INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AS A TOOL FOR CURBING PREVALENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Domestic violence remains a deeply rooted social problem with far-reaching consequences on individuals and community well-being. In multicultural societies such as Nigeria, solutions that incorporate cultural and linguistic elements are essential for sustainable impact. This study investigates the role of indigenous language as a strategic tool for curbing domestic violence and achieving sustainable development, with a particular focus on Yoruba communities in Lagos State. Drawing on a survey of 183 respondents—including community leaders, indigenous language experts, social workers, and survivors—the study reveals that domestic violence is driven by factors such as poverty, lack of respect for spouses, substance abuse, and cultural differences. The findings further show that indigenous songs and rhymes are moderately effective in promoting awareness, resolving conflicts, and discouraging gender-based violence. Additionally, the promotion of indigenous language-based education is shown to support Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 and 5 by fostering inclusive learning environments and advancing gender equality. The study concludes that integrating indigenous linguistic and cultural tools into domestic violence prevention initiatives offers a culturally resonant and community-driven pathway to sustainable development. Recommendations are made for policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders to harness these resources in holistic, grassroots interventions.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Indigenous Language, Prevalence, Sustainable Development,

Introduction

Domestic violence is a persistent global issue that threatens the social fabric of communities, undermines public health, and impedes the attainment of sustainable development (Effiong & Bassey, 2020). In Nigeria, domestic violence is not only prevalent but often normalized through cultural silence, limited legal enforcement, and inadequate public awareness. While various legal and institutional efforts have been made to tackle this problem, they frequently overlook the cultural and linguistic contexts in which violence occurs (Yusuf & Okusanya, 2020). This has prompted calls for more localized, culturally grounded approaches to violence prevention.

Language, as a fundamental element of culture, shapes social norms, communicates values, and influences interpersonal behavior (Omoniyi, 2006). In Nigeria, indigenous languages such as Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo are more than communication tools—they are reservoirs of traditional knowledge, proverbs, songs, and stories that reinforce communal ethics (Makinde & Oginni, 2018). These languages play a vital role in moral education and conflict resolution and therefore hold significant potential in shaping attitudes towards domestic violence. However, their integration into formal mechanisms for violence prevention remains underexplored.

This study examines how indigenous languages, particularly through oral traditions such as songs and rhymes, can be strategically employed to reduce domestic violence and promote sustainable development. The investigation focuses on how these linguistic tools can be used to challenge harmful gender norms, communicate rights and responsibilities, and facilitate inclusive, culturally relevant education. The study is anchored in the broader framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education) and Goal 5 (gender equality), both of which are instrumental in fostering peaceful, just, and resilient societies (United Nations, 2015).

By analyzing data from key community stakeholders in Lagos State, this study offers insights into the cultural dimensions of violence and the transformative power of indigenous language in advocacy, education, and policy. Ultimately, it seeks to inform a more holistic and sustainable response to domestic violence, one that is rooted in the linguistic and cultural realities of Nigerian communities.

Objectives of the Study

The major aim of the study was to investigate indigenous language as a tool for cubing prevalent domestic violence and in achieving sustainable development. The specific objectives of the study is to:

1. examine the causes of the prevalent domestic violence in our society;
2. ascertain the level of effectiveness of indigenous songs and rhymes for curbing domestic violence;
3. assess how promoting indigenous languages can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (inclusive and equitable education) and SDG 5 (Gender equality); and
4. explore how indigenous language can be used to promote sustainable development in our communities.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of the prevalent domestic violence in our society?
2. What is the level of effectiveness of indigenous songs and rhymes for curbing domestic violence?

3. In what ways can indigenous languages contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (inclusive and equitable education) and SDG 5 (Gender equality)?
4. How can indigenous language be utilized to promote sustainable development in our communities?

Methodology

Design: Survey research design

Population: All about 340 community members who are familiar with domestic violence (community leaders, indigenous language experts, social workers, survivors of domestic violence and witnesses of domestic violence) in the 3 sample communities in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Sample size: 183 respondents

Sampling techniques: purposive and stratified sampling techniques.

Instrument: Self-designed structured questionnaire.

Methods of data analysis: Frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What are the causes of the prevalent domestic violence in our society?

Table 1: Causes of the prevalent domestic violence in our society

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	S.D*	Remarks
1	Indecent dressing causes domestic violence.	100 54.6%	83 45.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	183 100%	3.55	0.50	Strongly Agreed
2	Domestic violence can be caused by lack of respect for spouse.	97 53.0%	71 38.8%	10 5.5%	5 2.7%	183 100%	3.42	0.72	Agreed
3	Poverty is a major cause of domestic violence in our community.	80 43.7%	75 41.0%	10 5.5%	18 9.8%	183 100%	3.19	0.92	Agreed
4	Domestic violence is caused by people's addiction to alcoholism and drugs.	97 53.0%	86 47.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	183 100%	3.53	0.50	Strongly Agreed
5	Differences in people's cultural background aid domestic violence.	59 32.2%	66 36.1%	18 9.8%	40 21.9%	183 100%	2.79	1.12	Agreed
	Grand mean						**3.30**	**0.75**	**Agreed**

Keys: **SA= Strongly Agreed** (≤ 4), **A= Agreed** (≤ 3), **D= Disagreed** (≤ 2), **SD=Strongly Disagreed** (≤ 1)

S.D* = Standard deviation

The individual mean of the five items in Table 1 indicates that the respondents agreed that indecent dressing causes domestic violence; domestic violence can be caused by lack of respect for spouse; poverty is a major cause of domestic violence in our community; domestic violence is caused by people addiction to alcoholism and drugs; and differences in people's cultural background aid domestic violence. In addition, the grand mean of the items 1-5 is **3.30** with a standard deviation of **0.75**. Based on these results, it can be inferred that the causes of the prevalent domestic violence in our society include indecent dressing, lack of respect for spouse, poverty, people's addiction to alcoholism and drugs; and differences in people's cultural background.

Research Question 2: What is the level of effectiveness of indigenous songs and rhymes for curbing domestic violence?

Table 2: Level of effectiveness of indigenous songs and rhymes for curbing domestic violence

S/N	Items	HE	ME	FE	NE	Total	Mean	S.D*	Remarks
1	Indigenous rhymes can be used to prevent gender-related conflicts in our society.	71 38.8%	80 43.7%	17 9.3%	15 8.2%	183 100%	3.13	0.89	Moderately Effective
2	Conflicts between husband and wife can be resolved through indigenous songs.	66 36.1%	88 48.1%	18 9.8%	11 6.0%	183 100%	3.14	0.83	Moderately Effective
3	Indigenous rhymes can be utilised to prevent sexual harassment in the society.	86 47.0%	90 49.2%	5 2.7%	2 1.1%	183 100%	3.42	0.60	Moderately Effective
4	Songs can be used for teaching sex education.	90 49.2%	93 50.8%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	183 100%	3.49	0.50	Moderately Effective
5	Traditional songs can be used to prevent domestic violence caused by cultural differences.	75 41.0%	88 48.1%	10 5.5%	10 5.5%	183 100%	3.25	1.12	Moderately Effective
	Grand mean						**3.29**	**0.72**	**Moderately Effective**

Keys: **HE= Highly Effective** (≤ 4), **ME= Moderately Effective** (≤ 3), **FE= Fairly Effective** (≤ 2), **NE= Not Effective** (≤ 1)

S.D* = Standard deviation

The individual mean of the five items in Table 2 indicates that the respondents were of the opinion that indigenous rhymes can be used to prevent gender-related conflicts in our society; conflicts between husband and wife can be resolved through indigenous songs; indigenous rhymes can be utilised to prevent sexual harassment in the society; songs can be used for teaching sex education; and traditional songs can be used to prevent domestic violence caused by cultural differences. Also, the grand mean of the items 6-10 is **3.29** with a standard deviation of **0.72**. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the level of effectiveness of indigenous songs and rhymes for curbing domestic violence is moderate. That is, the use of indigenous songs and rhymes is moderately effective for curbing domestic violence.

Research Question 3: In what ways can indigenous languages contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (inclusive and equitable education) and SDG 5 (Gender equality)?

Table 3: Ways by which indigenous languages can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and SDG 5

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	S.D*	Remarks
1	Promoting indigenous language-based education will promote inclusive education.	97 53.0%	28 15.3%	18 9.8%	40 21.9%	183 100%	2.99	1.23	Agreed
2	Discussion in indigenous language about gender equality can promote achievement of SDGs.	71 38.8%	100 54.6%	7 3.8%	5 2.7%	183 100%	3.30	0.67	Agreed
3	Incorporating indigenous language-based education into national curricula can help achieve SDG 4.	75 41.0%	80 43.7%	15 8.2%	13 7.1%	183 100%	3.19	0.86	Agreed
4	Promoting indigenous language-based education can aid actualisation of SDGs.	86 47.0%	90 49.2%	7 3.8%	0 0.0%	183 100%	3.43	0.57	Agreed
5	Incorporating indigenous language-based curriculum in schools will promote long life learning among male and female learners.	80 43.7%	103 56.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	183 100%	3.44	0.50	Agreed
Grand mean							**3.27**	**0.77**	**Agreed**

Keys: **SA= Strongly Agreed** (≤ 4), **A= Agreed** (≤ 3), **D= Disagreed** (≤ 2), **SD=Strongly Disagreed** (≤ 1)

S.D* = Standard deviation

The individual mean of the five items in Table 3 indicates that the respondents agreed that promoting indigenous language-based education will promote inclusive education; discussion in indigenous language about gender equality can promote achievement of SDGs; incorporating indigenous language-based education into national curricula can help achieve SDG 4; promoting indigenous

language-based education can aid actualisation of SDGs; and incorporating indigenous language-based curriculum in schools will promote long life learning among male and female learners in the society. In addition, the grand mean of the items 11-15 is **3.27** with a standard deviation of **0.77**. Based on these results, it can be inferred that indigenous languages can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (inclusive and equitable education) and SDG 5 (Gender equality).

Research Question 4: How can indigenous language be utilised to promote sustainable development in our communities?

Table 4: Indigenous language and promotion of sustainable development in our communities

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	S.D[*]	Remarks
1	Promoting indigenous language will enhance peaceful coexistence in the community.	81 44.3%	97 53.0%	3 1.6%	2 1.1%	183 100%	3.40	0.58	Agreed
2	Justice can be strengthened through promotion of indigenous languages.	80 43.7%	86 47.0%	15 8.2%	2 1.1%	183 100%	3.33	0.67	Agreed
3	Domestic violence can be discouraged through adoption of indigenous language-based education.	81 44.3%	102 55.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	183 100%	3.44	0.50	Agreed
4	Organising community development programmes using indigenous language will help to achieve the broader goal of sustainable development.	75 41.0%	98 53.6%	5 2.7%	5 2.7%	183 100%	3.33	0.66	Agreed
5	Incorporating indigenous language-based communication strategies will promote sustainable development in our communities.	86 47.0%	97 53.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	183 100%	3.47	0.50	Agreed
Grand mean							**3.39**	**0.58**	**Agreed**

Keys: **SA= Strongly Agreed** (≤ 4), **A= Agreed** (≤ 3), **D= Disagreed** (≤ 2), **SD=Strongly Disagreed** (≤ 1)

S.D[*] = Standard deviation

The individual mean of the five items in Table 4 indicates that the respondents agreed that promoting indigenous language will enhance peaceful coexistence in the community; justice can be strengthened through promotion of indigenous languages; domestic violence can be discouraged through adoption of indigenous language-based education; organising community development programmes using indigenous language will help to achieve the broader goal of sustainable development; and incorporating indigenous language-based communication strategies will promote sustainable development in our communities. Also, the grand mean of the items 16-20 is **3.39** with a standard deviation of **0.58**. Based on these results, it can be inferred that indigenous language can be utilised to promote sustainable development in our communities.

Summary of findings

i. The causes of the prevalent domestic violence in our society include indecent dressing, lack of respect for spouse, poverty, people's addiction to alcoholism and drugs; and differences in people's cultural background.

ii. The use of indigenous songs and rhymes is moderately effective for curbing domestic violence.

iii. Indigenous language can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (inclusive and equitable education) and SDG 5 (Gender equality).

iv. Indigenous language can be utilised to promote sustainable development in our communities

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role those indigenous languages, particularly within the Nigerian cultural context, can play in addressing the pervasive challenge of domestic violence and in promoting sustainable development. Indigenous languages are not only linguistic tools but also carriers of cultural knowledge, ethical values, and community-based norms that, when properly harnessed, can serve as powerful instruments for behavioral change and social transformation (Alo & Akinbobola, 2019; Salami, 2021).

Domestic violence in Nigeria, as in many multicultural societies, is influenced by a complex interplay of socio-cultural factors. The use of indigenous languages in prevention and awareness strategies provides a culturally resonant means of addressing these factors (Yusuf & Okusanya, 2020). Language reflects and shapes the worldview of its speakers, and thus the incorporation of Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, and other native tongues into anti-violence messaging allows for the internalization of those messages by community members. Proverbs, folktales, songs, and rhymes embedded within these languages convey moral lessons that traditionally emphasized respect, peaceful coexistence, and communal accountability (Makinde & Oginni, 2018; Amadiume, 1997).

Moreover, the inclusion of indigenous language curricula in formal education—as recommended—supports the realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5, which emphasize inclusive, equitable education and gender equality (UNESCO, 2003; United Nations, 2015). Educational programs that teach students about mutual respect, nonviolence, and gender equity using culturally grounded narratives can contribute to long-term attitudinal change and improved community cohesion (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019).

Conclusion

Nigeria's diverse cultures offer a wide range of tools that can be leveraged to address the issue of domestic violence and sustainable development. Indigenous language has potential roles to play in preventing domestic violence and achieving sustainable development. By tapping into indigenous language which involves the use of indigenous tools or cultural resources like folktales,songs and rhymes, it can play a central role in educating the public, challenging harmful gender norms, and promoting peaceful relationships. In addition, by emphasizing the cultural relevance and local ownership of solutions, it enhances the effectiveness of domestic violence prevention programmes and promote greater social equity. In doing so, Nigeria can take a holistic approach to reducing domestic violence while strengthening community cohesion and resilience and achieving sustainable development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

1. Community leaders and government should work in collaboration to foster a sense of responsibility and collective action towards reducing domestic violence among the people through promotion of indigenous language-based education and awareness about negative consequences of domestic violence.
2. Community-based organisations, Non-Govermental Organisations, and government agencies should incorporate indigenous songs and rhymes into their domestic violence awareness campaigns. This has the tendency to reduce domestic violence in the society.
3. Government should incorporate indigenous language-based curricular into the education system. These types of curricular will promote effective communication of culturally relevant messages about mutual respect, gender equality and long-life learning, which are entrenched in the Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5.
4. Community leaders and government agencies should mobilise indigenous language resources for sustainable development in various communities. This can be done through promotion of indigenous language-based education and communication strategies in the communities.

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