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**Contents**

Harriet Omokiniovo Efanodor-Obeten: Economic Diversification Strategy and Social Policy in Nigeria: Promoting Gender Parity for Women's Empowerment.....	5
Omatsola Divine Olley and Ozekhome Gabriel Igechi: Electronic Governance and Effective Public Administration in Nigeria: A Study of Edo State University Uzairue.....	13
Salifu Sunday Achor and Ali Abubakar Kadiri: Specific Language Impairment and Communication Disorders in Selected Children from Idah Metropolis in Idah LGA, Kogi State.....	26
Godwin Ona Ode and Terwase Sarah Shittu: A Semiotic Analysis of Igede Agba Festival.....	32
Olukayode A. Faleye, Peter E. Egielewa, and Anthony O. Ogette: Human Organ Trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Historical and Media Exploration .....	41
Obinna Johnkennedy Chukwu and Benjamin Abere: Evaluating Big Brother Naija Reality Television Programme through the Rural Communities' Inquisitorial Lens.....	48
Adesegun Samson Adetola: Comparative Analyses on National Communication Policies of Nigeria, Ghana and China for National Development.....	59
Agbomire Victor Umoru and Kadiri Abbas Ezolomhe: Punishment and Forgiveness in Nigerian Organisations: A Theoretical Review.....	69



# Economic Diversification Strategy and Social Policy in Nigeria: Promoting Gender Parity for Women's Empowerment

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## Abstract

Nigeria's economic growth has been largely dependent on oil revenue, which has contributed to the country's economic vulnerability. Economic diversification has been a key strategy for sustainable development in Nigeria. However, economic diversification efforts have not been inclusive, and women especially in the rural areas have been left behind. The Nigerian government has made efforts to address the above through various social policies. This paper therefore examines how Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and social policies support economic diversification for women particularly women living in rural areas. The paper relied on secondary sources for its information and data. Findings of the study reveals that implementation of ERGP has been slow and the country's economy remains heavily reliant on oil. While the ERGP has made efforts to promote economic diversification for women in Nigeria, the extent of its impact varies across different regions in Nigeria. Challenges such as limited access to finance, gender based cultural barriers and inequalities in education and training still persist, posing significant obstacles to women's economic empowerment and diversification especially women living in rural areas. Also, social policies have been based on a narrow conceptualisation of protection focused largely on conditional cash transfers and have taken the form of ad hoc, small-scale implementation without gender considerations. Thus, gender inequality remains a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. The paper concludes that gender consideration is essential in promoting gender parity and economic diversification. The study recommends that government needs to implement policies that are more inclusive and targeted towards addressing the specific challenges faced by women and the vulnerable especially those living in rural areas.

*Keywords: Nigeria, Gender, Women Empowerment, Gender Parity Economic Diversification*

## Introduction

Economic diversification is a critical issue that have been on the front burner of discourse in Nigeria in recent times. This is because the country's economic growth has been heavily reliant on oil revenue, which has made the Nigerian economy vulnerable to external shocks and fluctuations in global oil prices. In Nigeria, the oil sector has been the dominant sector accounting for over 80% of export earnings and 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings (Amadi 2021). The over- reliance on the oil sector has made the Nigerian economy vulnerable. Economic diversification is, therefore crucial for Nigeria to achieve sustainable economic growth, reduce poverty, unemployment and reduce its dependence on oil revenue.

Economic diversification is a process of shifting an economy from a single sector or a few sectors to multiple sectors. Though successive Nigerian government has made efforts to address these issues through various strategies and social policies. However, economic diversification efforts and initiatives have not been inclusive, and it has not taken into consideration the lived realities of the different segment of the society especially the vulnerable group such as women living in rural areas. As such, the effectiveness of these policies in promoting gender parity and economic diversification for the vulnerable groups remains a matter of debate.

In recent times, the Nigerian government has made efforts to diversify the economy through significant strategies and social policies. One of the significant policies aimed at promoting economic diversification is the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) launched in 2017 which is a comprehensive development strategy that prioritize economic diversification, job creation and poverty

reduction. Additionally, the government has implemented various social protection programmes aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and providing access to finance such as the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT). However, economic diversification initiatives and social protection efforts have not been gendered specific, and gender inequality remains a significant challenge that needs to be addressed.

Studies such as Holmes et al. (2011), Holmes et al (2012) and Akanle (2019), have analysed social protection policies as well as the Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and documented the earnest desires of the strategy towards progressive and sustainable national development in both economic and social segments. However, these studies did not focus on gender analyses in order to ascertain the extent to which the Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and social policies have promoted economic diversification for women.

The study therefore, through the female gender lens, analyzed the extent to which Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and social policies promote gender parity and support economic diversification for women particularly women in rural areas from 2015 to 2022. The study used the exploratory research design. The study obtained its data from secondary source of information. The Hermeneutic method of analysis was used to interpret information gotten from the secondary sources. Triangulation method was used to cross check facts from the sources of data.

### **The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and Social Policy in Nigeria: 2015-2022**

The Economic recovery and Growth plan is Nigeria's medium-term development strategy launched in 2017 which builds on the Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) earlier developed for the 2016 budget of change a short-term intervention plan (Ugwueze, 2022). It is articulated with the understanding that the role of government in the 21st century must evolve from that of being an omnibus provider of citizen's needs into a force for eliminating the bottlenecks that impede innovations and market-based solutions (Ejeh and Orokpo, 2019). The plan has three main objectives to drive inclusive and sustainable growth:

First, the ERGP aims to restore growth through achieving Marco economic stability and economic diversification with more focus on agriculture, energy and MSME led growth in industry, manufacturing and key services by leveraging science and technology. Secondly, the plan aims to invest in the Nigerian people by increasing social inclusion for the poor and vulnerable citizens reducing unemployment and underdevelopment with greater focus on youth and investing in health and education. Finally, the ERGP aims to build a globally competitive economy by increasing investment in favourable business environment to attract investors and promoting digital led industry growth (CBN 2017). The ERGP is also consistent with the aspiration of the sustainable development Goals (SDG) given that the initiatives address it's three dimensions of economic, social and environmental sustainability issue (FRN, 2017).

Consequently, to restore growth through economic diversification, the non-oil sector has been identified to have the potential to sustain the economy, organically drive growth, create jobs and advance national development. Economic diversification is the variation of products, exports and income sources across different sectors of the economy in order to ensure macroeconomic stability; enable job creation and minimise the vulnerability posed by a narrowly differentiated economy. It provides a range of revenue sources and ensures the ability of an economy to deal with adverse challenges occasioned by disruptions in the global economy (Amadi, 2021). Thus, in order to restore growth through economic diversification with more focus on agriculture, energy and MSME led growth in industry, manufacturing and key services by leveraging science and technology, the Nigerian government through the Central Bank of Nigeria rolled out intervention programmes.

The intervention programmes of the Central bank of Nigeria (CBN) aim at developing innovative technological and human capacity in key sectors of the economy; ensuring long-term inclusive growth; and deepening financial inclusion through the provision of inputs, credit and access to markets. Some of these sectoral interventions include- Agriculture Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), Commercial Credit Scheme (CACS) National Food Security Programme (NFSP), Agri- Business/small and Medium Enterprise Investment Scheme (AGSMEIS), Presidential Fertilizer Initiative (PFI); Industry/Manufacturing Real Sector Support Facility (RSSF), Textile Sector Intervention Facility, CBN-BOI Industry Financing Initiative (CBIF), and COVID-19 Intervention for the Manufacturing Sector (CIMS) (Amadi 2021).

In Entrepreneurship, the CBN also have the SME Credit Guarantee Scheme (SMECGS), Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme (YEDP), Creative Industry Financing Initiative (CIFI); Non-Oil Exports Development-Export Development Facility (EDF), Non-Oil Export Stimulation Facility (NESF), Export Facilitation Initiative (EFI); Financial Inclusion Shared Agent Network Expansion

Facility (SANEF). Others include; Family Home Finance Initiative, Solar Connection Facility, Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Payment Assurance Facility (NBET-PAF), Nigeria Electricity Market Stabilization Facility (NEMSF) (Amadi 2021).

While gender specific initiatives are not explicitly outlined in the ERGP, the economic recovery and growth plan in Nigeria has made efforts to promote diversification for which women can benefit. Areas where the ERGP has focused on promoting economic diversification for women are;

**Entrepreneurship and SME development:** the ERGP encouraged the growth of small and medium sized enterprise as a means of economic diversification. The basic strategy is to enhance support to MSMEs by reducing regulatory obstacles facing MSME, enable financial service providers to grant loans to MSME; enhance access to the 250 billion Naira CBN MSME fund by reviewing its design and implementation enabling initiatives to encourage on-lending. It made provision for support for women-owned businesses through provision of micro-loans for women through the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Fund (GEEP) and women empowerment fund amongst others. (FGN 2017) These efforts are expected to help enhance entrepreneurship opportunities for women and promote their participation in diverse economic sector.

**Agriculture and agribusiness:** the government has placed significant emphasis on the agricultural sector as a driver for economic diversification. The ERGP strategy is to support the integrated transformation of the agricultural sector by boosting productivity of the crop and other sub sectors. This is to be done by strengthening CBN schemes to improve access to finance for all players including the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (CACS) and the SME Credit Guarantee Scheme. To encourage women's involvement in agriculture, the Federal Government launched and implemented the Anchor borrowers programme aimed to lift thousands of small farmers out of poverty and generate millions of jobs for unemployed Nigerians (FRN 2017:25). These initiatives have aimed to empower amongst others, women farmers and agribusiness owners, thereby promoting economic diversification within the agricultural sector.

**Manufacturing and industry:** the ERGP has also highlighted the importance of promoting industrialization and manufacturing as a means of diversifying the Nigerian economy. While the focus on women's participation in these sectors may not be explicitly highlighted in the ERGP, efforts have been made to provide access to finance, business development support, and capacity-building programs for women entrepreneurs and industrialists.

**Information and communication technology:** the ERGP recognizes the potential of the ICT sector in driving economic diversification and job creation. Although gender specific initiatives are not explicitly outlined, various programmes aiming at ICT infrastructure, digital skills development, and entrepreneurship in the sector can indirectly benefit women's participation and diversification in the digital economy.

**Policy reforms:** the ERGP has also stressed the need for policy reforms to create an enabling environment for economic diversification. These reforms encompass areas such as ease of doing business, trade facilitation, and regulatory reforms. While not directly targeting women, these policy reforms can transform the overall business environment, benefiting women entrepreneurs and enabling their participation in a diverse range of economic activities.

The ERGP plan aims to invest in the Nigerian people by increasing social inclusion for the poor and vulnerable citizens reducing unemployment and underdevelopment with greater focus on youth and investing in health and education. Social inclusion ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to work and take part in society is fundamental to creating a harmonious, progressive and stable country. The strategies for social inclusion include to implement and increase social safety net programmes targeted at the vulnerable and to introduce social programmes.

Key activities are to sustain the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme initially introduced in 2016, targeted poor households and provided cash transfers to encourage investments in health, education, and nutrition. The aim is to reach one million of the poorest and most vulnerable household, especially through mothers as captured in the social register. Also, another activity is to upscale the home-grown school feeding programme to provide a meal a day to at least six million primary school children and support the agricultural sector as well as introduce a national relief programme (FGN, 2017:92).

Recognising the importance of gender equality, Nigeria implemented policies to empower women and promote their rights. One of such initiatives was the Gender and Equality opportunity bill (GEOB) proposed in 2016, which aimed to eliminate discrimination against women and enable their full participation in all sphere of life.

## **The Effectiveness of Economic Diversification Strategy and Social Policy in Promoting Gender Parity**

The effectiveness of economic diversification strategy and social policies in promoting gender parity in Nigeria remains a matter of debate. While government has made efforts to address these issues through various policies, the impact of these policies has been limited in promoting gender parity. This is because economic diversification strategy is gender neutral and social policies have been based on a narrow conception of social protection focused largely on conditional cash transfers as well as health fee waivers and have taken the form of ad hoc small-scale implementation. It is therefore pertinent to examine the effectiveness of economic diversification strategy and social policy in promoting gender parity using the Central Bank of Nigeria's Anchor borrowers programme and the conditional cash transfer scheme.

The anchor borrowers programme was launched by president Muhammuda Buhari's administration in 2015. The programme was initiated by the CBN in its economic diversification drive. The programme was directed at supporting the federal government key strategic plans of economic diversification, self-sufficiency in food production (CBN 2016). The programme was meant to also diversify Nigeria's economy away from oil, and into agriculture and other non-oil sectors. The key objective of the ABP is to create economic linkages between smallholder farmers and processors with a view to increasing agricultural output and ensuring food price stability. According to CBN (2021) the specific objectives include:

- Increase banks' financing to improve agricultural productivity by creating an ecosystem that drives value chain financing;
- Reduce the nation's food import bill through import substitution and enhanced domestic value addition;
- Create new generation of farmers through innovative financing to support smart agriculture; and
- Deepen financial inclusion and grow smallholder farmers from subsistence to commercial farming.

According to Emefiele (2015) the programme was conceived to complement the Growth Enhancement Support (GES) scheme, implemented under the Agricultural Transformation Agenda and advance the status of many subsistence GES small holders' farmers to commercial or large contract grooves with attendant increase in agricultural productivity and farm income. The programme cost is put at twenty billion Naira, sourced from two hundred billion Naira the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (ESMEDF) disbursed to participating farmers at single digit interest rate of nine per cent per annum. According to CBN, (2021) The eligibility criteria for small holder farmer includes;

- i. be a member of a farmer group;
- ii. have a bank account with the PFI;
- iii. provide a valid Bank Verification Number (BVN);
- iv. not be a defaulting borrower;
- v. v. has a validated farmland;
- vi. provide 10 per cent minimum equity contribution;
- vii. not participate under multiple associations in one cropping season.

A general review of the ABP implementation stages by Coker et al (2018) and Badejo et al (2018) threw up numerous issues, particularly at the loan disbursement stage. According to them citing the National Treasurer of the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN), Sadiq Daware, many farmers complained of not being able to access loan while others were not given the right amount proposed under the programme. He further noted that even though CBN disbursed N43.92 billion to farmers through 13 participating institutions, some of these institutions frustrated the efforts of the farmers in accessing the facility while some were not farmer friendly due to complicated transaction procedures and non-consideration of gestation periods of crop growing. Some Banks further insisted that CBN was yet to give specific guidelines on how to disburse the loans. In a related development, agro-input distribution was observed to be haphazard. Some farmers were given fertilizers while others were denied (Coker, 2018).

Though studies such as Gona et al (2023) have shown that the Anchor borrowers programme significantly improved the crop output of beneficiaries as compared with non-beneficiaries. It is pertinent to note that some of the criteria for participation under the programme may likely exclude the core poor and vulnerable groups including women, given their inability to meet up with the farm holding requirement of between 1 and 5 hectares, as a result of their being disadvantaged in asset ownerships.

Similarly, it is expected for the small holder farmer to be a member of a group, cooperative or commodity association, be ready to guarantee another farmer and open bank account and obtain Bank Verification Number (BVN). Most women living in rural areas might not be able to meet the above criteria because the lived realities of women were not taken into consideration. Conclusively, the implementation of ERGP has been slow and the country's economy remains heavily reliant on oil. Additionally, government's efforts to provide entrepreneurship have been limited, with access to finance and markets remaining a significant challenge. Women in rural area are predominately found in the informal sector and are unable to meet up with the conditions needed to access finance.

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme is one of the social protection policies of the federal government. The conditional cash transfer programme directly supports those within the lowest poverty bracket by improving nutrition, increasing household consumption and supporting the development of human capital through cash benefits to various categories of the poor and vulnerable. The support is conditioned on fulfilling soft and hard co-responsibilities that enable recipients improve their standard of living. Its beneficiaries are the unbanked, those without social media accounts, and smartphones, in fact without an education, the poorest of the poor. Poverty means different things to different communities. In one community, not possessing farmlands could be defined as being poor. In another, not having zinc roofs or children in school might be the perception of being poor. Thus, attempt to minimize the anomalies associated with the distribution of CCT led to the adoption of the Community Based Targeting (CBT) model. The CBT is a system where the community identifies what poverty means to them and who consequently is poor among them (Wujuola, 2020). The National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office (NASSCO) social register is what the CCT uses to identify those who make its own payment list. In obtaining the list, the community is usually shared into three focus groups, the youth, the women and the men. Each cluster is asked what poverty means to them and who they identify as the poor among them. The households that are common to each cluster are those who eventually make the list of the poor household for the national social register. Two people, a man and a woman are afterwards nominated by the community to sign on the list. Thus, the conditional Cash transfer is on the social register and based on household (Wujuola, 2020).

Analysis of data from the National Cash Transfer Office (NACTO) in 2022 by the international centre for investigative reporting shows that the cash transferred was skewed in favour of some geopolitical zones at the expense of other zones especially zones from the Southern part of Nigeria. Out of the 297,973 beneficiaries, South-South had a total of 10,429 beneficiaries, South-East 3,253, South-West 39,134, South-East 3,253, North-West 112,744 and North Central had 88,008. This indicates that 82.5% of the cash transferred to the poorest households went to the North Central, North East and North-West (Paul, 2022: 67-68).

In the context of high levels of poverty and inequality, the existing social protection approach is currently facing a number of challenges. The key ones include the low coverage of existing programmes, the implementation of only a narrow set of instruments, poor service delivery, and the fragmentation of approaches and projects across the country. The scale of social protection programme is extremely small in the high context of high number of poor people. Therefore, only a narrow set of targets groups is addressed (Holmes et al 2011). The conditional cash transfer by the federal government was expended through state level financing. To this end states have been given the responsibility to expand through a mechanism called the Conditional Grant Scheme (CGS). A financing mechanism which requires states to match federal mechanism which states to match federal expenditure. However, only one third of all the states have committed to cofunding and coverage is estimated at less than 0.001% of the poor. The monthly grants for four months ranges from twenty thousand naira to fifty thousand naira per household. This is low in relation to household needs, especially in large households. The decreasing purchasing power of the naira due to food and fuel price inflation.

Similarly, concerns over basic service delivery and the accessibility of other infrastructure (such as banking for the poor) are also key challenges. While the need for social protection to support the demand for basic services is strong, especially in terms of the direct and indirect costs associated with accessing health and education for instance, poor service delivery also needs to be addressed. The health sector, for example, is characterised by low efficiency and effectiveness in terms of poor budgetary allocations; ineffective use of system financing; and the inequitable distribution of resources (skilled personnel, health care providers, etc.), largely in favour of urban elites (National Health Insurance Scheme, 2010). Improving the quantity and quality of service delivery requires addressing a range of institutional, financing and governance constraints (Holmes et al, 2011).

## Promoting Gender Parity for Women's Empowerment

Gender parity refers to the equal representation of men and women in all aspects of life, including education, employment, and politics. In Nigeria, gender inequality has been a significant challenge, with women often facing discrimination in various aspects of life. However, in recent times, the government has made efforts to promote gender parity through various social policies. One of the significant policies aimed at promoting gender parity is the National Gender Policy (NGP) of 2006. The NGP seeks to promote gender equality and empower women in all sectors of the society. The policy recognises the importance of women's participation in decision-making and aim to increase women's representation in politics, education, and employment. Additionally, the government has implemented various programs at promoting women's entrepreneurship and providing access to finance and markets. Despite these efforts, gender parity in Nigeria remains a challenge. Women are still underrepresented in politics and other leadership positions, and they continue to face discrimination in the workplace and society at large.

Nigeria has almost even balance of the population between males and females. This is also the trend with respect to the labour force. However, in the micro business space, the trend is skewed towards men with women accounting for 41% of business and 3.4% of female employment within micro-enterprise. Table 1. Below shows the percentage of male and female in terms of population, labour force, participation in micro enterprise, sole proprietor and employment in micro enterprise.

Table 1

Population	Male(millions)	Female (Millions)
Population	101.7	104.5
Labour force	25.6	25.1
Participation in Micro enterprise	32.5	23.0
Sole proprietor	20.5	19.6
Employment in Mirco enterprise	11.8	3.4

Source: PWC (2020:5)

Similarly, there are gender mandated regulations in Nigeria. Central Bank of Nigeria regulations mandate a minimum of 30% of females on boards of Nigerian commercial banks. MSMEs development fund guideline mandates that 60% of the loans be given to women. Also, the national financial inclusion strategy recommends increasing female staff of micro finance banks by 30%. The security and exchange commission code only recommended that publicly listed companies consider gender when selecting board members but does not have any specific-gender based rule or regulation. The Nigerian Code of Corporate Governance (CCG) by the FRC encourages corporate boards to set diversity goals and be mindful of them when filling board vacancies.

According to PWC (2020) where there is a CBN mandated regulation for banking industry stating that they should be at least 30% of women on the board of regulation, there is no enforcement of such regulations as only 30.7% of banks adhere the instruction. While 69.3% of bank have not met the central bank of Nigeria regulation for 30% of women representation. In Nigeria firm with female top manager only account for 13.9%. female board members made up 19% of the total board composition across the various sectors listed on the stock exchange. Among the eleven sectors analysed, the construction, industrial goods and consumer goods sectors had the highest number of female board members, 81 in total compared to the other sectors.

Female management team members made up of 23% of the total board members composition across the various sectors listed on the stock exchange. The conglomerate, financial service and construction sector had the largest composition of female board members with 27%, 25% and 25% respectively. Although the number of female participations is improving overtime, it is slow (PWC 2020).

Similarly, the implementation of the NFG has been slow, and women continue to face discrimination in various aspects of life. Additionally, the government's efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship have been limited, with access to finance and markets remaining a significant challenge. While the ERGP has made efforts to promote economic diversification for women in Nigeria, the extent of its impact may vary across different regions in Nigeria's and sectors. Challenges such as limited access to finance, gender based cultural barriers and inequalities in education and training still persist, posing significant obstacles to women's economic empowerment and diversification especially

those living in the rural areas.

A gender equality perspective is paramount to economic diversification strategy and social protection policies. Evidence shows that social protection can narrow gender gaps in poverty rates, enhance women's access to personal income, and provide a lifeline for poor women, especially single mothers. To do so effectively, economic diversification strategy and social protection systems must be designed with gender and other inequalities in mind.

Gender-specific life course risks and vulnerabilities intersect and are exacerbated by structural gender inequalities that cut across and accumulate over the life course, including women's lesser access to and control over resources, exposure to gender-based violence, and disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work. To work for women, economic diversification and social protection strategies must recognize these inequalities and aim to address them in and through social protection policies and programmes.

## Conclusion

Economic diversification is a critical issue that have been on the front burner of discourse in Nigeria in recent times. The Nigerian government has made efforts to diversify the economy through various strategies and social policies. One of the significant policies aimed at promoting economic diversification is the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) which is a comprehensive development strategy that prioritize economic diversification, job creation and poverty reduction. Additionally, the government has implemented various social protection programmes. However, the implementation of ERGP has been slow and the country's economy remains heavily reliant on oil. Also, social policies have been based on a narrow conceptualisation of protection focused largely on conditional cash transfers and have taken the form of ad hoc, small scale implement without gender considerations.

It is pertinent to note that social policies play a critical role in promoting gender parity and economic diversification in Nigeria. However, the effectiveness of these policies in addressing these issues remains a matter of debate. To promote gender parity and economic diversification, the government needs to implement policies that are more inclusive and targeted towards addressing the specific challenges faced by women especially in rural areas. Additionally, there is a need for greater collaboration between the government, private sector and civil societies. Continued efforts are needed to bolster gender-inclusive policies, enhance access to resources and opportunities, and address gender disparities in Nigeria's economic landscape. There is also the need for government to increase investment in social service delivery to maximise the effectiveness of social protection programmes in terms of human development impacts.

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# Electronic Governance and Effective Public Administration in Nigeria: A Study of Edo State University Uzairue

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## Abstract

The aim of the study was to critically examine the electronic governance and effective public administration in Nigeria, using Edo State University Uzairue, as a study. The general objective of the study was to examine the extent to which adoption of e-governance and administration has reduced the level of inefficiencies in Edo State University, to assess the extent the adoption of e-governance and administration has enhanced transparency in Edo State University and to find out whether the introduction of e-governance and administration has reduced the cost of operation in Edo State University. Using primary data drawn from Key Informant Interviews (KII) alongside thematic analysis of secondary data within the confines of qualitative research methodology, the study argued that the Edo State government is earnestly deploying paperless form of administration in the key organizations in the state. Hence, findings show that Edo State University Uzairue has embraced this development in crucial areas of its operations, but with some challenges due, essentially, to the behavioural attitudes of some agent bodies which appear to work at cross purpose with the institution's overarching objective. In conclusion, the inescapable verdict then is that the modern Public Administration must now take cognizance of the increasing importance of the digital economy.

*Keywords: e-administration, Edo State, e-governance, Governance, Public Administration*

## Introduction

In many developing and transiting economies, public administration has been gradually and increasingly embracing e-governance and e-administration within the general confines of Information Communication Technology (ICT). The 21st Century has witnessed the growth and complexity of socioeconomic and technological activities which require countries to adopt quicker and better methods of reacting to the realities on the ground (Jonathan & Rusu, 2019). Indeed, the rise of the internet towards the end of last century and its wide adoption across the globe means that countries that do not move with this development will be left behind. Electronic governance is mainly embraced by states and institutions in order to improve the level of their efficiency and effectiveness. In this respect, it becomes the responsibility of those in position of authority to adopt and constantly modify the way of doing things (Dahiru et al, 2022). The concept of good governance is central to this development because the pursuit of the well being of citizens can only come where and when there are conscientious state officials who see the generality of the public as their constituent (Ojo, 2014).

The deployment of electronic governance within Public Administration can positively enhance efficiency, secure accountability and ensure transparency in the existential working conditions of the state, and by extension in the operations of the government and institutions which animate it. This will transform the workings of the state from the hitherto crude and ancient methods of operations to a more suave and elegant way of conducting the business of government with a view to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. Everywhere in the globe, this movement is being accelerated at different pace such that the general trajectory of the current global zeitgeist is the wide scale adoption of e-governance and its associated mechanisms. To be sure, this movement has been on for a while now as transiting and developing economies are embracing it within the confines of late developers (Johansen, 2023).

In all of this, the human behavioural dimension must be considered. Government ought to

consider policy and people because without the employees to implement policies, societies will remain in their old shape and forms (Long & Philips, 2023). When employees are reluctant to change or they lack the requisite skills to effect the needed changes that a policy brings, it then means that such policy will struggle to receive any meaningful implementation. Indeed, government employees are critical to the transformation from the erstwhile absolute analog paper channels to e-channels because they are not only the implementers but they also constitute the end users as they deploy electronic channels in their daily functions. It is therefore profitable to study attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of how employees perceive e-governance and how they see change in general. Policy makers ought to put this into proper general perspective when they are making changes to current practices and specifically to the implementation of e-governance policies (Johansen, 2023).

It is in this circumstance that Edo State Government announced the adoption of paperless mode of communication on August 28 2023, as the means for exchanging information between government institutions within the state. In doing so, the government was simply adopting a variant of electronic governance. In a memo with reference number HOS.26/T/2, which originated from the Office of the Head of Service, dated 25th August 2023 and addressed to Commissioners, Special Advisers, Permanent Secretaries, Auditors-General (State and Local Governments), Heads of Extra-Ministerial Departments, and Chief Executives of Boards, Agencies and Parastatals, the Government announced that it will no longer accept physical files from Ministries, Departments and Agencies. As it were, the memo directed employees to deploy electronic mode of information sharing in the course of their duties (HOS, 2023).

Edo State as part of the sub-federal components of the developing territory of the Nigerian State has been gradually adopting electronic governance in its operations, which accounts for this new development. Indeed, developing formations require the accelerated adoption of electronic administration due to its putative benefits. The enhancement of government services, improved accountability through automated operations, fast and convenient services, reduction in administrative costs and the implicit adoption of a green economy model, which is fundamental to sustainable development, are all benefits and advantages derived from electronic governance. As such it is recommended for societies that are in pursuit of growth and development. This is not to suggest that there are no potential pitfalls in the line of e-governance. Hacking, phishing and other irresponsible deployment of e-channels by fraudulent people who are both within and outside of public institutions can be detrimental to the overarching objectives of such institutions. However, there are ways to ameliorate these potential threats.

It is in the light of the above discussion that this paper addresses issues relating to e-governance and effective public administration in Nigeria. The study focused on Edo State University Uzairue. While a number of studies have been conducted concerning e-governance within public administration in Nigeria, there is a dearth of literature concerning this issue in relation to University administration and especially within the confines of Edo State University Uzairue, Edo State. At the outset, we engage some conceptual themes to give us clarity as regard the major issues in the study. The materials and the method deployed in the study are then outlined. Thereafter, the paper reviews relevant literature, conceptual and empirical, with some thematic analysis immediately following this review. The paper exits with sections on conclusion and recommendation.

### **Brief History of Edo State University Uzairue**

Edo State University Uzairue (formerly Edo University Iyamho) was established by the Edo University Uzairue Law (2014) and thereafter amended to Edo University Iyamho, Uzairue (2015) and subsequently amended by The Edo State University Act Cap No 4 of 2020 to Edo State University Uzairue. The University was accorded recognition and issued license by the National Universities Commission on 23rd March, 2016, as the 41st State owned University and 142nd University in Nigeria.

Edo State University Uzairue is a tuition-based institution of world-class standard. The purpose for establishing the University is to meet the increasing demands for quality tertiary education in Edo State in particular and Nigeria in general. The Edo State Government also realised that developing people through quality education is the key to meaningful development of the State, hence the need to establish a university that will provide quality education. The University is also expected to pursue social, economic, political, cultural, scientific and industrial growth of the State and Nigeria. The establishment of the Edo State University Uzairue will equally increase access to tertiary education for Edo State citizens and other Nigerians. Edo State University Uzairue is fully owned by Edo State Government.

The vision of Edo State University Uzairue, is to become a centre of excellence in quality

teaching, research, innovation and community development through its teaching, research, and innovative activities. The University is poised to be a major contributor in the advancement of knowledge and understanding for the benefit of the social, cultural, and economic needs of the people of Edo State in particular and Nigeria in general.

The University colours are blue, lemon green and white. The blue colour represents harmonising industry and technology, lemon green, represents agriculture, the main occupation of the people of Edo State, while white represents peace which is the hallmark of Edo people.

The University consist of the Visitor, Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Governing Council, Vice-Chancellor, Deputy-Vice Chancellors, Registrar, Bursar, University Librarian, Senate, Congregation, all graduates and undergraduates of the University and all other persons who are members of the University in accordance with the provisions of Edo University, Uzairue Law 2014 and Edo University Iyamho, Uzairue Law (Amendment Law 2016) and as subsequently amended by The Edo State University Act Cap No 4 of 2020.

The Governing Council is the supreme governing authority of the University responsible for policy decisions which have financial implications, the general management of the affairs of the University, and in particular the control of property and expenditure of the University.

The Senate of the University is the highest academic body responsible for the formulation of academic policies, including the organization and control of all academic activities of the University. The Senate is advised in academic matters by Boards of Faculties. Senate consists of the Vice-Chancellor (Chairman), Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrar (as Secretary), Bursar, the University Librarian, Provost, Deans, Professors, Heads of Department, Directors of Academic units and representatives of the Congregation.

Edo State University Uzairue has approved and accredited programmes by the National Universities Commission and other professional bodies in a number of Faculties, some of which include the College of Medical Sciences (Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences and Faculty of Clinical Science), Faculty of Arts and Communications, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Law and Faculty of Science.

The University has grown in leaps and bounds in the years since its inception. The EDSU tradition is built on a legacy of commitment, service, equality, diversity and impeccable academic credentials. Edo State University Uzairue is a fully residential institution with rooms all with high standard. Sporting activity is encouraged with a state of the art infrastructure.

## **Statement of Problem**

It is a known fact that governance and public administration in Nigeria have been facing critical challenges that have monumentally affected their operations. A cursory look at many government agencies reveals that inefficiency, lack of transparency, reduction in the capacity of government to collect revenue, increase in cost of governance and administration as well as unabated corrupt practices in administration and governance.

A number of researches have been conducted on e-governance, its contributions to the modern economy and the challenges confronting its deployment in many countries. The issue as it relates to the university system has received less attention. This study attempts to address this gap by investigating e-governance operations and its acceptance at Edo State University Uzairue. This endeavour is thus timely as the state government has recently embarked on adopting e-governance across its ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) as it attempts to meet the modern conception of administration. Indeed, if developing countries are to realistically meet the demands of the current global technological standards, then they must address the question of e-governance and ensure that their governance processes inculcate the major precepts of new public administration as they progress. A study of e-governance in an educational institution in a developing country is therefore important.

## **Objective of the study**

The general objective of the study is to explore electronic governance and effective public administration in Edo State University Uzairue. The specific goals are:

- i. to examine the extent to which adoption of e-governance and administration has reduced the level of inefficiencies in Edo State University;
- ii. to assess the extent the adoption of e-governance and administration has enhanced transparency in Edo State University;

- iii. to find out whether the introduction of e-governance and administration has reduced the cost of operation in Edo State University

### **Research Questions**

- i. Has e-governance and the use of technology reduce inefficiency in Edo State University Uzairue?
- ii. Has e-governance and the deployment of technology enhance transparency and reduce corruption in Edo State University Uzairue?
- iii. Has e-governance and the utilization of technology reduce the cost of operation in Edo State University Uzairue?

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Governance**

Governance refers to the idea of governing a particular territory and population, and it is the exclusive preserve of the State as animated by the government. In orthodox terms, it relates to the manner in which a political system achieves such diverse objectives as the security of lives and property, accountability and transparency, the rule of law and justice system, elections and political succession, citizen participation and legislative activities, bureaucratic and administrative functions and many more. According to Bevir (2023) governance is used to represent an authority that gives patterns of rules and norms to the constituents that it supervises. Similarly, we can talk about corporate governance in relation to the rules and norms which corporations and businesses adhere to.

#### **Electronic Governance**

In the opinion of Coleman (2008) e-governance has to do with the deployment of technically stored knowledge to aid public institutions due to the increasing complexity of public administration. This view sees the continuous varied nature of administration in different areas such as public works, health, education, and security as being the basic reason for electronic governance. Government must therefore encourage the use of modern technological applications to solve the increasingly complex problems that face administrators in public institutions. Coleman (2008) thus went on to suggest that e-governance entails the digitized coding, processing, storage and distribution of data that concern three key aspects of governing public institutions: the representation and regulation of social actors; the delivery of public services; and the generation and circulation of official information.

According to Ahmedabad (2003) e-governance arrived at some point in history to help provide cost-effective service delivery to citizens and to deepen the ease with which citizens access these services. For Basu (2004) e-governance involves the use by government institutions, of information technology which have the capacity to reconstruct the relations between government and other relevant segments of society like individuals, businesses and agencies of government. Chatfield (2009) suggests that e-governance refers to the deployment of Information Communication Technology (ICT), especially the internet, to encourage more effective and affordable services to citizens. Johansen (2023) defines e-governance as government's adoption of technology to enhance efficiency and cost effectiveness and to increase constituency involvement in public administration. Thus, we conclude that e-governance relates to the use of modern technological devices and expertise to enable the provision of cheap and affordable service which encourage society to cooperate with government. E-governance is therefore critical to the socioeconomic and political development of both developed and developing societies and as such is an important concept in Development Administration and indeed, Public Administration.

#### **E-Administration**

E-Administration seem to be a sub-section of e-governance and it consists of what government and its allied institutions do internally as it concerns the deployment of technology to aid administration. The EC (2007) conceptualized it as a device that deploys information Communication Technology to support and enhance administrative duties of governments and its agencies. Onuigbo and Eme (2015) simply see it as that part of e-governance which deals with the internal functions of the government excluding citizens and business people. Therefore, e-administration as a concept should be viewed as the government part of the entire e-governance architecture. It is the work of the employees of government to ensure that the erstwhile public administration is powered by a new approach with the requisite technological input.

## **Public Administration**

Any logical definition of Public Administration must be preceded by a conceptualization of the term Administration. In general terms, administration has to do with the organization and coordination of a number of persons with a view to achieving set objectives. According to Woodrow Wilson, the father of Public Administration; "Public Administration is the detailed and systematic application of law. Every particular application of law is an act of administration." (Wilson, 1887:2). Thus, whenever governments and their agents make decisions that have ramifications for society, they are more or less carrying out the basic functions of public administration. Public administration, in the opinion of Balogun (1983), is the mobilization of resources in order to meet the demands of public policy. A more recent and popular definition of the concept is that provided by UNDP (2004), which argues that public administration refers to: (a) the aggregate machinery (policies, rules, procedures, systems, organizational structures, personnel, etc.) funded by the state budget and in charge of the management and direction of the affairs of the executive government, and its interaction with other stakeholders in the state, society and external environment. (b) the management and implementation of the whole set of government activities dealing with the implementation of laws, regulations and decisions of the government and the management related to the provision of public services.

## **The Concept of e-governance**

The concept of e-governance, within Public Administration, is relatively young seeing as it came into mainstream towards the close of the Twentieth Century and the beginning of the Twenty First Century. Yet, there are number of literatures on the subject. A deluge of academic, policy, institutional and working papers have been written on different aspects of e-governance in Public Administration in Nigeria and elsewhere. Some studies have reached the conclusion that e-governance help to improve the quality of services rendered by public organizations. Mario et al (2009) suggest that the deployment of e-governance improves the quality of service delivery in the public sector. They argued that the traditional mode of public administration was too slow and lethargic prompting the need for a fresh paradigm to ameliorate the problem. Other studies have tried to conceptualize and situate the evolution of e-governance over time (Fang, 2002; Hu et al, 2009). These writers attempt to not just the definition of the concept but also to assess its acceptability by all and sundry.

Some writers have argued that the essence of e-governance is not about the ICT itself, but the application of it to enhance public policies, democracy and the general governance environment (EU, 2003). This position is founded on the assumption that some persons may be tempted to put much premium on the technologies themselves rather than the application of the technology to enhance and improve the workings of government. It is, therefore, suggested that policy improvement via technology should be the ultimate emphasis. Other contributors to the e-governance literature concentrate on the scope of the concept (Ojo, 2014; Savic, 2006). While Ojo (2014) sees three major arena viz e-administration, e-services and e-democracy, Savic (2006) suggest that there are e-democracy, e-government and e-business. The discrepancies appear to be matters of semantics rather than any concrete issue. The point that seems to be critical is that there are private and public domain in terms of the scope of the concept in its societal application.

## **Theoretical Framework**

A number of theoretical underpinnings have been used to analyze and understand e-governance reality. However, for this study the Theory of Planned Behaviour as propounded by Ajzen (1991) came in handy. The theory holds that acceptance behaviour is determined by behavioural intentions geared towards specific information system where subjective norms, attitudes and perceived behavioural control are the critical governing agencies. A fundamental reason behind the deployment of Theory of Planned Behaviour is that it provides a platform that can be leveraged upon to investigate changes in acceptance of e-systems and channels from the point of view of external variables. That is an external criteria or evaluator outside the organization can be commissioned to verify if employees are embracing change and the extent to which such acceptance occurs. Another positive point about the theory is that it blends data concerning social and behavioural control factors. These two tendencies are the basic drivers of change with social changes accounting for structural fluidity while behavioural changes forming the basis of individual or agency actions (Mathieson, 1991; Taylor & Todd, 1995).

The theory has been widely acclaimed to have the capacity to explore e-governance studies and information systems narratives (Baker & White, 2010; Hsieh et al., 2008; Taylor & Todd, 1995). The theory thus provides a well-crafted model that has the capacity for understanding e-governance

acceptance behaviour. A number of studies have concluded that the theory can correctly describe and understand user-accepted e-channel services (Hsieh et al., 2008; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006; Long and Philips, 2023). In the end, the capacity of the theory to drive research that border on e-governance imbues the theory to those who have roundly confirmed its pride of place in the pantheon of ICT and information system research. The Theory of Planned Behaviour thus provides us with the necessary theoretical handle with which we can properly carry the narrative as it concerns e-governance within the general sphere of public administration in Nigeria and Edo State University Uzairue in particular.

### **Theory of Planned Behaviour and e-governance within Public Administration**

The theory of planned behaviour comes in handy when explaining the quest for organizations to embrace new methods and modes of carrying out their operations. The theory's ability to explain employee behavioural changes towards accepting fresh patterns of cooperation is key to understanding the wide push towards e-governance and the strengthening of public administration as it concerns Edo State Public Service in general and Edo State University Uzairue in particular. The behavioural trajectories of employees becomes important in understanding the overall behaviour of the institution.

### **Empirical Review**

There are other studies that have addressed e-governance literature in recent years. Onuigbo and Eme (2015) examined the role, prospect and the impediments that technology application can face when attempted to be deployed in government functions. Relying on secondary data drawn from social media platforms like Twitter (now X), Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Tumblr and Instagram, they conclude that while there are skepticisms about the benefit of these technology, they can be positively deployed to aid governance. Adelana (2019) explored the scope and ambit of e-governance and the need to extend its benefits to public administration with a view to catering to the interest of government and the public. Using a qualitative research design, the paper found that e-governance, which has been widely adopted across the globe has the capacity to improve accountability, reduce costs and expand the tax net, all of which can help government achieve its administrative objectives.

Obodo and Anigbata (2018) examined the challenges of implementing electronic governance in public sector organizations in Nigeria. Adopting secondary sources of evidence, the authors found that there are certain factor frustrating the effective operation of e-governance channels in Nigeria. While the nation has embraced it, it has nevertheless not been effectively established as the norm as some employee issues and infrastructure deficit have provided some challenges. The paper calls for further research. Adewale (2017) addresses the question of e-governance and citizen participation in Nigeria. Relying on secondary data, the paper identified some problems and a number of advantages in the deployment of e-governance for government work. Thus, several studies, while acknowledging the usefulness of e-governance both in the public and private domains, usually sign post the potential pitfalls that come with the wide adoption of the method of administration. Indeed, when there is an invention, there is the tendency for such novel situation to birth/pose potential threats.

Rustiarini (2019) assesses the role of e-governance in the fight against corruption. Deploying a systematic review of journals and policy papers, the research synthesized the results of previous research carried out over a period of nineteen years and concluded that e-governance can reduce corruption but that there exist certain internal and external organizational factors that impact the ability of e-governance activities to clampdown on corruption. Other studies have concentrated on the behavioural dimension of people to either accept or reject e-governance as the new norm in public administration. Norms creation and institutional beliefs becomes critical. Long and Phillips (2023) investigated the transformation of government employees' behavioural intention towards the adoption of e-government services. This paper projects the position that government employees are an essential category in public administration because they constitute the principal medium of communication between the service provider (the state) and the end-user (the populace). Deploying primary data via semi-structured interview questions based on existing literature on the theory of planned behaviour, the study discovered certain enablers and hindrances to the adoption of e-governance framework in public administration.

Furthermore, Belanche et al (2010) submit that while citizens understand the importance of e-governance initiatives, they are sometimes not sufficiently armed with the necessary know-how required to accomplish e-governance tasks. Governments in many places often improve ICT infrastructure in the hope that citizens will be ready to deploy them in their work place. However, it has been found that some citizens think in countervailing manner and as such will refuse to use such devices even if they are

profitable to employees, government and the general public (Alarabiat et al., 2017; Nzaramyimana & Susanto, 2019). This may happen because behavioural change can be extremely difficult sometimes. Policy makers must therefore be able to ensure that they create the necessary conditions that best support this behavioural changes, as necessary prerequisite for policy changes. This will then make it a lot easier for employees to transit from previously learned behaviour patterns to new mode of operations.

Having explored the literature on e-governance in Nigeria, the paper reaches the preliminary conclusion that there is insufficient attention in the discourse as it concerns the administration of Universities and in fact there is a dearth of literature concerning this issue in relation to State University administration and especially within the confines of Edo State University Uzairue, Edo State.

**Research Methodology**

This research adopts qualitative research design. The qualitative research design do not lend itself to the hypothesis testing approach of the positivist school which usually emphasize explanation (Nwanolue et al, 2018). This qualitative research design also inculcated the Key Informant Interview (KII) to collect information from staff and students who understand the workings of the institution. In contradistinction to the positivist tradition, qualitative research design, especially of the narrative inclination, adopts the non-statistical and unstructured variant of design to attempt to understand social realities. This study approaches e-governance within the general confines of Public Administration in Nigeria and Edo State University Uzairue in particular in this light. The study therefore pursued inductive reasoning in the present situation to understand the result of the deployment of e-governance on the effectiveness of Public Administration in Nigeria.

**Data Gathering**

The search for relevant literature and data was conducted via Google, Bing, and Data.gov. Government statistics, technical reports, scientific journals and books were gathered via these channels. There were also inquiries at Edo State University Uzairue, where qualitative data were also collected via Key Informant Interviews. The Judgmental sampling method was deployed to select the staff and students for the interviews.

**Summary of Sample Size for the Study**

Designation	Number	Key Informant Interviewee (KII)	Sample size
Deans	of 2	KII(1&2)	02
Faculties			
Heads	Of 05	KII (3-7)	05
Departments			
ICT staff	05	KII(8-12)	05
Students	10	KII (13-22)	10
Total			22

*Source: Author’s Compilation 2024*

**Data Analysis**

A descriptive analysis of the thematic model was deployed. Before, the thematic analysis, the researcher reviewed the original data to confirm if they were reputable, accurate and relevant. After a thorough comprehension of details of the data, the study conducted analyses via themes. The primary data from the KIIs were also reported and analyzed alongside the secondary data.

E-governance and Public Administration in Edo State University Uzairue  
When Edo State government announced the facing out of paper files in August 2023 as the means for exchanging information between government institutions within the state, it was only validating and re-emphasizing the mode of operation that had already become the behaviour of some organizations and

institutions within the State. One such institution is the Edo State University Uzairue. The University relies on the utilization of modern technology in achieving most of its objectives. These various technological platforms will be briefly discussed below under thematic headings.

### **Learning Management System (LMS) and Academic Information System (AIS)**

The Learning Management System (LMS) is an e-learning tool that has been part of the University's academic administration. Through this tool, lecturers and students can continue their teaching and learning even outside of the classroom. Assignments, tests, quizzes, and uploads of documents can all be done with this tool. Administration of the class in the form of class attendance is also a regular feature of this e-device. During the Covid-19 pandemic, when every other institution was on lockdown, the LMS made it possible for the University to graduate its students. The Academic Information System (AIS), which is essentially a workflow system is more of an administrative tool that helps both academic and non-academic staff to achieve their objectives seamlessly and in a cost effective manner. It is a repository of the data of students which make for easy Course Advising and for the Registry and ICT Units to effectively achieve their remits.

### **Multimedia Teaching**

The University deploys multimedia platforms for teaching and learning. There are smart boards and projectors in the classrooms which enable academic staff to easily pass on their skills without resorting to clumsy traditional paper methods.

### **E-Library**

The University also has a well equipped and functional e-library where students and staff (academic and non-academic) can do research and other remits as required by the institution. The e-library has tens of thousands of books off-line and an unlimited number on-line.

### **E-mails, WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Zoom**

A number of the University's internal information dissemination are via e-mails and WhatsApp platforms. This makes it easy and cost effective for both the University as an institution and the employees as end-users of such information. Again, a number of the University's activities are driven, at least in part, if not fully as they were during the lockdown occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic by Google Meet and Zoom e-platforms.

### **End of Session Results**

Parents and guardians received on a regular basis, through e-mails, the end of session evaluation and results of their wards. This is a fitting testament to the power of e-administration and indeed e-governance because the results will get to the parents and guardians irrespective of how geographically far away from the University these Parents and guardians are.

### **Thematic Analysis**

#### **E-governance and Reduction of Inefficiencies in Edo State University Uzairue**

As noted by Fatile (2012), e-governance is a powerful enabling tool that has aided governments achieves some of their development and administrative reform goals. E-governance is a catalyst for change. Three factors are critical for the successful implementation of e-governance. These include willingness to reform, availability of information communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, and the institutional capacity to absorb and manage change. The proponents of e-governance are concerned about the ways for incorporating digital technology into exercise of administrative functions. It is an ICT-based tool for strengthening public administration. The introduction of e-governance and administration in Edo State University has enabled the university to circumvent ineffectiveness and inefficiency that characterizes public institutions in Nigeria. This was reported by KII(2) who is a Dean of Faculty in Edo State University Uzairue as well as KIIs 3,5,6 and 7. The interviewee argued that as a management staff of the



institution, the digital facilities and ICT components of the University have been quite helpful.

A careful inquiry into the operational structure of Edo State University Uzairue as an institution shows that its general architecture is at an optimal level, which accounts for why it has been able to survive, thrive and grow in leaps and bounds. Thus, as an aggregate, from the least staff up to the Governing Council of the University, there seems to be a level of optimization which has served it properly. This is not to suggest that there is zero level of constraint but to argue that such constraints have been duly handled or are being managed effectively and efficiently by staff and management in a fairly conscientious manner.

### **E-governance and enhancement of Transparency and Control of Corrupt practices in Edo State University Uzairue**

In the opinion of UN (2003) the introduction of e-Government is justified if it enhances the capacity of public administration to increase the supply of much needed public value. In Edo State University Uzairue, the use of electronic service delivery frees students to engage with university services at their own convenience, not just when staff offices are open. The interactive aspects of e-Government allow both students and staff to send and receive information, a major transformational shift in public university processes and functions.

It is worthy of note that the potential of e-Government to improve transparency and control corruption in public institutions cannot be overemphasized. To be candid, transparency can be attained by providing citizens with more and direct access to governmental information, as increased transparency leads to decreased corruption. This is what Edo State University has been able to achieve over the years through the adoption of e-administration. As KII (6) observed, Transparency in terms of the openness afforded by technology reduces the tendency for corruption in the institution. Challenges confronting public universities such as corrupt practices which manifest in the form of admission and result racketeering etc are not common in Edo State University Uzairue. This is not to suggest that there is zero level of corrupt act but to argue that it has reduced it.

### **E-Governance and Reduction of Cost of Operation in Edo State University Uzairue**

There is no denying the fact that e-governance and administration play a substantial role in corruption control and poverty reduction, and consequently offers opportunities to cost effective service delivery to institutions and citizens, a daunting task of modern public administration. The movement of Edo State University Uzairue away from the traditional paper-based system which many universities are known for in Nigeria to an electronic system has tremendously reduced the need for man power. Thus, allowing the process to be handled by fewer employees and therefore reduced operations cost. No doubt, the university had moved toward mobile connections. This position was extensively elaborated on by KIIs 1,2,4,5,6, and 7. Again, placing the university e-governance and administration services to be accessible to students and parents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week irrespective of location throughout the country with minimal cost is pleasing to stakeholders and end users. And this was confirmed by KIIs 8-17. The websites serve as convenient and cost-effective platforms for centralized service provision. This view was confirmed by KIIs 8,9, 11 and 12 who are all ICT staff on the non-academic side. It is not a miss placement to state that the university e-administration has indeed reduced spending and increased earning. Costs incurred by university in providing services can further be reduced by continuous enhancement of the use of the Internet.

### **Conclusion**

The inescapable verdict then is that the modern Public Administration must now take cognizance of the increasing importance of the digital economy. The complexity of the State in the current global zeitgeist means that Public Administration should equally re-think strategy and move away from the lethargic patterns of traditional administration which do not synchronizes sufficiently with this continuous change and norms variation. As a result of this a number of countries have transited from analog, paper administration to digital, paperless administration. E-governance, as it were, is now defining and re-defining the terrain and contours of Public Administration as objectives are being achieved in cost-effective ways with optimal resources. Sustainable development has also been a key theme in the discourse because e-governance has a prime place for green economy. Edo State government is now addressing these concerns in more accelerated ways which account for while it recently implored all Ministries, Departments and Agencies in the State to comply and adopt paperless e-channels in their

daily activities.

Edo State University Uzairue is an institution within the confines of the State government. This study has essentially been about deploying e-governance to enhance Public Administration in Edo State University Uzairue, with a view to generalizing findings across the State and the general Nigerian State. Data were sourced from both secondary and primary sources (through Key Informant Interviews) and an in-depth analysis of the operations and workings of the school was carried out via thematic analysis. This analysis took its point of departure from three key themes. The institution as a structural entity, the technological infrastructure, and the agents who drive the institution, which essentially refers to the leadership and employees. While the institution was found to be in an optimum condition, it nevertheless faced some challenges which deserve attention. In terms of the technological framework, the institution was found to be in relatively good condition seeing as the staff easily leveraged on the e-channels afforded by technology to achieve the wider objectives of the institution. Finally, agency issues of leadership and followership were considered, and it was suggested that the institution has been able to create an ethical culture that manifest in the wider behaviour of staff.

## Recommendations

The obvious administrative response to the current scenario will be to consolidate and make changes which are incremental, rather than radical. These changes will also be geared towards preventive measures to preempt attitudinal decay and improve agency relations.

Firstly, staff should be encouraged to accept the deployment of new technology in the line of their duty. Where it is perceived that some of the staff are not ICT savvy as a result of some form of intellectual and creative deficiency, special training can be factored in to help such group of employees.

Secondly, finance present some challenge in the University. Technological infrastructure takes some level of resource strength to maintain. This study is convinced that the management of the University will appreciate some level of increased funding from the State government.

The final point here is about replication. There are a number of public institutions that have refused to embrace the digital world, and are under performing. The story of Edo State University Uzairue should inspire them to leverage on e-governance and e-channels as they attempt to be more competitive in a complex world.

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## APPENDIX I

### Interview Guide

#### SECTION A

##### Socio-Demographic Data

1. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age: 18 – 30 ☐ 31 – 40 ☐ 41 – 50 ☐ 51 – 60 ☐ 61 – 70 ☐ 71 – 80 ☐ 81 – 90 ☐ 91 – 100 ☐
3. Educational background/qualifications
  - a) NECO, WASC ☐
  - b) OND/NCE ☐
  - c) HND/B.Sc, B.Ed. ☐
  - d) M.Sc/M.A/M.Ed/Ph.D. ☐
  - e) Other Professions ☐
- 4 Designation
  - a) Dean of Faculty ☐
  - b) Head of Department ☐
  - c) ICT Staff ☐
  - d) Student ☐
- 5.Nationality..... ☐
6. Religion: Islamic ☐ Christianity ☐ African Traditional Religion ☐

7. State of Residence of respondent. \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION B: Electronic Governance And Effective Public Administration In Nigeria: A Study Of Edo State University Uzairue**

i Has e-governance and the use of technology reduce inefficiency in Edo State University Uzairue?  
.....  
.....

ii Has e-governance and the deployment of technology enhance transparency and reduce corruption in Edo State University Uzairue?  
.....  
.....

iii Has e-governance and the utilization of technology reduce the cost of operation in Edo State University Uzairue?  
.....  
.....

# Specific Language Impairment and Communication Disorders in Selected Children from Idah Metropolis in Idah LGA, Kogi State

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## Abstract

This study investigates specific language impairment and communication disorders in selected children from Idah metropolis in Idah LGA of Kogi state. The objective of the study is to examine the cause of the impairment and disorders in selected children with a view to proffering solutions or treatment to the disabilities. The scope of the study is restricted to specific language impairment and communication disorders in selected children. The study uses the descriptive research design. It also uses interview as an instrument for data collection. The major findings of this study show that children with specific language impairment and communication disorders exhibit a wide variety of characteristics such as language delay, aphasia, voice disorders, developmental language disorders, fluency problems, articulation problems, etc. This study concludes that despite the early claims that the cause of specific language impairment was unknown, recent discoveries suggest that the impairment has both genetic and environmental connection.

*Keywords: aphasia, articulation disorder, fluency disorder, language disorder, and voice disorder*

## Introduction

Language is the pivot on which all human activities, ranging from the most prosaic to the most profound revolve. Language provides the unique medium through which the belief systems, moral values, and virtually all the basic ingredients of any given society are passed on from generation to generation. The significant thread that runs through all these activities is communication. Language as a natural human activity is common to every normal human being. Put differently, all normal human beings are naturally disposed to using language for the sole purpose of communication.

The crucial role of language in the society notwithstanding, there are some children who have specific language impairment and communication disorders.

Specific language impairment is a language disorder that delays the mastery of language skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing in children who have no hearing loss or other developmental delays. Specific language impairment is also called developmental language disorder, language delay or developmental dysphasia. It is one of the most common childhood learning disabilities, affecting approximately 7 to 8 percent of children in Kindergarten. The impact of specific language impairment persists into adulthood.

The cause of specific language impairment is unknown, but recent discoveries suggest that it has a strong genetic link. Children with specific language impairment are more likely to have parents and siblings who also have had difficulties and delays in speaking than those without it. Recent discovers also posit that 50-70 percent of children with specific language impairment have at least one other family member with the disorder.

Furthermore, cases of specific language impairment caused by a single mutation have been discovered in most children. The disorder has a more complex basis, with the interaction of several genes together with environmental risk factors.

The symptoms of specific language impairment are indicative of the fact that children are often late to talk and may not produce any words until they are two (2) years old. At the age of three, they may talk but may not be understood. Accordingly, as they grow older, they will struggle to learn new words and converse. These children are equally said to be having difficulties in the use of verbs. Some of the typical errors that a five-year-old child with specific language impairment would make include dropping the 's' from the end of present tense, dropping past tense and asking questions without the usual 'be' or 'do' verbs. For instance, instead of saying "He rides the horse" a child with specific language impairment will say, "He ride the horse". Again, instead of saying "She ate the egg", a child with specific language impairment will say, "she eat the egg" Moreover, instead of asking, "why does she like me?", a child with specific language impairment will ask, "why she like me?"

In another development, specific language impairment in children could first be diagnosed by their parents or pre-school or school teachers. Others include speech-language professionals such as speech-language pathologists.

It is obvious that specific language impairment affects reading and ultimately children's learning abilities. Under this circumstance, it can affect children's performance in school if it is not treated as early as diagnosed.

Based on the foregoing premise, it is germane to state here that the cause of specific language impairment is partly genetic and partly environmental.

Communication is said to be successful when both interlocutors have reached a mutual understanding of the topic of discussion. Anything that gets in the way of speaking or listening leads to a breakdown in communication. In essence, a problem in communication is called a communication disorder. The concept of communication disorders on the other hand, comprises a wide variety of problems in language, speech, and hearing. Speech and language impairments include articulation problems, voice disorders, fluency problems (such as stuttering), aphasia (difficulty in using words, sometimes as a result of a brain injury, viral infections, cardio-vascular accident, mental retardation), and delays in speech and /or language. Hearing impairments include partial hearing and deafness. Deafness refers to a kind of loss sufficient to make auditory communication difficult or impossible. A good number of communication disorders can equally result from other pathological conditions such as learning disabilities, mental retardation, etc.

Children suffering from communication disorders tend to manifest a number of peculiar cognitive behavioural features. For instance, a child with speech or language delays may present a variety of characteristics including the inability to follow directions, slow and incomprehensible speech and pronunciation difficulties in syntax and articulation. Articulation disorders are characterised by the substitution of one sound for another or the omission or distortion of certain sounds. Stuttering or dysfluency is a disorder of speech flow that most often appears between the ages of 3 and 4 years and may progress from an intermittent to a chronic problem. Stuttering may spontaneously disappear by early adolescence but speech and language therapy should be considered. Typical voice disorders include hoarseness, breathiness, or sudden break in loudness or pitch. Voice disorders are frequently combined with other speech problems to form a complex communication disorder. A child with a possible hearing disorder may appear strained to hear, ask to have questions repeated before giving the right answer, demonstrate speech inaccuracies, especially dropping the beginnings and endings of words or exhibit confusion during discussion.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**For purpose of clarity, the following concepts are explained.**

**Articulation Disorder:** This arises when a child has difficulty making certain sounds. These sounds may be left off, added, changed or distorted, which makes it difficult for people to understand the child. Learning out or changing certain sounds is common when young children are learning to talk. A good example of this is when a child says "wabbit" instead of "rabbit". This incorrect articulation is not necessarily a cause for concern unless it persists after the age when children are expected to produce such sounds correctly.

**Fluency Disorder:** This means that something is disrupting the rhythmic and forward flow of speech usually caused by stuttering. Consequently, the child's speech contains an "abnormal number of repetitions, hesitations, prolongations or disturbances. Tension may also be seen in the face, neck, shoulders or fists".

**Voice Disorder:** This refers to difficulty in the production of sounds when air from the lungs pushes through the voice box in the throat otherwise called the larynx, making the vocal cords within difficult to vibrate. A voice disorder involves problems with the pitch, loudness, resonance or quality of the voice. The voice may be hoarse, raspy, or harsh. For some, it may sound quite nasal; others might seem as if they are "stuffed up." People with voice problems, more often than not, notice changes in pitch, loss of voice, loss of endurance and

sometimes, a sharp or dull pain associated with voice use.

**Language Disorder:** This is defined as an impaired ability to understand and / or use words in contexts. A child may have an expressive language disorder or difficulty in expressing ideas or needs, a receptive language disorder or difficulty in understanding what others are saying, or a mixed language disorder, which involves both.

Below are some features of language disorders

- a) Improper use of words and their meanings;
- b) Inability to express ideas;
- c) Inappropriate grammatical patterns;
- d) Reduced vocabulary,
- e) Inability to follow directions

To this end, Children may hear or see a word but may not be able to understand its meaning. They may have trouble getting others to understand what they are trying to communicate.

## Literature Review

It is relevant to stress here that not many scholars have researched into specific language impairment and communication disorders in children. However, an attempt is made to present a few scholarly works done in relation to the topic under investigation.

Agbedo (2009) views communication disorder as a situation characterised by complete or partial impairment of language comprehension, formulation and use. He sees communication disorders as the loss of normal language abilities as a result of some pathological conditions. He further posits that communication disorder is caused by brain damage. Reasoning within the same premise, Nicolosi, et al. (1978) maintain that communication disorder is a purely linguistic pathology.

In the opinion of Bishop and Adams (2002) long term language impairments that persist into adulthood are less common than milder delays in preschoolers which may resolve with time.

They further say that a typical 7 or 8 year old child with the disability may talk like a 3-year-old using simplified speech sounds, with words strung together in short, ungrammatical strings e.g “me go, there” instead of “I went there”

Vargha-Khadem, Gadian, Copp and Mishkin (2005) explain that the cause of specific language impairment and communication disorders is traceable to the interaction of several genes together with environmental risk factors.

Bishop, Adams and Norbury (2006) opine that children with specific language impairment have unusual difficulty with some aspects of grammar and will tend to omit the appropriate verb inflection in sentences such as “Yesterday my brother walk to school” or “Every day, John ride his bike.” In the first sentence, the present tense form of walk is used instead of the past form walked.

Adima (1991) sees impaired speech as any speech which deviates from the average so far as to draw unfavourable attention to speakers whether through unpleasant sound, inappropriateness to the age of the speaker, or lack of intelligibility.

Doll (1941) Puts forward six criteria to be considered before a child is diagnosed as being retarded. These are as follows:

- a) The individual must be socially incompetent.
- b) This must be due to mental sub-normality
- c) The mental sub-normality must be the result of development arrest
- d) It is usually obtained at maturity
- e) It must be a constitutional origin (heredity or diseases)
- f) It is essentially incurable

Agbedo (2010) says that children with communication disorders are characterized by language delay. He equally asserts that the symptoms of language delay as manifested by children with communication disorders include inability to follow directions, slow or incomprehensible speech after three years of age, serious difficulties with syntax i.e placing words in a sentences into the correct order. He further gives another instance of communication disorders in children as dysfluency or stuttering, describing it as breakdown in the natural flow of speech during spontaneous communicative event. This situation, according to him, is clearly evident in their characteristic repetitions of whole words mostly one syllable in a word; elongation of a sound or syllable by drawing it out, or refusal to talk because of a fear of stuttering; intense struggling to utter even a word and abnormal breathing during speech.



## **Theoretical framework**

This study is built on McClelland and Rumelhart's (1986) connectionist theory (model of past tense). It holds that all morphological forms are processed within one type of processing mechanism (connectionist networks) distributed across multiple brain regions (Joanisse and Seidenberg 1999). The connectionist approach assumes that complex cognitive abilities arise from interactions among simple processing units i.e neurons and that complex behaviour such as language, reflect the more basic characteristics of these neural networks.

In the case of the past tense, this theory posits that word knowledge relies on information about sound (phonology) and meaning (semantics). Although the relationship between sound and meaning is usually arbitrary, morphology is a special case because morphologically related words share both phonology and semantic relationship. For instance, walk and walked overlap, both in phonology and in semantics. This theory further maintains that specific language impairment is a rule-learning disorder and as such, children with the impairment will have difficulty producing the past tenses of both regular and irregular verbs.

## **Methodology**

The research design for this study is descriptive survey, which tells systematically what a situation is. This involves taking a sample of the population of the subject for the study. The geographical area of this study is Kogi East Senatorial district of Kogi State, with a focus on Idah metropolis. The scope of this study is specific language impairment and communication disorders in children, using two selected school children with the disabilities. The choice of these categories of people is necessitated by the fact that they are relevant to the topic under investigation.

The instrument used for data collection in this study was unstructured interview. The interview schedule comprises ten (10) questions designed to give respondents freedom to express themselves on the specific language impairment and communication disorders in children.

Since the research work is descriptive, the researcher relied on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through face-to-face unstructured interview with a total of two (2) respondents. For secondary data, published works on the subject of study were consulted.

### **Data presentation and Analysis**

Here, two school children who are victims of specific language impairment and communication disorders were used. Both of them were born with the disabilities. Their names are Ojonoka Adukwu a five year old girl and Enemadukwu Idoko a seven year old boy. Below are the facts of the interactions between the researcher and the respondents (victims). The conversation encompasses respondent A (girl) and respondent B (boy).

### **Respondent A**

Researcher: Abu egbo? (How are you?)

Respondent: chuu gbee/ (fine)

Researcher: Eun chodu we? (What is your name?)

Respondent: Noo (meaning Noka, short form of Ojonoka)

Researcher: Omo do monu eche? (How old are?)

Respondent: Lu (Meaning five)

Researcher: Enu chodu iklachi we? (what class are you?)

Respondent: (Silent)

Researcher: (Repeated) Eun chodu iklachi?

Respondent: Temporarily confused. Kla... wa (class one)

Researcher: Abu ma dodu ichekwulu we? (What is the name of your school?)

Respondent: Appears more confused

Researcher: Noka, kodu ichekwulu we mi. (Noka, tell me the name of your school)

Respondent: Hope Nurse Pri... (Hope Nursery and Primary School)

Researcher: Ugbo mama we de? (Where is your mummy?)

Researcher: Uma... (I don't know)

Researcher: Thank you very much, Good bye.

### **Respondent B**

Researcher: Abu Egbo? (How are you?)

Respondent: La-afia (fine)

Researcher: Eun Chodu we? (What is your name?)

Respondent: Eene (meaning Enema, Short form of Enemadukwu)  
 Researcher: Omo do monu eche? (How old are you?)  
 Respondent: Sefen (meaning Seven)  
 Researcher: Ichekwulu ugbo ele? (Which school do you attend?)  
 Respondent: Aye... (Ayegba Nursery and Primary School)  
 Researcher: Eun chi iklachhi we? (What class are you?)  
 Respondent: Kilas two (class two)  
 Researcher: Ugbo daddy de? (Where is daddy?)  
 Respondent: Looks around and keeps quiet  
 Researcher: (Repeated) Enema, Ugbo daddy we de? (Enema, where is your daddy?)  
 Respondent: Uh Uhh man (He stutters and said "I don't know")  
 Researcher: Alright, thank you for your attention, Good bye.

## **Data Analysis**

From the data presentation, it is obvious that the respondent A and B are both victims of specific language impairment and communication disorders. Though the questions and their answers are similar, the interactions took place at different times and places. Both of them paid little attention to details, looked so disorganized, exhibited language delays, dysfluency or stuttering, have serious difficulties with speech articulation such as omission or distortion of certain sounds, refusal to talk due to fear of stuttering, have intense struggling to utter even a complete word, and more often than not, they looked helplessly confused. It is equally discovered that these children suffer from aphasia--they are particularly unable to use words correctly, resulting from several causative factors such as brain injury and even mental retardation.

## **Findings**

From the study undertaken, it is established that children with specific language impairments and communication disorders are characterised by language delay, developmental language disorder, dysfluency, voice disorder, aphasia, articulation disorders, inability to follow directions, reduced vocabulary, and poor academic performance.

Available evidence from the primary and secondary data collected shows that children with these disabilities pay little attention to details; make reckless mistakes; have short attention span; do not follow instructions; do not finish tasks; have difficulty organising tasks; avoid tasks that require sustained mental efforts; lose things with reckless abandon; get easily distracted and consistently forgetful in routine activities.

## **Conclusion**

From the foregoing analysis, it is obvious that children with specific language impairment and communication disorders are characterised by various disabilities such as language delay, dysfluency, developmental language disorders, difficulty making certain sounds, etc.

Despite early claims that the disability is rule-learning deficit, evidence indicates that children with specific language impairment have problems with all past tense forms.

Besides, the cause of specific language impairment is said to be unknown. Recent discoveries, however, suggest that the impairment has a strong genetic link. Further discoveries show that the cause of the disability is partly genetic and partly environmental.

At this juncture, it is germane to recommend that treatment of children with specific language impairment and communication disorders needs collaborative efforts of parents, teachers, psychologists, physicians and speech-language pathologists.

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# A Semiotic Analysis of Igede Agba Festival

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## Abstract

Festivals are celebrative as well as ritualistic activities organized annually or periodically in honor of a deity, other revered objects or themes. This study examined the signs and significations of Igede Agba Festival. The aim of the study was to interrogate both the verbal and non-verbal codes associated with the festival. The study adopted Ferdinand De Saussure's Dyadic theory of semiotics. Data were gathered using both primary and secondary sources. Findings revealed that the signs and symbols in Igede Agba festival include; the Akpang cult, the Ogodo godo (native attire), the Ihyigile, the pouring-of-libation and the yam. The findings further showed that the semiotic significance and meaning of signs and symbols in Igede Agba festival lies in the fact that the festival is rooted deeply in the culture of the Igede people. Some of the semiotic features used in the festival serve as a collective binding force on the Igede people and reflect their rich culture. It was also discovered that the non-verbal and verbal codes in Igede Agba include; dance, movement, costumes and make-up, facial expressions, mime, ritual and sacrifices of the Akpang cult; while the verbal codes are: story -telling, music and songs of the Akpang cults. The study indicated that the significance of Igede Agba festival shows that the Igede people have a rich culture and history. The festival is a popular event which offers the Igede people the opportunity to exhibit their hospitality. The study concluded that the Igede Agba festival is a cultural festival that depicts the totality of the way of life of the Igede people and it is an avenue for transmitting into the younger generations the history and cultural values of the Igede people. The study therefore recommended that the Governments at different levels should incorporate traditional festivals into their budgets, and special allocations should be given for organizing local festivals in Benue state as well as other states of Nigeria.

*Keywords: Semiotics, festival, Igede Agba, Akpang cult*

## Introduction

Language is the principal and richest means of communication used by human beings. Language is used for cultural accumulation and historical transmission of cultural practices from one generation to another. Language can be understood and studied from different sub-disciplines. One of such sub-disciplines is semiotics. 'Semiotics', which is also called 'semiology' is the study of signs and signs using behaviors. Ferdinand de Saussure (1894) asserts that "semiotics is the study of the life of signs within society. It is the sub-discipline of linguistics which is particularly concerned with the nature of the linguistic sign". A sign which is the central focus of semiotics, according to Pierce (1931) is "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity". From the above, we can establish that semiotics can be viewed primarily as a model of analysis that seeks to understand how sign performs or conveys meaning in context.

The goal of semiotics as a discipline is to uncover the rules that govern the conventions of signification. Language generally is used as a model for the analysis of sign system that is used in everyday life for communicating logical relationships. That is, language is used to express ourselves and our thoughts about life generally. The principal function of language is communication. Language communicates in different forms; it can be verbal or non-verbal. These forms of communication are submerged in culture. Every culture expresses language differently. Nigeria, for instance, is a multilingual and multicultural nation and one pertinent feature of these multiple cultures is their

language which makes each of the cultures stand out or unique. This statement presupposes that culture is the totality of a people's way of life which encompasses language which also separates one culture from the others. A people's culture therefore comprises language, dress code, food, eating habits, music, religion and festivals.

Festival is a period or season of cultural events celebrated by a community and centering on some characteristic aspects of that community and its traditions. Often, it is marked as a local or national holiday in the given society. Festival often serves to fulfill specific communal purposes, especially with regards to commemoration. It is an expressive way to celebrate cultural heritage and traditions. The celebration offers a sense of belonging for religious, social, or geographical groups contributing to their cohesiveness. From a historic perspective, each festival has a very specific significance such as arrival of a season, harvest time, the victory of good over evil etc. Celebrating a festival means respecting that event and accepting it as having a positive influence in the lives of its members. Local festivals in Nigeria, for instance, have very rich cultures, rituals, dances and semiotic elements. Local festivals can put forward the beauty of the native culture and tradition. Festivals such as Eje-Alekwu in the Idoma areas, the New Yam festival in the Iggede area, and the Kwagh-hir in the Tiv speaking areas all show the cultural aesthetics of the people of Benue state.

Among the Iggede of central Nigeria, festival is part and parcel of their language, society and culture at large. The Iggede people have been celebrating the Iggede Agba festival for ages. It is an annual celebration which usually takes place for a period of three days, often occasioned by huge festive activities. Iggede Agba celebration, also known as "New yam festival," marks the beginning of the harvest season. It is celebrated annually on the first Ihigile market day in the month of September, hence the date oscillates between the 1st and 5th of September. Yam, which is the most prized staple food item in the locality, is used as a symbol to mark the celebration Akpegi (2015). The Iggede Agba new yam festival is not just a communal celebration without certain semiotic signification and elements. In the process of its celebration, there are certain lingo-semiotic elements that make up the festival and some of these sign related elements have been negatively looked upon as some people refer to them as fetish, barbaric and not worthy to be part of the celebration. The study intends to examine these sign related elements as well as their significance in Iggede Agba festival.

## **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of the study is to examine the signs and significations of the Iggede Agba festival. The specific objectives include to:

1. Identify the signs and symbols that are evident in Iggede Agba festival
2. Ascertain the semiotic significance and meaning of the signs and symbols of Iggede Agba festival
3. Establish the verbal and non-verbal codes in Iggede Agba festival celebration
4. Establish the socio-cultural relevance of Iggede Agba festival on Iggede people

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

### **Semiotics**

Semiotics is derived from the Greek word "semesion", meaning sign "semainon" which means signifier and "semainomenon" meaning signified or indication. Generally, semiotic is the study of signs or an epistemology about the existence or the actuality of signs in societal life. Many pioneer researchers, practitioners and authors of semiotics such as Ferdinand de Saussure (1894), Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 - 1914), Roland Barthes (1915 - 1980), Roman Jakobson (1896 - 1982), Charles Morris (1901 - 1979) and Umberto Eco (Eco, 1979), Panuti and Zoest, (1996,) Chandler, (2002) etc. have agreed on the simple definition. For purpose of clearer understanding, semiotics accounts for everything that can be seen or be interpreted as a sign

Semiotics has a subset called the Saussurean tradition of semiology. Saussure's term, 'semiology' dates from a manuscript of 1894. The first edition of his course in general linguistics, published in 1916. Saussure, otherwise called Ferdinand de Saussure, is a Swiss linguist, semiotician and a philosopher. His ideas laid a foundation for many significant developments in both linguistics, and semiotics in the 20th century. He is widely considered one of the founders of 20th century linguistics and one of two major founders with Charles Sanders Peirce of Semiotics. One of Saussure's key contributions to semiotics lies in what he calls 'semiology', the concept of the bilateral or two sided sign. Thus, his approach is dyadic in nature, consisting of two; the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the linguistic form while the signified is the meaning of the form.

To Louis Hjelmslev (1899 – 1965), the signifier is interpreted as "the material form", that is,

“something which can be seen, heard touched smelled or tasted”, and the signified - the mental concept. The signifier is the form that the signified takes and the signified is the concept to which it refers. The relationships between the two concepts, according to Chandler (2002), “...are arbitrary, there is no logical connection”. Berger (2013:22) adds that “both the signifier and the signified are inseparable and both components coincide to create the sign and they are both purely psychological because, they occur in the mind”. While for the linguist Saussure, ‘Semiology’ was “...a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life”, to the philosopher Charles Pierce, the field of study which he calls ‘semiotic’ (or semiotics) was closely related to logic (Pierce 1931:58) and this logic operates within a context or culture.

## **Cultural Semiotics**

According to Andrews (2003) cultural semiotics is also known as “semiotics of culture”. He continues that “it is a sub-field within semiotic studies that attempts to define culture from the semiotics perspective and as a type of human symbolic activity that deals with the creation of signs and the way of giving meaning to everything around”. Therefore, here, culture is understood as “...a system of symbols or meaningful signs”. To examine the concept also, Torop (1998) opines that:

“cultural semiotics in its narrow sense overlaps and differs from the studies of cultural anthropology or contemporary popular culture in its academic goals. The overlap lies in that both regard culture as a kind of symbol or a kind of symbolic system and share the same understanding of the essential characteristics of culture”. (P. 25)

Torop (1998:26) adds further that “the difference lies in that the academic goal of the studies of cultural anthropology and contemporary popular culture is to study culture itself (local culture or contemporary subculture), while cultural semiotics in its narrow sense has a relatively independent pursuit in discipline construction”. Torop concludes that “therefore, cultural semiotics here is more interested in the patterned construction of culture in order to generalize the theoretical paradigm suitable for general semiotic research”.

Schroeder (1998) adds his opinion that;

Semiotics makes us aware that the cultural values with which we make sense of the world are a tissue of conventions that have been handed down from generation to generation by the members of the culture of which we are a part. It reminds us that there is nothing 'natural' about our values; they are social constructs that not only vary enormously in the course of time but differ radically from culture to culture”

This study aligns with the notion of cultural semiotics as expounded by Andrews (2002), Torop (1998) as well as Schroeder (1998) in treating the concept of Iggede Agba. This is because Iggede Agba festival is a unique cultural practice with all-encompassing collection of human, spiritual and material elements, including thoughts, values, behavior, literature, arts, costumes, material products and so on with complex associations or symbolic system. The festival often show-cases all the art forms of the community, such as dancing, drumming, costuming, chanting, singing, masking etcetera that are of significant value within the culture.

## **Concept of Sign**

According to Peirce (1914), a pioneer in the field of semiotics, a sign is “something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity”. Eco (1976:7) opines that a sign “itself is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting something else”. He argues further that “all signs are processes of communication which are meant to mean or convey a message. This sign serves as a substitute of verbal message and symbolically communicate perhaps what the generality of the people know or may know.

Thomas (1978:237) considers a sign as “something that suggests the presence or absence of a fact, condition or quality”. This “something” may be anything used to convey meaning. The “something” could therefore be a dress, picture, gesture, a conspicuous mark or object. Hawkes (1977:121) describes a sign as “anything which determines something else (it’s interpretant), to refer to an object to which it refers (its object). In a nutshell, a sign stands for anything or something.

## **Concept of Festival**

Amankulor (1985:83) states that: festival is a periodic or occasional celebration, merry-making or feast day of special significance in the cultural calendar of the celebrants. Anigala(2006:13) adds that “festivals are works of art with various forms which can be composed into songs, dance, mime, poetry, sculpture etcetera and these forms are integrated into a unified form “Hence, festival displays are actually celebration of people’s culture”. Anigala(2006:17) also opines that festivals are regular features in traditional African societies, and as such they derived their origin from the cultural and religious practice of the people. Thus, there is an agreement between the definitions given by both scholars, because for the fact that most African traditional festivals derive their origin from the cultural and religious practices of the people, they are rooted in the culture of the people, that is in the way they see life and these are organized around natural forces, deities, supernatural event, myths and legends. These festivals which have drama embed in them are peculiar to the people.

## **Concept of Igede Agba Festival**

According to Akpegi (2015:17) “participating in the Igede Agba festival among Igede people is a strong means of identity formation and collective consciousness”. Igede Agba festival is a cultural festival with its deep significance. It is celebrated with background knowledge of its significance which helps to rekindle the heritage, etiquette and strengthens beliefs of Igede people. Supporting this view, Ajegi (2010:6) opines that the “Igede Agba festival is “a new yam festival celebrated by the Igede people of Benue State yearly”. He continues that “the festival bothers on cultural education and merry making. It marks the ending and the beginning of a new planting season”.

The history of Igede Agba festival dated back to the arrival of the Igede people in their present place of dwelling. The Igede origin according to oral tradition could be traced to a great ancestral father called “Agba”-the progenitor of all Igede people. It is after this man’s name that the Igede Agba festival was coined. Akpegi (2015:17-18) adds that “ the yearly event is celebrated between September 1st - 5th on ihigile market day and the pounded yam dish is being used as the core food of the festival as the festival is emblematic of the abundance of the produce”. According to Agogo (2010) the “ihigile market day is a very good day, a peaceful day when matters (of societal values) are best resolved.” The Igede Agba festival involves a plethora of complex ideas, thoughts, religion and ritual and experiences of the Igede history and activities over a long period of time.

## **Theoretical Framework**

It is of utmost importance that we align this study to some theoretical framework to help us understand in details the way signs or symbols operate. For the purpose of this study, we will discuss the Saussuran, models of sign. Semiotic theory dates back to philosophical history of ancient times and there are two prominent traditions of semiotic: one from Ferdinand de Saussure, a French linguist (1857-1914) called Dyadic model and the other from an American philosopher and logician by name Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914) called Triadic Model. The mythologies of the two have come to take central stage in semiotics. However, the Saussurean model is emphasized here.

Saussure’s key contributions to semiotics lies in what he calls ‘semiology’, the concept of the bilateral or two sided sign. Thus, his approach is dyadic in nature, consisting of two; the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the linguistic form while the signified is the meaning of the form. And this is suitable for this study because the research seeks to answer the question, “why do the people chose to use certain objects, elements, or costumes for the festival or its celebration?” In other words, the choice of the material and the purpose for its choice agrees with the dyadic model of Saussurean semiotics.

## **Empirical Review**

Adiele (2021) did a study on, Nigerian festivals: In search of a new identity. The study focused on why some Nigerian festivals are no longer being observed with the fanfare they deserve. The study sought to find out what initiatives are needed to be undertaken to revive the declining interests in these festivals. The study further sought ways by which these festivals can be reorganized to attract tourism to give a new consciousness in the face of multiple socio-economic infirmities. The researcher adopted cultural materialism as a tool for analysis and concluded that through the revival of these festivals, Nigeria’s cultural identity can be re-established and transposed to the world.

Ake (2017) examined the Aesthetics of Amugele festival. The aim of the study was to explore the

theatrical aesthetics in the Amugele masquerade festival. The research made use of four methodologies. They include historical, sociological, literary and artistic methods. The findings of this study revealed that the festival has gone through some changes over the years. This is because, the traditional African festival performances serve as an important expression of the life of the Africans, hence it cannot remain static as it changes rapidly from time to time. And this is true of the Amugele masquerade festival.

Ogunleye (2015) examined Cultural heritage, roles and significant of Eyo Festival. The objectives were: to analyze the mode of production of these ceramic objects, identify the concept used and identify the shortcomings for future consideration. The study discovered that Lagos is a very popular city that almost everybody hears about. Ikeja is the state capital. The Eyo festival is organized under the auspices of the Yoruba tradition, as well as social organizations or clubs. It is an outlet used to showcase the culture of the Isale Eko people, since it can be organized for special occasions apart from the death of prominent chiefs, elders, or installation of a new Oba. It can be used to entertain at special state functions or occasions. The study concluded and recommended that ceramic student should be enlightened to go for practical exposure especially at various indigenous festivals.

## **Methodology**

The descriptive research design is adopted here because this study aims to describe how the Igede Agba festival is celebrated, what signs and symbols are used during this celebration as well as their cultural interpretations. The major sources of data for the study were through participant observation, personal interview and intuitive knowledge of the researchers as products of the culture from where the study is conducted. The researchers made a visit to Igede land during the 2023 Igede Agba celebration in the course of which they observed the activities prior to, during and after the Igede Agba celebration. Observations were noted down and afterwards, a follow up interview was conducted based on semi-structured questions that were in line with the research objectives. Twenty five (25) informants from the ages of 50 and above were selected. The selection was based on the assumption that age goes with experience and therefore this will ensure accuracy and authenticity of information. The study relied on qualitative method for analysis which is descriptive nature.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis:**

Igede Agba as a festival is enshrined in Igede culture, thus there are certain signs and symbols that are associated with the festival and these signs and symbols carry a huge element of both semantic and semiotic significations. Below are some of such signs and symbols that were identified:

### **Icon**

The Akpang cult is an iconic representation of the gods of the Igede people. Since icon is a resemblance or representation of an object, one can regard the Akpang masquerade cult as a representation of the gods. An icon, semiotically refers to a resemblance or representation of an object. Hawkes (1977:128) states that “the relationship between the sign and object or signifier and signified manifests in the community of some quality”. The icon represents its object namely by similarity between the signifier and the signified.

### **Symbol**

A symbol can be seen as when the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. It requires the active presence of the interpretant to make the signifying connection. The ogo’go (the Igede attire): is an attire that symbolizes unity. It is the traditional attire of the Igede people. Also the ‘ihyigile’ market is also a symbol because, it symbolizes two things; it is the name of the fifth and youngest wife of Agba. The market day is named after her to immortalize her name and as a sign of respect and honour. Secondly the market represents the day on which the Igede Agba is held and celebrated and it also stands as a day of ‘peace’. It is a symbol of peace.

**Ogụ ny’ Akpang.** This is a spiritual ash that is used by the Akpan Cult to sprinkle around the outskirts of the community which serves as a line of defence to ward off witchcraft and witchcraft activities against the community before the commencement of Igede Agba celebrations. The ash is a symbol of security because it is believed that any witch that crosses the ash line of defence will die with a swollen belly to show that such a person was killed by Akpan spirit.

**Enyi ny’ Akpang.** This is special water that is constituted with a variety of herbs and roots by the Akpan Cult. Male children and adults alike usually go to the Akpang Chief priest who sprinkles the water solution on their forehead as well as their bare chest. It is believed to be the traditional holy water against all



forms of evil machinations. It is a symbol of induction, baptism and protection

**Ọlọ éhẹ.** (Pouring of libation.) This is symbolic of the presence of the gods among the people and this shows that there is a link between the physical and the spiritual (the living and the ancestors). The libation that is poured is to thank the gods for giving them a good harvest.

**Iju.** (yam) This is also symbolic. The yam is the most cherished crop in Igede and it is the only food allowed to be prepared and eaten that day; it can be boiled, roasted, fried and pounded, provided yam is eaten. Any descendant of Igede who fails to use yam that day (that is, he or she cooks any other food other than yam), it is believed that the lineage spirits of the dead well lined up (Igede ancestors) will visit such a person in the dream with an empty basket requesting for atonement because, the yam eating was collectively agreed to be used as the Igede Agba food.

**Index:** An index is a sign that has some connection or association with its object. Hawkes (1977) asserts that “the relationship is concrete, actual and usually of a sequential causal kind”. Agba and the Igede Agba festival is an index sign. The Agba is an ancestral father of the Igede people and he is the one whom the Igede people honour through Igede Agba festival. The Igede Agba festival is a unifying sign that brings together all the sons and daughters of Igede from home and abroad. It is a communal umbrella of oneness and cultural communication and expression.

### Non-verbal codes in the Igede Agba Festival

Non-verbal codes form an integral aspect of Igede Agba festival and these codes include; dance, body movement, costumes and make-ups, facial expressions, mime and incantations. Despite their functions as non-verbal codes identified in the Igede Agba festival, they have great socio-cultural relevance among the Igede people. For instance, they can be established to document historical events, to enlighten, to act as entertainment and relaxation tool to release both the physical and emotional tension through organized dance steps at festival celebration.

The body movement and dance used during the celebration of the Igede Agba festival are codes of non-verbal communication. The dances performed during the festival have a lot of non-verbal codes of communication which are exhibited through the patterned use of the body parts and gestures of happiness and excitement during the festival. This pattern in which the chorus singers present their music and the way in which the dancers display their dances and movement is also a non-verbal code of communication. This conforms to Ogbona's (1991:45) assertion;

Dance as an aspect of human communication is more logical, technical and efficiently communicated when members of the chorus reduce their chants, songs and other verbal expressions or almost all their dialogue to mime. In mime, verbal expressions or all of the dialogue presented are reduced to convention or symbol and the body movement with the utilization of signs.

The Akpang cult and the ritual and sacrifices offered its members is another non-verbal code of communication. During the rites, rituals and sacrifices that they offer to the gods of the land **Ohe-ogba ogodo** (the ancestral gods), they communicate non-verbally with the gods, as they lift their hands, face the palms up and rob them against each other as they thank the gods for a successful harvest of the year and also requesting for even more harvest the following planting season.

Costumes and make-ups which are also non-verbal codes facilitate aesthetic beauty and also communicate meaningfully to interpret emotion, mood, situation, individual personality or the appearance of a person(s). The exhibition of the Igede attire in form of costume is also a non-verbal code. This attire used during the festival is known as **Ogodo-godo** or **Igbagiri** and it depicts the people's aesthetic value as well as their cultural past. This traditional attire comprises of blue, black and white stripes. The blue colour signifies honesty, that is to say, an Igede man can be trusted with words, money, materials or other forms of properties or value. The black colour stands for the mind of an Igede man which cannot be easily understood as he weighs issues before he speaks or acts. The white colour signifies purity of an Igede man's heart as he is not double tongued or led to betray people or his followers. The masquerade on this festival day taken in Ameka-Owo (Oju Local Government Area) appears in an attire made of raffia fibre *onyumunyomu*. The face of the masquerade is covered with a large wooden mask with polychromatic paints and rattles 'ijoh' and are tied on the ankle of the masquerade.



**Fig2: A Typical Igbo Masquerade (as used on Igbo Agba Day)**  
(Source: Filed Trip, 2023)

The masquerade wears a breast mane of white male goat over the left hand and carries a machete on the right as an emblem of bravery in war. It is true that costume do not speak, instead they communicate culturally in a manner that does not contradict perception and meaning. Another non-verbal code in Igbo Agba festival is the aspect of performance in the square or play-ground 'ojiya'. This is a spacious cleared location at the centre of the village with paths leading from there to the various lineage compounds. This is culturally significant to the Igbo people because, it is the place in which they all gather to celebrate the Igbo Agba festival, the venue where they converge to dance and display their cultural activities. This aspect of the festival is usually followed after the eating and drinking.

The incantations performed at the Akpang shrine which is located at the entrance to each village then. This shrine contains all the necessary accessories used in communicating with the gods and other deities during the new yam festival. This aspect of the festival is of immense importance to the Igbo people thus, it conforms to what Doki (2001:112) observed..."Through the centre around which the universe is organized, man is linked harmoniously to his land, the forest, the rivers, the deities, through the ancestors and then God and vice versa."

The choice of instruments used by the drummers of dance groups also communicates non-verbally. The dancers use different instruments which are peculiar to the various groups. The principal instrument used is the "ogirigbo" and "idio-phonetic slit drum which is basically a hallowed log that gives two tones when the logs are beaten with sticks. Metal gongs 'oje and rattles 'ichehe' are also used to enhance the rhythmic structure in some music type like 'akatanka' a slide horn is used intermittently to signify their presence at 'ojiya' and also a brass hand bell 'atang' is used sporadically to add to the drama of the occasion. It is pertinent to state that each group has its own instruments and they understand their sounds.

### **Verbal codes in the Igbo Agba Festival**

In spite of the various non-verbal codes found in the Igbo Agba festival, there are also some verbal codes of communication, one of which is the 'epwedi'. The epwedi is the gathering of peer groups for the purpose of eating after which story -telling and discussion of vital issues that relate to the history of the people take place. Because the elders are believed to be closer to the gods spiritually, participating in eating food is done according to the chronological ages of the participants, starting from the eldest to the youngest. Service during such meals and table manners are taught because the elders usually control the size of the lump of food 'ukpe nyuwe' that the children take and also advise them not to talk while eating. Another verbal code in the festival is the songs by the Akpang cult members conducting the rituals, their songs and chants are codes. The story told by the elders to the younger one(s) is also a verbal code.

### **Conclusion**

Contrary to the wrong impressions by some people who look at Igbo Agba as fetish, barbaric and not worthy to be celebrated, the festival has numerous positive significances to its people. The rituals, sacrifices and homage paid to the gods such as 'ohe ogbadogogo' and 'Ebina' which form the core of the

festival is a mark of appreciation to those deities whom the people believe relate with the heavenly God. The celebration also shows that the Igede people have a culture and history that identify them as an entity within the Benue and Nigerian context.

In addition, Igede Agba festival is a celebration which is reflected in the language-Igede, proverbs, poetry and songs. This point is deliberately stressed in that during the celebration, one is expected to speak fully in Igede language without adding words from English or other languages. Another relevance of this festival is the popularity the festival has given the Igede people as an ethnic group. Hitherto, little was known of the Igede within Benue state let alone at the national landscape. Today, the festival has mirrored the people into national limelight. At the State level, it has attracted non-Igedes into the area as every sitting governor of the state along with his cabinet always attends the occasion to witness the celebration. The Igede Agba festival can be seen as one integrating institution of the people.

Furthermore, the time of celebration offers a sense of linguistic and cultural belonging. It offers youngsters the opportunity to learn their traditions. The festival offers the Igede people the opportunity to exhibit their hospitality. It enables them to enjoy merriment and have spiritual rebirth together. It fosters the spirit of love, charity, generosity and goodwill among the people. The festival reminds the people of the cultural heritage. Historically, it is a period when Igede people rekindle their etiquettes, norms, cultural belief, values, and origin. Socially, it serves as a family reunion for family members, relatives and loved ones. It is therefore recommended that Governments at different levels should incorporate traditional festivals into their budgets, and special allocations should be given for organizing local festivals in Benue state as well as other states of Nigeria to forge unity and promote the diverse and unique cultures of the people of Nigeria.

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# Human Organ Trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Historical and Media Exploration

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## Abstract

This paper examines human organ trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa in the early twenty-first century. It is at once curious as it deals with a much less known dimension of human trafficking. While there have been suspicions of illicit human organ trade originating from Africa, there is very little empirical information on the extent of this crime. Against this backdrop, this article critically examines the reported underworld economy of human organ stealing by the African press and media outlets. Based on the critical textual analysis of media reports, it concludes that the commodification of human body parts provides a deep insight into the pattern of glocal power relations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

*Keywords: black markets, human organ trade, human trafficking, illicit organ harvesting, mass media, power relations, Africa.*

## Introduction

This paper examines an abnormal form of tissue and organ sourcing that violates the rule of law and bioethics. It focuses on the media representation of illicit organ harvesting and trade. Africa is witnessing an unprecedented wave of illegal organ harvesting. There are claims that these human organs have been used for benevolent rituals (Basden 1982). Bearing in mind the dearth of empirical sources and the difficulties of accessing factual evidence on this sensitive issue, these traditional narratives have been dismissed as mere local symbolism of social inequality in African societies (Smith, 2001).

The inadequate supply of legally donated organs for transplantation has stimulated the underground market system in which human organs are auctioned. It is argued that in high-income countries, the high rate of ageing is stimulating a high demand for organ transplants in the face of dwindling organ donors. Consequently, thousands of patients die yearly due to inadequate donors. Hence, in desperation, affluent people with terminal illnesses often seek the required organs in the developing world such as Africa (Scheper-Hughes, 2008; 2009; Budiani-Saberi and Delmonico 2008; Shimazono 2007). This is facilitated by the emerging human organ black market, where the healthy organs of the world's proletariats are being auctioned to the international bourgeoisie. This phenomenon showcases uneven imperial relations between the Global North and the Global South. With a special focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, this paper investigates the emerging dimension of organ trafficking and trade. It interrogates a new ramification of South-South cooperation that found expression in the globalization and formalization of ethno-medicine and its implications for human security.

In examining the societal narratives of illicit organ harvesting and trade, the mass media is a forum for public opinion. The media do not only report but also influence public opinions about organ trafficking in Africa. The media, for example, report on the atrocities committed by perpetrators of organ trafficking and bring awareness to the prevalence of organ trafficking in society and thus empower victims and their relations by giving them a platform and a voice to express themselves (Wallerger, 2010; Fraser, 2016; Austin and Farrell, 2017; Freeman, n.d). Thus, this paper critically engages media reportage as a relevant source of public opinion on human organ trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## Conceptual Clarifications

The complexities of organ sourcing, harvesting, trade and usage raise ethical concerns about the nature of the market systems of human organs connecting the developed and developing world. As observed by Al-khafaji and Parker (2017, 17), at the global level, despite the usefulness of transplant surgery, it is a controversial medical practice in the context of its socioeconomic significance. This discourse straddles many debates from the idea that - "society ought to direct its limited healthcare resources toward preventative and primary care efforts, rather than toward expensive, technologically-aided extensions of human life. [... Transplantation is seen as] society's reluctance to accept human mortality [... Moreover, there are fears that] acquiring another person's organ(s) confuses one's identity". In this way, organ transplantation could violate religious rules. Fundamentally, the demand for human organs creates a market for human body parts and encourages their commodification. Becker et al. (2022) illustrate this reality as follows:

In 2019, about 3800 persons died while waiting for a kidney transplant and 4200 left the waiting list because they were too sick to transplant, accounting for 20% of all removals...The current state of the market of kidney transplants is a disaster. Over the last [few years], the waiting list has grown by over 4000 individuals each year, while transplants have grown by only about 250 per year. The result has been longer and longer queues to receive organs. 4000 patients die each year while waiting 3 and a half years on average for a transplant. According to our estimations, the annual social cost of those who die while waiting for kidney transplants is over \$7 billion. (pp. 212- 224).

The world is witnessing an unprecedented rise in the demand for human organ transplantations. The evolution of markets for human organs in a stratified, unequal world facilitates the duality of distinct legal and black markets with serious implications in the developing world. This desperate circumstance invoked the Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism in 2008, which led to a global campaign on organ commercialization, ethics of human organ sourcing and transplantation. The Istanbul Declaration stimulated strong institutions in the high-income developed economies, relegating to the background the black markets of transplant medicine, organ trafficking and transplant tourism in the developing low and middle-income economies (Epstein and Danovitch, 2013). This development shows a market divergence dependent on institutional structure and socioeconomic complementarities in a globalizing world.

An open market system of human organs allows the payment of financial compensation to donors of human organs. However, this practice is restricted in some domains for ethical reasons to presumably preserve "human dignity" and avert the commodification of human body parts (Barnett and Kaserman, 1993; Al-khafaji and Parker 2017). The latter aligns with the conception of repugnant market transactions where third parties seek to avert perceived morally inappropriate transactions involving human bodies (Roth, 2007; Leuker et al 2021). Openness in a socially stratified society implies the contestation of space between the rich and the poor. As observed by Scheper-Hughes (2004), in the context of transplant medicine and organ trafficking, this has led to the consumption of the human body parts of the poor by the rich in society.

Beyond biomedicine, the African ethnomedical techniques of organ sourcing do not account for life. In African ethnomedical practice, human organs' efficacy in ethnomedical usage depends on the consumption of life. The idea that the soul resides in the human blood and organs is fundamental to African ethnomedical culture. Thus, the consumption of human organs through rituals and ethnomedical pharmaceuticals implies the absorption of the soul energy residing in the human body parts. The deprivation of life through fatal human organ harvesting in Africa reveals the illegality of this form of organ sourcing in secular African societies due to human rights concerns. Nevertheless, this legal restriction facilitates a black market in human organs in Africa.

Scholars have noted the spillover effects of Chinese economic development on other parts of the world. This spillover affects the global market for commodities and institutions (Herrala and Orlandi, 2021). In the ethnomedical sector, the Chinese ascension and the ensuing Sino-cultural globalization imply the global spread of ethnomedicine and the formation of new trajectories and inter-regional networks of ethnomedical practices.

It has been argued that every society has values in the form of societal goals that individual members must attain to be considered successful. Gramsci's cultural hegemony explains how individuals in the upper class make their values become the common-sense values for the society as a whole to

maintain the status quo (Quinney, 1970; 1977; Jennings, et al., 2016). Hence, they usually deploy this hegemony by possessing the cultural capital to make and interpret laws on issues including bioethics of organ harvesting, trade, and prosecution. Perhaps this explains the lack of grounded legislation on transplant surgery and tangible evidence of human organ trafficking in many states in Sub-Saharan Africa. This phenomenon has created an ungoverned space and a thriving black market for the violators of bioethics.

### **Framing the Commodification of Human Bodies in Africa**

The history of illicit human organ harvesting is traceable to ritual murder, a global phenomenon in the pre-modern era. Evidence of human sacrifice abounds in Europe, Africa, America, and Asia in the pre-modern era (Parker-Pearson, 2011). In the pre-colonial period, cases of human sacrifice were reported by European adventurers who visited Africa from the 15th century onwards. As observed by Burton (1966:233), the Europeans “do not appear to have reacted very violently to killing human victims [...] because what they saw in West Africa was hardly more horrific than the public executions and tortures commonly practised in their societies”. In this era, human sacrifice seems to have consolidated economic inequalities and reinforced societal socio-cultural privileges (Basden 1982; Ellis 1999).

Beyond the ritual theory, the reality of transcontinental criminality and the violation of bioethics is illustrated in the history of orthodox medicine, where slave merchants seized African living bodies, trafficked them, and dissected them on the surgical tables of Western medical institutions in the 17th and 18th centuries. As Savitt (1982:331-332) puts it:

Southern medical educators and researchers relied greatly on the availability of Negro patients for various purposes. Black bodies often found their way to dissecting tables, operating amphitheatres, classroom or bedside demonstrations, and experimental facilities [...] in fulfilling the “clinical material” needs of the medical profession [...] [B]lack were particularly easy targets, given their positions as voiceless slaves or “free person of color” in a society sensitive to and separated by race.

The foregoing shows that the consumption of the healthy bodies of the enslaved/colonized by the colonialists in the name of advancing the medical sciences was deemed legal and justified by the imperial powers of the Western World. This dimension of orthodox medicine has grown into transplantation surgery in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The trafficking of human organs for transplant surgery can be framed based on the “conditions making it ethically permissible to consume the body parts of the other, living or dead”. This is often without the “consent” of the donor, – a form of coercion stemming from the “demand for sacrificial violence and bodily gifting to fulfil altruistic, kin-based, or economic survivalist needs”. In this circumstance, the ethics of procuring human body parts is violated through the illicit fragmentation of the human body and the sale and distribution of its organs (Scheper-Hughes 2009, 8). The sophisticated circumstances in which the organs of the vulnerable people of the world are being sold in the underworld human organ market have been described thus:

I alternated [between] the role of cultural broker – sometimes helping organs buyers, sellers and brokers to avoid the worst damage to themselves and others – and the role of undercover agent, as when I briefly posed as a kidney buyer at a notorious bus station and ‘Russian suitcase market’ in the immigrant section of Istanbul where everything from smuggled cigarettes to sex and to kidneys was procured by broker-toughs and other intermediaries from dazed Eastern European peasant ‘guest workers’ hungry for a job. Or, as when I travelled incognito with a private detective from Buenos Aires in order to enter a locked state facility for the profoundly mentally retarded, the infamous Colonia Montes de Oca in Torres, to investigate and ultimately document allegations of tissue, blood, kidney and child theft from the neglected, emaciated, socially abandoned and unknown, so-called ‘noname’ inmates (Scheper-Hughes, 2004, 32).

The global network of organ trafficking shows the web of illicit trade in human body parts – linking the richest and the poorest of the world. Transplant surgery has over the years enjoyed unlimited protection from the political aristocracy of Western societies (Scheper-Hughes, 2004). In line with the natural expansion of the global capitalist network, new hubs of criminal underworld clinics with a supply chain to other parts of the world are evolving. Journalistic reportage of human organ trafficking abounds in the African media. These sources constitute public opinion on the crisis of organ stealing in the region. In Africa, the discovery of “the biggest illegal organ trafficking ring in [Egyptian] history involving “doctors, nurses, brokers and owners of medical laboratories” is instructive in this regard (*Punch*,

January 3, 2017). According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), “a lot of people [from Sub-Saharan Africa] were offered jobs in the Middle East” but on arrival, all the vital organs in their bodies were harvested (*Independent*, 2019, April 8). Moreover, the European border externalization policies have trapped many migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in Libya, where illicit markets in migrants’ body parts thrived. This phenomenon indicates the ethnomedical and biomedical dimensions of organ trafficking in the continent.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the victims of illicit organ harvesting are believed to be deceived by the prospects of a greener pasture. In some cases, the victims are left with no post-surgery support and insignificant income from sales (*Vanguard*, June 16, 2019). The scenario has triggered governmental intervention. For instance, in 2020, the Nigerian House of Representatives investigated this development, and “testimonies coming out from the probe [...] simply attest [to] the veracity of [...] a “powerful syndicate that lures desperate residents of Lagos State to India for organ harvesting deals that fetch the victims peanut [N750000 – 1million] and the merchants, a “windfall” (*Tribune* July 4, 2020; *Daily Post*, May 6, 2021).

In Nigeria, the challenge of human organ trafficking has led to the enactment of new regulations on transplant medicine. The 2021 Lagos State bill on the establishment of an organ harvest transplantation department in the state Ministry of Health is a movement in this direction. (Pulse Ng, June 30, 2021). Indeed, there is awareness of Nigeria's rising trend of illicit human organ harvesting. The House of Representatives has directed Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to work in synergy to protect Nigerians against organ harvesting for export (Nigerian Government, July 2, 2020).

This massive expansion of the TCM market is characterized by the Chinese view that Africa is a potential source of TCM ingredients. The Chinese ethnomedical penetration of the African continent is reportedly more visible in countries endorsing the use of Sino-TCM such as Cameroon, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Togo (*Guardian*, November 10, 2021). This impacts the distribution network of pharmaceutical materials and the creation of new sources, types, and markets of ethnomedical ingredients that differ from the existing norm of orthodox practice. A particular dimension of this ethnomedical knowledge is the emerging thriving market of human organs as an admissible ingredient of the emerging global ethnomedical sector that differs from the ongoing practice of transplant medicine.

In Nigeria, the ethnomedical perspective focuses on the nature and purpose of illicit human organ harvest as it relates to the ethnomedical sector. The ethnomedical perspective seems to fit stories of illicit organ harvesting (CKN Nigeria, 2013; *Sun Newspaper*, February 17, 2013). One such ethnomedical narrative goes thus:

Nigeria is fast gaining notoriety as a country of ritualists with stories of ritual killings daily reported in the traditional and social media. The latest of this cannibalistic atrocity is the gruesome murder of 22-year-old Oluwabamise Ayankole who was abducted after boarding a Lagos State Government-owned Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) bus and was later murdered and had parts of her body removed which confirmed the suspicion that she may have been killed for ritual purposes. Bamise who was on her way home from work was thereafter tossed out of the BRT Bus at Ebute Ero (*Premium Times*, 2022, March 17).

The preceding narratives involving butchering techniques show a non-clinical and crude procedure of ethnomedical harvesting and usage of human body parts in Nigeria. This category of harvested body parts is also alleged to be trafficked to other countries with a rich history of ethnomedical culture, such as China. By 2022, eyewitness accounts of kidnapped victims in Nigeria indicate that criminal bandits are involved in the illicit harvesting and trade of human body parts to finance the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. What is unknown is the specific consumers of this new source of reported trafficked organs.

Beyond Nigeria in West Africa, illicit organ harvesting thrives in East Africa, particularly in Tanzania. It has been noted that “people with albinism” are often targeted due to the high market demand for their “bones, skin and internal organs” often used in ethnomedicine to make “amulets or concoctions that some believe bring good fortune, health, wealth and even powers”. According to an ISS report, “a complete set of organs in Tanzania is priced at about US\$75 000 by criminals serving wealthy clients [...] A person living with albinism is valued at US\$340 000 [...] Traditional healers reportedly indoctrinate criminal gangs for weeks before an abduction, performing rituals, identifying the target, and providing instructions on harvesting the organs” (Daghar, 2022).

In South Africa, a report by the Human Rights League (HRL) indicated deeply rooted incidences of human organ harvesting with a cross-border dimension. It has been noted that illicit human organ harvesting is widespread in South Africa. Simon Fellows reported a South African Border Police Official in Mpumalanga District to have asserted, “I can tell you that the problems of trafficking along this border

of Mozambique and South Africa will never end and they do not only involve body parts of children but even adults". In South Africa, the manner of human organ harvesting is such that vital parts such as the breast, penis, lungs, hearts, and hands are reportedly removed from victims (Fellows, 2008).

This scenario is complicated by the poor infrastructure in terms of the weak or nonexistent specialized national and regional institutions dealing with the emerging issues of human organ stealing in Africa. The indictment of a Nigerian Senator for human organ harvesting in the United Kingdom exemplifies this scenario. According to the report:

Two Nigerians, including a serving senator, have been charged with plotting to have a child brought into the United Kingdom to harvest [his]organs[...] The investigation was launched after detectives were alerted to potential offences under modern slavery legislation, in May 2022 [...] Beatrice Nwanneka Ekweremadu, 55, and Ike Ekweremadu, 60, were charged with conspiracy to arrange the travel of another person with a view to exploitation, namely organ harvesting (Aljazeera News, 2022, June 23).

The foregoing reported case of criminality was discovered by the authorities in the UK due to strong bioethical institutions in the country. As observed by Amisu Mumuni, the chairman of the Medical Consultants Association of Nigeria, Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), no regulatory body for transplant medicine "existed in Nigeria in the past and it has provided a gap to many things" (Premium Times, June 30, 2021). This scenario portends disaster for the poor in the continent due to power inequality. The cross-border dimension of human organ trade became a serious issue in Nigeria following the false report of a seized cargo containing human body parts from West Africa. Consequently, the Nigerian "House of Representatives has resolved to investigate alleged illicit trade on human organs between Nigeria and China". While the report was false, it triggered a federal response to Nigeria's earlier abandoned bioethical problem. Reacting to the motion to investigate cases of organ harvesting in Nigeria, Nigerian government officials noted that:

The essence of that motion is not to focus on the 7,200 penises," [...] It can be fake news most likely but if you look at that motion, it is an investigation into organ harvesting. It has been an issue, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and [...] Nigeria. [...] We are not focusing on whether or not they caught 7,200 penises in China but the major issue is organ harvesting, can we look at it more critically? (Premium Times, 2021, April 23).

In a globalizing world, examining the ethnomedical tradition in China, Gwei-Djen and Needham (1964, 101-121) noted the use of human body parts in "Chinese medicine" At first, [human placenta] was not greatly used, but during the Ming period (fourteenth century onwards) it came into prominence and was prescribed habitually for all such affections as are considered to benefit by the administration of oestrogens at the present day" ((Gwei-Djen and Needham, 1964, 101-121).

In the face of the growing South-South cooperation, this scenario shows that the strengthening of existing local institutions is expedient due to "the increasing cases of missing persons, ritual killings and trafficking of persons" in Africa (Guardian, 2021, April 22). The crisis of illicit trade in human organs has taken a cross-continental complexion as some Africans "remanded in the Chinese prisons are allegedly being "killed extrajudicially [...] for their body organs" (Punch, 2016, April 22). This circumstance lends weight to the reported high demand for human organs in the Chinese Market. This exemplifies a dimension of social stratification and inequality in the global society.

This complexity surrounding illicit human organ harvesting in Sub-Saharan Africa is often dismissed as ritual murder. This downplays state intervention due to the unempirical basis of rituals. As observed by Okwenna (2021), this phenomenon portends challenges rooted in the closed epistemological order of Western medical knowledge and the ethical crisis which called for "medical pluralism as a viable platform for resolving the philosophic crises in medicine, by critically engaging non-Western medical traditions (NMTs) and thought systems". This development has created an ungoverned space for the violators of bioethics in transplant surgery and ethnomedicine. The urgent policy actions should recognize the local and cross-border dimension of the crisis and the need to adopt both the statist and inter-governmental institutional approach in this regard.

## Concluding Remarks

This paper unveils the pattern of illicit human organ harvesting and the black market for human body parts in Sub-Saharan Africa. It evaluates the phenomenon of human organ stealing based on global and local market forces. Significant attention is directed to the cross-border dynamics of this scenario in line



with power relations in a globalizing world. The media in Africa played a significant role in reporting cases of human organ trafficking. This article shows that the media reporting of this phenomenon is key to identifying the extent and intensity of the practice, placing it as an agenda that needs attention. As the study also shows, poverty and weak institutions encourage the endurance of the illicit market of human organs in Africa which include the quick prosecution of offenders and dispensation of justice. Thus, the strengthening of African institutions in response to this bioethical crisis is urgent. The urgent policy actions should recognize the intra-state and cross-border dimensions of human organ trafficking in Africa.

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# Evaluating Big Brother Naija Reality Television Programme through the Rural Communities' Inquisitorial Lens

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## Abstract

The study aimed to evaluate the Big Brother Naija reality television show through the inquisitorial lens of rural communities and guided by the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). The objectives included assessing the level of awareness and knowledge of the BBN show among rural viewers, identifying the show's appealing aspects for rural communities, recognizing immoral aspects of the show, and understanding the challenges faced by rural communities like Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido, and Uluoke while watching BBN. A survey research design was employed, and a questionnaire was used to gather responses from 76 purposively selected respondents across the four rural communities. Results showed a high level of awareness and knowledge of the BBN show. The study found that activities such as Tasks, Saturday-Night Pool Party, Gym sessions, Eviction process, Head-of-House lifestyle, Interactions among housemates, Dairy sessions, and Games were popular among rural viewers. Additionally, behaviors like Shower-time, Sexual activities, half-clad dressing, Saturday-Night Pool Party, and Romance activities in BBN were seen as corrupting moral values. To address these findings, the study recommends that the BBN reality show capitalize on the existing awareness to develop content that resonates with rural communities and supports their growth and economic development. It is also advised that the show's creators address the identified challenges promptly to maintain viewership and ensure a more wholesome viewing experience.

*Keywords: Evaluating, Big Brother Naija, Reality Television, Rural Communities, Inquisitorial Lens*

## Introduction

Reality television has become a pervasive form of entertainment across the globe, captivating audiences with its unscripted, dramatic, and often controversial content. Amakiri, Nsereka and Harcourt-Whyte (2020:1) emphasize the significance of reality television shows, stating that they are overtaking traditional networks with a substantial impact. They note that reality television has gained immense popularity in Nigeria, with people regularly tuning in to various reality programs aired on both local and terrestrial television stations, showcasing live unscripted and unedited content. Hall (2006) supports this by highlighting that reality programs have become a fundamental part of television programming. Balkin (2004) traces the origins of reality television back to the 1940s, coinciding with the early days of television broadcasting, while This Day newspaper (2004) reports that Nigeria's first reality TV show, Guilder Ultimate Search, debuted in 2004, paving the way for the proliferation of similar shows. Amakiri, Nsereka and Harcourt-Whyte (2020:1) emphasize that reality TV has become ingrained in viewers' habits, blurring the line between mere entertainment and reality. Bailey & Barbato (2003) categorize reality television into genres such as romance, talent, quiz, and games, whereas Hall (2006) expands on this classification to include competition-focused, game, makeover/lifestyle, talent, court, reality sitcoms, home improvement, and hidden camera-based shows. It is important to note that the realm of reality television is vast and diverse, offering endless possibilities beyond these defined categories.

Ozuru, Igwe, and Chukwuma (2024) note that reality television in Nigeria has become a norm, with well-crafted shows leading to increased viewership, cable TV subscriptions, and social media buzz.

They further assert that “more persons are drawn to reality TV shows because they are neither scripted nor predictable, depicting real-life scenarios that viewers can relate to in their everyday lives” (p. 234). This may be the reason behind the significant viewership and patronage of Big Brother Naija.

In support, Ozuru, Igwe, and Chukwuma (2024) indicate that the 2019 edition of Big Brother naija accumulated a total of 240 million votes, as reported by [www.news9naija.com.ng](http://www.news9naija.com.ng) and announced by the show's host, Ebuka Obi Uchendu. The show reportedly generated 7.2 billion Naira from votes alone, leading to over a 50% surge in subscriptions for DSTV and Gotv. Additionally, there was an increase in package upgrades during the show's airing, as viewers realized that the higher their package, the more voting power they possessed through the designated platform. Consequently, viewers tended to opt for premium packages due to the enhanced voting capabilities and control they provided. The show also garnered sponsorship from renowned brands like Bet9ja, Pepsi, Gulder, Innoson Motors, Legend Extra Stout, Indomie Noodles, among others. These sponsors were responsible for funding most of the task prizes and supplying various items and food in the Big Brother house (Ozuru, Igwe, and Chukwuma, 2024).

Big Brother Naija (BBNaija), the Nigerian version of the internationally renowned reality TV franchise, has emerged as one of the most popular and influential shows in Nigeria and the African continent. As an unscripted program, BBNaija showcases a group of contestants living together in a house, continuously monitored by cameras and faced with various challenges, tasks, and evictions. Behind the scenes of this reality spectacle, lies a dynamic interplay designed to maximize viewership, sponsorships, and manage the public perception of the show and its contestants. Olley, Nwagbara and Olley (2019) acknowledge that BBNaija fosters unity, entertains, educates, and informs the viewers. It provides avenues for the viewers to learn how to overcome challenges and develop strategies for success. Many housemates enter the show with different tactics to stand out and appeal to viewers, whether through garnering sympathy, forming romantic relationships, showcasing humor, or exhibiting wild behavior. Additionally, the show has served as a platform for discovering talents, with some contestants going on to achieve fame and success in their own right.

However, it is unclear how the rural dwellers in the communities of Iyamho, Ikholo, Ogbido, and Uluoke of Uzairue, Edo State, perceive the BBNaija show or whether they agree with the aforementioned advantages, considering the show's inclusion of X-rated content, which has sparked numerous discussions. Understanding the rural communities' perception of the BBNaija show is crucial given this dichotomy, especially with the new edition scheduled to commence on July 28, 2024. It is also essential to analyze the Big Brother Naija reality television show from the rural communities' perspective to assess their awareness of the show, the appealing aspects that attract viewership, and whether the show promotes immorality, among other factors.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Big Brother Naija has been reported to attract over one billion viewers across all editions of the popular reality television programme. This level of viewership has been deemed extraordinary by scholars. Many scholars suggest that the show's content is designed to engage a wide audience to promote Big Brother Naija. It is important to recognize that during the airing of various seasons of BBN, Nigerians, including residents of rural communities, have been split on whether to support the continuation or prohibition of the program. Supporters of banning BBN argue that the show promotes immorality through sexual acts, nudity, and indecency, potentially corrupting the moral values of viewers. On the other hand, proponents of the show's survival contend that the reality program provides educational, informational, entertainment, economic, and cultural benefits to the participants, the viewing audience, and the nation as a whole.

Given the above, it is important to understand or study the perception of the audience in our rural communities, particularly, those in Iyamho, Ikholo, Ogbido, and Uluoke (IIOU) communities of Uzairue, in Edo State, regarding the effect of the BBN reality show and its contents, the extent of awareness of the reality show, aspects of the BBN show that attracts more viewership, and whether or not the BBN reality show promotes immorality. Besides the above, the paper also seeks to unravel the aspects of the reality show that engendered the homogenous viewership, as well as the challenges encountered by the audience, whilst viewing the BBN reality show. In other words, the thrust of this paper is to evaluate the Big Brother Naija reality television programme through rural communities' inquisitorial lens. In achieving the above, the research was guided by the following research questions.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of awareness of the Big Brother Naija reality show among the rural communities of

- Iyamho, Ikholo, Ogbido, and Uluoke (IIOU) in Uzairue, Edo State?
2. What aspects of the BBN reality show attract the viewership of the rural communities of IIOU in Uzairue, Edo State?
3. What are the aspects of the BBN reality show that are viewed as immoral by the rural communities of IIOU?
4. Does the BBN reality show promote a culture of immorality among the rural communities of IIOU?
5. What challenges do the rural communities of IIOU face when watching the BBN reality show?

## **Literature Review**

Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) is a reality TV show and the Nigerian adaptation of the international reality television franchise, Big Brother. The program adheres to the standard format seen in other Big Brother versions, featuring a cohort of contestants, referred to as housemates, cohabitating in a custom-built residence for a set duration. These housemates are cut off from external influences and are continuously monitored by cameras and microphones positioned throughout the house.

The concept of the show revolves around social interaction and competition. During their time in the house, the housemates partake in various tasks, challenges, and games that assess their mental, physical, and emotional abilities. They must also form alliances and navigate social dynamics to survive, as the audience, through voting, determines who remains and who is evicted. Big Brother Naija debuted in Nigeria in 2006 as "Big Brother Nigeria," gaining rapid popularity. It was later rebranded as "Big Brother Naija" and has since become one of the most anticipated and watched reality TV shows in the country.

Over the years, the show has seen multiple seasons with different themes and twists, each attracting a massive viewership and generating significant social media buzz. Big Brother Naija has managed to capture the attention of not just Nigerians but also viewers across the African continent and in the diaspora. The show's success can be attributed to several factors, including its engaging format, the diverse mix of housemates from various backgrounds and regions, and the element of drama and intrigue that arises from the participants' interactions. Additionally, the incorporation of sponsorships and advertising opportunities has allowed the show to secure significant revenue streams, making it a commercially successful venture. As a cultural phenomenon, Big Brother Naija has become more than just a TV show. It has fostered a dedicated fan base and sparked numerous discussions and debates on social issues, entertainment, and the impact of reality television on society. The show's influence extends beyond its broadcast, shaping pop culture, fashion trends, and even the public perception of its participants, who often become household names and influencers after their stint on the show. While Big Brother Naija has enjoyed immense popularity, it has not been without its controversies and criticisms. Some have raised concerns about the content's appropriateness, the portrayal of certain behaviors, and the ethical implications of manipulating emotions for entertainment purposes. However, its significant viewership and dedicated fan base continue to demonstrate the enduring appeal of reality television and its unique ability to captivate audiences across different demographics. As the show continues to evolve and adapt to changing audience preferences, Big Brother Naija remains a dominant force in the Nigerian entertainment industry, carving its place as one of the most watched and discussed reality TV shows in the country and beyond.

## **Snapshot of BBN**

BBN is a reality television show that commences with an audition of interested young contestants. A final shortlist of about 20 to 25 housemates or more is selected to enter a house where they reside for approximately 3 months. Housemates face eviction on a weekly basis until one emerges as the winner of the competition. Viewers, who are fans of the show, vote for housemates to either stay or be evicted. The winner of each edition receives a cash prize ranging between 60 and 85 million Nigerian Naira (approximately \$156,675.96 to \$221,932.11) along with other material gifts. The inaugural edition of Big Brother Naija aired from 4th March 2006 to 4th June 2006. Subsequent editions followed with the next one commencing on 22nd January 2018, and the two most recent editions starting on 30th June 2019, and 19th July 2020, respectively. All editions were broadcast live on DSTV and GOTV, with daily highlights shown on various media platforms nationwide.

## **Morality or Immorality: The controversy still continues**

It is no longer news that the argument as to whether or not the BBN show is immoral or has the propensity to corrupt the morality of the viewers continues to intensify, sparking more controversies. Many Nigerians, especially those from the Northern region of Nigeria, persist in contending that the reality show includes elements that could erode the moral values of Nigerians, particularly the youth. Additionally, numerous scholars also argue that the BBN contents, such as the mode of dressing, unrestricted shower time, and sexual content, have the potential to undermine our values and morality.

Amakiri, Nsereka and Harcourt-Whyte (2020:1) acknowledge the ongoing debates surrounding the 'morality' of the BBN show and whether the Nigeria Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) should permit its broadcast in Nigeria. Despite Multichoice, the show's owners, implementing various changes to address criticisms and maintain the relevance of the show in Nigerian society, the discussions persist. While adjustments are being made, scholars like Africa's first Nobel laureate in Literature, Wole Soyinka, maintain that the dynamics and content of Big Brother Naija are not reflective of Nigerian culture (Lengnan, 2013).

Another contentious issue is the overt display of lust and affection within the show, alongside the cohabitation of shirtless men and scantily clad women in a shared space where they have the freedom to act as they please. In addition to these aspects, the show is characterized by a mix of emotions including love, hate, pretence, and deceitful strategies aimed at success (Amadi et. al., 2019). These strategies sometimes involve questionable tactics used for the sake of manipulation. Many Nigerians have raised concerns that some past winners may have relied on such deceitful tactics to secure victory. Despite efforts by Nigerian authorities and Multichoice, the show's owners, to address these issues, calls for the show to be banned persist. Arah (2017) encapsulated these sentiments:

At some point, Nigeria threatened to ban the show from being aired in the country, but a compromise was reached where the extreme lurid scenes like 'shower scenes' and 'sex scenes' were limited to late-night broadcasts. Furthermore, specific scenes require additional subscription, yet the issue remains regarding who has access to what (Amakiri, Nsereka and Harcourt-Whyte (2020:1).

## **Theoretical Framework**

The research was anchored on the uses and gratifications theory framed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the 1970s (DeFleur, & Ball-Rokeach., 1989). This theoretical framework jells with the trappings of reality television in many ways, given the fact that the theory asserts that the media exists to fulfil individual needs and that the medium that people make use of at a particular time is dependent on their needs at the moment (Mehrad & Tajer., 2016). The theory, further, according to DeFleur, & Ball-Rokeach (1989), states that media-consumption gratifications are influenced by culture, social institutions, media opportunities, circumstances, personal traits, needs, beliefs, and values. Also, that television audience take active part in the communication process and view TV programmes with an aim in mind and that Television audiences under Uses and Gratification Theory seek out the programme contents that best fulfill their needs.

The implication of the above is that the BBN show offers benefits to the audiences who choose to watch it. It also implies that the Uses and Gratification Theory is a strong determinant of the choice of programme to programs for the audience, especially at the personal level. In other words, media consumption stems from one's immediate needs, backed up by the individual's belief that such needs could be met and gratified through the use of such media, ultimately fulfilling the needs for information, relaxation, entertainment, or socialization (Amakiri, Nsereka and Harcourt-Whyte (2020).

## **Methodology**

The survey method was adopted to generate data for the study. A questionnaire was used to elicit information from 80 respondents purposively selected from the four rural communities of Iyamho (20), Ikhola (20), Ogbido (20), and Uluoke (20) in Uzairue, Edo State. Each community has four quarters, totalling 16 quarters, from which 5 respondents each, knowledgeable about the subject matter (BBNaija show), were purposively selected.

Similarly, 80 copies of the questionnaire were generated and administered to the respondents using the convenience sampling technique. Out of the 80 questionnaires distributed, 76 were retrieved, filled

out correctly, and deemed valid for analysis. The collected data was analysed using simple percentages and weighted Mean Score (WMS). Scores of 3.0 were categorized as Undecided, those above 3.0 as Positive or High, and scores below 3.0 as Negative or Low. The results of the analysis were then presented on the tables in tabular form.

**Table 1. Questionnaire Respondents' Distribution Rate**

Category	Iyamho	Ikholo	Ogbido	Uluoke	Total	Percentage
Distributed questionnaires	20	20	20	20	80	100
Retrieved questionnaires	19	19	19	19	76	95
Useful questionnaires	19	19	19	19	76	95

The above table shows the number of questionnaires distributed, retrieved, and utilized for data analysis. The above indicates that 95 copies of the questionnaire were filled correctly and found valid for the analysis.

### Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Data elicited from the respondents are analysed thus:

**Research Question 1:** What is the extent of awareness of the Big Brother Naija (BBN) reality show amongst rural communities of Iyamho, Ikholo, Ogbido and Uluoke (IIOU) of Uzairue, Edo State?

**Table 2: Extent of awareness of the BBN reality show amongst rural communities of IIOU**

Options	Respondents	Weighted	WMS	Response Result	Percentage
Very high extent	70	280			92
High extent	06	18			8
Low extent	-	-			-
Very low extent	-	-			-
	<b>76</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table, it is evident that the awareness of the BBN reality show among rural communities in IIOU is significant. The weighted mean score (WMS) being above 3.0 suggests that the respondents acknowledge a high level of awareness of the BBN reality show in the rural communities of Iyamho, Ikholo, Ogbido, and Uluoke of Uzairue.

**Table 3: Extent of knowledgeability of the BBN reality show of IIOU**

Options	Respondents	Weighted	WMS	Response Result	Percentage
Very high extent	61	244			80
High extent	15	45			20
Low extent	-	-			-
Very low extent	-	-			-
	<b>76</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 indicates that the extent of knowledgeability of the BBN reality show among rural communities of IIOU is high. This implies that the rural communities of Iyamho, Ikholo, Ogbido, and Uluoke of Uzairue have a high level of knowledge about the BBN reality show, contrary to the misinformation suggesting that people in the rural communities are unaware of the BBN reality show.

**Table 4. Do you watch BBN Reality Show?**

Options	Iyamho	Ikhola	Ogbido	Uluoke	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	19	19	19	19	76	100
No	-	-	-	-	-	-
I do not want to answer	-	-	-	-	-	-

The table shows that all the respondents from the four rural communities of Iyahmo, Ikhola, Ogbido, and Uluoke of Uzairue, Edo State, watched the BBN reality show. This further corroborates the fact stated in table 3, which established that the respondents are knowledgeable about the subject matter.

**Table 5. How many times have you watched BBN**

Options	Iyamho	Ikhola	Ogbido	Uluoke	Percentage (%)
More than 5 times	-	2	-	2	5
Regularly	19	17	19	19	95
Per change	-	-	-	-	-
Not at all	-	-	-	-	-
Do not know	-	-	-	-	-
I do not want to answer	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 indicates that the majority (95%) of the respondents regularly watch the BBN reality show. This suggests that the rural residents of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido, and Uluoke communities are avid viewers of the BBN reality show.

**Research Question 2:** What aspects of the BBN reality show attract the viewership of the rural communities of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido and Uluoke (IIOU) of Uzairue, Edo State?

**Table 6. Aspects that attract rural communities' viewership of BBN reality show**

Options	Iyamho	Ikhola	Ogbido	Uluoke	Percentage
Tasks	19	19	19	19	100
Saturday-Night Pool Party	19	19	19	19	100
Shower time	-	-	-	-	-
Interactions among housemates	19	19	19	19	100
Dairy Session	19	19	19	19	100
Games	19	19	19	19	100
Gym Session	19	19	19	19	100
Eviction process	19	19	19	19	100
Sexual activities including dressing half-clad	-	-	-	-	-
Romance	19	19	-	19	75
Head of House Lifestyle	19	19	19	19	100
Others	-	-	-	-	-

The table shows that the four rural communities agree that Sexual activities, including dressing half-clad, and Shower time do not attract viewership of the rural communities regarding BBN reality show. The table also indicates that Tasks, Saturday-Night Pool Party, Gym session, Eviction process, Head-of-



House lifestyle, Interactions among housemates, Dairy session, and Games are among the aspects that attract viewership of the communities. Further the table shows that only three of the communities – Iyamho, Ikhola and Uluoke, identified Romance as an aspect that attract viewership of BBN reality show, whilst Ogbido community disagrees.

**Research Question 3:** What are the aspects of the BBN reality show considered immoral by the rural communities of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido and Uluoke of Uzairue, Edo State?

**Table 7: Aspects of the BBN reality show considered immoral by the rural communities**

Options	Iyamho	Ikhola	Ogbido	Uluoke	Percentage
Tasks	-	-	-	-	-
Saturday-Night Pool Party	-	-	19	19	100
Shower time	19	19	19	19	100
Interactions among housemates	-	-	-	-	-
Dairy Session	-	-	-	-	-
Games	-	-	-	-	-
Gym Session	-	-	-	-	-
Eviction process	-	-	-	-	-
Sexual activities including dressing half-clad	19	19	19	19	100
Romance	-	-	19	19	50
Head of House Lifestyle	-	-	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-	-

The table reveals that the four communities have pinpointed Shower-time, Sexual activities, and dressing half-clad as immoral aspects of the BBN reality show. Additionally, all respondents from Ogbido and Uluoke communities have flagged Saturday-Night Pool Party and Romance as immoral elements of the show. This suggests that certain aspects of the BBN reality show are deemed immoral by the rural communities, conflicting with their values.

**Table 8: Aspects of the BBN reality show considered educative by the rural communities**

Options	Iyamho	Ikhola	Ogbido	Uluoke	Percentage
Tasks	19	19	19	19	100
Saturday-Night Pool Party	-	-	-	-	-
Shower time	-	-	-	-	-
Interactions among housemates	-	-	-	-	-
Dairy Session	19	19	19	19	100
Games	19	19	19	19	100
Gym Session	19	19	19	19	100
Eviction process	-	-	-	-	-
Sexual activities including dressing half-clad	-	-	-	-	-
Romance	-	-	-	-	-
Head of House Lifestyle	-	-	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-	-

Table 8 reveals that the four communities have individually recognized Task, Dairy Session, Games, and Gym session as elements of the BBN reality show that are deemed educative. This suggests that certain parts of the BBN reality show are viewed as educational by the rural communities.

**Research Question 4:** Does BBN reality show promote the culture of immorality amongst rural communities

of Iyamho, Ikholo, Ogbido and Uluoke (IIOU) of Uzairue, Edo State?

**Table 9. Does BBN reality show promote culture of immorality in IIOU**

Options	Iyamho	Ikholo	Ogbido	Uluoke	Total	Percentage
Yes	11	10	12	15	48	63.2
No	8	9	7	4	28	36.8
Do not know	-	-	-	-	-	-
I do not want to answer	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 9 indicates that majority (63.2%) of the respondents in the rural communities of IIOU state that BBN reality show promotes immorality. The implication of the above is that the rural dwellers of Iyamho, Ikholo, Ogbido and Uluoke communities agree that the BBN reality show promotes immorality.

**Table 10: Which Aspects of the BBN reality show that corrupt your morality**

Options	Iyamho	Ikholo	Ogbido	Uluoke	Percentage
Tasks	-	-	-	-	-
Saturday-Night Pool Party	-	-	19	19	100
Shower time	19	19	19	19	100
Interactions among housemates	-	-	-	-	-
Dairy Session	-	-	-	-	-
Games	-	-	-	-	-
Gym Session	-	-	-	-	-
Eviction process	-	-	-	-	-
Sexual activities including dressing half-clad	19	19	19	19	100
Romance	-	-	19	19	50
Head of House Lifestyle	-	-	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-	-

The table reveals that the four communities unanimously agree that Shower-time, Sexual activities, and dressing half-clad corrupt their morality. Additionally, all respondents from Ogbido and Uluoke communities also point out that Saturday-Night Pool Party and Romance activities in the BBN reality show corrupt morals. This suggests that certain elements of the BBN reality show are perceived by the rural communities to have the potential to corrupt morality.

**Research Question 5:** What are the challenges encountered by rural communities of Iyamho, Ikholo, Ogbido and Uluoke (IIOU) of Uzairue, Edo Stat, whilst viewing the BBN reality show?

**Table 11: Did you encounter challenges whilst watching BBN reality show**

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	76	100
No	-	-
Do not know	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

The table indicates that the rural communities of IIOU (100%) encountered challenges whilst watching BBN reality show.

**Table 12. Challenges encountered whilst viewing BBN reality show by IIOU**

Options	Iyamho	Ikhola	Ogbido	Uluoke	Total	Percentage
Lack of decent dress-code	19	19	19	19	76	100
Un-regulation of the time of broadcast	19	19	19	19	76	100
Use of vulgar language	19	19	19	19	19	100
Likelihood of Children viewing adult scenes antithetical to their growth	19	19	19	19	19	100
None	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

The table shows that the rural communities of IIOU identified Lack of decent dress-code, Un-regulation of the time of broadcast, Use of vulgar language and Likelihood of Children viewing adult scenes antithetical to their growth as challenges faced whilst watching BBN reality show. The implication of the above is that the rural dwellers of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido and Uluoke communities encountered challenges whilst watching BBN reality show.

### Discussion of Findings

Data analysed regarding to research question one indicates that the extent of awareness of the BBN reality show amongst rural communities of IIOU is high. This result implies that the respondents agree that the extent of awareness of the BBN reality show amongst rural communities of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido and Uluoke of Uzairue is high. Data also indicates that the extent of knowledgeable of the BBN reality show amongst rural communities of IIOU is high. This implies that the rural communities of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido and Uluoke of Uzairue have high knowledge of the BBN reality show, unlike the misinformation bandied about that the people in the rural communities have no knowledge of the BBN reality show. Further, data shows that all the respondents from the four rural communities of Iyahmo, Ikhola, Ogbido and Uluoke of Uzairue, Edo State, watched BBN reality show. The outcome of the study also shows that majority (95%) of the respondents watch BBN reality show regularly. This finding is in consonance with Olley and Nwagbara (2017) who found that many Nigerians are regular followers of the Big Brother shows and the fan base transcends the urban areas to the rural communities. The results corroborate the fact established in this study which states that the respondents are knowledgeable of the subject matter. The implication of the above is that the rural dwellers of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido and Uluoke rural communities watch BBN reality show.

Regarding research question two, the data analysed shows that the four rural communities agree that sexual activities, including dressing half-clad, and shower time do not attract viewership from the rural communities regarding the BBN reality show. This suggests that some of the content of the BBN reality show did not resonate with the rural communities, particularly those studied (Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido, and Uluoke). Additionally, the data indicates that tasks, Saturday-night pool parties, gym sessions, the eviction process, the head-of-house lifestyle, interactions among housemates, diary sessions, and games are among the aspects that attract viewership from the communities. Furthermore, the data shows that only three of the communities – Iyamho, Ikhola, and Uluoke – identified romance as an aspect that attracts viewership for the BBN reality show, while Ogbido community disagrees. These results suggest that the listed contents resonate with the rural communities.

Data analysed pertaining to question three shows that the four communities identified Shower-time and Sexual activities, including dressing half-clad, as aspects of the BBN reality show that are considered immoral. In addition, the communities of Ogbido and Uluoke also added Saturday-Night Pool Party and Romance activities as other aspects of the BBN reality show that are deemed immoral. The

implication of the above is that some aspects of the BBN reality show are considered immoral and antithetical to the values of the rural communities. This outcome aligns with the assertion of Wole Soyinka cited in Lengnan (2013), which stated that the interplays and contents of Big Brother Naija are not part of Nigerian culture. Further, the data analysed also established that the four communities respectively identified and considered tasks, diary sessions, Games, and Gym sessions as aspects of the BBN reality show that are educational. The implication of the above is that some aspects of the BBN reality show are considered educational by the rural communities.

Similarly, data analysed regarding to research question four, indicates that majority (63.2%) of the respondents in the rural communities of IIOU agree that BBN reality show promotes immorality. The implication of the above is that the rural dwellers of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido and Uluoke communities agree that the BBN reality show promotes immorality. Data also shows that the four communities identified Shower-time and Sexual activities, including dressing half-clad as the culprit that corrupts their morality. Asides the above, Ogbido and Uluoke communities also added Saturday-Night Pool Party and Romance activities in the BBN reality show to the list of the BBN reality show contents that corrupt their morals. The implication of the above is that some aspects of the BBN reality show are considered by the rural communities to possess the potency to corrupt morality.

In a similar manner, the data indicates that the rural communities of IIOU (100%) faced challenges while watching the BBN reality show. These challenges encompassed issues such as the lack of a decent dress code, unregulated broadcast timings, the use of vulgar language, and the potential for children to view adult scenes that are contradictory to their development. This suggests that the residents of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido, and Uluoke communities experienced difficulties while engaging with the BBN reality show.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the level of awareness and knowledge of the BBN reality show among rural communities in Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido, and Uluoke is significant. Therefore, it is recommended that the BBN reality show utilize this outcome to develop and promote content and initiatives that are relevant to the progress and economic prosperity of these rural communities.

Further, the study concludes that aspects such as shower-time, sexual activities, dressing half-clad, Saturday-Night Pool Party, and romance activities in the BBN reality show are deemed immoral by the rural communities of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido, and Uluoke, with the potential to corrupt morality. In light of this, it is recommended that the BBN reality show moderates these elements to ensure they are more suitable for rural community audiences.

The study concludes that the rural communities of Iyamho, Ikhola, Ogbido, and Uluoke faced challenges while watching the BBN reality show. Therefore, it is recommended that the issues identified by these communities should be promptly addressed by the owners of the BBN reality show to maintain viewership and ensure a smoother viewing experience.

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# Comparative Analyses on National Communication Policies of Nigeria, Ghana and China for National Development

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## Abstract

A country's media system is not only more than a reflection of its society but also very dear to the people and the administration of the country. Consequently, the governments of most countries have been working nonstop to devise legislative mechanisms of regulating media operations. On the other side, the press has been on a never-ending quest for a better way to operate within the state's legal framework while maintaining its freedom to hold, receive, and transmit information. This article examines the problem of communication policy-making as a strategy for country development, drawing on press development theory. It examines the importance of communication policies in national development and critically evaluates contemporary communication policy-making techniques in Nigeria, Ghana, and China. The article does, however, recommend that the government of Nigeria revisits, rejigs and approve an official national communication policy, which should be implemented to avoid having words just on paper.

*Keywords: communication, comparative analyses, national communication policies, national development*

## Introduction

Scholars have defined a national communication system as the result of a media policy, which is a set of norms and institutions that administer or manage the rights and obligations of media professionals and organizations, with the goal of maintaining journalistic ethics, advertising standards, and generally self-regulating the media's relationship with their audiences. The national communication system is derived from the national media policy, which emphasizes culture, conventions, and values that are conducive to long-term development. Radio, television, newspapers, online media publications, movies, advertising, and public relations are all part of it. In general, ownership and control, finance, content, and technology are used to assess a national media system. In today's world it is influenced by globalization (Akanbi, 2012; Alao, 2012).

If UNESCO defines communication policy according to Uwom and Alao (2013) citing Lee (1976) as "sets of principles and norms established to guide the behaviour of communication systems" (p. 62), then the dominance of external factors over internal forces is giving birth to new sets of guidelines for media behavior. External factors, through globalization and technological advancements, must be balanced against sovereign governments' localization strategies. These difficulties raise a variety of concerns that must be addressed as part of national communication policy (Ogunyemi, 1997). A national communication policy lays out the goals, objectives, and functions of communication systems, with the intention of aligning them with the society's broader socioeconomic, political, and cultural development goals. Media policy can also be compared to compiling major and strategic policies toward media, taking into account the media climate and public situation, in order to provide a clear direction for media management activities in order to achieve the missions and goals, as well as a framework within which media operational programs design and act (Arbatani, Labafi & Khajeheian, 2012; Bofo, 1986).

Meanwhile, Uwom and Alao (2013) citing Gadzekpo (1997) and Schramm (1964) assert that there

is a link between communication and developmental necessities. They believed that an appropriate flow of information is linked to societal growth and advancement (p.62). The importance of communication in most African and emerging countries cannot be separated from independence, because the media was utilized as an instrument of liberation from colonial masters. To harness the different media outlets in any country, there is need for a policy to guide the operations so that they can work towards a common goal. This emphasizes the significance of a national communication strategy. The basic purpose of a national communication policy according to Uwom and Alao (2013) is using the media to promote quicker societal growth and transformation in various fields and at various levels of national life. He goes on to say that for the media to play a significant role in the establishment and advancement of a desirable new social order in post-colonial Nigeria, a purposeful and coherent mass communication policy is required.

In line with the aforementioned introductory remarks this paper looks at the issue of communication policy-making as a strategy for development in countries and critically analyses current approaches to communication policy-making in Nigeria, Ghana and China and suggests an outline for a comprehensive approach to national communication policies in Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

The authors utilize a descriptive method and sourced from the secondary sources to drive their points home by considering the similarities and differences in the national communication policies among the three countries – Nigeria, Ghana and China.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study takes a cue from the development theory of the press. The development theory of the press is applicable to developing countries among which is Nigeria. To categorize countries as developing, Folarin (2002) cited in Talabi (2013) mentions some features that are apparent in the holistic structure of those countries as:

1. Relative lack of cultural production resources;
2. Relatively limited availability of media literate audience, and;
3. Dependence on the developed world for technology, skill and cultural products hence shortage of communication infrastructure and professional skill (p.36).

The call for media intervention in development process is hinged on what Denis McQuail called “development media theory”. This theory is quite influential because it sees the media as a pivot for national development in developing countries. McQuail (1983) cited in Kadiri, Muhammed, Raji, and Sulai (2015) stated that the central thesis of the theory is that the mass media in developing nations should be used for “the primacy of the national development task (economic, social, cultural and political); the pursuit of cultural and informational autonomy; support for democracy; and solidarity with other developing countries” (p.49).

McQuail outlined six main principles of the theory:

1. Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.
2. Freedom of the media should be open to restriction according to (1) economic priorities and (2) development needs of society.
3. Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language.
4. Media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally and politically.
5. Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
6. In the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict media operations and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified (pp. 95-96).

Primarily, the theory is rooted in the modernization/functionalist paradigm of mass media’s role in development. It presupposes the use of the mass media in achieving development in developing countries. McQuail is of the view that since the Siebert et al (1956) ‘four theories of the press’ (Authoritarian, Libertarian, Soviet/Communist and Social Responsibility) are inadequate in explaining the media systems of developing nations, the need for another theory becomes essential. Thus, he propounded the development media theory to take care of how the media can aid the development of those nations. The assumption is that the mass media are part of the instruments for achieving

development in developing nations.

The tenets of the theory advocate cooperation rather than adversarial relationship between the media and the government, therefore, development media theory has been abused by authoritarian regimes who assume media should be subjected to their whims and caprices in the name of development. The authoritarian element of the theory according to Kadiri et al (2015) which reigns supreme in most developing countries, has brought about tension between government/media relations and role conflict for journalist. Thus, professionals are always confused on to who they owe their loyalty - the government or the people?

Communication research has demonstrated that the media may help to promote national development, but is it necessary for the media to become a puppet in the hands of the current government in obeying the development media theory doctrines? The media in the developed world plays a critical role in the development and survival of their countries. However, it appears that the contrary is true in the developing world, where poverty is still visible everywhere. This has led us to the point where we must consider if development media theory is being applied in Africa in the manner it should be. This discovery has also raised the question of whether development media theory is the antidote to neoliberalism.

## **Rationale**

While Nigeria and Ghana are West African countries colonized by the British, the latter gained independence in 1957, hence, the first African sub-Saharan country to be independent of her colonial master while the former got her independence in 1960. Both countries among some other African countries, have a relatively free media and have also gone through military and civilian regimes before getting to where they are currently and presently, they have a vibrant media environment. China on the other hand started off from a full-blown totalitarian media system to a more liberal media landscape occasioned by economic reforms and globalization.

However, the media systems in both Nigeria and China have passed through the same evolution from totalitarian regimes. Nigeria from the British colonial rule to 'militocracy' and finally democracy, the media system has struggled through repression, liberalism and later self-censorship. The Chinese government according to Beina and Eleanor (2017) has long kept tight reins on both traditional and new media to avoid potential subversion of its authority. Its tactics often entail strict media control using monitoring systems and firewalls, shuttering publications or websites, and jailing dissident journalists, bloggers, and activists.

## **Comparative Analyses of Nigeria, Ghana and China National Communication Systems**

In Africa, according to Uwom and Alao (2013), Ghana is a front-runner in the development of a National Communications Policy. The need for a communication policy in Ghana became imperative to regulate the fast-growing broadcast industry after the establishment of commercial stations. According to Uwom and Alao (2013) the liberalization of the airwaves was part of the recommendations of the National Seminar on Communication and Information Policy, held in July 1992. It was an important breakthrough for the development of new communication policies in Ghana. The national media policy was developed for all communications media - print, broadcast, wire services, advertising and public relations etc.

One major area of difference between the media in Nigeria and the media in Ghana according to Uwom and Alao (2013) is that in Nigeria, there is no single document tagged "National Communication Policy", the country has bits and pieces (p. 69). However, this assertion was at variance with Adekoya and Ajilore (2012) and Suleiman (2018) which affirmed that the Nigerian Mass Communication Policy (NMCP) was formulated in 1987. The year was however in variance with Esiri and Okunade, (2014) who maintained "Nigeria's national communication policy document first emerged in 1990" (p. 14).

The policy was later reviewed in 2004 (Esiri & Okunade, 2014; Suleiman, 2018). The reviewed version was approved and adopted in 2010 as the Nigerian National Communication Policy (NNCP). The overarching aim of the policy is to drive the socio-political, economic and cultural development of the country through galvanizing mass participation in government's programmes, processes, and expanding opportunities for the citizens' self-expression and actualization (Suleiman, 2018). To this extent, the NNCP provides a framework for the growth, development, regulation and functioning of all available communication systems in the country (NNCP).

On the other hand, unlike the Ghanaian media policy that breaks it down into public media, commercial media and community media, the Nigerian media policy talks about the print media as a whole and the broadcast media as a whole as boundaries of operation were allotted to the various media



of communication then in existence in the country. These media are: The broadcast media- which include radio and television, and the print medium which include newspaper, magazine, books, posters, bill boards and hand bills (Adekoya & Ajilore 2012; Uwom & Alao 2013). Nevertheless, there are other laws guiding media practice in Nigeria like the National Broadcasting Commission Code (NBC), Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON), Nigeria Press Council (NPC), and Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), Advertising Practitioners' Council of Nigeria (APCON), National Films and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), and also the National Communications Commission (NCC) (Uwom & Alao 2013).

Gadzekpo (1997) cited in Uwom and Alao (2013) posited that communication policy in Ghana is guided by Article 12 of the Constitution which stipulates the freedom of the media, and which seeks to insulate the State-owned media from governmental interference. Article 21 also guarantees freedom of speech and expression for all as well as freedom of information. The freedom of information stipulation, however, appears to contradict instruments such as the Official Secrets Oath, which prevent public officials from divulging information to journalists.

Similarly, China's constitution affords its citizens freedom of speech and press, but the opacity of Chinese media regulations - Official Media Policy - allows authorities to crack down on news stories by claiming that they expose state secrets and endanger the country. The definition of state secrets in China remains vague, facilitating censorship of any information that authorities deem harmful to their political or economic interests. Experts say Chinese media outlets usually employ their own monitors to ensure political acceptability of their content. Censorship guidelines are circulated weekly from the Communist Party's propaganda department and the government's Bureau of Internet Affairs to prominent editors and media providers. China has one of the world's most restrictive media environments, relying on censorship to control information in the news, online, and on social media (Beina & Eleanor, 2017).

The media ownership and control in Nigeria, Ghana and China are in line with their country's dictates of the communication policy and systems. It is a plural or a mix of state owned/public owned and private owned media engagement. The analysis of the mix will be well appreciated by looking at the electronic and the print media separately.

## **Electronic Media**

While the Nigeria and Ghana broadcast media are liberal, the Chinese media is strictly authoritarian with full government control at inception. This phenomenon was influenced greatly by China's political emancipation, the Marxist/Communist ideology of Chairman Mao Zedong. This ideology emphasizes state control of all resources and paraphernalia. However, by the turn of the 1980's and 1990's media control was relaxed under the administrations of Deng Xiaoping and Jian Zemin. The strict regulation came back after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and Hu Jintao rule due to the growing influence of the internet and upsurge of dissident movement. This development has made two journalists pressure groups - Reporters without Borders and the Press Freedom Index in their annual reports 2010, to refer to China "as the sorry distinction of leading the world in repression of internet" (Ojo, Akinreti, Odegbenle & Jegede, 2013, p.23).

Leading the pact of the state owned/public owned media in China is China Communist Television, CCTV. In other parts of the country like Hong Kong and Macau, a separate media regulatory bodies operates. The Chinese electronic media - radio and television service stations - are controlled by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, SARFT. They are strictly monitored not to broadcast programmes against government policies in Tibet and Xinxiang, the communist party. Other no go areas of broadcast are pornography and the banned spiritual group-Falun Gong. Despite this centralization and government control of the Chinese media systems, as at today in mainland China, there are over 700 conventional television stations plus 3,000 cable channels and 1,000 radio stations.

For Nigeria, government and the private entrepreneurs equally own and control the broadcast media outfits. The Nigerian Television Authority, NTA, and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN, established in 1977 and 1933 are state owned television and radio stations funded by the federal government. As at today, there are over 48 NTA and 38 FRCN stations across Nigeria, with the headquarters in Abuja. The two electronic media outfits pride themselves as the largest television and radio network in Africa. FRCN motto is "Uplift the People and Unite the Nation". The external arm of the television station is called NTA International and Voice of Nigeria (VON) for the radio station.

1992 was a turning point for the private broadcast media in Nigeria with the establishment of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), breaking the monopoly of government in that sector of the media. The federal military government in 1992 deregulated the broadcast industry in Nigeria. By deregulation, therefore, government, groups and individuals are free to own and operate broadcast

stations with the government providing the legal framework guiding the activities of the broadcast stations.

It is the need to provide effective guidelines for the operation of private broadcast stations that led to the establishment of the National Broadcasting Corporation of Nigeria (NBC). The rationale behind the establishment of the commission, therefore, was to regulate broadcast contents in Nigeria. This regulation was viewed to be necessary considering the fear that some unscrupulous private owners of broadcast stations may be tempted to use their stations to undermine the interest and security of the nation if not properly checked.

The National Broadcasting Commission Decree Number 38 of 1992 empowered the Commission to take full responsibility for licensing broadcast stations, allocating airwaves to the licensees, and regulating broadcast contents in terms of ratio of local and foreign contents. The act did not specify either how to seek redress or to what extent public interest be protected. Thus allows the NBC to provide licenses in perpetuity only to withdraw them at their whims and caprices.

In Ghana, Uwom and Alao (2013) asserted that communication was embraced as a way of changing society. Broadcasting was to be a public service dedicated to the enlightenment and instruction of the people. The model was taken from the British Broadcasting Service (BBC) which was the pioneer of public service broadcasting. Ghana public broadcaster, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation was the only broadcaster in Ghana till 1995. Ownership of the media in Ghana however is spread to discourage monopolies and serve the interest of pluralism. The media policy kicks against monopoly and encourages plurality of media ownership. The community media are owned and operated by the community and every member of the community shall have access to the media (Uwom & Alao, 2013).

## **The Print Media**

Private ownership of print media was on the upswing in Nigeria and Ghana than in China. In Nigeria and Ghana, both government and the private investors are participating actively. In the main, government investment in the print media in Nigeria is a disaster from the ugly past of Daily Times, New Nigerian Newspapers (NNN) to Daily Sketch, Herald, Triumph and The Standard Newspapers. The surviving one like the Nigerian Observer from Edo state government, and the Graphics newspaper from Kogi state are gasping for breath!

The main features of the state-owned newspapers are the control of government in the appointment of the editor for the newspaper, funding and absolute control on the editorial policy of the newspapers. They are the mouth piece of government policies and programmes and disregard opposing views and news in their coverage. Generally, news and features do not focus more on the people but the paraphernalia of governance. Consequently, journalists working for these newspapers engaged in self-censorship.

Implicitly, in the private sector of the Nigerian media, there are too much concentration of private ownership and control from few rich and high net-worth individuals with the entrance of late Obafemi Awolowo - the Nigerian Tribune in the 1950s, late Moshood Abiola - defunct Concord newspapers in the 1980s, Olu Aboderin – The Punch newspapers, they surely set the pace of private ownership of newspapers, with their staples dictating the pace. While the Concord newspaper is defunct, the Nigerian Tribune and Punch newspapers are still blazing the trail. With the return to civil rule in 1979, after 13 years of military rule, the few surviving privately-owned newspapers in Nigeria were joined by a plethora of titles - the Vanguard, Thisday, the Guardian, the Sun, Daily Trust, Leadership, and others.

The newcomers appeared, in part, to serve the electioneering role played by newspapers of the 1920s. Since they are privately funded by an individual or group of like minds, their editorial policies are guided by the interests of their owners and not by the dictates of the people. The news slant is not nationalistic in outlook, rather it smacks ethnic, religious or political agenda. These print media are concentrated more in the urban centers of the country. Interestingly, the private media newspaper owners have formed a pressure group called the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria, NPAN, to cater for their interests.

Meanwhile, in China, the print media at the inception are owned by the government and later private investors too came in to compete in the market share as a result of the country's liberal reforms. By the turn of the year 2000 onwards, there were over 2,200 newspapers and 7,000 magazines and journals in the country of China. But the front runners are the state run, namely- the People's Daily, Beijing Daily, Guangming Daily and the Liberation Daily. They are virtually communist newspapers.

Just like Nigeria, the news agencies are also owned by the government. They are Xinhua News Agency and China News Service. Xinhua has the powers to censor and edit the news of foreign agencies just as the News Agency of Nigeria does. The Chinese newspapers and magazines are controlled by the government regulatory agency called - General Administration of Press and Publication - GAPP. The ownership structure and control really dictate the level of funding, editorial policy and the overall content of the media.

## **Funding**

Nigeria, Ghana and China media outfits have allowed private entrepreneurs to own and control, as well as fund their operations. Funding of the Chinese media is mixed. At the onset, government funded the state-owned media through subsidy. With the advent of the China's economic and media reforms, commercialization of the government-owned media emerged. Similarly, the diversity in mainland Chinese media news and programmes were responsible for commercialization as most state-owned media outlets were no longer merely serve as mouthpieces of the government. While the government issues directives defining what can be published, it does not prevent, and in fact encourages outlets to compete for viewers and advertising. Financial incentives are also used to control journalists' behaviour. Despite this partial funding, the operations of the media were tied to the Foreign Service department.

Just like the Chinese media scenario, the funding of state media organizations are done through direct funding by subvention/subsidy and partial commercialization in Nigeria. The FRCN, NTA and the News Agencies of Nigeria, (NAN), are good cases in point. Conversely, the VON is totally funded by the government. Despite partial government funding and commercialization, the media stations have been used largely by government to propagate its policies and defend its interests in line with the countries communication policies to engender growth and sustainable development.

The private media organizations were funded by private investors and owners. In the newspaper industry, the African Newspapers of Nigeria – the Nigerian Tribune, stand tall on this equation. The Nigerian Tribune is established by the Awolowo family but certain percentage of the newspaper's shares were sold to the public and called for Annual General Meetings annually.

On funding of the public broadcaster in Ghana, the policy allows for the levying of television license. There is a special levy on media consumption; the provision of incentives and concessions, such as rebates, tax holidays and the lifting of import duty. For public and community media, there are special or exclusive tax exemptions on equipment, technical assistance from public sources or tax-deductible donations from private sources, staff support scheme, paid announcements to public institutions, etc. (Uwom & Alao, 2013).

The majority of shares of the public media is owned by the government and part shares shall be owned by individual public corporations with state and private organizations. Likewise, for a commercial media company, 51% of shares is held by an indigenous Ghanaian citizen.

## **Media Content**

This section will be analyzed based on the language of broadcast and publications of news and programmes, language of broadcast in line with the dictates of the national communication policies of Nigeria, Ghana and China.

In Nigeria, the language of broadcast and publications are 90 per cent English and the remaining 10 per cent for local languages of Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. Consequently, most news and programmes are largely elitist and self-serving. This, however questioned the social responsibility of the media. In accordance with the NBC guidelines, electronic media in Nigeria are expected to have 60% of the programmes in local content and 40% foreign. Unfortunately, especially private televisions and radio stations do not have local content programmes nor commission local content programmes. They devoted more time to foreign music, chit chat and phone-in due to paucity of funds, lack of creativity, cheap foreign programmes, and lack of regards for time belt airing of home video contents on terrestrial television, etc.

On media content, the Ghanaian government through its National Communications Policy forbids rebroadcast of foreign programmes on FM stations. They also advocate for more local content to foreign content; there should be 50% of local content on radio and 30% of local content on TV and there should be the use of at least one local language in the broadcasts. The public broadcaster's content shall comprise 80% local programming of total airtime. For regular TV channels, 60% and at least 50% of local programmes shall be aired during prime time.

Free-to-air commercial radio and television stations shall devote 50% and 30% respectively of their total airtime to local content including music. Minimum local content shall rise 75% and 50% respectively for free-to-air commercial radio and TV stations. For community stations, 80% of programmes shall originate from the station and target audiences, the remaining 20% shall comprise materials of national interest like a relay of the state broadcasters' news. Also at least 70% of programmes shall be in local language or the language of the target audience (Uwom & Alao, 2013).

For the Chinese media, rising literacy rate and the economic prosperity of China have greatly affected the country's media content. Rising literacy rates have produced tens of millions of additional readers in the past decade, creating ever-expanding markets for the print media. The language of broadcast and publication is local Chinese language and about one per cent English due to the country's economic reforms.

Consequently, state-owned television stations have monopoly of local content programmes because the Chinese viewers have more passion for their local programmes. The station buys foreign programmes and banned foreign produced programmes between 5:00 pm and 8:00 pm to protect the state-owned Chinese animation studios to broadcast their cartoons. The only inviolable restrictions appear to be an unwritten ban on challenges to the party's right to rule and to the legitimacy and decision-making authority of top party leaders, as new restrictions were placed on all sectors of the press, Internet-users, bloggers, website managers and foreign journalists in preparation of the 17th National Party Congress in 2007. (Ojo, Akinreti, Odegbenle & Jegede, 2013).

China requires foreign correspondents to obtain permission before reporting in the country and has used this as an administrative roadblock to prevent journalists from reporting on potentially sensitive topics like corruption and, increasingly, economic and financial developments (Beina & Eleanor, 2017).

## **Regulations**

### **The Print Media**

There are different approaches to media regulation in China and Nigeria, as the essence of regulations is to ensure and maintain standards in terms of operations and service delivery. In Nigeria, the communication policy established the Nigeria Press Council to regulate the activities of the print media. It puts together a Code of Conduct or Ethics of the profession for the print media organizations and journalists as a whole. This covers fairness, objectivity, privacy, and respect for individual's rights to reply on any issues or stories among others.

It however works in collaboration with media groups such as the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Guild of Editors, National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) among others. It is also concerned with the training of journalists through regular seminars, workshops and conferences on contemporary issues in the media, nationally and globally.

In China, the print media are not allowed to write on topics such as the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China, the governance of Tibet, and Falun Gong. While the government issues directives defining what can be published, it does not prevent, and in fact encourages outlets to compete for viewers and advertising. Financial incentives are also used to control journalists' behaviour. The government has also drafted a new press law that would lessen government involvement in the news media. Much of the information collected by the Chinese mainstream media is published in "neicans" (internal, limited circulation reports prepared for the high-ranking government officials), not in the public outlets.

The withdrawal of government media subsidies has caused many newspapers (including some owned by the Communist Party) in tabloids to take bold editorial stands that are critical of the government, as the necessity to attract readers and avoid bankruptcy has been a more pressing fear than government repression. General Administration of Press and Publication – administers the newspaper, periodical, video and audio media and news industry. Generally, the Chinese media's growing autonomy has been reflected in their increasingly diversified content.

### **Training**

The training of media personnel is mixed in Nigeria and China. Government totally controls the curriculum for journalism training as enshrined in the communication policy in both countries. Specifically in Nigeria, government and the private sectors are involved the establishment of media training institutions. Mass Communication departments of the state and privately-owned universities, polytechnics, and other tertiary institutions embarked on training of journalists for the media industry.

Media organizations like the State owned FRCN and pressure groups like the NPAN, NUJ, NIPR established a private monotronics – FRCN Training School (now FRCN Broadcasting Academy) and Nigerian Institute of Journalism (NIJ) in Lagos to train media professionals. Same applies to media pressure groups like the NIPR, ARCON among others, who set up their different training institutions for their members to maintain standards and instill discipline in the media. These media training institutions equally worked with international media training organizations like the Reuters Foundation, BBC Media Trust and Thomson Foundation among others to train Nigerian journalists on current development in ethics and media entrepreneurship.

Be that as it may, China according to Ojo et al (2013), equally used the apparatus of the state and private sectors to train its journalists. The country is remarkably different in the sense that it is set to introduce a new media training system that requires its journalists to train in Marxist and Communist theories of news.

## **Conclusion**

Nigeria, Ghana and China from the analyses above allow for public and private ownership of the media while the Ghana and Nigeria media polices went further to allow for community ownership. The media in Nigeria and Ghana are free but with self-censorship by the practitioners while the media in China could be said to be highly government regulated. More than a dozen government review and enforce laws related to information flow within, into, and out of China. The most powerful monitoring body is the Communist Party's Central Propaganda Department (CPD), which coordinates with General Administration of Press and Publication and State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television to ensure content promotes party doctrine (Beina & Eleanor, 2017).

The three countries policy also state that the content of the media should be a mix of local and foreign programmes and advise the use of indigenous languages with China doing better in this area. On the whole, for the Nigerian media, there are no go areas for its contents, but each medium decides its operational goals within the ambit of the regulatory authorities laid down rules.

In terms of national development, communication and information are critical. They can help improve the socioeconomic, political, and cultural transformation process. In some way, most development policies and programmes are information-related or information-dependent. Communication infrastructures, systems, and processes, as Jon Katz has pointed out, could be significant supporters of societal development forces. This paper's main point is that communication is a critical resource in Africa's development, particularly in Nigeria. The amount to which communication strategies, facilities, and procedures are systematically and purposefully integrated into the overall national development planning determines the effectiveness and contribution of communication in societal transformation and development (Boafo, 1966).

Nigeria's national communication policy should be reformed to focus on crucial areas that directly affect journalism practice in the country, such as protecting journalists from exploitative media owners, so that the country's mass media industry may become more dynamic and robust (Esiri & Okunade, 2014). Journalists are subjected to a great deal of harm as a result of their work. They are also subjected to a slew of restrictions imposed by regulations that are no longer relevant in today's world. Such laws like Nigeria's Newspapers Ordinance Acts must be examined with the goal of amending or repealing some of the laws that are anti-journalism (Nwodu, 2015).

There is no right answer to what we should do and how we should do it in order to transcend the world's warring culture. Every nation and individual must channel efforts to assist and interact with one another in order to form a strong link of trust, mutual understanding, and societal peace. We should all try to connect people and institutions on a shared platform where we can all appreciate each other's cultural, social, and political differences (Mishra & Chauhan, 2009).

## **Recommendations**

Going by the above analyses, it could be deduced that the impact of communication systems and strategies on development efforts would only be minimal until policymakers and planners undertake more serious efforts to incorporate communication strategies and information utilization in overall national development policies and programmes. This paper recommends therefore that in Nigeria:

1. It is time to consider a review of the existing national communication policy and duly implemented to avoid having words only on paper. A strategy for formulating and implementing a national communication policy in any country however requires, first, the establishment of a communication policy-making structure. This structure may be composed of an overall body, such as a national

council on communication policy (NCCP), under which may be several committees or sub-committees which will deal with different aspects of the policy. Membership of the policy-making structure should be inter-ministerial, inter-sectoral, broad-based and representative of all sections of the society (Boafo, 1966).

2. A national communication policy council would undertake all the steps required for formulating and implementing a national communication policy that will be compatible with the socio-economic and political context of the country and respond to its development needs. The council would undertake broad consultations on the policy to be formulated, commission policy research and analysis, identify policy issues and suggest policy measures as well as monitor the implementation of the policy.
3. However, the policy document should refrain from dabbling into the criteria for news determination as this a professional issue which should be left for mass media professionals to handle. There are enough safeguards in our statutes and professional codes of ethics to guard against journalistic excesses and recklessness. Indeed, a national communication policy that dabbles into this core area of journalistic practice diminishes its essence because of the difficulty in enforcing such a policy (Esiri & Okunade, 2014).
4. As earlier observed and noted, the framework of the communication policies of the three countries analysed in this paper stem from the Constitution, it is therefore imperative that the policies should not be at variance with other policies and should promote and support the objectives of the country. However, Nigerian media should borrow a leaf from the media systems of China in terms of technological know-how.
5. In the same vein, what is important under the present circumstance in Nigeria is a close monitoring of the programming of the commercial (private) broadcasting stations by NBC to ensure that they comply with the regulation on local content. The NBC regulation states that “a broadcaster shall promote Nigerian content and encourage the production and projection of Nigerian life within and outside its borders; strive to attain 100% local content” and for the purpose of free-to-air terrestrial broadcast, “a broadcaster shall ensure that Nigerian music constitutes 80 per cent of all its musical content” (NBC Code, 2016, pp .41-42).
6. Though there has been an emergence of Community Broadcasting in Chapter nine, sub section nine of the NBC Code (p. 74), this also needs to be specified in the media policy. Nigeria communication policy does not address the emergence of Community Broadcast (Free-to-air). It made mention of it but did not make it elaborate. It should consider that some of these urban based media cannot get to the rural dwellers which constitute the majority of the population (Uwom & Alao, 2013).
7. The NBC should encourage the growth of cable channels because it portends the future in community broadcasting. They are cheap to acquire and this makes them suitable for use in rural areas. Cable could also be used to break the urban concentration of media in the country and to halt the tilt towards the elite. Community cable channels will empower the rural residents, who produce the wealth of the nation, and ensure their rights to be informed. Using the words of Adekoya and Ajilore (2012), in line with the stipulations in the current national communication policy, government should “create and empower the rural people towards the ownership of their own media of mass communication especially the radio as this will facilitate effective participation in the national development program” (p. 27). A developing economy like Nigeria needs cable system to promote its national development programmes and foster ethnic understanding. Ghana, another West African country, has already taken a bold step in this direction.

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# Punishment and Forgiveness in Nigerian Organisations: A Theoretical Review

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## Abstract

The paper examined the concepts of punishment and forgiveness in organisations. Punishment was defined in the context of organisation as imposition in consequence of a breach of law or ethical misconduct, while forgiveness was seen as an institutional inclusion to encourage members not to dwell in past offenses even when no result is demonstrated. Contextual factors that influence punishment and forgiveness decisions made by management in Nigerian organisations were identified. Given the nature of punishment and forgiveness including contextual decisions involved in punishment and forgiveness in organisations, the paper advanced the argument that despite the fact that it is hard to forgive in Nigerian organisations, the reason for forgiveness does not in any way result in the application of weal sanctions against in response to misconduct. The paper therefore took a stand that forgiveness in Nigeria organisations should not be seen as tolerance for unethical behaviour by making people unwilling to be punished appropriately and to administer negative sanctions against misconduct, but as a means to promote good social effects in organisations. The paper concluded that in this new economy characterized by increasing fear of change and escalating alienation, it makes good business sense to practice the art of forgiveness in organisations. The paper recommended among others that managers in organisations should be conscious in promoting organisational forgiveness to the extent that it will not result in serious damage to the organisation.

*Keywords: punishment, forgiveness, revenge, offence and organisation*

## Introduction

Punishment is a fundamental part of organized social life (Bandura 1969; Spitzer 1975; Calsmith, 2006). However, the use of punishment has always been present in organisational settings (Atwater and Waldman, 2001; Carsey and Carter, 2001). At one point or the other, managers find themselves in a position where they have to impose sanctions of some form on a worker, ranging from oral or written reprimand to suspension from work, termination or even dismissal (Butterfield, Trevino and Ball, 1996). Scolding, sabotage or ostracism are the various forms by which we-workers punish each other in the organisation (Baker, 1993; Struthers, Miller, Boalen, and Briggs, 2001). Nevertheless, far from being uncommon in the workplace, punishment is unlikely to vanish from the organisational landscape (Trevino, 1992).

Forgiveness and punishment are distinct constructs. However, they have been inextricably linked by philosophers and theologians – and at times regarded as inversely related (Tutu, 1999). This implies that the study of punishment and forgiveness was the almost exclusive preserve of philosophers, theologians and clinicians. Tavachus (1999) opined that sorrow and guilt are the energy forces behind apology, but they motivate an organisation to forgive employees who have been found guilty of an offence. This, according to Worthington (2006), is that empathic distress of a guilty party's suffering plays a fundamental role in a victim's willingness to forgive.

In Nigeria organisations, those who are responsible to enforce punishment sometimes, by their own attitudes, create more disciplinary problems and end up being part of poor discipline in the system



(Ozurunba, 2009). Since managers of organisations are clearly the determinant of punishment decisions, it is of great importance for them to be of good example. Given the difficulty and the challenges facing management of Nigeria organisations in ensuring that employees are punished according to rules and regulations, the ability of the organisational managers to utilize its various approaches to ensure good compliance to rules and regulations that guide workers' performance in their duties is a primary factor. In support of this assertion, the policies which organisations have about punishment and the way they are implemented have a far reaching effect on behaviour in organisation. The concomitant effects are increase in job abandonment, reduction in input, chronic quarrels and sullen hostility which will distinctively affect the whole performance of the organisation. In this study, theoretical overview of punishment is presented and concept of forgiveness is examined to show the relationship between punishment and forgiveness.

## **A Theoretical Overview of Punishment**

Three groups of punishment were analyzed in the early days (Sutherland and Cressey, 1970). The reaction to offences such as witchcraft, treason and sacrilege, was annihilation such as exile and death which was meant to render the offender non-existent. The second group has to do with injuries to private individuals such as murder, assault or theft. These fundamentally provoked feuds between the private individuals and their relations. For third group of injuries to other members of the family which were not seen as crises nor followed by punishments, ridicule or ostracism was the most powerful method of control. There are now other forms of punishment, for instance, those emanating from social degradation, the right to vote, the right to hold public office (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), the right to practice certain profession may be surrendered following conviction for a crime. For instance, section II (1) of the legal practitioners Acts (cap.207) Laws of the Federation 1990 emphasizes the legal practitioner's disciplinary committee, if it thinks fit, to strike off the roll or suspend from practice any legal practitioner who has been convicted of a criminal offence.

From the foregoing discussion, punishment in all its ramification is a loss of rights or advantages consequent on a breach of law. When it loses this ingredient, it degenerates into an arbitrary act of violence that can produce nothing but bad social effects. In the context of an organisation, punishment may be used in response to various forms of misconduct (Trevile, 1992) including poor performance (Trahan and Steiner 1994) or interpersonal transgression or "hurt" (Worthington et al, 2005). A handy definition was given by Bersoff (1999) and Traviflo (1992) who see punishment in response to ethical misconduct that is, behavior that falls short of the organisation's moral standards which includes lying or coming to work under the influence of alcohol, pilfering office supplies. Such misconduct is identified by a disciplinary agent directly or indirectly. (Arvey and Jones, 1985). More so, situation in which the disciplinary agent is not directly the victim of the misconduct, punishment is different from revenge which may also have dimensions (Acquino et al 2006, Zalbert, 2006).

Previous reviews and theoretical models for punishment in organisational settings have identified the organisational context as a group of antecedents that influences an individual's decisions to punish, the choice of punishment tactic, and the severity of the punishment imposed (Butterfield et al 1996, Arvey and Jones 1985). Jones (2006) defined context as the "situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organisational behavior as well as functional relationship between variables". However, a number of workplace related variables have been found to influence punishment behaviour, apart from features of the misconduct itself, which makes a chain of antecedents on their own (Arvey and Jones, 1985). For instance, Podsakiff (1982) noted that a disciplinary agent's span of control, his or her final reinforcement power and the structure and complexity of the task with respect to which a negative punishment is imposed all shape the frequency with which punishment is used, howbeit in the reaction to poor job performance.

However, the set of formal organisational policies regarding punishment has received the most research attention with regard to sanctioning misconduct in the organisation. Franklin and Papan (2006) and Arvey and Jones (1985) have observed that many organisations have formal procedure specifying the conditions and the extent to which punishment may be imposed on the employees, Beyer and Trice (1984) have suggested and upheld that the more a formal policy is perceived as applicable to misconduct, the more severe a suspension from work is imposed on a violator. Buterfield et al (1996) opined that the mere existence of these disciplinary policies and procedures creates expectation of punishment that compel managers to punish. On the other hand, Klaas and dell'omo (1997) pointed out that the more restrictive or formal disciplinary policy is, the less managers are willing and able to impose severe punishment such as dismissal.

## **Conceptualizing Organisational Forgiveness**

Webbster's new College Dictionary cited in Stone (2002) noted that to forgive is "to give up resentment against or the desire to punish, stop being angry with, pardon or to give up all claim to punish or exact penalty for (an offence), and overlook." In the context of organisation, Cameron and Caza (2002) define organisational forgiveness as capability of an organization to foster collective abandonment of justified resentment, bitterness, and blame "and to employ" positive, forward-looking approach in response to harm or damage". They conceptualized organisational forgiveness as an institutional inclination to encourage members not to strive in past offenses, even when no remorse is demonstrated (Cameron and Caza, 2002; Camena et al 2004). As a dimension of organisational virtue, forgiveness is manifested in individual actions as well as collective achievement or processes that promote organisational goodness and social betterment.

To clarify this conceptualization, the following points should be noted. First, the notion of organisational forgiveness necessarily involves an interpersonal dimension (Camena and Caza, 2002). Many scholars have advanced the argument that forgiveness is an inherently interpersonal phenomenon (Worthington, 2006). However, it is true that studies on forgiveness in workplace settings have been consistent with this view (Aquino et al 2003, 2006).

On the other hand, characterizing organisation as being more forgiving versus less forgiving is possible only on the basis of overt manifestations, expression, or signals of forgiveness. Transaction and communication processes between offended parties and the individual(s) perceived to have perpetrated the offence constitute the forms of manifestation (Waldron and Kelley, 2005). It is, however, possible that offended parties may constantly be forgiving on workers who have offended them by letting go of feelings of anger, depression, bitterness, intimidation and negativity without overtly showing forgiving behaviour, a feature referred to by Baumeister et al (1998) as silent forgiveness. Thus, stating forgiveness as an organisational-level construct shows forgiveness in some form between or among organisation members. Such indication of forgiveness may be indirect or non-verbal by way of act such as smiling or resuming normal patterns of interaction with an offender (Snook, 2005). Although as Caveal, Wade and Worthington (2005) insisted that forgiveness involves replacing negative cognitions, emotions and motivations with "positive" ones, but Macullough et al (2003) opined that forgiveness transpires when these cognitions, emotions and motivation towards a transgressor become less negative.

Secondly, even though organisational forgiveness inherently has an interpersonal dimension, the damage or harm in response to which forgiveness may be forthcoming need not be personal. Cameron and Caza (2004) observed and upheld that organisational members can abandon resentment and blame not only over hurts or interpersonal offenses but also in performance-related mistakes or missteps for what their co-workers were responsible. More importantly, however, Enright et al (1992) and Krapp (2005) noted that forgiving omission do not preclude imposing negative sanction on the individual(s) responsible for the damage. Baumeister (2000), Aquino et al (2006) and Wallace et al (2008) opine that in interpersonal offense, for which forgiveness may be seen as castrating or cancelling and interpersonal debt or refraining from revenge, forgiving does not, by default, mean the essence of sanctions or acts of restitution. At least, in principle, forgiveness does not imply minimizing, condoning or ignoring transgression (Enright and Fitzgibbons 2000; Murphy, 2002).

Thirdly, organisational forgiveness is not an objective or formal prospect of an organisation, even though it is conceptualized as an institutional capacity and inclination. This is not to discountenance that objective characteristics of the organisation associated with positive approaches to dealing with damage and harm may make an organisation appear forgiving. However, according to Ashfort (1985), and Schneider and Reichers (1993), deceptions and assertions regarding the extent to which an organisation is forgiving are likely to emanate from employee's interaction with each other and with elements of the organisational context.

In a forgiving organisation, managers and subordinates alike avoid blames, finger-pointing and dwelling on failures, past mistakes and bad decisions. Employees who work in the organisation seem to overcome grudges, resentment or ill-feelings towards co-workers who may have offended them. All employees deserve a "second chance" in the organisation.

### **The Impact of Forgiveness on Different Levels of Organisation**

"To not forgive is a decision to suffer" (Course in Miracles, 1975). Forgiveness can help employee to be more present and greatly reduce the stress in employee's lives Fountain of Inner peace (1975) noted that "Forgiveness can free us from the imposition of the fear and anger that we have imposed on our minds. It releases us from our need and hope to change the past." Toll (1999) observed that "None forgiveness necessarily implies a heavy burden of psychological effect". When employees in organisation have

guilt, self-criticism and remorse or find themselves dwelling on past issues, they are in psychological time. When organisation forgives, the organisation frees itself from the fear and anger that the organisation has imposed on employee's minds by holding on to the past. Employees in the organisation who the organisation feels have betrayed it or let the organisation down become mirror for organisation growth and development. By having forgiveness for employees, the organisation can more deeply understand the needs, desires, fears and motivations of others. This can bring great peace of mind, reduce stress and lead to greater satisfaction, joy, and fulfillment from their work.

Interpersonal relationships will thrive if organisation lets go the act about what the other employees have done wrong and takes the first step towards creating more nurturing relationship. When organisation demonstrates forgiveness at the level of fear, individual workers feel safe to express themselves fully, leading to greater creativity, innovation and risk-taking. Workers work much harder and engage in "courageous conversation" because they feel recognized and appreciated. Forgiveness leads to an empowered and fully functionary work team.

Organisations that develop a culture of forgiveness will breed authentic, courageous and open conversations based on their values and vision as well as the current commitments and strategic objectives. This develops trust and builds pride in the organisation. Customer satisfaction will start because individuals will not bring the quality of trial and error to their work and customers. Individuals will find greater meaning and value in the work they are doing. In a forgiving organisation, workers will want to stay and will work towards the success of the organisation and their fellow employees. Employee retention ceases to be an issue. A true sense of community will emerge with the organisation.

### **Why is it hard to Forgive in Nigerian Organisations?**

This paper is not about the impact of punishment on organisation. The quest of this paper has been that punishment is seen as imposed in consequence of a breach of law and that punishment should be forgiven. One reason organisation managers do not practice forgiveness in the work place is that they have very few examples or role modeling to teach on how to do it, learning to practice forgiveness starts with learning how to forgive ourselves. It is only via demonstrating forgiveness towards employees that we can teach it to others and begin to create a more forgiving culture.

There is underlying concern which is based in their fear of loss of face and or loss of possession. Loss of face emanates from a concern about what others will think of organisation managers if they fail and a fear of being embarrassed or rejected by other employees. Loss of possession is about projecting territory such as money, position and property. Such individuals view their life as their ultimate possession which includes the fear of being hurt physically or emotionally or in some way having their self – image (elimination) dented. Another reason why organisations do not forgive is the fear that forgiving might be seen as a message that organisation accepts their behaviour, leading to future re-occurrence.

While forgiveness purports to seek justice, it further perpetrates injustice by encouraging corruption and failing to address the plight of the organisation. Forgiveness in organisation rides on the crest of intimidation. While forgiveness serves to reconcile transgressors and victims, it can gloss over morally despicable activities that are inimical to the well-being of the organisation, and if such moral evil is not brought to book, the protection of human rights in Nigerian organisation would be adversely different.

### **Conclusion**

The overreacting purpose of this work was to examine punishment and forgiveness in organisations. The extent to which a disciplinary agent sees her organisation as forgiving, accounts for that individual's decision to punish unethical behaviour. There has been debate about the nature and definition of forgiveness. Some insist on an interpersonal definition which includes the process of overcoming negative recognition, feeling and attitude towards an offender at its core. Others acknowledge this interpersonal component but do emphasis an interpersonal dimension that includes a transgression victim's willingness to resume pre-transgression patterns of interaction with the offenders, manifested in real behavior. Organisational forgiveness at the organisational level is seen on the basis of interpersonal aspect of forgiveness.

The influence of contextual factors on punishment decision-making is based on the circumstances surrounding the object of the punishment – the perpetrator. The motive individuals have for punishing assumes that punishment justifications and attribution are associated with annoyance aspect of

transgressions. When the disciplinary agent is high in accountability, he punishes in response to misconduct that has resulted in service damage to the organisation. Punishment is related to forgiveness, considering forgiveness as a contextual variable, the role that forgiveness plays as an antecedent was integrated to the punishment decisions. Based on the literature on punishment and forgiveness, forgiveness is viewed as good and unforgiveness as less than desirable. Forgiveness supports the retention of valued employees, gives room for greater creativity and innovation, leads to increased profitability and generates greater flexibility in adapting to changing market condition.

## Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this work, it is recommended that:

1. Managers of organisation should be conscious of promoting organisational forgiveness. Engaging in ways to facilitate organisational forgiveness may result in the application of weak sanction in response to misconduct to the extent that imposing weak sanction for misconduct is seen as tolerance for misconduct. Having a high level of organisational forgiveness among employees may act to counteract ethical initiatives of the organisation by making people usually to punish appropriately and to administer negative sanctions against unethical conduct. Again, high levels of organisational forgiveness may promote a false impression that ethically questionable acts will not necessarily be punished, and are therefore acceptable.
2. Managements or organisation should develop culture of forgiveness to breed courageous and open conversation based on the vision and mission of the organisation. The culture should be at inter-personal team and organisational levels.
3. It is essential to establish evaluation process in order to better define the role of forgiveness, to understand the reason for the dysfunction of forgiveness mechanism when it occurs and to identify the potential of forgiveness for social transformation and democratization in organisation.
4. Conducive atmosphere should be crated to facilitate forgiveness in organisations. This should be anchored in good organisational climate.
5. Transparency and monitoring procedures should be introduced in organisation to make forgiveness effective.

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