated, most people are more likely to receive vaccination when they see their family and friends getting vaccinated, a testament to the influence of peer behaviour and social networks on vaccine acceptance. Thus, media health campaigns can tap into this strategy of social influence by getting those already vaccinated to share their positive experiences to persuade more people to accept vaccination.

8. Conclusion

The study has shown that the public used social media and health practitioners most as their sources of information on COVID-19 vaccines. The majority of the respondents had a positive attitude towards the vaccines. All the sources except religious leaders, NCDC, and opinion leaders were considered credible. The credibility source of a message has a significant influence on the acceptance or hesitancy towards the vaccines. Factors such as rapid pace of vaccine development, fear of safety and side effects of the vaccines, and COVID-19 being considered a hoax discouraged respondents from getting vaccinated while seeing family and friends accept vaccination and fear of contacting the disease encouraged acceptance of vaccination.

9. Suggestions for Further Studies

Firstly, this study was limited to selected states in South-East Nigeria. It will be interesting for other researchers to examine this topic using respondents from other geopolitical zones. Secondly, the sample size used was small compared to the population. In order to cover more participants and increase the generalisability of findings, the sample size should be increased by future researchers. Thirdly, the current study did not investigate the influence of some source



cues such as attractiveness, likeability, familiarity and similarity among others. Therefore, we encourage the examination of such variables in future research. Lastly, a comparative study across Nigeria's geopolitical zones is recommended to assess the role of religion and other socio-cultural factors in vaccine hesitancy.

10. Recommendations

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

Campaigns on COVID-19 vaccination should be shared more through social media and use mostly health practitioners. Similarly, social media platforms should take initiatives to prevent misinformation on their sites. This can be achieved by running transparent fact-checks like Community Notes on X (formerly Twitter). Also, the NCDC should leverage on other credible sources like health practitioners while disseminating information on COVID-19 since public distrust for government may be hampering the success of its information dissemination efforts on motivating people to accept vaccination. Finally, the government and the media, while leveraging all other named credible sources, should constantly design interventions in terms of awareness campaigns to spread more transparent and accurate information about the safety and efficacy of the vaccines, using the 6-point guideline of the CERC Model.

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Exploring the Interplay of Political Jargons and Marriage Narratives in Contemporary Nigerian Society on Digital Platforms

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Abstract

The impact of social media in the contemporary age has been gargantuan as it has surreptitiously infiltrates every aspect of human life. The interpersonal relationship is the bond that unites variety of personality from varied culture, color, status and gender with varied aspirations under the globe as this study examines the connection between politics and marriage in fostering human relationship as people place premium on the connection they relish in their proximity to one another in Nigerian society. Therefore, this study delves into the implication of deploying political jargons in projecting the importance of nuptial relationship using digital discourse in Nigerian ecosystem. It also examines how contents on digital platform influence users' attitudes towards marriage and familiar structure on online discourse as they employ social media platforms in amplifying political jargons to construct or deconstruct marriage ideas. The study employs Zaddy Sokoh's content on Facebook and YouTube in x-raying the deployment of political jargons in projecting the importance of nuptial relationship to their audience. The content of the skits that were purposively selected for analysis in the study were titled: 'Deputy Governor' 'Emotional Intelligence,' 'Chemistry,' and 'Undercover.' Symbolic interactionism



theory by George Herbert Mead is the theoretical framework that was utilized in projecting the importance of promoting and protecting personal interest in marital relationship. The theory is premised on the fact that human interaction is determined by meaning, symbols, interaction, and subjective interpretation. The methodology employs descriptive survey by analyzing the content of the selected skits on the Facebook and YouTube. The study concludes that communication cannot but be portrayed as the indispensable ingredient that shapes relationship, courtship behaviours, marital values and norms in virtual space as individuals affect and are affected through cause and effect mechanism in systematic observation of discovering and rediscovering relationship.

Keywords: Communication, Digital platform, Marriage, Political jargons, Relationship, Skit

1. Introduction

In recent years, Nigerians' engagement with social issues which include politics and cultural narratives, has shifted tremendously as they rely heavily on internet. One of the primary features of modern digital discourse is the combination of political jargon and personal narratives, particularly when it comes to marital discourse. The larger picture of how political language is influencing and occasionally warping cultural narratives in Nigerian culture helps to explain this occurrence. The vocabulary employed in political discourse frequently permeates ordinary discourse and extends beyond the boundaries of formal politics, impacting people's perceptions of interpersonal connections, social norms, and individual identities. This study examines how Nigerian marriage narratives and political jargon entwine, with particular emphasis on how these discourses develop online. Based on George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism theory, the study explores how political discourse is changing Nigerians' perspectives on marriage and how these online interactions mirror broader cultural developments. In Nigerian discourse on digital platforms, the intersection between politics and marriage reflects a broader socio-political landscape characterized by rising political participation and changing gender roles. Researchers have observed that digital platforms are increasingly influencing social norms and public opinion (Ogunyemi, 2022; Adebani, 2019). The popularity of social media has led to the spread of political jargon in informal, everyday settings, such as conversations about marriage and relationships. In order to express personal opinions, criticise social structures, or defend marital decisions, political terminologies, slogans, and ideologies are commonly adapted. Accordingly, marriage anecdotes shared on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) are becoming more and more tinged with political overtones which represent both the political and personal climate of modern-day Nigeria (Eze, 2021). With this viewpoint, political jargons contribute layers of meaning to the changing conversation about marriage in Nigerian society and serves as a tool for identity creation and social commentary in the digital era.

2. Importance of social media on politics

For theoretical precision, an all-encompassing and well-accepted definition of social media by Carr & Hayes (2015) holds that social media is predominantly internet-based, distained, and persistent channels of mass personal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions



among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content. Social media channels are internet-based as they allow users to interact opportunistically and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others. Examining how social media platforms mediate the relationship between political rhetoric and societal narratives, as well as how they interact with other domains like marriage and cultural identity in Nigeria requires an understanding of the significance of social media in the political landscape.

In contemporary political discourse, social media has emerged as a transformative element, altering the way information is disseminated, accessed, and utilized. Social media platforms are making political processes and decision-making more accessible by enabling unparalleled levels of interaction between the public and political figures (Carlos, Vegas, Estigoy & Hail, 2022). In Nigeria, social media serves as a crucial alternative to traditional media, which often faces challenges related to accessibility and censorship, by fostering civic engagement, amplifying marginalized voices, and encouraging political involvement. The new media offers spaces for users to engage in political discussions through online groups, pages, and accounts (Zaiter, Sabbagh & Koabaz, 2023).

In addition to accelerating the spread of political information, extensive use of social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) has fostered a dynamic environment for activism, campaigning, political discussions, and voter awareness (Carlos et al, 2022) through new media and technology platforms that have facilitated the evolution of two-way communication. These platforms enable individuals to share their opinions, challenge established authorities, and hold leaders accountable by eliminating socioeconomic and geographic barriers (Remilekun, Lillian, Adeniyi & Adamu, 2023). The use of political terminology aims to influence public perception, sway election outcomes, and frame policy debates in the digital realm, which has also become a battleground for conflicting political narratives.

Social media has positively impacted contemporary global politics, particularly regarding enhanced political engagement and access to information. A major benefit is social media's capability to amplify a broader array of views and opinions in political discussions. This cultivation of a deeper understanding and acceptance of various perspectives can result in a more informed and engaged citizenry. The rise of social media has created additional opportunities for individuals to engage with politics and participate in the political process. One of the primary advantages of social media for modern international politics is its ability to enhance citizen involvement. These platforms have established new venues for political dialogue and debate, allowing individuals to engage in various political activities. This includes sharing political news and information, rallying support for initiatives, participating in online campaigns and petitions, and even running for political office (Saaida & Alhouseini, 2023).

The effects of social media on politics can be encapsulated in three categories which include: political engagement, political personalization, and political efficacy. As a result, social media has empowered individuals to voice their opinions more significantly in the political arena and has helped in broadening the scope of political engagement beyond traditional frameworks (Remilekun et al, 2023). Increased citizen participation in politics through social media can



profoundly influence the democratic process, making it more accountable and representative (Ogunyemi, 2022).

The influence of social media on Nigerian politics is particularly noteworthy due to the predominance of young people among the country's internet users. An online platform in reported that there were 31.6 million active social media users in Nigeria, representing approximately 14.3% of the total population (Sasu, 2024). Gradually, an article published in January 2024 indicated that 36.75 million Nigerians, equivalent to 16.2% of the overall population, were active on social media (Kemp, 2024).

The younger generation increasingly relies on social media to gather information on various topics, including politics, as they are more engaged on these platforms. Young people often feel that conventional methods of political engagement have overlooked them for an extended period. Consequently, they may have restricted pathways to access institutionalized forms of political participation that align with their goals, such as lobbying or political parties (Barati, 2023).

Remarkably, this tech-savvy demographic has showcased social media's efficacy in galvanizing collective action and advocating for systemic change, as evidenced by significant political movements like the #EndSARS protests (Remilekun et al., 2023). Similarly, Hamoud, Al-Qora'n & Muwafaq (2023) asserted that digital media has become the cornerstone of contemporary society, profoundly influencing political participation among the youth by diminishing political disparity.

The rise of social media usage has led to challenges such as dissemination of false information, spread of political propaganda, increased cyber-polarization, and commercialization of political messaging (Sianturi, 2024). These factors are found to influence public sentiment and undermine the credibility of political discussions. On social media, political propaganda manifests in various ways, including provocative language designed to provoke reactions, manipulated images and videos, as well as fabricated news. This is an indication that there is decline in public trust in traditional media alongside the increased political polarization and division, which are critical concerns regarding the impact of social media on politics (Saaida & Alhouseini, 2023).

Additionally, political figures have utilized social media to discredit their adversaries, circulate conspiracy theories, and promote their own agendas. The negative utilization of social media can exacerbate existing biases and societal divides. Individuals exposed exclusively to information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs may find themselves trapped in echo chambers and filter bubbles due to social media algorithms, leading to diminished empathy and understanding for those with differing views. Moreover, social media can facilitate hate speech and online harassment targeting political figures or marginalized communities, resulting in adverse political outcomes and tangible consequences. Likewise, an excessive dependence on social media for political communication may hinder the democratic process by limiting opportunities for comprehensive discussion and debate (Mohammed & Mahmoud, 2023).

Therefore, it is crucial to develop ways to promote rational dialogues that support democratic principles (Olaniran & William, 2020). Also, enhancing media literacy and critical thinking skills, ensuring accountability for political figures, desisting from spreading from false or



misleading information, are vital steps to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on politics, especially concerning propaganda (Chaudhari & Pawar, 2021; Mohammed & Mahmoud, 2023). This may also involve addressing hate speech and online harassment, fostering diverse viewpoints, and implementing fact-checking measures to control misleading content. However, bridging the divide between supporters and detractors of different political parties on specific political issues needs to occur not just on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) or other social media but also within the broader society (Barati, 2023).

3. The Prevalence of Social Media on Marriage

The influence of social media on society has been extensively studied in prior researches. Various fields, including psychology, religious organizations, education, and interpersonal communication studies, have acknowledged social media's impact. Beyond its dynamics, the quality of interpersonal communication within close relationships is affected positively or negatively by social media (Mohd & Wan 2023). In contemporary world, the internet, and social media specifically, are two forces that are shaping individuals' decisions. Multiple facets of human activities have been influenced by social media and the internet, and modern marriages are no exception. As such, social media is viewed as both a diversion and a benefit (Adebayo, 2020).

Consequently, social media has significantly influenced perception, expectations, and management of marriage in contemporary Nigerian society. As digital platforms become increasingly integrated into daily life, they create spaces for people to engage with various narratives regarding marriage, relationships, and courtship (Obi & Ezennwanne, 2023). Nowadays, communication can occur without face-to-face interaction, as technological advancement has enabled social interaction from different locations (Mohd & Wan, 2023). Therefore, topics such as the frequency of social media use among married individuals, marital issues arising from couples' usage of digital platforms, the connection between social media use and marital success, and the relationships among social media, jealousy, suspicion, loneliness, and emotional detachment require thorough examination in this digital age (Adebayo, 2020).

These contemporary means of exchanging ideas, merging modern and traditional views on marriage have successfully shape public perception through the platforms available on the social media. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok display polished portrayals of romantic relationships, influencing how couples understand marital success, satisfaction, and challenges (Alberto, 2023). Moreover, social media enhances communication and connectivity, enabling long-distance relationships, spousal support, and sharing of experiences, which can either strengthen or strain marital connections. While these platforms foster family bonding, relationship building, and the redefinition of marriage standards, they also introduce complications like privacy concerns, unrealistic expectations, and external pressures that could disrupt marital harmony. Understanding the role of social media in shaping marriage narratives is crucial for comprehending its effects on relationships in a rapidly evolving digital environment, particularly in the context of Nigeria's shifting social and cultural landscape (Obi & Ezennwanne, 2023).



However, there is an assertion that some marriages are thriving while numerous couples are cohabiting as strangers due to the adverse effects of social media (Adebayo, 2020). Studies have also established that individuals' neglect of face-to-face connections, favoring social media over in-person interactions with family and friends, diminished communication skills, distrust issues, privacy concerns, cyber infidelity, reduced quality time in real-life relationships, and an increasing preoccupation with online interactions at the expense of the physical world, are proven repercussions of inadequate and inappropriate utilization of social media for social relationships which include courtship and marriage. Social comparisons and deceptive messages are not exempted from the hook. Observations and studies have shown that inadequate use of social media by couples or intending couples can be a significant factor contributing to distrust, infidelity and divorce in contemporary society (Adebayo, 2020; Carine, John, Patricia, Theresa & Bless, 2023).

Despite significant number of young individuals who hold the perception that most marriages are fundamentally unstable and their relevance need to be probed in modern times, largely due to the marital challenges they observe on social media (Obatarhe & Dinebari, 2022). It has also helped in playing crucial roles in shaping social behaviors within marital partnerships, strengthening connections and maintaining healthy relationships (Obi & Ezennwanne, 2023). Despite the suggestion that couples should limit their social media usage and dedicate more time to one another, particularly during shared moments, it must be further emphasized that the necessity for public awareness on the responsible use of social media among young adults is imperative. Individuals in relationships, whether married or engaged, should utilize digital platforms in a manner that does not adversely affect their partners because if the digital media is thoughtfully utilized, social media can reduce trivial conflicts among married couples (Adebayo, 2020; Carine et al., 2023).

4. Influence of politics on marriage

Political discussions influence various elements of human life, including romantic relationships. Topics on social media, news, education, health, and other facets of existence often carry political biases as it was recently discovered that political matters have been central to various interdisciplinary research efforts. Most of the studies focus on the correlation between political affiliation and relationship quality (Fangmeier, Stanley, Knopp & Rhoades, 2020).

In societies like Nigeria, marital relationships are significantly influenced by political considerations, with political discourse deeply linked to social and cultural norms. Politicians and policymakers often contextualize marriage within broader ideological perspectives by associating it with concepts such as family stability, national identity, and economic development, employing specific political language and terminologies. Public policies that govern gender roles, marital rights, and family dynamics tend to be shaped by political narratives regarding marriage, which subsequently impact legal structures and societal expectations as political discourse can be used to mediate debates on topics like bride price, child marriage, and gender equality, mirroring the prevailing ideologies of governance and leadership (Eze & Adeniyi, 2021).



In contemporary Nigeria, just as political narratives profoundly affect personal marital choices, political rhetoric is also magnified through digital platforms (Amadi & Okeke, 2021). Politicians and social commentators frequently utilize political jargons to support or challenge traditional marital norms. These registers are used to influence public perceptions and management of romantic relationships. The relationship between politics and marriage illustrates the complex negotiation of power, identity, and agency, as well as the substantial impact of political objectives on both the private and public dimensions of married life. These dynamics are essential in comprehending how political language and ideologies shape contemporary narratives of marriage in Nigerian culture (Adebayo, 2020).

Culturally, politics plays a critical role in shaping marriage in African societies. Political rhetoric often seeps into social and cultural narratives, thereby impacting the formation and perception of partnerships. Terms such as ‘voting,’ ‘democracy,’ ‘power to the people,’ and ‘battle for power’ are prevalent in political discussions. These resonate within the context of marriage because they are embodied in themes that deal with issues of negotiation, authority, and agency (Amadi & Okeke, 2021). The phrases mentioned above are cleverly integrated into discussions surrounding marital expectations and roles in Zaddy Sokoh's popular content on social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube as they are used to draw parallels between domestic dynamics and political struggles. This kind of content not only redefines marital interactions by promoting shared decision-making, mutual respect, and balanced power within partnerships but also enhances political dialogues (Eze & Adeniyi, 2021). The narratives illustrate how political language transcends governance, influencing the perception of marriage as a microcosm of social power relationships, where ideals of equality and collaboration reflect democratic principles (Fangmeier et al., 2020). Such interactions underline the interplay between politics and personal relationships within Nigerian culture, a process mediated through digital channels (Uche, 2020).

5. Theoretical Foundation

The research incorporates the symbolic interactionism theory introduced by George Herbert Mead as the foundation for this investigation.

Symbolic interaction was first articulated by George Herbert Mead, who was the first academic to comprehensively and coherently explore the idea, but it was later refined and expanded into what is now referred to as symbolic interactionism by Herbert Blumer, a sociologist. Initially regarded as a subdivision of sociology or social psychology, some researchers consider it a social theory that focuses on interactions among individuals, highlighting how society is formed and sustained through their ongoing exchanges (Pansiri, 2023). It has also been investigated in the realms of communication and various human activities due to its sociological viewpoint, which is rooted in pragmatism, social behaviorism, and neo-Hegelianism (Carter & Fuller, 2015; Quist-Adade, 2018), as it posits that facts are established and defined by symbols (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Demirbiken, 2009).

Mead's initial concern was with the behavioral skills that humans acquire throughout their lives, which enable them to engage in coordinated actions within societies. This focus led him to reveal the fundamental dynamics of social interactions among people (Symbolic Interactionist Theorizing, Chapter 6). Human behavior, interactions, and social organization are facilitated by



several distinct human capabilities, including the ability to employ and interpret conventional or significant gestures that convey the same meaning to both the sender and recipient within a communication exchange (Quist-Adade, 2018). This skill to utilize gestures allows individuals to assume the perspective of others by envisioning themselves in other people's positions, anticipating the roles they are likely to enact, and then adjusting their behaviors accordingly to promote cooperation (Symbolic Interactionist Theorizing, Chapter 6).

The human mind possesses the capacity for thought that is influenced by social interactions as individuals learn the meanings and symbols essential for conducting uniquely human actions and interactions. People can modify or change the meanings and symbols they use in action and interaction based on their interpretations of the situation, allowing them to explore potential courses of action, evaluate their associated benefits and drawbacks, and ultimately select one, as these interconnected patterns of actions and interactions form the basis of groups and societies (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

The core principles of symbolic interactionism assert that the way humans act towards various issues is influenced by the meanings they hold. This encompasses symbols or any social entities that represent something else, including physical objects, gestures, or words. Additionally, meaning is formed through the social interactions individuals engage in with others (Gusfield, 2003). This represents the origin of meaning, which develops during interactions with people, as it evolves through a person's actions and reactions towards others concerning different issues (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Demirbukan, 2009). Here, meaning is identified as a result of social formation and the defining actions of individuals as they engage with one another (Pansiri, 2023), utilizing human agency and creativity as people construct and reconstruct their social environments through the use and manipulation of symbols in their dynamic interactions with social counterparts (Quist-Adade, 2018).

Such interactions occur among various thoughts and significances that define human societies. It pertains to the engagement that involves self-reflection (self-objectification) and consideration of others (adopting another's perspective). It examines how humans interact symbolically with each other and themselves, ultimately making choices and directing their actions. This is a social theory based on the dialectical interdependence of individuals and their natural and social surroundings, highlighting how people interpret objects and others' actions in their lives and how this interpretive process influences behavior in particular contexts (Carter & Fuller, 2015; Pansiri, 2023). This perspective shifts focus to understanding subjective viewpoints and how individuals perceive their environment from their own unique lenses. One can infer that it highlights the significance of subjective meanings in contrast to objective structures: this humanistic focus fosters creativity and the capacity for meaning-making through societal norms and behaviors (Dong, 2008). Consequently, it underscores how consistent and meaningful interactions shape societal organization through the engagement of individuals (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

Symbolic interaction is regarded as a communication theory of human behavior due to its ability to unify traditional, behavioral, and humanistic approaches to communication studies. This perspective acknowledges the proactive role of individuals in managing themselves and their surroundings through their capacity to engage with and via symbols (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin &



Demirbukan, 2009). Furthermore, there are no stable social variables to quantify human social behavior, as they fail to provide a comprehensive and predictive understanding of human social interactions; instead, these interactions can be explored through different perspectives or viewpoints (Gusfield, 2003). Thus, this research investigated symbolic interaction through key elements: meaning; interaction, emergence and situatedness; language and symbolism; and the humanistic emphasis (Dong, 2008).

6. Methodology

The study is a descriptive content analysis as it employs qualitative approach in examining the connectivity between politics and marriage in fostering human relationship through the use of political vocabularies on the social media. This study employs purposive selection as social media contents that are coined to relate nuptial narratives are embellished with political registers. They are deliberately selected among the various skits for analysis in the study. There have been a number of skits on politics, deliberately created to satirize the Nigerian political system on the digital space over time. This study, however, specifically delves into digital contents that deploy political coloring to present marital and relationship issues between opposite gender. Four digital contents were exhumed from Zaddy Sokoh's skits on the Facebook and YouTube where he comments on social issues using 'power to the people' slogan. The selected skits for analysis in the study were titled: 'Deputy Governor' 'Emotional Intelligence,' 'Chemistry,' and 'Undercover.' The content of the selected skits were analysed to demystify the connection between politics and marriage in fostering human relationship as well as influencing audience attitudes towards marriage and familiar structure. Symbolic interactionism theory propounded by George Herbert Mead but crystalized by Herbert Blumer was deployed as the theoretical foundation on which this study is founded. This theory is premised on the notion that human interaction is determined and interpreted by meaning and symbols. The parameters of meaning; interaction, emergence and situatedness; language and symbolism; and humanistic thrust are critically employed in analyzing the digital contents for the study. These indicators were utilised in exploring the implications of deploying political jargons in projecting the importance of nuptial relationship using digital discourse in amplifying, constructing or deconstructing marriage ideas.

7. Result and Discussion of Findings

The presentation and analysis of the skits in the study reveal that the parameters employed in symbolic interactionism include: meaning; interaction, emergence and situatedness; language and symbolism; and humanistic thrust. These are critically employed in the digital contents for the study. Also, each device was critically scrutinize in order to find out the manifestation of its subset in each digital content that were considered in the study as they were represented in the analysis below:

7. 1. Digital Content I (Deputy Governor)

1. Meaning

Meaning is central and refers to the significance people assign to objects, events, and behaviors in their social interactions through:

- i. **Social Construction of Meaning:** Meaning is created through human interactions as running mate is peculiar to contesting in an election or used in political context. However, it is used for a side chic who is clamouring to be upgraded to the position of second wife.
- ii. **Symbols and Communication:** expressions like ‘deputy governor,’ ‘governor,’ ‘political juggernaut,’ ‘running mate,’ ‘non-committal way,’ ‘replace,’ ‘impeachment,’ ‘aspirant,’ ‘upgrade,’ ‘allowance’ and so on, are tools used to explicate that meaning is shared and understood based on political agreements between the side chic and Zaddy.
- iii. **Interpretation Process:** Zaddy and the side chic act and react based on the meanings that political process have for them. The meaning attach to the exercise is influenced by their understanding of the political experiences and this evolves to explain the love affair that exists between them while Zaddy was receiving the call in the presence of his wife.



Figure 1: Phone conversation between a cheating husband and the side chic

- iv. **The Role of Context:** The context is peculiar as Zaddy is involved in extramarital affair with a lady in London while he is in Nigeria with his wife. He unequivocally stresses the psychological state of sharing a husband with another woman even though the lady that wants to be married as the second wife is willing but Zaddy opined that the first wife who had been in the marriage will be unwilling to accept and allow another woman to share her spare in her matrimony.
- v. **Agency in Meaning-Making:** The two individuals involved in the telephone conversation in the skit actively interpret and negotiate meanings while deploying political vocabularies in their conversation in order to alienate the wife (Governor) who is listening but unaware of what the conversation is about.

2. Interaction, Emergence and Situatedness

Each concept is explained thus:

- i. **Interaction:** The two interactants on the phone are aware of the extramarital affair that they are involved. This, in turn, influences the dynamic process of communicating and responding to each other so that a third party will not understand their conversation as



meanings are created and shared using political jargons. The communication is verbal and expressions that are used convey political images.

- ii. **Emergence:** Emergence of new meanings, identities, or social structures is given to expressions like 'governor,' 'deputy governor,' 'running mate,' etc. in the digital skit as the reality will not allow the 'governor' (legal wife) to allow another woman to encroach her marital space. This conversation unpredictably allows new meanings to spontaneously arise with the use of political register.
- iii. **Situatedness:** The interaction is context-dependent as the cultural norms did not support extramarital affair with another man or woman. This situation uniquely influence the interpretation and response given to the interactions between them as presence of the wife is very important in influencing their codes.

3. Language and Symbolism

These are fundamental tools that shape human interaction and social meaning through:

- i. **Language:** The characters deploy language to share symbols and create meaning in a way to shape the thought and perception of the audience as they deploy political vocabularies and give them meanings to convey their extramarital interest. Expressions like 'side chic,' 'deputy governor,' 'replacement,' are used to express the societal rejection of infidelity in marriage.
- ii. **Symbolism:** Symbols are created and modified through:

Arbitrariness: The connection between the political vocabularies and their meanings in the skit is not natural but socially constructed.

Interpretation: The two characters interpret the political symbols mutually based on their context, experiences, and social positions.

Foundation of Social Reality: political symbols form the building blocks of their conversation as they deploy expressions to convey images that depict their marital status in line with societal norms and practices.

4. Humanistic thrust

Subjective experiences, interpretations, and interactions of individuals in the skit include:

- i. **Focus on Individual Agency:** The two speakers on the telephone call create their social realities by assigning meaning to their interactions based on their knowledge of political vocabularies.
- ii. **Subjectivity and Interpretation:** There is manipulation of meaning in order to cloud their marital infidelity in their discourse.
- iii. **Empathy and Understanding:** The refusal to indicate marital commitment to the deputy governor made her to enquire for the commitment of Zaddy in paying her monthly stipends as a side chic. Both parties grasp the situation and construct meaning to their audience.

- iv. ***Social Construction of Reality***: The shared meaning contravenes the societal norms about the fidelity of marriage. However, it explains the reality of being entangled in the web of infidelity intentionally in some situations.

7.2. Digital Content II (Emotional Intelligence)

1. Meaning

Social interactions is constantly interpreted and reinterpreted by individuals through:

- i. ***Social Construction of Meaning***: the interaction between Rudy (a woman who was detained at the Condemned Criminal Section of the prison for killing her husband) and Zaddy exposes the idea that women do not take the issue of infidelity lightly as it negatively affects their emotional quotient.



Figure 2: Phone conversation between Zaddy and the woman in the Condemned Criminal Section of the prison

- ii. ***Symbols and Communication***: Expressions that portray crime and criminality in taking laws into one's hand in the face of abuse in marriage are expounded in the content. There is voice modulation as each of the characters sometimes raises their voice to express their disapproval.
- iii. ***Interpretation Process***: the two characters on the telephone conversation act and react based on the meanings the abuse and murder have on them. These meanings are influenced by their social experiences but they expose the criminality of manslaughter while dealing with marital infidelity.
- iv. ***The Role of Context***: the society does not celebrate extramarital affair neither does it celebrate murder nor manslaughter as culprits are arrested and detained in the prison to await trial. Emotional abuse can also make a woman to take the law into her hands but the consequence will not be overlooked as well.
- v. ***Agency in Meaning-Making***: Rudy and Zaddy actively interpret and negotiate meaning based on the context that Rudy had found herself (prison).

2. Interaction, Emergence and Situatedness



Each concept is explained below:

- i. **Interaction:** The interaction between the characters helps in exposing the severity of the situation that Rudy had found herself. Her utterance exposes the huge number of women who are in the prison on the crime of passion, love and abuse in marriage. The conversation further stresses the willingness of a criminal to plead for lenient penalty.
- ii. **Emergence:** The social reality created through the interaction is taking laws into one's hand in the face of physical and emotional abuse. The unpredictability of Rudy, a quiet and calm lady who cannot hurt a fly ended up killing her husband. The skit further stresses the notion of walking out of an abusive marriage defying the societal and religious sentiments.
- iii. **Situatedness:** The context of crime, abuse and punishment are exposed in the skit as the society does not celebrate them. However, an atmosphere of enduring an abusive and turbulent marriage is also created.

3. Language and symbolism

These are fundamental tools that shape human interaction and social meaning through:

- i. **Language:** Language is explicated through subheadings that include:

Shared Understanding: vocabularies on crime and criminality that are deployed in the skit are mutually understood by the interactants and the audience is expected to grasp the message.

Dynamic Nature: Expressions like 'CC section,' 'emotional quotient,' 'abuse,' 'bill,' 'floor of the parliament' and others are used to expose the seriousness of the crime.

Role in Identity: Zaddy is presented as a personality that can influence the law in granting the lady a lenient sentence while the lady is presented as a person who was maltreated physically and emotionally by her dead husband.

- ii. **Symbolism**

Arbitrariness: There is connection between the crime Rudy committed and the detainment that the lady is subjected to.

Interpretation: Each character tries to justify their view about the issue as Rudy justifies the physical and emotional abuse as well as infidelity that she experience from her late husband while Zaddy justifies the idea of walking out of abusive relationship than committing crime.

Foundation of Social Reality: the symbol of the CC section of the prison indicated the upholding of law, order and justice by the society.

4. Humanistic thrust

Key aspects of this humanistic thrust include:



- i. **Focus on Individual Agency:** Ruby and Zaddy are active participants in creating their social realities. Each of them assigns meaning to the crime of murder and their interaction is based on their experiences.
- ii. **Subjectivity and Interpretation:** Ruby tries to justify her act despite the disapproval of the society as she does not condone crime and criminality.
- iii. **Empathy and Understanding:** There is voice modulation, repetition, and exclamation in understanding the perspectives and experiences of the two speakers in the skit.
- iv. **Social Construction of Reality:** The reality of the content is socially constructed through symbols, language, and interactions. The shared meanings influence societal norms and behaviors on jungle justice.

7.3. Digital Content III (Chemistry)

1. Meaning

Meaning is explored using the yardsticks below:

- i. **Social Construction of Meaning:** The refusal of a lady's boyfriend to pick her call sparks the interaction between Zaddy and her as she was soliciting for advice and financial assistance to travel in order to check her fiancé. She assisted her female friend who was going to Abuja from Lagos but had issues with accommodation to pass the night in her fiancé's apartment but this kindness later affected her relationship with her fiancé.
- ii. **Symbols and Communication:** The deployment of scientific vocabularies and symbols permeated their discussion as jargons are shared and understood by the two actors. Lexical items from biology and chemistry are deployed in the skit in order to alienate Zaddy's wife who is romantically enjoying the union of her husband so that she did not understand the phone conversation of another lady with her husband.
- iii. **Interpretation Process:** Zaddy and a lady were engaging in a phone conversation about her boyfriend that kept her on red after her female friend had visited him. The conversation was diverted by Zaddy to using codes from chemistry and biology to explain the potential implication of the act. The lady, on the phone, quickly grasps the conversation and flow along with her interlocutor.
- iv. **The Role of Context:** The marital context between Zaddy and his wife makes him to divert the flow of the discussion however sustaining the subject so that his wife will not be suspicious.
- v. **Agency in Meaning-Making:** The lady in a telephone conversation actually understand the context and deploy some scientific terminologies to ask questions from Zaddy in order to understand the potential implication of asking her boyfriend to accommodate her friend.



Figure 3: Phone conversation between Zaddy and the lady whose female friend was about to snatch her boyfriend

2. Interaction, Emergence and Situatedness

Here's an explanation of each concept:

- i. **Interaction:** There is dynamic process in the communication and response of the two interactants in a social context as meanings are created and shared. The communication is verbal as they are situated at two different locations. Zaddy influenced the discussion and the lady consequently adjusts to the conversation through her interpretations and responses in the dialogue.
- ii. **Emergence:** There is emergence of scientific vocabularies from biology and chemistry to showcase how nuptial meanings develop through shared experiences and communication. The identity and social structure of the two actors is reflected in the dialogue as Zaddy is married and the young lady is single; this reflect in Zaddy giving advice to the lady and pointing out where she had committed mistake.
- iii. **Situatedness:** The context-dependent nature of the interaction is shaped by the cultural belief that it is wrong to introduce a friend is likely to snatch your fiancé from you to him. This act is delicate but it has happened.

3. Language and symbolism

These are fundamentals and their significance are explained below:

- i. **Language:** language is explicated through subheadings that involve:

Shared Understanding: Language enables a shared understanding of the scientific expressions that are deployed in the skit.

Dynamic Nature: Meanings of words and phrases like ‘molecules,’ ‘atomic elements,’ ‘bond,’ ‘goats,’ ‘aquatic ecosystem’ evolve to explain love relationship between two lovers through their interaction.



Role in Identity: the identity and roles of the two discussants is expressed through their deployment of language. Zaddy's experience is shown in the discourse while the lady's ignorance and inexperience is also reflected based on her utterances in the conversation.

ii. Symbolism

Symbols enable the characters to communicate abstract ideas, emotions, and social norms through:

Arbitrariness: The connection between the scientific terminologies is symbolic and their meaning in the skit is not natural but they are socially constructed.

Interpretation: the characters interpret the terms based on the context, experiences, and social positions.

Foundation of Social Reality: the scientific terminologies create certain images that are symbolic on the mind of the audience and these form the building blocks of social structures, norms, and cultural practices.

4. Humanistic thrust

The subjective experiences, interpretations, and interactions the characters include:

- i. **Focus on Individual Agency:** Zaddy and the lady are presented to create different social realities. They are not passive recipients of social forces as they assign meaning to the situation and interactions based on their experiences.
- ii. **Subjectivity and Interpretation:** There is subjective interpretation in the skit. Meanings given to the scientific terms modified to indicate connubial relationship.
- iii. **Empathy and Understanding:** The understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the characters is reflected through the quality of questions and answers provided in the telephone conversation.
- iv. **Social Construction of Reality:** the deployment of the expression is symbolic and socially constructed as meanings influence societal norms and behaviors.

7.4. Digital Content IV (Undercover)

1. Meaning

Meaning is central and refers to the significance that Zaddy, the wife and Apomiemie (driver), assign to monitoring of Zaddy who is fond of extramarital affairs.

- i. **Social Construction of Meaning:** The wife bribes the driver, Apomiemie to monitor her husband and report his move anytime that concubines visit him in the office or wherever they go. She was unaware that Zaddy who was in the bathroom had heard the conversation between them. The man wanted to give the driver a three-day leave but the

- wife did not agree. The man, Zaddy in his craftiness, had to offer a higher inducement to the driver in order to cover up his escapades.
- ii. **Symbols and Communication:** Words and gestures are deployed simultaneously by the driver to greet and indicate respect for his boss wife. The wife had to stand up to indicate her willingness in giving a task to the driver. The boss hands over his bag to the driver to take it into his car as they are about to go to work.
 - iii. **Interpretation Process:** The three characters act based on the meanings promiscuity has to them. Their reaction is influenced by their social position and experiences.
 - iv. **The Role of Context:** The understanding of the context varies as the wife is bent on monitoring her husband in order to force him to respect the chastity of their marriage. The husband is bent on exploring the juices of extramarital affair and the driver explores the situation to his advantage by collecting bribes from both parties.
 - v. **Agency in Meaning-Making:** The wife employs the driver to monitor her husband and ask the driver to use the Bible to swear since he discovers the driver is not willing to give her the needed information. The husbands initially wanted to excuse the driver but later offer a higher price to bribe her. The driver exploited the situation to actively get more funds from the couple.



Figure 4: Disagreement among a cheating husband, his wife and the driver who was induced with money to monitor the husband

2. Interaction, Emergence and Situatedness

- i. **Interaction:** Interaction is the dynamic process the three actors employs in communicating and responding to one another in the home context. It is through interaction that the issue of Zaddy's involvement in extramarital affair is discussed. The three parties which include Zaddy share the same knowledge as their interactions did not only verbal but nonverbal cues and gestures through bending to indicate respect, pressing the phone to transfer and receive money, standing up from the couch, shaking of heads, pointing of the Bible are involved. The interaction in the skit is reciprocal as the characters influence one other's actions and interpretations.
- ii. **Emergence:** Emergence in the skit is demonstrated in the social structure as the driver is suddenly able to face the boss because the wife had given him a bribe. He also rejected the wife's proposal to monitor the husband. He later had the effrontery to tell the boss wife to add bank charges to the amount she wanted to offer him as bribe.
- iii. **Situatedness:** Situatedness in the skit refers to the context-dependent nature of marriage between Zaddy and his wife and employer-employee relationship between the Zaddy's



family and the driver. These contexts reflect the specific circumstances in which interactions occur.

3. Language and Symbolism

- i. **Language:** Through English language, the characters of Zaddy and his wife are able to perceive the reality of conjugal relationship while the deployment of pidgin by the driver is an indication of existing from a lower ladder of social status. Also, symbols are objects, gestures, sounds, or words that carry specific meanings agreed upon by the three characters in the skit. The possession of phones by the characters in sending and receiving money from one to another is mutually understood and interpreted based on the context, experiences, and social positions. Expressions like: 'if e com cast I no get another job,' 'please add bank charges,' 'I loyal to your government,' 'money is involved,' 'hundred thousand to get your silence,' 'your secret dey safe with me,' 'see pastor see me,' 'for our policy we no dey return money' are few among the expressions used to explicate issues of monitoring husband's infidelity in marriage.
- ii. **Symbolism:** Symbols such as official bag and the car form the official readiness that exists between Zaddy and his driver. The use of Bible which symbolizes respect provides the reality that the society shows piety towards the religion as unfaithfulness is not condoned with the instrument of worship.

4. Humanistic thrust

Subjective experiences, interpretations, and interactions of individuals in the skit include:

- i. **Focus on Individual Agency:** Three interactants are involved in the skit. The wife secretly induced the driver to intimate her on the ladies that come to visit her husband at the office. The husband did not want the wife to be aware of what happens concerning his relationship with other women and had to offer a higher amount of inducement to the driver. The driver initially protested that it was against his faith but since money is involved, he had to give in and even protested that bank charges be added to the money.
- ii. **Subjectivity and Interpretation:** The wife protested against the three-day stay at home to be given to the driver. The driver also protested that he did not want his boss to drive the car by himself. The wife asked the driver to take an oath with the Bible to prove that the information he provided was correct.
- iii. **Empathy and Understanding:** The refusal of the three characters to give in to one another at every aspect of their contact in the skit (the wife did not want Zaddy to do away with the driver, Zaddy did not want the driver to divulge his escapades with other women to his wife, and the driver did not want to swear with Bible) indicate that infidelity is been perpetuated by Zaddy as insinuated by the wife.
- iv. **Social Construction of Reality:** The content projected in the skit projects the doggedness of a woman to protect her marriage aggressively against any external interference from another woman. The husband who is involved in infidelity will not want his wife to be aware as this will diminish his social image from being a responsible man.

8. Conclusion



In conclusion, a major feature of modern Nigerian culture is the interaction of political jargon and marital narratives on digital platforms. Intimate and personal spaces are increasingly being invaded by political discourse, which is changing how people negotiate their identities and social responsibilities as well as how marriage is viewed. The use of political vocabulary in marriage discussions demonstrates how people use digital platforms to express their own opinions and negotiate social norms, underscoring the significant influence of politics on interpersonal relationships (Adebanwi, 2019). The combination of these discourses implies that marriage is not just a private institution in Nigeria but is intricately linked to political and public issues, reflecting greater changes in gender roles, power dynamics, and cultural values (Eze, 2021). The constant blending of political language with marriage stories will probably continue to be an essential component of Nigerians' understanding and communication of their relationships in the digital era, as digital platforms continue to function as avenue for both political participation and individual expression. Future studies should investigate the effects of these phenomena in greater depth, taking into account how it affects Nigerian political discourse and cultural identity (Ogunyemi, 2022). It is also recommended that further research should concentrate on how the fusion of political jargons and marriage-related narratives affect the psychological attitudes and behaviours of Nigerians towards marriage and politics. Considering the diverse ethnic groups and cultures in Nigeria, more research should be tailored towards marriage-related discussions from major ethnic groups in the country such as the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and other tribes in the country, looking at variations on how political jargons impact marital ideologies. This can be accomplished by using influencers, memes, and viral content to mould the country's youth's political and marital views. To understand and react to political language surrounding marriage narratives, researchers and media professionals should look more closely at how social media platforms (like Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) shape and disseminate marriage-related narratives in Nigeria, especially when they intersect with political discourse.



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Digital Activism and Political Accountability: Evaluating the Impact of #EndBadGovernance on Governance Reforms in Nigeria

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Abstract

The #EndBadGovernance Movement that occurred in August 2024 in Nigeria marks a significant event in the West African country's history. The movement was an expression of dissatisfaction by Nigerians over the country's failing economy and governance system. Using the hashtag on social media platforms, Nigerians expressed their grievances and mobilised for offline protests across the country. The study employs qualitative content analysis of posts from X to identify significant protest themes, government responses, and various forms of structural barriers that include entrenched political interests, weak institutions, and the transientness of digital activism. The findings indicate that while the movement amplified public grievances and increased civic engagement via digital platforms, it had minimal impact on governance reform. The movement showed that digital activism proved incapable of overcoming structural barriers alone, thus necessitating an integrated strategy that combined online mobilization with offline action and institutional engagement. This study contributes to the expanding discussions regarding digital activism in Africa by giving an account of how digital tools interface with civic dissent and Nigeria's governance systems.

Keywords: Digital activism, social media, political accountability, governance reforms, #EndBadGovernance



Introduction

Digital activism has emerged as a widespread and powerful tool for political engagement and social reform (Earl, Maher, and Pan, 2022), especially for countries burdened with internally complex socio-political landscapes like Nigeria (Oladepo, 2015). A recent yet prominent example of such activism is the #EndBadGovernance movement that gained momentum in August 2024. The movement emerged following initial cycles of campaigns against the reforms of President Bola Tinubu, whose administration's removal of fuel subsidies, floating of the national currency, and hike in electricity tariffs, among others, pushed more Nigerians into poverty (Hassan, Abalaka, and Ajiteru, 2024; Ewang, 2024). #EndBadGovernance expanded beyond these to calls for systemic reforms and government accountability, with some calling for a return to the existing policies before the new political dispensation (Hassan, Abalaka, and Ajiteru, 2024). Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok were used to articulate these demands while sidestepping traditional gatekeepers of information and galvanizing conversations beyond immediate local audiences.

Digital platforms have successfully democratised activism and brought users an online world for organising, mobilising, and voicing grievances. According to Tufekci (2017), social media activism is possible because it has eliminated the distances, costs, and restrictions on access that usually prevent traditional forms of protest. This is in addition to platform affordances such as hashtags, stories and trending sounds used to amplify messages and create viral effects (Yang, 2024). Hashtags are among the commonest affordances across digital platforms, and users leverage them to achieve visibility and build community (Hautea et al., 2021). In Nigeria, where the government has historically been marred by nepotism, inefficiency, corruption, and lack of accountability (Akinola and Ekundayo, 2020), digital



activism could afford collective action in instances where physical protests were repressed by the government and the ruling elites. The #EndBadGovernance protest movement in Nigeria reveals how concerned users organise and mobilise online to make their grievances known and to call for national reforms. However, the impact of such online movements is widely contested, as critics like Morozov (2012) warn against overestimating the power of online mobilisation in achieving real-world changes.

The #EndBadGovernance campaign effectively underscored the merits and limitations of digital activism. While it attracted international and diaspora attention that became counterproductive for the Nigerian government, as such visibility forced it to at least talk about the demands of the citizenry (BBC, 2024), there remains a nagging doubt as to whether or not these efforts have translated into long-standing changes in policy rather than short-lived agreements to appease protesters. The promise to address the protester's demands is perceived as an immediate result. However, the arrest of some protesters and the failure to fulfill the promises made during the protest dashed hopes about the government's sincerity in achieving the promised reforms.

This paper critically analyses the outcomes of the #EndBadGovernance movement about the wider perspective on the impact of digital activism on governance reforms in Nigeria. It draws on empirical evidence from X and theoretical perspectives to evaluate whether such campaign action brought about real reform in governance or merely reflected a transient outcry. In addition, it interrogates the role of structural barriers as established political interests, weak institutions, and digital divides as barriers limiting the impact of such movements in Nigeria.

The analysis of the campaign outcome data, such as policy changes, civic engagement levels, and governmental accountability measures, adds to the growing scholarship on digital activism in sub-Saharan Africa. Most importantly, it uses Nigeria as a frame to demonstrate both the promise and paradox of digital platforms as instruments of political change within societies whose realities are digitalizing rapidly yet remain highly unequal.

Background of the #EndBadGovernance Protest

In August 2024, Nigeria became the rallying point for mass decentralized protests under the theme #EndBadGovernance. It resulted from prevalent growing economic hardship and the removal of fuel subsidies that led to increased transportation and living costs. A living wage, electoral reform, human capital development, protecting farms and farmers, cost of governance, cost of living, and hunger are among the ten demands of the protest organisers (Uti, 2024). Coupled with inflation and stagnant wages,



the fuel subsidy removal policy mainly affects low- and middle-income Nigerians, thus worsening bad economic situations (Mohammed et al., 2024). Removing subsidies was regarded as a tipping point for mass protest among citizens already disillusioned by decades of bad governance, bribery, and failed leadership (Zipredo and Obi, 2024).

Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp were among the social media platforms that served well in mobilizing the movement (Udoinyang and Nwazuni, 2024). Activists leveraged these platforms to disseminate information in real time, amplifying their grievances to local and global audiences. The hashtag #EndBadGovernance was used on these platforms to spark solidarity among citizens from different regions and socioeconomic environments (Zachariah et al., 2024). These digital tools democratized the space of the protests, allowing ordinary Nigerians to influence the trajectory and agenda of the movement.

These protests were also deeply rooted in a deeper historical context of proven public dissent against systemic failures. Like the 2020 #EndSARS protests targeted at police brutality (Iwuoha and Aniche, 2022), the 2024 #EndBadGovernance scratched the long-standing itches Nigerians have concerning governance issues, particularly corruption, aging infrastructural decay, and lack of accountability. The protest was a manifestation of a generational shift in activism wherein digitally literate youths challenged entrenched power structures beyond social media to the streets.

The protests were decentralised; however, some regions and cities like Lagos, Kano, Abuja, Kaduna, and Port Harcourt became strategic flashpoints for large-scale offline demonstrations (Ehigiator, 2024). The protests were largely peaceful in southern parts, with most protesters carrying placards that called for governance reforms, economic relief, and transparency in public affairs but recorded traces of violence and destruction of public infrastructure in the north (Hassan-Wuyo, 2024). The government thus responded with a mixture of soothing rhetoric and repression. While government officials acknowledged the economic grievances of citizens, security forces were deployed to disperse the crowd, resulting in clashes and arrests (Amnesty International, 2024).

The protest put a spotlight on the prospect of digital activism invigorating popular concerted action in the face of structural injustices. At the same time, it threw critical questions about the potential of such movements and campaigns for effecting substantive change, especially within contexts where government is so deeply entrenched in systemic corruption and inefficiency, into substantive reforms. It's a historical moment that provides the lens to examine the nexus between digital instruments, civic engagement, and governance in Nigeria.



Theoretical Frameworks

The #EndBadGovernance movement exposes the multi-dimensional intersections of digital activism, political accountability, and the structural constraints within which governance reforms operate in Nigeria. That notwithstanding, various theories such as the networked public sphere, connective action, resource mobilization, slacktivism, and political opportunity structure theory serve to illuminate operational dynamics of digital activism and to provide critical lenses that contest its proposition for mobilizing and instigating real political change.

According to Habermas's theory of the public sphere, communicative spaces are avenues for democratic engagement and action (Habermas, 1989). This takes the form of digital spaces that serve as contemporary networked public spheres, allowing Nigerian citizens to go beyond state-controlled narratives and demand accountability. Scholars argue, however, that the same openness inherent in these digital spaces allows for the dilution of collective goals. Fuchs (2014) argues against the idea that digital spaces are by nature democratic, noting how algorithms and corporate interests usually mediate what voices get amplified. This was experienced during the #EndBadGovernance protests, as studies have shown that competing narratives counter efforts complemented by sponsored disinformation campaigns to scatter the focus of movements (Krafft and Donovan, 2020; Bradshaw and Howard, 2018; Ferguson, 2020).

The theory of connective action by Bennett and Segerberg (2013) is relevant to understanding the decentralized nature of protests. Unlike collective action in traditional understandings, this kind of collective action relies on personal engagement through the application of digital media. Even though the model reduces the barriers to mobilization, this very dependence on poorly coordinated networks may jeopardize any effective strategic initiatives in the long run. As in the case of the #EndBadGovernance movement, individual narratives and localized grievances generated an extraordinary buzz but, since they were not generally connected, undermined their collective impact. This fact corroborates the parsimonious argument by Chiluwa and Ifukor (2015), which avers that in Nigeria, digital activism tends to focus more on visibility than on structural engagements.

Resource mobilization theory by McCarthy and Zald (1977) elucidates how movements sustain themselves for accessing resources, be it financial, organizational, or technological. A digital-age-enabled real-time fundraising and coordination platform for active citizens was fully utilised during the #EndBadGovernance protests. This heavy dependence on technology for resource mobilization has become a two-edged sword. The accusation by civil society groups that the Nigerian government's



restrictions on internet access and social media usage completely disrupted the movement's momentum (Akinwale, 2024) underscores the fragility of digitally dependent movements in this regard.

The Morozov's (2011) concept of slacktivism relates to the movement. Though hashtags like #EndBadGovernance or any other similar movement conjured up massive engagement on online platforms, reliance on such symbolic acts posed a danger to their depth and sustainability. Tufekci (2017) argues that the performative contributions of online participants do little to address already entrenched issues of politics and economy, again highlighting the limits of digital activism within deep structural inequalities.

And then, the political opportunity structure theory (Tarrow, 1994) also demonstrates the relationship between external constraints and movements. The repression by the Nigerian state in the forms of arrests of protesters, social media censorship, and violent crackdowns reiterated the government's ability to stifle dissenting voices. Actions such as these exposed the failures of the governance system to the rest of the world, yet they again made visible the limits of online activism in confronting authoritarian systems without complementary offline strategies and institutional reforms (Bak, Sriyai, and Meserve, 2018; Earl, Maher, and Pan, 2022).

Research Approach

Qualitative content analysis was adopted to provide a systematic approach through which the dynamics of the #EndBadGovernance were explored using the digital contents on X. This includes posts using the hashtags #EndBadGovernance and #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria and press releases shared on X by the government. This approach allowed the uncovering of underlying themes, narratives, and sentiments that characterized the movement, providing insights into the use of digital platforms to mobilise support and shape political discourse. Similarly, the government's press releases through multimedia messages on their official and verified X handles were explored to spotlight the response to the pressure mounted by the #EndBadGovernance protest movement. X posts that used the hashtag #EndBadGovernance and government responses through press releases and multimedia messages on social media from August 1, 2024, to August 31, 2024, were analysed. Purposive sampling was used to capture diverse perspectives and user demographics.

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and recurring themes from the data. A hybrid approach was used to organize the codes, combining inductive coding derived from the developing patterns in the raw data (posts) with deductive coding based on pre-identified topics from literature. This made sure that



every aspect of the dynamics and content of the digital campaign was included in the findings. The images and multimedia contents were critically analyzed to reveal how visuals supported or contradicted textual narratives.

Findings and discussion

This research revealed significant themes that illustrate the outcomes and limitations of the #EndBadGovernance campaign from a critical point of view regarding its broader implications for the overall effectiveness of digital activism on governance reforms in Nigeria.

Coordination of offline protests

The coordination of offline protests heavily depended on social media platforms, especially X. Posts from some of the protest organisers demonstrated this. These posts from the protest organisers below communicated the time and location of the offline protest in Lagos, encouraging broad participation. They were reposted a combined two hundred and eighty-four times and seen by more than nineteen thousand X users. Many other similar posts on X communicated the venues and times for the offline protests across the country. The hashtags were used for visibility and reach by the organizers living and actively participating from different locations in Nigeria. This decentralised but coordinated way enabled the different cities, such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, to have protest hubs that functioned simultaneously. The organisers were also featured in different TV and radio interviews that were posted on X by the media platforms that interviewed them. They sometimes mentioned the locations and times for the protests in the interviews, subtly using traditional media platforms for mobilisation.

"We can't be intimidated by the Tinubu Government. We have converged at Ikeja under bridge and we await other change seeking Nigerians. The time to liberate Nigeria is Now!"⁷

⁷ Francis Nwapa (@Fnwapa) "We can't be intimidated..." X, August 1, 2024, 7.55 a.m., <https://x.com/Fnwapa/status/1818903429072269318>



*"Lagos let's do this! 2day is the D-day. The right to peaceful assembly is a fundamental human right. The day we submit that right is d day we lose our humanity - it is the day we become slaves. 7am is the time. Ikeja under bridge is the take-off point."*⁸

WhatsApp along with Telegram groups served as additions to these undertakings, as participants utilized them for immediate and real-time updates like legal assistance and tracking police presence during the offline demonstrations. The post below was reposted a thousand and seven hundred times and seen by more than sixty-three thousand X users.

*"Dear Nigerians protesting today, legal assistance is ready available! Save these numbers on WhatsApp and put them on speed dial!"*⁹

Public engagement and amplified awareness

The #EndBadGovernance movement showed the ability of social media to galvanize public awareness and civic engagement. X served as a virtual town hall meeting point where citizens openly expressed grievances and coordinated offline protest activities. Visibility was amplified by the hashtag #EndBadGovernance, through which individual frustrations were turned into collective voices. Consequently, the analysis of social media posts indicated many recurrent themes that reflected underlying grievances behind the #EndBadGovernance protests. These included increasing economic hardship (rising cost of living, fuel subsidy removal, increase in electricity tariffs, unemployment), governance failures, systemic corruption, and cost of governance.

The removal of fuel subsidies, devaluation of the local currency, rising inflation, and rising unemployment were at the forefront of public outcry. Many X users shared stories of their depressing struggle to afford life's basic necessities. X posts using the hashtag mostly linked these issues to mismanagement by the government. The posts below capture economic hardship as the central driver of the movement.

⁸ Hassan Taiwo Soweto (@HTSoweto) "Lagos let's do this! 2day is the D-day..." X, August 1, 2024, 5.38 a.m., <https://x.com/HTSoweto/status/1818868836050854075>

⁹ Harry (@Chiditweets042) "Dear Nigerians protesting today..." X, August 1, 2024, 9.14 a.m., <https://x.com/chiditweets042/status/1818923140556144705>



“The crazy part about the hardship in Nigeria is that the money we have touched as young people now would be able to sustain us if we made it like 20 / 15 years ago. Money wey our parents never touched at all but still lived comfortably. This economy has rendered money useless. Purchasing power is zero. Living from hand to mouth with a sprinkle of God Abeg.”¹⁰

“Leaving the country is not a feasible option for people again. People are hungry. Inflation is at an all time high. People are being stripped of their decency.”¹¹

“The Bad Governance protest is sponsored by hunger People are dying. 1. Garri is 3,500 2. Beans is 2,200 3. 1 Yam 5,000 4. A loaf of bread 1,500 5. Rice 1,200.”¹²

“The #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protests, fueled by the nation's worst economic crisis in a generation, continue to spread across Nigeria. Demonstrators, decrying record inflation and rising food prices, are demanding an end to bad governance and economic hardship.”¹³

“Hunger not politics mainly brought people out, high food inflation is not a respecter of tribe, culture or religion”¹⁴

“This is the first time in history that we feel so defeated, the country has always been bad but this is a new low. You do not understand how cooked we are until you go to the market, do you know how crazy it is that a single man or woman earning 200k monthly is struggling to feed and do basic stuff? Do you know how insane it is for a tuber of yam to be 8K? A paint of Garri for almost 3K? The highest denomination of the country's currency cannot buy you a loaf of bread. You cannot buy ANY decent car below

¹⁰ Ugochi (@ugoccie) “The crazy part about the hardship in Nigeria...” X, August 1, 2024, 8.47p.m., <https://x.com/ugoccie/status/1819097672176841175>

¹¹ Hauwa (@Hauwa_L) “Leaving the country is not a feasible option for people again...” X, August 1, 2024, 12.12 p.m., https://x.com/Hauwa_L/status/1818970566096740821

¹² Omo Kogi (@Oladapomikky1) “The Bad Governance protest is sponsored by hunger...” X, August 6, 2024, 3.15.p.m., <https://x.com/Oladapomikky1/status/1820825935228076412>

¹³ Take it back Movement (@TIBmovement) “The #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protests...” X, August 3, 2024, 7.26 a.m., <https://x.com/TIBmovement/status/1819620855187402865>

¹⁴ Olumide Adesina (@olumidecapital) “Hunger not politics mainly brought people out...” X, August 2, 2024, 12.12 p.m., <https://x.com/olumidecapital/status/1819333040021152043>



5M and this is just to mention but a few. They are stealing our future from us before our very eyes and if we keep quiet this is going to be the end of us. Do you know how pathetic it sounds that a lot of people will never be able to afford a car or a house in their lifetime if this mess continues?”¹⁵

“Here are the Sponsors of #EndBadGovernance 1. HUNGER 2. UNEMPLOYMENT 3. INSECURITY”¹⁶

The ineffectiveness of government institutions and leaders in addressing some critical issues such as unemployment, insecurity, and poor infrastructure featured prominently in the posts. The hashtags underscored the demand for transparency and competence in leadership.

“When people say we lost over 500 billion Naira daily from protesting, I feel sad but also remind them that, in one day, when President Tinubu decided to devalue the currency and reduce subsidy our GDP slumped from over 300 billion dollars to 251 billion dollars. All his ill-thought out policies have already destroyed the nation, just imagine over 100 billion dollars shaved off our GDP in one year with massive inflation and borrowing. Also remind those Pajawiri economists that over 200% of the purchasing power of Nigerians have been eroded between 2023 to date because of inflation, especially FOOD Inflation”¹⁷

“Today, we stood together in Ibadan, showing that our voices matter and our unity can spark the change to end bad governance in Nigeria.”¹⁸

Frequent mention of corruption scandals involving public officials reflected an understanding of self-serving governance as far from the needs of citizens. Some posts emphasised this issue and linked it to the country's current economic and social challenges.

¹⁵ Silva (@Thesilvapr) “This is the first time in history that we feel so defeated...” X, August 1, 2024, 11.21 a.m., <https://x.com/TheSilvapr/status/1818955085184971113>

¹⁶ Stephen Osemwegie (@PeterObiUSA) “Here are the Sponsors of #EndBadGovernance...” X, August 6, 2024, 4.21. p.m., <https://x.com/PeterObiUSA/status/1820842675186082296>

¹⁷ Oseni Rufai (@ruffdyfire) “When people say we lost over 500 billion Naira daily from protesting...” X, August 3, 2024, 4.31. a.m., <https://x.com/ruffdyfire/status/1819576678856757416>

¹⁸ Hon. Jesugbemi (@jesugbemi4) “Today, we stood together in Ibadan...” X, August 1, 2024., 1.40. p.m., <https://x.com/Jesugbemi4/status/1818990270173634969>



“If you're looking for a Truly Confused Country...then you have one, Nigeria 36 States, 48 Ministers 41 of 48 Ministers have Corruption Cases. 9 of 11 Governors who Lost Elections are now Ministers. One Governor who was caught stealing on camera is the chairman of Ruling Party”¹⁹

Some posts pointed out the excessive and flamboyant spending of government officials who have in the past called on the citizens to live within their means and to "suffer today" for the greater good.

“He inherited a dead economy but he went ahead to appoint 47 ministers, bought jet, embarked on a white elephant project of coastal road, built VP house, bought cars for reps etc”²⁰

“The reckless spending by the ruling class coupled with high food inflation rate, has made it difficult to sell reforms to the populace”²¹

The transient nature of online activism

The transient nature of online activism emerged as one of the findings of this study. The initial enthusiasm experienced in the early days of the campaign was not sustained over time. After the first 10 days, there was a dramatic reduction in the use of the hashtag and protest-related content, reflecting a lack of structural mechanisms to keep the momentum going. Morozov (2011) uses the concept of slacktivism to argue that online participation mostly amounts to shallow engagements that cannot support lasting activism. It was observed that engagements using the hashtag were limited to reposting of content rather than extending the participation offline or further engagements in policy-oriented advocacy. The immediacy and reach of the digital sphere do not make up for the ephemerality of trends that often compromise their long-term potential for political engagement.

Similarly, the posts using the hashtags trended for weeks and became visible to X users in Nigeria and beyond. However, more visibility does not automatically mean increased accountability in governance. According to Tufekci (2017), digital platforms are wonderful at amplifying dissent and raising awareness

¹⁹ Arewa Twitter Connect (@ArewaaConnect) “If you're looking for a Truly Confused Country...” X, August 4, 2024, 10.18. a.m., <https://x.com/ArewaaConnect/status/1820026539267727500>

²⁰ End Bad Politics (@endbadpolitics) “He inherited a dead economy...” X, August 3, 2024, 11.23 p.m., <https://x.com/Endbadpolitics/status/1819861747345379648>

²¹ Olumide Adesina (@olumidecapital) “Hunger not politics mainly brought people out...” X, August 2, 2024, 12.12 p.m., <https://x.com/olumidecapital/status/1819333040021152043>



but often cannot transform that awareness into meaningful policy outcomes due to institutional and systemic political limitations. In this instance, the increased discourse on social media platforms did not lead to tangible reforms but successfully highlighted failures of governance and underscored the limits of digital activism in confronting deeply entrenched systemic political inertia.

Institutional and structural barriers

The intrinsic power structures and poorly functional institutions in Nigeria became serious impediments to the movement's impact. The country's political arena is woven and is branded with weak, corrupt, nepotistic, and nontransparent institutions, making it averse to demands for accountability. Corruption has pervaded the government so inveterately that accountability has become uncommon, making it easy for government officials to escape punishment for mismanagement and abuse of power. The entrenched nature of this administrative problem is portrayed in the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, which consistently places Nigeria among the most corrupt countries in the world (Transparency International, 2023). Digital campaigns like #EndBadGovernance bring to the limelight the corrupt practices in the governance system, but without any firm anti-corruption structure in the system, such efforts hardly translate into measurable outcomes. Digital activism has also been stunted by weak institutions. Such institutions, be they government institutions or public ones, are weak and usually do not boast of independence, resources, or even the political will to innovate the meaningful change that might come through adopting a policy change (Carothers, 2014). Such a weak institutional framework restricts the capacity of digital movements to achieve long-lasting impacts since reforms are often delayed or effectively sabotaged by entrenched interests.

The digital divide adds to many of these problems, denying large parts of the populace a portrayal of what is happening online, primarily in rural areas. The number of Nigerians with access to the internet stands at 55.4% of the population (Statista, 2024). By implication, about 44.6% of Nigerians are without access to the internet and cannot take part in digital campaigns.

X posts revealed the frustration of Nigerians with the lack of an institutional framework to channel public agitation into reforms.

“This is proof that the protests are always peaceful and with good intentions until state sponsored thugs are sent to disrupt the protests. The Police in their complicity will ignore the infiltrators and start to attack Peaceful Protesters. This is how it happens not only in Lagos but in other states in the Country. At the end of the day, the



Government will then attempt to rewrite history as if it didn't happen before our very eyes. This is exactly how it happened with EndSars and the records will forever be there to point at the real enemies of Nigeria who unleashed terror and mayhem in our Society."²²

This situation is supported by Tarrow's (1994) political opportunity structure theory, which is of the view that an important factor in the success of social movements is the receptivity of the political system. Unfortunately, this has not been the case for Nigeria, as evident in some X posts analysed. Users were skeptical about the ability of the movement to yield positive results due to a lack of trust in the existing system. These institutional and structural barriers highlight the inadequacies of digital activism in challenging policies in deeply flawed political contexts.

Government response and policy outcomes

The Nigerian government response to the 2024 #EndBadGovernance movement was a blend of appeasement, repression, and symbolic gestures with few substantive policy outcomes. This combination highlighted both the potential and limitations of digital activism in seeking governance reforms within entrenched political systems.

A conciliatory tone emerged as the initial move from the government, with promises being made to the protesting citizens and the wider international community that the government was doing something to review some of the reasons for the protest movement. Public officials, including the president in a live broadcast posted on X, read a message to the people acknowledging their grievances and hinted at reforms. The President promised to set up committees to review the issues but failed to give a timeline. Even though the promises sounded like real short-term responses meant to placate the protesters, these steps were not on a trajectory of structural reform. Most of these promises were vague, left without time frames, and did not cover the systemic governance issues brought to light by the protests.

Parts of the presidential speech read, "I speak to you today with a heavy heart and a sense of responsibility, aware of the turmoil and violent protests unleashed in some of our states. Notably among the protesters were young Nigerians who desired a better

²² Mr Macaroni (@mrmacaronii) "This is proof that the protests are always peaceful..." X, August 1, 2024, 2.38. p.m., <https://x.com/mrmacaronii/status/1819004893904228763>



and more progressive country where their dreams, hopes, and personal aspirations would be fulfilled... In the past 14 months, our government has made significant strides in rebuilding the foundation of our economy to carry us into a future of plenty and abundance. On the fiscal side, aggregate government revenues have more than doubled, hitting over 9.1 trillion Naira in the first half of 2024 compared to the first half of 2023 due to our efforts at blocking leakages, introducing automation, and mobilising funding creatively without additional burden on the people. Productivity is gradually increasing in the non-oil sector, reaching new levels and taking advantage of the opportunities in the current economic ambience...”²³

Analysis of posts on X in reaction to the speech speaks to the dissatisfaction of users and the perception that the speech was not sufficient in placating the aggrieved Nigerians.

*"Protests will continue if the government does not attend to our demands. It is a shame that the president, who addressed the nation, did not address any of our demands."*²⁴

*"This is how someone summarized President Tinubu's speech: 1. I have heard you 2. I'm busy working 3. Go back home 4. Subsidy is forever gone (Forget it) 5. Continue to endure the hardship/hunger 6. Your protest is politically motivated."*²⁵

*"The broadcast is full of threatening to protesters and Nigerians who are hungry. Tinubu refuses to address hunger and hardship father, praising himself for removing fuel subsidies which has brought untold suffering to millions of Nigerians."*²⁶

Crackdowns and repression as outcomes of offline protests

²³ TheCable (@thecableng) "I speak to you today with a heavy heart and a sense of responsibility..." X, August 4, 2024, 7.05.am., <https://x.com/thecableng/status/1819977967855964475>

²⁴ EndBadGovernanceinNigeria (@endbadgovtinnig) "Protests will continue if the government..." X, August 9, 2024, 6.10. p.m., <https://x.com/endbadgovtinnig/status/1821957130850640377>

²⁵ Tony Ajah (@tonyajah) "This is how someone summarized President Tinubu's speech ..." X., August 4, 2024, 8.33 p.m., <https://x.com/tonyajah/status/1820181380841525352>

²⁶ Peter Obi Grassroots Mobilization (@PO_GrassRootM) "The broadcast is full of threatening to protesters..." X, August 4, 2024, 7.14 a.m., https://x.com/PO_GrassRootM/status/1819980087082541105



Despite the government's initial overtures, it quickly resorted to crackdowns and a repressive approach. Protesters were threatened and harassed, and some were arrested. Temporary restrictions of social media platforms would eventually disrupt the flow of information, thus weakening the momentum of the movement. These moves discouraged sustained participation in the movement. With excessive use of force by security agencies, trust in the institutions of government was eroded further and strengthened perceptions of authoritarianism, as found in the analysis of posts from X. A part in the president's speech indicated the resolve to use force.

*"As President of this country, I must ensure public order. In line with my constitutional oath to protect the lives and property of every citizen, our government will not stand idly by and allow a few with a clear political agenda to tear this nation apart."*²⁷

Similarly, a statement released by the police on X on the first day of the protest did not rule out the use of force and attempted to discourage protesters with suggestions of predicted violence.

*"It is with grave sense of responsibility that I address you this evening. You will recall that upon several indications by various groups of their intent to commence a nationwide protest on 1st August, 2024, we rolled out several warnings based on actionable intelligence at our disposal indicating that some groups were mobilizing our youths for violent protests with intent to create anarchy in the country. While some groups claiming to be mobilizing for peaceful protests were doing so with violent undertones refusing to cooperate with the Police on measures to be taken to guarantee peaceful protest. 2. On the basis of these intelligence, the Police advised that the protests should be shelved at the instant time. Where the organizers insisted on going on with the protests, they were advised to stage the protest in confined locations. This would have enabled the police provide adequate protection for the protesters and isolate the criminals whose intention was to loot and destroy in the name of a protest. This we were doing in furtherance of our duty to protect lives and property and maintaining law and order..."*²⁸

²⁷ TheCable (@thecableng) "I speak to you today with a heavy heart and a sense of responsibility..." X, August 4, 2024, 7.05.am., <https://x.com/thecableng/status/1819977967855964475>

²⁸ Nigeria Police Force (PoliceNG) "SPEECH BY THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF POLICE..." X, August 1, 2024, X, 10.33 p.m., <https://x.com/PoliceNG/status/1819124424194601135>



Posts using the hashtag on X showed that security forces, especially the police, applied the use of force to intimidate and disperse offline protesters that mobilised across the country using social media. These included multimedia content such as pictures, videos, and livestreams.

“Chaotic! A few minutes ago, Nigeria's security forces have been forced to fire multiple shots of tear gas to disperse hundreds of protesters gathering at Eagle Square in the capital, Abuja. There was a scene when daring protesters were seen chanting and marching towards the police telling them that they are hungry.”²⁹

“There's heavy military reinforcements deployed along the road leading to the Presidential Villa, also known as Aso Rock.”³⁰

“Video Clip of men in DSS uniform with guns accompanied thugs with cutlasses dispersing unarmed peaceful protesters in Abuja. The Police also discharged live bullets at Journalists & protesters at the MKO Abiola National Stadium. The @PoliceNG are yet to make a statement about this.”³¹

“Tension is seriously escalating in Abuja as protesters express anger against Police brutality. Here's one of the protesters. Sadly, he had some harsh words for the Nigerian president.”³²

The government resorted to blocking the accounts of sponsors and organisers of the protests and placing them on a watchlist to force them into backing down and cutting the financial flow necessary for sustaining logistics and mass mobilisation. Critics say such actions undermine democratic freedoms and stifle civic engagement (Amnesty International, 2021). The Nigerian government took similar action during the #EndSARS protests (Nimi, 2021). It underlines the use of state power against dissent and speaks to the kind of threats that digital activists in Nigeria face when governments weaponise economic controls against civil society movements.

²⁹ Kennedy Wandera (@KennedyWandera_) “Chaotic! A few minutes ago, Nigeria's security forces...” X, August 1, 2024, 2.47 p.m., https://x.com/KennedyWandera_/status/1819007168491782609

³⁰ ibid

³¹ Chude (@Chude_) “Video Clip of men in DSS uniform with guns...” X, August 3, 2024, 2.43 p.m., https://x.com/chude_/status/1819730899849658542

³² The Guardian Nigeria (@GuardianNigeria) “Tension is seriously escalating in Abuja...” X, August 2, 2024, 3.21 p.m., <https://x.com/GuardianNigeria/status/1819377908718202895>



“FG blocks accounts of #EndBadGovernance sponsors, places them on watchlist.”³³

Limited policy outcomes

The protests succeeded in amplifying public grievances; however, they could not translate into tangible policy outcomes. The federal government in the President’s speech nominally announced policies and plans that many protesters saw as insufficient and temporary.

“...we have secured \$620million under the Digital and Creative Enterprises (IDiCE) – a programme to empower our young people, creating millions of IT and technical jobs that will make them globally competitive. These programmes include the 3Million Technical Talents scheme. Unfortunately, one of the digital centres was vandalised during the protests in Kano. What a shame! In addition, we have introduced the Skill-Up Artisans Programme (SUPA); the Nigerian Youth Academy (NIYA); and the National Youth Talent Export Programme (NATEP). Also, more than N570 billion has been released to the 36 states to expand livelihood support to their citizens, while 600,000 nano-businesses have benefitted from our nano-grants. An additional 400,000 more nano-businesses are expected to benefit. Furthermore, 75,000 beneficiaries have been processed to receive our N1million Micro and Small Business single-digit interest loans, starting this month. We have also built 10 MSME hubs within the past year, created 240,000 jobs through them and 5 more hubs are in progress which will be ready by October this year. Payments of N1billion each are also being made to large manufacturers under our single-digit loans to boost manufacturing output and stimulate growth. I signed the National Minimum Wage into law last week, and the lowest-earning workers will now earn at least N70,000 a month...”³⁴

The much broader economic and governance reforms insisted upon by the movement—including a return to the fuel subsidy regime, reversal of the policy to float the local currency, transparency in

³³ Africa Independent Television (@AIT_Online) “FG blocks accounts of #EndBadGovernance sponsors...” X, August 6, 2024, 5.49 p.m., https://x.com/AIT_Online/status/1820864720041349242

³⁴ TheCable (@thecableng) “I speak to you today with a heavy heart and a sense of responsibility...” X, August 4, 2024, 7.05.am., <https://x.com/thecableng/status/1819977967855964475>



public spending, anti-corruption measures, and institutional accountability—remained largely unaddressed.

Long-term implications

The protests exposed significant gaps in the capacity of the Nigerian government to engage in constructive dialogue with aggrieved people. Instead of being taken as an opportunity for reform, the response of the government was a clear indication of preference for the status quo. In the absence of genuinely effective and fruitful mechanisms to address the real causes of public discontent, such discontent may continuously unleash cycles of unrest and continuous protest.

Images and multimedia content reflection of textual narratives

X users turned to images, videos, and other multimedia options to further enhance or amplify the effectiveness of their textual posts. The combination of visual and textual content emphasized the movement's messages, stirred up emotions, and initiated conversations.

Images capturing long queues of vehicles at petrol stations alongside empty stalls and price tags of basic commodities visualising economic hardship were shared with critical textual posts against subsidy removal and soaring inflation. The glaring, real-world evidence in the images portrayed the struggles seen in the texts.

Similarly, symbolic visuals such as broken chains, clenched fists, and protest banners represent calls for reforms. They repeated the demand for systemic change and were usually posted alongside the hashtag #EndBadGovernance. Crowds shouting slogans in protest or people voicing their grievances at offline protest grounds embodied visually the sentiments social media users expressed in written posts.

Also, multimedia content became yet another medium through which the movement was humanized. Hardships being suffered were accompanied by pictures or short video clips of the victims themselves, eliciting empathy and collective pity. The connection between textual narratives and visuals promoted empathy and solidarity and made the protests relevant across the borders of Nigeria.

The emotional appeal of the multimedia content made it more sharable than textual posts. Analysis showed that posts combining strong textual critique with emotive visuals or videos were at the top of the lists for most widely reposted or shared, demonstrating the power of multimedia to boost digital activism by amplifying virality.



Conclusion and recommendations

The paper critically examined the #EndBadGovernance movement in Nigeria and shed light on its outcomes and broader implications for digital activism in the country. The content analysis of social media posts that used the hashtag, including government responses posted on X handles of government ministries and media personnel, focused on exploring the potential and limitations of social media capacity as instruments for mobilizing and organizing protest in demand for political and economic reforms.

The study clearly showed that while the #EndBadGovernance digital activism had succeeded in amplifying public grievances and civic participation, it struggled to achieve governance reforms the way people wanted. The movement successfully utilized hashtags, multimedia, and decentralized coordination to galvanize local and international support over the economic and governance crises in Nigeria. In addition, increased visibility and public outcry, powerful as they might be, are insufficient to establish systemic change within contexts such as Nigeria that have deep and entrenched political resistance. Government suppression, structural barriers, and the transient nature of online activism left much to be desired. Also, the study highlighted the continuous challenges faced by digital activism in Nigeria, including but not limited to the repressive means employed by the state to stifle dissent and dampen momentum. These present the need for integrating multidimensional approaches, such as a digital-offline mobilization blending with institutional engagement, into activism.

Faced with the aforementioned challenges, the urgency of structural changes to enable civil movements to realize their objectives is emphasized. Provisions have to be put in place to strengthen weak institutions while also instituting transparent accountability mechanisms that will translate citizens' demands into substantive policy results.

Strengthening the existing legal protection of protesters is one such provision. Evidence from this study reinforced the view that digital activism usually gets silenced by intimidation, arbitrary arrests, internet shutdowns, and other violent measures that undermine civic movements and sometimes breach fundamental rights. Legal protections for protests and protesters are crucial in ensuring freedom of expression and assembly and indispensable for the proper functioning of a democracy. For instance, the resolution passed by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on the promotion and protection of human rights in the digital age (UNHRC,2016) provides a fundamental document for member states to adopt and localise. Such solidifying protections into national constitutions and legal systems would subject governments to scrutiny over upholding human rights, ensuring that protesters can



express their views and exercise their rights to peaceful protest without persecution. Nigeria's situation has more to do with the implementation of these legal protections. Chapter IV, Section 40 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, as amended, guarantees the right to peaceful protest. This protects the fundamental human right to peaceful assembly, which enables people to voice their opinions and hold the government responsible. According to the Nigeria Police Act 2020, police officers are required to maintain the fundamental rights of all citizens while providing protesting citizens with sufficient security. Civil society organizations and international bodies must ensure compliance and document cases of violation to pressure the Nigerian government. The advocacy should target independent judiciary systems to ensure these laws are implemented. International human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) may also force governments to act accordingly. Publicizing violations through digital platforms and global media can attract international condemnation that could create reputational and economic costs for the government and may motivate them to honour their legal obligations.

Also, civil society organizations (CSOs) play a key role in translating the buoyancy of online activism into real-world reforms. It gives critical organizational support, advocacy expertise, and sustained pressure on the policymakers to help ensure these campaigns produce meaningful outcomes. Strengthening CSOs through funding increases, targeted capacity development, and strategic partnerships is essential in improving their ability to complement digital activism (Carothers, 2014). These would also enhance the possibility of incorporating digital campaigns into policy-making processes, establishing structure, continuity, and links with grassroots movements. This integrated approach successfully creates a "bridge" between public dissent and systemic reform while amplifying the long-term effects of digital activism.

Importantly, hybrid activism which involves the combination of online campaigns and offline strategies would bridge the gap between online engagement and real-world change. Each space's interacting affordances create opportunities for community formation and organizing that are qualitatively distinct from those of offline or online spaces alone (Showden et al., 2021). Social media mobilization must be supplemented by grassroots mobilization through town hall meetings, petitions, and direct lobbying of legislators elected to serve in the interest of the people. Directly connecting to the policymakers with face-to-face conversations through hybrid activism legitimizes the digital movements, ensuring that online dissent translates into concrete discussions and outcomes. This model gives hold to activism that is no longer bound to virtual spaces but is directed towards long-term political accountability (Tufekci, 2017).



Addressing systemic barriers through empowerment of anti-corruption mechanisms, bridging the digital divide and comprehensive institutional reforms are key to digital activism achieving its full potential. Whistleblower protection and public financial audits by the citizens are examples of needed anti-corruption and systemic transparency initiatives (Transparency International, 2023). Institutional reforms must include reducing political interference and building governance capacity towards effective policy implementation (Carothers, 2014). The establishment of rural broadband and digital literacy programs proposed by the World Bank (2019) will be key to bridging the digital divide. Such efforts would be most effective with the backing of civil society in partnership with international organizations and the government at all levels.

These strategies provide a multifaceted approach that addresses the structural and institutional limitations and enhances the ability of digital campaigns to result in tangible governance reforms in Nigeria.

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Evaluating the Role of X Platform as a Tool for Social Mobilization and Trust in the #EndSARS Protest in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The X platform as a communication space, promotes interactions and public participation on various issues of human concerns. It serves as a platform for discourse, social mobilization and activism. It is in light of the unique features of this communication platform that this study examines its role in social movement with focus on #EndSARS protest. Specifically, the study ascertain the level of trust people have for X information on #EndSARS. The study adopts survey method with Social Networks Theory and Agenda Setting Theory as theoretical guide. Findings reveals that people partially trust information they come across on X. The study concludes that there is need for a critical approach to social media information. While the majority of respondents found X to be a reliable source, a significant portion remained cautious, emphasising the importance of verifying information before forming opinions. The study recommends that social media influencers, alongside traditional media, play a crucial role in shaping public opinion during social movements. Policies should encourage these actors to responsibly report and share information, highlighting the importance of accuracy, accountability, and ethical considerations in their communications.

Keywords: Role, X platform, Tool, Social Mobilization, Trust, #EndSARS, Protest, Nigeria

Introduction

The growth and development of communication technologies and the ever-changing complex nature of societies have significantly changed the way and manner information is gathered and disseminated. It has changed the methods and process of initiating and coordinating social movements and mass protests. Citizens with this development have utilized the opportunities provided by modern technologies in satisfying their quest to keep abreast of happenings around them. With internet becoming the biggest technological revolution of the 20th century and more accessible to the larger number of the population of the world, it is now the biggest network



where one can find products, services, information, ideas and knowledge at the mere click of a button (Bruns & Burgess, 2020). The use of these communication technologies has resulted in efficient, cost-effective and convenient sharing method of vital information among the people via online media tools known as the social media. Nwanfor and Nwabuzor, (2021) states the observation of some scholars such as (Theocharis, & Quintelier 2014) that the advent of social media represents a shift in how people discover, read, create and share information content, and that it represents to a large extent democratization of information. As the development is rapidly changing people have change from content readers into content creators and publishers. Reasoning along that line, Nwafor, (2015) describes social media as the media of the people, by the people and for the people. A term he referred to as 'mediacracy'. According to Nwafor and Nwabuzor, (2021) many studies such as Ahmad, (2018) and Augustine & Nwaizugbu, (2018) have shown a link between social media and citizens engagements and mobilization for protests and civil unrests. One of these social media platforms is X.

X formally known as Twitter is an American micro-blogging website that penetrates the hole among contributing to a blog and texting. It permits people to share short messages on the internet about their status (Passant et al, 2008). The beginning of X traces all the way back to mid 2006 when Jack Dorsey imparted a groundbreaking plan to a portion of his colleagues at Odeo, a podcasting organization. Jack's thought was a stage that permitted users to impart short messages to gatherings. On 15th July 2006, X was acquainted with people in general. X permits users to post messages known as tweets and connect with the tweep (the individual that posted the message) by responding to the posted messages. On X, tweet can be statement, comment, retweet, hashtag and even bookmarked. X can be gotten to with the utilization of program or versatile frontend programming, or automatically by means of its APIs (Britannica, 2021). X advances connection and public support over different issues of human worries. The unhindered intelligent nature of X has offered huge chances to people in general to participate in connections north of a few issues that connects with Nigeria and the world overall. #EndSARS is one such issue.

In this new technological age, protesters typically gather and mobilize via social media, and the protest's context is posted to become a trend and gain additional support. According to Bouveir (2020), the micro-blogging platform X is most often used to organize protests and use hashtags to generate more trends and participation.

#EndSARS is a decentralized social movement and series of mass protest against police brutality in Nigeria. The slogan requires the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) with a long record of alleged brutality and mishandling of citizens. The protest took its name from the slogan that began in 2017 as at X campaign using the hashtag "#EndSARS" to request the disbanding of the unit by the Nigerian government. Furthermore, in October 2020, the movement started again after a troubling video of a SARS officer shooting a young Nigerian went viral. As the video spread on social media, the hashtag #EndSARS began to gather momentum as more young Nigerians requested an end to the brutal police unit that has for a long time brutalized young Nigerians. On Thursday, 8 October 2020, following weeks of outcry and anger with videos and pictures showing police brutality, harassment and extortion in Nigeria, mass demonstration occurred all through Nigeria in major cities and the hashtag accumulated up to 28 million posts. The human right abuses were archived



in trending videos on social media. Within few days of renewed protest, the Nigerian Police force declared that it was dissolving SARS on Sunday, 11 October 2020 a move that was broadly gotten as a victory of the protest. However, many noted that same promise had been made in recent years and that the government planned to reassign and review SARS officials to medical centres instead of eliminating them totally. Protest continued accordingly and the Nigerian states maintained a pattern of violent repression including what is today referred to as the Lekki shootings of civilian peaceful protesters which has kept on attracting condemnation both locally and globally (Ogundipe, 2017).

Online communication, particularly through social media platforms, plays a critical role in contemporary social movements. The integration of online communication into everyday life has enabled the rapid dissemination of information, real-time coordination of activities, and widespread mobilisation of support. Social media platforms such as Twitter have become indispensable tools for organising protests and amplifying social movements (Howard & Parks, 2012). Twitter, in particular, allows users to share short messages, known as tweets, which can be easily disseminated and interacted with, fostering a dynamic and interactive environment for public discourse (Passant et al., 2008). The connection between online communication and social movements is evident in the way social media platforms like X enable rapid information dissemination, real-time coordination, and broad engagement. According to Howard and Parks (2012), the internet and social media platforms have become critical in shaping public discourse and organising collective action. These platforms provide a space for individuals to voice their concerns, organise events, and mobilise support, thus playing a crucial role in contemporary social movements.

With the popularity of X mostly among the youths, this ignited protest not only in Nigeria but also gained attention of the prominent people worldwide. It is therefore paramount to know the role X played in mobilizing people to participate in the #EndSARS movement.

Literature Review

Apuke, et al., (2020) conducted a study on “Fake News Proliferation in the Social Media Era: Combating the Menace in Nigeria Through Awareness Strategies”. Most studies on fake information have emerged from advanced countries. Despite the Anti-faux information marketing campaign released in Nigeria, the unfold of faux information stays alarming. Nigerians are considered as contributing to social cohesion by sharing news. Users are driven to do so by the perceived emotional impact of the news, its potential significance for the receiver, and the sender's purpose to provide counsel or warning. Most Nigerians trust information supplied by relatives and friends more than information shared by strangers. They are considerably more prone to proportion incorrect information roughly entertainment, political information, activity adverts, kidnapping and individuals which have elements of patriotism and feelings. Moreover, faith or ethnic business venture or an individual they safeguard in excessive esteem and proportion will moreover rouse such sharing.



One study conducted by Stefanone, et al., (2011) investigates the usage of Facebook for individuals to reduce uncertainty regarding individuals connected to the social networking site. They demonstrated that individuals utilized Facebook in order to reduce global uncertainty when it came to new friends and otherwise for already existing friends. People utilized Facebook to gather information about communication apprehensions. An interesting finding was that geographical distance did not seem to influence information seeking behaviour for uncertainty-avoidance. Although this research tapped into information seeking and Facebook usage, it did not look into what were the reasons for people to utilize Facebook as information seeking tool. This study simply explored how people utilized Facebook to gather information to reduce uncertainty between them and their Facebook friends.

Karsenty, (2009), qualitative study on “Facebook and Information Trust” shows that all participants of the interview noted that they utilize Facebook as a primary means of search, i.e. if they look for information about people Facebook is the first or the only tool that they use for research. To recapitulate, people utilize Facebook to explore other Facebook users. This can come in two main categories and an overlapping type: looking for information about someone connecting with someone new through Facebook and Facebook stalking. Generally, when people utilize Facebook, it is to find information of two types: Other people’s action or information about other’s social status or personal life.

Okosun, et al., (2023), investigates user perception of the credibility of news related tweets on X. The study used a survey research method to collect data from 300 participants out of 4.95 million users in Nigeria in early 2023. The study provides valuable insights into user perception of credibility for news-related tweets on X. The study found that user perception of the credibility of news-related tweets on X is influenced by several factors including the source of the post, the content of the tweet, and the user's prior knowledge of the topic. The study concludes that X is a valuable platform for disseminating news but users should be cautious when assessing the credibility of news-related posts. The study recommends that news organizations use posts to disseminate news and increase their credibility and that users should be cautious when assessing credibility. The study also suggests that more research is needed to understand the factors that influence user perception of credibility for news-related tweets on X in more detail.

"User Perception of Information Credibility of News on Twitter" by Mohd, et al., (2014) examined how users judge news-related tweets. Lecture Notes in Computer Science peer-reviewed the article. The writers said that Twitter's free-flowing news made verification difficult. The study looked at news tweet believability. News tweets were assessed using crowdsourcing. 200 people assessed 20 news-related tweets' trustworthiness. X's public stream API provided 100 posts. Favorites, retweets, and relevancy determined the tweets. Participants judged each tweet's trustworthiness on a 1–5 Likert scale. Research participants provided age, gender, and education. According to the study, X users rate news-related tweets based on source, topic, and prior knowledge.

The research indicated that people trusted CNN and BBC tweets more than blogs and individual users. Link containing tweets were also more trustworthy. Higher-educated people also believed tweets more. The study examined how consumers assess news-related tweets' authenticity. Mohd, et al., (2014) examined X users' perception of news credibility. According to the study, X



users rate news-related posts based on source, topic and prior knowledge. The authors advised clients to be cautious when determining reliability and that news organizations use X to convey news and create trust.

Methodology

The study employed the use of both quantitative research approach. Quantitative research approach deals with quantifying and analysing variables in order to get result.

The research method employed in this study was survey. The survey was used as a method for data gathering with the intention of describing the nature of using X as a tool that enhances social movement. It involves collection of data by gathering information from X users asking them certain questions with regards to X and how they got influenced to participate in the #EndSARS movement. This research method enabled the study to test the research question based on the response of X users on the questions. The survey methodology helps in gathering relevant data from the population of the study who are the X users which enabled the researcher to gather data from the field.

The population for the study was drawn from X users within Nigeria of both gender within age bracket of 15 to 64 years. The decision to pick age bracket 15-64 was because 15-64 years is considered to be the largest working population group in Nigeria in 2021 (GlobalData, 2022). According to Dataportal (2023), the active users on X in Nigeria are within the age range 15-64.

the study employed the convenient sampling technique for the survey part of the study. Questionnaires were administered to the participants using the convenient sampling method. This method is a non-probability sampling method which is exclusively employed if the availability of the participants is the researchers' mere concern in choosing a sample and when they could not select from many various population and research site (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Due to the large number of the sample size and other logical constraints the study chooses to use the convenient sampling method to select participants.

The sample size for this study is 400 for the questionnaire. The sample size for the questionnaire was calculated using Taro Yamane formula. Going by the calculations, 400 respondents will be chosen randomly from X users within Nigeria to answer the questions. Where BBC reports that X has about 40,000,000 X users within Nigeria.

The calculation formula of Taro Yamane is presented as follows:

$n =$

Where:



n = sample size required

N = Population of the study

K = is constant which is 1

e = degree of error expected which is 0.05

$$n = 40,000,000 / (1 + 40,000,000 [(0.05)]^2)$$

$$n = 400$$

Data presentation and Analysis

A total of 400 responses were gotten from the field and were deemed valid. The data is presented in tables, illustrating the frequencies and corresponding percentages.

Table 1: Users' Biographic Data

Biography	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	217	54.2
Female	183	45.8
Total	400	100.0
Age group		
15-25	94	23.5
26-36	280	70
37-46	26	6.5
47-57	0	0
58-64	0	0
Total	400	100.0



Religion

Islam	355	88.5
Christianity	45	11.2
Total	400	100.0

Geographical zone

North East	8	2
North West	59	14.8
North Central	90	22.5
South West	231	57.8
South East	8	2
South South	4	1
Total	400	100.0

Occupation

Student	75	18.8
Employed	206	51.5
Self employed	66	16.5
Unemployed	53	13.2
Total	400	100.0

Source: Online Survey, 2023.

From (Table 1) above, majority of the respondents were male (54.2%). This could be due to the fact that they are most times the victim attacked by the SARS officers and the protest in general



was initiated by the male gender. Also, majority of the respondents are within the age range of 26-36 having 70%. 88.8% of the respondents were Muslims.

Furthermore, 57.8% of the respondents were from the South-West region. This perhaps could be attributed to the fact that majority of the brutality and atrocities committed by the now disbanded SARS occurred in South-West, Nigeria.

Also, 51.5% of the respondents are employed, 18.8% are students, 16.5% are self-employed while 13.2% are unemployed. The table above shows that the employed citizens were majorly moved by the #ENDSARS movement.

Table 2: Response on the extent respondents trust X information

Level of Trust	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Completely	52	13.0
Partially	299	74.8
Not at all	49	12.2
Total	400	100.0

Source: Online Survey, 2023.

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents (74.8%) partially trust X information while 13% of the respondents completely trust X information. However, 12.2% of the respondents do not trust X information.

Table 3: Response on how respondents fact-check the information related to #EndSARS before forming an opinion

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	336	84.0
No	64	16.0
Total	400	100.0

Source: Online Survey, 2023.

The (Table 3) above shows that 84% of the respondents fact-checked the information related to #EndSARS before forming an opinion on the movement while 16% of the respondents did not



fact-check information related to #EndSARS before forming an opinion/ having a stance on the movement.

Table 4: Response on how reliable respondents find X as a source of information

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very reliable	94	23.5
Somewhat reliable	229	57.2
Not reliable	77	19.2
Total	400	100.0

Source: Online Survey, 2023.

The (Table 4) above shows that majority of the respondents (57.2%) find X as somewhat reliable source of information, 23.5% of the respondents find it as a very reliable source of information while 19.2% of the respondents find X as a not reliable source of information.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the data gathered from the field (table 2), it reveals that most people partially trust X information. However some (13%) completely trust information they get from X while 12.2% of the respondents do not trust any information from X.

It is also revealed from the result (table 4) of the online survey that 84% respondents fact-check the information related to #EndSARS they got from X before forming an opinion on the movement while 16% did not fact-check.

Adding to what has been said, 57.2% of the respondents find X as somewhat reliable source of information while 23.5% of the respondents find it to be a very reliable source of information and 19.2% respondents find X information to be unreliable.

This is in line with the work of Apuke, et al., (2020) on “Fake News Proliferation in the Social Media Era: Combating the Menace in Nigeria Through Awareness Strategies”. Most studies on fake information have emerged from advanced countries. Despite the Anti-faux information marketing campaign released in Nigeria, the unfold of faux information stays alarming. Nigerians are considered as contributing to social cohesion by sharing news. Users are driven to do so by the perceived emotional impact of the news, its potential significance for the receiver, and the sender's purpose to provide counsel or warning. Most Nigerians trust information supplied by relatives and friends more than information shared by strangers. They are much more likely to proportion incorrect information approximately entertainment, political



information, activity adverts, kidnapping and people which have factors of patriotism and emotions. Moreover, faith or ethnic business enterprise or a person they preserve in excessive esteem and proportion will additionally motivate such sharing. Their study provided a framework to examine how trust, motivation, and cultural dynamics influence the use of platforms like X in social movements such as #EndSARS, thereby enriching the research topic. The study identifies key motivations for Nigerians sharing news such as emotional importance and a sense of responsibility.

Also, "User Perception of Information Credibility of News on Twitter" by Mohd, et al., (2014) examined how users judge news-related tweets. Lecture Notes in Computer Science peer-reviewed the article. The writers said Twitter's free-flowing news made verification difficult. According to the study, Twitter users rate news-related tweets based on source, topic, and prior knowledge. Their study helps contextualize the role of credibility, source evaluation and information verification on X in shaping trust and engagement, which are critical to understanding the platform's role in the protest.

On the other hand, the study is in contrary to the work of Karsenty, (2009), qualitative study on "Facebook and Information Trust". The study shows that all participants of the interview noted that they utilize Facebook as a primary means of search, i.e. if they look for information about people Facebook is the first or the only tool that they use for research. To recapitulate, people utilize Facebook to explore other Facebook users. This can come in two main categories and an overlapping type: looking for information about someone, connecting with someone new through Facebook and Facebook stalking. Generally, when people utilize Facebook it is to find information of two types: Other people's action or information about other's social status or personal life.

Conclusion and recommendation

The study highlights the need for a critical approach to social media information. While the majority of respondents found X to be a reliable source, a significant portion remained cautious, emphasising the importance of verifying information before forming opinions. The varying impacts of influencers' posts on engagement demonstrate the complexity of digital activism and the necessity of diverse communication strategies to reach and mobilise different segments of the population.

Social media influencers, alongside traditional media, play a crucial role in shaping public opinion during social movements. Policies should encourage these actors to responsibly report and share information, highlighting the importance of accuracy, accountability, and ethical considerations in their communications.

Suggestion for Further Research

Future research could conduct comparative analyses of social media's role in various social movements, both within Nigeria and globally.



Further studies could Investigate the long-term consequences of social media-led protests on policy changes in Nigeria

Further research is needed to understand how social media algorithms influence the visibility and spread of social movement content.

An exploration of how opposition groups, including state actors, use social media to counteract social movements would provide a comprehensive view of the digital battleground.

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Digital Influencers as Catalysts of Cultural and Political Change: Examining Nigeria's Digital Public Sphere

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ABSTRACT

Digital influencers have become pivotal actors in Nigeria's cultural and political discourse, reshaping traditional narratives and mobilizing new forms of engagement. This article applies Habermas's Public Sphere Theory and employs an interpretive hermeneutic method to explore the role of digital influencers in Nigeria's digital transformation. It examines how influencers construct and mediate cultural meaning, amplify marginalized voices, and influence political processes. It focuses on key events such as the #EndSARS protests and the rise of influencer-driven movements in music, fashion, and social justice. By analysing the symbolic power of influencer narratives, this study reveals their dual role as democratizing agents and potential amplifiers of misinformation or elitism. The findings underscore the potential of digital influencers to reshape Nigeria's public sphere while emphasizing the need for policies and practices that ensure inclusivity and accountability in their operations.

Keywords: Digital Influencers, Public Sphere Theory, Cultural Mediation, #EndSARS Protest, Nigeria's Digital Transformation



Introduction

The proliferation of digital platforms in Nigeria has opened new avenues for communication, self-expression, and collective action. With over 120 million internet users as of 2023, the country's social media ecosystem has become vital for cultural exchange and political engagement (Abdullahi, 2024). Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are not merely spaces for entertainment but battlegrounds for narratives shaping national and global perceptions of Nigeria (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023).

Digital influencers have become critical actors in this transformation. Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers build their audiences through consistent content creation and direct engagement with followers, often bypassing conventional gatekeeping institutions. They act as tastemakers, political commentators, and social mobilizers, usually holding sway over millions of followers. For instance, influencers such as Mr. Macaroni and Falz have used their platforms to amplify calls for justice during the #EndSARS protests (Ekenaite, 2022). In contrast, fashion and lifestyle influencers like Toke Makinwa redefine modern Nigerian aesthetics and identity on the global stage.

However, the rise of digital influencers also introduces challenges. Issues such as misinformation, digital divides, and the commercialization of activism raise questions about the inclusivity and authenticity of the digital public sphere. Understanding the dual potential of influencers as agents of democratization and contributors to new inequalities is critical for navigating this evolving space.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the role of digital influencers in Nigeria's cultural and political discourse, this study employs Habermas's Public Sphere Theory. Habermas conceptualizes the public sphere as a space where private individuals come together to discuss and debate matters of public concern, ideally free from coercion and inequality. While his original theory focused on the bourgeois coffeehouses and print media of 18th-century Europe, it remains a relevant lens for examining contemporary digital spaces (Zhaparaliev, 2023).

In the Nigerian context, social media platforms function as digital public spheres, where influencers mediate conversations and shape public opinion (Okonkwo et al., 2024). However, these platforms are not devoid of power imbalances. Influencers, by their reach and visibility, occupy a privileged position in these spaces, challenging the egalitarian ideals of the public sphere. Through this lens, the study interrogates the extent to which influencers facilitate inclusivity, foster dialogue, or reinforce existing inequalities in Nigerian society.

1.3 Methodological Approach

This study adopts an interpretive hermeneutic method to analyse the symbolic and narrative dimensions of influencer-driven content. Unlike quantitative or qualitative methods that prioritize metrics or experiential data, the interpretive hermeneutic approach focuses on the



construction of meaning within discourse (Bell, 2011) By examining hashtags, memes, visuals, and influencer commentary, this method unpacks the layers of symbolism and cultural resonance embedded in their content.

For instance, the #EndSARS movement provides a rich case for analysis. Influencers employed hashtags, images, and videos to construct a collective identity and mobilize international attention. Through interpretive analysis, this study examines how these digital artifacts created a shared narrative of resistance and empowerment. Similarly, the study explores how influencers in the fashion and music industries use storytelling to promote cultural pride and reshape global perceptions of Nigeria.

1.4 Research Objectives and Structure

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

Firstly, it aims to analyse the multifaceted roles of digital influencers in shaping cultural and political discourse within Nigeria. The research investigates how influencers use their platforms to promote cultural pride, redefine social norms, and foster collective political action.

Secondly, the study evaluates the inclusivity and accessibility of the digital public sphere as mediated by influencers, with particular attention to how power imbalances, commercialization, and digital divides affect the authenticity and reach of their narratives.

Thirdly, it seeks to identify the challenges and risks associated with influencer-driven narratives, including the spread of misinformation, the commodification of activism, and the potential for reinforcing elitism in digital spaces.

Finally, the research aims to propose actionable strategies for optimizing the potential of digital influencers as agents of positive societal change. By addressing issues of accountability, inclusivity, and representation, the study offers recommendations for strengthening the role of influencers in fostering democratic discourse and cultural resilience.

2. Methodology

The methodology section outlines the interpretive framework, and the procedures used to examine the symbolic and narrative dimensions of influencer-driven content in Nigeria. This section provides a rationale for employing an interpretive hermeneutic approach and details the data sources, selection criteria, and analytic process.

2.1 Interpretive Hermeneutic Approach

The interpretive hermeneutic approach is rooted in the understanding that meaning is constructed through symbols, narratives, and discourse. This method prioritizes the subjective interpretations



of texts, images, and digital artifacts, enabling an in-depth exploration of how influencers create and disseminate meaning in the digital public sphere (Bell, 2011)

By focusing on the narrative strategies and symbolic representations employed by influencers, this approach reveals the deeper cultural and political resonances of their content. For example, an influencer's use of a hashtag like #EndSARS or a viral video can be analysed as a cultural artifact, reflecting and shaping collective identities and societal values.

2.2 Data Sources

The study draws on diverse data sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis. These include:

Social Media Content: Posts, tweets, videos, and images created by key influencers on platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

Hashtags and Trends: Analysis of popular hashtags like #EndSARS, #NigeriaDecides, and others to identify patterns of engagement and discourse.

Audience Reactions: User comments, retweets, and engagement metrics to understand public reception and interaction with influencer content.

Media Interviews: Interviews from mainstream media and YouTube channels of news platforms

2.3 Selection Criteria

Influencers included in the study were selected based on the following criteria:

Relevance: The influencer's active participation in cultural or political discourse, such as advocacy for social justice, cultural pride, or political mobilization.

Reach and Engagement: A substantial following and consistent engagement with their audience on digital platforms.

Diversity: Representation of a range of niches, including activism, fashion, music, and entertainment, to capture the multifaceted impact of influencers.

Impact: Demonstrated influence on public opinion or societal trends, particularly in the Nigerian context.

2.4 Analytical Process



The analysis involves several steps to unpack the layers of meaning in influencer content:

Content Analysis: Identifying recurring themes, symbols, and narratives in influencer-driven posts, videos, and campaigns.

Contextual Interpretation: Situating the content within broader cultural and political contexts, such as ongoing social movements, elections, or cultural festivals.

Audience Dynamics: Examining how followers engage with and reinterpret influencer content, contributing to its meaning-making process.

Critical Reflection: Assessing the implications of influencer narratives for inclusivity, authenticity, and the democratization of the public sphere.

This multi-step process ensures a thorough understanding of how digital influencers mediate cultural and political discourse in Nigeria, providing insights into their transformative potential and limitations.

3. The Cultural Impact of Digital Influencers

Digital influencers have become pivotal figures in shaping Nigeria's cultural identity, leveraging their platforms to mediate trends, amplify local narratives, and foster global visibility for Nigerian culture (Adeoba & Yeku, 2024). This section examines their roles as tastemakers, cultural mediators, and storytellers.

3.1 Influencers as Tastemakers

Influencers in the realms of fashion, music, and lifestyle wield considerable influence over what is deemed culturally relevant and aspirational. Through curated content, endorsements, and collaborations, they set trends that resonate with both local and global audiences (Harshika & Nag, 2024). For example, influencers like Toke Makinwa and Denola Grey have redefined contemporary Nigerian fashion, blending traditional elements with modern aesthetics to showcase a uniquely Nigerian yet globally appealing identity.

Moreover, influencers often collaborate with local designers, musicians, and artists to promote Nigerian culture on the world stage. These partnerships not only elevate local talents but also contribute to the global appreciation of Nigerian creativity. By acting as intermediaries between grassroots creators and international audiences, influencers play a crucial role in cultural diplomacy and soft power.

3.2 Amplifying Local Narratives

Digital influencers go beyond aesthetics to function as cultural custodians, using their platforms to highlight and celebrate Nigerian stories, traditions, and values in ways that connect deeply with diverse audiences (Adams, 2024). Through creative storytelling and digital engagement, these influencers tap into personal experiences and historical contexts, constructing narratives



that resonate with local audiences and global viewers. For example, food critics like Opeyemi Famakin leverage social media to document and popularize traditional Nigerian cuisine, effectively bridging generational and cultural gaps. By curating content that showcases dishes such as Jollof rice, Egusi soup, and Suya, Famakin has revitalized interest in Nigerian culinary heritage, making it appealing and accessible to younger Nigerians and international viewers. In a 2024 podcast posted on YouTube, the audience described his views on Nigerian cuisine as ‘audacious’ and ‘unapologetic’ (Echoo Room, 2024). In the music industry, influencers like Don Jazzy have been pivotal in championing Afrobeats, which has now become a global phenomenon. Don Jazzy’s role in fostering talents and promoting Nigerian music through social media platforms has amplified the genre’s reach, elevating artists like Rema, Ayra Starr, and others to international stardom. In a 2021 interview with the Daily Post, he stated that he leveraged social media to discover new talents who could give Afrobeats more global recognition (Olowolagba, 2021).

Through their efforts, Nigerian culture is presented as dynamic and innovative, dispelling monolithic stereotypes and creating new opportunities for cultural export. By emphasizing the vibrancy and richness of Nigerian traditions, these influencers instill a sense of pride and belonging among Nigerians while simultaneously reshaping global perceptions of the country. As Hartley (2023) notes, digital influencers have become key agents in reframing African cultural narratives, proving that storytelling through digital platforms can be a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy.

3.3 Influencers, Cultural Promotion, and Tensions in Nigeria: A Critical Examination (2019-2024)

Digital influencers in Nigeria have become powerful figures in shaping the country’s cultural identity, both within its borders and internationally (Omenugba et al, 2016). As tastemakers, narrators, and mediators of culture, they play a vital role in the way Nigerian culture is perceived and experienced. However, this influence is fraught with complex cultural tensions, especially when it comes to issues like cultural appropriation, the erosion of traditional values, and the commercialization of cultural heritage. Drawing on examples between 2019 and 2024, one can explore how these influencers navigate such challenges while contributing positively to cultural promotion.

A significant challenge for Nigerian influencers is the risk of cultural appropriation, a contentious issue where elements of traditional Nigerian culture are used out of context or for commercial gain, often by individuals who may not fully understand or respect their cultural significance. For example, in 2020, the popular Nigerian influencer and fashion entrepreneur, Chioma Ikokwu, faced backlash after launching a fashion line that incorporated traditional African prints and styles, but without acknowledging the deep cultural significance of these patterns. Many critics argued that this kind of commercialization of African cultural attire was an example of cultural appropriation, particularly because these patterns were being sold at premium prices, often detached from their original cultural contexts (Park & Chun, 2020). For example, Toke Makinwa and Denola Grey have redefined contemporary Nigerian fashion, blending traditional elements with modern aesthetics to showcase a uniquely Nigerian yet globally appealing identity. An interview with Denola Grey highlights his deliberate



approach to blending the old and the new. He sees his platform as a means for preserving Nigerian heritage while making it relatable to younger generations. Nigerian fashion isn't just about the past—it's about how we reinterpret it for the future," he noted in a 2022 podcast (TokeMoments, 2022)

Moreover, the blending of modern trends with traditional elements, while often innovative, has sparked debates about the authenticity of cultural representations (Sood, 2024). For instance, influencers in Nigeria frequently post content that mixes traditional Yoruba attire with contemporary streetwear or popularize food and dance fusions that are seen as creative expressions of Nigerian identity. However, critics argue that such hybridization can sometimes distort cultural heritage, leading to a version of (Nigerian) culture that is less grounded in its historical and social realities (Sood, 2024). For example, influencers like Nancy Isime, who often showcases fashion and beauty trends incorporating traditional Nigerian styles, have been criticized for simplifying or "watering down" these traditions for mass consumption

Perhaps the most pronounced challenge faced by Nigerian influencers is the commercialization of cultural content. The growing trend of monetizing cultural heritage through branded partnerships, product endorsements, and sponsored content raises important ethical questions about the commodification of Nigeria's rich cultural diversity (Nomishan & Sani, 2023). Nigerian influencers, many of whom have large followings both locally and globally, frequently partner with multinational brands like Pepsi, Nike, Puma, and Amazon, integrating local cultural symbols into global marketing strategies. While this collaboration can help elevate Nigeria's cultural profile, it also comes with a responsibility to preserve cultural authenticity. While these prominent influencers bring global attention to Nigerian culture, the influence of micro-influencers and community-based creators often adds depth to cultural representation. For example, regional influencers collaborating with local artisans can promote sustainable practices and preserve traditional craftsmanship.

For instance, in 2022, popular Nigerian singer and influencer, Wizkid, sparked a debate when he collaborated with a high-end fashion brand to launch a line that drew heavily on Afrobeat aesthetics and West African fashion trends. While the collaboration brought global attention to Nigerian culture, Many Nigerians contended that the commercialization of Afrobeat culture, originally rooted in social and political activism, had become more of a marketing tool for international luxury brands. This exemplifies the ethical dilemma faced by influencers in balancing their roles as cultural ambassadors with the demands of profit-driven branding (CJ, 2022)

The issue is not only about fashion but extends to music, cuisine, and other cultural domains. Nigerian food bloggers, such as Ify and Nkiru, who have gained international recognition for sharing Nigerian dishes, often face criticism for how they present traditional recipes in a manner that is tailored to global taste buds, sometimes losing the essence of their original preparation. The commercialization of Nigerian cuisine through partnerships with food delivery services or global food brands raises concerns about whether these influencers are misrepresenting Nigerian food culture for profit, ultimately commodifying what was once a deeply personal and communal tradition (Adegoju, 2024). In light of these challenges, influencers in Nigeria must find a delicate balance between cultural preservation and the pressures of commercial success. While it is



undeniable that digital platforms offer a significant opportunity to promote Nigerian culture to a global audience, the question remains: how can influencers ensure they remain faithful to their roots while engaging in profitable ventures?

One example of an influencer who has managed to balance cultural integrity with commercialization is Teni Apata, a popular Nigerian musician and influencer. Teni has successfully integrated elements of Nigerian folklore and language into her music and public persona while also securing lucrative brand deals with global companies. Her ability to celebrate Nigerian culture through music and storytelling, without diluting its essence, has earned her a reputation as an ambassador for Nigerian culture. Teni has also used her platform to address social issues, particularly around gender and identity, showcasing that influencers can use their power to promote cultural pride and advocacy while still navigating the commercial world.

Similarly, influencers like Folake Kuye Huntoon, a fashion blogger and content creator known for her commitment to showcasing traditional Nigerian fashion, work to strike a balance by creating content that both celebrates and preserves Nigerian culture. By collaborating with local artisans and supporting sustainable fashion initiatives, she uses her platform to advocate for a deeper appreciation of Nigerian craftsmanship while also benefiting from brand partnerships.

Hence, digital influencers in Nigeria play an indispensable role in the evolution of the country's cultural identity. They are central to how Nigerian culture is presented and perceived on the global stage, often serving as the bridge between traditional heritage and contemporary trends (Adams, 2024) However, this influence is not without its challenges. Issues such as cultural appropriation, the erosion of traditional values, and the commercialization of cultural heritage present significant tensions that influencers must navigate.

Through their roles as tastemakers, narrators, and mediators, influencers shape cultural dialogue, bringing Nigerian culture to a global audience while also influencing local trends (Omenugba, 2016) But this process requires a nuanced understanding of the delicate balance between celebrating cultural identity, commercial interests, and ethical considerations. The future of Nigerian influencers will likely depend on how they manage this balance, ensuring that cultural preservation and commercial success can coexist without compromising the authenticity and integrity of Nigerian heritage.

Micro-Influencers and Marginalized Voices

While prominent influencers such as Mr. Macaroni and Falz have played key roles in shaping discourse, it is equally important to recognize the contributions of micro-influencers and regional content creators in diversifying Nigeria's digital public sphere. Unlike their more prominent counterparts, micro-influencers often operate within niche communities, focusing on localized narratives that resonate deeply with underrepresented groups. For instance, northern Nigerian influencers like Aisha Aliyu Tsamiya, a Hausa-language filmmaker, have been pivotal in promoting regional culture and language through content that highlights northern traditions.

Similarly, grassroots culinary bloggers like Fatima Adamu, who documents Fulani food practices, provide a window into cultural identities that might otherwise be overshadowed in



national discourse. By elevating these voices, the analysis better aligns with Habermas' Public Sphere Theory, which emphasizes equal access and participation in public discourse—failing to include such marginalized perspectives risks perpetuating the inequalities the digital public sphere should challenge.

4. The Political Implications of Digital Influencers

4.1 Influencers as Activists and Advocates

Digital influencers in Nigeria have played significant roles in political advocacy and activism, particularly during critical periods such as the #EndSARS protests in 2020 (Oghogho & Osazuwa, 2024). Influencers like Mr. Macaroni and Falz used their platforms to highlight police brutality and mobilize grassroots support for systemic change. Their content—ranging from live-streamed protest footage to emotionally charged commentary—galvanized both local and international attention, transforming social media into a powerful tool for political mobilization. In a televised news report on the live-streamed protest commemorating the second anniversary of the #EndSARS protest, viewers on YouTube described the activism of Falz and Mr. Macaroni as using their celebrity status to say the truth and speak for the masses (Arise News, 2022). The #EndSARS movement exemplifies how influencers act as intermediaries between citizens and global audiences, amplifying the voices of marginalized groups and drawing international scrutiny to local injustices (Oghogho & Osazuwa, 2024). For instance, DJ Switch's live Instagram broadcast of the Lekki Toll Gate shooting brought real-time documentation of state violence to a global audience, challenging official narratives and underscoring the potential of influencers to disrupt state-controlled information channels.

In addition to the role of prominent digital influencers, that of smaller, regionally focused influencers should not be overlooked. Activists from underserved areas like the Niger Delta used digital platforms to highlight the unique challenges their communities face such as environmental degradation and resource mismanagement. By incorporating micro-influencers from marginalised communities, the digital public sphere becomes more representative. However, the lack of structural support such as limited internet access and the bias of algorithms hinders these voices from gaining equal visibility.

4.2 Influencers in Electoral Politics

During elections, influencers serve as critical players in shaping public opinion and voter behaviour. In the 2023 general elections, influencers like Aisha Yesufu and social media platforms became arenas for electoral discourse, with influencers endorsing candidates, fact-checking claims, and encouraging voter participation. Their ability to break down complex political issues into accessible narratives allowed them to engage younger, digitally-savvy voters who might otherwise disengage from traditional political channels (King et al, 2016)

For example, the widespread use of the hashtag #NigeriaDecides2023 demonstrated how influencers leveraged their networks to provide real-time election updates, expose instances of voter suppression, and counter misinformation. By doing so, they contributed to a more



transparent electoral process, even as challenges like online harassment and misinformation persisted (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2023)

4.3 Challenges of Misinformation and Polarization

While influencers can facilitate political engagement, their platforms are also susceptible to the spread of misinformation and divisive rhetoric. During the #EndSARS protests, false narratives circulated alongside authentic reports, often amplified unintentionally by influencers with large followings. This underscores the double-edged nature of influencer-driven political discourse, where the rapid spread of information can simultaneously empower and mislead audiences (Velte, 2018)

In the 2023 elections, some influencers were accused of partisan bias and spreading unverified claims, exacerbating existing political tensions. For instance, viral posts alleging electoral fraud often lacked substantiated evidence but gained traction due to the credibility associated with high-profile influencers. Such incidents highlight the need for greater accountability and media literacy among both influencers and their audiences (Abumbe & Owa, 2024). Misinformation remains a significant challenge for influencers, particularly during politically charged events like elections or protests. While prominent influencers are often credited with exposing injustices, regional creators play a crucial role in countering localized misinformation that might escape broader scrutiny. Initiatives that include independent fact-checkers and training programs for influencers, regardless of their following size, are critical for fostering a more informed and equitable digital landscape

Hence, digital influencers play multifaceted roles in Nigeria's political landscape, acting as activists, commentators, and mobilizers. While their platforms offer opportunities for democratic engagement and advocacy, they also present risks related to misinformation, polarization, and ethical accountability. Understanding these dynamics is essential for leveraging the transformative potential of digital influencers in fostering a more equitable political discourse.

5. Challenges Associated with Digital Influencers

The influence of digital personalities on Nigeria's cultural and political landscapes is transformative yet fraught with significant challenges. This section critically examines the risks and limitations of digital influencers, focusing on misinformation, the digital divide, and the commercialization of activism. These challenges highlight the complex dynamics at play and the need for a nuanced approach to engaging with digital influencers in societal discourse (Ghobadi & Sonenshein, 2024)

5.1 Misinformation and the Erosion of Trust

One of the most pressing challenges associated with digital influencers is their potential to spread misinformation, either intentionally or inadvertently. The viral nature of social media amplifies the reach of unverified or misleading content, often with far-reaching consequences.



(Govindankutty & Gopalan, 2023) In Nigeria, this issue was starkly illustrated during the #EndSARS protests in 2020. While many influencers used their platforms to advocate for justice and police reform, some shared unverified claims, such as inflated casualty figures or unsubstantiated allegations against specific individuals. Although these actions were often well-intentioned, they risked undermining the credibility of the broader movement.

Misinformation propagated by influencers extends beyond activism, affecting cultural representation and the preservation of heritage. In their pursuit of engaging content or bolstering their brand, some influencers often oversimplify or distort Nigerian traditions, cultural practices, and historical events. (Adams, 2024) This distortion is sometimes unintentional, driven by a lack of deep understanding, but it can also be deliberate, aimed at creating dramatic narratives that appeal to a wider audience. For instance, in the case of the Osun-Osogbo Festival—a UNESCO-recognized cultural event—misrepresentations by influencers have included exaggerated depictions of rituals or erroneous claims about the festival's origins. Such inaccuracies have sparked a backlash from cultural custodians, who view these portrayals as disrespectful and harmful to the authenticity of Nigeria's rich heritage (Mackay et al., 2017)

These actions risk not only eroding the cultural significance of such traditions but also alienating the communities that sustain them. Additionally, the widespread reach of social media amplifies these inaccuracies, potentially leading global audiences to form misinformed perceptions of Nigerian culture. This trend underscores the need for influencers to engage with cultural custodians and historians to ensure their content is both accurate and respectful. By doing so, influencers can play a positive role in preserving and promoting Nigeria's cultural heritage rather than inadvertently contributing to its misrepresentation

The erosion of trust in digital platforms due to misinformation also affects audience engagement. As followers grow increasingly sceptical of the authenticity of influencer content, the perceived reliability of influencers as cultural or political mediators diminishes. Addressing this challenge requires greater accountability mechanisms, such as fact-checking initiatives and digital literacy campaigns tailored to influencers and their audiences (Peter & Muth, 2023)

5.2 The Digital Divide and Unequal Representation

The digital divide—disparities in access to internet infrastructure, digital tools, and literacy—poses a significant barrier to inclusive cultural and political discourse mediated by influencers. (Sylvester & McGlynn, 2010) While Nigeria has witnessed exponential growth in internet usage, with over 122 million active users as of 2023, rural communities and economically disadvantaged groups remain underrepresented in digital spaces. (Kemp, 2023) This gap in access is not merely technological but also intersects with issues of economic inequality, education, and language barriers.

In rural areas, internet connectivity remains sporadic, and high costs associated with data and devices further restrict access for economically disadvantaged populations. A 2022 report by the Nigerian Communications Commission found that broadband penetration in rural areas was below 50%, despite urban centres boasting significantly higher figures. As a result, rural



communities face limited opportunities to engage with or contribute to the influencer-led digital public sphere.

This exclusion creates a significant gap in representation, as the concerns, traditions, and voices of rural Nigerians are often missing from the narratives constructed online. For instance, during the 2023 general elections, political influencers primarily focused on urban voters, using platforms like Twitter and Instagram to promote hashtags such as #NigeriaDecides2023. (H et al., 2023) However, the reliance on such platforms inadvertently sidelined rural voters, who often lack both the infrastructure and digital literacy to participate meaningfully. Consequently, the concerns of these communities, including access to basic amenities, healthcare, and education, received less attention in the influencer-driven discourse.

In the realm of cultural discourse, similar dynamics unfold. Indigenous communities, often located in remote areas, possess a wealth of cultural knowledge and practices that could enrich Nigeria's digital public sphere. Yet, these perspectives are frequently overshadowed by high-profile influencers who prioritize narratives with greater commercial appeal. (Cheng, 2015) For example, while influencers might showcase elements of traditional fashion, music, or festivals, the content is typically curated for urban or international audiences, often reducing cultural practices to simplified or commodified versions.

This marginalization is further exacerbated by the predominance of English and Pidgin as the primary languages of digital communication. Indigenous languages, which are integral to many rural communities, rarely feature in influencer content, creating a linguistic barrier that excludes significant portions of the population.

The digital divide also magnifies power imbalances within the influencer economy. High-profile influencers with access to cutting-edge technology, production teams, and robust sponsorships dominate online conversations, crowding out emerging voices from marginalized communities. Micro-influencers, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, often struggle to gain visibility due to limited resources and the algorithmic biases of social media platforms that prioritize popular content.

To address these disparities, deliberate efforts must be made to democratize access to digital platforms. Government and private sector partnerships, such as those outlined in Nigeria's National Broadband Plan, must prioritize expanding affordable and reliable internet access to rural areas. Beyond infrastructure, digital literacy programs tailored to rural communities can empower individuals to engage more effectively in the digital public sphere.

Promoting local content creators from underrepresented groups is equally crucial. Initiatives such as mentorship programs, funding for grassroots creators, and collaborations between high-profile influencers and regional voices can amplify diverse perspectives. Influencers themselves can play a proactive role by engaging with marginalized communities, incorporating their narratives into mainstream discourse, and using their platforms to highlight issues affecting rural and economically disadvantaged Nigerians.



By bridging the digital divide, Nigeria's digital public sphere can move closer to inclusivity, ensuring that the voices of rural and economically marginalized groups contribute to shaping the country's cultural and political identity. This effort would not only enrich the diversity of digital discourse but also foster a more equitable representation of Nigeria's multifaceted society.

5.3 The Commercialization of Activism

The monetization of digital platforms has given rise to the commercialization of activism, where influencers engage in social or political causes primarily for personal or financial gain (Hutchinson, 2021). While influencer activism can bring critical issues to the forefront, the blurring of ethical lines between genuine advocacy and profit-driven engagement undermines the authenticity of their contributions.

During the #EndSARS protests, for example, some influencers were criticized for using the movement to boost their brand visibility, with allegations of staged photo opportunities and selective participation. Similarly, cultural influencers have been accused of exploiting traditional themes for lucrative brand endorsements without meaningful engagement with the communities they claim to represent.

The commercialization of activism poses long-term risks to societal trust in influencer-led initiatives. Audiences may grow cynical about the motives behind influencer campaigns, diminishing their impact and effectiveness. To mitigate these risks, influencers must adopt transparent practices, such as declaring sponsored content and ensuring that advocacy efforts are grounded in genuine community engagement. Additionally, platforms and regulatory bodies should encourage ethical guidelines for influencer activities, balancing profitability with social responsibility. By tackling these issues, Nigeria's digital ecosystem can evolve into a more inclusive and credible space for societal engagement.

6. Strategies for Optimizing the Role of Digital Influencers

To address the challenges associated with digital influencers and enhance their contributions to Nigeria's cultural and political discourse, it is essential to implement targeted strategies. This section proposes actionable measures to combat misinformation, bridge the digital divide, and mitigate the commercialization of activism. These strategies aim to foster a more inclusive, credible, and socially responsible digital ecosystem.

6.1 Combating Misinformation Through Education and Regulation

Misinformation poses a significant threat to the credibility of digital influencers and the public sphere (Osimen & Adeyefa, 2024). Tackling this challenge requires a multifaceted approach involving education, regulatory frameworks, and platform accountability.

Promoting digital literacy is essential to mitigate the spread of false information. By providing workshops and online courses, influencers can learn to verify sources, fact-check claims, and communicate responsibly (Shuni & Mukoshy, 2024). For example, campaigns in Nigeria



launched by NGOs and platforms like Facebook and Twitter have aimed to improve information accuracy during elections.

Social media platforms must also enhance their accountability mechanisms. Algorithms should prioritize credible sources, and influencers should be required to disclose their sources when sharing news (Lanius et al., 2021). During the 2023 elections, Twitter introduced tags for misleading posts, a feature that could be extended to influencer content.

Establishing collaborative fact-checking networks with independent organizations can further enhance credibility. These networks would provide influencers with verified information, debunking false claims before they are shared (Jones et al., 2022). Incentives such as recognition programs or financial support could encourage influencers to participate in these networks, helping to build public trust and ensuring content integrity.

6.2 Bridging the Digital Divide Through Infrastructure and Inclusion

The digital divide exacerbates social and economic inequalities, particularly for marginalized groups with limited access to digital tools, hindering their representation in Nigeria's digital public sphere (Fuchs & Horak, 2008). Bridging this gap requires infrastructure investments, such as expanding broadband coverage to rural areas and ensuring affordable internet access for all. Inclusive policies must prioritize equitable participation to foster diverse narratives and cultural representation online. Empowering underrepresented voices, including women, youth, and indigenous communities, is essential through targeted initiatives like training, grants, and support for local influencers.

Government and private sector collaborations are key to expanding affordable internet, particularly in underserved regions. Efforts like Nigeria's National Broadband Plan, aiming for 90% internet penetration by 2025, are steps towards addressing these disparities (Nigeria National Broadband Plan, n.d.).

To empower local content creators, platforms and sponsors should provide grants, mentorship, and visibility initiatives for marginalized influencers (Blanchet-Cohen & Cook, 2014). Highlighting indigenous creators and promoting their narratives can diversify perspectives.

Additionally, establishing community digital hubs equipped with internet access and training programs can empower rural communities to engage in the digital public sphere (Ashmore & Price, 2018). These hubs can foster local influencers, helping them reach wider audiences and contribute to a more inclusive digital ecosystem.

6.3 Promoting Ethical Practices to Mitigate Commercialization of Activism

The commercialization of activism occurs when influencers prioritize financial gain over genuine advocacy, often resulting in superficial or insincere campaigns. (Scharff, 2023) This undermines the authenticity of their efforts, causing audiences to question their motives and eroding trust in their messages.



Several high-profile cases illustrate the ethical dilemmas associated with the commercialization of activism. During the #EndSARS protests in 2020, some influencers faced backlash for monetizing their involvement in the movement. Critics accused them of using branded hashtags or partnering with commercial entities under the guise of activism. For instance, influencers promoting protest-related merchandise, such as T-shirts or wristbands, without contributing proceeds to the movement or affected communities were accused of exploiting the cause for personal gain. These actions sparked debates about the fine line between raising awareness and profiting from advocacy.

Another case involved an influencer who collaborated with a global NGO to promote a campaign against child labour. While the campaign garnered significant attention, investigative reports later revealed that the influencer had minimal interaction with the affected communities. This raised questions about the campaign's legitimacy and whether the partnership prioritized optics over substantive impact. Critics highlighted the absence of community engagement and the failure to address systemic issues, framing the initiative as a missed opportunity for genuine advocacy.

To ensure the credibility of digital influencers, ethical practices must be promoted through transparency and accountability. Influencers should disclose any sponsorships linked to their activism, with regulatory bodies like Nigeria's Advertising Regulatory Council enforcing these guidelines. Introducing certification programs for influencers that reward responsible practices, such as transparency and community engagement, can create benchmarks for authenticity in the digital space.

Influencers should also partner with grassroots organizations to ensure their advocacy aligns with community needs (Farid, 2019). For example, during the #EndSARS movement, influencers collaborating with local NGOs were more effective in building trust and driving impact than those relying solely on social media visibility.

These strategies will help influencers navigate misinformation, inequality, and commercialization while reinforcing their role in driving positive cultural and political change.

7.1 Leveraging Technological Innovation

Future research and policy should focus on leveraging innovative technologies to enhance influencer engagement and accountability. AI tools can help influencers fact-check content and identify underrepresented voices, promoting inclusivity. Blockchain can ensure transparency in influencer-led activism by verifying the deployment of raised funds. Additionally, augmented reality (AR) can create immersive experiences that showcase Nigeria's cultural heritage, blending cultural preservation with digital engagement. These technologies will enable influencers to be more accountable and impactful in their roles.

7.2 Promoting Participatory Governance



Digital influencers play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing policymaking. To fully harness their potential, strategies should focus on integrating them into participatory governance frameworks, enabling them to act as intermediaries between policymakers and the public while fostering inclusive governance.

One approach is engaging influencers in policy co-creation, particularly on digital rights and cultural preservation issues. Their ability to communicate with diverse audiences makes them ideal collaborators for ensuring governance processes incorporate various perspectives. Additionally, influencers can amplify civic education by partnering with government agencies, such as INEC, to boost voter turnout and public engagement in elections.

To maximize impact, grassroots engagement is vital. Collaborating with community leaders and NGOs allows influencers to create localized campaigns tailored to specific cultural contexts. Initiatives like workshops and town halls enable direct community interaction, ensuring their voices inform broader advocacy efforts, as demonstrated during the #EndSARS movement. Moreover, influencers can address digital divides by partnering with NGOs to provide resources like smartphones, internet access, and digital literacy training, empowering underserved communities to engage in governance.

By leveraging their broad reach and adopting community-focused approaches, digital influencers can transform participatory governance, promoting inclusive policymaking and societal equity.

7.3 Fostering Ethical Digital Ecosystems

Building an ethical digital ecosystem is essential for maintaining the credibility and effectiveness of digital influencers. Ethics training programs and certification schemes endorsed by regulatory bodies can instill principles like transparency, accountability, and social responsibility, providing influencers with clear ethical guidelines. Social media platforms should collaborate with local stakeholders to create accountability mechanisms, such as independent audits, to address challenges like fake news and exploitative content monetization. Additionally, community-driven regulations, developed in consultation with influencer communities and civil society, ensure that policies are both effective and equitable, balancing innovation with ethical considerations.

Conclusion

Digital influencers have become indispensable actors in Nigeria's cultural and political discourse, wielding the power to inspire change, shape narratives, and bridge divides. However, their influence comes with significant challenges that require collective action from policymakers, platforms, and society. By leveraging technological innovations, fostering participatory governance, and building ethical digital ecosystems, Nigeria can harness the transformative potential of digital influencers while addressing their limitations.



As the popular Nigerian Pidgin English proverb says, "If person waka fast, e go waka alone; but if person waka well, dem go waka together." (If you walk fast, you will walk alone; but if you walk well, you will walk together.) The journey toward a more inclusive, credible, and impactful digital landscape requires collaboration, patience, and shared responsibility. Through these efforts, digital influencers can truly become champions of cultural heritage and agents of political progress in Nigeria's dynamic digital age.

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Unfolding Gender Discrimination in Education: The Case of Female Children in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

Gender discrimination is a significant issue affecting women and young girls worldwide. This article examines the causes of gender discrimination within the Gbagyi community in Abuja, Northern Nigeria, and its impact on the education of female children. Using focus group discussions, the main finding reveals the extent to which women and girls in this region face various forms of discrimination, including limited access to education and cultural practices that perpetuate gender-based stereotypes. The research also highlights the role of family, cultural, and societal norms in prioritizing the education of boys over girls, leading to gender disparities in education within the Gbagyi community. Challenges faced by female children in accessing education include early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and household responsibilities. These obstacles limit their educational opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and inequality. In conclusion, addressing the underlying causes of gender discrimination and promoting education for all can create a more equitable and just society that values the contributions of all its members, regardless of gender.

Keywords: Nigeria, Gender, Discrimination, Gbagyi, Abuja, Education, Inequality

Introduction

Scholars argue that gender encompasses more than merely classifying individuals as male or female; it is a learned set of behaviors that influence actions on individual, communal, and institutional levels. A gendered mentality involves recognizing and accepting societal limitations imposed on individuals due to their gender. Kuehnast & Robertson (2018) contend that as communities gain new knowledge and adapt to changing norms, their attitudes towards gender roles can evolve. Gender analysis is a powerful tool for identifying power imbalances within society and facilitating structural changes, leading to improvements in governance institutions overall.

A core tenet of gender ideology in many societies is the belief in distinct societal roles for men and women, each with different social responsibilities and rights. This model perpetuates the stereotype that men should financially provide for their families, while women are expected to manage the home through domestic duties. More broadly, gender ideology refers to the beliefs and practices that justify and sustain gender inequality in influential settings such as the home, schools, and workplaces. Research maintains that people's experiences are directly shaped by ideologies and choices based on their gender (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). Attitudes and actions



in the home, workplace, and wider community are influenced by gender ideology, and whenever these roles evolve, it signals a shift in gender ideology.

As gender ideology shapes various aspects of society, one of its most profound impacts is on access to education. In many developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, gender-based segregation is often reinforced by informal policies that prioritize male education. As a result, male children are far more likely to enroll in and complete their education compared to their female counterparts, as Jayachandran (2015) confirms. This unequal access to education, supported by societal norms and expectations surrounding gender roles, further influences broader social patterns such as marriage, family structure, and socioeconomic status (Philipose, Toure, & Verhuist, 2018).

Female children who are denied equal educational opportunities often face the consequences of early marriages. A report jointly published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) identifies child marriage as one of the most pressing issues in West and Central Africa (2021). This practice has a severely detrimental effect on education, sexual and reproductive health, as well as the overall development of young girls and adolescents. The report reveals that nearly 60 million girls and young women, or 41% of the population, were married before the age of 18 in the region. Additionally, Nigeria, the most populous country in West and Central Africa, has the highest rate of child marriage. Of the estimated 42 million child brides across Africa, 40% reside in Nigeria (Philipose, Toure, & Verhuist, 2018).

Extensive research in West and Central Africa demonstrates that poverty and rural living are major factors influencing the prevalence of child marriage. Researchers document that child marriage is three times more common among the impoverished than among the wealthiest in the region. Evidently, according to the 2018 UNICEF and UNFPA report, over 80% of young women living in poverty in Nigeria were married as children, compared to only 10% of those from wealthier backgrounds (2019). Child marriage presents numerous challenges, particularly for young girls, as it often leads to the end of their education and prevents them from obtaining the qualifications necessary for their desired careers. These statistics underscore the urgent need for significant investment in girls' education to combat child marriage. Building on this understanding, the study examines gender discrimination within the Gbagyi community in Abuja, Northern Nigeria, and its impact on girls' education. It finds that cultural norms and societal beliefs place greater value on boys' education, resulting in lower school enrollment for girls. Challenges such as early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and domestic responsibilities further limit girls' educational opportunities, reinforcing cycles of poverty and inequality. The study also recommends changing cultural attitudes, promoting education for all, and implementing policies that ensure gender equality. Additionally, it highlights the need for financial support and incentives for families to educate their daughters, as well as addressing broader issues like poverty and gender-based violence. Tackling these challenges can help create a more equitable and just society.

Education & gender inequality in Africa: A Necessary background



Linking gender ideology to education, the Global Education Monitoring Report highlights that access to quality and sustainable education is one of the world's most pressing challenges, both now and in the future. Therefore, every society's goal should ensure that all children have the opportunity to attend school and continue learning throughout their lives, equipping them with the necessary skills to contribute to the growth of their communities. As quality education is a key tool for achieving sustainable development and global peace, UNESCO continues to prioritize gender equality in and through education, ensuring that the fundamental right to education is upheld for girls and women in the world (UNESCO, 2019).

Yet, poverty, inequality, and disparity are arguably one of the major impediments to schooling and education. Out of 796 million uneducated people globally, women make up over two-thirds of them (UNESCO, 2019). The central obstruction and limiting factor to women getting out of poverty is social constructs that deny them access to education. b. School enrollment clearly shows this gender disparity. Hurt (2019) argues that the gender enrollment gap in schools begins in elementary school and persists through high school. The number of girls who were not in school increased from 10 to 23 million in western Africa by 2019.

The female-to-male ratio for school enrollment in Africa is 0.76, the lowest Gender Parity Score (GPS) of any region globally. There is significant variation in country performance regarding women's education across the continent, with Southern African nations performing relatively well, while countries in West and Central Africa lag behind (UNDP, 2020). These statistics clearly show that a child's educational opportunities in Africa are influenced by both gender and location. Without focused efforts to support the most disadvantaged girls, achieving universal primary education in many sub-Saharan African countries will not be realized in this generation.

Achieving gender equality in education requires more than just equal school enrollment; it also involves providing opportunities for girls and women after graduation. To promote global development and peace, countries must develop strategies, educational policies, and plans to eliminate this inequality. Additionally, girls and women must have access to fields like science and technology, where they remain underrepresented. Unfortunately, gender disparities in education, economic and digital inclusion, and political participation have worsened over the past four years (The Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2019). This affected girls' education as will be seen in the following section.

Interpreting the state of Girls' Education in Africa

Article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that everyone has the right to free education, especially in early development stages, and access to professional education. Parents or guardians can choose the early skills and knowledge their children should learn. In the context of Africa, a girl's education typically consists of three stages: early childhood (0-5 years), primary education (6-12 years), and secondary education (12-18 years). During these years, the girl-child is usually under the care of her parents or guardians, who help her develop her



character and behaviors. In this section, let us overview the main challenges imposed on girl education and share some of the potential ways to improve these obstacles.

a. Major obstacles to girl education in Africa

There are some significant challenges to educating girls in Africa in general. Some of these obstacles are as follows: *1. Access to education:* Some research suggests that education accessibility means that female children have the opportunity and ability to receive training and acquire knowledge. However, many Nigerian girls, as we will discuss later in the article, lack access to education due to factors such as child labor, poverty, lack of funds, truancy, broken homes, and parental death (Okeke, Nzewi, & Njoku, 2008). Additionally, more than half of the African population lives below the poverty line, resulting in many female children being excluded from education due to a lack of resources (Offorma, 2009).

In countries like Ethiopia, many girls are forced into marriage as early as the age eight. In West African nations such as Nigeria, females often work as domestic servants in poor rural households. Social and cultural factors are the main barriers to girls' education in African countries. For example, due to widespread poverty, families typically choose to educate boys over girls, who are expected to stay home, work, or marry wealthy men (Okeke, Nzewi, & Njoku, 2008). The patriarchal structure of African society prioritizes male children for the family's growth, leading to the neglect of girls' education.

Despite having strong regional and international programs to promote education, both male and female youngsters in Sub-Saharan Africa are poorly educated (Series, 2005). Initiatives like the Forum for African Women's Education (FAWE) network have not significantly improved the situation, with female students attending school for only about 2.82 years out of their first sixteen. Only 46% of female pupils typically complete their primary education (Forum for African Women's Education, 2024). In contrast, some nations, such as South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana, have achieved a Gender Equality in Education Index (GEEI) of 60 out of 100, which is impressive. Unfortunately, other African nations, including Ghana, Uganda, and Tanzania, have a GEEI score below 60, which has remained steady over the years. There are also significant gender enrollment disparities in African nations, such as Guinea Bissau, where only 60% of girls attend school compared to 100% of boys. In Mali's rural areas, the enrollment of female students is approximately 29%, indicating severe gender discrimination in these regions (Johannes, 2020).

2. Retention/Dropout: By the end of 2002, approximately 24 million girls in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, Chad, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and DRC, have dropped out of school. The South Sudan region had the highest proportion of female dropouts due to ongoing civil conflicts. According to Offorma (2009), only 15% of school-age children were enrolled, with just 1% being female students. Social and cultural views have significantly contributed to the high dropout rate among female students in Sub-Saharan Africa. Komora (2016) adds that inadequate counseling, parental decisions, lack of job opportunities for educated women, preference for money, and the lengthy education process are primary factors for the high dropout rate among girls.



3. *Quality of Education*: The Jomtien Conference in 1990 aimed to ensure that all female children were enrolled in school during their first ten years at least to receive a decent education. The main issue was whether the education provided to girls was adequate to ensure their success in a male-dominated society. Ideally, Offorma stated that quality education enhances the general well-being of the girl-child but does not necessarily ensure her academic success. Consequently, we see child labor, sexual oppression, and corporal punishment hindering the development of young girls and the provision of proper education (2009).

4. *Child marriage*: In its 2019 report titled “Child Marriage in West and Central Africa: A Statistical Overview and Reflections on Ending the Practice,” UNICEF discusses the prevalence of child marriage and its severe impact on education, health and the overall development of young girls, especially in West and Central Africa. It was documented that approximately 41% of females under 18 in this region are married, equating to nearly 60 million child brides, with many of them younger than 15 years (Nigeria alone has about 22 million child brides). Poverty, rural living, and lack of education are strongly linked to the prevalence of child marriage, while wealth, urban living, and access to quality education reduce its incidence (Philipose, Toure, & Verhuist, 2018).

b. Ways to improve girl-child education in Africa

On the other hand, scholars maintained that improving girls’ education in Africa is not impossible, in fact, some argue that there are some methods already implemented over the years to ensure girls have equal education rights. For example, Kenya enacted the *Children Act* in 2001 to increase access to education for all children. The Kenyan government would arrest parents who neglected or failed to send their children to school; and if parents are found guilty of denying their child's right to education, they could be sentenced to up to five years in prison Offorma (2009). Additionally, several NGOs have emerged to combat child marriages in African society, educating parents about the importance of schooling for their daughters instead of pressuring them to marry older men. There has also been an increase in school-based nutrition programs, which help reduce the cost of enrolling girls in school.

Further, observers argue that some strategies could be also implemented to ensure every African girl receives an education. For example, governments can provide equal growth opportunities for boys and girls by addressing gender disparities in schools, aiming for equal enrollment. Series documented that after Uganda established universal primary education policy in 1997, 93% of boys and 90% of girls were enrolled in school (Series, 2005). Additionally, nations can focus on reducing the costs associated with enrolling and retaining girls in school. Series adds that these costs include direct expenses like tuition and indirect expenses like construction fees, shoes, and uniforms (2005). Eliminating indirect school fees can increase girls' participation in formal education.

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) highlight in their report that indirect costs, such as school uniforms, safety, and transportation, are often higher for girls than for boys. Reducing these costs would increase the number of girls attending school (2021). Additionally,



society should be prepared to bear the opportunity costs when girls are sent to school. These costs include the free services girls provide at home, such as cleaning, cooking, childcare, and water collection. In African cultures, girls are more likely than boys to care for sick parents or family members, which can hinder their ability to attend school. Society must be willing to bear these costs to ensure girls receive the education they need to improve their lives (UNGEI, 2021).

Indeed, improving the quality of education in Africa is crucial for ensuring girls' right to education. Series (2005) argues that reducing the cost of education alone is insufficient; enhancing the quality of education is also necessary. This includes employing effective teaching strategies, providing academic materials, updating curricula, involving the community, and improving school facilities. Several African nations have initiated projects to improve the quality of girls' education. For example, some of them require girls to enroll in school, and to include their retention in both the school and teacher's performance and evaluations. As well, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) asserts the role of schools which offer gender awareness training for teachers to help them understand the role of educated women in society. Communities have also developed guidelines to address gender-based violence and oppression, particularly in early marriages, and to support the education of pregnant girls. Assigning more female instructors to rural schools to serve as role models for young girls is another step to enhance girls' education in Africa (UNICEF, 2021).

Focus on Nigeria & Gender Discrimination

Here, the focus of analysis is Nigeria where gender discrimination is quite prevalent, especially in the northern regions. Cultural and religious traditions contribute to gender inequality, with women often viewed as subordinate to men (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021). Researchers add that Nigeria's patriarchal society allows men to dominate and discriminate against women, treating them as second-class citizens, particularly in rural areas (Ejumudo, 2013 & Makama, 2013). The 2012 "Gender Equality in Nigeria" report ranked the country 118th out of 134 countries (British Council, 2012). There is a common belief that women's roles are confined to domestic duties such as cooking, farming, managing the home, and caring for men. Women are often treated as property and subjected to mistreatment and abuse both at home and in the community (Makama, 2013). In many households, female children bear the heavy burden of household chores, while boys are given more opportunities for formal education or learning a trade (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021).

Despite the Nigerian Constitution's guarantees of gender equality and condemnation of discrimination, many women still face discrimination and marginalization. This inequality is often rooted in discriminatory laws, religious and cultural traditions, gender stereotypes, low education levels, and the disproportionate impact of poverty on women (Okafor & Akokuwebe, 2015). Gender inequality in Nigeria is influenced by various cultural and religious factors. In many parts of the country, especially in Northern Nigeria, women are often seen as second-class citizens or, in some cases, as the property of men.



A survey by the Department for International Development (DFID) in Nigeria revealed that both men and women uphold restrictive norms about gender roles within the home. About 91% of men and 94% of women agreed that a woman's primary role revolves around domestic responsibilities, including child and family care. Abuse and assault of females, including young girls, were often viewed as normal or commonplace. Conversely, traits such as toughness, sexual performance, and the ability to earn an income were considered masculine (British Council, 2012).

To promote the growth and development of any society, nation, or government, gender-based discrimination and inequality must be eliminated. Practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation, and violence against women and girls must be actively opposed. The rights of girls, including their sexual and reproductive health, must be protected. Ensuring access to quality education and opportunities to reach their full potential is essential for the development of every girl. To achieve development that benefits everyone, the root causes of poverty must be addressed. Ensuring equal treatment of women and men is crucial for this goal. While gender equality is significant in tackling global poverty, it is not the only factor. Other systems of oppression, such as colonialism and capitalism, also contribute to poverty in various parts of the world. Therefore, a comprehensive and effective approach to combating poverty must consider all potential causes (Mbah & Oti, 2015).

Sustainable development is unattainable if half of the population is prevented from reaching their full potential due to gender-based barriers. The future of any nation depends on the advancement of gender equality, making it essential for everyone to actively pursue this goal. Providing opportunities for girls and women to access their rights, contribute to economic growth, and shape their communities is crucial for building a prosperous and equitable future for all. Achieving gender equality is not just a matter of fairness; it is a vital step toward a more sustainable and inclusive world (DFID, 2018).

Gender Education & Literacy Levels in Nigeria

Nigeria's education system is not performing as well, as expected, for such a large and economically strong country. Despite having a high per capita income and being Africa's biggest economy, Nigeria ranks 161 out of 189 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI). This index measures how well people can live the lives they want. Nigeria's low ranking shows it has issues with poverty, inequality, and gender gaps. For example, Nigeria's 2019 HDI score was 0.539, but it drops to 0.348 when inequality is considered, a 35.4% decrease. This puts Nigeria in the category of countries with low human development and high inequality. The HDI looks at progress in life expectancy, health, education (average years of schooling), and living standards (UNDP, 2020).

A UNESCO report on Nigeria reveals that the primary school Net Registration Rate is 56% for girls and 61% for boys, with over 5.5 million girls not attending school (UNESCO, 2014a). The National Population Commission reports that 40% of women and 28% of men have never attended school, with the highest dropout rates occurring in the sixth grade, especially among



girls (UNESCO, 2014b). In the Northwest and Northeast regions, more than two-thirds of women have no schooling, while in the South-South, less than 15% percent of women are uneducated.

In Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions, girls and women are often excluded from education. Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children globally, with this figure increasing daily. Most of these 10.5 million out-of-school children are girls. Girls from the poorest families in rural areas of the North-West and North-East are the least likely to attend school. For example, 70.8% of women aged 20-29 in the Northwest are illiterate, compared to just 9.7% in the Southeast (British Council, 2014). Despite some efforts by the government and NGOs to improve educational access for girls, significant challenges remain.

According to the latest UNESCO Institute for Statistics data, about 10.1 million children in Nigeria are out of school, most of whom are girls. Girls from rural and poor communities face significant educational barriers, such as inadequate infrastructure, poverty, child marriage, and gender discrimination (UNESCO, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues, with school closures and economic hardships disproportionately affecting girls' education (UNESCO, 2020). The 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report warned that up to 20 million girls might not return to school after the pandemic, with Nigeria being at high risk (Global Partnership for Education, 2021). Literacy rates vary widely across regions, socioeconomic levels, gender, and age, with the southern regions having the highest literacy rates and the smallest gender gap, while the northern regions have lower literacy rates and a larger gender disparity.

As seen, gender disparities in literacy rates highlight both historical and ongoing inequalities in school enrollment and completion. Girls are more likely to drop out of elementary school and less likely to transition to or complete secondary education compared to boys. Factors like poverty, gender norms, and early marriage contribute significantly to school dropouts. Additionally, inequalities based on socioeconomic status, race, location, and disability worsen these gender disparities in education (Koissy-Kpein, 2020). Children from the poorest households are much less likely to enroll in school, with young women from the wealthiest 20% being four times more likely to be literate than those from the poorest 20% (UNESCO, 2015). Low literacy levels are also due to insufficient school facilities, poor sanitation, lack of textbooks, and a shortage of trained teachers. Rural living, combined with poverty and traditional practices, further increases the risk of educational exclusion. Therefore, addressing these educational barriers and bridging gender and socioeconomic disparities is crucial to ensure all children, especially girls, can reach their full potential and contribute to a more equitable and prosperous future.

Gbagyi People: Gender Inequality Case study

Africa hosts some of the world's fastest-growing economies, yet gender disparity continues to impede its full potential (African Development Bank, 2014). Research indicates that gender discrimination against female children and women is prevalent across Africa. This discrimination



stems from social institutions that impose restrictions, preventing women from achieving their full potential. These institutions enforce various laws, norms, traditions, and codes of conduct that limit women's rights. Such limitations are often embedded in customs and rituals, including female genital mutilation, child marriages, polygamy, and patriarchal authority, which restrict women's freedom of movement, personal choices, education, and inheritance (Jayachandran, 2015).

In many African countries, women lack basic rights and opportunities to escape poverty. While men can own land and property, women face restricted access to ownership, hindering their ability to build wealth and financial security. Additionally, African women are often denied education, a fundamental human right that could help them break free from poverty. Without education, women are less likely to secure well-paying jobs, exacerbating their economic challenges (Mutume, 2005).

Gender inequality has resulted in low female participation in economic activities and limited access to education and health resources for women. Efforts to improve women's conditions will have minimal impact if social institutions continue to discriminate against them (Jayachandran, 2015). Despite significant progress in some African countries towards gender parity, inequality remains widespread across the continent (Signe & Gurib-Fakim, 2019). While some women have managed to overcome these barriers, millions remain constrained. This persistent gender inequality hinders the social and economic development of women and prevents Africa from achieving its full economic potential. For instance, in 2018, women contributed only 33 percent of Africa's total GDP, despite making up more than half of the population (Moodley et al., 2019). This imbalance perpetuates inequality and threatens Africa's long-term economic health.

A study by the McKinsey Global Institute shows that progress toward gender equality in Africa has largely stalled between 2017 and 2021. If the current rate of progress continues, it will take over 140 years for the continent to achieve gender parity. In 2019, Africa's Gender Parity Score (GPS) was 0.58, indicating significant gender inequality across the 15 indicators of workplace and societal gender equality used to measure this score. The GPS, developed by McKinsey, tracks progress toward gender equality. South Africa's GPS of 0.76 reflects moderate gender inequality, while countries such as Mauritania, Mali, and Niger have some of the lowest scores in the region. However, accelerating efforts to close the gender gap could bring substantial economic benefits to Africa, potentially increasing the continent's total GDP by \$316 billion, or 10 percent, by 2025 (Moodley et al., 2019).

The Gbagyi people of Abuja are selected as the case study for several reasons. Firstly, their cultural and socioeconomic characteristics closely mirror those of other groups in Northern Nigeria. Additionally, the Bwari region of Abuja is home to followers of all major religions practiced in Nigeria, offering a unique opportunity to distinguish between religious and customary practices. The subjugation of women within Gbagyi culture reflects longstanding traditions, making it essential to study the impact of patriarchy on Gbagyi women. The Gbagyi have a deeply ingrained cultural and belief system that places women in subordinate roles to men, more so than in other tribes, thereby reinforcing patriarchal dominance (Ayuba, 2016). Moreover, the Gbagyi's cultural practices and belief system are intriguing and warrant closer examination. For instance, traditional beliefs dictate that only women are permitted to carry



heavy loads, as their God forbid men from doing so. Consequently, women bear the physical burden of carrying heavy weights on their shoulders and backs (Abiola, 2020).

Since this research aims to explore the cultural practices and social norms of the Gbagyi people, it will shades more light on understanding the experiences of Gbagyi women and assessing the potential for gender equality within the community.

Gbagyi or Agbari (plural: Agbagyi/Agbari) refers to the people and their language, primarily located in Central Nigeria, with a population of about 5 million. They are spread across Niger, the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, Kogi, Kaduna, and Nasarawa regions. In Nigeria's central belt and the Federal Capital Territory, the Gbagyi/Gbari are the largest indigenous and ethnic communities (Orisaremi, 2020). While the Gbagyi/Gbari are mainly farmers, some are skilled in clay sculpting and pottery. They create decorative household items like vases and traditional arts and crafts, including ceramic and wooden mortar and pestles (Abiola, 2020).

While Gbagyi people in towns and cities are relatively modernized, most Gbagyi in rural areas remain deeply rooted in tradition, including male leadership. The Gbagyi/Gbari follow a patrilineal kinship structure, still prevalent today. Authority starts at the extended family compound, led by the eldest male, and extends to the Esu/Osu (king), supported by a council of elders. Although the Gbagyi are increasingly adopting modern clothing, medical care, and livelihoods, many rural Gbagyi still undervalue education, as evidenced by low high school graduation rates (Ayuba, 2016).

Patriarchy is the dominant social order among the Gbagyi people, as it is in much of Nigeria, where males are considered superior to females. Educational opportunities hold little importance for the Gbagyi, who are primarily farmers and view education as a waste of time and resources (The Joshua Project, 2016). Consequently, if Gbagyi boys struggle to attend school, marginalized Gbagyi girls have even less access to education.

Research Methodology

Since the aim is to analyze gender inequality in Nigeria, how society views gender, and how this perception affects the country's economic growth and social progress, this study examines power dynamics in social groupings, institutions, and representation systems from both socio-historical and current perspectives. Furthermore, to fully grasp the significance of gender in power and socioeconomic advancement, the study also examines the intersections of privilege and oppression based on gender and ethnicity, with a focus on the Northern regions of Nigeria.

Methodologically, a case study research design aims to use several data sources and usually includes either quantitative methods, such as questionnaires, or qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups (Crowe et al., 2011). Here, interviews were used to collect the data: 21 participants aged between 15 and 65 years were selected from the target population; 15 females and 6 males. Ideally, this design aims to source data from different people, especially in a qualitative study, to boost the internal validity of the research. The central assumption in this method is that the responses given by the participants will result in the same findings. At the



same time, the use of several sources ensures that the researcher develops a holistic view of the research phenomena.

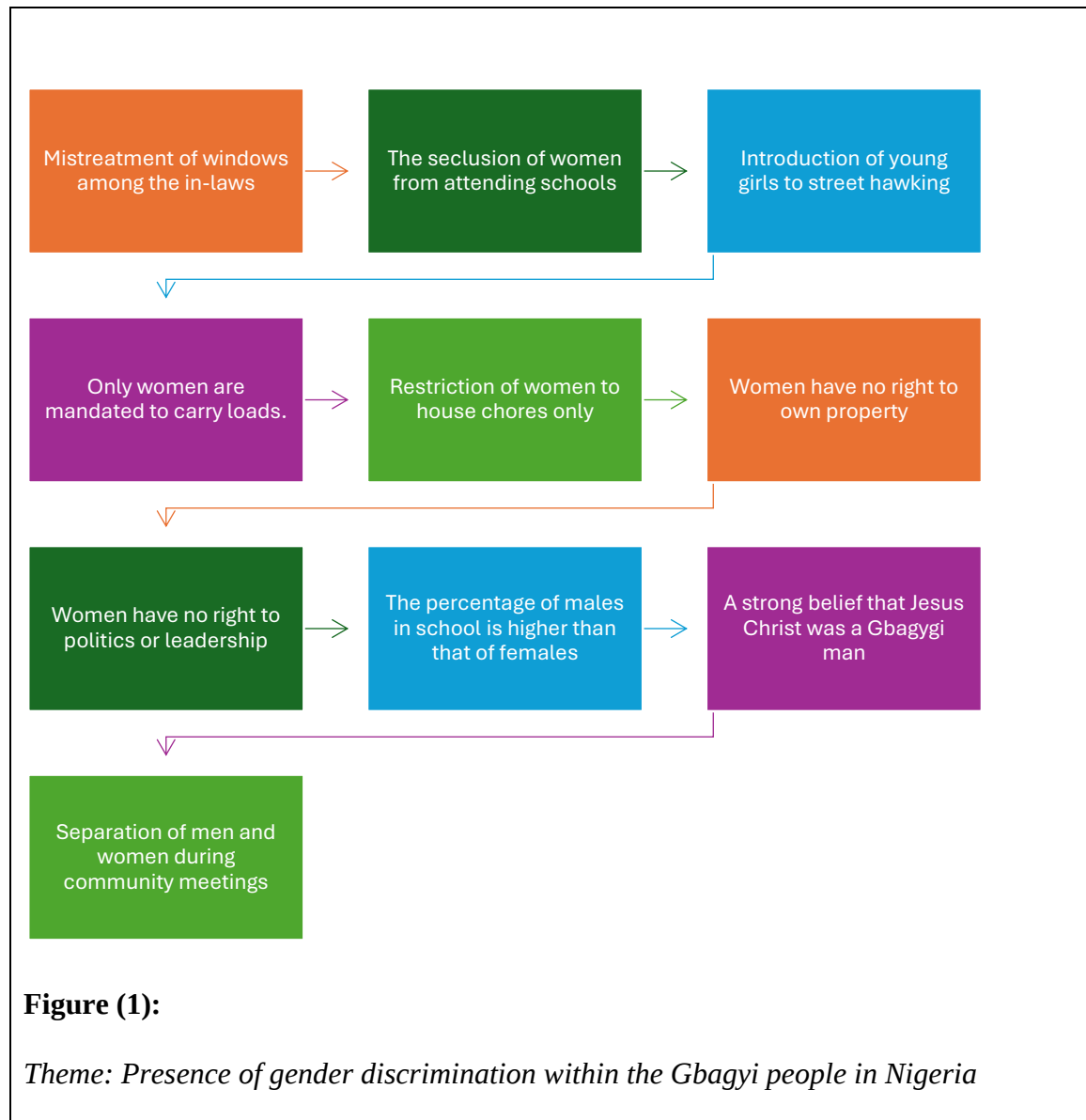
Interviews are common approaches to gathering data for research purposes. They are methods of data collection used by researchers to garner various information to help them arrive at their objective outcomes. Interviews can be structured or unstructured, also known as formal or informal. Structured interviews consist of standardized and premeditated questions, which apply to the quantitative research approach. In contrast, unstructured interviews are spontaneous and not calculated and are usually used for qualitative data collection (Formplus, 2021).

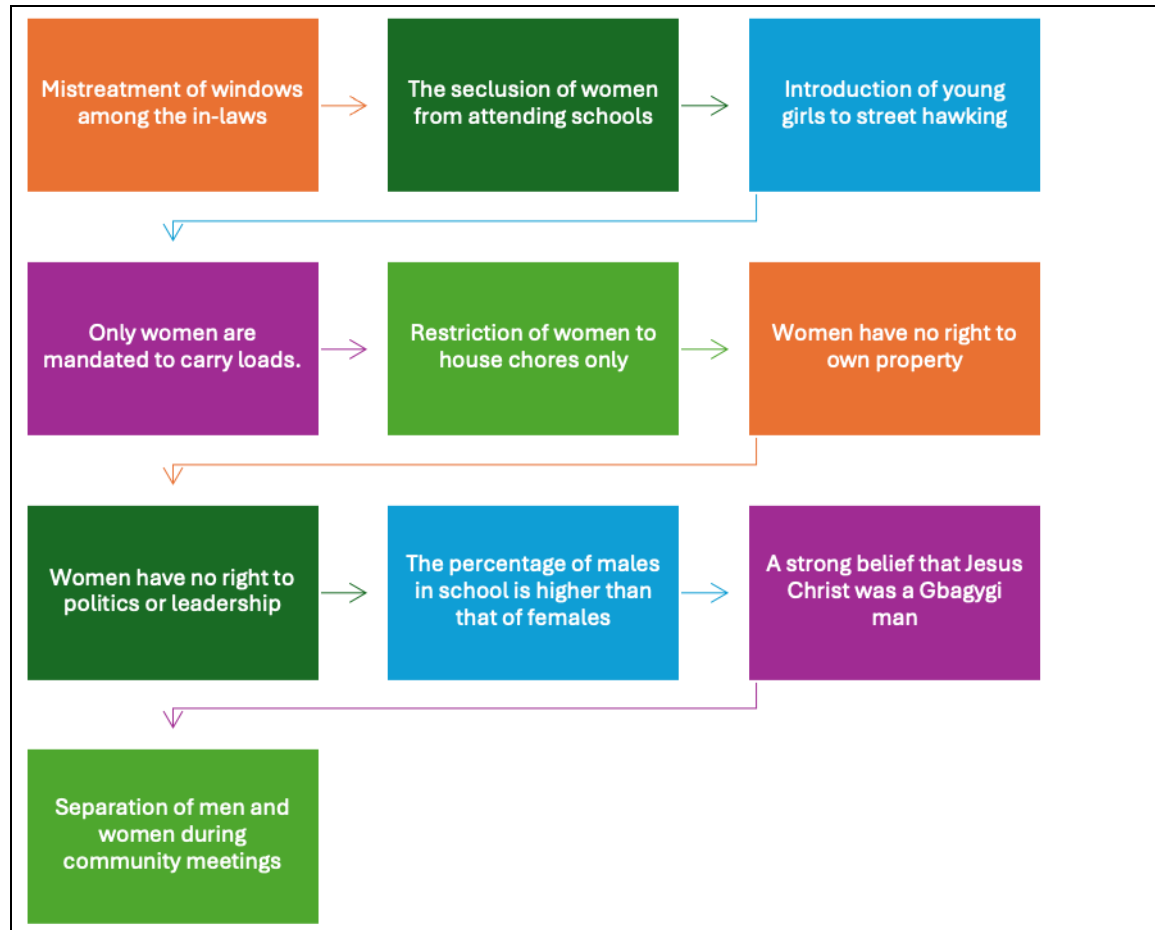
Since this research is qualitative, the paper adopted unstructured interviews as a critical instrument for primary data collection. In unstructured interviews, the approach is in-depth and detailed. No standardized questions are followed, rather, different research questions are developed for each participant. These questions leave room for observation; they are open-ended and allow the respondent to be as detailed and descriptive as possible. This interview format is more of an informal conversation with the respondents being interviewed. It allows for rapport, revealing vital information, thoughts, and ideas on complex issues like gender discrimination among the Gbagyi people. In addition, unstructured interviews allow for flexibility and qualitative observation. They give the respondent room to explore different perspectives, which aids in a rich array of data gathering for the interviewer (Formplus, 2021).

Data analysis was conducted using a mix of *Nvivo* and emergent coding, where coding is used to arrange and assemble the data based on the actual words of the interview respondents. Emergent coding classifies and categorizes the information and concepts emerging from the data according to themes in the best-suited way (Saldaña, 2013). As a result, data was labeled under four broad categories and subcategories, as detailed in the following section. All respondents have been coded anonymously and were given a title to correspond to their role in the research (for example: *Government employee, high school student, ...etc*). All interviews are conducted after obtaining the ethical approval of the Ethics Committee at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada.

Analysis & Discussion

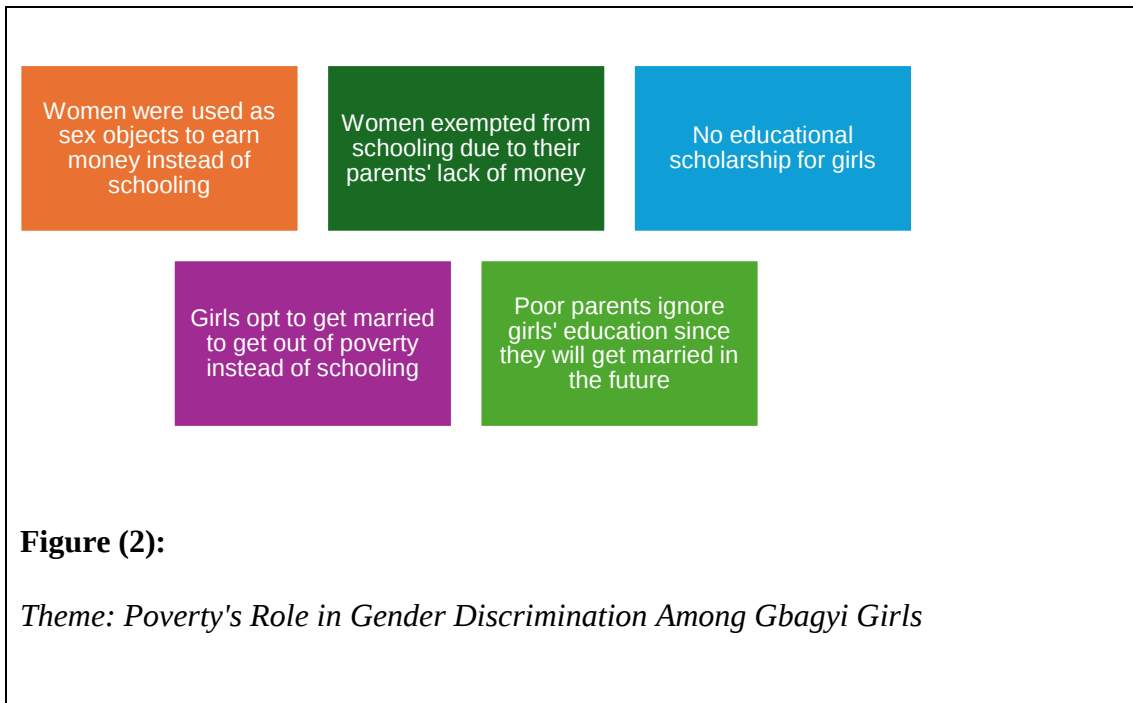
One prominent manifestation of gender discrimination is that women are forced to stay home and perform domestic duties, as indicated in the document below. According to Harris (2016), Nigerian men did not need as high wages as the British because it was believed that Nigerian wives contributed significantly to household finances; however, contributing to the family finances was made as difficult as possible by denying women waged employment because their place was in the home. These sentiments are evident in the interview with a *high school graduate*; the graduate says the Gbagyi community prefers women to stay at home while men should go to school. Figure (1) explains the themes detected in the analysis in relation to gender ideology and codes of discrimination.





High levels of control over spouses and widows are further indications of gender discrimination against women in the Gbagyi community of Nigeria. In gerontocratic societies like Nigeria, age and gender-based hierarchies intersect, with older men representing the ideal masculine position (in control of wives and offspring) and older women holding a secondary position (above young people of both sexes but below their husbands) (Harris, 2016). An interview with *government employee1* emphasizes this issue by saying that widows often suffer significantly at the hands of their husband's family. This is because widows are expected to support their husband's family, ranging from protecting the family home and property (if applicable) to fighting for their husbands' rights at work. However, *government employee1* assures us that no widows in the Gbagyi community will be taken advantage of or abused thanks to the precautions being taken.

Another central point that showcases gender discrimination in the Gbagyi community is that women are seen as inferior to men. Makama (2013) states that females are viewed as infidels and treated as second-class citizens in Nigeria. As a result, there is a widespread perception that women belong in the kitchen at home. Additionally, the author says that the average Nigerian woman is seen as an accessible object for prostitution, forced marriage, street hawking, an instrument of wide-range trafficking, and a misfit in society.

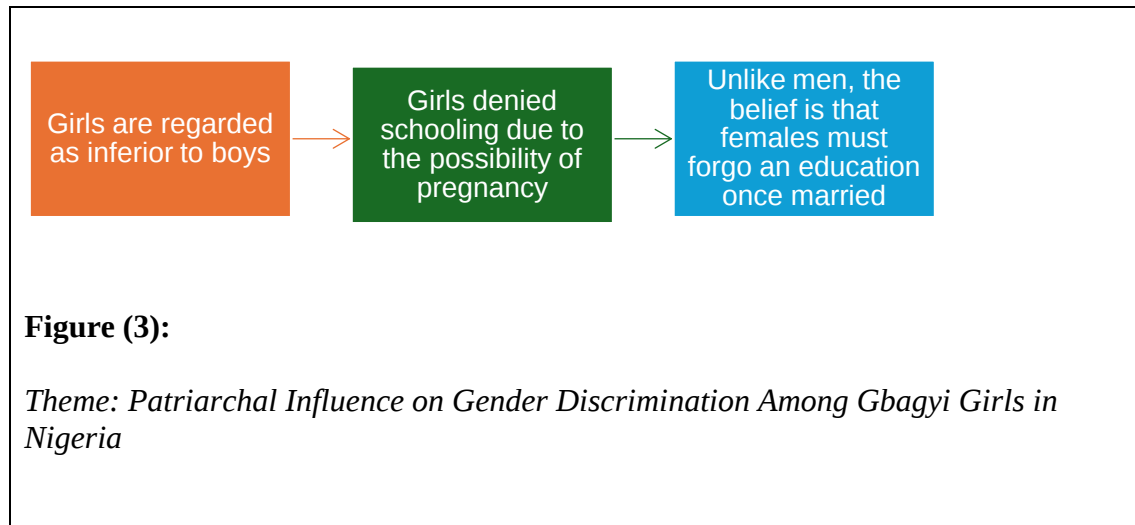


Furthermore, the girl-child's educational opportunities tend to be restricted by patriarchal attitudes about gender roles, which results in some parents attaching greater importance to boys' education than girls, see Figure (2). At the same time, Ejukonemu (2018) asserts that historically, in the traditional African society prevalent in Nigeria, women are not only perceived as inferior to men but are also marginalized and denied equal opportunities. Furthermore, as in most parts of Africa, women in Nigeria live in a male-dominated society where males continuously and persistently relegate females to the background because society has endorsed this view. While the male child is encouraged to learn a trade or go to school, the female child is given out in marriage at an early age.

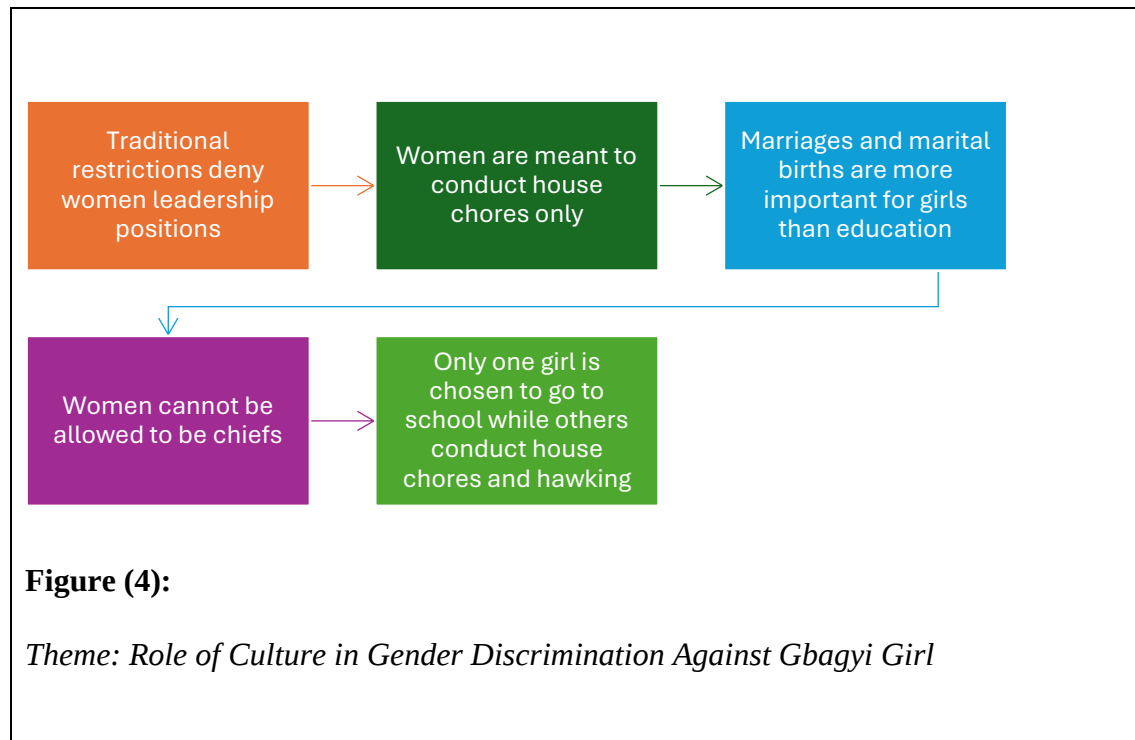
Moreover, Abdulhamid & Alhassan (2012) argue that gender disparity is a prominent feature of Nigeria's educational landscape, with girls and women being the most disadvantaged. The authors extend this argument, suggesting that mothers and wives are often accorded a low social status in many societies, especially in Nigeria, where they are treated as second-class citizens and, as a result, face discrimination, ostracism, and economic, cultural, and societal marginalization.

Figure (3) summarizes this dynamics, evidently, in an interview, *Teacher 2* echoed this view, stating that the girl-child is often perceived to have no real future beyond marriage and childbearing. Under this belief, bright female children may be overlooked or dismissed due to

their gender, particularly in the Gbagyi community. Similarly, an interview with *Government Employee 2* revealed that some men believe women exploit their willingness to help with housework, thereby expecting them to perform chores that they themselves, as women, should be doing. Consequently, these men tend to avoid household chores. Furthermore, *Government Employee 2* stated that in Nigeria, there is a widespread belief that women are inferior to men, a view that is evident in politics, decision-making, and property ownership.



Government employee3 stresses this point to illustrate their argument, stating, “If there is a meeting in the town square, both males and females attend, but the men will be seated in chairs while the women and children will be instructed to sit on the floor.” Moreover, a report from an interview with *high school dropout1* suggests that boys have more leeway than girls. Males are free to engage in sexual activity without fear of repercussion, while females who try to become sexually self-aware face ridicule and accusations that they were not adequately raised at home. In addition, an interview with *government employee4* showed that maternal healthcare is not a high priority for the Nigerian government. Women are expected to endure substandard maternal care and continue with their lives. The father of *high school graduate2* expressed concern in an interview that his daughter would be discriminated against because of her gender. The social norm for a Gbagyi woman, he says, is to get married and have children. To “empower” women, schools only offer vocational training.



The fact that women are frequently assigned to historically “soft, poorly paid positions” in Gbagyi Nigerian society is another important indicator of gender inequality; men, on the other hand, are given “challenging, well-paying employment” (Ejuronemu, 2018). The author argues that young women may be encouraged to pursue “soft” and generalist careers, such as teaching, nursing, and secretarial work, while male-dominated fields like law, engineering, and the military are seen as the exclusive domain of men. Harris (2016) also asserts that the colonial era's demand for skilled manufacturing labor attracted southern Nigerians to the cities, significantly increasing the Igbo and Yoruba populations. Many of their women were employed in peripheral workshops, which offered “softer” jobs, while men found work in the main facilities. As Figure (4) highlights, while girls were educated for domestic roles to avoid hard labor, educated men were given skilled jobs in the civil service and on the railroads. However, the interviews revealed that men are allowed to prosper in “soft, well-paying employment” facilitated by formal education, while women are relegated to “hard, low-paying jobs” in the Gbagyi community.

According to the discussion with *government employee2*, women in Gbagyi society often handle most household duties. In an interview, *high school graduate2* mentioned that Gbagyi women frequently sell groundnuts on the street, while the boys go to class. Additionally, *government employee3* revealed that women are expected to carry physical loads and place them on their shoulders, while men are prohibited from lifting heavy burdens—a taboo in Gbagyi culture. The issue of forced marriages for women is another sign of gender discrimination in Gbagyi society. Orisaremi (2020) reports that older and middle-aged participants were more likely to believe that, in the past, girls or women had no say in whom they married. This reflects discrimination, as girls were often pushed into marriage, while boys were allowed to pursue their studies. A



similar point was made in the interview with *high school dropout*², who claims that the Gbagyi community views it as parents' duty to ensure their children marry the people they have chosen for them. As a result, marriage is considered more valuable than education, with concerns that girls might get pregnant before marriage if they stay in school.

Gender Inequality in Gbagyi community: any possibility?

As explained earlier, the goal of this study is to explore how female education might contribute to eradicating gender inequality in the Gbagyi community. According to various interviewees, gender disparity is gradually being addressed in the Gbagyi village. The traditional role of women in Africa and Nigeria has undergone significant adjustments or transformations, as noted by Ekong & Ekong (2016). Key factors in these changes include the influence of Western civilization, urbanization, and industrialization. Additionally, globalization, human rights initiatives, and legislative reforms have played a crucial role. These forces have impacted traditional social institutions, particularly the family structure. As a result, economic activity has shifted from a subsistence to a commercial level, contributing to improvements in gender equality. For instance, the interviewees noted that an increasing number of women are relocating to urban areas in search of employment opportunities in industrial, commercial, and governmental sectors.

These changes have been driven by several factors. For example, families in Nigeria are experiencing difficult economic conditions, and the need for survival has become more urgent. The community has come to understand that the financial support provided by men alone is no longer enough to sustain the entire household. According to the interviewees, the traditional roles of men as the primary breadwinners and women as domestic caretakers have shifted in today's world. The prevailing belief now is that both men and women must contribute equally to supporting the family. In fact, men are no longer solely expected to provide for their wives and children, and women are no longer waiting for men to cover their expenses, largely due to the advances in girls' education. The interviewees also noted that female education has helped reduce gender discrimination, as educated mothers are more likely to ensure that both their sons and daughters receive an equal education. At the same time, educated women are becoming more aware of their rights and the legal avenues available to protect them. For instance, more Gbagyi women are now able to hire competent lawyers to assist with property inheritance matters and to challenge domestic abuse. Additionally, schools are increasingly offering the same courses to both boys and girls, and more girls are enrolling in technical programs at the college level. The interviewees emphasized that the world is changing, with more people becoming aware of the importance of personal development. The Bwari community is also being influenced by the developments in nearby Abuja, a hub for corporate growth. As a result, community members now recognize that educating their children is essential for ensuring their future relevance in the world.

As Ejukonemu (2018) points out, women today are making significant strides and taking advantage of new opportunities across a wide range of fields, including those traditionally dominated by men. In countries like Nigeria, women are now found in professions such as



doctors, pharmacists, engineers, politicians, lawyers, bankers, vice-chancellors, military officers, pilots, wrestlers, and even commercial drivers. The interviewees noted that educated women tend to earn more respect from men compared to their uneducated counterparts, which suggests that female education is helping to reduce gender discrimination in the Gbagyi community. Educated women are often more confident and knowledgeable about issues impacting the community, which enhances their respectability among men.

This research aims to explore how educational programs and initiatives can contribute to the development of the Gbagyi community. According to the interviewees, many young women who had dropped out of school are now participating in vocational training, such as tailoring and knitting, to support their families financially. These programs have empowered women, enabling them to avoid early marriages as a means of survival. As a result, many of these women are now able to support both themselves and their parents, contributing to broader societal development. Additionally, educating girls has given women the opportunity to purchase land and property, improving their economic well-being.

Additionally, education programs, such as women's seminars, have provided women with knowledge on family planning and reproductive health, leading to a decrease in early and unwanted pregnancies among Gbagyi women. According to the interviewees, the inclusion of women in formal education and vocational training has brought noticeable societal development to the community. For instance, more men are sharing household responsibilities as women take on the role of breadwinners. Furthermore, globalization has expanded women's opportunities in the labor market, which has, in turn, increased parents' willingness to educate both their sons and daughters. As a result, educational and vocational training programs have played a key role in empowering women and enabling them to contribute to the overall growth of the community.

Concluding Reflection: Gender Equality through Education

Gender equality through education is a central focus of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the broader human rights agenda. Researchers argue that educating girls is widely recognized for its transformative impact on individuals, families, and communities, driving poverty reduction, economic growth, and social progress. Unterhalter, Howell, and Parkes (2019) emphasize that gender equality is crucial for achieving several SDGs, including SDG 1 (ending extreme poverty), SDG 4 (ensuring quality education for all), SDG 5 (empowering women and girls), and SDG 16 (promoting peaceful, inclusive societies). The authors further suggest that achieving gender equality in education requires systemic changes, such as the implementation of policies and long-term strategies that ensure equal opportunities for both men and women. By fostering equitable institutions and environments, both genders can thrive, leading to overall societal development.

Unfortunately, gender inequalities in many African nations contribute to higher dropout rates among female students. Political and cultural institutions within African societies, including traditions, customs, and practices, often present significant obstacles to the education of young girls. As explained, the patriarchal culture in the community reinforces male dominance, with a



strong emphasis on maintaining the male lineage. As a result, women who face discrimination often have lower levels of education, leading to limited knowledge of family planning issues. In some cases, low levels of education among women can contribute to unsafe abortions, which pose serious health risks and may lead to premature death. Moreover, the community's culture dictates that women should not participate in decision-making processes, based on the belief that they are mentally and emotionally weaker than men and prone to making irrational decisions. Additionally, a biased interpretation of religion has significantly contributed to gender discrimination in the Gbagyi community.

Unterhalter, Howell, & Parkes (2019) explain why gender equality is advantageous for all members of society, including both men and women. According to the authors, achieving gender equality through education requires systemic changes in institutions, particularly through the design of gender-sensitive policies and programs. Emphasizing girl-child education, especially in developing nations, is one way gender equality can be achieved. Notably, achieving gender equality through education is essential to the human rights agenda, the pursuit of social justice, and the realization of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In the following section, we will overview the various global frameworks and initiatives support gender equality through education. This includes the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) interventions, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Education 2030, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the World Conference on Women, and the Commonwealth Platform for Girls' Education.

1. Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Interventions: Unterhalter, Howell, & Parkes (2019) report that GPE has provided over \$500,000 to support educational planning in several African nations, including the development of education sector plans based on current data. GPE plans to implement grants (ESPIGs) of at least \$100 million to promote gender equality through education. This involves a transformative approach that evaluates all aspects of the education system, addressing factors like access, participation, learning objectives, legislative frameworks, and planning procedures. GPE also collaborates with organizations such as the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative to build gender-sensitive education sectors. In addition to combating early marriages, which hinder girls' education, GPE and its partners address other significant challenges.

2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Unterhalter, Howell, & Parkes (2019) highlight that the SDGs contain several goals and targets aimed at promoting gender equality through education. For example, SDG 4 includes seven targets to improve equality through education. The first three targets focus on ensuring access to education for all children and adults, from primary to tertiary levels. Another target emphasizes equipping young people and adults with skills to promote gender equality. Other SDG 4 targets include promoting education for people with disabilities, indigenous communities, and those in vulnerable regions; enhancing numeracy and literacy for all men and women; and upgrading education infrastructure to ensure gender and disability sensitivity in schools (Global Partnership for Education, n.d.).

3. Education 2030: Launched in 2015, Education 2030 aims to foster gender equality by addressing and eliminating gender-based discrimination in education, which is often driven by social, cultural, or economic factors (Unterhalter, Howell, & Parkes, 2019). The initiative



focuses on promoting the development of gender-sensitive policies and strategies to ensure equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls. At the same time, countries participating in the UNESCO meeting reaffirmed their commitment to combating gender-based violence and oppression, particularly in developing nations, marking a key milestone in advancing the Education 2030 agenda (UNESCO, 2015).

4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): The United Nations General Assembly held the CEDAW convention in 1979, where several resolutions were adopted to promote gender equality through education (Unterhalter, Howell, & Parkes, 2019). For example, countries pledged to prioritize gender issues, with the aim of empowering women through education. Additionally, CEDAW established a strategic review process to ensure that topics related to women's empowerment would be discussed annually at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. The convention also called for countries to support the interventions of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), particularly in developing nations where girls have low enrollment rates in schools (United Nations, 1979).

5. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the World Conference on Women: The authors highlight that during the 1995 conference, nations acknowledged the importance of prioritizing women's rights as an integral part of universal human rights (Unterhalter, Howell, & Parkes, 2019). The conference also introduced the idea of international collaboration to promote gender equality through education. Key objectives included eliminating female illiteracy, addressing the educational needs of girls, and combating oppression. In 2020, the convention updated its goals by integrating elements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on increasing women's participation in global decision-making (United Nations, 1995).

6. Commonwealth Platform for Girls' Education: A final global initiative that support gender equality through education, and during the 2018 Commonwealth summit, the UK government launched the Platform for Girls' Education, committing over 200 million Euros to educate more than one million girls in Commonwealth countries. (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2018). The funding is set to be distributed over a period of twelve years, with the goal of achieving gender equality in education by 2030. This initiative aims to promote gender equality and female education worldwide by increasing school enrollment for girls, particularly in developing nations.

In conclusion, this article examined gender inequality in Nigeria, focusing on societal perceptions of gender and how these views impact the country's economic growth and social development. It also emphasized the importance of female education in driving both economic and social progress in the Gbagyi community of Nigeria.



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