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A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN STUDIES IN TURKEY AND GREECE

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Abstract

For many years, African issues had a low priority in both political and academic circles in Greece and Turkey. However, as far as Turkey is concerned, scientific interest in African issues has gone hand in hand with growing political interest in the continent, with African studies focusing primarily on Turkish-African relations. Regarding the Greek reality, while the Greeks have had an active diaspora in countries of Sub-Saharan Africa for many decades, the state has never formulated any coordinated political proposal to strengthen the country's relationship with the continent. This lack of central policy leaves the Greek immigrants there absolutely alone to make their mark in their host societies. Respectively, the Greek academic community only in recent years has been dealing with Africa, even though to a limited extent, focusing mainly on issues concerning the Greek diaspora there. Given that in recent decades Greece has become a host country for immigrants and among them, immigrants or even refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa, so, due to this fact the scientific interest in Africa has increased. Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to compare the two case studies regarding the status quo of African Studies across them.

Keywords

African Studies, Greece, Turkey, non-colonial past, diaspora

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1. Introduction: The wider discussion on African Studies

African Studies in Greece and Turkey are relatively new academic fields. Neither country had a colonial empire, which explains the lack of a historical interest in developing these areas of study. Interestingly, the USA, China, and Japan, although also without a colonial past, have demonstrated significant academic interest in African Studies and achieved excellent results in this domain.[1] On the contrary, the colonial empires, France, Britain, Germany, Belgium, etc., had a strong interest in exploiting the subject of African Studies from the points of view of social and cultural sciences (human geography, social anthropology, demography, and economics) and natural sciences (geology, physical geography, zoology, etc.).[2] From the perspective of the social and cultural sciences, the primary subjects of study include pre-colonial and modern African societies, languages, religions, and cultures.

Africa is perceived with a multitude of stereotypes based on the Eurocentrism of its scholars and also on criteria linked to the needs of colonialism. Therefore, the study of Africa's societies requires that our knowledge of this continent be continually scrutinized (Courade, 2006). In this context, interest in African Studies is also diffused to scientific communities belonging to non-former colonial states. These countries perceive Africa not as a geographical entity but as a continent with diverse historical, cultural, religious, political, and ecological characteristics (Tepeciklioğlu, 2016: 6). This growing interest of the international scientific community in Africa has significant importance, as it reflects Africa's increasing role in the global geopolitical landscape (see also Copinschi and Noël, 2005; Power and Mohan, 2010; Carmody, 2016; Le Gouriellec, 2022).

Despite the undeniable fact that African Studies are often associated with the colonial era, the independence of African states – especially in the 1960s – did not halt the production of academic papers on African societies. African Studies were reinforced with critical perspectives and new epistemological trends, introducing the parameter of the role of colonialism in the postcolonial development of African societies.[3] An illustrative example is postcolonial theories, which, despite any contradictions, have attempted to disentangle the various interpretive schemes from the Eurocentric framework (Abrahamsen, 2003; Hill, 2005). However, Africans themselves have also sought to speak for themselves, either in the context of their claims to 'Black identity' or embedded within the academic framework of African Studies as it has been shaped in Europe. Africa demands reconsideration outside of dominant European frameworks (Ogunyankin, 2019).

Some believe that independence did not free Africa from colonial dependencies (Ocheni and Nwankwo 2012), while others, by referring to colonialism, attempt to answer the question: Why has Africa failed to meet the challenges of modernity and globalization? (Táíwò, 2010). There are, of course, perspectives that 'imagine' what Africa could have been like if not for its colonial past (Heldring and Robinson 2012), and there is also the view that wants Africa not to be seen as an exclusive victim of the West. By giving voice to Africans themselves, the aim is to bring a constructive internal critique of their involvement in issues affecting the continent into the dialogue (Lonsdale, 2005).

Africa is perceived with a multitude of stereotypes based on the Eurocentrism of its scholars and also on criteria linked to the needs of colonialism. Therefore, the study of Africa's societies requires that our knowledge of this continent be continually scrutinized.

To understand the place of African Studies in contemporary academia, one is called upon to trace who, with what motivations, and in whose interests they study Africa (Kessi et al., 2020). For this reason, it is relevant to examine countries without a colonial past and, in fact, without direct interest in the development of the African continent.

Despite the Western countries' monopolization of African Studies, the expressed interest of countries without a colonial past – many of which approach Africa through the context of colonial or post-colonial paternalism– is not negligible. These countries often conduct research within the framework of diplomacy, economic and trade relations, history, and migration. Notably, some of them maintained strong academic and political ties with Africa during the socialist era (Skalník 2016; Tarrósy & Solymári 2022). As Tarrósy and Solymári (2022:115) note, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communist regimes in countries such as Hungary changed the agenda of their priorities, shifting them toward goals such as EU membership, Euro-Atlantic integration and individual ethnic issues. This result in a decline in interest in Africa, which of course was revitalized in the following years.

Basedau (2020), argues that research on Africa continues to be dominated by external, non-African, mainly Western views, which usually focus on negative aspects of Africa, overlooking progress in many areas. It also argues that Comparative African Studies can identify causal relationships and general trends both within Africa and between Africa and other regions. We support the view that African Studies conducted by non-colonial countries can contribute in this debate. Besides, the EU's increasing interest in Africa –expressed through the organization of EU-Africa Summits– is an incentive for other countries without a previous colonial past to get involved expressing in many ways –diplomatic, political and academic– their interest in Africa.

In this article, we focus on Greece and Turkey offering a comparative overview of African Studies in the two neighboring countries which share the characteristics of lacking a colonial past, holding a significant geopolitical position in the Balkans and the winder Middle East, and maintaining relatively close geographical proximity to Africa. Through the examination of these cases, we aim to fill the scientific gap in the relevant literature. The questions we will address and hope to contribute fruitfully to the debate are as follows: 1) Why are countries without a colonial past, such as Greece and Turkey, interested in studying African societies? 2) Are their motivations purely related to their scientific interest in Africa and its residents, or are they related to searching for answers to issues concerning their place within the contemporary world? 3) Have links been established between African intellectuals and the scientific communities in Greece and Turkey that deal with Africa?

2. The interest in Africa, as expressed by African Studies in Greece

The Greek interest in Africa is initially linked to the existence of a wider commercial diaspora that had its origin in the Ottoman area and extended northwards to the countries of Western and Central Europe, Russia and the Black Sea countries (Hassiotis, 1993; Korma, 2017), and to the North African countries such as Egypt (Hadjiiosif, 1981; Kitroeff, 1989; 2019; Soulogiannis, 1999; Karanasou, 1999; Dalachanis, 2017), Sudan (Kamitsis, 1961; Chaldeos, 2018), as well as Libya and Tunisia that attracted Ottoman citizens of Greek origin (Kazdaghli, 2000; Agathangelidou, 2003; Chaldeos, 2015). Greeks, mostly seafarers, were found in the late 19th century in South Africa (Mantzaris, 1984) and its neighbouring countries, such as Zambia (former Northern Rhodesia) and Zimbabwe (former Southern Rhodesia) (Mantzaris, 1980). However, there is evidence of earlier individual presence in Madagascar (Condominas, 1968).

Various Greek travelers – doctors, journalists, artists – such as Nikolaidès (1923), Prokopiou (1930), Pahtikos (1938), Papamihail (1951), and Sakéllaridès (1960) were initially concerned with the Greek presence in Africa. These works are descriptive approaches and data collection efforts of great importance to researchers, published either with the authors' own resources or with support from the Greek communities in Africa. Scientific studies on Greeks in sub-Saharan Africa are limited, with the relevant literature including the works of Natsoulas (1975), Lazidou (2004), Métaxidès (2010a, 2010b), and Akono and Métaxidès (2017).

Greek academics, as well as the wider public, have limited knowledge of Africa. Before 2000, there were very few books on the Greek market about Africa, such as Basil Davidson's classic book (1997), Asteris Huliaras's book (1997), and Giannis Markakis's (1998) composite report on the Greek diaspora in Africa. Markakis was the first professor of African Studies in Greece, specializing in the study of political development in the Horn of Africa), which encompasses Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, and Djibouti (Markakis, 1968, 1987, 1993, 1996). Since 2000, and especially in the 2010s, books have been appearing on the Greek book market that bring the Greek public – not only academics– closer to Africa.[4]

Apart from Markakis, academic professors dealing with Africa are Huliaras, Magliveras, Petropoulos, and Tsekenis [see Huliaras (1998, 2012), Huliaras and Petropoulos (2015), Huliaras and Magliveras (2008, 2011), Magliveras and Naldi (2013, 2024), Tsékénis (2010a, 2010b, 2015) and Makris (1996, 2000)]. However, the corresponding departments, such as the Department of History and Archaeology and the Department of Oriental and African Studies at the University of Crete, where Markakis taught, are not staffed with academics specializing in Africa, but rather with subjects more broadly related to ancient and medieval Byzantine and early Ottoman history. Moreover, in Greece, there are no autonomous departments specializing in African Studies, such as the respective departments of Turkish and Asian Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Balkan Slavic and Oriental Studies at the University of Macedonia.

Despite the African continent's geographical proximity and its growing geopolitical role at regional and global levels, engagement with Africa at the academic level is relatively recent. Between 2010 and 2013, Harokopio University and the University of Peloponnese jointly organized an action titled "Investigation of the Potentials and Integration Prospects of African Migrants in the Greek Host Society." In 2013, Professor Huliaras, in collaboration with Professor Magliveras, founded "The Hellenic Network of African Studies" (see https://hellenicafricanstudies.wordpress.com/) which aims to join the forces of Greek researchers interested in Africa. In 2014, Professor Huliaras organized a conference titled "The European Union and Africa: Interregional Dynamics" at the Institute of Diplomacy and Global Affairs in Athens. Moreover, in Greece, there are think tanks and research institutes that deal with international relations issues and, in a broad sense, likely encompass issues related to Africa. However, they do not specialize in it.[5]

Another effort aimed at bringing together Greek researchers with an interdisciplinary interest in Africa is the two-day conference entitled "Sub-Saharan Africa in Research and University Teaching in Greece," co-organized by the French School of Athens, the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations in Paris, and the University of Aegean and Harokopio. The two-day conference took place at the French School of Athens from October 30 to 31, 2023.

Today, there is a gradually growing scientific interest in Africa, despite the fact that proposals from Greek doctoral candidates are limited, especially in cases that require field studies in Africa.[6] Searching at the National Archive of PhD Theses (https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/), we found that there are few dissertations about Africa, and only 20 of them were supported in Greek university departments between 1984 and 2023. More specifically, six of these were in political science departments, one in international relations, two in geography, two in history, five in science departments (polytechnic, medicine, biology, geology, and agriculture), and one each in departments of law, theology, economics, and social anthropology. Therefore, there is interest in the preparation of doctoral theses in various departments, which demonstrates a tendency to approach and study Africa through different disciplines. There is an enrichment of scientific debate and our understanding of Africa. Additionally, a better comprehension of Africa and the issues faced by its residents can help build a bridge for communication and cooperation.[7]

There seems to be no political interest in strengthening relations between Greece and Africa through a rational government proposal. In Greece, since the early 1960s, there has been a vision of the country gaining a leading position in the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. This vision took shape when the 1967 Junta sought international recognition, as Western countries had not recognized the regime.[8] Greece's opening to Africa began in 1969, when the military dictatorship ruling the country supported Muammar Gaddafi's revolution against King Idris. In the following years, official visits to Greece by African leaders took place.[9] Similarly, Pattacos, one of the leaders of the Junta, visited Libya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Congo and the Central African Republic on behalf of the regime in 1971 and the Ivory Coast, Gabon, Senegal and Cameroon in 1972. Greece's civilizing role in Africa included the strengthening of economic transactions, the enrollment of Africans in military schools, and the development of missionary work by the Orthodox Church. Essentially, the Junta promoted Western interests in the continent, with the main goal of distancing Africa from the influence of the Soviet Union. As a result, the Junta's contacts with Africa are characterised as meaningless and without concrete results (Panoutsopoulos, 2018; 2022).

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The Greek governments, after the period of democratic transition in Greece, have not shown a keen interest in Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa.[10] In recent years, this seems to be changing, but the policies seem contradictory. In Greece there is only a small number of African embassies located in the capital city, Athens, while there are no embassies located on other region of Greece. Also, in Athens there is a relatively significant number of African honorary consulates and a few in Thessaloniki and Rethymno (Map 1). Moreover, regarding the diplomatic presence in Africa, Greek embassies exist in only 12 countries, a relatively small number considering that the African continent comprises 54 countries, and also small compared with Turkey's embassies in 40 countries. However, consulates (general and honorary) exist in more countries, 14 and 24 respectively, even more than the corresponding Turkey (Map 2). Additionally, the presence of official Greek government officials in Africa, with the aim of strengthening bilateral relations, is extremely limited. However, in recent years, for the first time, a Greek Foreign Minister (specifically Nikos Dendias) has visited countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Rwanda in 2021 and South Africa and Mozambique in 2023. In addition, in 2022, he visited Niger for the first time.

In the realm of educational diplomacy, the situation is relatively calm, despite the increasing interest among African students in Greece. This is noteworthy considering that a significant number of young Africans have either been born in Greece or have immigrated to the country.[11] The State Scholarships Foundation offers scholarships to African students, while others are provided by private institutions, such as the Onassis Foundation. Additionally, some students from Africa study in Greece through academic mobility programs.

In conclusion, what connects Greece with Africa is its diaspora, which dates back to the first quarter of the 20th century. However, this diaspora has never had the support of the Greek state, which has never expressed a comprehensive plan for a political proposal to strengthen the Greek element in the Black Continent.[12] Interest in Africa is primarily expressed through the individual interests of some scientists specializing in Africa and various private initiatives, such as those of the “Hellenic African Chamber of Commerce and Development” (https://www.helafrican-chamber.gr/). It is only in recent years that the Greek state has expressed political and diplomatic interest in Africa, ‘following’ Turkey’s moves to reduce, as far as possible, the distance separating the diplomatic presence of the two countries on the continent.

3. The interest in Africa as expressed by African Studies in Turkey

For many years and until relatively recently, African issues have been a low priority in both political and academic circles in Turkey. Since the 1990s – mainly due to Turkey’s growing interest in Africa at the political level – a high priority has been given to the study of African issues. Although contemporary interest focuses mainly on Turkish–African relations (see Enwere and Yilmaz, 2014; Chigozie and Yilmaz, 2014; Tepeciklioğlu, 2017, Bayram, 2020; 2022; Hazar and Tepeciklioğlu, 2021), African Studies in Turkey have made progress and continue to engage with other scientific fields. Initially, African Studies in Turkey were part of the field of international relations and the study of specific regions[13] in which scientific interest began immediately after the end of the Second World War (Tepeciklioğlu, 2016: 4).

The interest in Africa, however, began much earlier, namely during the Ottoman period, mainly with travel documents and studies that demonstrated the Ottoman Empire’s significant relationship with Africa in the 19th century (Tepeciklioğlu, 2016: 9). A fascinating study is that of Minawi (2016), who convincingly explains that the Ottoman Empire’s colonial aspirations were as complex as those of other great powers. The relationship between the Ottoman past and Africa, along with the anti-colonial discourse, consists of the two main pillars on which, at a theoretical level, Turkey’s foreign policy interest in Africa is based (Bilgic and Nascimento, 2014: 2).

Since its establishment in 1923, the Turkish state has sought to develop relations with the Western world, with a declining interest in Africa (Kaya and Warner, 2012: 3). In the 1960s, the vast majority of African regions gained independence. This was the period during which Turkey began its efforts to strengthen relations with Africa, with meager results, as the will and resources to implement such a policy were still lacking. The political climate was not fertile ground for the academic development of studies on Africa (Tepeciklioğlu, 2016: 7). However, as early as the 1970s, some important books and studies on Africa, translated into Turkish, were gradually published (ibid., 10). The coups of 1960, 1971, and 1980 significantly impacted the political environment, which in turn affected the academic environment, ultimately reducing the productivity of Turkish universities, as was the case in Greece.

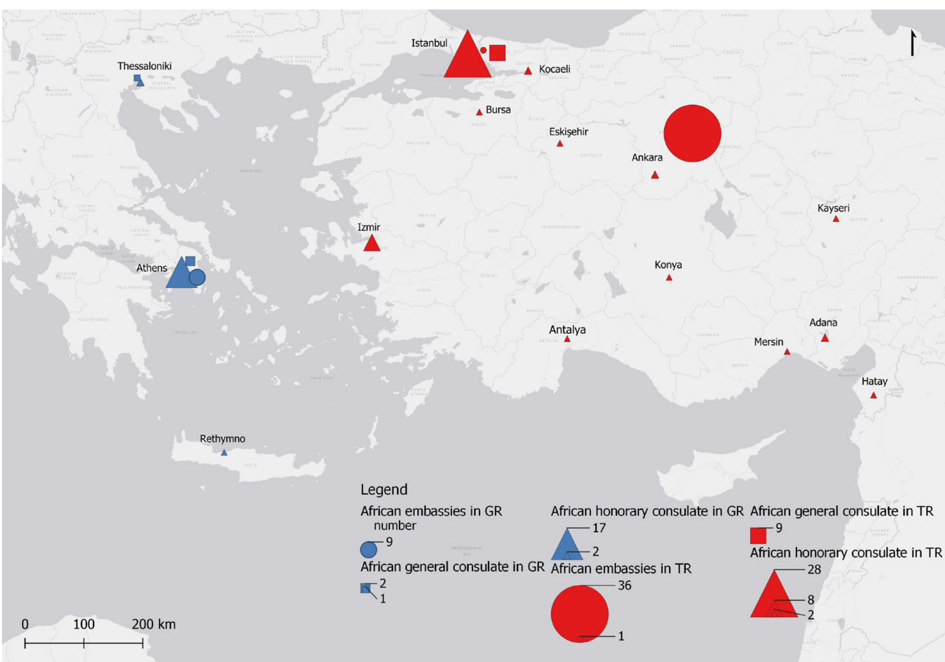
The modern policy of openness of the Turkish nation-state towards Africa started only in 1998 (Kaya and Warner, 2012; Bilgic and Nascimento, 2014; Binaté, 2019) and is linked to the political orientation of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government in the early 2000s (Tepeciklioğlu, 2016: 10). This increase in Turkey's interest in Africa has created a Turkish migratory interest towards the Black Continent, which is clearly influenced by Turkey's growing diplomatic interest in African countries[14] and the large number of destinations to Africa – over 60 – served by Turkish Airlines (Köse, 2021: 74). According to 2025 data the diplomatic interest of Turkey in Africa is very intense. There is a large number of African embassies in Turkey with the majority of them located in the capital city, Ankara. Also, there is a large number of African honorary consulates in Istanbul and fewer are distributed across different areas within Turkey (specifically in the southern and western coasts of Anatolia, also known as Asia Minor) (Map 1). At the same time, Turkey's embassies expanding across the entire African continent, although the consular authorities of Turkey are very few (Map 2).

In an effort to strengthen its geopolitical position, Turkey increased its bilateral relations with many African countries, became involved in African issues by actively intervening in African organizations such as the "African Development Bank" (Angey, 2014), and tried to be Africa's voice in international institutions (Angey, 2009: 13). It exploited religious diplomacy (see Bruce, 2012: 144) by attempting to play an international role between Africa and the Arab-Muslim world (Binaté, 2019: 224), participating in peacekeeping missions and providing humanitarian and development aid, especially to Muslim states (Angey, 2014: 14), strengthening its relations with regional organizations, developing economic cooperation with African countries by increasing the volume of trade with them (Angey, 2009; 2014; Binaté, 2019), and investing in the construction of infrastructure (Angey, 2014: 21, 22). Another area of cooperation is the exchange of students and the provision of scholarships (Angey, 2009: 13), as well as encouraging business travel and business partnerships. "*All these goals were more or less achieved in the following years, primarily reflected in the opening of new embassies in various African countries*" (Bilgic and Nascimento, 2014). In a not merely symbolic move, Ankara declared 2005 the "Year of Africa", a year that one commentator described as a "*turning point*" for Turkish-African relations, as many unprecedented high-level visits took place and Turkey gained observer status in the African Union (Kaya and Warner, 2012: 2).

Universities have followed the political and economic interest in Africa, offering postgraduate studies and establishing Africa-oriented research centers.[15] The contribution of the academic community in creating knowledge about Africa has benefited not only the academic community itself,[16] but also the governmental bodies responsible for policy-making. Since 2005, the production of studies about Africa has become more systematic (Tepeciklioğlu, 2016: 11), and academic production has expanded to cover areas such as African cinema, poetry, media, geography, education, migration, religion, history, security, tourism, economy, and the natural environment (Tepeciklioğlu, 2016: 12). Contemporary studies on Africa are complemented by studies that "return" to the Ottoman past and historically document the Ottoman Empire's involvement in Africa (Kaya and Warner, 2012: 3).

African Studies in Turkey are linked to university research centers for Africa (Tepeciklioğlu, 2016: 14; 15), and to several private think tanks such as TASAM (Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies,) which has been organizing an annual Turkish-African conference since 2005, ODAM (Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies) and others (ibid, 13), but also to state agencies, such as TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) and ASCA (African Solidarity and Cooperation Association). Turkish academic diplomacy includes the provision of scholarships to students, including those from Africa, with the number of the latter increasing rapidly over the last decade. In 1980, fewer than 100 African students were studying in Turkish universities. The economic cooperation that Turkey has established with African countries has led to an increase in the number of scholarships available to African students.[17]

The qualitative study by Dziwornu et al. (2016) is quite interesting. They analyzed the intentions of 15 African students studying at Süleyman Demirel University about their prospects and plans after their graduation. Despite the fact that most African countries are closely associated with some former colonial power, African



Map 1: African diplomatic missions in Greece and in Turkey.
Data source: Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Protocol directorate 2025 and https://www.mfa.gov.tr/
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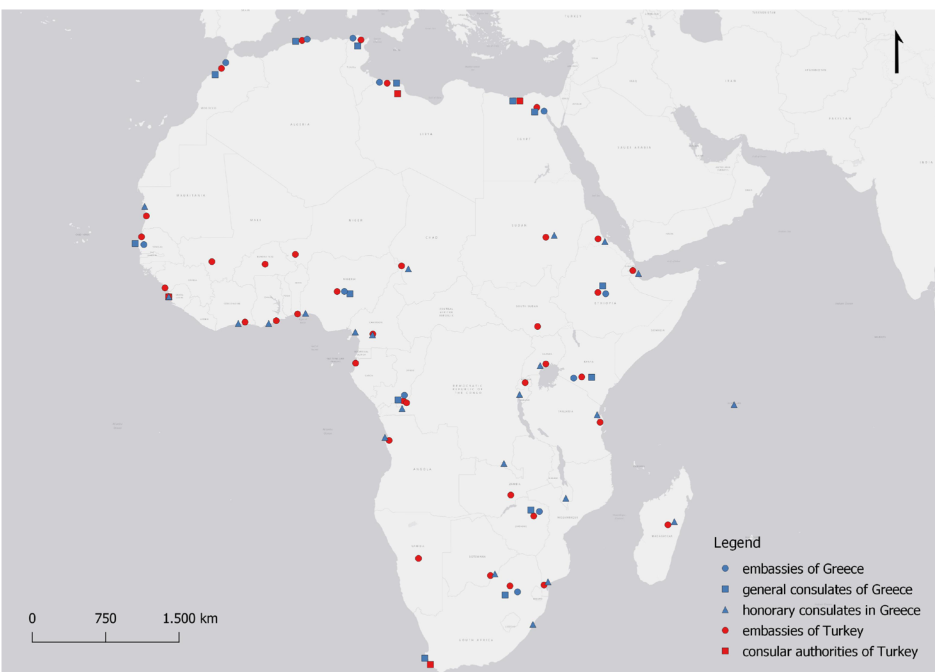
students state that Western European countries do not attract them due to the lack of scholarships and the high cost of living there. The points that discourage African students from choosing France or Britain, for example, are the main reasons why they ultimately choose Turkey.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Turkish reality is favorable to the development of African Studies, both at the political and academic levels. The interaction between the two seems to be important.

4. Concluding thoughts

Academic interest in African issues almost always arises from the relationship that has previously been established between the country in which this interest develops and Africa. In the case of the former colonial powers, this relationship was rooted in the colonial past, and any interests of Western European countries that were linked to this were tied to their knowledge of Africa. In the case of countries without a colonial past, this relationship may also be influenced by other factors, such as geographical, political, social, or cultural aspects, which do not seem to be characterized by purely academic interests.



Map 2: Embassies and consular authorities of Greece and Turkey in Africa.
Data source: Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Protocol directorate 2025 and https://www.mfa.gov.tr/
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Among the countries with a non-colonial past are Greece and Turkey, which are the focus of our article. As far as Greece is concerned, although no department specializes in this academic field independently, interest in Africa is expressed by individual researchers and academics. This is not due to a lack of academic interest in African issues, but mainly to the fact that African studies – perhaps also due to the country's non-colonial past – is not a priority.

In the case of Turkey, the development of African studies is linked to both the traditional political ties of the Ottoman period and the contemporary political practices that Turkey is developing as a regional power seeking to play a significant role in the broader African and Eurasian regions. This political culture became the yeast that contributed to the development of the corresponding academic interest, confirming the fact that "*important events and developments in international politics and foreign policy have a fundamental impact on how those disciplines are studied and treated by academics*" (Tepeciklioğlu 2016: 4). The policy of cooperation promoted by the Turkish government is also transferred to the corresponding level of cooperation at the academic level, which is not developed in a corresponding institutional way in Greece.

Greece, despite its long-standing ties with the African continent, has only come into contact with African realities in the last decades, having been transformed from a country of origin for immigration to a receiving country for, among others, African immigrants and refugees (Papadopoulos and Fratsea, 2013). On the other hand, Turkey, despite its policy of openness toward Africa, is also confronted with African migration, which, to a significant extent, exploits the migration routes of the wider region en route to Europe (Wissink et al., 2018, 2020).

In examining the characteristics of African studies in Greece and Turkey, we find that although neither country has a colonial past, their perspectives on African issues are inevitably shaped by a form of "Eurocentrism." This is due to the fact that Africa, in terms of its realities and cultures, is regarded as an "Other" that remains relatively unknown to their general and academic audiences.[18] This Eurocentrism is logically more pronounced in Greek affairs, given the role of the Greek diaspora in Africa in support of the colonial system, and is further underscored by Greece's accession to the European Union in 1981. In contrast, Turkey's approach to international relations does not prominently reflect Eurocentrism, or what might be more accurately described as 'Western-centrism.' This is largely due to its Eastern cultural traditions and its policies in Africa, which are characterized by a focus on fostering equal partnerships rather than colonialism. Cooperation between academic institutions in Turkey and Greece could enhance the field of African studies in Greece. Considering that the Greek government, particularly regarding African affairs, somewhat aligns with Turkey's approach – albeit from a distance – this collaboration could positively influence the academic landscape in both countries.

Knowledge about Africa produced in Greece is based on the fields of politics and international relations, anthropological knowledge related to the societies of the continent and to some extent on geography and history on issues concerning the

Greek diaspora on the Black Continent, but in recent years also on issues of African migration to Southern Europe, Turkey and the Balkans. Similar themes also shape research and teaching about Africa in Turkey. The relevant role played by the Greek diaspora in Africa for some scholars in Greece is matched by Turkey's growing political and economic interest in Africa in recent decades. On the other hand, the presence of African students, economists, migrants and asylum seekers in Greece and Turkey is a potential criterion for the development of the interest of these two countries in Africa. In the case of Turkey, this translates into political and diplomatic interest, which is hardly the case in Greece.

Despite the fact that African Studies was born in the colonial era, the African diasporic phenomenon, as well as the transnational movements of Africans over several decades, these latter have been a powerful factor in strengthening scholarly interest in Africa beyond colonial studies (Schramm, 2008).

Notes

1 As an extension of African American studies, African Studies in the US followed the hegemonic role the country acquired after World War II (Martin and Young, 1984). The field of African Studies in China has grown steadily since the late 1990s, in a variety of disciplines while still maintaining a balance between practical and academic research (Anshan, 2005). Finally, for Japan, these studies have become increasingly important as a source of investment and foreign aid (Philips, 1997: 161) and are linked to scientific disciplines of relevance to it, such as earthquake studies (ibid, 163; 164).

2 The initial interest in Africa was geographical, especially at a time – the 19th century – when European public opinion was ignorant of the black continent. Until the 1950s, Africa was administered by the so-called colonial powers, mainly France and Britain, within a framework that defined the colonized as different from the colonizers, and thus their proper administration required their study. Since the 1960s, the colonial powers have withdrawn from Africa, but continue to exist more or less behind the scenes in the lives of their former colonies (Cooper, 2002).

3 It is important to mention that when we talk about Africa, we are essentially talking about sub-Saharan Africa.

4 Indicatively, translated into Greek, the works of Baṭṭṭūṭa, I. (2000). *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*. Stoxastis; Kapinsky, R. (2009). *Ebony, the colour of Africa*. Metaihmio Publishers; Cooper, Fr. (2023). *Africa since 1940: Yesterday and today*. Klidarithmos Publishers. There are also books by Greek scholars (Makris, 2015; Livieratos, 2013; Kefala, 2015; Tsekenis, 2020).

5 These are the "Institute of International Relations" (IIR), the "Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy" (ELIAMEP), the "International Centre for Black Sea Studies" and the "Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East and Islamic Studies" (KEMMIS).

6 Professor Makris –in a discussion we had with him– pointed out the security issues faced by the Greek doctoral candidates who might be invited to do fieldwork in Africa. Also, he pointed out the lack of organized institutions to support researchers, such as the "French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development" (IRD-Research Institute for Development) which is officially supported by the French Government and maintains cooperation strategies with universities and research institutions in Africa.

7 At the academic level, Greece's presence in the European family opens up –potentially– academic cooperation prospects in all scientific fields, through EU funding programs (Kraemer et al. 2018).

[8] In September 1967, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands accused Greece of violating the European Convention on Human Rights at the European Commission of Human Rights. In 1969, the Junta reacted by withdrawing from the Council of Europe.

[9] President Joseph Desire Mobutu of Zaire visited Greece in 1969 and President Jean Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic visited Greece in 1970 and 1972.

[10] Greece as an EU member state participates in the growing number of agreements between the EU and African states, but there is no common policy at national level. Greece's main aspiration is the support of African countries to be elected to the non-permanent members of the Security Council for the period 2025-2026.

[11] Besides, according to the 2021 census data, 23,515 people of African nationality reside in Greece. Of these, 27.8% are young Africans aged up to 24 years old (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2023).

[12] In 1998 a general study on the Greek diaspora was carried out with European funding (Kazakos, 1998).

[13] According to Tepeciklioğlu, (2016: 5) "*As of 2015, there are 27 graduate programs on European studies, with only three graduate programs on Africa – and one of these is combined with the neighboring Middle East region*". The first department of Middle Eastern and African Studies was established in 1982 at Gazi University in Ankara.

[14] To increase its influence and presence in Africa, Turkey is increasing the number of its embassies in Africa. The number of embassies increased from just 3 in 1950 to 10 in the early 1990s, with the number soaring to 39 in 2019 (see http://geopoliticalfutures.com/how-turkey-won-over-africa/ and Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs). However, the growth has remained static in the following six years, with the number reaching only 40 embassies by 2025 (Source: https://www.mfa.gov.tr/).

[15] For example, at Istanbul Ticaret University there is an interdisciplinary master's level program which started in 2018.

[16] In the period 1986-2014, 108 theses and dissertations were written on Africa. Of these, more than half were written between 2010-2014 (Tepeciklioğlu, 2016: 8).

[17] The number of African students in Turkey between 1995 and 2008 did not exceed 100 per year, with the relative curve rising sharply after 2009 (see Figure 2. Number of African Students in Turkey from 1995-2014 in Dziwornu et al., 2016: 232). Between 1991 and 2013, 3,254 scholarships were awarded to African students, of which only 1,090 were awarded during 2014-2015 (Uchehara, 2010; Tepeciklioğlu, 2017).

[18] The Turkish academic public, as we have already discussed in this paper, has a greater familiarity than the corresponding Greek one.

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UNDERSTANDING IMPOLITE UTTERANCES ON FACEBOOK IN KENYA: A CYBERPRAGMATIC APPROACH

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the different pragmatic strategies that Kenyans use to understand impolite utterances on Facebook. Research shows that impoliteness is common in today's society. For example, in the political arena, Kenyan politicians use both positive and negative Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) to convey their agendas. This highlights the significance of language choices in communication. Additionally, parliamentarians utilize both positive and negative politeness strategies to ensure effective communication within the National Assembly. This approach helps mitigate threats to face and emphasizes the importance of linguistic politeness in promoting harmonious interactions. Research shows that individuals who communicate online tend to display more aggressive and antagonistic behaviors. Online platforms often provide users the opportunity to behave unpleasantly. In the context of cyberbullying among university students, strategies such as blocking offenders, pursuing legal action, and enhancing online security are employed to combat this issue. These proactive measures aim to address the impoliteness commonly found in digital interactions, highlighting that online communication typically exhibits higher levels of impoliteness compared to face-to-face communication. Using the inferential cognitive and social cognitive systems in Escandell-Vidal's (2004) theory of impoliteness, the study qualitatively analyzed data. Findings indicate that both the inferential cognitive and social cognitive systems work simultaneously in the interpretation of impoliteness on Facebook.

Keywords

cyberbullying:, impoliteness, antagonistic, cyberpragmatics, Kenya

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1. Introduction

The growth in the number of internet users has necessitated a rise in research on internet language. Yus (2011: 1) claims that this surge in internet research has been observed because the internet, as a medium of communication, has prompted studies on human behavior by social scientists, educators, and marketers. One area of study that emerged due to the surge in internet studies is Cyberpragmatics. Cyberpragmatics is a term coined by Francisco Yus in 2001 to refer to the cognitive study or evaluation of computer-mediated communication (CMC), also known as internet-mediated communication. Francisco Yus has applied this brand of pragmatics to conduct research in various contexts (2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). These studies primarily analyze the challenges faced by interactants when attempting to compensate for a "lack of orality" (Yus, 2021:77) in various contexts. Pragmatics refers to the study of language in use, encompassing the appreciation of literary works and digital spaces (Bernabéu and Ortega, 2024; Martello, 2023).

Cyberpragmatics is grounded in relevance theory, where context plays a crucial role in the production and interpretation of information. According to Sperber and Wilson (1987: 40), context is shaped by a person's assumptions about the world and is utilized in the interpretation process of communicative acts or stimuli. Context can be categorized into various sources of information that a person uses to derive meaning and interpret the intended message of another participant in a conversation. For example, an interlocutor can gather information from their general knowledge, the physical environment, previous remarks made during the same interaction, and from what they remember clearly from the conversation. Consequently, each participant in the dialogue has a preliminary context made up of prior utterances or statements spoken earlier in that exchange (Sperber and Wilson, 1987: 593).

In addition, Sperber and Wilson (1987) postulate that the relevance of a proposition may be minimized or maximized by variations in contextual information. Of more interest to relevance theory is how interactants cognitively combine new information and contextual information to generate contextual implications (593). Regarding the internet, Yus (2011: 15) asserts that interactants have limited access to contextual information, which is attributed to the characteristics of various media of communication. This limited access to contextual information on the internet is constrained or limited by the features of the different channels of communication. This is in accord with Kelsey and Amant's (2008: 426) views of CMC as a medium that de-personalizes. The features of the internet media reduce contextual information available to both interactants, resulting in social anonymity.

In the same vein, Metz (1994: 39) postulates that CMC lacks regulating cues, such as recognizing when an interactant understands the message before moving on to the next topic and speaking when spoken to. Moreover, Sproull and Kiesler (1986: 1494) argue that there is a complete absence of expressive (nonverbal) behavior cues such as nods, eye contact, tone of voice, and distance, which cause a lot of misunderstanding as a consequence of perceived meaning derived from the tone and context left to human imagination. Since substantial pragmatic consequences are associated with variations in accessibility to context, there are also consequences related to the amount and quality of information produced and interpreted within it.

Just as in face-to-face conversations, context is crucial in the production and interpretation of online information (Lai, 2024: 2633-2634). Interactants adjust the target, verbal content, and tone of their utterances in response to their interpretation of the situation (Sproull and Kiesler, 1986: 1494). On the internet, the conversational tasks of the "addresser user" (speaker) and the "addressee user" (hearer) are no different from those that characterize face-to-face conversations. The "sender user" (speaker) predicts that his [her] interlocutor will arrive at relevant conclusions by accessing contextual information that is necessary for the interpretation process. Similarly, "addressee users" (hearers) are expected to search for relevance in texts, pictures, videos, or any form of utterance and process it (Yus, 2011: 14).

Kesley and Amant share the same assumptions that, contrary to face-to-face conversation, computer-mediated communication is characterized by conversational constraints due to a lack of contextual cues that are readily available in face-to-face communication.

Kesley and Amant (2008: 934) share the same assumptions that, contrary to face-to-face conversation, computer-mediated communication is characterized by conversational constraints due to a lack of contextual cues that are readily available in face-to-face communication. They even go further to claim that CMC lacks paralinguistic features that facilitate the efficiency of encoding and decoding messages among interactants. Prosodic features, which fall under paralinguistic features, such as intonation, pitch, accent, tone of voice and pause, enable interactants to communicate a variety of emotional as well as socio-cognitive meanings. Typing on a keyboard also does not facilitate the deliverance of non-verbal signals such as facial expressions and gestures that convey affective and interpersonal stances.

Besides, typed texts on the keyboard are cues-filtered, and may require, in some instances, extra mental effort hence making it difficult for the internet users to identify their interlocutor's hidden intentions, feelings, emotions and attitudes (Yus, 2011: 18). Eventually, they affect the relevance of communication that is text-based. One thing that cuts across all cyber media is the existence of an information gap that needs to be filled through the inference process despite the fact that these internet media offer limited choices for contextualization. Information gaps that need to be filled inferentially exist between what an interactant intends to convey and what he [she] actually utters, and between what the speaker utters and what his [her] interlocutor picks up.

To summarize, context is crucial in the production and interpretation of utterances in internet-mediated communication, just as it is in face-to-face interaction. The interpretation process that characterizes face-to-face interaction is no different from the one that characterizes internet-mediated communication. However, accessibility to contextual information in internet-mediated communication is limited compared to other, more context-saturated forms of communication. If this is the case, is the interpretation of impoliteness on the internet affected in any way since the latter heavily relies on contextual information? This study, therefore, sought to determine the pragmatic strategies Kenyans employ in the interpretation of impolite utterances on Facebook.

The study was therefore guided by the following research question: which pragmatic strategies do Kenyans employ in the interpretation of impolite utterances on Facebook? This paper has various sections. The second section of the paper gives an overview of impoliteness in Computer- Mediated Communication while section three discusses Escandell Vidal's (2004) Theory of Impoliteness. The methods used in the study will be detailed in section four. Section five is dedicated to findings followed by the concluding remarks.

2. An Overview of Impoliteness in Computer-Mediated Communication

According to Yus (2011: 269), no sentence structure or phrase is inherently polite or impolite; therefore, context plays a crucial role in the study of (im)politeness. (Im) politeness is a dynamic process, meaning that linguistic structures themselves do not dictate (im)politeness. Instead, it is the interpretation of these structures by interactants during communication that determines whether something is perceived as polite or impolite (Watts, 2003:8). Impoliteness theory also takes into consideration the context of interaction (O'Keefes, Clancy and Adolphs, 2011: 73). Much of the work on impoliteness tends to move away from paying attention to an individual's grammatical or lexical strategies; hence, impoliteness theorists are most interested in the hearer's response to an impolite utterance and how interactants resolve a particular confrontational encounter since more often than not, impoliteness triggers a reaction from the hearer (O'Keefes, Clancy and Adolphs, 2011: 71). Chapman (2011: 140) affirms this by postulating that impoliteness theory takes into consideration the context of interaction since there are some instances where the combination of context and the communicative act amount to impoliteness.

Hardaker (2012: 71) opines that interactants are more predisposed to aggressive behavior or conflict while communicating online. This is facilitated by several factors, such as the anonymity that characterizes CMC, which may encourage aggression, manipulation, and deception (Hardaker, 2012: i). Hardaker (2015) examined the trolling and flaming that characterize CMC. While both are considered antagonizing behaviors, 'trolling' is basically intentional and carried out for amusement's sake (Hardaker, 2015: 202), and 'flaming' is aggressive and hostile and can be termed as an extreme overreaction by an interactant to a post (Graham and Hardaker, 2017: 804). Graham (2007: 743) also shares the assumption that flaming characterizes

CMC and that it manifests in a similar way to offline impoliteness, particularly in terms of the degree of hostility. Yus (2011: 265) supports this notion by claiming that impoliteness manifests on the internet in the form of flaming, attributing this to the absence of physical co-presence on the internet.

Metz (1994: 39) attributes online impoliteness to a lack of or limited regulating feedback that governs behavior, such as recognizing when an interlocutor understands the message before moving on to the next topic and speaking when spoken to. These findings are analogous to those of Sproull and Kiesler (1986:1495). The latter postulates that when there are strong social context cues in an interaction, behavior tends to be relatively differentiated, other-focused, and controlled; however, when these cues are weak, interactants' feelings of anonymity lead them to be relatively self-centered and uncontrolled. According to the Social Presence theory, which deals with bandwidth and social presence in relation to more traditional media, nonverbal cues play a crucial role in any form of communication, as they make the communicator's presence more salient and enhance the friendliness and warmth of the interaction. Online communication lacks nonverbal cues. Moreover, text-based systems have low bandwidth, which translates to a limited social presence (Walther, 2002: 531). In support of this, Kiesler (1986: 48) claims that computer-mediated communication lacks the nonverbal cues that typically characterize face-to-face interaction, especially those used to express setting, purpose, roles, decorum, effect, and relative status. Without these cues, interactants would become engrossed in themselves and the task and end up disinhibited and hostile.

In addition, the cues-filtered model posits that the functions played by nonverbal cues in face-to-face communication are unmet in computer-mediated communication. This is mainly because non-verbal cues are lacking; thus, computer-mediated communication (CMC) must be impersonal if no other cues can fulfill the social functions that co-presence, physical appearance, and dynamic non-verbal behavior can (Walther, 2002: 532). These findings are analogous to those of Kesley, Sigrid, and Kirk (2008: 935). They opine that the absence of contextual cues leads to linguistic ambiguity and miscommunication, unlike face-to-face communication. Kraut et al. (1992: 375) support this notion by arguing that CMC media not only damages existing offline social ties but also impedes the formation of new ones.

Social media platforms are an indispensable fragment of human life (Gitu, Atoh and Basweti, 2024: 3). These platforms have become means of interaction for the wider community (Purwat et al., 2022: 35). They have also surfaced as a predominant source of information especially for news readers (Kharisma, 2023: 44). In Social Networking Sites (SNS), participants are usually allowed to listen, watch, read, create, comment and share any form of available content. With just a few clicks on the search bar, any imaginable subject can immediately appear on the screen. Due to this ease of access to information, online communication has been almost limitless hitherto. Unfortunately, such expediency on social media platforms often leads to harassment (Nurul, 2018: 71).

Social media platforms have gained immense popularity today, and politicians have embraced this trend. Many of them use these platforms to share their ideas while also capturing public attention (Elaf and Hussein, 2020: 66). Studies indicate that specific journalistic settings on social media encourage particular online behaviors, such as clicking on news items, commenting on them, and sharing them with others. The comment section allows participants to express their opinions, which often leads to a space filled with hatred and extremism. Verbal attacks, hate speech, and other toxic expressions have become commonplace on social media platforms (Kharisma, 2023: 44).

The extent of antagonism and disagreement on the internet is baffling, especially in the interactions that characterize social media platforms. These platforms are characterized by violations of social standards, aggression, incivility, and attacks on interlocutors' social identity and social image (Marta, 2023: 1). This is the case because interlocutors can now interact freely without the constraints of time and space. This causes people to unconsciously evoke things that violate the concept of politeness in language, resulting in impoliteness (Purwat et al., 2022: 35). Additionally, communicators have varied styles and ways of using language when interacting with one another. They are normally aware of their choice of words and would mostly select words wisely, using polite language to ensure that the communication process runs smoothly. However, there are some who do not pay attention to their choice of words, and this necessitates impoliteness (Vini and Delvil, 2018: 225).

In summary, politeness is important for satisfactory relations on the internet, something that is particularly fragile in a multi-geographical communicative environment. Of course, interlocutors are typically placed in very dissimilar speech communities and within different physical locations, which often employ particular politeness strategies that cannot be easily exported to other communities (Yus, 2011: 285). Since it has already been established that computer-mediated communication is characterized by impoliteness, how is it interpreted despite limited contextual information?

3. Escandell-Vidal's Theory of Impoliteness

In a recent study, Escandell-Vidal (2004) proposes that human cognition can process, almost simultaneously, specific pieces of information conveyed in utterances and the social information derived from the processing of inputs. Essentially, there are two cognitive skills of the human mind, which are undertaken by specialized cognitive modules. One of the modules is responsible for processing utterances by filling information gaps, a process referred to as the inferential cognitive system. The other module is known as the social cognitive system, which compares the information gained from interpreting utterances or texts with the social information already stored in our minds. Within this stored information, there is a sub-group that focuses on (im)politeness strategies. Indeed, these cognitive functions are undertaken independently of the origin or source of the utterances, which may vary, for instance, from face-to-face oral interactions to oral communications via mobile devices, typed email messages, and so on. According to this model, repeated communicative interactions produce an increasingly precise picture of the rules, common goals, interests, etc., which characterize interactive behavior within a particular community, including behavior in both physical and virtual environments (Yus, 2011: 283)

The inferential system is geared towards maximizing relevance, to extract the most relevant details from utterances that are normally inferred from the schemata of words uttered by interlocutors. On the other hand, the social system is oriented towards attaining and stabilizing social information from everyday communicative interactions and characteristics, which include the employment of (im)politeness strategies. Typically, the actions of the social cognitive system generate a repository of information regarding (im)politeness strategies that are, with varying degrees of disparity, shared within a community. The two cognitive systems are characterized by the same universal status; that is, they exist in all human beings, and the latter systematically gravitates towards optimizing the information that the systems process (Yus, 2011: 283). This theory proved useful in interpreting impolite utterances on Facebook in Kenya.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study was qualitative in nature since the researchers were interested in linguistic behaviour occurring in a natural setting (Friedman, 2012:185). Instrumental in understanding people's behaviour, attitudes, and interactions, the qualitative method was helpful in studying impoliteness in interactions. The research used two qualitative approaches: observational studies and textual analysis of posts and comments. Regarding observational studies, the researchers examined interactions on Facebook as people went about their daily lives online, without participating or interfering. According to Bryant (n.d.: 5), the observation method allows researchers to capture and understand the context of interactions, which is crucial for this study. This method is essential for collecting data about people's behaviors (Kawulich, 2012: 2). In this research, the researchers employed a covert observation method, where the participants being observed are unaware of their observation. This approach is particularly suitable in situations where participants' knowledge of being observed might alter their behavior (Kawulich, 2012: 3). Therefore, the researchers closely monitored impolite linguistic patterns on Facebook, produced by users either consciously or unconsciously, to achieve more reliable results. The primary objective of this approach was to identify patterns in the discourse that might escape the attention of a casual observer or even the participants themselves. This advantage of the observation method is also noted by Bryant (n.d.: 5). The study focused on interactants' linguistic choices on Facebook regarding impoliteness. These choices were not only conditioned exclusively by linguistic considerations but also by context.

The researchers conducted a textual and content analysis of posts and comments on Facebook, focusing on impolite utterances. They examined how words were used within their specific contexts to infer the nature of impoliteness in the texts. Textual analysis entails choosing the types of texts, acquiring appropriate ones and determining the approach to use to analyze them (Botan et al., 1999: 5). Specifically, content analysis was crucial in this study since it was used to identify and analyze occurrences of particular messages and characteristics of messages embedded in texts (Botan et al., 1999: 3). This method allowed the researchers to analyze data inductively and establish links between the objectives and summary findings generated from the raw data.

4.2 Data Collection

The researchers employed purposive sampling to seek information-rich cases of impoliteness, guided by the model. The corpus of data was sourced from utterances coded in words rather than numbers. Kenya being a multilingual country, the researchers were fully aware that posts and comments would be encoded in English, Kiswahili, and Gikuyu, among others. Kenya is a multilingual country in Africa. It is a home to about 61 existing indigenous languages and one is now extinct. Swahili is one of the indigenous languages, which is used as an official language. Moreover, seven existing non-indigenous languages have already taken root within the country. Among them is English which is used as an official language alongside Swahili (Ethnologue, 2025). The researchers were fully aware that posts and comments would be encoded in English, Swahili, and Gikuyu, among others.

Table 1. gives a breakdown of the indigenous languages spoken in Kenya. *Figure 1.*, the map of Kenya shows the distribution of languages spoken in the country.

The concept of saturation served as a guiding principle in collecting data for this study, as outlined in the qualitative approach. The saturation point refers to a situation where fewer surprises arise as a researcher collects data, and no further emerging issues or patterns within the data are identified (Saunders et al., 2017, 1893). Thus, the saturation point marked the final point of data collection for the researcher. This is why the study considered six strings of conversations, which would help provide a clear picture of the impoliteness situation on Facebook in Kenya.

Ateso	Ekegusii	Kipsigis	Nyala	Rendille
Aweer	El Molo	Kitharaka	Okiek	Sabaot
Borana	Garre	Kuria	Olukhayo	Sagalla
Bukusu	Gichuka	Luidakho-Luisukha-Lutirichi	Olumarachi	Samburu
Chichinyi-Chidzihana-Chikauma	Gikuyu	Lukabaras	Olumarama	Singa
Chidigo	Kamba	Lulogooli	Olunyole	Somali
Chiduruma	Keiyo	Lutachoni	Olusumia	Suba
Daasanach	Kenyan Sign Language	Maasai	Olushisa	Swahili
Dahalo	Kiembu	Markweeta	Olutsotso	Taveta
Dawida	Kigiryama	Mwimbi-Muthambi	Oluwanga	Terik
Dholuo	Kimiiru	Nandi	Omotik	Tugen
	Kipfokomu		Orma	Turkana
			Pokoot	Waata
				Yaaku

Table 1: A table highlighting indigenous languages in Kenya. Source: Ethnologue (2025)

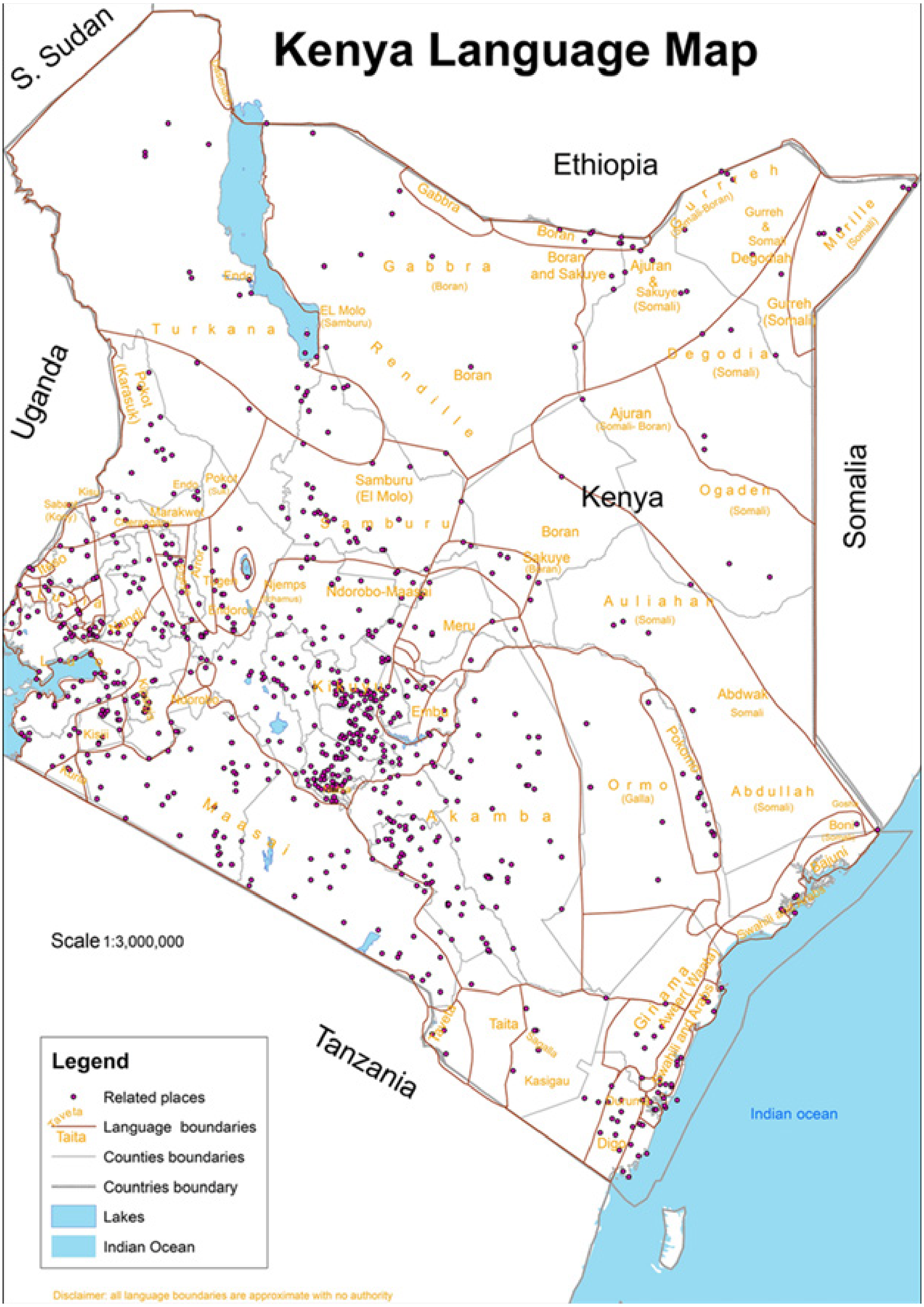

Figure 1: The Map of Kenya showing the distribution of the languages spoken in the country. Source: Nyangweso and Gede (2022:777)

The researchers, who are frequent users of Facebook, identified impolite posts and comments on the platform and recorded them in their original languages. For posts written in Kiswahili and Gikuyu, they made translations into English. When it came to languages the researchers were not familiar with, they sought assistance from competent speakers who could help with the interpretation. The data sampling was not conducted randomly, as random selection would compromise the context—a critical element in interpreting and analyzing the data for this study. The researchers specifically focused on impolite conversations initiated by their friends' posts and certain Facebook pages. These utterances were naturally occurring between participants; thus, the primary data was collected with the participants oblivious to the fact that their comments were under scrutiny. Data was collected just before the 2022 general elections,a period which saw many Kenyans taking to social media to campaign for their favourite politicians. Some of the politicians featured in some of the conversations in this paper managed to clinch prominent seats though they are now facing a backlash from the Kenyan Gen Zs.

Since impoliteness studies analyze larger chunks of language, researchers did not focus on smaller units, such as words or phrases, but rather on entire conversations, as the richest possible context is needed for the analysis of impoliteness. According to Chapman (2011: 140), impoliteness theory considers the context of interaction, as there are instances where the combination of context and the communicative act results in impoliteness. Impoliteness theory focuses on arguments and other forms of conflict, examining how they are initiated, how they develop, and how they might be resolved. As a result, the data used in this theory often encompasses more than just a single turn of conversation; it typically covers longer sequences of naturally occurring dialogues. Additionally, researchers have gathered secondary data on impoliteness from both online literature and library resources.

4.3 Data Analysis

The data were classified and analyzed using Escandell-Vidal's (2004) theoretical model of impoliteness. The inferential cognitive system was employed to fill information gaps, while the social cognitive system was utilized to identify impoliteness in utterances. The two systems played a crucial role in the interpretation process of impolite utterances on Facebook.

5. Findings

The following conversations are characterized by impoliteness. In the first interaction, Speaker A talked about a politician who was popularly known as Father, knowing very well that it infuriated some of his followers. The politician had gone underground after July 7th, 2020, and the speaker was calling upon people to advise the politician. The latter attributed the silence of the politician to stress. The act of mentioning the politician in this post was enough to drive Speaker A's interlocutor to the wall, and this explains why insults ensued afterward.

Post 1: Speaker A: *After 7/7 ni stress tu. Yawa…please advise Baba* (It is just stress after July 7th. Please advise Father)

(a)Speaker B: *Utapatwa hapo tu. Ghasia* (They will find you there. Trash!)

In the above example, Speaker B referred to Speaker A as trash in response to his post. The full proposition was [you are trash]; thus, Speaker A would use inference to fill the information gap with the words [you are], implying that he had just been called trash. In other words, Speaker A would use his inferential cognitive system to reach the assumption that Speaker B had just called him trash. Simultaneously, the social cognitive system would detect a problem in the use of politeness rules adhered to in the Kenyan community. For instance, in Kenya, calling someone 'trash' constitutes an insult; hence, Speaker A would likely assume that Speaker B was not observing politeness rules, which would amount to impoliteness.

Regarding sarcastic comments, situations are usually interpreted ironically rather than literally. For instance, Speaker A posts and comments on his Facebook wall in praise of a very prominent Kenyan politician, who popularly goes by the name 'Baba' or 'Father.' In response, Speaker C calls him 'Mr. Personal Assistant.'

Post 2: Speaker A: *Baba Podpek (RAOnd 1)* (Father is still heavy (popular) -Round 1)

(b) Speaker B: *Wee ngihinguria maitho ngkore arego. You are more gatua-ostrich. Kwa Baba ucio waku uragufudithia kijaka* (When I open my eyes, I want you to be in Alego. You are more of an Ostrich. Off to your Father who is teaching you how to speak Luo language)

Speaker C: *Baba alipona bwana PA?* (Did Father recover Mr. Personal Assistant?)

The full proposition is [You are his personal assistant, for you know a lot about him]. Inference has been used to fill the inferential gap with the words {You are his… for you know a lot about him}. Personal Assistants often have extensive knowledge about their employers or bosses; thus, Speaker C is implying that Speaker A is the politician's Personal Assistant simply because he appears to have a lot of information regarding the politician, including details about his health, which is not accurate. Speaker A is just a Kenyan citizen who is very vocal in matters of politics. He does not even know the politician on a personal level. He is just on a campaign trail, campaigning for his favorite politician. In this circumstance, Speaker C has an intention of communicating an attitude of ridicule or scorn towards Speaker A's post because he is aware that his interlocutor has no personal relationship with the politician. In short, Speaker A would use his inferential cognitive system to arrive at the conclusion that Speaker C has called him Mr. Personal Assistant, the politician's personal Assistant, a position he does not hold. This can only mean that his interlocutor is being sarcastic or ridiculing him. He would simultaneously use his social cognitive system to detect an anomaly in the utilization of politeness rules recognized by the Kenyan community, specifically regarding the use of ridicule or sarcasm, which are considered forms of impoliteness, and conclude that he is being ridiculed, thereby amounting to impoliteness.

In the same conversation, Speaker A praises the same politician, suggesting in his post that the politician remains popular and will win elections by a landslide. Speaker C, in his response, inquires about the politician's health, asking, "Did Father recover, Mr. Personal Assistant?" The full proposition would be [Did Father recover Mr. Personal Assistant now that you know so much about him?]. In his interpretation, Speaker A would use inference to fill the information gap with the words: now that you know so much about him; hence, arrive at the conclusion that Speaker C is ridiculing him, and is being sarcastic, first, by calling him the politician's personal assistant and then asking him about the politician's well-being knowing very well that Speaker A is just an innocent Kenyan campaigning for his favourite politician. Speaker A is simply an innocent Kenyan who has stepped up by campaigning for his favorite politician. He knows very little about the politician's health or personal matters. There has been speculation in the country for some time that the politician's health is not good, but information about his condition is not publicly available. Therefore, no one knows his health status except for those who are very close to him, and Speaker A is not part of his inner circle. In a nutshell, Speaker C is ridiculing Speaker A's campaigning effort by attempting to show that the latter knows nothing about the politician; he is merely pretending to do so. In this regard, Speaker A would use his inferential system to arrive at the conclusion that Speaker C is being sarcastic. Simultaneously, he would use his social cognitive system to detect an anomaly in the use of politeness strategies recognized in Kenya, specifically regarding the use of ridicule, which is considered impolite, thus concluding that he has been ridiculed, which amounts to impoliteness.

In another conversation, Speaker A would use his inferential cognitive system to arrive at the conclusion that Speaker B was implying he was not mentally okay. The former posted a dialogue between a man and a "slay queen" (gold digger). In Kenya, a slay queen refers to a woman who relies solely on men for financial support. They tend to be very extravagant, but every penny they spend on themselves comes from dating men. In other words, they are seen as leeches—generally broke, entirely dependent on men, yet extremely lavish in their lifestyles. The term "slay queen" is sometimes used derogatorily in Kenya to describe young women. A man who has been hurt by his girlfriend or fiancée may use this term to refer to her if he feels that she has financially exploited him. Speaker A appeared to have issues with such women, which is why the dialogue seemed like an outright attack on them. Speaker B felt that the post was made out of spite, perhaps suggesting that someone had hurt Speaker A, prompting him to target slay queens and young women. In response, Speaker A bragged that he had not been hurt; rather, he was the one who had caused much of the hurt. This response was greeted by Speaker B's comment: *I am concerned about your mental health*, knowing very well it was just a post, having nothing to do with his mental health.

Post 3: Speaker A: Man: Can you date yourself?
Slay queen: I don't date broke people.
(c)Speaker B: Who hurt you man?

Speaker A: I tend to do most of the hurting around here.

Speaker B: I am concerned about your mental health

The full proposition would be [I am concerned about your mental health for attacking young women]. In this situation, Speaker A would use his inferential cognitive system to arrive at the conclusion that Speaker B suggested that he had mental issues for him to attack the slay queens/ young women. In other words, he was not mentally well for writing such a post. Simultaneously, the social cognitive system would detect a problem in the use of politeness strategies accepted by the Kenyan community. For instance, in Kenya, telling someone "I am concerned about your mental health" in such a situation is tantamount to telling him there is something wrong in his head e.g. he is mentally ill, thick, etc.; hence, Speaker A would conclude that Speaker B was not concerned about his welfare but was just being impolite.

This can also be seen in the next post where the addresser declares his unflinching support for one of the prominent Kenyan politicians but this attracts some impolite comments, especially from one interlocutor who asks him, "How is your wallet," knowing very well that Speaker A is not as rich as the politician in question; hence, implying that the former is poor despite the fact that he is supporting a wealthy politician. In other words, he is impolitely telling the addresser that nothing has changed economically about him; he is poor despite the fact that he is supporting the politician.

Post 4: Speaker A: I remain symptomatic to Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta

(d) Speaker B: Slavery at its best

Speaker C: *Utapona tu* (You will recover)

Speaker D: *Wallet nayo?* (How is your wallet?)

Speaker E: In this one, you don't have a competitor

The full proposition is [How is your wallet considering you support a wealthy politician?] In other words, do you benefit in any way for supporting him? Speaker A would use the inference model to fill the information gap with the words "despite supporting a wealthy politician." In a nutshell, Speaker A would use his inferential system to conclude that he has been labeled as poor, despite working extra hard to support a wealthy politician. In other words, he does not benefit in any way by supporting the politician; therefore, his support for the wealthy politician has no impact on him. He is still a butcher. He would simultaneously utilize his social cognitive system to identify an anomaly in the application of politeness rules commonly accepted in Kenya. For instance, being told that he is poor, despite supporting a wealthy politician, amounts to ridicule, which is considered impolite; thus, arriving at the conclusion that he is being ridiculed, amounting to impoliteness.

In the next post, Speaker A is jovial since his campaign for the named politician is bearing fruit, and he swears he will not relent but continue campaigning for the politician, hoping for more converts. Speaker A is a newspaper vendor but is very vocal when it comes to national politics. Speakers B and C are making fun of him by saying that he never gets tired now that he is on the job selling newspapers, thereby attacking his career as a newspaper vendor. In fact, Speaker E sarcastically tells the others to let Speaker A enjoy the money he earns from selling newspapers while he rests.

Post 5: Speaker A: Hahaa. The pro Uhuru gospel is bearing fruit. We shall leave no stone unturned. We are determined to have as many converts as possible

(e)Speaker B: *Hauchoki?* (Can't you get tired?)

Speaker C: *Ako job* (He is on the job)

Speaker B: *I know...hawezi choka* (I know. He can't get tired)

Speaker D: *Lift off your veil and say Raila converted. Uhuru is retiring in two years. Tiga gutukua wana* (Lift off your veil and say Raila converted and Uhuru is retiring in two years. Do not treat us like children)

Speaker E: *Niarie mbia cia gatheti ahorerete* (Let him enjoy the money from selling newspapers while resting)

Speaker F: *Sanity is coming back in Mt. Kenya. Few fools remaining* (Sanity is coming back to Mt. Kenya; few fools remaining)

Speaker G: *This nigga is a big disappointment especially in Central Kenya* (This black slave is a big disappointment, especially in Central Kenya)

Speaker A's interlocutors are making fun of him. For instance, Speaker E responds to his comment by saying, "Let him enjoy the money from selling newspapers while resting." The full proposition would be [Let him enjoy the little money he makes from selling newspapers while resting]. Speaker A would use inference to fill the information gap with the words {little… he makes}. In this regard, Speaker A would use his inferential cognitive system to arrive at the conclusion that Speaker E is actually making fun of him or mocking him. The money from newspaper vending is very little in Kenya; hence, the speakers are just making fun of him for that kind of money cannot be enjoyed. Simultaneously, he would utilize his social cognitive system to identify an anomaly in the application of politeness rules acceptable in Kenya. For instance, mockery amounts to impoliteness, and thus, he would arrive at the conclusion that his interlocutors are being impolite.

In the following post, Speaker A declares that he is a Gikuyu. This angers some of his followers because the former is supporting a Gikuyu politician who seems no longer popular among his tribesmen for endorsing a politician from another tribe to run for president. The act of declaring his tribe attracts impolite responses from his interlocutors, who feel betrayed. For instance, Speaker B tells him to his face that he is a Gikuyu who is a maniac. Speaker E goes on to tell him that Gikuyus don't speak stupidly like him.

Post 6: Speaker A: I am unapologetically Kikuyu

(f)Speaker B: A Kikuyu who is a maniac

Speaker C: So what?

Speaker D: *Kwa hivyo?* (So what?)

Speaker E: You are a shameless Kamba. Kikuyus don't think stupidly like you

Speaker A: What a silly comment!

Speaker E: *Peleka ujinga Machakos* (Take your stupidity to Machakos)

Speaker A: *Hebu demonstrate venye mtu hupeleka* (Please demonstrate how that is done)

Speaker E: By carrying your silly thick lips to that semi-arid place

Speaker A: Thought you said Kikuyu's don't think the way you do

Speaker E: *Sometimes I try to fit in a group of one digit IQ Simpletons. At least we can sail on the same boat* (Sometimes I try to fit in a group of one digit IQ Simpletons so that we can sail on the same boat)

Speaker A: *Hehehe. Sawa, suit yourself* (Hehehe. That's fine. Suit yourself
Speaker B: *Ndukiambie wendie nyama fooder* (Start selling meat, you donkey)

Speaker C: *Domo kaya wewe* (Slanderer)

Speaker D: *Wee wakomire ta Joram* (You slept like Joram)

Speaker E: *Huyu kiherere mdomo kaya. Vitina ilitoka wapi? Wewe unasifu Uhuru kama Mungu Muumba. Wajinga ni wengi Kenya lakini wengine wazidi. Tukome. Oh Tanga Tanga hii oh Tanga Tanga mara ingine* (This person is nosy and a slanderer. Where did slander come from? You are praising Uhuru like God the creator. There are so many foolish people in this Kenya but you are an extreme case. Spare us. Oh Tanga Tanga this, oh Tanga Tanga that).

With regard to Speaker B's response, a Gikuyu who is a maniac, the full proposition would be: You are a Gikuyu who is a maniac for supporting an unpopular Gikuyu politician. Speaker A would use inference to fill the information gap (you are … for supporting an unpopular Gikuyu politician). In relation to this, Speaker A would use his inferential system to arrive at the conclusion that he has been called a maniac. He would also utilize his social cognitive system to identify an anomaly in the application of politeness rules acceptable in Kenya. For instance, calling someone a maniac or stupid is tantamount to insulting, which is an act of impoliteness.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate the interpretation of impoliteness on social media despite the limited contextual information available. It purposely sought to determine the pragmatic strategies Kenyans employ in the interpretation of impolite utterances on Facebook. It is apparent that computer-mediated communication is often characterized by impoliteness, particularly on social media platforms like Facebook. In the foregoing discussion, it is clear that pragmatic strategies are employed simultaneously in the interpretation of impoliteness on social media.

Both the inferential cognitive system and the social cognitive system are used in the interpretation of impoliteness. The inferential system is used to fill the inferential gaps in utterances to formulate full propositions, while the social cognitive system is used to detect an anomaly in the use of politeness strategies recognized in Kenya to arrive at the conclusion that an utterance is impolite. Thus, there is no difference between the interpretation of impoliteness in computer-mediated communication and face-to-face conversation, though in the former, one relies heavily on previous utterances and encyclopedic knowledge as sources of contextual information.

Further studies on interpretation of impoliteness can be conducted on other social media platforms such as instagram, YouTube, Whatsapp, among others to determine whether the same pragmatic strategies are employed in the interpretation of impoliteness. Moreover, different contexts can also come into play. The current study focused on how Kenyans interpret impoliteness on Facebook but one can also concentrate on a specific community or nationality because impoliteness is interpreted variously world over.

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"EVERYBODY SHOULD BE INVOLVED" THE DIRE NEED FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL NIGERIAN CITIZENS IN THE POLICING, MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper serves as a clarion call to every Nigerian citizen to actively participate in creating a crime-free and better Nigeria for all. The security situation in Nigeria is deeply troubling to both the government and its citizens. There is an urgent need to address this issue before it escalates. To achieve positive results, collaborative efforts among the police, government, and members of the public are essential for protecting lives and property at all levels within Nigeria. Several key factors should be prioritized to enhance the effectiveness of policing activities in Nigeria. These include the age-grade system, communal vigilante groups, hunters' associations, the police at state and regional levels, traditional rulers, the government, and every patriotic citizen. Furthermore, police-community partnerships, information sharing, and police involvement in community affairs should be emphasized as vital strategies for effective policing in Nigeria. It is, therefore, imperative that Nigerian citizens adopt a culture of integrity, social justice, and a thorough moral re-evaluation to foster the mutual support necessary for proactive policing in the country. This paper aims to demonstrate that Nigeria can successfully tackle crime if everyone is involved in the crime prevention process, working in collaboration with law enforcement agencies.

Keywords

Age Grades, community policing, crime, Nigeria, police and vigilante

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1. Introduction

In recent times, the importance of maintaining peace and ensuring the safety of citizens and property has become increasingly evident for the progress and survival of any sovereign nation. It serves as a fundamental requirement for good governance, which in turn fosters socioeconomic growth, political advancement, national peacebuilding, human capital development, and the proper functioning of institutions. Conversely, the lack of internal security creates disorder, heightens insecurity, distorts freedom, diminishes human value, and impoverishes citizens. Thus, no nation is willing to compromise its internal security, as doing so can lead to a breakdown of law and order, ultimately disrupting the country's democracy (Oikhala, 2021: 130). The security situation in Nigeria has become so disturbing that many people live in fear because security and law enforcement agencies are unable to provide them with adequate protection from Boko haram, herdsmen and bandits. Modern police institutions worldwide have developed various strategies to deliver essential services to citizens in an effective manner. However, the contributions of the Nigerian Police Force and other security agencies to controlling crime and maintaining law and order have become more complex than ever before. As a result, their efforts have proven insufficient (Barley, 1994: 3). This issue represents a significant challenge faced by many developing countries, including Nigeria. It is crucial for all Nigerian citizens to participate in the policing and crime prevention process to address problems such as crime, theft, and other social vices that threaten the security and well-being of all Nigerians. This need has led to the implementation of community policing initiatives in various communities, villages, and cities across Nigeria (John, 2010: 4).

This article aims to appeal to all Nigerians and the various indigenous social control systems at work in the country to collaborate closely with the Nigerian police in combating the diverse range of crimes against individuals and property that characterize contemporary Nigerian society. It also aims to address the security challenges in Nigeria, particularly concerning crime detection, prevention, and control, to make Nigeria a safe haven for all. The article will also address the questions of how and what can be done to overcome the security challenges confronting Nigeria.

2. Clarification of terms

It is essential to distinguish between the concepts of 'police' and 'policing.' The police is a particular kind of institution, while 'policing' implies a set of processes with specific social functions. It may be true that the police may not found in every human society, but policing may be a universal requirement of most social order in communities, which may be represented by a variety of different processes and institutional arrangements (Maguire, 1997: 2). Traditionally, policing is the responsibility of all male adults in most African communities in their respective countries. In medieval African societies, all adult males were involved in policing activities before the emergence of specialized police forces for maintaining law and order, as well as serving as members of the state. They were organised into age groups or grades and were responsible for providing security and the maintenance of law and order in their respective communities (Usman, 2014: 12).

With the rise of the state, modern systems of government developed complex bureaucracies characterized by centralization, hierarchical authority structures, and professional staff. This shift transformed the traditional philosophy of policing, which was based on the idea that policing was a communal responsibility (Weber, M., 1978: 5). As the state emerged as a legal entity, it faced an increase in crime, societal issues, and violence. As a result, specialized government agencies, such as the police force and armed forces, were established to control and uphold law and order (Alemika, 2000: 5).

In Nigeria, Community policing is a security strategy that needs to be adopted as a supplementary effort to enhance the police force's efforts in combating criminal activities and crime across all communities in Nigeria. The police in Nigeria cannot sustain or maintain crime-free communities without the voluntary efforts of local and communal groups to complement their efforts. It is also believed that people residing in a particular community can easily identify those who perpetrate evil in their immediate environment and will be more easily able to track them down because they have adequate knowledge of the geographical settings of their areas and communities (Okafor, 2018: 66). In Nigeria, Community policing takes different forms, which include community development associations, peace and security committees, and landlords and tenants' security harmony initiatives. In these initiatives, able-bodied men in their respective communities are grouped or organised into parties to watch over the community on a rotational basis. Civilian joint task forces, vigilante service groups, age grades, hunters' associations, and other organizations should also be involved in community policing activities. Community policing can significantly assist or aid the Nigerian police force and other security agencies in preventing crime in most communities if a cordial relationship is established between the community and the security agencies. This will enable the security agencies to track down and apprehend all perpetrators and criminals in various communities. It is no new information that there is little or no harmonious working relationship or understanding between the police force and several communities in Nigeria. This results from mistrust and suspicion between the Nigerian police force and the people, making cooperation almost impossible (Olusegun, 2016: 11).

It may be true that the police may not found in every human society, but policing may be a universal requirement of most social order in communities, which may be represented by a variety of different processes and institutional arrangements.

3. Theoretical framework

The most suitable theory for this analysis is Strain Theory. It was developed by American sociologist Robert Merton in the late 1930s. According to Merton, crime is not simply a function of deprivation but the result of a disjuncture and lack of connection between ends (goals) and the means to attain those ends. Robert further argued that deviance results not from pathological personalities but from the structure and culture of society (Mathieu, 2018: 144). He begins from the standard functionalist perspective of value consensus, which argues that all members of a society share similar or the same values. However, because individuals occupy different positions within the social structure, such as varying class positions, they do not all have the same opportunities to realize these shared values. This disparity can lead to deviance. Social and cultural structures exert pressure that can cause individuals in different positions within those structures to engage in socially deviant behaviours (Mathieu, 2018: 144). The theory further states that society places pressure on people to achieve socially accepted goals, even when they lack the necessary means to do so. People aspire to achieve the cultural norms of economic success but are denied the education, capital, or other means to realize those ends, and as a result, they will experience strain. According to Robert, there is a possible response to this strain. The person may try what Robert calls innovation. Innovation, in this vein, refers to accepting society's goals and designing one's means for achieving them. Often using socially unapproved or unconventional means to obtain culturally approved goals. Examples of this include dealing drugs or stealing to achieve financial security. Although the individual continues to accept the cultural value of success, they will employ illegitimate means, such as theft or robbery, to obtain money or wealth because legitimate means to achieve this end are unavailable (John, 1980: 90).

In Nigeria, as in many modern societies, education is a vital means of social mobility. Individuals who receive quality education are more likely to secure better jobs and achieve occupational success, enabling them to reach greater heights in their communities. Consequently, those without access to quality education or social connections, and who are unable to attain a high level of education and occupational status, face significant challenges in advancing within society. There is a strong temptation for individuals who find it difficult to succeed through accepted channels of mobility to resort to socially unacceptable means to achieve their goals (Onyeozili, 2005: 32).

From the foregoing, it is therefore clear that the adoption of the Strain Theory will provide support for analysing the security situation. Presently, in Nigeria, even those who have the opportunity to attain a high level of education are found committing crimes. Due to the high level of unemployment and unbearable state of poverty in the country, many people are left with no other option than to resort to, as explained above, innovation, thereby becoming criminals. Property crime, including theft, arson, and burglary, is rapidly increasing and becoming a major problem hindering Nigeria's developmental progress (Ugwueke, 2011: 8). In light of the above, the Strain Theory clearly explains some of the major causes of the current security problems in Nigeria.

4. The idea of community policing

Policing is closely related to the concept of social control and is subject to various interpretations and uses. According to a dictionary definition, policing is "the function of maintaining social control in society" (Outhwaite, 1994: 8). When we refer to 'community policing,' we emphasise a community-oriented approach aimed at combating crime. Community policing involves a collaboration between the police and the community to identify and tackle crime-related issues. In this situation, the police are no longer the sole custodian of law and order; instead, all community members become active partners in enhancing the safety and security of their neighbourhoods (Samuel, 2012: 135).

Community policing can also be seen as a strategy where police departments work together in partnership with their community to reduce crime and disorder and to uphold a sense of order in the community (Reiner, 2010: 5). In official circles, community policing is an idea that emerged in the mid-1980s when it was realised that formal and informal means of crime reduction, order, and maintenance were complementary and that the community should work together to stop crime and lawlessness. The movement towards community policing has, to a large extent, gained momentum in recent years. As a result of this, the police force and community leaders explore more effective ways to promote public safety and improve the quality of life in their communities. Also, community policing strategies differ depending on the needs and responses of the community involved (Dennis, 1989: 188).

From a historical perspective, contemporary community policing can be traced back to Sir Robert Peel, who established the London Metropolitan Police. He articulated several principles, one of which is foundational to community policing: "The police are the public and the public are the police" (College of Policing, 2016: 7). This type of community policing should be studied, adopted, and implemented in Nigeria to address its contemporary criminal challenges. The key issue here is the mutually beneficial relationship between the police force and the community, which forms the core idea of community policing, particularly in the United Kingdom. This approach emphasizes two complementary components: community partnership and problem-solving (Omowunmi, 2016: 34). To develop this community partnership, the police must develop a positive relationship with the community, must involve the community in the quest for better crime control and prevention, and must pool their resources with those of the community to address the most urgent concerns of community members with all sincerity and passion (Dominique, 2009: 148).

Before the colonization of Nigeria, the various ethnic nationalities that presently constitute Nigeria had traditional social control mechanisms in place. These indigenous social control systems performed many of the functions that modern police do. These systems of social control were deeply ingrained in the community and closely intertwined with its social and religious structures. These include agencies such as Age Grades (formal organizations whose membership is based on a pre-determined age range), secret societies, or vocational guilds. Some of these include local groups such as hunters, farmers, or fishermen. Through these groups, law and order were maintained without force or violence (Elrena, 2008: 32).

In contemporary Nigeria, some varieties of these indigenous social control systems still exist. These kinds of social control systems are now represented in organisations such as the Bakasi Boys of the Igbo, the Hisha of the Hausa/Fulani, the Odu'a People's Congress (OPC) of the Yoruba, and the Umogbai of the Auchi Kingdom, among many others. Essentially, these indigenous social control systems are based primarily on the guiding principles derived from the norms and values of the indigenous people rather than the traditions, customs, and practices of other societies outside Nigeria. Apart from the large, coordinated, and well-organized indigenous organizations, such as the Bakasi Boys, Hisha, and OPC, there are numerous other indigenous watch organizations or vigilante groups that ensure community security (Akin, 1994: 36).

Traditional policing and vigilantism are widely accepted by citizens in Nigeria due to their effectiveness over the years. Members of a society to which traditional policing generally applies accept and participate in their indigenous policing systems. As part-owners of the system, it is unlikely that any significant portion of the population will be excluded from the system or its mode of operation. Decisions are always made and enforced with the knowledge and consent of the members. The personnel in indigenous social control systems come from the communities they serve, which makes them more acceptable to the locals compared to police officers (Samuel, 2012: 137). It is also crucial to note that many Nigerians lack trust and confidence in the Nigerian Police Force, viewing them as 'alien' agents of the government. This perception is compounded by widespread beliefs that the police are corrupt and unfair. As a result, the majority of Nigerians see the police's response to crime as grossly inadequate. Many citizens prefer to rely on local mechanisms, such as vigilante groups or age grade organizations, due to their quicker responses to distress calls (Okafor, 2007: 9).

5. Aims and objectives of community policing in Nigeria

Community policing in Nigeria has several aims and objectives, which highlight the importance of involving every Nigerian citizen in the process. These aims will be explained in detail. Firstly, community policing offers a broader perspective on crime control and prevention, which remains a central concern for individuals in communities, villages, and cities across Nigeria. Community members play an active role in addressing issues related to crime, insecurity, and neglect. They are engaged in dismantling gang activities, ensuring that abandoned houses and warehouses are not used as hideouts by criminals, preventing vandalism of broken-down vehicles, and monitoring bushes in neighbourhoods that could serve as potential hiding spots for criminals. These initiatives are undertaken by members of the community because they directly benefit their own safety and well-being. No one can address these issues better than the community itself. Strengthening the link between the police and community members enhances their partnership, enabling them to identify and address the underlying causes of crime more effectively (Ikuteyijo, 2012: 12).

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Additionally, community policing places a new emphasis on engaging community members as active participants in addressing community security challenges. The partnership between the police and community members should be built on mutual trust and confidence. However, this trust is lacking, which significantly contributes to the police's lack of proactivity. As a result, the police often miss out on critical information due to insufficient proactive policing. The distance between the Nigerian Police Force and the public is further exacerbated by the frequent transfer of officers from one geographical location to another, often moving from their communities of origin to areas where they are unfamiliar. This makes it challenging for them to adjust to their new environment and connect with local community members (Alemika, 2005: 14).

Community policing complements and enhances the work of the Nigerian Police, leading to increased resources and personnel dedicated to preventing crimes and law enforcement activities. It is important to recognize that community policing does not diminish the authority of the police or undermine their primary responsibility of maintaining law and order. Instead, community policing enables the police to leverage the skills, expertise, and resources available within the neighbourhood. This collaboration helps alleviate some of the burdens faced by the police (Ugwueke, 2011: 34).

Furthermore, the void created by the lack of mutual trust and confidence between the people and the police can be filled by community policing. Community policing will help gather and share security information with the police force in a timely way, enabling them to be more responsive in their policing efforts and activities. This mutual relationship between the police and the community would positively enhance the police's activities by improving their image among Nigerians (Onyeozili, 2005: 35).

Protecting lives and property is a capital-intensive endeavour, making it a crucial goal of community policing. A person's sense of well-being is closely linked to their security; one cannot truly feel secure if their safety is at risk. In the near future, Nigeria may need to allocate more resources to ensure the security of its citizens' lives and property. The inclusion of community policing in the security architecture may also involve engaging several idle hands across various communities, villages, cities, and the nation as a whole. What this means is that the energies of the youths will be positively redirected from criminality and idleness to more patriotic and productive endeavours, such as securing the lives and property of their respective community members. This demonstrates why members of society may actively participate in community policing to create a safe and crime-free country for themselves (Odinkalu, 2005: 28).

Community policing, through the use of vigilance groups, plays a very important role in the maintenance of an orderly and secure environment during national events, such as elections for various political positions. This effort complements the responsibilities of the police, who are statutorily mandated to uphold law and order during these occasions (Oikhala, 2021: 137). Community policing has undoubtedly created significant awareness and sensitization regarding crime among people in many communities where it operates. These efforts have significantly heightened residents' awareness and vigilance regarding crime. The awareness campaigns include advising residents to be observant around their homes, especially concerning strangers, and providing them with office and personal cell phone numbers for timely reporting of incidents. Additionally, they encourage individuals to avoid carelessly moving or staying in the dark and to secure their homes by locking doors and windows when they are away. Regularly ringing bells or gongs at night is another measure that has been implemented. As a result of these initiatives, people are now more aware of potential criminal activity and are taking proactive steps to ensure the security of their towns and communities (Onyeozili, 2005: 48).

6. The much-needed community policing in Nigeria

There is considerable hope for integrating community policing into the Nigerian police's activities. This approach could significantly aid in combating crime and maintaining law and order in Nigeria. Historically, community policing has been the foundation upon which effective policing and internal security management can be improved in the nation. Local communities had practised community policing effectively long before the colonial period. Since gaining independence, Nigeria has yet to adopt a workable national policy on internal security. It is the responsibility of all Nigerians to advocate for a strong police-public partnership to combat and prevent crime. This suggests that the community policing policy in Nigeria should incorporate distinct principles and pathways for strengthening public trust and fostering partnerships between the police and citizens (Ibrahim, 2017: 19). In this way, the needed national policy on internal security will define the necessary corridors for achieving the community policing vision. Programs and initiatives that focus on crime prevention through community policing, retraining and development of personnel for capacity building, and enhancing police-public relations should be introduced and implemented. Additionally, intelligence-led policing that utilizes neighbourhood and inter-agency collaboration is essential to combat corruption and crime. These measures should be prioritized to address the country's security concerns (The Agora Policy Report 2, 2022).

Community policing is rooted in a systematic connection between the police and the communities they serve. Therefore, the duties of the police force are not limited to law enforcement alone but extend to addressing a wide range of community issues. To realise or achieve such obligations, the police must be part of and not apart from the community they are meant to protect and safeguard. It is worth noting that community policing involves fostering community partnerships to create a safe and secure environment for all. It is a kind of policing whereby the people take an active part in their own affairs. With community policing, the police are not seen as strangers whose presence signifies danger and imminent hazard but as partners in development and advancement, which is the much-desired form of policing in Nigeria (Ikuteyijo, 2008: 285). The community policing strategy that is suitable and beneficial for Nigeria should focus on a collaborative effort between the police and local neighbourhoods. This approach must be supported by all parties involved and effectively implemented. It is essential that traditional rulers and their communities actively participate, making it challenging for criminals to operate within their neighbourhoods. In this model, the police would share authority and information with community residents, while key decisions should be made in collaboration with local dwellers (Okeshola, 2013: 134). In summary, this paper highlights several critical elements, including change management, community partnership, community engagement, organizational transformation, and self-help. These elements are expected to be integral to the application of community policing in Nigeria, and they will be further explained in the following paragraphs.

6.1. Change Management

The change management canvassed in this paper posits that the Nigerian Police should redesign their soft patterns of new orientation and flexible managerial innovation to encourage neighbourhood residents to be actively involved in policing their areas. In this design, community members will see themselves as integral to the policing process in their areas, as they share a vested interest in its outcomes. It has been argued that a wise person does not allow misfortune to befall their ancestral home, as they have nowhere else to turn (Arase, 2017). If police officers on the ground are re-educated to work collaboratively and courteously with community members, rather than dictating their actions, and if police operations are made to reflect public interests, there will be fewer opportunities for crime and criminal activities in Nigerian communities, villages, and cities. The new management approach of the Nigerian Police Force is that the institution has adopted and continued to encourage active community policing (John, 2010: 6). This approach involves actively engaging in problem-solving within the community and fostering shared interests and values that promote development for everyone. As a result, community members will begin to view the Nigerian Police as friends and partners rather than adversaries (Dandison, 2006: 65).

6.2. Community Partnership

The policing process in Nigeria is designed to empower its residents to engage in crime prevention. This is achieved through active cooperation between the police and members of the neighbourhood in an attempt to gather and share intelligence information to solve crime-related and disorder issues (Okeshola, 2013: 134). This would lead to the formation of a police-community partnership aimed at supporting crime prevention efforts. Such a partnership would provide a framework for engaging citizens, enabling law enforcement agents to easily access valuable community information. The Nigeria Police Force is expected to employ sufficient personnel, and a spirit of police-community teamwork will be encouraged to address all forms of crime in Nigeria. In other words, everyone should be actively involved in crime prevention activities to achieve success, as it benefits the entire community (Oikhala, 2019, 39).

6.3. Community Engagement

Engaging neighbourhood residents enables the police to access covert crime-related information easily and promptly. This collaboration also encourages a sense of teamwork within the community, helping to maintain peace, ensure security, and build mutual relationships based on public trust. This is where vigilante groups and neighbourhood watch programs come into play. Both are volunteer-based private security organizations that operate with the legal backing of the states they serve. They have proven to be functional, effective, and efficient in crime prevention and control, as they possess the ability to identify criminals regardless of their efforts to conceal their identities (Adeniyi, 2019: 179). Vigilante groups are engaged and used to complement the national security management framework of the country. Over the years, this has proven to be very effective in most rural communities and small towns in Nigeria (Alemika, 1999: 34).

6.4. Organisational Transformation

There should be a way or method that community policing can be modelled to fit into the Nigerian police system that would make it harmonized with the traditional policing model that has always alienated neighbourhood residents from police functions or roles. This supported (Kelling, 1988: 4) that the police would radically alter their reactive traditional policing model to suit the requirements of a people-oriented police system. Similarly, (Goldstein, 1990: 3) argued that the philosophy or idea of community policing is at risk if the police fail to change their old orientation and still get on with the traditional ways alongside the community policing. Therefore, the stance of this paper is well acknowledged in (Brown, 1989: 1) that organisational transformation is a driver of community engagement, self-help, problem solving, change management, and police-community partnership in an attempt to properly implement the ethos of community policing. Without re-orientation, the issue of integrating community policing would be unrealistic in the Nigeria police force.

6.5. Self-Help

The concept of community policing represents a shift from the traditional precolonial policing perspective. It involves ways of controlling and managing crime. This implies that the Nigerian police force genuinely allows community members to participate in keeping peace, securing and protecting their various. Community policing paves the way for the local community to actively develop and implement self-help projects and activities that promote their shared interests and improve their quality of living. One of such self-help policing is the vigilante group. (Justice, 2009: 245). Community policing is also hinged on the belief that fellow citizens protect and serve themselves through a range of self-initiated laudable programmes (Reiner, 1992: 29). This involves educating and orienting community members on crime prevention and security awareness. Community members are consistently informed and encouraged to report any suspicious or criminal activity they observe to the police and local security authorities for prompt action. This initiative should begin at the level of immediate or nuclear families and gradually expand to encompass the larger Nigerian society (Abba, 2014: 35). The goal is to ensure that everyone participates in making Nigeria a safe haven for all.

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7. Citizens, Community Policing and Community Development in Nigeria

Security is crucial to the people in all communities in Nigeria and constitutes one of the important social services provided through community development and engagement. It should be noted that it requires the cooperation of the government, the citizens, and the communities to ensure a successful community policing activity. The citizens in their various communities cannot handle security matters alone; cooperation with security agents, particularly the police, is essential. In the same vein, the police force cannot ensure security or effectively tackle crime without partnering with the citizens and the communities. Everyone must be involved in the processes and actions that lead to success. Security is vital for community development, as both lives and property must be protected for development to be possible. Without law, order, and peace, no development, especially community development, can take place. Security not only facilitates development; it is also a fundamental component of development itself. In this regard, community policing is essential for fostering community and economic development in Nigeria (Adams, 1994: 894).

In reality, community policing, as implemented in Nigeria, has not ensured security and safety, nor has it facilitated community development. Instead of fostering cooperation, the Nigerian police have been busy enforcing laws on the community and alienating its members. As a result, insecurity, crime, and disorder have driven investors away from Nigeria, crippled economic activities, and hindered development within communities. As long as the Nigeria Police Force focuses on policing the community rather than partnering with it on matters of security, safety, and development, people will remain hesitant to engage in activities that could enhance security. This absence of trust between community people and the Nigerian police means that development will continue to evade Nigeria (Jude, 2018: 12).

8. Conclusion

This paper focused on how community policing can enhance service delivery within the Nigerian Police Force and effectively reduce crime and criminality in Nigeria. It serves as a call to all Nigerians to actively participate in crime prevention initiatives and collaborate with the Nigerian Police Force to create a safe and crime-free country for everyone. Community policing is not a novel concept in Africa. Before European colonialism, many villages and communities in Africa practised similar models. In these societies, structures such as hunters' associations, age grades, and masquerade societies played roles in law enforcement before the establishment of the Nigerian Police Force after Nigeria was granted independence in 1960. Every adult male citizen are part of these groups, indicating that the responsibility for policing and securing their communities rested with all adult males in their respective villages and communities (Falola, 2018: 11). However, European colonialism supplanted the then existing model of community policing activities with the colonial police which alienated the people indigenous policing activities and relegated them to the background. This alienation continued in post-independent Nigeria, increasing the distrust or mistrust between the people and the police force.

In recent times, the question of how and what can be done to overcome the security challenges confronting Nigeria has been a subject of discourse among researchers and stakeholders in Nigeria. To curb crimes and enhance an effective policing system, the police force should be encouraged to work together in partnership with the community inhabitants to reduce crime and disorder and also uphold a sense of order in the community. This lack of cooperation from the people and police has had a serious consequence: the inability of the Nigeria Police Force to combat crime and tackle various security challenges in Nigeria, rendering the problem almost unsolvable.

The Nigerian police should prioritize creating or encouraging cooperation or partnership with the community on security matters, allowing for broader involvement rather than simply policing neighbourhoods. The focus should be on improving the strained relationship between the police and the community, integrating effective community engagement strategies into policing efforts, and collaborating with community residents to share policing responsibilities.This approach aims to maintain peace and ensure safety for all, with active participation from every citizen.

Note

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SURVEY OF IKOT ABASI SLAVE TRADE ARENA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The archaeology of Akwa Ibom is an area of study that remains largely undocumented, holding a wealth of unexplored histories waiting to be discovered. In our pursuit of archaeological findings, we aimed to investigate the potential of the sites available and to uncover the unique histories and heritage of the local people. Among these sites, the Ikot Abasi slave trade site was selected for examination. This paper reports on the archaeological relics identified at the site, which shed light on the accounts and activities associated with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Ikot Abasi. To achieve this, written records were consulted, oral traditions engaged with, and an archaeological survey was conducted. Our findings include various relics: a bridge, a slave fort, a bunker, a branding rod, iron chain, a branding furnace, a furnace outlet, hooks, and manila, all of which were documented. As a result of this groundbreaking research, we have identified and documented these relics and cultural materials. Additionally, the historical activities related to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the area have been highlighted, thereby enhancing our understanding of the history of Akwa Ibom State within the broader context of the archaeology of the Lower Cross River Region.

Keywords

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena, Enslaved Persons, Archaeological Relics and History

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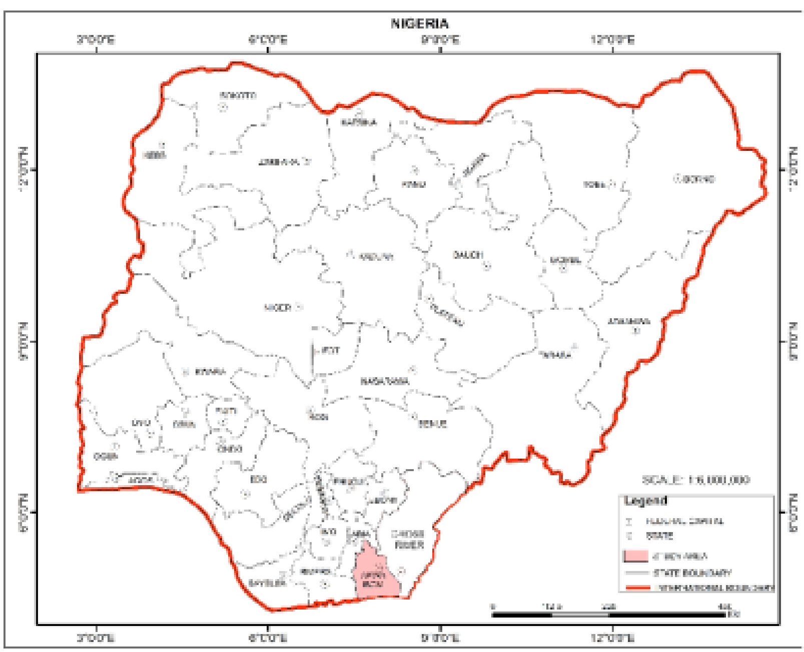
1. Introduction

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and associated slave activities are aspects of Akwa Ibom's history that are largely unknown to the current generation. As oral traditions fades, there is a risk that this important information may be lost if not recorded. Ikot Abasi is one of the ancient towns that contain valuable remnants of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Unfortunately, the accounts of these activities in the Akwa Ibom region have received little attention and recognition in the broader context of Atlantic history. Research on the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade site has been informed through citations by various scholars, such as Abasiattai et al (1997) on the slave trade activities along the Bight of Biafra between the 16th and 19th centuries. These citations indicate the existence of archaeological relics within this vicinity that needed to be salvaged and documented. Consequently, interest in the choice of the site was geared based on its economic contribution and relevance in the history of Akwa Ibom area during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade which was both beneficial for the European buyers, their nations, and the African middlemen who enriched themselves from the proceeds of the trade, as this exchange fueled the mercantilist system during this period. Additionally, Ikot Abasi was a strategic location that served as an entry port for the Europeans and an exit port for the enslaved Africans, hence the construction of the "Bridge of No Return." More so, with the material evidence and relics of slave trade activities identified, such as the bridge, slave fort, bunker, branding rod, iron chain, branding furnace, furnace outlet, hook, and manila, the site was determined to be archaeologically viable for research.

Furthermore, the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade site is presently undergoing rapid deterioration, which indicates an obvious threat to the existing archaeological relics, therefore necessitating the urgent need for action in documenting, salvaging, and preserving these relics to avoid further dilapidation or total loss of our historical past. Searching through the written sources, we observed that the available records on Ikot Abasi Slave Trade activities are scanty, except for those stored in the memory of a few indigenous persons, transmitted as oral information, which is limited to the origin/migration of the area and the slave trade activities within the vicinity of the slave fort. Additionally, there are no previous archaeological records regarding this group and the slave trade activities in the area. This research is the first archaeological work to be executed within the Ikot Abasi area. This research, therefore, aimed at documenting the available archaeological data as tangible evidence of the slave trade activities within the Ikot Abasi area. Its objectives were to: identify and document in detail the archaeological evidence on the sites, document the history of the slave trade activities in the Ikot Abasi area from oral sources, and highlight the deteriorating state of the archaeological relics within the study site.

2. Geographical Background of the Ikot Abasi Area

The Ikot Abasi Local Government Area is situated in the southwestern corner of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It is bordered to the north by the Oruk Anam Local Government Area, and to the east by Mkpat Enin and Eastern Obolo Local Government Areas. To the south, it is adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean, while the Imo River forms the natural western boundary, separating it from Rivers State (see Figures 1 and 2) (Abasiattai et al., 1997). The activities of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade took place in and around the Ikot Abasi village and its surroundings (see Fig. 3). It is located at 4^{0}34’20” N latitude, and 7^{0}32’48” E longitude within the Ikot Abasi Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The terrain of Ikot Abasi is flat and low-lying, characterized by three main physiographic units: the alluvial plains, which include mangrove swamps and freshwater floodplains; the beach ridge sands that extend from the mangrove mudflats toward the shoreline; and the rolling sandy plains found in the upland areas, where the topography is undulating (Abasiattai et al., 1997). The area is drained by the Imo River and its tributaries, primarily the Essene Creek, along with numerous streams and rivulets (Abasiattai et al., 1997). The soil in this region is acidic, well-drained, and strongly weathered. Although acidic in nature, it can be made fertile and productive if adequate soil management practices are adopted. The climate of the area is humid tropical with a high temperature lying between 26 °C and 28 °C. The rainfall is heavy (between 2000- 4,000mm), occurring almost throughout the year (April- November). Ikot Abasi Local Government Area falls within the tropical forest zone, with three types, namely: mangrove forest along the coast and river estuaries, freshwater swamp forest, and rainforest proper. This vegetation type allows for the existence of different species of trees and fertile soil for cultivation during the farming season (Abasiattai et al., 1997).



SOURCE: Office of The State Surveyor General, Uyo.

Figure 1: Nigeria Showing Akwa Ibom State. Source: Office of the State Surveyor General, Uyo.

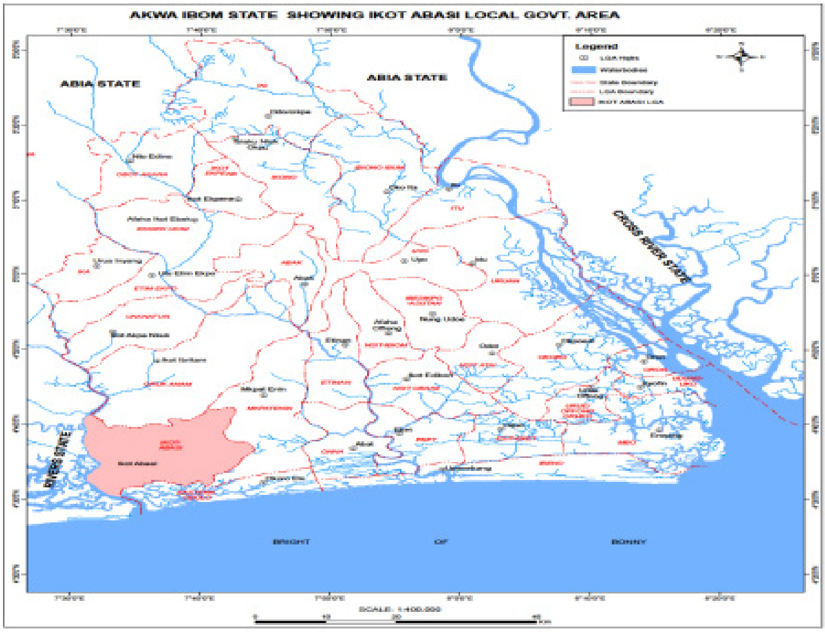


Figure 2: *Akwa Ibom State Showing Ikot Abasi Local Government Area. Source: Office of the State Surveyor General, Uyo.*

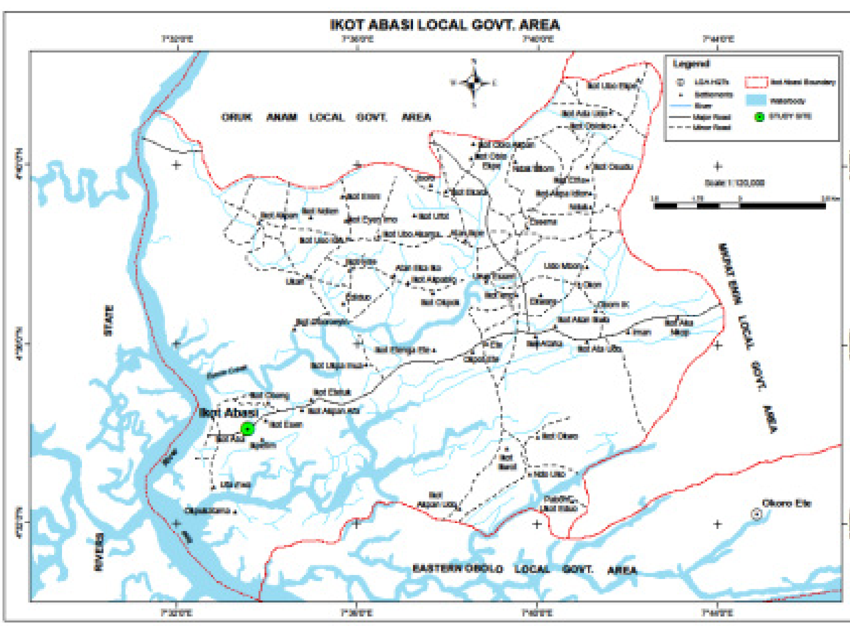


Figure 3: *Ikot Abasi Local Govt. Area Showing the Study Site. Source: Office of the State Surveyor General, Uyo.*

3. Methodology

The basic methods employed in this research were: consultation of written records, oral tradition, and archaeological survey. Written sources from the libraries, online books, and articles about the history of the Ikot Abasi and the slave trade activities were consulted. Oral tradition, "the testimony transmitted orally from one generation to another by the individuals who either experienced or witnessed the events," was employed (Vansina, 1981). This was collected from about six informants identified by the Local Government tourism supervisor, who were considered to have information on the history of the people and the slave trade activities. Archaeological survey was achieved with the assistance of a tour guide who had intimate knowledge of the slave trade site. It involved systematically walking across the site, directly observing the ground's surface and recording the surviving relics identified, using Global Positioning System (GPS), a ranging pole, a photography scale, and a 5.5m measuring tape. Photographs were also taken in order to document the relics in situ.

4. Historical Background of the Slave Trade in Ikot Abasi

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was an extensive trade involving the buying and selling of human cargo, mainly from West and Central Africa to be carted to Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America for work on large plantations. It lasted for more than four hundred years from the late 15th to the 19th century. Extensive explorations carried out in the 15th century, most of which were spearheaded by Prince Henry, the Navigator of Portugal, led to many discoveries of multiple islands along the coasts of Africa and beyond. However, the sponsorship of the voyage of Christopher Columbus by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain led to the ground-breaking discovery of the Americas in 1492 that forever changed the world's demographic, geographic, political, and socio-economic construct. The acquisition of free labour from the African continent was borne out of the necessity to build colonies in the newly discovered American continent. The thirst for power, prestige, and glory drove Western European powers to plunder African countries for free labour from people who were exploited for generations without compensation. In contrast, the revenue generated from slave labour was used to expand European economies. Eric Williams states that the reasons for slavery, according to Gibbon Wakefield, "are not moral, but economic circumstances; they relate not to vice and virtue but to production (Williams, 1744).

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, involved three voyages through three continents across the Atlantic Ocean;

- Europe to Africa: Europe was the starting point of the trade. Goods were taken from Europe and then exchanged for slaves in Africa. Examples of goods include: textile, iron bar, beads, horses, umbrella, guns, gun powder, rum, etc.
- Africa to the Americas: This is also known as the Middle Passage, and at this point, the newly purchased enslaved persons were then transported to the Americas through inhumane and treacherous circumstances using the Atlantic Ocean.

It usually lasted between six to eight weeks or more, depending on the destination and conditions at sea.
- Americas to Europe: This trip was the last voyage that completed the triangle. Here, the agricultural produce cultivated and some enslaved persons were taken back to Europe, and the triangle ended.

Many coastal and inland communities in West and Central Africa participated in the slave trade, with the coasts often serving as the primary points of departure. The area known as Ikot Abasi in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, contains physical relics that illustrate the extent of slave trade activities that occurred there. The first Europeans to make contact with the people of Ikot Abasi were the Portuguese, who encountered the Andoni people in 1472 (Abasiattai et al., 1997). According to Abasiattai, the Andoni became the first middlemen in the trade between the people of Ikot Abasi and the Europeans. Over time, they were eventually replaced by the Bonny and Aro, who became the dominant players in the slave trade in the region. Various means were employed to capture enslaved individuals, including targeting breakers of taboos, debtors, prisoners of war, society misfits, and criminals. As the demand for slaves grew, the capturers began to kidnap strangers within their communities and invade neighboring areas to acquire more individuals to meet the escalating demand for slaves.

This increase in demand precipitated the establishment of slave markets at Ibekwe, Essene, Ukam, Uruakwak, Ubium, and Ndio in the Ibibio countryside. After being bought from these markets, these enslaved persons were then closely guarded and escorted through footpaths, creeks, and rivers to Egwanga and particularly Essene (Abasiattai et al., 1997). In exchange for these enslaved persons and other farm products (such as rubber, gum, palm oil and ivory), commodities of the manufactured variety were traded and these include: coral beads, smoking pipes, gun powder, knives, textiles, umbrellas, guns, iron pots, brass bugles, along with other forms of exchanges like the manila (there were different types and patterns of manila, see image 30 for the type discovered at the site by researchers) (Abasiattai et al., 1997). Isichei explains that the Black traders from Bonny and Calabar designated Thursday or Friday as their trading days. Every two weeks, they arrived with 20 to 30 canoes, each carrying 20 to 30 enslaved individuals. The enslaved were tied with their arms behind their backs, and the more resistant and stronger individuals were additionally secured above the knees for extra restraint. They were placed at the bottom of the canoe and often covered with water. Upon reaching the coast, these individuals were taken to the Traders' Houses, where they were fed, oiled, and kept in optimal condition for sale at the market (Abasiattai et al., 1997).

However, with the construction of the slave fort and the 'Bridge of No Return' in 1795, they were likely taken to the forts after capture. According to oral source, after making the long treks and trips along the creeks and rivers, the enslaved persons made their way through the footpath into the slave forts where they were kept and chained, awaiting the arrival of the Europeans. The stubborn ones who are perceived as capable of attempting an insurrection were stored in the bunkers, which were connected to the bridge with very minimal ventilation. This was done to break their will and spirit. Many were kept in the forts in deplorable conditions until the Europeans reached the Ikot Abasi shores, where the transactions occurred. The European merchants made selections based on the physique and general health of the enslaved persons. After which, the enslaved persons were weighed on the scale to determine their worth and then exchanged for any of the items mentioned earlier. Using a branding iron, the enslaved persons were given identity marks on their bare skin showing the initials of the European merchant who had purchased them. The act of branding identified the specific owner of the enslaved persons by the European merchants (Akpan and Udo, pers. com. 2024). From the analysis of the relics inside the forts, one can assert that slave auctions most probably took place inside the Ikot Abasi slave fort.

After the transactions were made, the enslaved individuals made their way to the ‘Bridge of No Return,’ where they were mentally and physically forced to say farewell to their homeland. They then embarked on the horrific journey known as the Middle Passage, navigating the Imo River, which flows into the Atlantic Ocean. They were sent to various destinations in the Americas and some parts of Europe, never to return. As a result, they and their descendants were forced to migrate involuntarily and assimilate into cultures completely alien to them thereby forever altering their socio-cultural identity.

5. Archaeological Survey of Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena

An archaeological survey within the slave trade site at Ikot Abasi Local Government Area was undertaken in two phases; the first was between 12th to 14th and the second phase took place from 19th to 21st, all within the month of April 2024. Being an important historical site, it was quite accessible, although barricades exist, enforced by the marine police force as a form of site protection by the Local Government Council. The site presents material evidence and relics of slave trade activities, such as the bridge, slave fort, bunker, branding rod, iron chain, branding furnace, furnace outlet, hook, and manila were all documented. To determine the extent of the slave trade sites, a judgmental strategy was employed. Due to the absence of delineating structures to show the extent of the sites, the terminating point of the surviving relics was adopted as the extent of the site. Global Positioning System (GPS) readings were taken for this purpose. To facilitate the production of the site map and show the spatial distribution of the archaeological relics, coordinates were taken and recorded using a GPS device. The site map shows the entire Ikot Abasi Slave Trade arena, which covers an area of about 5,028. 98 square meters and irregular in shape (see Fig. 4).

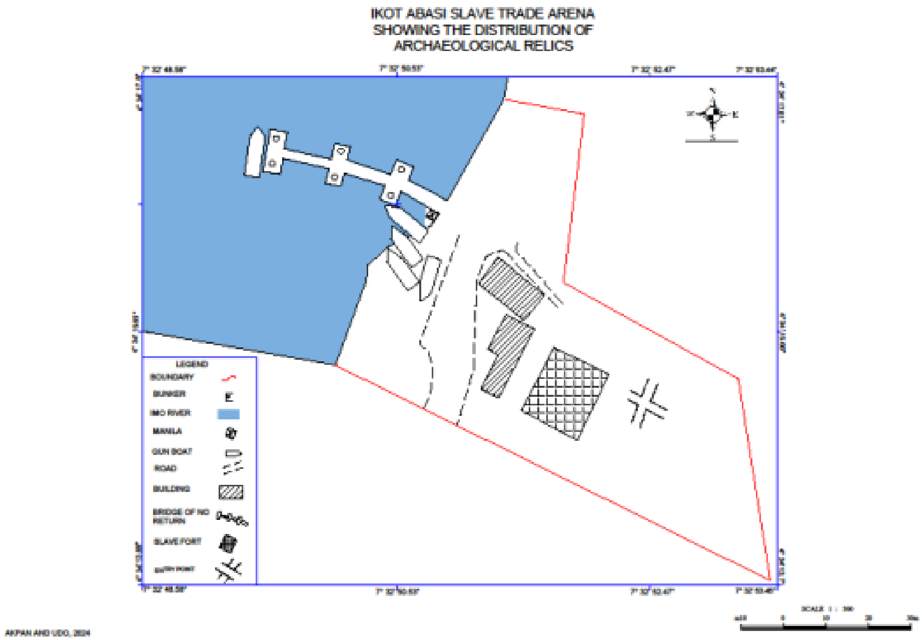


Figure 4: Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena Showing the Distribution of Archaeological Relics. Source: AKPAN and UDO, 2024.

Below are the archaeological relics identified;

The Slave Fort Entry Point: This passage is situated adjacent to the footpath where the slaves were brought in from their various points of capture, leading straight into the slave fort (see image 1). According to oral source, after making the long marches and trips through creeks and rivers, the enslaved persons made their way through the footpath into the slave forts where they were kept chained, awaiting the arrival of the Europeans (Akpan and Udo 2024 pers. comm.).

Image 1: Slave Fort Entry Point

The Slave Fort: This feature was identified within the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade vicinity and said to have been a solitary confinement where the slaves from different locations were kept. The slave fort was built using burnt clay bricks, iron rods, wood, and aluminum sheets. Based on the period of the slave trading activities, the materials used in building the slave fort were most likely imported from Europe. Although the slave fort is still in use as a make-shift shelter for the marine police force guarding the bridge, its original state has been altered by the introduction of smaller concrete rooms within the fort. Not only has the structure been altered, but it is presently undergoing adverse deterioration, for instance, the posterior walls have fallen, leaving it exposed (see images 2, 3, 4, and 5).

Image 2: Front view of the Slave Fort

Image 3: Side view of the Slave Fort

Image 4: Back view of the Slave Fort

Image 5: Internal Wall of the Slave Fort

Iron Chain: This is an iron chain identified within the slave fort and said to have been used to bind the slave's neck, hands, and feet. It was obviously of a metal origin, rusted, and about 190cm long (see image 6).

Image 6: The Iron Chain

The Weighing Point

The weighing point consisted of a hook and scale, both located within the slave fort. Although the scale is currently not present, oral history states that this was where slaves were weighed before being branded for identification by merchants. The weight of the slaves determined the type of exchange that would take place. For example, exchanged items included beads, mirrors, textiles, bar iron, hardware, arms, gunpowder, liquor, basins, knives, locks, belts, swords, clocks, paintings, beer, copper rods, manilas, brass, wires, cowries, and clothing accessories such as hats, umbrellas, and walking sticks.

The Hook: The hook is connected to an iron bar and is said to have held the scale in suspension. The hook is obviously of metal origin and has rusted over time (see image 7).

Image 7: The Hook

The Branding Point- The branding point has two components as described below.

The Branding Rod: This arrow-shaped rod was identified within the slave fort and said to have been an instrument used for branding or placing identity marks on the bodies of the enslaved by the merchants. The arrow-shaped rod was heated in the branding furnace and used to place identity marks on the enslaved persons. The markings were basically the initials of the European merchants used as a form of identification. These identity marks may have been written by the African middlemen, possibly partially literate, or by the European merchants. The arrow-shaped rod was obviously of metal origin, rusted, and about 110cm long (see image 8).

Branding Furnace: This feature was identified within the slave fort and said to be where fire was set. The furnace frame has a length of 197cm and a width of 123cm, while the furnace cover has a length of 172cm and a width of 103cm. More so, the furnace place had a heat outlet where the branding rod was heated and used to apply identity body marks on the slaves by the merchants. The outer circle diameter of the furnace outlet is about 26cm, while the inner circle diameter is about 12cm. The branding furnace was built using metal and has rusted over time (see images 9 and 10).

Image 8: The Branding Rod

Image 9: Branding Furnace

Image 10: Close view of the Furnace Outlet

The Bridge Signage

The bridge signage was restored by Hon. Dr. Akpan Micah Umoh and commissioned on the 25th of September, 2014, by Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, Speaker, House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The signage is crested "this jetty was first built in 1795 by the Europeans for the purpose of conveying slaves into waiting ships; it is a floating jetty and has three major underground holding compartments which were used in storing very stubborn slaves." The bridge signage was obviously of metal origin, and an epitaph was built and inscribed in front of it (see images 11 and 12).

⋀ *Image 11: The Bridge Signage*

⋀ *Image 12: Close view of the Signage Inscription*

The Bridge of No Return

According to the bridge signage, this feature, called "the Bridge of No Return," was built in 1795, possibly by the British who were actively involved in the slave trade in this region. It was the passage taken by the slaves that led to the slave ships waiting to embark on the Middle Passage (which is the second voyage in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, from Africa to the Americas via the Atlantic Ocean). According to the signage, this feature was nicknamed "Bridge of No Return" because once a slave stepped on it; they were not allowed to look back and never returned. The length of the bridge is about 1440cm, and its width is about 168cm. The bridge's height from ground level is about 137cm, while the height of the bridge railings is about 125cm. The length of the steps is about 176cm, while the width of the entrance steps is about 286cm. The pillars and walkway of the bridge were built using iron, and due to the wear and tear of time, the bridge is undergoing adverse deterioration. These deterioration include: rusting, some sections of the bridge floor are caving in, tilting, and are being patched using aluminum pans. Additionally, the bridge's pillars has over time lost its strength due to age and lack of maintenance (see images 13, 14, and 15).

Image 13: The Bridge Entrance

Image 14: Eastern view of the Bridge

Image 15: Western view of the Bridge

Bridge Anchor

The bridge anchor, also known as the floater, functioned over time in dual capacity, where it held the bridge in position and also connected the floor of the bridge with the bunker. It is of metal origin and is also deteriorating. The bridge anchor has a width of about 144cm and its height from the surface of the bunker is about 148cm (see images 16 and 17).

Image 16: Bridge Anchor

Image 17: Bridge Anchor

The Bunker: Three bunkers are connected to the bridge and said to have been underground compartments for storing very stubborn slaves. According to the bridge signage, the bunker has a capacity for 30 slaves, but about 150 slaves were stored there at any given time. This gives the study an idea of the estimated number of enslaved persons that were kept in the forts at a particular time, which is speculated to have been about a thousand or fewer. The bunker has the following features: the bunker cover, the metal steps, the inner walls, and the air vent. The entire length of the external part of the bunker is about 1148cm and 409cm wide.

- **The Bunker Cover**: The bunker has three metal covers, which has a diameter of 82cm, used in enclosing the opening that gives access to the bunker. The opening, on the other hand, has a diameter of 77cm and is used to access the bunker (see images 18 and 19).
- **The Metal Steps**: The metal steps has a height of 170cm and were used in descending and ascending the bunker. It was observed to be deteriorating as the last step has fallen off (see images 20 and 21).
- **The Interior of the Bunker**: The interior of the bunker has a height of 220cm, a width of 400cm, and a length of 360cm. It was the compartment that harbored the stubborn slaves. The bunker was obviously built using concrete and iron rods, and having lasted for over two centuries, the wear and tear of time has led to its adverse deterioration. The inner walls and floor of the bunker are observed to undergo rusting of the inner rods and other leaching effects (see images 22 and 23). Moreover, since the bunker is situated within water, another concern is that water currently seeps into the bunker (see image 24).
- **The Bunker Air Vent**: The bunker has four air vents with a diameter of 18cm. According to oral sources, when briefly opened, the vent allows air into the bunker for the enslaved occupants (Akpan and Udo, 2024 pers. comm.). The distance between the two air vents, internally and externally, is 173cm (see images 25, 26, 27, and 28).

Image 18: The Closed Bunker

Image 19: An Opened Bunker

Image 20: *Iron Steps within the Bunker*

Image 21: *The Broken part of the Iron Steps*

Image 22: *Water seeped within the Bunker*

Image 23: *Rusted Inner walls of the Bunker*

Image 24: *Deteriorated Walls within the Bunker*

Image 25: *Air vent within the Bunker*

Image 26: Air Vent within the Bunker

Image 27: External view of the Bunker Air Vent

Image 28: Close view of the closed Air Vent

Manila

Manila was an ancient form of money or barter coinage in the form of a metal bracelet or amulet made of bronze, copper, or brass (Edward, 2013). A rusty metal manila was identified close to the entrance step of the bridge. The diameter of the manila is 13cm, and according to Edward, manilas were first noted at Calabar in West Africa, thus its universal name, *Okpoko,* meaning "money" (Edward, 2013). Different types of manilas were regularly used as a means of exchange in West Africa, especially along the coast of modern-day Nigeria from the 15th Century to the mid-20th Century. While they were used for everyday purchases at the markets, primarily local agricultural and luxury goods, they also became the central currency of the transatlantic slave trade. The Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British slave traders carried them to the interior of West Africa to procure slaves (Ecoma and Ecoma, 2013). Evidence of manila at the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena did not only suggest its use as a currency for transactions with Europeans, but reflects the type that was likely used during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Image 29: Manila

Administrative Office for Trading

This feature was identified in close proximity to the Bridge of No Return. According to oral source, this structure was the meeting point for the middlemen, possibly an administrative office for trading slaves (Akpan and Udo, 2024, pers. comm.). Although the structure is said to be as old as the fort, it is no longer in its original state, having included features of recent building technology such as concrete blocks. On the one hand, the roof and parts of the structure were obviously old, supporting the claim that it was as old as the fort (see image 30).

Image 30: Administrative Office

6. Challenges of Fieldwork

In an attempt to carry out an investigation of this magnitude within the study area, the researchers encountered some challenges enlisted below;

- Insufficient funds: For easy implementation of the field plan involving logistics, consultation of state authorized agencies and local community, the unavailability of funds proved to be one of the major challenges of this research. Howbeit, this investigation was fully funded by the limited resources generated solely by the researchers.
- Dearth of Scholarly Research- Due to the paucity of historical and most especially archaeological research within Akwa Ibom State, very limited knowledge exists among the people of the community on the significance of the relics. By

implication, this greatly affected the collection of adequate data within the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena.

- Lack of Awareness- As a result of the aforementioned factor, a severe lack of historical consciousness has hindered the people's inability to preserve the heritage within the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena. This colossal setback has further accelerated the rapid deterioration of the relics resulting in the loss of both immaterial and material evidence such as the scale, chains and other artifacts. For instance, the only chain that exists in the fort was deliberately preserved by the tour guide which otherwise would have been completely lost if the deliberate intervention did not occur. It is necessary to point out that during the peak of the trade, as earlier discussed, about 20 to 30 canoes every two weeks carrying 20 to 30 enslaved persons were brought to the area prior to the construction of the fort. As a result of the number of enslaved persons that departed from the fort, the latter likely housed many chains which must have been used to hold down a great number of the enslaved. However, only one chain exists at the site (see image 6).
- Natural Factors- In line with the human factors discussed above, natural causes from the Imo River being a tributary of the Atlantic Ocean with its high tides along with the extended passage of time has substantially catalyzed the wears and tears of the relics. In addition to this, the lack of maintenance culture by the appropriate authorities has contributed immensely to the site's present predicament.

7. A Discourse on the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena

The history of the slave trade in Ikot Abasi, as previously discussed, indicates that significant slave trading activities occurred in the area during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade period. While scholars such as Uya (2012) and Abasiattai (1990) have extensively documented the history of the Lower Cross River Basin and Old Calabar with regards to slave trading activities in those regions, there are few written records discussing the relics identified within the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena. These relics, which include the fort, the Bridge of No Return, bunkers, and other internal artifacts, are all key components of the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade site. The entry signage clearly states that the Bridge of No Return was built in 1795. Although it is uncertain whether other relics, such as the fort, were constructed in the same year, it can be speculated that they were all built around the same period.

Regarding raw materials, one can speculate that the different relics were not built using indigenous materials but rather from hardware imported by the Europeans. This speculation is built around the evaluation of the materials in comparison with locally indigenous ones, as those employed in the construction of the arena are intrinsic to the Europeans. More so, the manpower used to erect the various components of the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena could have plausibly been indigenous, albeit with European supervision.

The signage indicates that the Europeans carried out the construction, though this information was presented without disclosing the builder's nationality. This inadequate information is due to the dearth of research carried out on the Arena. However, based on written evidence regarding slave trading activities in the area, this study asserts that the British slavers were likely the builders of the architectural features and relics evident in the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena. The interpretations largely inform this assertion of the written sources, which support the extensive trade between the British and Old Calabar.

Although other Europeans, such as the Portuguese, Spanish, and French, occasionally traded in this region, British slave merchants dominated the slave trade in Old Calabar. Latham suggests that by the 17th century, the British had already begun trading humans in Old Calabar, as evidenced by John Watts, an English sailor, who sailed there in 1668. Latham also indicated that trade in the area had existed for some time before 1668, and by 1672, many British ships were leaving Old Calabar (Latham, 1973). Lovejoy and Richardson support this by noting that much of the evidence regarding credit arrangements in the Old Calabar slave trade comes from British sources, particularly between 1760 and 1807. During the 18th century, as shipments at the ports peaked, the trade relations between the British and Africans became increasingly sophisticated (Lovejoy and Richardson, 1997).

To further strengthen this argument, Kenneth Morgan states that Britain dominated the trade from the Bight of Biafra and, by a considerable margin, was the most important region in West Africa for British slave merchants as their imperium in that region was unmatched elsewhere in Atlantic Africa. They accounted for more than two-thirds of the slave trade from the region between 1525 and 1859 (Morgan, 2016). Philip Curtin postulates that, from 1690 to 1807, about 776,400 slave ships departed the Bight of Biafra for England (Curtin, 1969).

The British were the primary trading partners of the Efik, who were slave traders from Old Calabar. It is important to note that the English were astute capitalists and bourgeoisies, who only often invest their resources in areas where profits were significant and beneficial to their merchants, financial corporations, and the broader British imperial economy. This study argues that other European powers would unlikely invest in constructing the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena, especially if the profits from human cargo were minimal for them. Competition among European slave traders was extremely high during the 18th and 19th centuries, and the national interests of each trading nation were fundamental principles that they held sacrosanct. Thus, the surplus and the tides of trade in Old Calabar were financially rewarding to the British, which must have led to the construction of the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena by the English. The British built a great presence in Old Calabar which was unrivalled by any other European nation, having a far reaching impact which eventually led to the cultural diffusion of Efik norms and lifestyle with the British culture. In addition, the trade between the British and the Efik during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade aided in no small measure in the establishment of powerful Efik City states in Old Calabar such as Creek Town, Old Town, New Town, Archibong Town, Cobham Town, Henshaw Town and Eyamba Town during this period.

These Efik towns were established by a strong syndicate of slave trading families who dominated the trade in the area for centuries, they include: the Robin Johns, Eyambas, Dukes, Henshaws, Honestys, Ebros, Ephraims, Ecricocks, Tom Egbos, Ambos, and the Cobhams (Behrendt, Latham and Nortrup, 2010). The Efik's expansive interaction with the British led to the smooth transition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade into legitimate trade, which ultimately paved the way for the British occupation of the Lower Cross River region of Nigeria.

Future archaeological research on the lands and waters in and around the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena would provide more insight into the slave trading activities, especially those that occurred in the Akwa-Ibom area. It is important to point out that relics such as the Slave fort found in Ikot Abasi are currently not found anywhere along the coasts of the Old South-Eastern region of Nigeria, except for similar ones in Badagry, Lagos state, which is geographically situated in the Bight of Benin in Western Nigeria. Although former slave depots existed along the Bonny, Calabar, and Opobo coastal communities, however, the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena stands as the only Slave fort of its kind along the coasts of the Lower Cross River area.

8. Conclusion

This research has documented a significant amount of information regarding the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade activities in the Ikot Abasi area. The material evidence found along the coast of Ikot Abasi confirms that these extensive activities persisted for centuries. The survey result has not only helped establish the extent of the slave trade in this region but has also contributed to creating a site map that reflects the spatial distribution of archaeological relics related to the slave trade. Moreover, the study highlights the obvious threats these relics face from natural and human activities, emphasizing the urgent need for conservation strategies to prevent further deterioration or loss. As this is a pioneering study in the area, its archaeological and historical significance to Atlantic scholarship has been revealed, advocating for further investigation to address chronological and socio-cultural questions that may provide useful insight into the people of Ikot Abasi. Ultimately, this study has placed the Ikot Abasi Slave Trade Arena on the global archaeological map and serves as a foundation heralding the need for further research into the archaeology of the Akwa Ibom area as a whole.

Notes

The Ikot Abasi area is located in the Bight of Biafra along with the latter's other prominent cities such as Bonny and Old Calabar. It is important to note that the Efik, Aro, and Bonny peoples were all traders in this region. The term "Old Calabar" can be ambiguous and used in different contexts. Geographically, it refers to the Efik city-states, while in British pre-colonial terminology, it denotes the specific areas from which enslaved individuals were captured. Additionally, it is also used to refer to the Efik people themselves.

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List of Informants

S/No	NAME	Age	Gender	Occupation	Type of Information	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
1	Hon. Abraham Usen	57	Male	An Elder and Politician	Settlement History and Slave Trade History	Ikot Abasi	2024
2	Hon. Okon Mayen	64	Male	Tourism Supervisor at Local Government	Slave Trade History	Ikot Abasi	2024
3	Mr. Udeme Ukpe Ukpe	36	Male	Civil Servant/ Field Guide	Slave Trade History and General History	Ikot Abasi	2024
4	Mrs. Cyrilla Effiong Bassey	45	Female	Volunteer Staff of the Local Government and Tour Guide	Slave Trade History	Ikot Abasi	2024
5	Ms. Favour Frank Enoidem	28	Female	Field Guide	General History	Ikot Abasi	2024
6	Mr. Aniekan Livingstone Malvin	31	Male	Hotel Manager	Settlement History/ Slave Trade History	Ikot Abasi	2024