



Social Work
Services and the
Impact of Divorce
on Family
Wholeness in
Nigeria

Fuel Subsidy
Removal and the
Agony of the
Deprived in
Nigeria

Parameters for
Determining Core
Cultural Symbols:
A Philosophical
Analysis

Social Values and
Symbolic
Characterisation in
Nigerian Folk
Narratives



Journal of Education, Humanities, Management & Social Sciences



JEHMSS



The podium for scholars of human, cultural and social phenomena

Volume 2, Number 2, March 2024

Published by

Klamidas Communications Ltd
No 42 Ajose Adeogun Street, Utako District, Abuja
Tel: (+234) 08033370200
Website: <https://klamidas.com/jehmss>
Email: jehmss@klamidas.com
© JEHMSS 2024

in partnership with

The Division of General Studies
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Anambra State, Nigeria

All Rights Reserved

No part of this publication shall be reproduced, stored
in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form
by any means electronic, magnetic, or otherwise
without the prior permission of
the publishers.

Journal of Education, Humanities, Management & Social Sciences



JEHMSS



The podium for scholars of human, cultural and social phenomena

JEHMSS Editorial Board

Editor-in-Chief

Duve Nakolisa

Editors

Prof. Innocent Chijindu Ngangah

Francis Chuks Madukasi, PhD

Members of Editorial Advisory Board

Prof. Federico G. Settler	University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Prof. Maduabuchi Dukor	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
Prof. Sarojini Nadar	University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Prof. Roderick Hewitt	University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Prof. Jacob K. Ayantayo	University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
Prof. Chika Moore	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
Prof. E. Nwigwe	University of Port-Harcourt, Nigeria
Prof. Jude E. Madu	Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Nigeria
Prof. Uduma Oji Uduma	National Open University, Abakiliki, Nigeria
Prof. O.B.C.Nwankwo	Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Nigeria
Dr Nneka Ifeoma Okafor	University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria
Dr. Roseline Uzeh	University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria

About JEHMSS

Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS) is an international, open-access journal published every two months (January, March, May, July, September, and November) by Klamidas.com, a notable academic publisher and webhost, in partnership with the Division of General Studies, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU). The publishers' goal is to enhance and encourage cross-fertilization of ideas among educationists, scholars in the humanities, management and social sciences. Other benefits include: life-time archive of published papers on JEHMSS web pages and on Google Scholar, free plagiarism check and paper amendment advisory services, free proof-reading/editing services, and availability of share buttons on every paper contributor's JEHMSS journal page. Website: klamidas.com/jehmss. Submit paper to jehmss@klamidas.com.



Vol. 2, No. 2, March, 2024

Table of Contents

Social Work Services and the Impact of
Divorce on Family Wholeness in Nigeria

Christian Osemuyi Oseghale 7-25

Fuel Subsidy Removal and the Agony of the
Deprived in Nigeria

Livinus Nwaugha & Ihezue Solomon Okekwe 26-36

Parameters for Determining Core Cultural
Symbols: A Philosophical Analysis

Innocent Ngangah 37-47

Social Values and Symbolic Characterisation in
Nigerian Folk Narratives

Bukar Usman

48-60

Social Work Services and the Impact of Divorce on Family Wholeness in Nigeria

Christian Osemuyi Oseghale

ABSTRACT

The degree to which your family is connected, united, loving, and harmonious is the universal standard for "Family Wholeness". Every family faces challenges, but by learning and using useful skills, you can lessen the harm your family suffers and build it up to become healthier and more "whole". Working on your family ties requires conscious effort, but the rewards are numerous and the process is enjoyable. Family wholeness, which can be defined in a variety of ways, is a state of social functioning that is experienced when we feel connected in love and understanding with loved ones. The effects of divorce on family cohesion and wholeness were examined concerning the social well-being of either spouse and significant others (children) using secondary data. The findings demonstrate that the majority of clients experience feelings of hurt, fear, confusion, sadness, and overwhelm at some point and that divorce is unquestionably a devastating event for spouses and their children. The paper concluded that the traumatic psychological impact of divorce is a significant obstacle to family wholeness and unity; and recommends that it is important to address any issues in the marriage as they arise with sincerity and to make sure that any early warning signs of divorce are not ignored. Therefore, social work services for divorced people should not only be extended to children but should be primarily focused on divorced couples because they are equally or even more affected by divorce.

Keywords: divorce, ethical principle, family wholeness, social work service, spouse, separation

INTRODUCTION

T A casual view of national and international newspapers, electronic, print and even social media reveals an alarming rate of divorce cases among couples globally. This is a fundamental challenge to the very foundation marriage is anchored upon; divorce, therefore, has become a stumbling block to family wholeness. The universal standard for "Family Wholeness" is that family is connected, united, loving, and harmonious. Family wholeness also includes the opportunity to demonstrate a standard of

living that promotes or optimizes all aspects of health and is free from any psychological disequilibrium. However, divorce hinders these characteristics of family wholeness, necessitating a clarion call on social work services—one of the first core values or ethical principles of social work practice—that focuses on assisting those in need and addressing their social issues, such as divorce-related issues.

Every family faces challenges; however, these challenges can be lessened and free from harm so that the family experiences can be strengthened to become healthier and more "whole" by learning useful skills and putting them into practice. It takes conscious effort to work on the family ties, but the benefits are enormous and the processes are enjoyable. Family wholeness, which vary in approaches, depicts a state of social functioning felt on those occasions when we feel connected, in adoration and comprehension, with loved ones and have a place to share happiness, togetherness and the opportunity to exhibit a standard of living that promotes or optimizes all aspects of health, free from any form of psychological disequilibrium. These are the characteristics of family wholeness. Divorce is, however, an impediment to these features of family wholeness, hence the need to activate the services of a social worker, which is the first core value or ethical principle of social work practice that is concerned with helping people in need and working to address their social problems, such as those thrown up by divorce (Nordesjo, et al., 2022; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010).

Divorce, otherwise called disintegration of marriage, is a way toward ending marriage or conjugal association. It involves the dropping or dissolution of legitimate obligations and duties of marriage between adult male and female wedded under the standard of the law of the specific society, nation or state. Divorce laws shift significantly around the globe, yet in many nations, divorce requires the endorsement of a court or other expert in a legitimate procedure, which may include issues of dispersion of property, youngster authority, divorce settlement (spousal help), child visitation/access, parenting time, child support, and division of debt support, and division of obligation (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010).

Marriage, therefore, is an all-inclusive establishment that has existed since the biblical account of creation. The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). The contractual marriage agreement usually implies that the couple has legal obligations to each other throughout their lives or until they divorce. A commonly accepted and encompassing definition of marriage is: Marriage is a social and legal contract between two individuals that unite their lives legally, economically, and emotionally. Marriage is defined

differently and by different entities, based on cultural, religious, and personal factors. Traditionally, marriage is often viewed as having a key role in the preservation of morals and civilization. Being married also gives legitimacy to sexual relations within the marriage Stritof (2018). In Nigeria, the sacredness of marriage is upheld across cultural and religious lines. The significant sorts of relational unions that existed in pre-colonial times were Social/Customary marriage and Islamic/Maliki marriage and recently Christian marriage (Laoye-Balogun, 2015).

Social services, sometimes known as welfare services or social work services, are any of a variety of government or privately provided services aimed at assisting underprivileged, troubled, or vulnerable individuals or communities. The phrase social service also refers to the profession that provides such services. In providing these services, social workers assist families in improving relationships and coping with unpleasant events such as divorce, sickness, or death. They assist families in the counselling process by assisting them in identifying difficulties, setting objectives, and finding solutions to their problems. They may also advocate legal action in a crisis scenario, such as neglect, substance misuse, or violence, like having children temporarily removed while the parents work through their troubles. Therefore, social work services comprise a wide range of interventions and support offered to individuals, families, groups, and communities by trained social workers. These programmes strive to improve people's lives by addressing social concerns, promoting social justice, and empowering individuals and communities to overcome obstacles (Pinker, 2023; Nordesjo, et al., 2022; Rembuluwani, & Heiletje, 2021; Oheme, 2018).

The concept of divorce entails a legal procedure used to dissolve a couple's matrimonial partnership. It can be referred to as dissolution of marriage and entails the cancelling or rearranging of the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage, thereby dissolving the bonds of matrimony between a married couple under the rule of law of the particular country or state before the death of either spouse (Britannica, 2020; Cathy, 2017). The law guiding divorce varies from country to country and some are based on their religious beliefs. However, in Nigeria the law is clear on the grounds for divorce, the first and most important thing is that the marriage must be at least 2 years old; if less than this, and there is still a need to get a divorce, the concerned individual will have to go through another route called "annulment". If it is over 2 years, then a divorce can be obtained. There is technically only one ground for a divorce in Nigeria: irretrievable breakdown of the marriage.

METHODOLOGY

Rational choice theory (RCT) as a framework for analysing and interpreting social and economic behaviour was used in this study. Adam Smith, a philosopher, is credited with originating rational choice theory in 1776. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, sociologists George C. Homans, Peter Blau, and James Coleman championed rational choice theory in the context of social interaction. According to these social theorists, social behaviour is driven by a rational assessment of a cost-benefit exchange. It holds that people employ logical calculations to make actions that they feel will increase their utility or happiness. This idea has been used to explain many aspects of family behaviour, including the decision to divorce. According to RCT, divorce is a logical decision taken by individuals who feel that the advantages of dissolving their marriage exceed the drawbacks. These advantages might include enhanced enjoyment, freedom, and personal development. The drawbacks, on the other hand, might include financial losses, mental distress, and strained relationships with family and friends. RCT research has found a number of factors that impact divorce decisions. One of the most important variables is the occurrence of marital strife. When issues occur that cannot be resolved, couples may decide to divorce in order to stop their arguments and enhance their well-being. Furthermore, RCT reveals that individuals are more likely to divorce when they have access to alternative possibilities, such as education and work.

The methodology, which is mainly qualitative, adopted for this study included data collection from secondary sources like books, articles from libraries and online sources that help in the explanation of concepts such as family wholeness and social work services. These works were analysed to extract points made by different authors that argue for or against family wholeness and social work services. The use of secondary data in this research paper provides numerous benefits, including cost-effectiveness, time efficiency, access to large sample sizes, opportunities for longitudinal studies and comparative analysis, validation and replication of findings.

TYPES OF DIVORCE

Divorce is not just a common affair, and the type of divorce a couple chooses to adapt, to a great extent, is determined by the peculiarities of their situations. There are several types of divorce; some are very different from the stereotypical contested type (Divorce Knowledge, 2014). The following are some of the different types of divorce:

Fault and No-Fault Divorce: A divorce based on "irreconcilable differences" or an "irretrievable breakdown of the marriage" is referred to

as a "no-fault" divorce. These are just fancy ways of saying that a couple can't get along and can't reconcile. When you file out your divorce petition (legal form-filling) in a no-fault case, you simply tell the court that you want a divorce based on irreconcilable differences; you are not needed to explain to the court what caused the divorce or show that it was your spouse's fault, because the court won't take either spouse's bad behavior into account. (Divorce Knowledge, 2014 Susler, & Johnstone, 1973).

Emotional Divorce: Unresolved, long-lasting arguments and disagreements accumulate over time and can amplify and poison the marriage, fueling a downward twist that can result in a divorce. If this takes place, respect, trust, and good communication may all be lost. The length of time a marriage might be in crisis of collapse is unpredictable, but many couples eventually reach a divergence in the road when they must decide whether to pursue resolution or disengagement. Essentially, emotional divorce is first experienced before a legal divorce because of the feelings of the couple, which is the need to withdraw and protect themselves from problems in the marriage. Either the male or female can emotionally divorce themselves from the marriage, but it is more common in female (O'Connell Corcoran, 1997; Meyer, 2018),

Legal Divorce: A court of law can formally and legally dissolve a marriage or other marital relationship. Divorce is another name for it. It is common knowledge that a marriage must be legally conducted and supported by a valid Marriage Certificate in order for divorce procedures to begin in court. Legal divorce specialized intermediation can be useful in resolving difficulties and in developing a co-parenting design when children are involved. Although they may have feelings of weakness, the attorney and the tribunal can help make a conclusion regarding each side of the divide; the attorney needs to be informed if there is need for more ascendancy over these decisions reached (ICFEG 2018; Scott, 2004).

Uncontested Divorce: Uncontested divorces are generally available to couples who have no remaining disagreements regarding the basic divorce issues: child-custody, child support, property division, and spousal support. Uncontested divorces usually have streamlined paperwork, in which property and child custody information is filed, along with a statement of the grounds for divorce. Once either spouse doesn't agree and makes the necessary court filings, an uncontested divorce cannot be granted. Like a contested divorce, it begins by one party to the divorce filing for divorce. An uncontested divorce relies on both partners working together to spell out the rules. Essentially, the routine involves both filing reprint paperwork with the law courtroom before going their separate ways peacefully (ICFEG 2018; McNamara, 2004).

Collaborative Divorce: A collaborative divorce is similar to abatement and intermediation, but instead of using a neutral third party to spur communication or make a sound judgment for the couple, it involves both couples retaining their own legal doctrine with a special direction on the collaborative natural law. Also known as collaborative legal philosophy or collaborative recitation, a collaborative divorce is another means of resolving contention between divorcing couples without deliberately punishing one another (McNamara, 2004). According to Adamopoulos (2011), the benefits of collaborative divorce is that it permits couples to avoid wasting the extra cost, time, loss of privacy and emotional distress related to adversarial divorce, promotes open communication, encourages respect and helps to guard future relationships. It focuses on problem-solving, issues of spouse and kids, and the resolution of problems are driven or controlled by perception of client's interests. Apart from saving money and time in collaborative divorce, Meyer (2018) stresses further that it enables clients to get through the divorce processes with their self-respect and moral standards intact, whether the collaborative approach was used from the beginning or not.

Default Divorce: A default divorce is granted "by default option selection" and without the need for the non-responsive spouse to appear before the tribunal at all (McNamara, 2004). A default divorce refers to a divorce that takes place when the party against whom the divorce suit is brought does not respond to the divorce papers served on them within the time limit set by law for such response. In some states, the parties can end their marriage by filing a default divorce, which is the easiest and inexpensive way to divorce. This is common when parties have discussed how they want to settle issues before the complaint is filed or when the defendant feels the complaint is reasonable. A default divorce may also occur when both parties agree on all issues. According to Chow (2012), default divorce may likely necessitate the petitioner to disclose her income and assets, and possibly try one final time to deliver these documents to the other party, even though the other party is not expected to reply to the documents. If the petitioner is seeking child custody, child or spousal support, or a division of marital property or debt, then she must also submit paperwork describing her wishes.

Contested Divorce: In this scenario, each spouse hires a different attorney and presents their respective arguments to the judge at the motor lodge. When both partners have a high net worth, significant assets and liabilities, and a lot riding on the proceedings, this type of divorce may be necessary (McNamara, 2004). Emphasizing contested divorce further, Trinder and Sefton (2018) opine that concessions are not achieved as a result of

persuading the court of the merits of their case or establishing the fact but rather as a result of what deals could be hammered out between the parties on the day of the court hearing, reflecting bargaining power and tenacity, rather than the veracity of any allegations.

GROUND FOR DIVORCE IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, divorce is based on the form of marriage. There are two main forms of marriage in Nigeria: statutory marriage and customary marriage. Statutory marriages are conducted under the Matrimonial Causes Act, and customary marriages are done in accordance with customs and traditions. A statutory marriage (sometimes known as a court marriage) is simply a marriage that takes place in a licensed register or location (church). Where the church that conducted the marriage is not one of those licensed under the Act, the marriage is considered traditional. Customary weddings are often done in a customary manner. Islamic marriage is likewise considered customary marriage, much as marriages done in unlicensed churches (Resolution Law Firm, 2020).

Due to the necessity to safeguard marriage-based children and family values, Nigerian law is particularly averse to divorce. The Matrimonial Causes Act (MCA) LFN 1990 and Matrimonial Causes Rules are the main statutes that govern the divorce procedure in Nigeria. Not just these laws affect divorce in Nigeria (Alloh, 2020). Several court rulings are essential to the overall legislation governing Nigeria's divorce procedure. Abandonment is a spouse's unilateral withdrawal from cohabitation without the consent of the other spouse, when there is no valid reason for desertion and the deserting spouse intends to end cohabitation permanently. The Matrimonial Causes Act 1 included abandonment as a ground for divorce and a fact that, if proven, will result in the courts concluding that the marriage has irreparably failed. As a result, the Matrimonial Causes Act's section 15(2) (d) states that "Respondent has deserted the petitioner for a continuous period of at least one year immediately preceding the presentation of the petition" constitutes an irretrievable breakdown of a marriage. If the respondent has deserted the petitioner for at least one year immediately before the presentation of a petition for the dissolution of a marriage celebrated between the petitioner and the respondent, the court will rule that the marriage has broken down irretrievably under the preceding section. One of the reasons a marriage can be said to have broken down irretrievably is desertion for at least a year immediately before the filing of a petition for the dissolution of the marriage (Alloh, 2020). A party attempting to dissolve a marriage is known as the Petitioner, while the other party being sued for divorce is known as the Respondent (Resolution Law Firm, 2020).

According to the MCA, only the irreparable breakdown of the marriage qualifies a court to dissolve a marriage. However, there are eight distinct types or classes of the breakdowns, subject to the Act's clause 15(2) (a) (h). The following is a new definition of the eight classes:

- a. that the respondent has intentionally and persistently refused to end the marriage;
- b. that the petitioner finds it intolerable to live with the respondent because of the respondent's adultery during the marriage;
- c. that the respondent has been acting in such a way since the marriage that the petitioner cannot reasonably expect to live with the respondent;
- d. that at least one year prior to the filing of the petition, the respondent had consistently abandoned the petitioner;
- e. that the parties to the marriage have been living apart for at least two years continuously immediately prior to the respondent's presentation, and that the petitioner does not object to a decree being granted;
- f. that the parties to the marriage have been living apart for at least three years continuously immediately prior to the filing of the petition;
- g. that the other party to the marriage has failed to comply with a decree or restitution of conjugal rights made under that Act for at least one year;
- h. that the other party to the marriage has been absent from the petitioner for such a period of time and in such a way that gives good reason to believe that they are dead.

The emphasis on different forms of marriage is significant because it determines whether courts have jurisdiction or authority to hear the divorce case. Where a marriage is classified as Statutory Marriage, the State High Courts and the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory have the authority to hear the case and dissolve the marriage. Where a marriage is deemed Customary Marriage, the Customary Court in each local government has the authority to rule on it.

The practice of bringing the families of both spouse together to agree, bring and accept a return of the bride price, constituting completion of divorce process, without the rigor of litigation process, is a common

practice in Nigeria. Although not often or seldom documented, this practice has incrementally continued to gain momentum as well as legal support. According to Alieke (2023), the statute also recognises customary divorce, and the sole recognised manner of terminating a marriage is to refund the bride price paid back to the groom. On several occasions, the court has maintained the tradition of repaying the bride's price to confirm a conventional divorce. In the case of *Eze v. Omeke* (1977) 1 ANSLR 136, the Court held that any order dissolving a customary law marriage without a subsequent order for the return or acceptance of the bride-price or dowry is meaningless. In fact, in the case of *Tabitha Bawa v. Bawa Waziri* CCKJ/CV/14/2011, the court not only ordered the recovery of the bride price, but also ordered the lady to pay all incidental pre-marital expenses to the man. As a result of the implication of court rulings, statutory provisions, and acknowledged customary practices that have been judicially recognised, the returning of the bride price is what invalidates a customary marriage; thus, when the bride price has yet to be returned, the marriage is deemed to be valid and existing, and any of the parties who enters into another marriage may be held liable for bigamy.

CAUSES OF DIVORCE

Neglecting issues in a relationship is not in the interest of such a relationship, as the neglected issues can snowball into divorce. Different factors are responsible for divorce; it varies from individual to individual, so what could be responsible for the divorce of marriage between A and B could be what is binding the marriage between C and D. However, the following are common causes of divorce:

Lack of Communication: Lack of communication in marriage is a major causative factor in divorce as it tends to lead to every other reason or cause of divorce. Marriage consists of two people who come from different backgrounds and have different methods of communication, so they need to communicate in the language both of them can understand, especially in the area of wants and needs as they are now one. Absence of communication means your work, home, and sex life will suffer when you do not share your thoughts and feelings with your partner. Your relationship needs a strong emotional and physical bond to succeed, and communicate with your spouse, even when the subject matter is awkward or uncomfortable, is essential. So it is understandable how these varying factors can make it difficult for couples to talk. In his opinion, Warren (2018) insists communication is crucial in marriage and not being able to communicate effectively quickly leads to resentment and frustration for both, impacting all aspects of a marriage. Shouting at your spouse, not talking enough throughout the day, and making nasty comments to express

yourself are all unhealthy methods of communication that need to be ditched from marriage (Rubab, & Alam, 2022; Paulinus, 2022; ICFEG 2018).

Unrealistic Expectations: Unrealistic expectations are products of lofty heights set before marriage that the focus was not on personality but on materialism. Tartakovsky (2018) asserts that when you expect that your relationship is meant to be a certain way, and that expectation doesn't happen, this can create feelings of anxiety, sadness, and despair; it can equally spark resentment, which can ruin relationships. Unrealistic expectations “set up couples to fail” (Tartakovsky, 2018, quoting Clinton Power, a clinical relationship counselor). It is easy to go into marriage with lofty expectations—expecting your spouse and the marriage to live up to your image of what they should be. These expectations put a lot of strain on the other person, leaving you feeling let down and setting your spouse up for failure (Wynstra, 2023; Warren, 2018).

Lack of Intimacy: Lack of connection can swiftly lead to the breakdown of a marriage since it makes partners feel more like roommates than spouses or as though they are cohabiting with a stranger. This isn't necessarily about having sex and can result from a lack of emotional or physical intimacy. Know that over time, if you consistently give your spouse the cold shoulder, it may create a basis for divorce. Both partners are accountable for fostering intimacy and specialness in your relationship. To improve your relationship, try to do small acts of kindness and appreciation for each other as well as enjoy physical intimacy as much as you can (Warren, 2018).

Abuse: Abuse in marriage is a red flag in that relationship; many people said their marriage would end if their partner hit them or sexually or physically mistreated their kids. Many individuals would not allow themselves or their children to be mistreated in that way, especially by someone who promised to love them. However, many people choose to stay in physically abusive relationships, and some spouses choose to look the other way if their spouse abuses their children; this comes down to a trust issue (Wynstra, 2023; Oliver, 2013).

Sex and Money Issues: Sexual incompatibility is one of the major cases of divorce. Melone (2016), quoting Jessica O'Reilly, author of *The New Sex Bible*, says “Hormonal changes that arise with age can cause significant shifts in sex drive. And though every couple of every age experiences differentials in desire, these can become more pronounced with age.” Sexless marriage is a silent marriage killer; it starts as a slow injury, and then explodes at the end of a marriage. This issue, which is

more common than imagined, has been responsible for many divorce cases. Leamon (2017) emphasized three reasons that could be responsible for this silent marriage killer. Making excuses is the first reason: some spouses who, for one reason or another, may want to avoid sex hide under different excuses to deny their partners, probably because their libidos are affected by hormones and exhaustion. This may be perfectly normal, especially after their children are born. However, when the kids get older and the couple has more time, the blame switches to something else, such as demands at work; it goes on and eventually ends in divorce. The second reason is not making an effort: this refers to a spouse refusing to put forth any effort, like letting the other know how unhappy he or she is. If the spouse who is avoiding intimacy refuses to work on the problem through counselling or medical checkups, this problem can become worse. Sexual problems are nothing to be ashamed of; it is ignoring the unhappiness of the other partner that is detrimental to a marriage. To be defensive and refusing to listen to one another in trying to talk about your sexless marriage is disrespectful; every marriage requires compromise. Agreeing to go to a sex therapist or the couple's counsellor is enough to show that they both respect the marriage and will try to work on the problem; doing otherwise may make divorce inevitable.

Money issues such as spending habits and financial difficulties may finally come to a head and cause a break-up. A spouse may be a big spender while the other likes to save; Melone (2016) says, "The kids' activities, expenses and college funds eat the family's discretionary cash and you are deep in debt." If you tend to be a little reckless with money or a negligent financial planner, it is going to negatively affect your partner and the overall longevity of your relationship.

Without a doubt, understanding differences in money management styles and sex life between couples is very important to either encourage divorce or prevent it. Many people in happy relationships said if their spouse lied to them, they may not be able to continue the relationship. For many, the marriage should be built on absolute trust. When that trust is abused or broken, some cannot maintain that relationship (Oliver, 2013; Wynstra, 2023).

DIVORCE AND FAMILY WHOLENESS

Wholeness in a family implies a unified and strong band that is capable of withstanding adversities, investing in meaningful relationship activities, and creating value together (CFED, 2018). At this stage of togetherness, one can begin to talk about "family wholeness" or "solidarity in a family". There is a wide range of approaches to portray or consider; however,

presumably most essential, we can feel it in those occasions when we feel associated in admiration and comprehension and having a place to showcase the beauty and joy of achieving the complete state of physical, mental and social well-being. Typically, we don't talk about this feeling of family harmony. Whether or not we can feel it, it is true to some extent that, given the state of the world today and the pressures on families, we may not feel this harmony in any particular way. Regardless of whether we are able to express family wholeness in language or actions, divorce is typically a hindrance to this harmony for children and parents, and has general consequences (McNamara, 2004).

Divorce can have a significant impact on family unity, according to social workers. Divorce is a complicated process that affects not only the couple involved but also their children and the dynamics of the family as a whole. Consequently, this article, which relies on secondary data, aims to investigate divorce to ascertain its impacts on family wholeness and the role of the social worker in helping to ameliorate these impacts for the social functioning of the individual. Divorce affects many marriages, and several of the affected couples have children. Social workers may assist parents in healing after divorce, developing new coping skills, and focusing on keeping their children out of post-divorce turmoil (Damota, 2019).

Divorce Impact on Family Wholeness and the Role of a Social Worker

Divorce has a great deal of impact on family wholeness and the social worker needs to understand dimensions of this impact in order to play a meaningful role in dealing with this spousal conflict. Some of the different kinds of impact divorce could have on family wholeness are discussed below.

Impact on Emotion: The emotional stress that underpins challenges obvious in divorce can be very traumatic, to the extent of igniting health-related issues which can lead either party to function in a state of disequilibrium. All members of a family frequently experience a variety of intense feelings following a divorce, including grief, rage, sadness, and anxiety. As their family structure shifts, children may experience confusion, fear, and a sense of loss. Guardians might wrestle with sensations of culpability, disappointment, and stress. Emotional support, counselling, and resources for family members to navigate these emotional difficulties are all provided by social workers, to help set new goals and find solutions to their troubles of emotional stress (Wynstra, 2023; Paulinus, 2022; Britannica, 2020; O'Connell Corcoran, 1997).

Physical Impact: Family professionals should remind spouses of the long-term investment they have in each other and their children when they are preoccupied with their immediate frustrations and disappointments. Individuals who decide to divorce need to be well-informed by a social worker about the potential costs it could have for them, their partners, and their children. According to Waite and Maggie (2010), marriage researchers experience greater social isolation. The majority of dads who have been separated from their children stop having regular contact with them after a few years. Parent-child relationships strained by divorce result in children struggling to adjust to new living arrangements, parenting schedules, and family routine shifts, as well as a sense of divided parental loyalty. Social workers can help parents maintain positive relationships with their children during and after the divorce process by facilitating healthy communication and co-parenting strategies. Based on their training, social workers know that sentimental connections can help some people who are separated from adults regain their confidence and happiness; however, for others, these new sentimental connections end up leading to more prominent feelings of despair, despondency, and low self-esteem (Nordesjo, et al., 2022; Rembuluwani, & Heiletje, 2021).

Psychological Effect: The psychological effects of divorce on every one of the parties involved—the woman, the man and the children—can be so devastating and far-reaching that its outcome can hardly be predicted. At this stage the social workers in the social services agencies provide counselling services to the couples to help them manage the psychological effects inhibiting their well-being. According to CampBell (2017), once a woman commences a divorce case, she may feel a sense of guilt for the demise of the marriage. CampBell (2017) opined that Cindy Holbrook is right regarding her view that if there are children involved in the marriage before divorce, women may feel more pain and continue to blame themselves for being responsible for breaking up the family and causing emotional trauma to the children. Social workers assist families in establishing new routines, overcoming obstacles associated with co-parenting, and gaining access to ongoing support services during the transition period following a divorce. They might also talk about child well-being, custody arrangements, and visitation rights (O’Connell Corcoran, 1997).

Adjustment and Well-being of Children: Divorce can have short- and long-term effects on children's well-being and adjustment. Children's academic performance, emotional well-being, and social relationships may be affected by divorce, according to research. During this difficult transition, social workers can assess the needs of children, provide

counselling that is appropriate for their age, and work with schools to support their academic and social-emotional development. Family members going through a divorce benefit greatly from the coordination of services and interventions provided by social workers. To guarantee a comprehensive approach to addressing the numerous requirements of family members, they collaborate with other professionals like attorneys, mediators, mental health professionals, and educators (Paulinus, 2022; Britannica, 2020).

Financial Factors to Consider: Separate frequently brings monetary changes that can affect the prosperity of relatives. Financial instability and increased stress can result from economic strain, decreased income, and the possibility of asset loss. Social workers can help people find resources, offer financial counselling, and connect families with community services that can help them with their money problems. Family members' social support networks can be impacted by divorce. Connections to the community, extended family, and friends may change or become strained. Social workers can assist individuals and families in navigating the changes and building resilience by strengthening their social support networks, establishing new connections, and utilizing counselling or support groups. According to CampBell (2017), the fact that children from divorced families may have more externalizing issues like conduct disorders, delinquency, and impulsive behaviour than children from two-parent families is even more unfortunate, hence the role of social worker services during and after divorce cannot be overemphasised, as after a divorce, children may also encounter more conflict with peers and have more behavioural issues. In general, social workers provide crucial support and interventions to assist families in overcoming the difficulties of divorce, minimizing the detrimental effects on family unity, and facilitating the adjustment and well-being of all members of the family during and after the process (Wynstra, 2023; Paulinus, 2022; Britannica, 2020).

DISCUSSION

According to several studies, the two people involved in divorce experience real physical effects when they are apart, such as depression, weight gain or loss, difficulty concentrating, increased stress, lack of sleep, dizziness, heart problems, and other real ailments. The majority of people believe that a relationship breakup only causes mental or emotional problems. That is unquestionably the case because Krueger and Hernandez (2011) asserted that divorce is undeniably a devastating event in the lives of the spouses and their children, highlighting the fact that the majority of clients in divorce issues experience feelings of hurt, fear, confusion,

sadness, and overwhelm at some point. However, there are frequent physical repercussions, such as the dropout of children from school, depression that can lead to suicide, mental health issues in some cases, and phobias in one or both spouses. On the plus side, divorce is sometimes necessary for life security. Therefore, social work services are paramount in the challenging times of divorce situations as they encompass a wide range of interventions and support provided by professional social workers to individuals, families, groups, and communities. These services aim to enhance well-being, address social issues, promote social justice, and empower individuals and communities to overcome challenges. Generally, social workers offer critical support and interventions to help families navigate the challenges of divorce, minimize negative impacts on family wholeness, and simplify the modification and well-being of all family members during and after the divorce process.

Divorce is like the elephant in the room; no matter what causes it, all parties involved (spouses and children) require professional help before, during, and after the divorce. It is critical to include the children in the divorce process both before and throughout, since including them will greatly assist them in dealing with the consequences of divorce. After divorce, you must cope with a variety of issues, including your connection with your ex, the children, your family and that of your ex, friends, and significant others, such as religious organisations. The need for social work services involvement cannot be overstated, since empathy is more important than the blame game.

CONCLUSION

The devastating psychological effect of separation, which is a severe impediment to family wholeness and does not recognise the colour of one's skin, religious affiliation, or cultural background, is terrible news for anybody who may come across it or be the burden bearer. The fact is that it will always be distressing for families that failed to address the major issues that were overlooked during the marriage, issues which have now snowballed into divorce. Before and after marriage, married couples should be informed about the need to address any apparent challenges in the marriage as concerns to be brought before God in prayer. It is important to deal with any troubles in the marriage as they emerge with sincerity, and to make sure that early warning signals are not overlooked.

Family wholeness refers to the state of harmony, connection, and overall well-being within a family unit. It signifies family members' sense of belonging, mutual support, and strong bonds. To attain and maintain family wholeness, the first core value or ethical principle of social work

practice, is to assist individuals in need and strive to address their social issues. It takes consistent work, effective communication, and a commitment to mutual growth and support. While issues may happen, a healthy family unit may use its strengths, resilience, and shared values to manage them and build a feeling of togetherness and well-being among its members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regular efforts should be carried out to raise awareness of social work services for divorced people, as the vast majority of people are unaware of such services. Many people believe that social work services are only for the poor and children in need of assistance; social work services for divorced people should include financial emancipation for divorced people because their financial situations are negatively affected by divorce; and social work services for divorced people should not only be extended to children but should be primarily focused on the divorced couple because they are equally or even more affected by divorce.

REFERENCES

- Adamopoulos, A. C. (2011). Understanding collaborative divorce: Divorce resolution services, https://divorcingoptions.com/Handouts/Collaborative_Divorce_PDF_Handout
- Alieke, S. (2023). Returning of Bride Prices in Customary Marriages <https://www.tekedia.com/returning-of-bride-prices-in-customary-marriages/#>
- Alloh, B. (2020). Desertion as a ground for divorce in Nigeria. *International journal of comparative law and legal philosophy (ijocllp)*, 1(3).
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2020, February 20). Divorce. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/divorce>
- Chow, A. (2012). What Does 'Default' Mean in a Divorce? https://blogs.findlaw.com/law_and_life/2012/07/what-does-default-mean-in-a-divorce.html
- Cathy, M. (2017). What is a divorce? <https://www.liveabout.com/what-is-a-divorce-1103062>

- CampBell, A. (2017), Psychological Effects of Divorce on Women, <https://www.livestrong.com/article/250164-recovery-from-a-vaginal-hysterectomy/>
- Damota, M. (2019). The Effect of Divorce on Families' Life. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342145237_The_Effect_of_Divorce_on_Families'_Life
- Divorce Knowledge (2014), The Different Types of Divorce, <https://www.divorceknowledgebase.com/blog/types-of-divorce/>
- Issues Cambridge Family Enterprise Group ICFEG (2018), Family Unity and Relationship Building, <https://cfeg.com> accessed 3/11/2018
- Krueger and Hernandez SC, (2011), Emotional and Physical Effects of Divorce – Attorneys and Other Professionals Can Help, <https://www.kh-law.net/blog/family-law/emotional-physical-effects-divorce-attorneys-professionals/>
- Laoye-Balogun A. (2015), The Evolution of Divorce Law and Practice in Nigeria, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/evolution-divorce-law-practice-nigeria-abimbola-laoye>
- Leamon, S. (2017). 3 Reasons that a Sexless Marriage Causes Divorce (Recommended) <https://divorceandyourmoney.com/blogs/sexless-marriage-divorce/>
- Melone L. (2016), The 5 Big Reasons why Couples Divorce after Decades of Marriage, <https://m.huffpost.com>
- Meyer C. (2018), What Does the Term "Emotional Divorce" Mean? <https://www.liveabout.com/what-does-the-term-emotional-divorce-mean-1102714>.
- McNamara D. (2004), Family Wholeness and the "Family-Being" http://www.joyfulfamilies.org/family_being.html
- Nordesjo, K., Scaramuzzino, G., & Ulmestig, R. (2022). The social worker-client relationship in the digital era: a configurative literature review. *European Journal of Social Work*, 25(2), 303-315.
- O'Connell Corcoran, K. (1997), Psychological and Emotional Aspects of Divorce, <https://www.mediate.com/articles/psych.cfm>
- Oheme, K. (2018). Social Workers Help Families Move Forward after Divorce; <https://onlinemsw.fsu.edu/blog/2017/02/14/social->

workers-help-families-move-forward-after-divorce

Oliver K. (2013), Divorce Causes: 5 marriage mistake that leads to divorce, <https://m.huffpost.com>

Paulinus, C. E. (2022). A philosophical examination of the concept and nature of infidelity in marriage as a socio-ethical issue in contemporary society. *GPH-International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 5(07), 36-42.

Pinker, R. A. (2023, March 3). Social service. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-service>

Rembuluwani, P. M. and Heiletje, M. W. (2021). Enhancing the wellbeing of divorced persons through social work services: service-users' experiences and suggestions <http://dx.doi.org/10.15270/52-2-924>

Resolution Law Firm, (2020). Types of marriage in Nigeria. <https://lawpadi.com/types-of-marriages-in-nigeria/>

Rubab, K., & Alam, A. (2022). Perceived proximate and underlying divorce causes in Hazara division, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 4(04), 65-78.

Scott, E. S. (2004). Marriage, cohabitation and collective responsibility for dependency. *U. Chi. Legal F.*, 225.

Stritof, S. (2018). What is the Definition of Marriage? <https://www.thespruce.com/definition-of-marriage-2303011>

Susler, B. A., & Johnstone, E. (1973). Looking to the Future to Correct Evils of the Past-Attempts to Modernize Illinois Family Law. *DePaul L. Rev.*, 23, 326.

Tartakovsky, M. (2018), 3 Unrealistic and detrimental expectations about marriage, Retrieved from <https://psychcentral.com/blog/3-unrealistic-and-detrimental-expectations-about-marriage/>

Trinder, L., and Sefton, M. (2018). No Contest: Defended Divorce in England & Wales, <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/>

Warren S. (2018), 10 Most Common Reasons for Divorce, <https://www.marriage.com/advice/divorce/10-most-common-reason-for-divorce/>

Waite, L. J. and Maggie, G. (2010). *The Case for Marriage: Why Married*

People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially
<http://www.psychpage.com/family/brwaitgalligher.html>

Witztum, A. (2005). Social Circumstances and Rationality: Some Lessons from Adam Smith Why We May Not All Be Equally Sovereign. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 64(4), 1025–1047. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3488050>

Wynstra, B. (2023). *Vows, Veils, and Masks: The Performance of Marriage in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill*. University of Iowa Press.

Writer's Brief Data



Dr Christian Osemuyi Oseghale is a lecturer in Caleb University, Imota Lagos, Nigeria. *Email:* trustnigent1@gmail.com. Orchid number: 0009-0001-0276-0607



APA

Oseghale, C. O. (2024). Social Work Services and the Impact of Divorce on Family Wholeness in Nigeria. *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, 2(2), 7-25. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-01/>.

MLA

Oseghale, Christian Osemuyi. "Social Work Services and the Impact of Divorce on Family Wholeness in Nigeria". *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2024, pp. 7-25. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-01/>.

Fuel Subsidy Removal and the Agony of the Deprived in Nigeria

Livinus Nwaughu & Ihezio Solomon Okekwe

Abstract

Increase in the price of premium motor spirit (PMS) has always been a source of panic to the average Nigerian as it usually has a multiplier and inflationary effect that reduces the purchasing power of most Nigerians, especially the poor. A major reason for the concern is that most vehicles used in transporting commuters, goods and services in Nigeria are PMS-powered, and any increase in the price of PMS (petrol) directly and immediately translates to increase in the price of virtually all commodities and services. To limit the ripple effects of PMS price increase, government after government in Nigeria had been exercising control over how much consumers were asked to pay for PMS at the filling stations. Since the 1977 price control act, the federal government had been fixing the price of PMS to prevent the forces of demand and supply from swaying inordinately against consumers. However, owing to the massive corruption that characterized government's subsidization of PMS, and the attendant financial losses borne by government over the years, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in his inauguration speech on May 29, 2023, announced the removal of fuel subsidy, thereby provoking a nationwide outcry against the decision. This paper examines fuel subsidy removal and the agony of the deprived in Nigeria as well as the history of fuel price increases in Nigeria. The paper examines vital issues connected with fuel subsidy in Nigeria. A mixed method of data collection was adopted for the paper: relevant data were obtained from 30 respondents who were purposively selected and interviewed while other data were sourced from extant literature. The paper revealed that putting an end to oil subsidy so that the forces of demand and supply would be determining the price of PMS is not a bad policy but that government should have put in place remedial measures to cushion the effect of the subsidy removal on the masses.

Keywords: fuel subsidy removal, agony, deprived, corruption, government

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation blessed with human and natural resources. Its diverse but fertile soil types are ideal for the production of various kinds of farm produce, including highly-demanded cash crops. Its climatic and topographic diversity makes it very suitable for other forms of agricultural endeavours, such as the breeding of livestock and fishing, and for agro-based ventures, such as hides and skin processing. Nigeria's stockpile of mineral resources includes, among several others, petroleum, gas,

limestone, tin and iron ore. Before independence in 1960, Nigeria was reputed as a major exporter of cocoa, palm oil, groundnut, millet and cotton, and these, together with tin, constituted its major foreign-exchange earners (Akindele, 1988:103). This was the period adequate attention was paid to agriculture. The then regions, Northern, Western and Eastern regions, were distinctly marked and known by their agricultural output. The Northern region was the major producer of groundnut, millet, pepper, maize and cattle. Cocoa was the Western region's cash crop, and through its cultivation the Western region was able to drive its economic development and growth; it built the impressive Cocoa House and the first television station in sub-Saharan Africa. The Eastern region was the major cultivator of palm oil and through it initiated several developmental projects in the region.

In 1956 crude oil was discovered in large quantities at Oloibi in south-southern Nigeria, but became prominent as a major foreign-exchange earner in the 1970s. Before the 1970s agriculture was Nigeria's main foreign revenue earner (Akindele, 1988). According to Atemie (1996), agriculture constituted 73% of Nigeria's foreign-exchange earnings. But by the 1970s, Nigeria's oil sector had taken the center stage as the mainstay of the economy, giving rise to the oil boom that characterized that petro-dollar economy (Akindele, 1988:113). The emergence of the petro-dollar economy disrupted and distorted Nigeria's agricultural economy (Adubi, 2004).

During the oil boom era, the naira was among the world's strongest currencies; from the 1970s to the early 1980s, one US dollar exchanged for less than one naira. This exchange rate advantage could not last because Nigerians abandoned agriculture in search of oil-boom contracts, jobs and mercantile ventures. Along with that, Nigeria embarked upon massive importation of goods, many of which could have been locally produced; in no time Nigeria became one of the world's largest importers of wheat, rice, household products, cosmetics, clothing materials, and diverse vehicles and generators, to name but a few. As Nigeria was importing almost everything while exporting virtually nothing else but crude oil, undue pressure was put on Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings. This situation was not helped by Nigeria's indebtedness to foreign financial institutions and organisations who ultimately pressurized it into adopting, in the mid 1980s, the structural adjustment programme (SAP) that ultimately led to the devaluation of the naira against major Western currencies, principally the US dollar.

Overview of Naira's Exchange-Rate Oscillations

The devaluation of the naira signaled a distortion in the economy and a

general fall in the living standard of Nigerians, a situation which was exacerbated by increase in the rate of unemployment and the rate of violent crime. All of these were aggravated by systemic maladministration and corruption at federal, state and local government levels. The international angle to naira's devaluation was and remains the fact that oil is mostly bought and exchanged in US dollar, so any variation in the value of the US dollar automatically impacted on the price of oil in the international market. In spite of this, Nigeria's bad domestic economic policies should be largely blamed for the country's economic woes, including the continuous devaluation of the naira since the 1980s. For example, according to sparkgist.com, by 1986 one US dollar was equal to 90 kobo but as at 1997 one dollar was equal to ₦105. As at February 2024, more than ₦1,500 was exchanged for one US dollar at the black market.

Exchange rate in the international market is subject to constant fluctuations; this is why many countries fix the exchange rate of their local currencies against the world's major currencies for basic economic reasons (Jhingan, 2009). The exchange rate of a country's currency vis-à-vis major currencies, like Euro, pounds sterling, and the Japanese Yen, plays a great role in stabilizing its economy. Hence, nations have continued to make policies that strengthen their currencies; despite these policies, currency exchange rates fluctuate in the international market as the value of the US dollar, the overriding currency of international transactions, increases or decreases (Jhingan, 2009).

Factors that are responsible for exchange rate oscillation can be broadly grouped into two: internal and external factors. The internal factors occur when a country, through its deliberate economic policy, decides to lower its exchange rate in the form of devaluation in order to make its commodities in the international market cheaper than other countries' commodities; comparative considerations could also make a country increase the value of its currency. External factors come into play when the exchange rate rise or fall is caused by global economic conditions, such as recession or global instability caused by, for instance, war or outbreak of a devastating pandemic.

The importance of the US dollar to Nigeria's economy cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria's major export commodities are valued in the international market in USD, and most times Nigerians seem to believe that they do not have any direct influence on the fluctuation of NGN-USD rate. This may not be totally true. For example, when the naira was introduced on January 1, 1973, to replace the Nigerian pound, £1 = ₦2, according to CBN records. At that time the Nigerian economy was stable, the decline of Nigeria's agricultural sector had started but many were still

into farming, and Nigeria was not an indebted country. When Nigerians, especially the youth, largely abandoned agriculture in subsequent years and migrated to the cities in search of greener pastures, the country became almost totally reliant on oil. There was a notable energy crisis which affected the fortunes of Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC), one of which was Nigeria. Overwhelmed by many elephant projects and programmes, one of which was FESTAC '77 extravaganza, Nigeria began to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF); by the 1980s, Nigeria had become one of the world's most indebted countries, a status which forced it to adopt SAP in 1986.

The decline of the Nigerian economy led to the decline of the naira. By 1999, when Nigeria's current democratic dispensation began, \$1 = ₦85.95. While we may blame the military for mismanaging the Nigerian economy, and consequently the naira, the table below, which captures the dwindling fortunes of the naira under the watch of civilian politicians, indicates that Nigerian leaders, both military and civilian, have proved to be incapable of solving Nigeria's economic problems. Below is a table which captured the slide of the naira from the year 2000 to 2024. The data provided in the table are authentic as they are similar to those stated in an independent table published in Twitter by Abubakar (2024).

Table 1: Dollar-Naira Exchange Rates from 2000 to 2024

Year	US Dollar	Naira
2000	1	85.95
2001	1	99 – 106
2002	1	109 – 113
2003	1	114 – 127
2004	1	127 – 130
2005	1	132 – 136
2006	1	128 – 131
2007	1	120 – 125
2008	1	115 – 120
2009	1	145 – 171
2010	1	148 – 154
2011	1	151 – 165
2012	1	155 – 161
2013	1	153 – 162
2014	1	170 – 199
2015	1	199 – 300
2016	1	300 – 320
2017	1	400 – 368
2018	1	360
2019 – 2023	1	365 – 600
2024	1	600 – 1600

Source: <https://www.sparkgist.com>

Nigeria's Oil Production and Refining Woes

Between 1978 and 1989, Nigeria established three refineries in Port Harcourt, Warri and Kaduna to make oil accessible and available to the local market as well as for export (nigeriatradehub 2024). These refineries were the drivers of the oil economy in Nigeria from the late 1970s to 2002. When the Port Harcourt refinery was completed, it had a capacity of 100,000 Bpsd; Warri refinery was completed and commissioned in 1978 with a production capacity of 100,000 Bpsd. Also in 1980, Kaduna refinery was completed and commissioned with production capacity of 50,000 Bpsd (Oaikhen, 2004).

By 2002, as investment in agriculture further declined, Nigeria's oil industry provided 98% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Through this singular indicator Nigeria became a mono economy. In the 1990s, during the military era, oil production capacity declined as a result of poor governance, pipeline vandalisation and upsurge of resource control issues. This continued even after the return to democratic rule in 1999. By 2002, pipeline vandalisation and kidnapping (to extort ransom) had become the order of the day in the Niger Delta region. The militancy degenerated to a war-like situation following the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni activists by the Abacha administration in 1995.

The Niger Delta, in spite of being the region where the bulk of Nigeria's oil is extracted, has continued to experience environmental degradation and abject poverty caused mainly by the multinational oil companies, especially Shell BP, operating there. It was the abysmal state of the region that ignited the spirit of militancy which drew the attention of the government and the international community to the plight of the people of the region. The region's different militant groups include Egbesu Boys, Niger Delta Volunteer Force and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), to mention but a few (CEDCOMS, 2003). The activities of these militant groups, at a point, nearly crippled the Nigerian economy as oil production reduced from 2.2 million barrels per day to 700,000 barrel per day in 2007. Even as at February 2024, due partly to the activities of militants, Nigeria's average daily crude oil production dropped to 1.32 million barrels per day (bpd). This amounted to 105,000 bpd or 7.36 percent decrease from the 1.42 million bpd recorded in January 2024 (thecable.ng, 2024).

Chronicle of Fuel Price Increases and their Ripple Effects in Nigeria

The price of PMS has always been a source of concern to the average Nigerian as its increase or decrease has multiplier effects that affect the economic wellbeing of the citizens (Umoru, 2022). The reason is that most of the transportation system in Nigeria depends largely on PMS to power

their vehicles, and any increase in PMS gives rise to increases in the prices of other commodities, including the prices of foodstuff and essential items that the poor and the under-privileged mostly depend on. This is why PMS price increases aggravate the condition of the downtrodden and increase the poverty level of the masses (Umoru, 2022:34). Below is a table of PMS price increases from 1999 to 2024.

Table 2: The Changing Prices of PMS from 1999 to 2024

Year	PMS Price per Litre
1999	₦20
2000	₦30
2002	₦26
2003	₦42
2004	₦50 – ₦65
2007	₦75 – ₦65
2014	₦141 – ₦97
2016	₦145
2017	₦200
2018	₦148
2020	₦165
2022	₦220 – ₦250
2024	₦620 – ₦700

Sources: Zaccheaus Tunde Egbewole , Bolaji Aluko, Ike Okwuobi, and Umoru

To show how an increase in PMS price affects the prices of other commodities in the market in Nigeria, let us see how the prices of two common food items (rice and bread) changed each time the price of PMS (as reflected in the above table) changed between 2014 to 2024. In 2014, when the price of PMS was ₦97 (there was a brief period of subsidy removal that shut up the price of PMS to ₦141 before a series of demonstrations forced back the price to ₦97), the price of a bag of rice ranged from ₦7000 to ₦8000 while a loaf of family-size bread cost ₦450. By 2016 to 2017, when the price of PMS was between ₦145 to ₦200, the price of a bag of rice was ₦39,000 to ₦40,000 while a loaf of family-size bread cost ₦750. Also by 2023 to 2024, when the price of PMS was ₦620 to ₦700, a bag of rice was sold between ₦50,000 to ₦75,000 while family-size bread cost ₦1000 to ₦1400. So, there is no doubt that an increase in PMS price influences the price of other commodities in the country.

History of Fuel Subsidy Removal in Nigeria

Fuel subsidy removal is a deliberate government policy to allow the forces of demand and supply determine the price of petroleum products in the market. However, the removal of fuel subsidy is a violation of 1977 Price Control Act (PCA) that mandates government to fix price of certain commodities in Nigeria, including petroleum products. The aim of fuel subsidy removal is to deregulate the price of fuel (PMS), especially as government can no longer cushion the effect of fuel subsidy now that it is faced with dire economic disequilibrium and paucity of funds caused by endemic corruption, racketeering and lack of transparency that characterized fuel subsidy management in Nigeria since the 1970s.

Moves to remove fuel subsidy in Nigeria date back to 1988 when Nigeria was faced with dire economic crisis that led to the devaluation of the naira and other economic liberalization measures. However, all the earlier moves to remove fuel subsidy could not materialize as a result of opposition from the labour unions and civil society groups in Nigeria. A major move to remove fuel subsidy was made in 2012 by President Goodluck Jonathan who introduced SURE-P to help cushion the suffering the removal of fuel subsidy might cause the masses.

SURE-P was a conscious government effort to re-inject the resources previously injected into fuel subsidy to other critical areas of the economy that would impact positively on the lives of the people. Government felt that the fraud that marked the fuel subsidy regime was endemic and that, if left unchecked, it might cripple the economy, especially as major oil marketers were engaged in diversion of petroleum products. It was to contain this market racketeering and diversion that President Jonathan assured Nigerians that with the removal of fuel subsidy other economic sectors would have enough fund that would create employment and reduce poverty –one of the cardinal objectives of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But the move to remove fuel subsidy was vehemently opposed by opposition parties and civil society groups. They said the move was sinister and anti-people, if not a total scam, and supported nationwide ‘occupy Nigeria’ protesters who besieged public places and government establishments.

In 2016, the Buhari administration cited endemic corruption and market racketeering as some of the reasons which might necessitate the removal of fuel subsidy; for lack of political will the regime dilly-dallied until May 29th 2023 when it handed power to Bola Ahmed Tinubu as president.

During his inauguration as the 16th president of Nigeria on May 29, 2023, President Ahmed Bola Tinubu bade farewell to fuel subsidy with his famous ‘fuel subsidy is gone mantra’ statement. He regarded fuel subsidy as a cankerworm that had eaten deep into the fabric of the economic

fortune of Nigeria, something that must go if there must be any tangible forward leap for Nigeria's transformation. The president adumbrated that Nigeria spent over 12 billion naira every year on fuel subsidy servicing, and said that no economy can develop that way. According to him, as cited in Sobowale (2023):

Fuel subsidy payment were being funneled into the deep pockets and lavish bank accounts of selected group of individuals. This group had amassed so much wealth and power that they become a serious threat to the fairness of our economy and the integrity of our democratic governance. Nigeria could never become the society it was intended to be as long as such small powerful yet unelected group hold enormous influence over our political economy and the institution that govern it.

Some fuel subsidy removal protagonists argue that fuel subsidy removal was not a bad economic move, but that government would have put some remedial measures that would have ameliorated the sufferings of the masses. International organizations, especially the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), have hailed the fuel subsidy removal; they said that the removal will retool and kick-start economic transformation and growth. As plausible as their accolades might sound, fuel subsidy is the only welfare package Nigerian citizens are enjoying from their government. Even in the Western economies that allow the forces of demand and supply to hold sway, there are some measures of subsidy that give their citizens some respite and latitude to operate, especially in the area of agriculture. There is no economy that operates wholly an open or closed system; what obtains is mostly mixed economy.

Policy Execution and Insensitivity

As a primary function of the state, section 14(2) of the 1999 constitution as amended stipulates that the Nigerian government is to provide for the security and economic wellbeing of its citizens as one of the fulcrums of its legitimacy. Thus, security and economic wellbeing are interwoven and interrelated as one leads to the other. In recent times, security needs of the citizens embrace social, cultural, political and economic needs. This is because no nation that needs peace and development would pay lip-service to the basic needs of its citizenry as such neglect may lead to untold suffering and anarchy.

Although the removal of fuel subsidy had foot-dragged over the years, by 2023 government was still unable to come up with sustainable palliative measures before the sudden removal. This sort of insensitive approach has characterized government policies in Nigeria since independence. And this has led to a high degree of developmental distortions that crystallize as

poverty and suffering among the masses. Rather than weighing the pros and cons of government plans before announcing them, policymakers in Nigeria use suffering and hardship to test the pulse of citizens' acceptance or rejection of public policies. The fuel subsidy removal is akin to the recent naira redesign in Nigeria where the CBN seemed not to know that the policy, especially the cash-limit aspect of it, would negatively affect the living standard of the people.

Findings and Discussion

As earlier mentioned, thirty (30) respondents from three geopolitical zones of Nigeria (namely, the South East, South South, and South West zones) were purposively interviewed. Respondents #1, #2, #6, #8, #9, #10, #25, #26, and #29 said that government's action was not well thought out as it came when the economy was recovering from recession and the naira redesign crisis. Respondents #3, #4, #5, #11, #12, #13, #14, #15, #16, #19, and #24 revealed that no time was more propitious than the 29th May, 2023 Bola Ahmed Tinubu declaration that fuel subsidy was gone. They said the monumental corruption associated with the fuel subsidy regime was paralyzing the economy and enriching only a few individuals. Respondents #17, #18, #21, #22, #23, #24, #27, #26, #28, and #30 saw fuel subsidy as a cankerworm that had eaten into the nations treasure but observed that measures should have been put in place to cushion the sufferings of the common masses.

Conclusion

The oil sector is a very critical sector, as it is Nigeria's main foreign-exchange earner as well as the sector that provides the petroleum products Nigeria uses domestically to power the vehicles engaged in the distribution of goods and services across the country. This study has observed and illustrated that an increase in fuel price would always have a multiplier effect that would shoot up the prices of goods and services in the country. It was also noted that to assuage the effect the increase in price of commodities might have on Nigerians, the price control Act (PCA) was enacted in 1977 as a way of controlling the forces of demand and supply. Although no government policy is expected to remain static, since the global economy is subject to change, a major change in government policy, such as fuel-subsidy removal in Nigeria, needs to be people-oriented; after all, the essence of governance is for the provision of socio-economic and security needs of citizens. Any government that is insensitive to the welfare of its citizens, especially in advanced democratic settings, is bound to lose re-election bid. But this is not often the case in many developing countries, especially Nigeria, where a politician could occupy an elective office as a result of rigging and manipulation of the

electoral process. This is why such leaders come up with anti-people policies. A combination of appropriate timing and manner of implementation is what makes a policy seem good or bad. Deregulating the price of PMS, thereby allowing only market forces to determine its price, may be a defensible economic decision, but government should have embarked on basic remedial measures to cushion the effect of the removal on the masses.

References

- Adubi, A.A. (2004). Agriculture: Its Performance, Problem and Prospects. In Imam-Bello & Obadan, M.I. (Ed). *Democratic Governance and Development Management in Nigeria, Fourth Republic: 1999-2003*. LGARDS, Ibadan.
- Akindele, R.A. (1988). Nigeria's External Economic Relations, 1960-1985: An Analytical Overview. In Akindele, R.A. & Ate, B.E. (Ed) *Nigeria's Economic Relations with the Major Developed Market-Economy Countries, 1969-1985*. NIIA In Co-operation with Nelson Publisher Limited Lagos.
- Atemie, J.A. (1996). Oil and Agriculture in Economic Development: The Nigerian Experience. In Alapiki, H.E. (Ed). *Perspectives on Socio-Political and Economic Development in Nigeria*. Volume. 1 Springfield Publisher, Imo State, pp-46-66
- CEDCOMS (2003) Informal Security Groups in Nigeria in Historical Perspective. In Sesay , A. Ukeje, C. Aina, O & Odebiyi, A (Ed) *Ethnic Militia and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria*. Obafemi Awolowo University Press, Ile-Ife.
- Dele Sobowole, Tinubu Versus Buhari War Started Earlier than Expected. Vanguard Newspaper 6th August, 2023. Vanguardngre.com.
<https://www.cbn.gov.ng>. Retrieved March 22, 2024.
- <https://www.nigeriatradeshub.gov.ng/Organizations/View-Details?OrganizationId=20#:~:text=Between%201978%20and%201989%2C%20NNPC,in%20Port%20Harcourt%20in%201965>
- <https://www.sparkgist.com/record/>
- <https://www.thecable.ng/ope-nigerias-oil-production-dropped-by-7-to-1-32m-bpd-in-february>
- <https://twitter.com/jrnaib2>
- Jhingan, M.L. (2009) *International Economics* (6th Ed) Vrinda Publication Limited Dehli

Oaikhenan, H.E. (2004) Petroleum Resources: Development, Distribution and Marketing .In Imam-Bello & Obadan, M.I (Ed) *Democratic Governance and Development Management in Nigeria's fourth Republic, 1999-2003*. CLGARDS Ibadan

Umoru, D.O. (2022). Devaluation of Naira, Shocks and Realities: Evidence Disciplining Strength. 4th Inaugural Lecture, Edo State University, Uzairue. 11th May, 2022.

Writers' Brief Data



Livinus Nwaughu is of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos State, Nigeria. *Email:* priscuscott@gmail.com



Dr Ihezio Solomon Okekwe is of the Department of Political Science, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria. *Email:* okekweihezio4@gmail.com



CITING THIS ARTICLE



APA

Nwaughu, L. & Okekwe, I. S. (2024). Fuel Subsidy Removal and the Agony of the Deprived in Nigeria. *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, 2(2), 26-36. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-02/>.

MLA

Nwaughu, Livinus and Okekwe, Ihezio Solomon. "Fuel Subsidy Removal and the Agony of the Deprived in Nigeria". *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2024, pp. 26-36. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-02/>.

Parameters for Determining Core Cultural Symbols: A Philosophical Analysis

Innocent Ngangah

Abstract

There is need to work towards the identification of common parameters for determining core cultural symbols in philosophy of ethnic studies and other forms of cultural research. This has become cogent since scholars are increasingly utilizing the concept of symbolic transformation in various studies of cultural groups and identities. In such studies, symbols are treated as mental representations of cultural ideas, objects or realities. Within this context, core symbols are those symbols which represent the central cultural beliefs of a cultural group, be it racial, ethnic or any other group. This paper would attempt to identify parameters which would guide the cultural researcher through the intricacies of identifying a cultural group's core symbols. This is important because a given cultural group's core values and cultural systems can only be discerned and grasped through the recognition of its core symbolic logic.

Keywords: signs, symbolic transformation, traditional African society, cultural philosophy

1. Introduction

While the study of the culture of ethnic groups by foreign anthropologists, ethnologists and philosophers has waned, academic research on the culture of ethnic groups by scholars from those groups is believed to have risen globally. The "Humanities Indicator", an index of the American Academy of Arts and Science, for instance, shows that in 2014, "traditionally underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities received 17.0% of all bachelor's degrees in philosophy (Indicator II-50a)", an increase of "eight percentage points from 1995 (the first year for which data of this kind are available)". At the Masters level, these minorities "earned 10.2% of philosophy degrees awarded in 2014, up from 6.5% in 1995 (Indicator II-50b)" while at the PhD level, they "reached a high of 7.9%, a level nearly three times as great as that observed in 1995 (Indicator II-50c)". Both philosophy and their cultural backgrounds must have mutually benefited from these students' researches.

And in Africa, where the primary research for this paper was conducted, there is hardly any philosophy department of any university that does not offer courses in African philosophy. At their basic level, cultural studies, including philosophical ones, are narrations about how culture and mind are related through symbols (Wagoner 2009). So, a clear understanding of what “culture” and “symbols” are, especially in the context of this study, is crucial to our appreciation of the necessity of setting parameters for determining core cultural symbols. We will explain what we mean by “culture” and “symbol” in subsequent sections of this paper which uses the culture and symbols of the Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria to illustrate the heuristic role universal parameters can play in identifying any given group’s core cultural symbols.

The paper is in six sections, namely, the introduction, which states the importance of the topic within a backdrop of growing interest in the philosophy of cultural groups; cultural essence, a section devoted to explaining the meaning of “culture” as used in this study; signs and symbols – what they mean and the differences between them; core symbols – their relevance in mapping the core areas of any group’s culture; parameters for identifying core symbols – a set of theoretical rules and an illustration of how they can be applied; and conclusion.

2. Cultural Essence

What sets a social group apart in terms of its worldview, social organization, and ways of carrying out social functions or activities is what we call culture. Culture, therefore, accounts for a given group’s philosophy of life, ideas about existence, social relationships, work ethic, and ways of conducting transitional ceremonies (such as those associated with birth, marriage, and death) and religious rituals.

Culture, in determining and enforcing veritable values in a society, enables it to avert social chaos and disintegration. As reference.com puts it, “Society could not function without cultural norms that assist in governing behavior and values, and culture could not exist without societal influences to create it.”

Culture is the traditional beliefs and practices of a society or a group of people within a society. In this sense, culture is synonymous with tradition, customs, heritage, and mores. Extending the meaning of culture even further, Adian and Arivia (1974) say that:

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

For us, here, culture consists of a cultural group's beliefs, values, norms, language, attitudes, activities, ceremonies, and objects and the unique way of life which these entail or reflect. Hence, culture provides the social platform and points of reference within which a given group organizes, interprets and makes sense of their internal and external environment. In short, culture is the traditional system around which a society is organized and by which its guiding perspectives and practices are carried on from one generation to another, and this often dates back to ancestral times. In many societies, culture is conveyed and sustained by oral tradition.

A distinct social group, such as an ethnic or racial group, owes its uniqueness to a shared cultural identity founded on shared cultural values. And cultural identities can be socially and psychologically stabilizing for groups and individuals. Absence of such identities can be very disorienting and is known to have been the root of deviant, counter-productive and socially divisive behaviour. Such behaviour is experienced usually in those societies where the authentic culture has been supplanted by counter-cultural forces that violate a people's definition of who they are and how they customarily do things.

It is generally agreed that culture is not an inborn trait but something that individuals and groups can learn. In other words, cultural traits are not innate but rather learned acquisition of a socially-integrating set of thoughts and actions as they were received or changed by previous generations via oral tradition. Such changes are not formal amendments and rarely constitute a total break with the past. More often than not, they are little departures from past attitudes and practices or merely generational adjustments that delicately tinker with the meaning and manner of a people's cultural references and habits.

So, although culture is a continuum authenticated by roots in the distant past, it is at the same time intrinsically dynamic. In whatever form culture is manifested, symbols play a very key role in enabling it to generate meaning for members of a given cultural group.

3. Signs and Symbols

Having explained what we mean by "culture", we now turn to "symbol". Generally, a symbol is something that refers to a given reality, be it abstract or concrete. Charles Peirce, the philosopher who has conducted the most elaborate study of signs, sees a symbol as a type of sign, the latter being his basic semantic category. Peirce (1932) believes that all modes of thinking depend on the use of signs. For him, every act of reasoning is a function of the interpretation of signs. Thus, signs mediate between the external world of objects and the internal realm of ideas. According to Peirce, a symbol is a sign which refers to the object it denotes by virtue of

a law. For him, a symbol is technically a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object.

Symbols are, therefore, associative representations of objects or social realities. They are not mere representations of pictures or abstract ideas, as do normal signs, but are deemed to be symbolic signs because there is a “semiosis” or “cooperation” between the given objects and their symbols. A symbol is different from a mere sign in the sense that it reveals a reality that is beyond what a sign would normally indicate. Dukor (2006) explains:

Symbols are cultural realities imbued with cultural meaning and any suggestive symbol...is epistemic and thematic. It is an overt expression of the reality behind any direct act of perception and apprehension, which really possesses scientific connotation outside its normal, obvious or conventional meaning.

Above, Dukor refers to a symbol as “an overt expression of the reality behind any direct act of perception”. This is noteworthy because reality is not independent of human consciousness but consists of symbols or objects and events as perceived by the human mind. Symbols enable humans to understand and communicate their awareness and interpretation of their physical, social, spiritual, and cultural environment.

A symbol makes sense within a given semiotic code. Explaining this post-Saussurean term, Chandler (2019) says that every symbol “as part of its social use within a code” makes sense within a historical and connotative context to “members of the sign-users’ culture”. This echoes Saussure’s position that “language is always an inheritance from the past” (Duan 2012) users are compelled to accept, a view Lévi-Strauss (Chandler 2007, 27) also expresses when he maintains that “the sign is arbitrary *a priori* but ceases to be arbitrary *a posteriori* – after the sign has come into historical existence it cannot be arbitrarily changed”.

This historically fixed nature of the symbolic sign is one of the elements that imbues it with cultural relevance and stability and enables certain symbols to emerge as core symbols.

4. Core Symbols

Core symbols offer the surest guide to the identification and understanding of a cultural group’s essence, defining values, and characteristic behaviour. According to Poon (2018), symbols, as cultural materials, in being used to “to signify ideas, beliefs, actions, events or physical entities” are “instrumental for human communication and commodification”.

Paraphrasing Hall (1996), he stresses that:

The study of symbols seeks to understand symbolic forms of mediation and the mediated, and aims to critically demonstrate symbolic construction in its cultural role as meaning-makers in postmodern era.

One of the first major philosophers to appreciate the meaning-making role of symbols in terms of their power to organise both thought and action is Susanne Langer. In her indepth study, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Philosophy of Reason, Rite and Art* (1954), she says that “the human brain is constantly carrying on a process of symbolic transformation” of experience because “the main themes of our thought tend to be transposed” into symbols. Core symbols are those symbols which reflect and represent the main themes that energize the belief system and customary practices of a cultural group.

Though this paper is not about “the logic of meaning” in a general sense, Langer’s thoughts and assumptions in this regard would illuminate our basic understanding of symbolic meaning, and it is necessary to let her explain this in her own words:

Meaning has both a logical and a psychological aspect. Psychologically, any item that is to have meaning must be *employed* as a sign or a symbol; that is to say, it must be a sign or a symbol *to* someone. Logically, it must be *capable* of conveying a meaning, it must be the sort of item that can be thus employed... Both aspects, the logical and the psychological, are always present, and their interplay produces the great variety of meaning-relations over which philosophers have puzzled and fought...(Langer 1954, 42-43)

Langer goes on to assert that there is no quality of meaning because meaning is logically derived and logic does not deal with quality but with relations. Even then, meaning may not be said to be a relation as a relation is mostly viewed as “a two-termed affair”. She prefers to see meaning as “a *function* of a term” because a function is “a *pattern* viewed with reference to one special term round which it centers”, stressing that “this pattern emerges when we look at the given term *in its total relation to the other terms about it*” (44). In functional terms, therefore, we can share this view by stating that a symbol is regarded as a core symbol in terms of its total relation to the other cultural elements that contextualize its symbolic pattern.

This means that there can be a shift in the core essence of a core symbol if the semantic values of the cultural elements that circumscribe its meaning change over a given period of time. This is why a core symbol’s meaning is not instinctively or infinitely fixed. Its meaning can be modified,

reviewed or even lost over time. Cowries, for instance, used to be the core symbols of wealth when they served monetary purposes across Africa. When they lost their value as means of exchange, with the emergence and dominance of bank notes and coins, they lost their long-term role as symbols of wealth.

In spite of their symbolic decline, as noted above, cowries proved more resilient than some other discarded traditional symbols, such as red mud, that became mostly irrelevant after such demotion. Cowries continue to function today as cultural symbols because the user communities reverted to using them for decorative, theatrical, and medicinal purposes (Ngangah 2013). When cowries ceased to serve as means of exchange, they became easily available to the common folk who now use them to decorate clothings, household items, and masks. Their theatrical uses are seen in costumes won by cultural troupes, masquerades, and dancers. Their use in traditional medicine is chiefly in divination and fortune-telling, which are key pre-clinical tools used by traditional healers across Africa to identify the spiritual cause of a serious disease.

The changing fortunes of cowrie, in terms of its symbolic roles, indicate that symbolic transformations are continual and epochal in nature and that major shifts in symbolic meaning are possible within someone's life time.

Symbols are not immutable. As people and societies that imbue them with meaning change in physical, spiritual and psychological terms, the symbols by which they define and explain their various shades of existence undergo alterations that moderate or alter the essence of their symbols. With the exception of few radical departures from the past, such changes are usually gradual and cut across generations, and this make them barely discernible to most observers.

Thus, there would always be occasional, though infrequent, need to determine and re-determine what constitutes a given culture's core cultural symbols. As earlier noted, this is a sine qua non for assessing a cultural group's symbolic uniqueness, identity, and value. To avoid making the determination of the core cultural symbols of an ethnic group an arbitrary, non-uniform, and unreliable exercise, a set of generally applicable parameters by which to gauge the cultural relevance of symbols needs to be put forward. This is what we would try to do and illustrate in the next section of this study.

5. Parameters for Identifying Core Symbols

The word, "parameter" is loosely used here as an identifiable and measurable characteristic or distinguishing feature by which a symbol can be classified as "core" or "peripheral" within a given cultural belief system

and practices. The usefulness of a parameter, in most ordinary contexts, lies in its universal or non-specific applicability. For example, if an examination board sets the pass mark at 50%, it should apply to all courses and all students for it to be a predictable and reliable determinant of whether a student has passed or failed a course.

Just as in the above simple example, a parameter is usually derived from the elements or attributes of the system which it is meant to gauge or quantify. For instance, in our example, the number of marks (expressed as a percentage) earned by a student is used to determine whether he has passed or failed. If his personal relationship with the teacher, rather than his performance in an examination, is used in awarding marks to him, then that yardstick cannot be considered a parameter because it is extraneous to the usual system of testing and grading students.

Before we go into the parameters we have identified for the purposes of determining core cultural symbols, let us briefly explain what we mean by “core” and “peripheral” symbols. Every society has its cultural pillars or those elements of cultural beliefs and practices that define and sustain its key beliefs, values, institutions and essential practices. Symbols which are used to represent these elements or their respective essence are core symbols while symbols which signify other cultural elements (such as a palm wine tapper, the death of the king) or cultural events (such as the pre-marital fattening of the bride among the Ibibio) are peripheral symbols because they have no direct relevance to the essential and central functions of the cultural group.

Having said this, we can now turn to the parameters for evaluating core cultural symbols. Although what may qualify as core cultural symbols can differ from one culture to another, the under-listed set of parameters derived by this researcher in the course of his years of conducting research in the area of cultural philosophy constitutes a theoretical framework which can be applied to identify and set apart a cultural group’s core symbols from its peripheral ones.

There are six parameters this researcher has used and found helpful in this regard. The parameters are used only in determining if a cultural artefact is a core symbol. By artefacts we simply mean those modes of transmitting cultural beliefs and practices that are found among all cultural groups. According to Bauman et al (1972), three forms of artefacts are universally acknowledged; they include:

- Oral traditions (e.g. oral history, tale)
- Material culture (e.g. shrine, totem)
- Customary lore (e.g. ritual, masquerade act)

An artefact would be regarded as a core symbol if at least 50% of the parameters mentioned below are applicable to it. So, it is possible that if three artefacts are tested using these parameters, one may be rated 50%, another 70%, and another 100%. Because they all measured at least 50%, all would be regarded as core symbols although it is clear that their degree of cultural weight, acceptance or popularity obviously differs. This difference can be critical, as we would see later in this study, when gauging which cultural artefact should be adopted to serve a specific cultural or research purpose. All artefacts that score less than 50% when measured for degree of cultural relevance, using these parameters, should be regarded as peripheral cultural symbols.

Below, then, are the parameters for gauging the status of a cultural symbol, whether it is a core cultural symbol or a peripheral cultural symbol:

- A core cultural symbol should be an integral aspect of a cultural group's controlling belief system, not an extraneous appendage.
- It should be popularly shared across the social strata of a given cultural entity.
- It should reflect or symbolize a core philosophic concept or worldview of the cultural group in question.
- Its symbolic value should derive from or be in alignment with a given culture's core values, particularly its spiritual and cosmological frames of reference.
- It should be easily accessible to or popularly understood by members of a given cultural group.
- It should be an artefact around which the people gravitate – an artefact that generally attracts or entails popular participation in a limited or massive sense.

This researcher recently conducted a study among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria where he needed to determine which of the two key Igbo symbols, *ikenga* (a horned deity of the Igbo) and the Igbo masquerade, he should use as a core cultural symbol for the research. The fact that both were common core Igbo cultural symbols made it even more difficult to choose one over the other. For the purposes of the research, he needed to choose the most common core cultural symbol of the Igbo.

Having narrowed his choice to these two Igbo cultural symbols, the question was: which of them, *ikenga* or the Igbo masquerade, is more of a core cultural symbol than the other? To answer this critical pre-research question, the six parameters were applied in comparing *ikenga* and the Igbo masquerade and below is the result:

	Ikenga	Masque- rade
1st Parameter: A core cultural symbol should be an integral aspect of a cultural group's controlling belief system, not an extraneous appendage.	✓	✓
2nd Parameter: It should be popularly shared across the social strata of the cultural group.		✓
3rd Parameter: It should reflect or symbolize a key philosophic concept or worldview of the cultural group in question.	✓	✓
4th Parameter: Its symbolic value should derive from or be in alignment with a given culture's core values, particularly its spiritual and cosmological frames of reference.	✓	✓
5th Parameter: It should be popularly understood by and easily accessible to members of a given cultural group.		✓
6th Parameter: It should be an artefact around which the people gravitate – an artefact that generally attracts or entails popular participation in a limited or massive sense.		✓

As we can see, the Igbo masquerade doubly outscored *Ikenga*. The researcher, thus, adopted and regarded it as the most common core cultural symbol of the Igbo. Indeed, no largely non-verbal cultural expression in Igbo land is as popular and widespread as the Igbo masquerade act and certainly none offers as much drama, variety of music, colour, sport, and all-round fascination as much as the theatrical complements masquerades bring to enrich events and enhance audience participation.

6. Conclusion

Let us note, as we conclude this study, that parameters mean different things to different people, depending on their area of discipline. What a parameter means in linguistics is different from what it means in engineering, mathematics or statistics. And no matter how it is expressed (as an equation, a function, or a simple set of rules, such as the above 6-point parameters), a parameter is not a variable value (Kilpatrick 1984).

A parameter is a fixed value. It does not change with circumstances and is not arbitrarily altered. None of the six parameters we have identified should be altered to suit a particular cultural or research need. It is either a cultural artefact wholly satisfies the specific demand of each of these

parameters or it does not. This is the spirit behind this set of rules which, it is hoped, may be of some benefit to a cultural philosopher or scholar conducting a research that necessitates the identification of a cultural group's core cultural symbols.

If this study has made some contribution towards the design and application of general parameters for determining not only the core symbols of cultural groups but those core symbols' respective level of authenticity and relevance, then the main goal of this study would have been achieved. As Langer (43) has rightly noted, "the whole purpose of general concepts is to make the distinctions between special classes clear".

References

Bauman, Richard; Paredes, Americo, eds. *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore*. Trickster Press, 1972

Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics: The Basics*. Routledge, 2007

Duan, Manfu. "On the Arbitrary Nature of Linguistic Sign". *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Academy Publisher, pp. 54-59, January 2012 doi:10.4304/tpls.2.1.54-59

Dukor, Maduabuchi, "Theistic, Panpsychic Animism of African Medicine", *Essence*, Vol. 3, 2006, p.xvi

<https://www.amacad.org/humanities-indicators/higher-education/raciaethnic-distribution-degrees-philosophy><https://www.reference.com/culture>

Kilpatrick, James J. *The Writer's Art*. Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1984.

Langer, Suzanne K. *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Philosophy of Reason, Rite and Art*. New American Library, 1954.

Ngangah, Innocent. "The Epistemology of Symbols in African Medicine," in *Open Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 03, Iss 01, 2013, pp 117-121.

Poon, Stephen. *Symbolic Perception Transformation and Interpretation: The Role and Its Impact on Social Narratives and Social Behaviours*. IAFOR Journal of the Social Sciences, Vol. 3, March 8, 2018.

Trimmer, John D. *Response of Physical Systems*. New York: Wiley, 1950.

Urban, Wilbur M. "Symbolism in Science and Philosophy" *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Jul., 1938), pp. 276-299.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/184835>.

Wagoner, Brady. *Symbolic Transformation: the Mind in Movement through Culture and Society*. Routledge, 2009.

Weiss, Charles Hartshorne Paul (ed.). *Collected Papers of Charles S. Peirce*. Harvard University Press, 1932.

Writer's Brief Data



Prof. Innocent C. Ngangah is of the Department of Philosophy, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria.
Email: ic.ngangah@coou.edu.ng.



CITING THIS ARTICLE



APA

Ngangah, I. (2024). Parameters for Determining Core Cultural Symbols: A Philosophical Analysis. *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, 2(2), 37-47. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-03/>.

MLA

Ngangah, Innocent. "Parameters for Determining Core Cultural Symbols: A Philosophical Analysis". *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2024, pp. 37-47. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-03/>

Social Values and Symbolic Characterisation in Nigerian Folk Narratives

Bukar Usman

Abstract

Folk narrative characters make sense to the local audience of folktale narrators primarily because of the social and symbolic values attached to the characters by the indigenous communities whose culture and cosmology gave birth to the tales. Unlike a modern short story, where the events of the story mainly determine how the character is viewed, the folktale utilizes the label placed on each given character by the culture to develop the conflict and unfold the theme or themes of the tale. This researcher undertook a study of one thousand (1000) folktales of Nigeria with a view to classifying them based on how the characters are socially valued and symbolised by their local audiences. The research was necessitated by the fact that the classification classes adopted by the well-known AT and ATU systems were found to be functionally inadequate when applied to folktales emanating from non-Western traditions, including Nigerian folk narrative traditions. Although there are other ways of classifying Nigerian folktales, this study undertook a classification of Nigerian folktales based on their character types. The result is an 8-character type classification of 1000 tales of Nigeria published in the voluminous book, *People, Animals, Spirits and Objects: 1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria*. This academic paper, adapted from my introductory notes to the book, sheds light on the symbolic values of Nigerian folk characters and why they can inspire a taxonomic distribution of Nigerian folktales.

Keywords: characterisation, symbols, social values, Nigerian folk narratives

Introduction

This exposition will briefly discuss two complementary topics. The first is the social values associated with folkloric tales while the second is symbolic characterization, a literary device which, in the arena of fictional tales, is socially mediated.

One of the most enduring qualities of folktales is their social relevance. Folktales convey and stabilize social values such as respect for constituted authority, respect for spiritual ordinances, hard work, good neighbourliness, honesty, patience, courage, moderation, and love for

one's family and kindred. The need to preserve stories that propagate these social values was one of the reasons the Dr Bukar Usman Foundation conducted the Pan-Nigerian tale-collection projects which generated the tales of the Treasury of Nigerian Tales series. *People, Animals, Spirits and Objects: 1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria* is one of the books published under the series. All the folktales I will be referring to in this paper are taken from this collection.

Social Values in Folktales

Folktales are vital aspects of any nation's folklore and this fact is clearly acknowledged by Emmanuel Obiechina, one of Nigeria's pioneer literary critics. In the informed view of Obiechina (27), folklore

embodies the values and attitudes (of a people) in its proverbs and fossilised saying, its belief in myths and religion, and its consciousness of its historical life, collective outlook and ethics, in its legends, folktales and other forms of oral literature.

Concurring with Obiechina, the literary scholar, Saradashree Choudhury (3-11), says: "The folklore in traditional African societies has a highly educative value. It imparts knowledge on the groups' history, values of warfare, morals, wise sayings etc". In many areas of the world, the tale is the vehicle by which these communally-generated attributes are communicated and entrenched in the consciousness of the people. In Nigeria and other parts of Africa where, despite the fast-fading trend, it is still orally narrated to family groups, the folktale reflects the social pulse of the common folk. Carroll-McQuillan (1993) elaborates on this pulse:

The African oral tradition embodies this pulse in an especially inclusive and expressive way. Stories in Africa weave music, audience participation, chants and choruses, even dance, into their fabric. Storytelling in Africa is an integral part of the culture. It is a common and effective means of teaching, preserving values and historical events, entertaining and is also an essential aspect of most ceremonial rituals.

There is something about stories that make them appealing across all cultures, but folktales have a distinct rural flavour which makes them so fascinating. People love stories, especially stories that reflect their everyday realities; and sometimes the more removed the stories are from the common features of the immediate environment, the more charming they seem. This is one of the reasons many of us, rural- and city-dwellers, are initially attracted to folktales. Reading or listening to the stories gives us concrete benefits that urge us to explore further. Carroll-McQuillan (1993) explains:

When we explore folk stories, we explore ourselves and our many facets as human beings. We see the reflection of humankind: its strength, flaws, fears, and hopes. The settings and characters may change but the heart and soul feelings are always there. They are timeless; they are ageless...in folk stories, we encounter a mirror in which we can see who we are and what we have been. It is a mirror charged with echoes of the past and hints of the future.

Characters as Social Mirrors

Writers and narrators mirror the realities of their environment through the various aspects of their story, namely theme, setting, plot and characters. But no matter how profound the theme of a narrative, how exotic its setting, and how excellent its language, it cannot succeed in delivering a competent story without a character or group of characters.

Characters energize stories; they awaken and sustain our interest in the plot. Indeed, a story's plot cannot unravel without characters. Those actions or inactions which make reading fiction worth it all happen around the characters in the story. A story moves from one episode to another because of the activities of its characters. The way in which an oral narrator or a writer portrays his fictional characters, and this is very important, is known as characterisation. Bernardo clarifies:

What does characterization do for a story? In a nutshell, it allows us to empathize with the protagonist and secondary characters, and thus feel that what is happening to these people in the story is vicariously happening to us; and it also gives us a sense of verisimilitude, or the semblance of living reality...In the best of stories, it is actually characterization that moves the story along, because a compelling character in a difficult situation creates his or her own plot.

A story's characters interest us because we see our society, if not ourselves or those we know, through them. Characters are social mirrors. No matter the theme or orientation of a narrative – be that narrative a modern story or a folktale – the characters play the role of reflectors through which we see the variegated experiences of life.

A character's success in achieving this role depends on a number of factors most of which we need not dwell on here. But suffice it to note that the type of characters deployed by the storyteller is very crucial. While a major character in a modern short story tends to be round and generally realistically portrayed, the typical character we encounter in folktales tends to be flat in the sense of having one kind of personality trait. It should be stated that this apparent lack of complexity is compensated for by the stimulating symbolic nature of many folktale characters.

Symbolic Relevance of Folktale Characters

Although they are not endowed with complex traits, many characters we meet in folktales are significant and entertaining because of their attributes as symbolic characters. A symbolic character is one who reflects or represents an idea or concrete reality. Narrowed to folktale characters, this symbolic representation is invariably socially determined, thus ensuring that such characters personify culturally-fixed concepts, virtue or vice.

The symbolic nature of its characters is a major reason a folktale is set in a familiar world of people, animals, spirits or objects and why its characters are drawn from this easily recognizable terrain. For this reason, as well, folktales are characterized by formulaic plots and traditional motifs. All of these make the folktale a communally-delivered art form. Symbolic attribution enables the narrator's audience (or the reader of a written folktale) to get inside the head of a character and predict what the next move is likely to be. Depending on the narrator's manipulation of the plot, during a story-telling session, or introduction of some elements of surprise, such predictions may turn out to be true or false.

The symbolic attributes of the characters are outside the prerogative of the folktale narrator. They are socially determined over several generations and involve a "sociopsychological" process which is outside the manipulative powers of the narrator. In this process, according to J.L. Fischer,

at least three semi-independent systems are involved: (1) the tale itself, considered as connected and rather tightly structured discourse; (2) the modal personality of the typical audience-narrator group for the tale; and (3) the social system relevant to the tale, including not only that segment of the society in which are found the active and passive participants in the tale (i.e., the "bearers" of the tale as an item of culture) but the pattern of the whole society.

In the tale-bearing environment, this connection is easily established since the concerns expressed in folktales are usually the concerns of the common folk whose worldview is shaped by the collective consciousness of the community. It is this communal consciousness that had, over time, attributed symbolic meanings to the folktale's typical characters. Thus, symbolic characters, in folktales, are cultural in origin and make customary sense because they spring from the age-old "memory" of a given ethnic or linguistic group. This description of cultural symbols by Carl Jung (93) is very definitive:

The cultural symbols...are those that have been used to express eternal truths...They have gone through many transformations and even a long process of more or less conscious development, and have

thus become collective images accepted by civilized societies. Such cultural symbols nevertheless retain much of their original numinosity or spell. One is aware that they can evoke a deep emotional response in some individuals...They are important constituents of our mental make-up and vital forces in the building up of human society....

Cultural symbols in the context of folktales function within a given social system which may be limited to a community or ethnic group or encompass many ethnic, linguistic or social groups. The relevance of these symbols, however, may be expanded, through migration and some other form of social integration, to wider social settings. Infact, due to cultural affinities among Nigerian ethnic groups and the prevalence of similar traditional motifs across folktales collected from different parts of the country, many stories of this collection have similar cultural symbols.

A good number of characters the reader would be encountering through the 1000 tales featured in this book are symbolic. It is, therefore, important to briefly examine the subject of cultural symbols as they relate to characters featured n Nigerian folktales.

Symbolic Characterisation in Nigerian Folktales

Symbolic characterization is the use of characters as symbols. This is a device employed in all fictional narratives, oral or written. In the case of folktales, including Nigerian folktales, the symbolic value of the characters are culturally derived. In modern short stories, the symbolic relevance of a character usually rests on the character's engagements within the story. Unlike what obtains in the folktale, a character is not normally labeled outside the context of the contemporary short story. This is an important distinction worth exemplifying.

Two short stories from *Through Laughter and Tears: Modern Nigerian Short Stories* can be used to illustrate this point. In Helon Habila's "The Embrace of the Snake," Lamang, the heartless manipulator of peasants from his own community, is the symbol of oppression whereas in Wale Okediran's "Just One Trip," Grace, the drug courier who swallowed a wrap of cocaine now tearing her health apart, is a symbol of foolhardiness. Both symbolic meanings are achieved purely by the actions of the characters within the stories, and not by any external cultural attribution.

In a folktale, on the other hand, a typical character's symbolic meaning is ascribed by the tale-bearing culture. This culturally determined label or symbolic value is so strong that presumptively the characters are portrayed in the tale in the manner dictated by the narrator-audience culture. For example, the hyena, in the stories where it featured in this book, symbolizes awkwardness, greed and foolhardiness. These are the qualities attributed to it by the story-bearing cultures of northern Nigeria and this

informs the narrator's portrayal of the hyena in any tale. This stereotypical characterization of the hyena delights the audience who has been culturally raised to expect the display of these symbolic qualities from the hyena.

A few examples of stories (published in Usman's *People, Animals, Spirits and Objects: 1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria*) featuring the hyena include "The Rabbit, the Tortoise and the Hyena" (No. 241), where the rabbit and the tortoise kill the hyena; "The Hyena's Offsprings and the Rabbit" (No. 253), where the rabbit fool the hyena and malnourish its offsprings; and "The Hyena and the Ant" (No. 278), where the hyena is almost drowned by the ant's schemes; and "The Wasp and the Hyena" (No. 303), where the wasp trick the hyena to drink itself to death.

Some other instances are "The Hyena and the Spider" (No. 352), where the spider defeats the hyena in a wrestling match; "The Hyena's Desire to Fly" (No. 436), where the hyena, on a monkey's mischievous advice, tries to fly from a tree top but crashes down and dies; and "The Boy, His Pets and the Hyena" (No. 649), where the hyena steals food, is killed and eaten by other animals. In all of these scenarios, the hyena was discomfited or destroyed by physically inferior opponents.

The hyena's self-destructive miscalculations above delight the audience of each of these stories because this character's behaviour in each instance matched its symbolic mould. Should the hyena behave contrary to its cultural tag, as in "The Hyena's Dawadawa" (No. 606) where the hyena displays uncharacteristic patience, the story would seem unreal and the symbol-guided audience would most likely find it uninteresting. Can any group of Nigerian youngsters believe or appreciate a folktale where the tortoise, the nationally-acclaimed trickster, is portrayed as honest, faithful, truthful, reliable, or selfless? Not likely. These qualities are simply not in the tortoise's symbolic character. Because the tortoise's crafty nature is culturally fixed, a narrator trying to make it behave otherwise may lose credibility with his audience.

The fact is that symbolic value is ascribed to the character by the culture and the folktale narrator and his audience is customarily led to respect this. However, the narrator is expected to freshen up these characters by engaging them in interesting episodes. The narrator may even borrow episodes from two or more stories and weld them into one story. This is permissible as long as the narrator remains faithful to each character's symbolic trait.

Good narrators can also introduce elements of surprise by manipulating the plot or the motifs instead of tampering with the symbolic tendencies of the characters. This is a major reason narrators have created thrilling versions of a specific tortoise story without compromising the personality of the tortoise. In fact, the tortoise has featured in far more stories than any other single character can lay claim to, and in each story it plays a major

role.

And the tortoise plays out its symbolic role mostly through its shell. At least 12 different stories in *1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria* are weaved around the motif of the tortoise's patchy shell. They include the stories numbered 281, 332, 343, 366, 371, 372, 388, 396, 499, 502, 591 and 937. In all of these stories, the tortoise is characterized in accordance with its symbolic nature.

Symbolic values differ not only from one animal character to another but also from one narrator-audience environment to another. While the tortoise features prominently in the oral narrative of every region of Nigeria, some other interesting animal characters feature mainly in tales associated with a particular linguistic or regional group. A good example is Gizo, a popular character found in many folktales from northern Nigeria. Although the rabbit can play different symbolic roles in other areas of Nigeria, for the Fulani it symbolizes cleverness in a self-serving sense. All in all, there is more cultural unity than variations among Nigerian groups.

Symbolic characters in Nigerian folktales are not limited to animals. People, spirits, and even some objects are imbued with symbolic meaning. In many tales of this collection, the king is characterized as a symbol of authority and social order. In some stories, however, such as in "The King's New Robe" (No. 6), the king can diminish his dignified symbolic stature through ignoble or atrocious behaviour. Among the king's subjects, some categories of individuals are uniquely symbolically represented. They include the old woman (symbolized as a mysterious rescuer or avenger), the juju priest (the communal prophet), the hunter (usually associated with bravery and adventure), and the orphan (a symbol of the triumph of providence over adversity). The orphan's symbolic character accounts for the reason none of the many tales featuring the orphan in this collection portrays the orphan as a villain. The orphan is almost always a victim of circumstances who ends up triumphant through some fluke of good fortune, supernatural rescue or magical transformation.

Women are not so uniformly characterized. While they are represented as caring mothers in some tales, they are painted as vengeful mean antagonists in other tales. The latter picture is prevalent when narrators are characterizing the jealous co-wife. Generally, folktales simply reflect the roles the culture has traditionally assigned to women. The same cultural prerogative also dictates the way the menfolk are characterized in tales. Male and female characters, in general, play different roles – symbolic and otherwise.

Even trees are characterized symbolically in many of these folktales. The iroko and baobab trees symbolize mystery, strength, or fertility. "The Child from the Iroko Tree" (No. 878) and "Oluronbi" (No. 894) illustrate the latter symbol. But in spite of the strength of the baobab tree, the soldier

ant (characterized in these tales as a symbol of wisdom, industry and resilience) successfully brings down the baobab tree in “The Cock, the Baobab Tree and the Soldier Ant” (No. 941) by attacking its roots.

It should be re-stated here that not only characters are of symbolic significance in folktales. Themes, plots and settings can also be used as symbolic tools. Indeed, the formulaic pattern of some plots may serve useful symbolic purposes; and in certain stories involving supernatural elements, the setting of the folktale can be as symbolically important as the characters. But we have dwelt on symbolic characters in this essay because of the central place of the folktale’s characters in initiating and resolving action. One can tell a story without a theme, plot or setting, although it is not likely to be interesting, but it is impossible to tell a story which does not feature at least one or two characters. A folktale is primarily about the characters. This is one of the reasons we opted to use characters in classifying the tales presented in this anthology.

Folktale Classification Systems

Of the best-known folktale classification systems, none can claim to be adequate enough to be applied universally. These systems are the Aarne/Thompson index (AT index), Aarne/Thompson/Uther index (ATU index), Stith Thompson’s Motif Index of Folk Literature and Vladimir Propp’s Morphology of the Folktale. Indeed, none of these has captured in its system all the vital aspects of the folktale.

While the first three systems listed above concentrate on theme and motif, the third concerns itself with the morphology or structure of the tale. An examination, for instance, of the classification classes adopted by the AT and ATU systems would indicate their limitations and the inadequacy of applying them on a global level. We have tabulated the main AT and ATU classes below.

Main Thematic Classes of the AT and ATU Indexes

Aarne/Thompson	Aarne/Thompson/Uther
1. Animal tales	1. Animal tales
2. Regular folktales	2. Tales of Magic
3. Humorous tales	3. Religious tales
	4. Realistic tales
	5. Tales of the stupid ogre
	6. Anecdotes and jokes
	7. Formula tales

The ATU classification, in spite of its greater thematic space, is inadequate outside the Western world where it has gained some regard as an

international taxonomical system. An attempt to fit the 18 classes of the collection, *A Selection of Nigerian Folktales: Themes and Settings* (edited by Usman) will display obvious inadequacies in certain areas. For instance, in which class would one place enfant-terrible tales? And what about those animal tales that make sense only within the interplay of human and animal characters, in which of the above tabulated classes will they be placed?

If the AT and ATU analytical systems were not positioned as global taxonomies, posing the above questions would have been unnecessary. Within the context of their originating Western tradition, these systems (especially the ATU model) are probably adequate for classifying most traditional tales from the Western and, to some extent, Asian worlds. Elsewhere, particularly in Nigeria where we have extensive research to rely on, the ATU index is inadequate, and this is not surprising since tales from Africa were not part of the data used in deriving its classes.

And recently, two Malaysian scholars (Harun and Jamaludin) attempted to develop a largely academic “conceptual model that envisions the connections of the three classification systems (Thompson’s Motif-Index of Folk Literature, the ATU index and Propp’s Morphology of the Folktale), which displays their cohesive nature to operate as one classification system.” (*Brackets mine*) While the sort of micro classification proposed by them is not our objective here, it is important to observe that in their parameters these systems are not broad enough to cover tales from every country of the world.

Folktale Classification by Character-Types

In classifying the 1000 tales studied by this researcher, a character-type classification deemed culturally appropriate for these tales collected from Nigeria was devised. Since Claude Bremond’s 1966 three-type classification model, further efforts have been made to classify tales by character-type. One of such efforts is the home-grown four character-type model used by Sekoni to classify Yoruba folktales in 1983. Sekoni’s four categories are heroic, non-heroic, anti-heroic and a-heroic character-types (Sesan).

A character-type classification was used in grouping the 1000 tales analysed by this researcher. One of the reasons for using this type of classification was the need to celebrate the elements that make folktales vibrate in our memories long after they were told – the characters in the stories!

The character-type classification system deplored by the study broadly classifies the 1000 tales into eight groups based on the kind of characters or combination of characters featured in them. The eight categories are as

follows:

1. **Human tales:** these are tales featuring only human characters. By “human,” we mean all human beings, including malformed ones.
2. **Animal tales:** these are tales featuring only animal characters. By “animal,” we include all living things apart from human beings and plants.
3. **Human-animal tales:** these are tales featuring only human and animal characters.
4. **Human-spirit tales:** these are tales featuring only human beings and spirits as characters. By “spirits” we include ghosts, fairies, elves, mermaids, and other supernatural “beings.” Living human beings are not included in this definition of “spirit.”
5. **Human-object tales:** these are tales featuring only human beings and objects as characters. By “objects,” we mean tangible non-living things (e.g, an isolated bone, a rock or the moon) personified to play such roles as speaking or moving from one point to another. “Objects” may also include non-human, non-animal living things (such as a tree) when they are personified to act like human beings.
6. **Animal-spirit tales:** these are tales featuring only animal and spirit characters.
7. **Animal-object tales:** these are tales featuring only animal and personified-object characters (“object” here is as defined above).
8. **Multiple-character tales:** these are tales featuring characters derived from three or more character-types as classified above.

It should be noted that each of the above tales classification, in being anchored on character-types, represents some basic unifying characteristics of the character drawn from the tales in each category. For instance, all animal tales are unified by the mere fact of being animals, as defined above. Also note that the emphasis here is on a *set* of characters (e.g, animals) rather than a specific character (e.g, tortoise). This classification, however, allows anyone who so wishes to explore the character traits of single actors (as we did, in this essay, in our earlier discussion on the deployment of the hyena and the tortoise as symbolic characters).

Tales Distribution by Character-Types

A total of the 1000 folktales collected from different parts of Nigeria, categorized according to their character-types, are distributed into the eight sections of *People, Animals, Spirits and Objects: 1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria*, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Character-Type	Range of Tales	No. of Tales	% of the Entire Tales
1. Human Tales	1 - 233	233	23.3%
2. Animal Tales	234 - 563	330	33%
3. Human-Animal Tales	564 - 756	193	19.3%
4. Human-Spirit Tales	757 - 867	111	11.1%
5. Human-Object Tales	868 - 909	42	4.2%
6. Animal-Spirit Tales	910 - 938	29	2.9%
7. Animal-Object Tales	939 - 953	15	1.5%
8. Multiple Character Tales	954 - 1000	47	4.7%
	Total =	1000 Stories	100%

From the above table, one gets the impression that human beings like using animals to portray human behaviour, especially the foibles of individuals and the inequities in the society. Perhaps, this could explain why 33% of the tales (the highest for any singular character type) are animal tales. However, the bulk of the 1000 tales (62.6%) are stories featuring human beings in interaction with human and non-human characters.

Conclusion

As we have analysed, familiarization with the symbolic value of the characters heightens the reader's appreciation of the tale and its import. Characters play a central role in generating and developing conflicts in folktales, and conflicts are what make folk stories interesting to the audience. In whichever way conflicts are resolved, happily or unhappily, they ultimately teach some morals. These morals, no matter the cultural root of the tale, are usually universal truths. Understanding the social values represented by the characters enhances the reader's enjoyment of the story and the kind of moral truths drawn from it.

Works Cited

Bernardo, Karen. "Characterization in Literature" (<http://www.storybites.com>)

Bremond, Claude. "La logique des possibles narratives". *Communications*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1966, pp. 60-76.

Carroll-McQuillan, Synia. "Folktales: The Mirror of Society". From <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1993/2/93.02.02.x.html>

Choudhury, Saradashree. "Folklore and Society in Transition: A Study of The Palm Wine Drinkard and The Famished Road", *African Journal of History and Culture*, vol.6, no. 1, January 2014, pp. 3-11.

Fischer, J.L. "The Sociopsychological Analysis of Folktales". *Current Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 3, University of Chicago Press, June 1963, pp. 235-295.

Habila, Helon. "The Embrace of the Snake". In Duve Nakolisa, ed. *Through Laughter and Tears: Modern Nigerian Short Stories*. Klamidas Books, 2015.

Harryizman Harun and Zulikha Jamaludin. "Folktale Conceptual Model Based on Folktale Classification System of Type, Motif, and Function". *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Computing and Informatics*, Paper No. 118, Universiti Utara, 2013.

Jung, Carl. *Man and His Symbols*. Doubleday, 1964, p. 93.

Nakolisa, Duve, ed. *Through Laughter and Tears: Modern Nigerian Short Stories*. Klamidas Books, 2015.

Obiechina, Emmanuel. *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*. Cambridge UP, 1975, p. 27.

Okediran, Wale. "Just One Trip". In Duve Nakolisa, ed. *Through Laughter and Tears: Modern Nigerian Short Stories*. Klamidas Books, 2015.

Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*, 4th ed. University of Texas Press, 1998.

Sesan, Azeez Akinwumi. "Yoruba Folktales, the New Media and Postmodernism". *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol.17, no. 2, Khazar UP, 2014.

Thompson, Stith. *Motif Index of Folk Literature*, Vol. 16. Indiana UP, 1966.

Usman, Bukar, ed. *A Selection of Nigerian Folktales: Themes and Settings*.

Klamidas Books, 2016.

Usman, Bukar, ed. *People, Animals, Spirits and Objects: 1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria*. Klamidas Books, 2018.

Writer's Brief Data



Dr Bukar Usman is the President of Nigerian Folklore Society. *Email:* bukarusman@gmail.com.



CITING THIS ARTICLE



APA

Usman, B. (2024). Social Values and Symbolic Characterisation in Nigerian Folk Narratives. *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, 2(2), 48-60. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-04/>.

MLA

Usman, Bukar. "Social Values and Symbolic Characterisation in Nigerian Folk Narratives". *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2024, pp. 48-60. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-04/>