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REGISTERED OFFICE: Box 1208, Suites A201 & A202 (upstairs),
Regent Village East, Grace Bay, Providenciales
TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS - British West Indies
Reg. No. E 14905

Web Site: www.stclements.edu
Email: admin@stclements.edu

EDITORIAL TEAM: Editor: Mr Adrian Williams

CONTRIBUTIONS: Contributions should be forwarded to Mr Adrian Williams at admin@stclements.edu

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Humanitarian Aid for Nepal Flood Victims after the flash flood swept through the country's mountainous northern region August 26, leaving thousands injured, displaced and struggling to meet their basic needs.

Source and Photo: https://tprf.org/humanitarian-aid-for-nepal-flood-victims/

IN THIS ISSUE

Local Government Democracy in Nigeria: Governance, Problems and Solutions – Andrew C. Ezeanya

Individual Cybersecurity Measures – Ethem Gurcan

English Articulation Difficulties among Iraqi Learners: Patterns, Causes and Pedagogical Implications – Hayder Ali Abdulridha Alzubaidi

Digital Pedagogy and Foreign Language Education in Türkiye and Korea: Notes from a Comparative Doctoral Study – Mincheol Choi

Origins Part Three – John Potter

Assessment of Noise Induced Hearing Loss among Workers at Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (AAKIA) Zanzibar – Patima Saleh Shadid, Salum Seif Salum, Kombo Hamad Kai & Omar Juma Ali

Modern Loneliness and Social Alienation: A Social Psychological Analysis – Sultan Akbugan

Nigerian Pidgin English and Economic Development: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Pidgin English Use in Three Major Markets in Enugu Capital City, Nigeria, 2015-2025 – Frederick Ugwu Ozor

Sovereignty Under Siege: Somalia, Somaliland and the Geopolitics of Recognition in the Red Sea Corridor – Sharif Sheikh Amin

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: GOVERNANCE, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Andrew C. Ezeanya*

Abstract

This paper shall attempt to define the key terms in the discourse. It will examine the local government in Nigeria: democracy, challenges, and solutions. Additionally, it will look at the legal right of local councils to carry on the activities of governing themselves independently from the state government, including managing their finances, budgets, and resources without interference. A healthy democracy requires free and fair elections by universal suffrage and secret ballot and a pluralistic system of political parties. The local governments in Nigeria are parts of the local authorities that elect council members through organized elections. Those elected chairmen and councilors are responsible for governance at the grassroots levels. The local governments are the third-tier structure of governments in Nigeria.

Key Words: *Local Government, Democracy, Governance, Problems, Solutions*

Introduction

Gberevbie and Mukoro (2023) state that the primary goal of establishing local government under a democracy is to implement democratic ideals at the grassroots level, with a renewed global focus on this role for effective development. While constitutional democratization aims to ensure local responsiveness, accountability, and efficiency, decades of administrative oversight have left many areas in Nigeria physically undeveloped. The purpose of local government areas (LGAs) is to foster grassroots engagement and development and to bring the government nearer to the people in the communities. Local government democracy alludes to the principle where local communities have the authority to govern themselves through elected officials. The local governance means that the council members and other officials are chosen by the people through democratic elections. The local government's freedom primarily revolves around the financial autonomy of the local councils. Some of the local councils in their host states are playing a vital role for which they are created. Though, some local governments are more forthright in making sure their function in the area of service delivery is flourishing for the society's common good through addressing local specific needs such as fair share of infrastructural development, decentralizing power, and ensuring a sense of belonging among diverse communities."

Method

This paper will adopt content analysis by analyzing Nigeria's local government, democracy and governance. Applying content analysis, this paper shall analyze local government, democracy, governance, challenges and solution in Nigeria. The paper shall source materials from secondary data such as State Government gazettes, Local Governments bye laws, journal publications, article publications, newspaper publications, Magazine publications, government documents, annual reports, public data base, scholarly works, seminar papers, symposium papers, workshop papers, roundtable discussions, and internet materials.

Local Governments in Nigeria

Between 1960 and 1967, Nigerians welcomed independence with great expectations, notably for participatory local government. Sadly, after having taken over from the British local government system, the First Republic's financial information, administrative structure, and democratic practices worsened. The period's setbacks in the democratic governance of the local government were documented using the two regional instruments: First, the nation's municipal governments at this time were regionalized and operated differently depending on the region (Obi, 2021). Hassan (2020) echoed a different sentiment and noted that since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, there has been a decline in the delivery of social services at the local government level due to overwhelming corruption and weak institutional oversights.

With the Northern region's emergence of the Provincial Administrative Law of 1962, the local government's power emerged in the area known as the Native Authority. Then, the traditional rulers have authority to deliver as both regional political actors and customary rulers. As per Igbuzor (2020), the Local Government (Amendment) Law almost all of 1960 reduced the responsibilities of the local government councils in the Western region and eliminated their authority by demarcating the Local Government Service Board as the region's supervising body.

The 1962–1965 Western region tragedy brought chaos and aggravated the issue of the breakdown of the region's administrative system. The Eastern region was not excluded from this system because the Ministry of Local Government is being used as a regional body to monitor the conduct of the local government councils and transform them into simply extensions of the

region. Second, the number of small local party politics and overly zealous party partisanship in local governments eroded Nigeria's local government councils.

The ministry of local government as well as the municipality's public service board did serve as regional agents to supervise local government. These institutions were made up of 3 political parties: the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) in the East, the Action Group (AG) in the West, and the Northern People Congress (NPC) in the North. Even in instances where they were elected, as in the Eastern and Western zones, and designated in the Northern region, council members were generally directly accountable to the general populace and not political, according to Obi (2021).

In 1965, the ruling Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP), led by Samuel Ladoke Akintola, dissolved the elected local government councils in the Western region as they had supported the AG, who'd been led by Obafemi Awolowo , during the 1962–1965 crisis. Nigerians were glad for the role the local government plays towards grassroots development. Local government is about constructing stronger, livelier communities in which everyone can live well and where economic opportunities prosper; it is recognized as local development.

Nigeria's Local Governments Creation

Local governments, whether democratic or military, had also failed to uphold their own constitutional mandate as noted by Mukoro and Gberevbie (2023). Trying to implement principles of democracy at the local level is the major aim of local government formation under democracy. Mukoro and Gberevbie (2023) stress that "the aim of establishing a legitimately elected local government council is both to improve grassroots service delivery in a direction that is efficient and effective" (p. 1). There is very little relevance to democratically elected local government councils in Nigeria.

In endorsement of this conversation, Mukoro and Gberevbie (2023) researched Nigerian local authorities to implement and proposed that the state government abstain from trying to meddle with their finances and from trying to push more local help, retaining charge during this crucial moment by having to raise the allocation, which would offer the service the general populace needs. The delivery of social services at the local government level in Nigeria has reduced since the nation's return to democracy in 1999 as a consequence of graft and corruption, substandard institutions, and oversights.

These intellectuals make the case that public infrastructure is in bad condition, primary education is in a coma, teachers are protesting over their lack of remuneration, health services are inadequate, and there is a shortfall of potable water. Even though the situation is dire, it is neither incurable nor hopeless. Good governance still is seriously hindered by Nigeria's local government system's lack of accountability and transparency.

Local Governments Democracy

Anywhere in the world, local government establishment is expedient because it is necessary to support grassroots economic growth. The ability of local governments to have autonomy fosters a sense of satisfaction, safety, and belonging among their citizens and determines their significance (Akindele et al., 2018). To date, every type of government, political system, or regime has made sure that this objective is accomplished. The idea of local government contains a strategy for guaranteeing both political and administrative advancement at the national level (Chiedozie, 2019). Regardless of the form of government in place, local government has long been seen as the foundation for national administration, development, and integration (Gauba, 2020).

The establishment of local authorities is a means of attaining and achieving grassroots development all over the world because it is crucial to strengthen economic growth at the local level. Its significance is defined by how local governments' autonomy encourages contentment, safety, and society among one‘s components (Akindele et al., 2018). To date, those forms of political processes, governments, and authoritarian governments have guaranteed that this objective is reached. The scheme for making sure a political and administrative improvement is included at the national level is the notion of local government (Chiedozie, 2019). Local government has long been considered the cornerstone, irrespective of the nature of national administration, development, and integration of government in place (Gauba, 2020).

Almost any plural society in history does have its own kind of local government, though every nation had a distinctive kind, threshold of autonomy, background, and constitutional status. For these differentiations, people who study local *government has* started to reassess the idea of local government (Iheanacho, 2019; Orhero, 2021). To say this is to say the obvious: the formation of other governance structures would better be determined by local government as the third tier level of government entity in Nigeria. It sincerely serves as a facilitator for grassroots development and engagement as a consequence. According to Ezeani (2016), "Every system of government has a grassroots governance process and mechanism whose main goal is to make people's lives better."

A local government, according to Odalonu (2018), is a constitutionally valid government unit with a representative council that has political authority over specific regions or spaces. In Nigeria, given the diversity of cultures, languages, and unique needs and assets, the relevance of such an organization in cultivating requisite national consciousness, unity, and

relative uniformity and protection of unexpected variations could be exaggerated. Even so, a substantial number of rural citizens live closer to their local government than to any other levels of government.

Local Governments Governance in Nigeria

There is erosion of democratic local governance (Hassan, 2020), whilst there is a national institutional framework for decentralized governance and anti-corruption initiatives embedded in local government's civil service rules. Their initiatives are operating in a challenging political and social context, preventing the adequate prevention of corruption at the local level. Typically, "it was asserted that decentralization creates an opportunity for governance-driven development at the sub-national level, yet this may not be true in the case of Nigeria." The essence of local government is, in theory, that it brings democracy closer to the people.

In Nigeria, successive governors have failed to conduct elections at the local level, thereby eroding democratic governance. Instead of elected officials, there is a so-called Caretaker Committee, mainly comprised of cronies, and they are appointed to local government offices. The state governor selects trusted stalwarts to do their bidding and protects their interests. Political leaders, traditional rulers, and youth leaders at the local level who are loyal to governors are awarded contracts, which they, however, rarely execute.

The institutions, procedures, and methods used to guide, regulate, and hold account to local authorities such as municipalities or regional districts are referred to as local government governance. In order to ensure these organizations are responsive to the needs of their communities. It covers how they are set up, run, offer services, and make decisions. Accountability, openness, and the successful, efficient provision of municipal services are important components of accountability. Hassan (2020) observed that health services are inadequate, there is limited portable water, primary education is in a comatose state, teachers are protesting against not being paid, and public infrastructure is poorly maintained.

The citizens hold local governments responsible for their deeds and choices. This covers procedures for public participation, openness in decision-making, and recourse in the event that locals believe their concerns are not being taken into consideration. In governance, openness and transparency are essential in providing the public with easy access to information regarding council meetings, finances, and decision-making procedures.

To this end, efficiency and effectiveness means making prudent use of resources and making sure that services satisfy community requirements, local governments work to provide services in an efficient and effective manner. Community engagement is actively interacting with the community and incorporating their opinions into decision-making procedures, which are the key components of good governance. Strategic planning helps direct government activities and ensure they are pursuing certain goals and objectives; local government creates strategic plans in order to solve problems that call for cooperation. Local governments frequently collaborate with federal and state administrations.

The tiers mean the three levels of government directly develop and guarantee the welfare of citizens. Similarly, local governments offer leadership and stewardship for the community. The instances of effective local government governance are through public consultations prior to deciding on significant matters like development projects or zoning changes. The local councils in the developing society do conduct public consultations for any local development project. With respect to budget procedures, local governments create and adopt budgets that specify how public monies will be distributed among different programs and services. In real terms, local election representatives are held accountable; residents choose them to serve on the local council. Local governments strive to support cultural events, social progress, and economic growth in their communities. The goal of local government governance is to establish a framework that allows local authorities to function efficiently, openly, and responsibly while making sure they represent the interests of their people**.**

Local Governments Monetary Freedom

To address this challenges, the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit has issued an advisory forbidding the tampering with statutory local government allocations, granting local government' direct access to the fund. However, the Nigeria Governors Forum—comprising the 36 state governors of Nigeria—is challenging this effort, which, if introduced, could go very far in tackling corruption. Indeed, data from the office of the accountant-general reveals 14.7 trillion naira (equivalent to 38 billion US dollars) was allocated to the 774 local governments between 2008 and 2018, but the governors diverted a significant percentage of the allocation into state accounts. The local government's top focus is money.

The federal government gets approximately 52% of the statutory allocation from the federation account, each of the 36 states gets 27%, and the 774 local government areas are entitled to 21%. This is the official sharing formula. In reality, however, the government requires the State Joint Local Government Account, a provision set out in section 162 of the 1999 constitution, to appropriate the 48% accrual and disseminate a portion to the local government at its own discretion.

The Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit has issued guidance that prevents tampering with statutory local government allocations, enabling direct access order to solve this issue. The fund in this proposal, which, if executed, could greatly reduce corruption, is being

disputed by the Nigeria Governors Forum, which is composed of the 36 state governors of Nigeria. In fact, according to data from the office of the accountant-general, between 2008 and 2014, 14.7 trillion naira, or 38 billion dollars, was dispersed to the 774 local governments; nevertheless, the governors diverted a substantial portion of this quantity into the state account.

According to Hassan (2020), the State Joint Local Government Account is thus a crucial enabler of this corruption and continues to reduce the power of local governments. The envelope system, a reference to cash bribes accepted by officials, is a direct consequence of the joint account system and sees governors releasing funds to the local government without any budget justification (Hassan, 2020, p. 1). The money is often spent at the discretion of the chairman, treasurer, and head of administration at the local council, most of whom are appointed by the governor, and the money disbursed to locals by the state governments is usually grossly insufficient. It is primarily used to pay staff salaries. The opaque system engenders corruption coupled with the fact that audit reports, when conducted, are only available to one or two individuals at the top of the local government structure in that area.

Thus, the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) continues to destabilize the power of local governments and is a critical enabler of this corruption. The envelope system, which also relates to cash bribes that officials accept, is a direct outcome of the joint account system and enables governors to release the money to local authorities without supplying a government budget clarification. The appointing of the major portion of the local council's chairman, treasurer, and head of administration, and the finances dispersed to inhabitants by the state governments are generally grossly insufficient. This same basic motive of it is to pay staff wages. Corruption is urged by the opaque system, and when audits are completed, only one or two people have access to the outcomes.

Even though this local council's internal auditor undertakes audit reports quarterly, according to a respondent interviewed for research by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), "funding is not communicated to anyone within the council except to the chairman and head of finance." It is due to this impossibility to ascertain uncertainty surrounding this. Its recommendations are now being accompanied, and, subsequently, those interested in reforming the process take the appropriate measures that have been unable to.

Organizations Serving the Public Needs

Nigerian governance is accused of bias, and councilors do not even give the top class of accountability and representation needed to continue local good governance. Communities all through the nation are still undeveloped as a consequence of this continual impunity. Unfortunately, it is apparent that a sizable number of the population had already declined to take part in trying to call for accountability at the local level, feasibly out of frustration at being completely ignored for so long. To break this cycle of unethical behavior in the organizations serving the public needs and encourage the implementation of skillful local governments, even doing so will obviously necessitate a flourishing civil society.

Nevertheless, local governments' civil service restrictions integrate national institutional frameworks for decentralized governance and anti-corruption attempts. Due to the difficult political and social environment in which these programs operate, corruption cannot be successfully blocked locally. Usually, it is claimed that decentralization opens the door to development driven by governance. Even in Nigeria's case and situation, this might not be the case.

Conceivably though, the fundamental concept behind local government is to bring democracy closer to the people. The issue of democracy and governance is crucial in every society and it offers a framework for decision-making citizen’s engagement, encourages accountability, openness, safeguard liberties and rights of the citizens. Nigeria’s democratic governance has indeed been eroded by successive governors' failing to secure local elections. Local government officials are appointed to so-called caretaker committees, which are mainly made up of cronies, in different locations from elected officials. To bring out their guidelines and protect their interests, state governor’s select reliable party officials. Local youth leaders, political leaders, and traditional rulers who endorse the governors are provided contracts they cannot ever undertake/execute.

Problems

Local governments in Nigeria face an array of problems, such as insufficient service delivery, financial constraints, ineffective leadership, and a lack of accountability. These issues make it harder for them to meet all of the demands of the population, particularly in rural areas. According to Hassan (2020), the situation is dire but neither hopeless nor incurable. However, the lack of transparency and accountability in Nigeria’s local government system continues to be significant and a hindrance to good governance. Despite being the level of government closest to the people, local governments are frequently unable to deliver basic amenities, such as infrastructure, healthcare, and education. The public’s trust in government institutions is undermined by this failure. Local government officials are at times more famous because of their harassment than their delivery of amenities.

Financial limits: A great deal of local governments encounter challenges with producing insufficient revenue and rely on funds from the federal and state governments. A lack of technological infrastructure and poor financial management make it hard for them to optimize revenue collection. Opportunities for revenue generation can frequently be limited by laws

and regulations and corruption and inefficient management. The primary problems that contribute to ineffective local governance are waste, inept leadership, and an absence of accountability. Resources meant for service delivery and *development is* diverted by corruption.

These issues are made harsher by a lack of accountability and transparency measures. Weak institutional *capacity, the local governments often lacks* the capability to carry out plans and manage their affairs properly. This includes inadequate administrative systems and a lack of adequately trained staff. Local decision-making and autonomy may be repressed by undue federal and state consolidation. Local governance can also be undermined by outside interference from state governments and security problems, of which local communities in Nigeria are particularly affected by safety concerns like terrorism, banditry, and *inter-communal* disputes that additionally impede governance.

Solutions

It is believed that local government can solve all of the various challenges and issues faced by a diverse range of culturally diverse individuals in a diverse nation/state like Nigeria. Even though this level of government has always been significant, there appear to have been some obstacles affecting its effectiveness recently. These obstacles include, among other things, bribery and corruption, embezzlement, the glaring lack of appropriately qualified and trained staff, and political meddling by both the state and federal governments (Adeyemi, 2017).

A local authority is a territorial unit with some degree of autonomy that is established by a state's constitution or broad regulations to carry out specific tasks within predetermined or restricted geographic boundaries. Agbakoba (2019) defines a local government as a political as well as administrative body that has the legal authority to rule over a designated area.

It entails a philosophical dedication to the notion of grassroots community involvement in governance. In actuality, local government initiatives are where democracy itself began and grew. For this reason, the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of these governments are, if applicable, appointed or elected. The establishment of local government in Nigeria aims to bring the governing body closer to the populace. Overall, local governments in Nigeria faced challenges in the area of infrastructure, healthcare, and educational issues, which tend to be particularly acute in the rural areas. These issues indicate that Nigeria's local governance has to be provided with adequate support to enhance service delivery, and accountability and transparency need to be encouraged.

Conclusion

If you compared the federal and state governments, they would be better positioned to understand the actual issues facing the populace and act as the most efficient catalyst for positive socioeconomic and political development (Adeyemi, 2017). But the main reason local government was established was because it provided a channel for the public and the government to interact, relate, and, faster than any other method, settle disputes that might have erupted in the structure (Okoli, 2016). The push for municipal autonomy is necessary in order to maximize citizen participation, promote balanced development, and elicit a response from the government.

A type of political as well as administrative framework known as local government is used to support decentralization, national integration, effective governance, and a sense of community at the local level. Globally, local governments function as administrative units (Agagu, 2018**)**. There is no doubt in my mind that the Nigerian federal government's description of local government is primarily theoretically sound and people-oriented, but local councils were unable to take complete control of autonomy with the power to make absolute decision choices.

In order to supplement the efforts of the federal and state governments, it speaks of representative councils having significant authority over local affairs and the ability to provide services and carry out projects in their communities. As the major control of local governments is directed towards personnel, institutional, and financial matters, among other things, the definition also acknowledges the necessity of local government autonomy (Guideline on Local Government Reform, 1976). The goal of the study was to determine whether or not local government establishment under democratic regimes is service-oriented and not merely an adjunct of the state government. Given the current state of the nation's economy, it is not practical to create more local governments; instead, more revenue streams must be opened in order to provide effective grassroots service delivery. The crux of the local government is fiscal.

The official sharing formula of the statutory allocation from the federation account is the following: the federal government takes about 52 percent; the 36 individual states get 27 percent, while the 774 local government areas are entitled to about 21 percent. In practice, however, the state appropriates the 48 percent accrual and grants a portion to the local government at its own discretion, using the State Joint Local Government Account provision set out in section 162 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution.

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About the Author



***Andrew C. Ezeanya** is a married man with kids. He is a teacher and a researcher by profession, licensed to teach in Canada. He holds a Bachelor's degree in education B.SC (B.ED) obtained from the University of Nigeria Nsukka. He has also obtained a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in Political Science from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka in Nigeria. Andrew has a Master of Arts in Criminology from the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia and has also received a Malaysia Language Certificate called Bahasa Melayu (BM). In 2006, he received Ontario College of Teachers License, and also, in 2009, received additional qualification courses in Canadian Law from the University of Toronto. Andrew Ezeanya currently teaches at the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board in Ontario, Canada.*

He may be reached at andrewezeanya@yahoo.co.uk.

INDIVIDUAL CYBERSECURITY MEASURES

Dr Ethem Gurcan*

Abstract

This study outlines the measures individuals should take against "crimes in the field of informatics"—which include cyberbullying (defined as the intentional and repeated harassment, harming, hurting, or frightening of one person by another via digital platforms, environments, and social media channels) as well as acts such as unlawfully accessing or remaining within an information system (in whole or in part), obstructing or disrupting the operation of such a system, and attempting to destroy data.

Keywords: *Information Technology, Cybersecurity, Bullying, Crime.*

Entrance

Rapidly advancing technology is becoming an inseparable part of every aspect of our daily lives. Although it has not been long since we were introduced to mobile phones, many homes now have robot vacuum cleaners and household appliances that can be controlled over the internet. In fact, homes are being built as smart homes, allowing various functions to be performed through voice commands. Vehicles capable of autonomous driving have been developed and are already appearing on the roads. While balloons, airplanes, and helicopters were once used for imagery intelligence, today drones have been developed, and more advanced satellite technologies are now being used. The widespread use of social media has taken information sharing to an entirely new level. As technology becomes more accessible, the risk posed by cybersecurity threats continues to increase. Faced with increasingly complex cyber threats in the virtual world, it has become necessary to use artificial intelligence methods to protect users' privacy and data.

To Protect Against Cyber Attackers Who Try Every Method To Achieve Their Goals, The Precautions That Every Technology User Should Take Are As Follows;

1. Use A Strong Password

Using a strong password is important for protecting your personal data. The more complex and longer your password is, the stronger it becomes. A password consisting of at least eight or more characters should be created. It is recommended that you use uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols in your password. Special characters (! @ # $ % ^ & * ( ) etc.) can also be used.

Commonly used words and names in any language, sequential letters and numbers such as abc or 123, and easily guessable passwords such as birthdays should not be used (Gündüz, 2022, p.430). Additionally, regularly changing your password increases the level of security.

2. Using Two-Factor Authentication

Two-factor authentication is a method of verifying users' identities by using a combination of two different factors they possess. This method provides a higher level of security than authentication methods based on single-factor authentication, where the user provides only one factor (usually a password or passcode). Therefore, the use of two-factor authentication in supported applications and platforms is recommended to make internet users' accounts more secure. Security can be enhanced through the capabilities provided by artificial intelligence for authentication, such as facial recognition technology (Kılınç, 2023, p.55).

3. Using Up-To-Date Antivirus And Security Software

The importance of using up-to-date antivirus and security software plays a vital role in detecting and blocking malicious software on computers and other devices. According to statistics, thousands of new malicious software programs are detected and spread every day. These programs can engage in harmful activities such as stealing your personal information, locking your devices, or encrypting your data. Up-to-date antivirus and security software detects known viruses and other malicious software and provides protection against security threats. In addition, updated software versions are regularly improved and updated to defend against new threats. Therefore, using up-to-date antivirus and security software is an important step to protect your computer and personal data. Antivirus software protects our computers against worms, trojans, and other viruses.Microsoft Windows XP işletim sisteminin önerilen ücretsiz antivirüs yazılımları şunlardır (Zeydan, 2006, s.4)

• AVG Antivirus Free (http://free.grisoft.com) • Antivir Antivirus (http://www.avira.com)

• Avast Home Edition (http://www.avast.com) • Comodo Antivirus (http://www.antivirus.comodo.com)

4. Keeping Operating Systems And Applications Up To Date

Keeping your operating systems and applications up to date is one of the most effective methods for eliminating security vulnerabilities and protecting your computer against cyberattacks. Updates are software patches released by developers to fix security

weaknesses they have identified and to provide protection against new threats. Statistics show that many cyberattacks occur through operating systems and applications that have not been updated. Therefore, neglecting updates can make it easier for attackers to gain access to your computer. In addition, older versions can also affect your computer's performance and compatibility. For this reason, regularly checking for updates and keeping your operating systems and applications up to date is an important step in ensuring your computer's security.

5. Making Regular Backups And Using A Reliable And Up-To-Date Browser

Data loss may occur due to computer crashes, hardware failures, or other reasons. Backing up is an important step to keep your data safe and protect your critical information. By performing regular backups, you safeguard your important files and can restore them without issues in case of data loss.

Using a reliable and up-to-date browser is a critical factor in terms of internet security. A reliable browser should be equipped with security measures and have features that can block malicious software. Up-to-date browsers include new security updates and provide protection against known security vulnerabilities. In addition, modern browsers can display websites developed in compliance with web standards more effectively and provide better performance. Using up-to-date versions of browsers helps prevent various malicious software (viruses, trojans, ransomware, etc.) and phishing attacks. Furthermore, reliable browsers can recognize fake websites that redirect users to harmful pages or attempt to steal their personal information. Therefore, internet users can enhance their online security by using a reliable and up-to-date browser.

Hackers can exploit vulnerabilities in outdated software and silently infiltrate users' systems, infecting them with viruses. By regularly updating software, you can secure your computer (Çelik, 2018, p.121).

6. Using A Secure Wi-Fi Network

Using a secure Wi-Fi network is an important step in protecting the security of your internet connection and your personal data. Many people use Wi-Fi networks at home or in public spaces, and these networks carry potential security risks. Using a secure Wi-Fi network prevents others from gaining unauthorized access to your network and from data theft. For this purpose, you can increase security measures by encrypting your Wi-Fi network and changing its default settings. It is also important to set a strong password for your Wi-Fi network. Keeping your network hidden, that is, disabling SSID broadcasting, is also a step that enhances security. When browsing on public Wi-Fi networks, you should be careful and avoid sharing your sensitive information (bank details, passwords) over such networks. Using a secure Wi-Fi network protects you from cyberattacks and data leaks and makes your internet experience safer.

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) is a technology that addresses this need. A VPN enables users to connect to a network by protecting their private data over an internet connection. VPN technology has a structure that encrypts users' data and makes their internet connections secure. By hiding the user's geographical location, VPN technology also prevents access by those who want to detect the user's IP address (Aydemir-Fetah, 2023, p. 377).

7. Not Opening Unknown Email Attachments And Avoiding Fake Websites

Email is a tool frequently used in communication today, but opening email attachments carelessly can pose a major cybersecurity risk. Opening email attachments from unknown or untrusted sources can lead to malicious software infecting computers and the theft of sensitive data. Statistics show that phishing attacks and the spread of malicious attachments via email are still a common method. Without verifying the reliability of an email, you should avoid opening attachments from emails you do not recognize or do not expect. This precaution keeps your personal information and devices safe and helps protect you against cyberattacks. If you receive a suspicious email, carefully examine it, check the source of the email, and unless you are sure it is safe, be careful not to open its attachments (Duran, 2019, p.7).

Research shows that phishing attacks are one of the most common methods used by cyber attackers, with fake websites being a key tool. Therefore, users should verify the URL before clicking on any suspicious email or link and ensure that the site is trustworthy before sharing their information. A good method is to check whether the site has an SSL certificate (Korkmaz, 2019, p. 827) and to make sure the URL is spelled correctly. In addition, caution should be exercised and security measures should be taken when accessing sites where sensitive information is shared, such as popular e-commerce sites or banks. Avoiding fake websites is an important step for protecting users' personal and financial security.

8. Being Careful Against Social Engineering Attacks

using fake identities on the phone, in emails, or on social media. The targets of these attacks are usernames, passwords, bank details, and other personal or financial information. There are many types of social engineering attacks; for example, attacks known as "phishing" aim to obtain personal information by directing users to fake websites. The most effective way to reduce the success rate of social engineering attacks is to be careful and skeptical of any unsolicited or suspicious request (Korkmaz, 2019, p. 99). We should not trust requests from unknown individuals or sources, and when any request for information or

action is received, we should use alternative communication channels to verify it.

9. Protecting Social Media Accounts And Limiting Social Media Posts

Protecting your social media accounts is an important step to ensure your personal security and protect against cyberattacks. Because social media platforms contain sensitive data that includes your personal information and contact details. The first step is to use a strong password. Your password should be complex, unique, and unpredictable. Additionally, enabling two-factor authentication also increases your account security. Review your privacy settings and only grant access to people you know. Carefully evaluate friend requests and restrict access to unknown people. Be cautious when downloading apps and games you trust on social media platforms, as they may contain malware. Be careful against social engineering attacks, and do not click on suspicious messages or links from unknown people (Ayçanoğlu-Yalçın, 2019, p. 99). Share consciously, and avoid revealing private or personal information publicly. Finally, regularly check your social media accounts and report suspicious activities.

Limiting your social media posts is an important step to protect your personal privacy and increase your online safety. Avoiding the public sharing of your personal information (such as address, phone number, date of birth, etc.) helps protect you against fraud or phishing attempts. Additionally, photos or posts you share on social media may have negative consequences in the future regarding matters such as work, education, or relationships. Therefore, it is important to keep your information under control and stay safe by limiting your social media posts.

10. Not Trusting Unknown People Or Sources

In this era we live in, the internet age, it is an important cybersecurity principle not to trust unknown individuals or sources. Threats such as fraud, phishing attacks, and malware on the internet are increasingly rising. Many fake websites, emails, or messages attempt to obtain our personal and financial information. Therefore, caution should be exercised before trusting unknown individuals or sources. Any suspicious request, offer, or link should be treated with skepticism, and additional research should be conducted to verify its accuracy. Additionally, when sharing information online and conducting online transactions, trusted and reliable sources should be preferred.

11. Being Careful With Spam Emails And Not Clicking Unknown Links

Paying attention to spam emails (Gedik, 2020, p. 480) is extremely important for a safe online experience. Spam emails typically contain unwanted advertisements, fake offers, or fraudulent messages. Opening these emails or clicking the links they contain may result in malware infecting your computer or your personal information being stolen. Spam emails often come from suspicious email addresses or unknown senders. Therefore, it is important to recognize spam emails and evaluate them carefully before opening them. Additionally, it is important to verify the authenticity of any email before sharing your personal or financial information. Even emails that appear to come from trusted sources should be examined carefully, as attackers may impersonate people or organizations we trust. Before opening email attachments or clicking links, it is always best to delete any emails you find suspicious.

Not clicking on unknown links is an important step in maintaining cybersecurity. Such links are commonly used to spread malware and phishing attacks. Clicking on unknown links can expose you to risks such as having your personal information stolen, infecting your device with malicious software, or becoming a victim of fraud. Therefore, it is important to avoid clicking on unknown or suspicious links, except those that come from sources you trust.

12. Shopping Online Safely

Checking reviews and user feedback can give you an idea of the site's reliability. When sharing your credit card information, you should only use trusted and well-known payment providers. To keep your card information secure, it is important to protect your device by using up-to-date antivirus software and a firewall. Furthermore, regularly reviewing your account activity and promptly reporting suspicious transactions can help detect potential fraud at an early stage. In summary, ensuring security while shopping online involves choosing reputable websites, using a strong password, and protecting your credit card information (Algür, 2011, p. 3669).

13. Not Trusting Unknown USB Flash Drives Or External Devices

Not trusting unknown USB flash drives or external devices is extremely important for personal and computer security. Many cyberattacks and malware use USB flash drives or external devices to infect computers and other systems. Connecting USB flash drives or external devices from unknown sources to a computer can allow malicious software to infect the device and lead to the theft of sensitive data. Such devices may contain malware or viruses and can cause data loss or phishing attacks without the user's knowledge. Therefore, avoiding the use of USB flash drives or external devices from unknown sources is an important step in minimizing security risks. Instead, it is safer to use USB flash drives or external devices obtained from sources you trust and know to be reliable. In addition, keeping your antivirus software up to date and performing regular scans are also important for maintaining your computer's security.

14. Receive Internet Security Training

Receiving internet security training informs internet users about cyber threats and raises awareness of safe internet practices. These training programs provide the skills needed to recognize and prevent threats such as online fraud, phishing attacks, and malware. Internet security training teaches users how to protect their personal and financial information, create strong passwords, verify trustworthy sources, and understand the impact of their online behavior. By improving users' security, these programs help them become more aware and better protected in the online environment. In this context, BTK Academy offers effective, free, and certified training programs. You can access training any day of the week, at any time, and improve your knowledge of internet security and many other subjects at https://www.btkakademi.gov.tr.

15. Securely Sharing Files

Performing secure file sharing is important for protecting your personal and sensitive information. Choosing secure file-sharing services when sharing your files ensures that your data is encrypted. This way, it reduces the risk of unauthorized access and helps keep your information safe. Additionally, by limiting access permissions to the files you share, you can ensure that only certain people can view the files. In this way, you can protect the security and privacy of your files.

Although there is no way to fully ensure cybersecurity in rapidly developing technology, the implementation of the above measures by individual users will provide a high level of protection against attackers.

Conclusion

With the development and diversification of technology alongside the internet, new types of crime and differences in criminal methods have emerged today. For states to be successful in combating crime and criminality, there are measures that individuals must also take. As a result of the joint cooperation between law enforcement forces and the public, it will be possible for crime to decrease and for criminals to be caught more quickly. We can name this work as Community-Oriented Security Service.

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About the Author



***Dr Ethem Gurcan**, Address: Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Academy - Ankara – Türkiye, graduated from the Faculty of Business Administration. He completed his Master's degree in the Department of Republican History with his thesis titled "Transition to Regular Army and the Circassian Ethem Incident". He completed his Ph.D in "Public Law" at St Clements University in March 2022. Dr Gurcan has been working as a Lecturer at the Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Academy for 9 years. You can reach him at ethemcokum@hotmail.com*

ENGLISH ARTICULATION DIFFICULTIES AMONG IRAQI LEARNERS: PATTERNS, CAUSES AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Dr Hayder Ali Abdulridha Alzubaidi*

(*Assistant Professor, Kut University, Iraq*)

Abstract

This study investigates the articulation difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL learners, focusing on fresh first-year students at the English Department of Al-Kut University. The research identifies common patterns of mispronunciation, examines underlying causes related to Arabic phonology and instructional factors and proposes pedagogical recommendations. Data was collected from 50 participants through pronunciation tests, audio recordings and questionnaires. Results reveal systematic pronunciation challenges and suggest targeted instructional strategies to enhance oral proficiency.

Keywords: *Iraqi learners, English articulation, segmental difficulties, L1 influence*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

English pronunciation is a persistent challenge for EFL learners whose first language is Arabic. Iraqi learners, in particular, struggle with phonemes absent in Arabic, as well as stress and intonation patterns that differ significantly from their L1. Mispronunciations reduce intelligibility and hinder communication, even after years of formal instruction (Hameed, 2024).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite compulsory English courses at Iraqi universities, learners continue to face systematic pronunciation difficulties. These challenges stem from L1 transfer, limited exposure to authentic English input, and insufficient emphasis on oral skills in classroom instruction (Merzah, 2024).

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the most common pronunciation errors among Iraqi first-year EFL learners?
2. What phonological and instructional factors contribute to these errors?
3. What pedagogical strategies can be implemented to improve learners' oral proficiency?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of research on Iraqi EFL learners by providing empirical evidence of systematic pronunciation difficulties. It offers practical recommendations for curriculum design, teacher training, and classroom practice.

English pronunciation is a persistent challenge for EFL learners whose first language (L1) is Arabic, especially Iraqi Arabic varieties. Pronunciation errors often lead to reduced intelligibility and communication barriers despite years of formal instruction. Prior studies highlight that Iraqi learners struggle with specific phonological aspects, influenced by L1 transfer, classroom practices, and limited exposure to native English speech.

2. Literature Review

Research on Arabic-speaking learners of English has highlighted recurring pronunciation problems. Segmental difficulties include the substitution of English phonemes absent in Arabic, such as /p/, /v/, and /ŋ/, with their closest Arabic equivalents. For example, /p/ is often realized as /b/, and /ŋ/ is replaced with /n/ (Al-Abdely, 2016). Suprasegmental features such as stress, rhythm, and intonation also pose challenges, as Arabic is generally syllable-timed, whereas English relies on stress timing (Ali & Abdalla, 2021).

Studies conducted in Iraq confirm that Iraqi learners' pronunciation difficulties are systematic and deeply tied to L1 phonological structures (Merzah, 2024; Hameed, 2024). Consonant clusters, in particular, represent a major obstacle, as Iraqi Arabic restricts cluster formation, especially word-initially and word-finally. Learners therefore resort to strategies such as vowel epenthesis, consonant deletion, and cluster simplification (Almuselhy, 2024). These findings underscore the need for explicit pronunciation instruction tailored to the Iraqi context.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants were **50 first-year students** (ages 18–21) enrolled in the **English Department at Kut University**. All were native speakers of Iraqi Arabic

and were taking compulsory English courses during the research semester.

3.2 Instruments

- **Pronunciation Test:** A list of 30 target words representing problematic phonemes for Arabic speakers (e.g. /p/, /r /, /ŋ/, cc, ccc) was administered.
- **Reading Aloud Task:** Students read short sentences aloud while being audio recorded.
- **Questionnaire:** Learners self-reported their awareness of pronunciation difficulties and exposure to English outside class.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

1. Participants completed the pronunciation test individually in a quiet room.
2. Audio recordings were made for later phonetic analysis.
3. A questionnaire was administered immediately after the speaking tasks.

3.4 Data Analysis

Audio recordings were analyzed using auditory judgment and transcription comparison with standard English pronunciation. Frequency counts of errors were tabulated, and questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively.

4. Results

4.1 Common Pronunciation Errors

The most frequent errors observed among the participants were:

Phoneme	Error Pattern Example	Percentage of Learners Affected
/p/	Pronounced as /b/	98%
/r/	Pronounced as /f/	96%
/ŋ/	Substituted with /n/	100%
Vowel length	Short vs. long confusion	78%
CCC		98%
CC		97%

spy- play-try- cry- beauty- duty- fly- few- view- new- music- green- stay- star- smoke- slow- sweet- three- Street- spread- stupid- stopped- kept- act- garden- pool- fact- battles- helped –sing- wrong- ring-singer- banging Tongues-

These results reflect patterns documented in the Iraqi context, where certain English sounds do not have direct equivalents in Arabic.

4.2 Stress and Intonation Issues

Many students placed equal stress on syllables rather than following English lexical stress patterns, leading to unnatural intonation patterns. This aligns with research indicating suprasegmental difficulties among Iraqi EFL learners.

REcord n reCORD v PREsent n preSENT v CONtract n conTRACT v

I kept a REcord of the result please reCORD the lecture

Intonation issues

He is coming tomorrow (down statement) He is coming tomorrow (Yes-No) up

Where are you going? (down) Where are you going? (up) X

Really? (up) surprise/ doubt Really (down) acceptance

Common Mistakes

Overuse of level or rising intonation, limited use of falling tones- transfer from Arabic intonation, weak awareness of nuclear stress placement. Led to unnatural rhythm- pragmatic misunderstanding- reduced intelligibility

4.3 Learner Awareness

The questionnaire revealed that 60% of participants were **aware** they had pronunciation problems but reported **limited practice opportunities** outside the classroom. Most learners (72%) indicated they primarily focused on reading and writing rather than listening or speaking practice.

4.4 Consonant Cluster (Consonant Sequence) Difficulties

4.5.1 Nature of Consonant Clusters in English

English allows complex consonant clusters at the **initial**, **medial**, and **final** positions of words (e.g., *street, next, asked*). In contrast, Iraqi Arabic has **severely restricted consonant clusters**, particularly word-initially and word-finally. This structural difference leads to systematic pronunciation difficulties for Iraqi EFL learners.

4.5.2 Observed Error Patterns among Kut University Students

Analysis of the recorded data from the **50 first-year students** revealed frequent errors in pronouncing English consonant clusters. The most common strategies used by learners were:

1. **Vowel Epenthesis** (inserting a vowel)
2. **Consonant Deletion**
3. **Cluster Simplification**

a. Initial Consonant Clusters

Words beginning with two or three consonants were particularly problematic.

Word	Target Pronunciation	Learner Production	Error Type
street	/striːt/	/ɪstriːt/	Vowel epenthesis
school	/skuːl/	/ɪskuːl/	Vowel epenthesis
play	/pleɪ/	/pəleɪ/	Vowel insertion

72% of participants inserted a short vowel (/ɪ/ or /ə/) before initial clusters, reflecting Arabic phonotactic constraints.

b. Medial Consonant Clusters

Clusters within words caused timing and articulation difficulties.

Word	Target	Common Error
student	/ˈstjuːdənt/	/ˈsɪtjuːdənt/
extra	/ˈekstrə/	/ˈekɪstrə/

Learners often **broke the cluster into two syllables**, disrupting English syllable structure.

c. Final Consonant Clusters

Final clusters were the **most difficult** category.

Word	Target	Learner Output	Error
asked	/ɑːskt/	/ɑːsk/	Consonant deletion
next	/nekst/	/neks/	Cluster reduction
helped	/helpt/	/help/	Final consonant deletion

Approximately **80%** of learners deleted one consonant from final clusters, especially past-tense and plural morphemes, which also affected **grammatical accuracy**.

4.5.3 Causes of Consonant Cluster Difficulties

The findings indicate that consonant cluster errors among Iraqi learners result from:

1. **L1 Phonological Transfer**

Iraqi Arabic does not permit complex clusters, especially word-initially or word-finally, encouraging vowel insertion or deletion.

2. **Articulatory Complexity**

Producing multiple consonants without an intervening vowel requires motor coordination unfamiliar to learners.

3. **Orthographic Influence**

Learners rely on spelling, leading to confusion when silent or reduced consonants appear in clusters.

4. **Lack of Explicit Instruction**

Pronunciation instruction in Iraqi classrooms rarely addresses phonotactic rules or cluster training.

These findings are consistent with previous research on Arabic-speaking EFL learners (Al-Abdely, 2016; Almuselhy, 2024).

4.6 Consonant Sequences (Clusters)

Consonant clusters were among the most challenging aspects of pronunciation.

Initial clusters:
- *street* /striːt/ → /sItriːt/ (95%)
- *school* /skuːl/ → /ɪskuːl/ (75%)

Medial clusters:
- *student* /ˈstjuːdənt/ → /ˈsɪtjuːdənt/

Final clusters:
- *asked* /ɑːskt/ → /ɑːsk/
- *next* /nekst/ → /neks/

The dominant strategies were vowel epenthesis and consonant deletion, reflecting Arabic phonotactic constraints.

5. Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following pedagogical recommendations are proposed for Iraqi EFL contexts:

1-Integrate Pronunciation into Curriculum

Pronunciation should be taught **explicitly and regularly**, not just as isolated drills. Contrastive analysis between English and Arabic sounds can help learners anticipate common errors. Teachers can use minimal pair drills and phonetic transcription exercises.

2- Use Technology and Multimedia

Language labs and mobile applications that provide **audio feedback** can increase learners' self-monitoring and correction. Activities like shadowing native speaker audio can improve rhythm and stress.

3- Communicative Practice

Teachers should implement **task-based speaking activities** that encourage real communication, such as dialogues and role plays, increasing exposure to authentic pronunciation.

4- Teacher Training

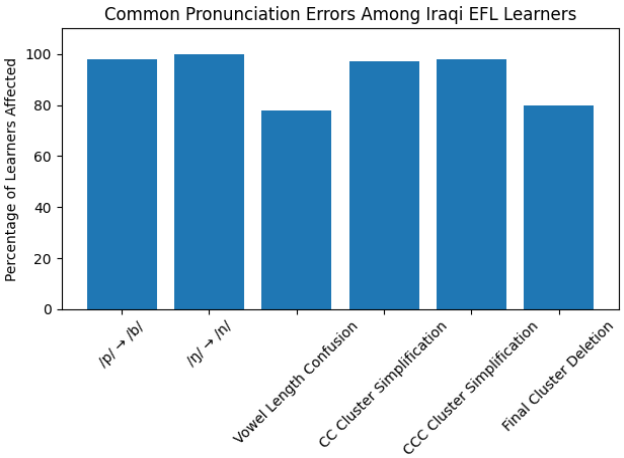
Instructors need professional development on pronunciation pedagogy to confidently teach segmental (sounds) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, intonation) aspects.

Teaching Consonant Clusters Explicitly

Based on the findings, the following instructional practices are recommended:

- Teaching **English syllable structure and phonotactics**
- Using **slow-to-fast drilling** of clusters (e.g., /s/ → /st/ → /str/)
- Practicing **minimal cluster contrasts** (*play* vs *pay*, *asked* vs *ask*)
- Highlighting **morphological clusters** (-ed, -s, -st)
- Employing **visual phonetic charts** and IPA transcription
- Integrating **listening discrimination tasks** before production

1. Pronunciation should be given greater emphasis in first-year university syllabi, rather than being treated as a marginal skill.
2. Basic English phonetics and IPA symbols should be introduced to raise learners' phonological awareness.
3. Teachers should explicitly address consonant sequences through gradual articulation practice and repetition drills.
4. Listening activities using authentic English input should be integrated to improve stress and intonation awareness.
5. Iraqi EFL teachers should receive professional development training focused on pronunciation instruction.



Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to one academic institution and a relatively small sample size. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all Iraqi EFL learners. Future research may include larger samples and comparative studies across Iraqi universities.

Ethical Considerations

All participants took part voluntarily. Their identities were anonymized, and the collected data were used exclusively for academic research purposes.

6. Discussion

The findings support previous research that Iraqi learners' pronunciation difficulties stem primarily from **L1 interference** and a lack of sufficient oral practice. The substitution of English sounds with nearest Arabic equivalents (e.g., /p/ → /b/) is consistent with phonological transfer effects. Stress and rhythm differences further challenge learners because Arabic is generally more syllable-timed compared to English stress timing.

The low level of communicative practice reported by learners reflects instructional patterns in Iraqi EFL contexts where pronunciation receives limited curricular emphasis. This is similar to other findings across Iraqi universities.

7. Conclusion

This study has investigated English pronunciation difficulties among first-year Iraqi EFL learners at the University of Kut. The findings indicate that learners face systematic problems related to phonetic articulation, phonological structure, and consonant sequencing, largely due to L1 interference and limited pronunciation-focused instruction. The study highlights the importance of integrating phonetics-based pronunciation teaching into Iraqi university curricula. Despite its limited scope, the research contributes empirical evidence to the growing body of Iraqi EFL studies and may serve as a reference for future research.

Iraqi EFL learners at Kut University exhibit systematic pronunciation difficulties influenced by L1 phonology and instructional practices. The research underscores the importance of integrating pronunciation teaching into the EFL curriculum to improve intelligibility and communicative competence.

In addition to segmental and suprasegmental difficulties, this study demonstrates that **English consonant clusters constitute a major pronunciation obstacle** for Iraqi EFL learners at Kut University. These errors are systematic, predictable, and rooted in Arabic phonological constraints. Addressing consonant cluster pronunciation explicitly can enhance both

intelligibility and grammatical accuracy among first-year university students.

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Dr Hayder Ali Abdulridha Alzubaidi
(*Assistant Professor, Kut University, Iraq*)

hayder.alia@uokut.edu.iq

DIGITAL PEDAGOGY AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN TÜRKIYE AND KOREA: NOTES FROM A COMPARATIVE DOCTORAL STUDY

Dr Mincheol Choi*

Ph.D in Education Management – St Clements University, Institute of Social Sciences (Türkiye)

This is a summary from the thesis paper written for the St Clements University - Turkish Language Division - Doctor of Education Management.

The complete version of this summarised article is available at:
https://stclements.edu/articles/UniEduSystem.pdf

Introduction: Looking Beyond the Data

A doctoral dissertation is usually evaluated in terms of its methodology, the reliability of its data, and the soundness of its conclusions. My dissertation, Comparative Analysis of 4-Year University Education Systems of Türkiye and Korea and Investigation of Awareness Dimensions of University Students' Satisfaction Levels towards E-Learning, was grounded in that empirical framework. Using the 19-item scale designed by Dr Alişan Baltacı, I analyzed responses from 212 participants. Cronbach's alpha of 0.980 indicated strong internal consistency, and the findings provided a reliable picture of how university students respond to e-learning.

As the project developed, however, I began to see that its contribution extended beyond statistical validation. What mattered more, in the end, was the educational question it raised: how digital systems can support the human work of teaching and learning, especially in foreign language education. What began as a comparative study of higher education systems came to focus more directly on the relationship among technology, pedagogy, and academic responsibility.

Technology as a Pedagogical Tool

At the outset, I was mainly concerned with the practical and institutional features of e-learning, including flexibility of access, usability, and examination security. These issues are central to educational administration and cannot be ignored in any serious discussion of digital learning. Under the guidance of my supervisor, Dr David Le Cornu, however, I was encouraged to consider a more fundamental question: how these systems affect teaching and learning in practice.

That change in perspective shaped the rest of the study. In both Türkiye and Korea, foreign language instruction has often relied on grammar-heavy teaching and formal classroom routines. My research suggested that digital pedagogy can help offset some of these limitations. E-learning does not replace the foundations of formal instruction, but it can broaden the contexts in which students engage in language learning. Interactive materials, multimodal resources, and asynchronous formats can reduce some of the rigidity of classroom-based teaching and create more space for participation. This is especially important in speaking and listening, which are often difficult to develop fully within conventional four-year university programs.

I therefore came to regard technology less as a goal to be pursued than as a tool that supports pedagogy. Its educational value depends on whether it expands opportunities for meaningful language use, sustained exposure, and active learner involvement.

Comparative Context and Digital Inequality

The comparative dimension of the study also brought another issue into focus. Korea benefits from highly developed digital infrastructure, while Türkiye shows notable strengths in the breadth of its higher education sector and in institutional support for information access and academic guidance. Examining these two contexts side by side showed that digital education is shaped not only by technological capacity, but also by the institutional and social conditions surrounding it.

This, in turn, raised a broader question about the relationship between student satisfaction and educational equity. Students' views of e-learning depend not only on platform design or technical efficiency, but also on unequal access to devices, stable connectivity, and digital support. The digital divide should therefore be treated as a core educational concern rather than a secondary technical problem. For administrators and policymakers, successful digital transformation requires more than investment in systems. It also requires sustained attention to inclusion and to the uneven conditions in which students' study.

The Instructor's Role in a Changing Academic Environment

The study also sharpened my understanding of the instructor's role. In higher education, instructors are no longer expected simply to deliver knowledge. They are increasingly required to guide students' learning, maintain academic standards, and respond to the

growing complexity of contemporary educational environments.

This change is even more evident today, as AI-assisted writing and digital information tools become part of students' everyday academic experience. In this environment, higher education cannot be reduced to technical fluency alone. It also depends on judgment, originality, and ethical responsibility. In foreign language education, this point is particularly clear. Teaching involves not only explanation, but also encouragement, correction, modeling, and the trust that sustains the learning process.

Technology can support these functions in important ways. It can widen access, diversify materials, and strengthen opportunities for practice. Even so, it cannot replace the interpretive and relational dimensions of teaching. For that reason, the educator's human presence still matters in ways technology cannot replicate.

Writing, Argument and Scholarly Discipline

The final stage of the dissertation demanded a different kind of work. Beyond data analysis, I needed to ensure that each chapter made a clear contribution to comparative education. This was not simply a matter of style; it required a clearer account of the concepts connecting administrative structures, student motivation, and expectations about future employment within digital learning environments.

In revising the dissertation, I came to think differently about academic writing itself. Clarity is not produced by polish alone. It depends on whether the argument has been developed carefully from beginning to end. A study is persuasive not because it says everything, but because it presents its central claims clearly and with discipline. That became particularly important in a project dealing with both educational management and pedagogical practice. Digital systems have institutional significance, but they become educationally meaningful only when technical design and pedagogical purpose are closely aligned. Without that alignment, they risk functioning as administrative mechanisms rather than genuine learning environments.

Conclusion: Continuing the Work

Now that the dissertation has been archived in the St Clements e-Library, I regard it as one contribution to an ongoing conversation about higher education, digital pedagogy, and foreign language learning in Türkiye and Korea. What began as a comparative inquiry ultimately reinforced my view that educational technology is most effective when it remains learner-centered, pedagogically grounded, and supported by thoughtful teaching.

I am sincerely grateful to the Ph.D Assessment Committee and to President Dr David Le Cornu for their careful review and critical evaluation of this work. Their feedback helped me move the dissertation beyond technical description toward a clearer educational argument.

For me, completing the program has strengthened, rather than concluded, my commitment to Educational Administration and to the continuing work of relating institutional systems to the actual conditions of teaching and learning.

About the Author



***Dr Mincheol Choi** has recently completed his Doctor of Education Management with St Clements University - Turkish Language Division. He previously studied at National Institutes for Lifelong Education to earn a Bachelor Degree in English Language and Literature and later at Fatih University earning a Master Degree in Business Administration.*

He may be reached at mincheol.choi88@gmail.com

The complete version of this summarised article is available at:
https://stclements.edu/articles/UniEduSystem.pdf

ORIGINS PART THREE

Dr John S. Potter*

Every cell in the human body needs a constant supply of energy every minute of every day. We get energy by eating plants which manufacture and store the basic sugar (carbohydrate) glucose.

Glucose is synthesised in plants and marine algae from **carbon dioxide and water**. The process is called ***Photosynthesis*** because the energy source is sunlight. Radiant energy from the sun is trapped and converted into chemical energy by a substance called **chlorophyll** located in chloroplasts in plant and algal cells. A by-product of glucose synthesis is **oxygen**, which plants breathe back into the air for animals to breathe in.

We eat plants, digest them, and absorb from our gut various nutrients, including energy carrying glucose, into our blood. Glucose is carried to every cell in our body along with oxygen breathed in from the air. There they combine to produce carbon-dioxide and water and **release energy**. The process is called ***Respiration***. The carbon dioxide is taken to the lungs and breathed out into the atmosphere for plants to use to make more glucose. Water is eliminated as urine or sweat.

PHOTOSYNTHESIS IN PLANTS

The roots of terrestrial plants take up water and transport it to the leaves via a vessel called the xylem. Carbon-dioxide gas is taken in from the air that enters the plant through openings in the leaves called stomates.

When sunlight strikes the chloroplasts, carbon-dioxide and water combine to form the energy carrier glucose and free oxygen: Carbon-dioxide + Water + Energy → Glucose(E) + Oxygen.

Using chemical formulae, this reaction is written:
$6CO_2 + 6\ H_2O + € \rightarrow C_6H_{12}O_6€ + 6O_2$

GLUCOSE STORAGE IN PLANTS

Plants make more glucose than they need for their own needs. They store excess glucose in complex forms like maltose (2 glucose molecules) and sucrose (1 glucose molecule combined with 1 fructose molecule). [Fructose is a basic sugar which can be absorbed into the blood stream, but it is not used to carry energy to the cells].

Other plants store glucose as polymers with the formula: $C_6H_{10}O_5n$, where n = many molecules tied together. Beans, corn and Irish and sweet potatoes store glucose as the polymer starch. The other common polymer is cellulose; the main constituent of plant fibre/wood.

MIRACLES OF DESIGN IN PLANTS

The development of glucose in plant life is remarkable:

Common Inert Ingredients: Water and carbon dioxide are abundant substances containing only three basic elements: carbon, hydrogen and oxygen.

Gaseous Exchange: Carbon dioxide is a gas. The provision of stomates in plant leaves is highly appropriate for its uptake and the breathing out of gaseous oxygen once the process of glucose manufacture is completed.

Water Uptake: Water is a liquid, the provision of roots in plants is appropriate for its uptake from the soil and the provision of the xylem is perfect for its transport to the leaves. Elevation of water to great heights against gravitational forces, brought about by the transpiration of water vapour from the stomates, is remarkable.

Chlorophyll: The capacity of plants, cyanobacteria and algae to construct chloroplasts containing chlorophyll which can trap sunlight is a miracle of chemical design. Just how chlorophyll reacts under sunlight to promote photosynthesis remains a mystery.

RESPIRATION IN THE BODY

Glucose (carrying energy) is carried to the cells by the blood. The blood also carries oxygen to the cells because energy is released only when the glucose is oxidised. Oxidation of glucose in the cells results in glucose being converted back to water and carbon dioxide and in the process releasing the energy the cells need to function. The reaction is the exact opposite of glucose synthesis in plants:

Glucose + Oxygen → Carbon-dioxide + Water + Energy, i.e. $C_6H_{12}O_6€ + 6O_2 \rightarrow 6CO_2 + 6H_2O + €$

So crucial is the process of respiration that a body starved of carbohydrates will start converting fat to glucose through a process called ketosis. When all the body fat has been used, the body has the power to convert protein (muscle) to glucose through a process called gluconeogenesis. This can lead to conditions like anorexia nervosa, but the body must have energy, otherwise it will die!

MIRACLES OF DESIGN IN BODY ORGANS AND PROCESSES

The importance of respiration is shown by miracles of design of organs and processes in the body that:

- Ensure that ample supplies of both glucose and oxygen are delivered to trillions of body cells.
- Ensure that carbon dioxide and water produced by respiration are eliminated from the body.

The heart and the blood vessels are key organs in these processes. Let's look at the vascular system.

THE VASCULAR SYSTEM

Humans have one heart, located in the ribcage. The heart is a muscle that pumps continually around eighty times every minute throughout a person's lifetime!

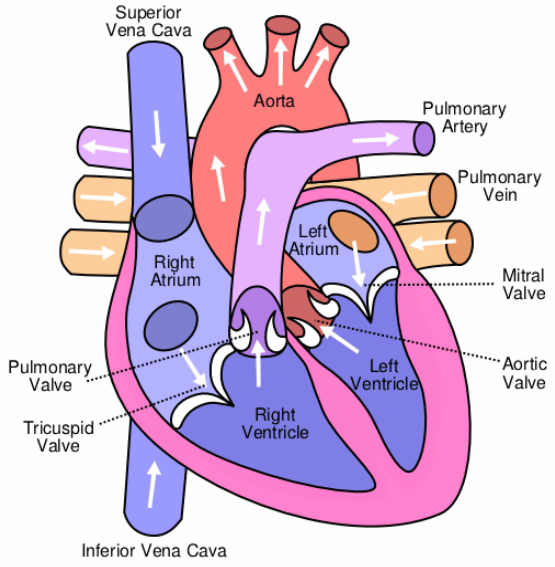


Diagram courtesy Wikimedia Commons

The cross section above shows the main features of the heart. It has four chambers. On the right we have two chambers: the right atrium (top) and the right ventricle (bottom). On the left, we have a left atrium and a left ventricle. Between each atrium and ventricle there is a valve.

The right side of the heart is set up solely to eliminate carbon dioxide from the body. Blood carrying carbon dioxide from respiration in the cells reaches the right atrium via two major vessels: the superior and anterior **vena cavae**. The heart pumps this blood through the **tricuspid valve** into the right ventricle and then through the **pulmonary valve** into a large vessel called the **pulmonary artery** which carries the blood to the lungs for the removal of carbon dioxide and the gaining of a new supply of oxygen.

The vessel that carries the freshly oxygenated blood from the lungs is called the **pulmonary vein**. This vessel delivers oxygenated blood to the left atrium, where it is pushed through the **mitral valve** into the left ventricle. From there the blood is pumped through the **aortic valve** into **the aorta**, a major vessel with three branches that takes oxygenated blood to every cell in the body.

Note that the vascular system is **specifically designed** to ensure glucose and oxygen are taken to the cells and carbon dioxide is eliminated from the body. That is by far its main purpose.

SUPPLYING GLUCOSE TO THE CELLS

Sourcing Glucose: The digestion of food begins with mastication (chewing) in the mouth. Amylase in the saliva begins the process of converting complex sugars and glucose polymers to glucose. No digestion of carbohydrates occurs in the stomach. Digestion starts again in the small intestine where pancreatic juices containing bicarbonate solution and more of the enzyme amylase continue the work of reducing complex carbohydrates to glucose. Absorption of glucose begins in the small intestine and is completed in the colon.

Storing Glucose: The blood vessels that pick-up food stuffs from the gut pass through the liver, located just under the diaphragm. The liver is a multifunctional storage organ. Glucose from the gut is stored in the liver and the muscles as the polymer **glycogen**. Glucose is continually delivered back into the blood stream from the liver and muscles at a controlled steady rate.

Managing Glucose Levels: The pancreas, in addition to secreting enzymes into the small intestine, also secretes a peptide hormone called **insulin** which regulates the amount of glucose in the blood. This is important: too little glucose in the blood can lead to a serious lack of energy and even cell death. Too much glucose in the blood (diabetes) can cause permanent damage to your eyes, nerves, kidneys and blood vessels and produce foot ulcers.

Transporting Glucose to the Cells: Glucose is carried in the blood on flattened discs called Red Blood Cells (Erythrocytes). At normal plasma glucose levels, the maximum glucose transport capacity of the human red cell membrane is 12,000 times the amount of glucose used by the red blood cells! Glucose is transferred to the cells by a process called facilitated diffusion which uses carrier proteins to move glucose through the cell wall membranes.

SUPPLYING OXYGEN TO THE CELLS

Breathing in Oxygen and Breathing out Carbon Dioxide: This is the sole purpose of the lungs. The lungs are located in the chest, where they are protected by the rib cage. Healthy lungs look like pink, squishy sponges.

The right lung has three lobes, and the left lung has two lobes. The lobes are connected to the outside air via the nose and mouth by the **trachea** (the windpipe). The trachea divides when it reaches the chest into two smaller vessels called **bronchi**, one to each lung. The bronchi divide into bronchioles and finally alveoli in the lungs.

The process of breathing is permitted by the ribcage and the diaphragm, located at the base of the ribcage. The ribcage is a marvellous provision. It provides protection for the heart and lungs but still allows breathing! Breathing is a partially involuntary process which can be over-ridden by the agent at any time. (Another miracle of design).

Carrying Oxygenated blood to the Cells: Oxygen is carried in **arteries** attached to a protein in the blood called **haemoglobin**. Haemoglobin has a lot of iron in it which gives the blood its red colour.

Removing Carbon Dioxide from the Cells: Following respiration, carbon dioxide seeps out of the cells and is picked up by the blood. Carbon dioxide is carried in the blood as bicarbonate in the serum and bound to haemoglobin and other proteins.

Removing Water from the Cells: The body has a complex system for maintaining a water balance. Respiration water becomes part of this system.

SUMMARY

There is nothing in evolutionary theory that can explain how plants and animals might by chance develop compatible attributes in the way that photosynthesis and respiration are compatible. The fact that plants have a complete system of roots, a xylem, stomates and chlorophyll **all dedicated** to manufacturing and storing large quantities of glucose above that required for their own use; and humans have a complex digestive system, and a heart, lungs, and blood vessels almost **entirely focused** on accessing and transporting glucose to keep their cells alive, overwhelmingly supports the view that photosynthesis and respiration are a Grand Design. Elohim not only planned and ordered it – He announced it, for the benefit of the first man and woman, at the beginning: 'Behold, I have given you every herb… and every tree… for food' (*Genesis 1:29*).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



***Dr John Potter** has pursued careers in Agricultural Science, Rural Sociology, Education and Training, Management Consulting, Biblical Hermeneutics and Practical Theology over 65 years of professional life. He may be reached at jonjup1958@gmail.com.*

ASSESSMENT OF NOISE INDUCED HEARING LOSS AMONG WORKERS AT ABEID AMANI KARUME INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (AAKIA) ZANZIBAR

Patima Saleh Shadid*, Prof. Salum Seif Salum, Dr Kombo Hamad Kai, Dr Omar Juma Ali

Abstract

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is a hearing impairment resulting from exposure to an excessive loud sound that damages the structures and/or nerve fibers in the inner ear that respond to sound. This study aimed to assess noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) among workers at Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (AAKIA) in Zanzibar. The study used data from questionnaires, interview guides, key responses observation, and experimental result through pure tone audiometry test. The non-probability sampling technique was used to recruit 170 participants. Structured Questionnaires were used to gather data on demographic and potential contributing factors to hearing loss. While an audiometry examination was used to test the participants hearing ability and checklist for direct observation to assess safety practice among the workers. The findings revealed a high prevalence of hearing impairment, with 81% of respondents having slight hearing loss, 16% moderate hearing loss, and 2% severe hearing loss, while only 1% had normal hearing. The majority of respondents (97%) had low awareness of NIHL, 85% had never received occupational health and safety training related to noise exposure, and 63% did not regularly use hearing protection devices while working in noisy environments.

The study further established that prolonged occupational noise exposure, inadequate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and limited safety awareness were the major factors associated with the risk of NIHL among airport workers. The findings underscore the need for strengthening hearing conservation programmes through regular occupational health training, routine hearing screening, enforcement of PPE use, and implementation of effective workplace noise control measures to protect workers from occupational hearing loss.

***Keywords*:**
Noise Induce Hearing Loss, Abeid Amani Karume International Airport and Hearing protection device.

Introduction

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is one of the most common occupational diseases and a growing public health concern resulting from prolonged exposure to excessive noise. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024), more than 430 million people worldwide live with disabling hearing loss, with the majority residing in low and middle-income countries where occupational health services remain inadequate. Occupational noise exposure is a leading cause of preventable hearing loss, particularly among workers in airports, mining, and manufacturing, construction, and transportation sectors.

Evidence from several countries has demonstrated that workers exposed to high occupational noise are at increased risk of developing NIHL. In the United States, occupational noise affects millions of workers, with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health estimating that approximately 22 million workers are exposed to hazardous workplace noise annually (NIOSH, 2023). In the United Kingdom, hearing loss remains one of the most frequently reported occupational illnesses among workers exposed to excessive industrial noise (Health and Safety Executive, 2023). In Saudi Arabia, Alnuman N. (2019) reported a high prevalence of hearing impairment among airport ground staff due to continuous aircraft noise exposure. Similarly, a study in China found that approximately 36.6% of noise-exposed workers experienced NIHL, with cumulative noise exposure and duration of employment identified as the major risk factors (Yang et al., 2017). In South Africa, studies among mining and industrial workers have also reported high levels of occupational hearing loss associated with prolonged exposure to hazardous workplace noise (Edwards, 2018).

In Tanzania, available evidence on occupational NIHL remains limited and has largely focused on industrial and mining workers. Studies by Afiah (2017), Nyarubeli et al. (2020), and Massawe (2022) reported inadequate knowledge of hearing conservation, poor compliance with hearing protection device use, and limited occupational safety training among workers exposed to excessive noise. The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) No. 5 of 2003 requires employers to provide appropriate hearing protection devices, conduct periodic medical examinations, and implement hearing conservation programmes to reduce occupational hearing loss.

Although NIHL is irreversible, it is largely preventable through comprehensive hearing conservation programmes that include regular audiometric screening, engineering and administrative noise controls, worker education, and consistent use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Despite increasing air traffic and occupational noise exposure at airports, there is a paucity of published evidence on

NIHL among airport workers in Tanzania, and no documented study has specifically assessed NIHL among workers at Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (AAKIA) in Zanzibar. This evidence gap limits the availability of data needed to guide occupational health interventions and workplace policies. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the prevalence of noise-induced hearing loss among AAKIA workers and generate evidence to support hearing conservation programmes and occupational health policy in Zanzibar.

Problem Statement

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is one of the most common occupational diseases worldwide and remains a major yet preventable public health challenge among workers exposed to hazardous noise. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) estimates that millions of workers are routinely exposed to excessive occupational noise, placing them at increased risk of permanent hearing impairment. Airport workers are particularly vulnerable because they are continuously exposed to high-intensity noise generated by aircraft engines, ground support equipment, and other airport operations, often exceeding recommended occupational exposure limits.

Although studies conducted in countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and South Africa have documented a high prevalence of NIHL among workers exposed to occupational noise, evidence from Tanzania remains scarce and is largely limited to industrial and mining settings (Yang et al., 2017; Alnuman, 2019; Afiah, 2017; Nyarubeli et al., 2020). Existing Tanzanian studies have reported inadequate awareness of hearing conservation, low compliance with the use of hearing protection devices, and limited occupational safety training among noise-exposed workers. However, no published study has specifically assessed the prevalence of NIHL, workers' awareness, or hearing protection practices among airport workers in Zanzibar, despite the increasing growth of air transport and occupational noise exposure at Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (AAKIA).

This lack of evidence limits the ability of policymakers and airport management to design effective hearing conservation programmes and occupational health interventions. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the prevalence of noise-induced hearing loss among AAKIA workers and generate evidence to support workplace policies and preventive strategies aimed at reducing occupational hearing loss in Zanzibar.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on assessing noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) among workers at Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (AAKIA), Zanzibar. Specifically, it assessed workers' awareness of NIHL, determined the prevalence and symptoms of hearing loss, and evaluated the availability and use of personal hearing protection devices. The study targeted employees working in occupational settings with potential exposure to aircraft noise, including airline staff, ground handlers, security personnel, health workers, marshallers, and other airside personnel. Data were collected to assess hearing status, occupational noise exposure, awareness of NIHL, and workplace hearing protection practices among the study participants.



Methods of Study

A cross-sectional study was conducted among workers at Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (AAKIA), Zanzibar, to assess the prevalence of noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL), workers' awareness, and hearing protection practices. The study was carried out among employees working in occupational settings with potential exposure to aircraft noise, including airline personnel, ground handlers, security officers, health workers, drivers, loaders, marshallers, customer service staff, and supervisors. A total of 170 participants were recruited using a non-probability sampling technique. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula and adjusted using the finite population correction formula based on the total airport workforce.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, direct workplace observation, and pure-tone audiometry. The questionnaire captured participants' socio-demographic characteristics, occupational noise exposure, medical history, awareness of NIHL, use of hearing protection devices, and other potential risk factors for hearing loss. A structured observation checklist was used to assess the availability and use of hearing protection devices and workplace safety practices. Hearing status was assessed using calibrated pure-tone audiometry conducted in a soundproof room at the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Department of Mnazi Mmoja Referral Hospital following standard audiometric procedures. Participants with earwax obstruction or upper respiratory infections were examined after appropriate clinical management to ensure accurate audiometric measurements.

Data were entered, cleaned, and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and summary tables, were used to describe participants' characteristics, hearing status, symptoms of NIHL, awareness levels, and hearing protection practices.

Noise Protection Practices among Workers and Communities

A: Airport Workers

Wearing Hearing protection device

Majority of the respondents are not wearing hearing protection devices when they are working in noise areas as result indicates 63% does not wearing it as shown in (figure 4.3) this exposure to noise and the tendency of not wearing protective hearing device can accelerate the cause of hearing loss to workers. Also 37% of the respondents seemed to wear hearing protection devices to avoid hearing loss. Awareness and enforcement of wearing protective hearing device should be made to avoid ineffectiveness of work and hearing problems.

Training and awareness program related to work safety

It seemed that 85%of the respondents do not have tendency of attending to training related to health and work safety while few of them 15%attends as in (Table 4.10). Having no knowledge of working safety can increase the risk of being exposed to noise and lead to hearing loss. Regular training should be done to the workers so that they can be protected against noise.

Direct observation

Majority of the respondents are not wearing hearing protection devices, only 37% of observed workers found to be wear hearing protection devices as seen below.



Ebay.com

Effect of Hearing Loss on Airport Workers

Airport workers are at high health risk for hearing loss because of constant exposure to loud noise. Aircraft engines, tugs, baggage carts, and auxiliary power units can hit 120-140 dB jet engine at takeoff is about as loud as a rock concert next to the speakers. OSHA safe limit is 85 dB for 8 hours. Risk depends on the job area.

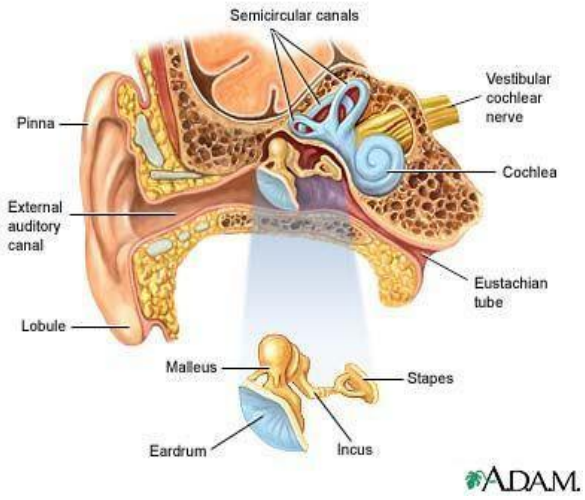
The way that hearing loss affects hearing:

Health effects: Noise induced hearing loss (NIHL):.Usually permanent. Starts with trouble hearing high-pitched sounds like consonants s, f, and the Makes speech sound muffled.

Tinnitus: Constant ringing, buzzing, or hissing in the ears. Very common in ramp workers, can cause sleep problems and anxiety, auditory fatigue: By end of shift, sounds seem duller. Temporary at first then permanent.

Increased stress plus blood pressure: Chronic noise exposure is linked to hypertension and cardiovascular strain.

Hearing Structure



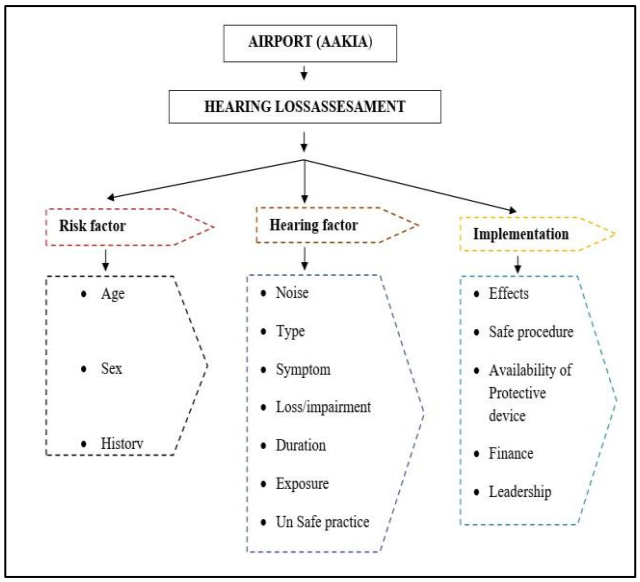
Safety risks at work

Can't hear warnings: Missed shouts, backup alarms, or radio calls on the apron raises risk of vehicle or aircraft accident.

Miscommunication: Tower, pilots, and ground crew rely on clear radio. Hearing loss leads to misunderstood instructions.

Job plus quality of life impact Career limits: AAKIA and many aviation authorities require hearing tests. Severe loss can disqualify workers from certain roles, especially air traffic control or mashing.

Social isolation: Trouble hearing conversations in break rooms or at home leads to withdrawal.



Preventions Procedure

Noise Induce Hearing Loss (NIHL) is permanent but 100% preventable:

Hearing protection: Dual protection earplugs plus earmuffs for ramp agents near aircraft.

Hearing conservation programs: Annual audiograms to catch early shifts

Noise controls: Quiet zones, limiting time, near running engines, better equipment design.

Training: Many workers don't wear protection correctly, cutting effectiveness by 50%.

Uses of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in airport environments

PPE for noise refers to devices worn to reduce the amount of sound reading the ears. Airport ramps and tarmacs are some of the loudest workers. Jet engines at takeoff are 140 Db. OSHA requires hearing protection at 85 dB for 8 hours. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the last line of defense when you can't remove the noise.

Using personal protective equipment in noisy airport environments is not optional it is essential. Improving workers comfort, and ensuring safety, it must be used correctly and combined with other noise control measure for maximum protection.

The most common types include:

(a) **Ear plugs:** small insert placed inside the ear canal, can be disposable(foam) reusable(rubber/silicone)

(b) **Ear muffs:** cover the entire outer ear, connected by a head band, provide higher and more consistence

(c) **Canal caps:** sit at the entrance of the ear canal, easily to remove and reuse, suitable for intermittent noise exposure

(d) **Double protection:** combination of ear plug and earmuffs, used in extremely loud environments like near jet engines

Importance of using PPE in an airport environment

Airports workers are around dangerous noise levels every day, PPE keeps that noise from causing permanent hearing loss and to avoid health hazard to be safe on work environment.

Common areas that need PPE at the airport

- On the ramp/apron 90-140 dB from jet engines
- Baggage makeup areas 85-95 dB from conveyors
- Maintenance hangers 90-110 dB from power tools, engine runs
- Cargo loading 90-105 Db from loaders, aircraft
- Office that isn't sound proof.

B: Community Perceptions around AAKIA

Variable	Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Experience aircraft noise regularly	Yes	178	82.4
	No	38	17.6
Aircraft noise affects daily activities	Yes	152	70.4
	No	64	29.6
Aircraft noise disturbs sleep	Yes	128	59.3
	No	88	40.7
Aircraft noise affects communication/conversations	Yes	116	53.7
	No	100	46.3
Experienced annoyance/stress due to aircraft noise	Yes	139	64.4
	No	77	35.6
Experienced difficulty concentrating	Yes	97	44.9
	No	119	55.1
Aware that aircraft noise can affect health	Yes	81	37.5
	No	135	62.5
Use any measures to reduce noise exposure	Yes	74	34.3
	No	142	65.7
Support improved airport noise management	Yes	191	88.4
	No	25	11.6

Among the 216 community respondents, 82.4% reported regular exposure to aircraft noise, indicating that aircraft operations represent a common environmental disturbance among residents surrounding AAKIA. More than two-thirds (70.4%) reported that aircraft noise affected their daily activities, while 59.3% experienced sleep disturbance and 53.7% reported difficulties in communication due to aircraft noise**.** Furthermore, 64.4% associated aircraft noise exposure with annoyance and stress, suggesting potential effects on community well-being. Awareness of the possible health impacts of aircraft noise was low, with only 37.5% of respondents reporting awareness. The majority (88.4%) recommended improved noise management and stronger communication between airport authorities and surrounding communities.

Conclusions

The study demonstrates that aircraft noise exposure at Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (AAKIA) represents an important occupational and environmental health concern affecting both airport workers and surrounding communities. Among workers, prolonged exposure to high noise levels, low awareness of noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL), inadequate participation in safety training, and limited use of hearing protection devices increase the risk of hearing impairment and related occupational hazards. The findings further indicate that aircraft noise extends beyond the workplace, with surrounding communities experiencing disturbance that may affect sleep, communication, concentration, and overall quality of life. Limited awareness among community members regarding the possible health effects of aircraft noise highlights the need for stronger public engagement and information sharing. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of an integrated noise management approach that addresses both occupational and environmental noise exposure around AAKIA.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, AAKIA management should strengthen noise control and hearing conservation programmes by ensuring regular noise exposure assessments, periodic audiometric screening, and continuous monitoring of workers who are exposed to high levels of aircraft noise. The use of hearing protection devices should be improved through effective enforcement of safety procedures, provision of appropriate protective equipment, and regular training to ensure correct and consistent use among workers. Furthermore, continuous awareness programmes should be conducted to improve workers' knowledge regarding noise-induced hearing loss, its health consequences, and preventive measures.

In addition, airport authorities should establish a comprehensive noise management framework that considers both occupational and environmental noise exposure. This should involve collaboration between AAKIA management, government authorities, health institutions, and surrounding communities to improve communication and address community concerns related to aircraft noise. Public awareness programmes should be introduced to educate residents living near the airport about potential health effects of prolonged noise exposure and available strategies for reducing noise disturbance. The airport should also consider implementing practical noise reduction measures, including improved ground operation procedures, noise monitoring systems, and appropriate planning of activities around the airport environment. Further research is recommended to assess long-term health effects of aircraft noise exposure among both workers and surrounding communities and to support evidence-based policies for noise control and public health protection.

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About the Author



* ***Patima Saleh Shadid*** *is a Tanzanian Environmental and Occupational Health professional with experience in public health, port health services, workplace safety, and health research. She holds a Bachelor of Environmental Health Science from the State University of Zanzibar and has pursued a Master of Science in Natural Resources and Environmental Science at the State University of Zanzibar.*

She currently works as an ***In charge of Occupational Health and Environmental Health Officer at Fumba Port, Zanzibar,*** *where she is involved in occupational health monitoring, workplace safety management, environmental health assessment, and implementation of preventive health measures. Previously, she served at* ***Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (AAKIA), Zanzibar,*** *as a Port Health and Surveillance Officer, gaining experience in health screening, disease surveillance, and occupational health practices within a high-risk aviation environment.*

Patima's research interests include occupational health hazards, environmental health risks, hearing conservation, and prevention of work-related diseases. She conducted research on ***noise-induced hearing loss among workers at Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (AAKIA), Zanzibar,*** *focusing on hearing status, awareness of noise-related health risks, and the availability and utilization of hearing protection devices among airport workers.*

She has also participated in public health programmes involving health education, infection prevention and control, sanitation and hygiene promotion, immunization activities, and community health interventions. Her combined background in clinical medicine, environmental health, and occupational safety contributes to evidence-based approaches for improving workplace health and safety in Zanzibar.

You can reach her via email at
patimasaleh@yahoo.com

Contributors to this Article

Patima Saleh Shadid *- Student*

Prof. Salum Seif Salum *- Supervisor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology School of Health and Medical Science, State University of Zanzibar (SUZA)*

Dr Kombo Hamad Kai *- Supervisor, Tanzania Meteorological Authority, Zanzibar Office*

Dr Omar Juma Ali *- Research Expert, Head of Research Coordination, Zanzibar Planning Commission*

MODERN LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ALIENATION: A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Dr Sultan Akbugan*

Doctor of Social Psychology – St Clements University – Türkiye

Abstract

This study explores the complex psychological and social phenomena of loneliness and alienation as they appear in contemporary society. Rather than being isolated emotional experiences, loneliness and alienation are interpreted as interconnected outcomes of broader structural, technological, and cultural transformations. The work argues that these conditions have become defining features of modern life, intensified by the rapid evolution of digital communication, the commodification of social relationships, and the fragmentation of traditional community structures.

The research begins by situating loneliness within the framework of social psychology. It examines how early emotional bonds, personal attachment styles, and the innate human need for connection shape individuals' experiences of isolation. The study highlights how disruptions in early attachment and social development can predispose individuals to chronic feelings of loneliness, especially when they live in environments that lack authentic interpersonal engagement. The psychological roots of loneliness are shown to be deeply intertwined with the way people perceive themselves in relation to others and their broader social surroundings.

The thesis then examines alienation as a broader societal condition. Drawing from classical philosophical and sociological perspectives, it analyzes how individuals in modern capitalist societies become estranged from their work, their communities, and their own inner selves. This alienation manifests not only in economic and occupational settings but also in emotional and existential domains. The analysis reveals how societal pressures to perform, compete, and succeed often override the human need for meaning, belonging, and genuine expression. As a result, many individuals experience a loss of identity and purpose in everyday life.

Digital technology and online culture are explored as central forces shaping modern experiences of both loneliness and alienation. The study shows how the rise of social media, virtual communication, and digital identity has transformed the way individuals interact with one another. Despite providing new opportunities for connection, these platforms often encourage superficial and performative relationships that lack emotional depth. The constant pursuit of visibility, validation, and approval in digital spaces leads to emotional fatigue, self-fragmentation, and a phenomenon described as "fake belonging." This sense of belonging is based more on metrics and appearances than on real emotional intimacy or trust.

The study also incorporates literary and cinematic representations to illustrate how themes of loneliness and alienation are reflected in contemporary culture. Analyzing works such as the film Her and the novel The Stranger, the thesis highlights the contradictions between technological advancement and emotional fulfillment. These narratives portray characters who are surrounded by people and immersed in modern life, yet remain deeply disconnected. Such portrayals serve as cultural mirrors, helping to illuminate the psychological struggles faced by many individuals in the real world.

Recognizing the profound impact of loneliness and alienation on mental health and social well-being, the research proposes a range of interventions. These include psychological counseling, community-based initiatives, and policy-level actions aimed at rebuilding social bonds and restoring a sense of connection. Emphasis is placed on the importance of creating spaces where individuals can engage in authentic relationships, express vulnerability, and experience meaningful belonging. Strategies for intervention are envisioned as multidimensional, requiring collaboration across psychological, social, and political domains.

The study ultimately argues that the phenomena of loneliness and alienation are symptomatic of a larger crisis in modern life—one that involves a disconnection not only from others, but also from the self and from the deeper sources of meaning. To address these issues effectively, it is necessary to reimagine the values and structures that define human relationships. This involves cultivating emotional awareness, fostering communal solidarity, and resisting the reduction of human worth to performance, appearance, or productivity. By doing so, individuals and societies alike can begin to reclaim a sense of wholeness, belonging, and emotional vitality in an increasingly fragmented world.

In conclusion, this work contributes to a deeper understanding of how loneliness and alienation function as both personal experiences and social conditions. It calls for an integrative approach that

acknowledges the interplay between psychological development, technological environments, and cultural narratives. Through this lens, loneliness and alienation are not merely private struggles, but reflections of the collective challenges facing contemporary humanity.

Keywords: *Loneliness, Alienation, Social Psychology, Digitalization, Identity, Belonging*

Introduction

Modern life, marked by rapid technological advancement and social change, has transformed the way individuals connect with each other and with themselves. Loneliness, once seen as a private emotional experience, now appears as a widespread social condition. The loss of communal bonds, the pressure for constant visibility on social media, and the erosion of traditional support systems contribute to a growing sense of isolation. This study addresses how these dynamics affect self-perception, emotional well-being, and social cohesion, using a multidisciplinary approach that includes psychology, sociology, and media studies.

1. SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF LONELINESS

Loneliness is no longer confined to physical solitude; it has evolved into a complex psychological and social phenomenon that signifies emotional and cognitive detachment from others. In modern society, individuals may feel intensely lonely even while being surrounded by others, indicating that loneliness is not defined by the absence of people but by the absence of meaningful connection. This transformation of loneliness into an internal, subjective, and often chronic state of being is one of the major concerns of social psychology today.

From a psychological standpoint, loneliness emerges when there is a discrepancy between the social relationships an individual desires and those they actually experience. This sense of unmet relational need leads to negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, and despair, but it also distorts the individual's cognitive appraisal of themselves and others. They may begin to believe they are unworthy of connection, that others are untrustworthy, or that meaningful relationships are unattainable. These beliefs, in turn, reinforce the very isolation they fear, creating a vicious cycle of emotional and relational withdrawal.

One of the foundational frameworks for understanding the roots of loneliness in social psychology is Attachment Theory, first developed by John Bowlby and later expanded by Mary Ainsworth. This theory posits that early interactions between infants and their primary caregivers form "internal working models" that shape how individuals view themselves and others in future relationships. If a child consistently experiences care that is responsive, comforting, and secure, they are likely to develop a secure attachment style. These individuals typically view themselves as worthy of love and others as reliable, which facilitates healthy social relationships.

Conversely, individuals who grow up in environments where caregivers are neglectful, inconsistent, or emotionally unavailable often develop insecure attachment styles. These are commonly categorized as anxious, avoidant, or disorganized. Anxiously attached individuals crave closeness but fear rejection, often leading to dependency or clinginess in relationships. Avoidantly attached individuals, on the other hand, tend to suppress their desire for intimacy and prioritize self-reliance, often at the cost of emotional closeness. Disorganized attachment, characterized by a contradictory mix of seeking and avoiding contact, often emerges from trauma and chaotic caregiving.

These insecure styles are directly linked to loneliness. For example, anxious individuals may constantly seek validation and become distressed when their need for reassurance is not met, perceiving themselves as isolated even when they are not. Avoidant individuals, while outwardly independent, may struggle with unacknowledged desires for connection and suffer from chronic emotional distance. Their avoidance of intimacy can prevent the formation of deep, meaningful bonds, thereby sustaining a state of loneliness that is both self-protective and self-defeating.

The advent of digital communication has significantly altered the landscape of human connection, complicating traditional attachment dynamics. In theory, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp allow individuals to remain connected across vast distances. However, digital interactions often lack the non-verbal cues, emotional immediacy, and embodied presence that characterize authentic human relationships. This is particularly problematic for individuals with insecure attachment styles. For instance, those with anxious attachment may interpret delayed replies or lack of "likes" as rejection, triggering emotional distress. Meanwhile, avoidant individuals may prefer the superficial safety of online communication, thereby further insulating themselves from real-world vulnerability.

In a recent study by Wu, Feng, and Zhang (2024), it was found that participants with insecure attachment patterns tended to use social media more extensively, yet also reported higher levels of loneliness and lower levels of life satisfaction. The study emphasized that while online platforms provide a sense of being "in touch," they do not satisfy the deeper emotional and psychological need for secure attachment and relational depth.

Another crucial theoretical lens through which loneliness can be examined is Baumeister and Leary's Need to Belong Theory. This theory asserts that the drive to form and maintain lasting, positive interpersonal relationships is a fundamental human motivation, on par with the needs for food or safety.

According to this perspective, humans are evolutionarily wired to seek social inclusion because belonging to a group historically increased survival chances.

Baumeister and Leary argue that frequent, affectively positive interactions with a few key individuals are necessary to fulfill the need to belong. These interactions must be stable, enduring, and marked by mutual concern and care. When these criteria are not met, individuals experience emotional discomfort and cognitive dissonance, leading to feelings of rejection, exclusion, and—ultimately—loneliness.

Critically, the theory also highlights that loneliness is not just about quantity, but quality of relationships. One may have hundreds of acquaintances or followers online, but still feel profoundly disconnected if these ties lack intimacy, authenticity, or emotional reciprocity. This is particularly relevant in the age of social media, where performative relationships often replace substantive ones. The digital self—carefully curated, visually optimized, and constantly monitored—can become disconnected from the real self, exacerbating internal conflict and emotional emptiness.

Moreover, chronic loneliness is associated with a range of adverse psychological and physiological outcomes. It increases the risk of depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline, and has even been linked to weakened immune function and cardiovascular problems. From a cognitive perspective, lonely individuals are more likely to interpret ambiguous social situations as threatening or rejecting, which further perpetuates social withdrawal. They may also engage in self-defeating behaviors—such as pushing others away or avoiding social gatherings—that contradict their desire for connection.

Social psychologists have also examined how cultural factors mediate experiences of loneliness. In collectivist societies, where group identity and interdependence are emphasized, loneliness may manifest as a failure to meet communal expectations, such as forming a family or maintaining strong kinship ties. In contrast, in individualistic societies, loneliness may stem from the burden of self-reliance and the expectation to achieve personal fulfillment independently. Thus, while the subjective feeling of loneliness may be universal, its sources, expressions, and consequences are shaped by cultural narratives and norms.

Gender and age are additional variables influencing loneliness. Research suggests that while young adults report higher levels of loneliness, often due to identity exploration and unstable relationships, elderly individuals may face loneliness due to loss of peers, declining health, or physical isolation. Men and women may also experience and express loneliness differently, with women more likely to acknowledge and seek help for loneliness, and men more likely to mask it due to social expectations around emotional stoicism.

In conclusion, social psychology offers a nuanced understanding of loneliness as a relational, emotional, and cognitive state rooted in early life experiences and shaped by cultural, technological, and interpersonal dynamics. Attachment Theory helps explain how early relational patterns influence adult loneliness, while the Need to Belong Theory underscores the universality and centrality of social connection in human life. In the context of modern society—marked by digital mediation, cultural fragmentation, and performative identity—loneliness emerges not as an exception but as a common, if silent, epidemic. Addressing this issue requires more than fostering social interaction; it demands deep, reciprocal, emotionally resonant connections that restore our faith in others—and in ourselves.

2. MODERN ALIENATION AND IDENTITY LOSS

Modern society, with its emphasis on individualism, technological efficiency, and capitalist production, has fundamentally transformed the relationship individuals have with themselves, with others, and with the work they do. At the heart of this transformation lies the deep and pervasive experience of alienation—one of the most critical and enduring concepts in social theory. Drawing on Karl Marx's theory of alienation, Erich Fromm's existential critique of modernity, and Melvin Seeman's analytical dimensions of alienation, this section examines how modern individuals become estranged not only from their labor and communities but also from their own sense of self.

Karl Marx (1844/2021), in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, famously identified four key dimensions of alienation under capitalism: alienation from the product of labor, from the labor process, from one's species-being (or human essence), and from other people. In a capitalist economy, workers do not own the goods they produce, nor do they control how their labor is used. As a result, labor becomes a means to an end—merely a survival mechanism—rather than a form of self-expression or creative realization. This detachment leads to a deep psychological and existential disconnection from one's own activities and capacities.

In today's digital and post-industrial economies, Marx's insights remain acutely relevant. Many individuals find themselves performing repetitive, cognitively alienating tasks in service of abstract organizational goals that feel distant and meaningless. While automation and remote work have introduced new forms of flexibility, they have also exacerbated the sense of disconnection between workers and their labor. The increasing reliance on algorithmic management in workplaces (e.g., productivity tracking software, performance metrics, etc.) has created environments where employees are monitored,

evaluated, and replaced with little regard for their intrinsic worth or human needs. This mechanization of the self fosters a sense of powerlessness, a key dimension of alienation defined by Melvin Seeman (1959).

Seeman, in his seminal work “On the Meaning of Alienation,” proposed five dimensions of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. These categories provide a systematic framework to analyze how individuals perceive their disconnection from societal structures and values. Powerlessness refers to the individual's perception that they cannot influence the events that shape their lives; meaninglessness arises when societal goals and processes are perceived as incomprehensible or arbitrary; normlessness emerges when accepted norms no longer guide behavior; isolation is the experience of being socially marginalized; and self-estrangement denotes a detachment from one’s own true self.

In modern neoliberal societies, where meritocracy and productivity are emphasized over solidarity and community, Seeman’s categories manifest in everyday life. The rise of precarious employment, gig economies, and short-term contracts reflects a structural shift where stability is replaced by constant competition. Individuals often feel powerless in the face of volatile job markets and shifting institutional expectations. Simultaneously, the meaninglessness of many modern jobs—especially those that are repetitive, low-paid, or algorithmically directed—contributes to emotional exhaustion and burnout.

Erich Fromm (1996), in his philosophical treatise *To Have or To Be*, presents a compelling existential interpretation of alienation. According to Fromm, modern humans have become trapped in a mode of existence centered around "having" rather than "being." In a society that defines success in terms of accumulation—of possessions, credentials, followers, or status—individuals internalize the logic of capitalism as their personal identity. One is not valued for their intrinsic humanity, but for what they own, produce, or display. This external orientation towards selfhood results in a pervasive self-alienation—individuals become strangers to their own desires, values, and emotions. They perform roles rather than live identities, constantly adapting to social expectations while suppressing their authentic selves.

This dynamic is particularly visible in the digital age. Social media platforms encourage users to construct and maintain curated versions of themselves—digital identities that prioritize visibility, approval, and performance. Bodford (2021) argues that these platforms function as “self-marketing arenas,” where individuals engage in continual impression management, often at the cost of psychological authenticity. The gap between one’s true self and one’s digital persona creates a form of identity dissonance that aligns with Seeman’s concept of self-estrangement. Over time, this dissonance can lead to a diminished sense of self-worth, as individuals come to rely on external metrics—likes, shares, engagement—for validation.

The commodification of the self is also evident in the way individuals relate to their bodies and emotions. As Bozkurt (2009) notes, the modern subject often views their body as a project to be optimized—through fitness, fashion, diet, and cosmetic interventions. Similarly, emotions are managed in instrumental terms: confidence becomes a tool for career advancement, empathy a strategy for better customer service. In this sense, even the most intimate aspects of the self are subjected to economic rationality. This fragmentation and externalization of identity prevent the individual from forming a cohesive self-narrative, leading to what Bourdieu (1997) describes as symbolic violence—the internalization of social hierarchies and expectations as personal inadequacies.

Moreover, the culture of competition promoted by neoliberal ideology undermines communal bonds and promotes interpersonal alienation. Cacioppo, Fowler, and Christakis (2009) argue that loneliness and social fragmentation are not merely personal problems but reflect deeper structural shifts in how societies are organized. As social trust declines and individuals retreat into self-focused pursuits, the capacity for mutual support, collective identity, and civic participation erodes. This retreat fosters isolation, another of Seeman’s key dimensions, where individuals feel disconnected not only from society but from shared values and public life.

Educational institutions, workplaces, and even families are increasingly shaped by individualistic and performance-oriented norms. This transformation contributes to **normlessness**, where traditional moral frameworks lose their authority, and individuals struggle to find stable ethical guides for action. In such environments, decisions are often made based on short-term gain or instrumental reasoning, further alienating individuals from deeper sources of meaning and belonging. As Bülbül Oğuz (2012) observes, this erosion of normative foundations leads to confusion, anxiety, and moral indifference, particularly among younger generations who navigate a world of competing truths and fluid identities.

Importantly, alienation is not a purely psychological state; it has material, institutional, and political roots. Neoliberal policies that emphasize deregulation, privatization, and marketization have weakened the role of the welfare state in providing social safety nets and public goods. This withdrawal of institutional support places the burden of success and failure squarely on the individual, reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and disconnection. As Marx noted, the alienated worker is not only estranged from the product of their labor but also from their fellow workers, leading to a breakdown in class consciousness and solidarity. In a similar vein, today’s atomized subject

often lacks the political language or organizational capacity to articulate their alienation, let alone resist it.
In conclusion, modern alienation is a multifaceted phenomenon rooted in economic structures, technological systems, and cultural ideologies that prioritize competition, performance, and possession over authenticity, cooperation, and being. The theoretical contributions of Marx, Fromm, and Seeman remain vital in diagnosing the psychological and social costs of modern life. Alienation is no longer limited to the factory floor; it permeates the digital sphere, the self, and the very fabric of human relationships. To combat this erosion of identity and belonging, we must not only rethink our economic and technological priorities but also reimagine what it means to live meaningfully, to relate authentically, and to be fully human in an increasingly alienating world.

3. DIGITAL CULTURE AND EMOTIONAL ISOLATION

In an era marked by unprecedented digital connectivity, individuals paradoxically report heightened feelings of emotional isolation. While social media platforms and instant communication tools promise constant connection, the emotional quality of those connections is often superficial, performative, and devoid of depth. This contradiction lies at the heart of a growing psychological crisis in the digital age: the rise of "fake belonging," emotional fatigue, and fragmented identity.

One of the primary mechanisms fueling emotional isolation in digital spaces is the performative nature of self-presentation. Social media encourages users to craft idealized versions of themselves, selecting and displaying only those aspects deemed socially desirable. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of self-presentation, which likens everyday social interactions to theatrical performances, has gained renewed relevance in the context of digital media. Online platforms are akin to stages where individuals perform for an invisible audience, shaping their behavior, appearance, and narrative in ways that align with cultural expectations of success, beauty, or happiness. However, this constant performance often comes at the cost of authenticity and emotional truth.

The pressure to maintain a curated digital identity leads to a fragmentation between the “real self” and the “performed self.” Milbrandt and Park (2023) highlight how this split can result in identity dissonance, where individuals feel alienated from their online personas. Their study found that many users experienced heightened anxiety and low self-worth when their digital presentations diverged significantly from their lived realities. This divide fosters emotional exhaustion, as individuals constantly manage impressions rather than engage in emotionally honest interactions.

At the heart of digital emotional isolation is the phenomenon of “fake belonging”—a term used to describe the illusion of social integration created by frequent but shallow digital interactions. Käcko, Hemberg, and Nyman Kurkialab (2024) argue that while users may have hundreds or even thousands of online connections, these relationships often lack emotional resonance, empathy, and sustained attention. The pursuit of likes, shares, and comments becomes a substitute for real emotional validation, leading individuals to feel simultaneously visible and invisible—seen by many, yet understood by none.

This superficial connectivity also affects how individuals interpret their social worth. Online metrics, such as follower counts and engagement statistics, function as external indicators of social value. Bodford (2021) critiques this dynamic, suggesting that digital culture commodifies identity and reduces self-worth to algorithmic feedback. As users internalize these values, they may develop a dependency on digital affirmation, experiencing distress when their content receives less attention. This leads to what Saleem and Bani-ata (2014) call emotional fatigue, a state characterized by psychological depletion resulting from the continuous need to perform and be validated.

Paradoxically, while the internet provides platforms for constant visibility, it also intensifies feelings of loneliness. Visibility does not guarantee intimacy. Individuals may be constantly observed—through stories, posts, and timelines—but rarely truly known or emotionally engaged. This phenomenon creates a paradox of digital sociality: increased exposure paired with decreased emotional connection. As Cacioppo, Fowler, and Christakis (2009) emphasize, loneliness is not the absence of interaction, but the absence of meaningful connection. The digital world, for all its connectivity, often fails to deliver on this essential human need.

Digital culture also reconfigures the notion of community. Traditional communities—based on physical proximity, shared rituals, and mutual obligation—are replaced by virtual networks organized around common interests or identities. While such digital communities can provide solidarity and a sense of belonging, they are often transient, transactional, and performance-based. Rokach (2015) refers to this dynamic as “social fragmentation,” in which the individual is spread thinly across multiple, unstable relational spheres without anchoring in emotionally secure connections.

Furthermore, the algorithmic nature of digital platforms prioritizes content that is popular, sensational, or controversial, rather than emotionally nourishing. Emotional nuance is flattened by the medium itself: reactions are reduced to emojis, comments to brief affirmations, and conversation to intermittent engagement. This economy of attention leaves little room for vulnerability, conflict resolution, or deep listening—all of which are essential for meaningful emotional bonds.

Nowland, Necka, and Cacioppo (2018) explored the implications of digital connectivity for emotional health. Their findings suggest that while online tools can support relationships, they often do not replace the depth and complexity of offline bonds. Especially among young adults, high engagement with social media correlates with lower levels of self-esteem and increased feelings of disconnection. The researchers conclude that emotional isolation arises not from lack of interaction, but from the quality and emotional authenticity of those interactions.

The impact of digital emotional isolation is not confined to personal distress; it also has broader societal consequences. As individuals retreat into personalized digital worlds, opportunities for civic dialogue, empathy, and collective identity diminish. Public discourse becomes fragmented, polarized, and emotionally shallow, as users engage with content that reinforces their views and isolates them from difference or complexity. Emotional isolation thus undermines not only personal well-being but also the fabric of democratic social life.

Importantly, emotional isolation in the digital age disproportionately affects those who are already vulnerable—such as adolescents, the elderly, or those with preexisting mental health issues. For example, Wu, Feng, and Zhang (2024) found that individuals with insecure attachment styles were more likely to use social media as a substitute for face-to-face interaction, but that this strategy often backfired, intensifying feelings of loneliness rather than alleviating them.

To mitigate these challenges, several scholars advocate for digital mindfulness—a deliberate approach to online engagement that emphasizes quality over quantity, reflection over reaction, and authenticity over performance. This involves cultivating awareness of how digital tools shape emotional experiences and developing intentional practices for connection. As Fromm (1996) might argue, the shift from "having" digital relationships to "being" in relationships requires a fundamental reorientation of values—away from metrics and toward meaning.

In conclusion, while digital technologies have revolutionized communication, they have also introduced new risks for emotional well-being. The rise of performative interaction, fake belonging, and fragmented identities reflects a broader cultural drift toward superficiality and spectacle. Emotional isolation, though digitally mediated, is a deeply human problem—one that demands not only technological solutions, but a renewed commitment to empathy, authenticity, and emotional depth in our relationships. Digital connection, to be truly meaningful, must be anchored in the enduring human need to be seen, understood, and emotionally held.

4. REPRESENTATIONS IN MEDIA AND LITERATURE

In modern societies, literature and cinema serve not only as entertainment but also as crucial cultural tools for reflecting, interpreting, and sometimes critiquing the psychological and existential conditions of the age. The themes of loneliness and alienation—once explored within the philosophical confines of existentialism—have found rich expression in narrative forms. This chapter explores how two emblematic works—Spike Jonze's film *Her* (2013) and Albert Camus' novel *The Stranger* (1942)—illustrate the inner landscapes of lonely individuals navigating the promises and pitfalls of modernity. These texts act as cultural mirrors, revealing the psychological dislocation of the individual within technologically saturated, emotionally fragmented, and morally ambiguous worlds.

Her (2013): Intimacy in the Age of Artificial Connection

Spike Jonze's *Her* is a poignant exploration of digital-era loneliness, set in a not-so-distant future where artificial intelligence has seamlessly merged with human life. The protagonist, Theodore Twombly, is a sensitive, introverted man who falls in love with his operating system, Samantha—an AI designed to evolve through experience. At first glance, this narrative may appear absurd or dystopian; yet beneath the surface lies a profound commentary on how technology mediates, distorts, and sometimes replaces human intimacy.

The film presents a striking paradox: the more sophisticated our communication tools become, the more emotionally isolated we may feel. Theodore's relationship with Samantha begins as emotionally fulfilling, even euphoric—she listens attentively, offers comfort, and evolves to meet his emotional needs. However, as the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that this connection is asymmetrical and ultimately hollow. Samantha lacks a physical body and a shared existential experience; her understanding of emotions is algorithmic, not embodied. The intimacy she offers is designed to simulate emotional depth, but it lacks the ontological risk inherent in human-to-human relationships.

This tension reflects Baudrillard's concept of simulation, where representations (or in this case, emotional interactions) become so refined that they obscure the absence of an original referent (Baudrillard, 1994). Samantha is not a "person" but a performance of personhood—a digital construct mimicking intimacy. Theodore's immersion in this simulacrum illustrates how modern individuals may retreat into controlled, low-risk emotional spaces in response to the unpredictability of real relationships.

From a social psychological perspective, *Her* raises concerns about attachment displacement. Theodore transfers his emotional needs from interpersonal

relationships to technology, bypassing the complexities, disappointments, and vulnerabilities of human interaction. Wu, Feng, and Zhang (2024) emphasize that such digital displacement does not eliminate loneliness but may in fact deepen it, as individuals are left without reciprocal emotional validation. Theodore's emotional world is rich, but it is unshared and ungrounded, leading to a kind of existential echo chamber.

The film also critiques the commodification of emotions in the digital age. Samantha is a product—tailored, marketed, and purchased. Her ability to love Theodore is not the result of mutual growth or shared experience, but a feature of her programming. This commodification echoes Fromm's (1996) notion of the "marketing character," where even emotions become objects of exchange. In Theodore's world, love has been outsourced and optimized, but in the process, it has lost its grounding in vulnerability, reciprocity, and presence.

Ultimately, *Her* presents loneliness not as the absence of contact, but as the absence of real relational depth. Theodore is surrounded by people, devices, and networks, yet he floats in a solipsistic bubble, unable to bridge the chasm between himself and others. The film's visual language—soft pastels, clean technology, muted public spaces—reinforces this emotional numbing. Jonze's aesthetic creates a world where everything is smooth and frictionless, but where the self is adrift, unmoored by real human bonds.

The Stranger (1942): The Absurdity of Disconnection

While *Her* examines loneliness in the digital future, Albert Camus' *The Stranger* explores existential alienation within the context of 20th-century absurdism. The novel's protagonist, Meursault, is a man emotionally estranged from both society and himself. He reacts to his mother's death with indifference, avoids deep connections, and ultimately commits a senseless murder. His actions—and his inability or refusal to justify them—lead to his condemnation not just legally, but existentially.

Camus constructs Meursault as a man out of sync with social expectations. He neither mourns according to custom nor displays the appropriate affect in interpersonal situations. From a psychological angle, Meursault embodies emotional detachment to an extreme degree, suggesting either a profound defensive coping mechanism or a nihilistic worldview devoid of moral structure. His detachment is not rooted in technology or digital simulation, but in existential absurdity—the idea that human life lacks inherent meaning, and that the universe is indifferent to human suffering.

Fromm (1996) would interpret Meursault's alienation as the result of modernity's failure to provide a coherent sense of belonging or identity. While earlier societies offered religious, familial, or tribal frameworks for meaning, modern secular life places the burden of meaning-making on the individual. Meursault, however, refuses this burden. He does not invent narratives to justify his behavior; instead, he embraces the void. This radical honesty is what ultimately condemns him in the eyes of society.

In Seeman's (1959) framework, Meursault exhibits all five dimensions of alienation: powerlessness (he has no control over fate), meaninglessness (he sees no purpose in life or death), normlessness (he refuses social norms), isolation (he is emotionally cut off), and self-estrangement (he acts in ways that even he cannot explain). Yet Camus resists portraying Meursault as mentally ill. Instead, Meursault is a mirror to a society desperate for coherence, order, and emotional conformity. His silence, passivity, and indifference expose the fragility of social meaning-making structures.

What makes *The Stranger* particularly compelling is how it invites the reader to project their own anxieties onto Meursault. Is he a sociopath? A tragic figure? A revolutionary? Camus leaves these questions unresolved, emphasizing instead the freedom and terror of human existence in a godless world. Meursault's final acceptance of death—without appeal, without hope—is framed not as defeat but as liberation. In this, Camus offers a radical redefinition of loneliness: not as a pathology, but as an ontological condition—a state of being that reflects the fundamental isolation of human consciousness.

Comparative Reflections: Modernity, Meaning, and Mirrors

Both *Her* and *The Stranger* portray characters grappling with disconnection—but from opposite angles. Theodore seeks intimacy through artificial means and becomes emotionally overwhelmed; Meursault rejects emotionality altogether and faces societal expulsion. One is too soft, the other too hard. Yet both characters reveal the same underlying truth: modernity disrupts our traditional ways of relating—to others, to meaning, and to ourselves.

Literature and cinema are not just reflections of this disruption; they are also sites of resistance and re-imagination. Through narrative, they give shape to the shapeless, visibility to the invisible. They help us name what we often experience only as vague unease—whether it is the ache of longing in Theodore's whispered conversations with Samantha, or the chill of detachment in Meursault's impassive gaze.

Moreover, these representations challenge the dominant narratives of modern success and fulfillment. They ask whether progress—technological, social, existential—has truly brought us closer to ourselves or merely given us more sophisticated ways to avoid the fundamental questions of human life: Who am I? What do I need? What does it mean to love, to belong, to be?

In conclusion, cultural representations like *Her* and *The Stranger* are not merely artistic artifacts; they are psychological documents, charting the emotional contours of the modern soul. They reveal that loneliness and alienation are not just private emotions but shared conditions of modernity—conditions that call not only for empathy and reflection but also for new modes of connection that can bridge the space between performance and presence, between silence and understanding.

5. SOCIAL IMPACT AND INTERVENTIONS

Loneliness and alienation are no longer considered marginal psychological experiences limited to particular populations; instead, they are recognized as widespread phenomena that deeply influence mental health, social functioning, and collective well-being. In an era where digital connectivity has paradoxically increased emotional disconnection, understanding the psychosocial consequences of loneliness and alienation is vital. These phenomena contribute not only to individual suffering—manifesting in depression, anxiety, and emotional fatigue—but also to broader societal fragmentation.

The Psychological Toll: Mental Health Consequences

A substantial body of research has documented the negative psychological impact of chronic loneliness. From a clinical standpoint, loneliness is associated with increased vulnerability to major depressive disorder (MDD), generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), and even cognitive decline in aging populations (Nowland, Necka & Cacioppo, 2018). The persistent absence of emotionally fulfilling relationships can dysregulate the stress response system, leading to elevated cortisol levels, sleep disturbances, and a weakened immune system. In addition, alienation—particularly self-estrangement and meaninglessness as defined by Seeman (1959)—can exacerbate existential despair, increase suicidal ideation, and impair motivation.

Lonely individuals often experience negative self-schemas, interpreting social cues pessimistically and expecting rejection. This cognitive style feeds a self-reinforcing cycle of withdrawal, where the individual avoids social contact, which in turn deepens their sense of exclusion. The result is a vicious loop: isolation begets loneliness, and loneliness begets further isolation. This process aligns with cognitive models of depression, wherein negative thinking patterns are both a cause and consequence of emotional distress.

From a developmental perspective, individuals with insecure attachment histories are more susceptible to these cycles (Wu, Feng, & Zhang, 2024). Early experiences of emotional unavailability or inconsistency create internal working models that predispose individuals to interpret social ambiguity as threat. Consequently, they may avoid intimacy, mistrust others, or become overly dependent—all of which are maladaptive in forming stable relationships. These developmental vulnerabilities often surface in adulthood as chronic loneliness or relational instability.

Societal Consequences: Erosion of Social Fabric

On a societal level, loneliness and alienation contribute to the erosion of civic engagement, trust, and collective responsibility. When individuals feel disconnected from their communities or perceive themselves as powerless within social systems, their sense of agency and participation declines. As Bourdieu (1997) emphasized, social capital—the network of relationships that provides access to resources and support—diminishes when interpersonal trust is compromised. In turn, this weakens the social cohesion necessary for democratic functioning and inclusive policy-making.

The rise of individualistic ideologies and competitive neoliberal economic structures further compounds these effects. According to Marx's theory of alienation, capitalist labor conditions fragment individuals from the products of their work, their fellow workers, and their own essence (Bozkurt, 2009). In today's gig economy and algorithm-driven job markets, workers often lack a stable professional identity, a sense of purpose, or long-term relational networks. This economic precarity fosters both emotional insecurity and social disaffiliation.

Moreover, the digitalization of social life—from remote work to algorithmically curated social media feeds—has transformed the structure of community. While technology enables connection, it often lacks the emotional depth, nuance, and embodiment required for authentic belonging. People may accumulate digital "friends" or "followers" yet remain deeply disconnected. As Käcko, Hemberg, and Nyman Kurkialab (2024) argue, such digital belonging is often performative rather than transformative—based on visibility, not vulnerability.

Interventions: Reclaiming Human Connection

Given the multidimensional impact of loneliness and alienation, interventions must likewise be multilayered and integrative, encompassing psychological, social, and structural approaches.

1. Psychological Counseling and Therapy: At the individual level, psychotherapeutic interventions—particularly those grounded in attachment theory, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and existential-humanistic approaches—are effective in addressing maladaptive beliefs and enhancing relational capacity. Therapy helps individuals recognize and reframe distorted assumptions about self-worth, rejection, and intimacy. It also enables clients to explore the existential dimensions of alienation, including the search for meaning, identity, and authenticity.

CBT, in particular, has been successful in disrupting negative feedback loops in lonely individuals by promoting behavioral activation and social skills training. Therapists may guide clients to initiate social interactions, challenge avoidance behaviors, and cultivate secure attachments. Meanwhile, existential therapy encourages a confrontation with aloneness not as pathology but as a shared human condition—thus reframing loneliness as a doorway to deeper self-understanding rather than merely a deficit.

2. Community-Based Programs:Loneliness is not just a personal ailment but a social epidemic, requiring collective solutions. Community engagement initiatives—such as intergenerational programs, neighborhood networks, and peer support circles—can help rebuild social capital and a sense of belonging. For example, community centers that offer art therapy, shared meals, or volunteer opportunities create low-barrier social spaces where people can connect organically. These programs are particularly effective for marginalized populations—such as the elderly, immigrants, and LGBTQ+ individuals—who may face systemic exclusion.

Such initiatives are grounded in the idea of "relational citizenship"—the belief that all individuals, regardless of their productivity or status, deserve inclusion, voice, and emotional presence within the public sphere. Policies that fund and normalize these programs represent an investment not only in mental health but in social resilience.

3. Structural and Policy Interventions: On a macro level, governments and institutions must address the structural roots of alienation: income inequality, precarious labor, inadequate mental health services, and urban design that discourages spontaneous social interaction. Urban planning, for example, can play a crucial role in fostering or hindering connection. Cities that prioritize public parks, community gardens, and pedestrian-friendly spaces create "third places"—environments outside home and work that invite social engagement.

In addition, digital policy reform is essential. Algorithms that amplify echo chambers, comparison culture, and outrage must be reconfigured to promote genuine dialogue and well-being. Educational systems, too, can serve as early intervention points by embedding emotional literacy, empathy training, and communal responsibility into curricula.

Legislative efforts to combat loneliness have already emerged in some countries. The United Kingdom, for instance, appointed a Minister for Loneliness in 2018, recognizing the issue as a national health concern. Such symbolic and practical measures signal a societal acknowledgment of the emotional costs of modernity—and a commitment to restoring social glue.

The Ethical Imperative: Rehumanizing the Digital World

The ultimate aim of intervention should not be to eliminate loneliness entirely—a futile and arguably dehumanizing task—but to reintegrate human connection into the fabric of daily life. This means revaluing presence over productivity, depth over performance, and dialogue over display. In a world obsessed with metrics, efficiency, and visibility, reclaiming slowness, silence, and sincerity becomes a radical act of resistance.

As Fromm (1996) warns, modern societies risk reducing human beings to commodities or spectators, thereby eroding the capacity for authentic love and solidarity. Interventions, therefore, are not merely technical or therapeutic—they are ethical. They ask us to rethink what it means to be human in a digitized, distracted, and divided age.

Ultimately, the fight against loneliness and alienation is a fight for the restoration of shared meaning, collective agency, and emotional presence. It is a movement not only toward mental health but toward human wholeness—a reweaving of the fragile threads that connect us to each other, to our communities, and to ourselves.

Conclusion

Loneliness and alienation in modern society are not merely fleeting emotional states but profound manifestations of structural disconnection, cultural disintegration, and psychological fragmentation. They represent a condition of the self that has become increasingly disembedded from its relational, communal, and existential roots. This study has traced the trajectory of loneliness and alienation through multiple dimensions—psychological theories, sociological frameworks, digital culture, and symbolic representations in media and literature. What emerges is a complex and troubling picture: while modernity has offered unprecedented tools for communication and expression, it has also eroded the very foundations of authentic human connection.

At the psychological level, the legacy of early attachment experiences shapes how individuals approach intimacy and belonging. Insecure attachment styles, as illuminated through the works of Bowlby and subsequent theorists, set the stage for recurring cycles of emotional withdrawal or overdependence. When these patterns are carried into a digitalized world where interaction is curated, transient, and emotionally shallow, the result is a "connected loneliness"—an oxymoron that captures the essence of our era.

Sociologically, the works of Karl Marx, Erich Fromm, and contemporary theorists underscore how economic and ideological systems commodify the self and alienate the individual from labor, meaning, and identity. Alienation today is not only about production

but about existential drift—a loss of coherence in one's inner world as external expectations and performative norms override internal values. The neoliberal emphasis on individual success, constant self-optimization, and digital branding has fractured community ties and rendered relationships increasingly transactional.

In digital culture, performativity replaces intimacy, and visibility substitutes for connection. Social media fosters a sense of belonging that is ultimately simulated, fragmentary, and emotionally exhausting. Likes, shares, and followers become poor proxies for true companionship. The concept of "fake belonging" reveals how easily one can feel surrounded yet isolated—mirroring the paradoxes of modern life. This condition is further reflected in media narratives such as Spike Jonze's *Her* and Camus' *The Stranger*, which expose the silent void beneath apparent connection.

Yet, within this bleak landscape lies the potential for transformation. The study argues for a multidimensional reconnection—one that spans the personal, the collective, and the institutional. Psychological interventions, community initiatives, ethical media design, and structural policy changes must work in tandem to heal the ruptures that modern life has deepened. Reclaiming presence, empathy, and mutual care is no longer a private ideal but a societal necessity.

In essence, the journey toward understanding modern loneliness and alienation is also a journey toward rediscovering the human condition itself. It calls us to restore depth in an age of distraction, to revalue being over having, and to reweave the social fabric that binds us—not only to others, but to the truest version of ourselves.

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About the Author



***Dr Sultan Akbugan** holds several Associate degrees in the fields of Elderly Care, Laboratory and Veterinary Health, Emergency and Disaster Management, Call Center Services and Computer Programming. She has a Bachelor degree from Anadolu University - Faculty of Economics, Department of Finance and a Masters from Hoca Ahmet Yesevi International Turkish-Kazakh University - Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Political Science and Public Administration. Dr Akbugan has recently received her Doctor of Social Psychology from St Clements University - Türkiye.*

She may be reached at sultanakbugan@hotmail.com

Orcid No: 0009-0004-2129-5909

NIGERIAN PIDGIN ENGLISH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF PIDGIN ENGLISH USE IN THREE MAJOR MARKETS IN ENUGU CAPITAL CITY, NIGERIA, 2015-2025

Dr Frederick Ugwu Ozor*

Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu

(Ph.D, FIMC, Pr. FIGA, DPFM, MSc., BSc. (Hons.), TC 11)

Abstract

Nigerian Pidgin is an English-based language spoken to facilitate communication among Nigerians who have no common or unifying language. The language plays a significant role in the social and economic life of traders in Enugu state of Nigeria. This paper sought to empirically determine the extent of use of Pidgin in Artisan, Ogbette, and New markets in Enugu capital city of Nigeria as well as the effects of improved literacy in Pidgin English and its use as a linguistic strategy on the social and economic lives of traders in the study area within the period 2015 up to 2025. Hence using survey instrument, this study analyzed quantitative data and found that Pidgin English is widely used in informal market settings by diverse groups in Nigeria though very small proportion of respondents indicated that Pidgin English use is less preferred. The study further revealed that Pidgin English literacy and digital skills use in trade and commercial sectors could be a powerful driver for socio-economic development particularly in informal settings. In order to actualize and consolidate on the potential gains of Pidgin English use in informal economic activities in Nigeria, the study proffered among others the recommendation that the Nigerian public policy makers should initiate public law to encourage the use of the language in both formal and informal settings. The use of a codified and accepted Pidgin as an instrument for upward economic mobility will positively impact both the official and users' perception of the language. Going beyond recognizing Nigerian Pidgin as an ordinary facilitator of economic activities, policymakers should equally accept that Pidgin could also play a role in the formal economy. Finally, in order to maximize the gains of improved Pidgin English use, policy makers must necessarily encourage Pidgin English speakers to make use of online education platforms, such as Naija.gur to enhance Pidgin proficiency with resources like dictionaries and interactive forums, which address the needs of Nigeria's diverse population.

Introduction

Pidgin English plays a significant role in the social and economic life of traders in Enugu state. It facilitates communication in markets, enabling interactions between traders from diverse linguistic backgrounds and fostering a sense of community. This can lead to increased business opportunities, as it allows traders to negotiate deals and understand customer needs more effectively. Hence, on this backdrop, this study examines the correlation between Pidgin English use and economic development of traders in the study area. In other words, the paper focuses on critical examination of the nature and extent of influence or effects of use of Nigerian pidgin on the social and economic lives of traders in the study area. It further sought to explain the extent to which age, sex and occupational distribution of the study population determine the use of Nigerian Pidgin by buyers and sellers in facilitating commercial transactions in the study area.

However, studies in literature tend to suggest that Pidgin English can act as a unifying force, transcending beyond ethnic boundaries and promoting economic activity. In other words, this implies that Pidgin English could be a vital tool for social and economic interaction in Enugu state, particularly among traders. This is more so because it fosters communication, builds community, and supports economic activity. However, there appears to be evident challenges related to literacy and standardization of the language that need to be addressed.

According to Bob, & Obiukwu, E., (2022), pidgins are minimal and makeshift languages which are the results of language contact, developed for the purpose of communication, particularly in multilingual societies. Being spoken in many countries of the world, it is recognized as a contingency language in the absence of a central communicative code. Nigerian Pidgin is one of the pidgins spoken in the world. It has gained wide currency having permeated the Nigerian linguistic ecology.

The authors highlighted its position in the Nigerian linguistic situation by recourse to the stages of language development, and argued that language is employed solely for communicative purposes and perform functional roles despite their limitations. They concluded that the Nigerian Pidgin in its stage in

language development occupies the status of a promoted language (PL).

Following on the heels of these studies, a major focus of this paper is on the use of Nigerian Pidgin as a linguistic strategy in area consisting of Artisan, Ogbette, and New markets in Enugu State of Nigeria. It is observed that Nigerian Pidgin is dominantly used in these markets, though Nigerian Pidgin is not the only language spoken in the markets as other indigenous languages (Igbo, Yoruba, etc) as well as Standard English, Broken English and Hausa, the language of the immediate environment are also in use. However, the use of Nigerian Pidgin in these markets is very important.

Since different people of different linguistic backgrounds patronize the market, and since most do not either understand or use Standard English, the use of pidgin becomes very important in these markets because they need to understand one another. It is interesting to note that interaction is often achieved through code-mixing and code-switching of the languages in order to expand and enhance sales. The use of Nigerian Pidgin is important because a wider spectrum of society uses it. In this context, Rajend et al.2000), observed that communication among people who speak the same language is possible because they share the same common language. Sapir 1921:6), further defined language as ‘’a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols‟ (Sapir 1921:6). The author emphasized that language is the institution whereby human beings communicate ideas, emotions and desires as well as interact with each other by means of habitual oral auditory and arbitrary symbols.

When individuals of different backgrounds are compelled by force of circumstance to interact with each other, a simplified language derived from two or more languages is developed and the product is often called a pidgin. These are modified languages consisting of components of two or more languages and employed as a linguistic strategy to facilitate communication between speakers, who do not have a common language, and which ultimately help to sustain interaction in a given community. Code-switching takes place in individual utterances, and speakers form and establish a pidgin language when two or more speakers do not speak a common language Labov (1936). In the study area, code-switching and code-mixing in communication takes place between speakers of two or more languages, and Nigerian Pidgin is used especially by traders to facilitate economic and business transactions. Thus traders tend to use this form of language in the market to aid communication and to promote sales. The value of pidgin in Nigeria as a sociolinguistic variable is of great importance as it is spoken in the market among buyers and sellers to promote trade. Pidgin further serves as a language for broader communication between people coming from different ethnic backgrounds as is often the case in a market situation. For this reason, pidgin language receives great attention because of the socio-economic benefits it offers to both educated and uneducated in the country.

Growing evidence from literature reveals the recognition by scholars on the important role of Nigerian Pidgin as used in social interaction and business transactions among people of different languages. Even against traditional disapproval attitude displayed towards pidgins, it has remained hugely relevant in commercial and social activities where different ethnic groups come together to transact business. The seeming success in business negotiations and transactions as well as noticeable growing social interaction in the study area warrants this study. Consequently, against this backdrop, our study seeks to describe and explain the nature and extent of the effects of pidgin as a linguistic strategy on the social and economic lives of traders in the study area.

In an empirical study of the Pidgin English as a development communication for rural communities in Delta State, Oghwie, (2021). Found that the extent to which respondents preferred pidgin language was high and moderate, and concluded that the use of Pidgin English on any of the radio programs was capable of influencing socio-economic and political development in the rural communities under study. The author noted that the finding that indigenous language like Pidgin English could be potentially used to facilitate human and community development suggests that Western approaches to development in developing countries continues to be untenable. While these findings are suggestive of the potential gains which could arise from enhanced Pidgin literacy, most studies on the subject have tended to dwell largely on syntax, phonology as well economic significance of Nigerian pidgin, as the important domain of literacy in Pidgin English appear rather limited and understudied. For these reasons, this paper sought to fill this gap in literature by testing the hypothesis that Pidgin literacy reduces communication barriers, especially for the 38% of Nigerians with limited internet access, promoting inclusivity in the digital economy. In this context, research shows that Pidgin English plays significant role in media and education as it fosters unity and cultural expression, yielding economic benefits through better social cohesion and market engagement.

Statement Problem

Used as a means of communication, language becomes problematic when a common language is lacking. Nigerian pidgin is a term used to denote an English based pidgin, which is a marginal language used among Nigerians to facilitate communication needs in certain interactive contexts. However, Nigerian Pidgin has undergone a lot of modifications and re-modifications over the years by drawing its rich lexicons from various Nigerian indigenous languages as well as the contact language, English.

This study seeks to contribute to empirical discussions on Nigerian Pidgin following on the heels of the works of Adeyanju (1989), Todd (1974), and Gani-Ikilama (2005) who observe that Nigerian Pidgin is spoken in market places, barracks, campuses, etc. and that the Nigerian variant of Pidgin is predominantly a market language used in buying and selling interactions. It seems that very limited work has been done on the extent to which pidgin is used for economic or business transactions in Enugu markets particularly in a context in which it is used simultaneously with other languages such as Ibo, Standard English, Broken English and non-indigenous languages spoken in the study area. More so, it seems that studies on economic significance of improved literacy on Nigerian Pidgin are apparently very limited. In this context, in light of the cosmopolitan nature of Ogbette, Artisan, and Ariara/New markets in Enugu capital city, empirical work on the potential economic gains of enhanced literacy on reading and writing in Pidgin English becomes warranted, particularly because Nigerian Pidgin, a unifying lingua franca, could bridge Nigeria's diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Its use in media, trade and informal settings could enhance information access, enabling broader participation in economic activities. Improved Pidgin literacy could further reduce communication barriers, especially for the 38% of Nigerians with limited internet access, promoting inclusivity in the digital economy. Hence, in pursuit of this hypothesis, this study sought to examine the potential economic gains of use Nigerian Pidgin English for socioeconomic groups with improved literacy in Nigerian Pidgin. The study further enquired into the extent of use of Pidgin by socioeconomic groups including age, gender, occupational, and Pidgin literacy categories/groups in the study area. Specifically, the study addressed the research question of whether there is any significant correlation between Nigerian Pidgin use and social and economic development of traders in the study area.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Related literature on use of Nigerian Pidgin English is reviewed under the following sub themes: conceptual, theoretical and empirical reviews.

Conceptual Review

Language and Communication

Language is an expression of human activity. People use language in every day conversations, buying and selling or transacting business), planning meals and vacations, debating politics. In this context, Clark (1996:125) observed that "all speech, written or spoken is a dead language until it finds a willing and prepared hearer". Sapir (1921:7) defines language as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". Language has very important functional utility. Existing literature on linguistics has often stressed the communicative relevance of language, though it appears that scholars have presented communication in very precise terms than is often true in practice.

Some scholars have also made a distinction between linguistic and nonlinguistic messages in communication. Hence, one problem which arose in the study of language as a formal system was that of deciding if human activity is properly „linguistic" or „non-linguistic". A clear delineation between linguistic and non-linguistic communication became increasingly difficult. For instance, traditionally it has often been assumed that linguistic messages can be transmitted and received only through speech. However, this assumption ignores other commination symbol such as gestures (or what some describe as body language) as a means of transmitting linguistic information. Uwaechia, (2016) in this context noted that the underlying assumption is that, while spoken language is divisible into discrete entities whose patterning can be characterized by identifiable rules, gestural communication is not. The author raises the question: in conversation, what sort of data will then lead to fruitful analysis: words, posture, facial expression, gestures of the hands? Generally, language is a system of symbols. A symbol is anything used represent something else, and for this reason a symbol thus becomes a vehicle for communication, when those using the symbol know what meanings the symbol represents (Huen, and Huen, 1978). In human conversation, people in interaction apply all available data within the environment of communication for useful analysis or decipher of meaning. It follows therefore that language is a major vehicle of communication.

Watzlawick, et al, (1968), argued that communication is the exciting process of human interaction; it is a necessary condition sine qua non of human life and social order. Obviously, in the beginning of his existence, human beings are involved in the complex process of acquiring the rules of communication with only minimal awareness of what this body of rules consist of. Language has then remained a survival tool for humans, and the important element in this language is the symbol. Heun and Heun, (1978), aptly observed that human communication is essentially a dynamic unique process of "calling up" meaning by the use of symbols. People do say something which "call up" reaction in the minds of other people. Symbols such as words or gestures are what people use to communicate, and meanings are the reaction that other people get from thinking about the symbols.

Overall, a missing gap in literature on Pidgin as a vehicle for communication is that most studies focused on grammar tics and appear limited in scope. There is thus very limited work on the effects of Pidgin English use and its economic, social and even political utility, as well as its potential gains for whole community and groups in society.

Language and Context

UNESCO in Le Page (1977) defines language as a basic means of people's mark of cultural identity and as an instrument for ordering and interpreting the world around them. Ogunsiji, (2001) further insists that Language is either a facilitator or hindrance to transactions; though effectively used, language can powerfully influence and control people's thoughts and actions and lead them to desire what they do not have and do things they ordinarily would not think of doing (Okolo and Ezike- Ojiaku 1999:2).

The place of language in structuring exchanges in market transactions is all important because it unfolds how speech events are carried out to achieve the desired goal. In this context, Malinowski, (1946) describes context as the immediate concrete circumstances about what was going on while the words were said. Contributing to this discussion, Firth (1957) includes in the environment the personal history of the participants and the entire cultural setting within which they interact. In these discussions, the two authors identified physical environment of speech event, the participants involved in the discourse and the cultural norms guiding the people involved in the speech interaction. Nunan (1993:5) further sees context as "a situation giving to the discourse and within which the discourse is embedded". The author further identified two types of contexts, namely, the linguistic and non-linguistic contexts. While the linguistic context refers to language that surrounds or accompanies the piece of discourse under analysis, the non-linguistic context includes the type of communicative event that is taking place at a given time, which could be a story, joke, lecture session for instance. It also includes the topic and the setting consisting of the location, time of the day, season of the year and physical aspects of the situation such as size of room, arrangement of furniture, the participants and the relationship between them, the background knowledge and the assumptions underlying the communicative event.

The linguistic and nonlinguistic components of language seem to be related because language use is sensitive to context (Eggins, 1996:7-8). In other words, language and context are interwoven. Often, we assume the meaning of words without considering the context in which these words are used. This means that words used relate to the context of use. The author provided an illustration to buttress his point using a textual analysis. Textual analysis and understanding of language in markets therefore become necessary in this study principally because in addition to the context helping us to interpret an utterance, good background knowledge of the issue in discussion enables the discussants to achieve fuller understanding of language in use. Social linguistic scholars emphasize the importance of placing utterances in context and the relationship between uses of language which would provide ground for effective interpretation of utterances. Doing this will also help to eliminate other possible meanings (Ibileye (1994). In this study therefore Artisan, Ogbette, and New markets are selected for study because they provide a suitable platform where naturally occurring language in a context can be studied and where relent data that are reliably representative of actual emerging patterns of language and context. It follows that a sociolinguistic analysis of use of Pidgin the study area is warranted.

Nevertheless, review of this related literature on language-environment synergy reveals the understudied area of improved literacy on Pidgin, which has the potential to boost participation in Nigeria's informal economy that accounts for over 50% of GDP. Better literacy could support clearer market transactions and enhance advertising effectiveness, as Pidgin is widely used in media campaigns. Integrating Pidgin into education, as per Nigeria's 2013 National Policy on Education, could further improve academic outcomes and employability in a country where only 62% of adults are literate.

Sociolinguistics and Variations of Language

Language is one of the outstanding features that differentiate man from other creatures. According to Hornby et al (1974:473), "although animals such as goats, sheep, bee etc. do communicate with members of their respective species, we do not have a basis for regarding this 'so called' means of communication as language in the same sense that we regard human method of communicating ideas, feelings desires by means of a system of sounds and symbols". Language is therefore a human behavior, it has been with man from creation and no meaningful impact can be executed without the use of language. It is true to say that no society exists without language and no language exists without society. It is this kind of consideration that leads us to what scholars refer to as "sociolinguistics". According to Hudson (1980:1-2), sociolinguistics is "the study of language in relation to society". Awolaje et al (2008:25) view sociolinguistics as "the study of relationship between language and social structure, that is, it seeks to unravel how age, sex, social status or background correlate with language". Sociolinguistics looks at how the society influences language. Based on these definitions, it can be deduce that sociolinguistics is a discipline which analyses the relationship between language and how members of the society use language in different perspectives. The two concepts (language and society) are interrelated and interwoven, one complements the other. Sociolinguistics is divided into two branches: Micro-sociolinguistics concerns itself with language components, paralinguistic, speech styles, code mixing, code switching, linguistic variation, stylistics, discourse analysis etc. This branch is further concerned with a description of the features of verbal interaction between individuals in small groups. On the other hand, macro sociolinguistics handles issues of language planning and language standardization, language attitude, language distribution etc. Macro sociolinguistics is concerned with the distribution and

function of language varieties in a society. However, out of the two broad classifications, our research work falls under the micro-sociolinguistics domain. This is more so as the present study focuses on the investigation and description of features of verbal interactions between speakers, buyers and sellers in a given social setting such as the market. The significance of this review on sociolinguistics is that it helps to locate the study in a micro domain within the broader macro-linguistic context.

Multilingualism

Multilingualism as a sociolinguistic concept has been variously defined by scholars. Hartman and Stock (1977) define multilingualism as the use of more than two languages by a speaker or a speech community; it also exists in a large area encompassing many tribes each possessing its own language. Dittmar (1976) says multilingualism is: "the term given to the linguistic situation where two or more languages co-exist within the bounds of one society and are kept constant by political or economic interest" Bell (1976) also argues that multilingualism is "both the use by an individual and the use by a group or nation of more than two languages". This view describes a situation where an individual can function at some reasonable level of competence in more than two languages and the existence of many languages within a territory. Synthesis of these various arguments provides a more workable definition, such as those that describe the concept as a common human condition that makes it possible for an individual to function at some level in more than two languages. A multilingual has the ability to interact freely with the speakers of other languages in different situational contexts. Multilingualism in Nigeria involves not only the indigenous languages, but also the major groups of non-Nigerian languages. The first group comprises English language and Nigerian Pidgin, which is the deviation contact between English and the indigenous language. The strength of multilingualism is found in the flexibility that shows for greater participation in social and economic processes of different linguistic groups. This is often a situation in Sabon-Garir or ghettos. It further shows the extent to which transactions are made possible. The relevance of this concept to the present study seems to lie in its mobility as one of the strategies to facilitate sales. The understanding of many languages by a seller or a buyer, places such a seller/buyer above whoever is a monolingual. In addition, the ability of a buyer to speak more than one language makes it easy for him/her to transact business with ease and possibly gain the favor and confidence of the seller. Also, a seller's ability to speak more than one language would probably enable him/her to attract more customers and ultimately sell more. This brings us to the concept of code mixing, code-switching, using Nigerian Pidgin, Standard English and Broken English.

Code-mixing

Code-mixing is a sociolinguistic phenomenon prevalent in any multilingual setting like Nigeria. According to Abdullahi-Idiagbon, (2007), code-mixing is a means of communication used for convenience purposes as well as for social and egoistic manifestation. Code-mixing is common among rural and urban dwellers because of the heterogeneity and complexity of the areas. Code-mixing features in the markets under study. Wardhaugh (1986) observed that code-mixing" occurs when people in a conversation use both languages in such manner that they change from one language to another within a single utterance.

Code-mixing often occurs at times when a speaker is lacking the equivalent lexical item in the general language to express him or herself. Speakers tend to mix codes in order to demonstrate a personality of mixed identity and to achieve egoistic effect (Poulack, 1985).

Moreover, Coupland and Jaworski (1977) argued that the use of distinct language varies in interaction as an index of flexibility and creativity on the part of the speaker, occurs not necessarily as language defect.

However, Appel and Muyesen, (1993) in a counter argument insist that co-mixing is an attempt to cover up incompetence or deficiency in the act of interaction or in the linguistic facility of a particular language that encourages speakers to code mix. Nevertheless, the fact remains that co-mixing as a language phenomenon and, as used for interaction between people, is relevant or apt to this study because it provided a rationale for collection and analysis of data from heterogeneous linguistic groups and situations that provoke code mixing.

Code-switching

Code-switching occurs when a speaker switches from one code to another. According to Gumpez (1976), in a context of social interaction, code-switching occurs when individuals use different varieties of language in different situations. Code-switching depends on an individual speech repertoire, and can be described as conscious when a deliberate choice of language is made as opposed to another having taken into consideration relevant factors. Traders often code-switch and code-mix in order to gain customers' attention and to achieve a particular objective. It can be conscious where a deliberate choice of language is not made but various elements of the environment are allowed to dictate the language used. It can also occur when an individual is in the habit of switching from one language to another without much thought or deliberation, which is an indication that the individual is probably fluent in both languages.

Literature on linguistics identified three types of code-switching, namely Metaphorical code-switching, Conversational code-switching, and Situational code-switching.

Metaphorical code-switching occurs where an individual only uses one kind of variety in a situation (Hudson1980:156). Therefore, metaphoric change which occurs in language used in communication permits the transfer of registers and automatic change in situations or events. It further shows how speakers employ languages to convey information that goes beyond their actual words especially to define social situation.

The second, which is conversational code-switching, describes a situation where a speaker switches code (varieties) within a single sentence and many even do so many times (Gumperz, 1976). In conversational code-switching, there is no complete transfer of code varieties but the switch in code occurs instantaneously and simultaneously especially in an informal situation (Hudson, 1980). The implication is that there is no change in the topic of discussion, as the speech is only observed in a particular situation of speech communication, and the rest of the communication continues in the dormant language. It follows therefore that conversational code-switching can occur in two forms: in intersectional reoccurrence where we have combination of more than one language in a particular service and in inter-sentential occurrence, where conversational code-switching occurs at intervals meaning that a speaker starts a conversation in one language and often in a first sentence and thereafter switches to another language to make a new sentence.

Finally, situational code-switching could occur where a speaker at each point switch to a code, which is in tone with a change in a situation (Hudson, 1980). In situational code switching, there is no change in topic; while the changes observed in the situation can be explained through variations in languages used. Code-switching promotes the reduction of differences among different ethnic groups. Each participant attempts to learn a language or more precisely the language of their environment to communicate with a native speaker and other members of their ethnic group particularly for purposes of doing business.

Pidgins

According to Gani-Ikilama, (1984), Pidgins are contact languages created out of a mixture of other languages used as a means of communication between speakers of different languages. Pidgins have rudimentary grammars and restricted vocabulary serving as an auxiliary language. A pidgin develops when people are forced to develop a common means of communication principally because there is the absence of a common language. Pidgin languages exist in most multilingual communities as is the case with Nigerian Pidgin. Languages that have given rise to notable Pidgins include English, French, Spanish, Zulu and Chinook (Akinluyi, 1977).

Definitions of Pidgins

According to Bob & Obiukwu, (2022:174), 'pidgins are new language categories that develop when speakers of different languages come into contact with each other and have a need to communicate'. Classically, they are minimal, marginal and makeshift languages which evolve to perform communicative roles among multi-linguals without a common language code (Reinecke (1964), Todd (1974).

A pidgin is a variety of (English) which developed for practical purpose, such as trading, among group of people who have a lot of contact, but who did not know each other's language. Sociolinguistics such as Todd (1994:1), defined pidgin as a marginal language that arises to fulfill certain restricted communicative needs among people who do not share a common language''. Therefore, pidgins are simple form of languages commonly used for limited communication purposes between people with no common language, and generally they result from any situation of language contact such as trade situations. Le Page (1977) extends this idea by referring to the communicative act of a speaker on any given occasion as an "instant pidgin", since speakers in any situation will need to accommodate settings for speakers to negotiate a common set of meanings through the linguistic means available to them.

Bloomfield (1933:474) claimed that pidgins are "varieties whose grammar and vocabulary are very much reduced" adding that, "The resultant language must be a native to none". According to the author, pidgins are not an individual's own language; it is a simplified language that develops between two or more groups to meet their communicative needs. Hall (1966:7) echoes this view asserting that "Two or more people use a variety whose grammar and vocabulary are very much reduced in extent, and which is native to neither side. Such a language is a pidgin."

Further, Holmes (1988:4-5) defined Pidgin as,

> *"a reduced language that results from extended contacts between groups of people with no language in common; it evolves when they need some verbal communication perhaps for trade but no group hears, the native language of any other group for social reasons that may include lack of trust or close contact".*

The author also noted that pidgins have no native speaker; it is no one's first language but it is a contact language which occurs in trade contact, ethnic or refugee situation where participants need a functioning common language. The definitions of pidgins are many and varied, and there appears to be no consensus

among scholars on a singular understanding of the term.

However, scholars have noted that pidgins can develop to a considerable degree of stability and complexity.

The important features of Pidgins

The important features of Nigerian Pidgin as used by traders in buying and selling interactions are of great value to note, bearing in mind how it facilitates effective communication. The grammar of Nigerian Pidgin consists of its lexicon, syntax, and phonology. In what follows we review these areas as they exist in the literature.

The Nigerian Pidgin lexicon

A major feature of Nigerian Pidgin identified by Hall (1966) is that it consists of sharply used vocabulary. The vocabulary of Nigerian Pidgin is indeed small in contrast to the English language, but an examination of what Nigerian Pidgin does with its vocabulary is necessary for proper assessment of its adequacy. In making this comparison, Hall (1953:23) observed, "so as to say anything that can be said in English. The implication is that there is no reduction in the overall semantic domains covered by a Pidgin English but merely in the number of items used to map them". It follows therefore that if a given semantic field has to be covered by a few words rather than many, each word has to signify a wider range of phenomena. Akinluyi (1977), provides other examples in Nigerian Pidgin word "sabi", which is to know, and has the following meaning:

Know a food item; as in "I sabi beans"

To recognize a food item; as in "I sabi rice"

Have the technical know-how; as in "I sabi drive"

Hence, based on context by the interlocutors, a person gets to understand the meaning of what is communicated. Pidgins is said to hardly have synonyms because of this characteristic, rather context plays a vital role in defining meaning.

Nigerian Pidgin Syntax

Pidgins are often described as simpler syntactically than their source languages and for this reason; it is easily used for interactions in the market between buyers and sellers. Given below is a brief description of the syntax of Nigerian Pidgin with their English translations to enable a comparison with English.

(a) Sentence structure:

According to Mafeni (1971), Nigerian Pidgin has a fixed word order usually SVO and usually short and simple sentences.

To illustrate, V - Chop (Eat)

VO - Chop de fud (Eat the food)

SVO - I bin chop de fud (He ate the food)

Sometimes, complex sentences occur in complex Nigerian Pidgin.

To illustrate,

- "I no go go dai if yu no tel me wetin di man bin tok."

Meaning: "I will not go there if you don't tell me what the man said".

- "I no con laik dai wai wai u con handle the tori"

Meaning: "I don't really like the way you handled the issue"

(b) Negation:

Nigerian Pidgin uses the negative marker "No" and this may occur in the pre-verbal slot.

To illustrate,

kom	(come)
No com	(don't come)
Dem no fit com	(they can't come)

(c) Plurality:

Omamor (1987) holds that plurality in Nigerian Pidgin may be indicated in a number of ways.

i) Preceding the noun by appropriate adjective qualifiers such as "plenty, meni"

(Plenty, many) as in (I have many toys)

ii) The use of "dem" after the noun head as in
de toys dem (the toys)

iii) No overt marker at all in which case plurality is determined contextually.

Toys no de fo maket

(There are no toys in the market)

According to Omamor and Elugbe (1991) when definite reference is intended, plurality is commonly marked by the third person pronoun dem occurring after the noun head which is itself preceded by the definite article di (the or the demonstrative dis (this) and dat (that).

To illustrate,

di man dem	(the men)
dis pikin dem	(these children)
dat boi dem	(that boys)
dos geh dem	(those girls)

Nigerian Pidgin Phonology

There is no uniform system of sounds pronunciation in Nigerian Pidgin although scholars like Agheyisi (1971) and Schneider (1966). Kisob (1963:28) acknowledges that, "a pidgin differs in detail depending from where it is spoken" and also that; "It is influenced by local dialects".

According to Mù hlhä usler (1986), of all parts of grammar, those of pronunciation and phonology remain the least stable in stabilized pidgins. This instability is probably because of the existence of variety in the spoken form. There is some apparent difficulty in phonology of Nigerian Pidgin, which arises mainly from the fact that speakers of Nigerian Pidgin often bring into it the phonology of their first languages. Phonologically, therefore, this gives Nigerian Pidgin different varieties such that for example, while the average Nigerian may say / ʧɔp /for "chop" which means "to eat", a Yoruba person may pronounce the same word as / ʃ ɔp / because the sound / ʧ / does not occur in Yoruba.

Language and Trade

Pidgins are contact languages used by people in a given society for communication because of the absence of a common language. According to Corder (1977:3), "language is a code system based on arbitrary conventions infinitely extendible according to the changing needs of its users". The author asserts that language is seen as communicating through code. In his contribution on language, Sapir (1929:36, cited in Mandelbaum, (1949:162), observed that,

> *Language is a guide to social reality. Though language is not ordinarily thought of as of essential interest to the students of social science, it powerfully conditions all of our thinking about social problems and possesses. Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become a medium of expression for the society. The fact of the matter is that the real world is to a large extent is unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group. … We see, hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of the community predispose certain choices of our interpretation.*

Nigerian Pidgin performs the important function of serving as a trade language in Nigeria. In this study, Artisan, Ogbette, and New markets bring together people from several different ethnic backgrounds for the purpose of buying and selling goods and services. Buyers and sellers come in contact and communicate mostly in Nigerian Pidgin, which is acceptable and understood by the majority. According to Omamor and Elugbe, (1982), people in this market situation use a common language such as Pidgin in order to communicate and enhance sales effectively. In support of this view, Adekunle, (1972:198) observed that,

> *Nigerian Pidgin is the language most commonly and frequently used as a means of inter-ethnic communication at shopping centers, market places motor parks and even in most informal discussions in offices, in linguistically heterogeneous cities*.

Gani-Ikilama (1992) further echoes this position maintaining that the most important place where people speak pidgin is in the market place. Pidgin is considered a language of trade over time used by traders from one part of the world as they visit and communicate with people residing in one distant part Yul- Ifode (2001) in this context maintained that "Pidgins are contact languages used in a situation such as trading requiring communication among people who do not speak each other's language". Against this backdrop, the study area, Artisan, Ogbette, and New markets become apt because it provides an important setting for data collection.

Empirical Review

Eke, and Ochuba, (2023), proposed that Nigerian Pidgin can effectively be used in schools, especially to solve linguistic problems and to equalize the educational opportunities since National Policy on Education (2013) encouraged the use of the language in the immediate environment. The authors observed that in Rivers and Bayelsa States, 'teachers resort to the use of Nigerian Pidgin for explanatory purposes, especially in the early stages of pre-primary education, since there is no other common language among the pupils. To deprive them of the use of Nigerian pidgin at this early stage means making way for inequality of educational opportunities for people in rural areas. There is therefore need to incorporate Nigerian pidgin into language of instruction at the pre-primary level of education for equalization of educational opportunities. Recommending Nigerian Pidgin as a medium of instruction and adopting it may enhance national unity among the diverse ethnic groups and equal opportunities of education. It was suggested that Nigerian Pidgin should be offered as a subject in secondary schools and as a course of study in tertiary institutions. Tertiary National Policy on Education as a subject will enable Nigerians to draw a line between pidgin and Standard Nigerian English. However, empirical research on Pidgin English literacy appear to be vast, but there are limited studies on the important role of enhanced Pidgin literacy with digital skills, which could play a significant role in economic development particularly in informal trade sector and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMCEs).

Besides, in another related empirical work, Ehondor (2020) argued that Pidgin English has assumed a significant role in communication in Nigeria, especially between and among ethnic groups that do

not share common language. The author highlights the importance of Pidgin English and maintained that the language enhances the propagation of national ideals, socio-cultural, linguistic and political development objectives as well as peace and unity in the country since it is the only language used by both the educated and uneducated, irrespective of their ethnic background.

Gana (2007) further carried out a study among university lecturers with an attempt to find out if highly educated Nigerians also speak Pidgin English, and if they do, to whom do they speak it and where? The findings from this study concluded that university lecturers speak Nigerian Pidgin, not only to uneducated Nigerians, but also among themselves and even in the classroom occasionally to get the attention of their students.

Moreover, Onjewua and Okpe (2015) investigated the preference for pidgin instead of Standard English by students of English as a foreign language. The study adopted a survey approach to elicit data from students in a Nigerian institution. Findings showed that many of the students in the sample preferred the use of Pidgin English especially in areas outside the formal school settings. These studies on the extent of Pidgin English usage have shown that many people prefer the use of the language within formal and informal settings. The finding reveals its significance in different settings. However, there appears to be dearth of knowledge regarding the extent to which people in rural communities appreciate the use of Pidgin English in market places.

Overall, findings from studies on the potential impact of Pidgin English usage in influencing development in communities have been mixed. While some studies have identified the potential gains of Pidgin English use in improving actual development in rural communities, work on this domain still remain limited and needs to be expanded.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on Development communication theory, which focuses on social processes and is designed to seek a consensus or shared understanding among all the participants of a development initiative, which would result in complimentarily of action.

The implication is that development communication must take into account the different perspectives of the people involved in the development process. According to Schramm (1979:1) as cited in Baran (2002), development communication will be "the local area, local activity, local decision making, a two-way, horizontal, not a one-way communication." As a result of transformations taking place globally, the view of development has shifted from one imposing Western notions and strategies of development onto developing and underdeveloped nations to perceiving development as one involving the processes of participatory efforts by local people as a necessary condition for achieving social change. When development message is conveyed in the language the targets are not at home with, it is possible that they, the local people may despise the message and treat the conveyors with hostility. This is why development communication agents and scholars have recently been very particular about the vehicle (language) of development messages. In relation to use of Pidgin English in trading transactions under study, any development information must necessarily be passed in the language that buyers and sellers understand in order to ensure an effective communication. Any communication platform that wishes to make a successful trade transaction deal must provide intelligible and mutually accepted communication mode, in this case Pidgin for the participants engaged in the speech event. Given the pervasiveness in the use of Pidgin English in the markets under study as well as frequency of use, it appears evident that the utility of Pidgin is significant. Thus communicators, development communicators especially, are obliged to use the language the people love when communicating for development purposes so that their target groups would be totally integrated into the objectives of such messages.

A contending theoretical lens is the Human Development theory. In this context, it has been traditionally argued that a homogenous language is an essential vehicle for economic aspect of human development. Human development, especially "the theories of people's participation", is an interesting framework to analyze the link between language and socio-economic development (Walsch 2006:131). According to this theoretical lens, people's participation is vital for promoting development and the state could help the poor mobilize, through appropriate language policies, to participate in economic activities in order to achieve economic growth and development (Walsch, 2006:132). According to Bearth, (2013:16), in explaining "communicative sustainability", the linguistic medium used for the everyday exchange of information and for negotiating daily life issues is key to the design of development strategies to meet development and global sustainability standards in a given setting. However, the need to promote a shared language to facilitate trade is based on the idea that linguistic proximity leads to increased trade, creates more wealth and lifts people out of poverty (Ginsburgh and Weber 2016: 2). However, this theory seems too narrow to encapsulate the major concerns of this study.

Summary and Gap in Literature

A gap in literature on Pidgin as a vehicle for communication is that most studies focused on linguistic features of Pidgin and consequently appear limited in scope. There is thus very limited work on the effects of Pidgin English use and its economic, social

and even political utility, as well as its potential gains for whole community and groups in society.

Further, review of related literature on language-environment synergy reveals the understudied area of improved literacy in Pidgin, which has the potential to boost participation in Nigeria's informal economy.
The significance of the review on sociolinguistics is that it helps to locate this study in a micro domain within the broader macro-linguistic context.

The relevance of conceptual review of previous works on multilingualism is that it enhanced and highlighted a greater understanding of the strength of multilingualism, which is in the flexibility that it allows for greater participation in social and economic processes of different linguistic groups. This is often a situation in Sabon-Garir, ghettos or cosmopolitan communities. It further shows the extent to which transactions are made possible. The relevance of this concept to the present work lies in its mobility as one of the strategies to facilitate sales.

Review of works on code mixing not only provided the basis for conceptual clarity but also reveals that co-mixing as a language phenomenon and, as used for interaction between people from varied backgrounds, is relevant or apt to this study because it provided a rationale for collection and analysis of relevant data from heterogeneous linguistic groups and contexts that provoke code mixing.

Methodology

This study embarked on a critical sociolinguistic analysis of the use of Nigerian Pidgin in Ogbette, Artisan, and New markets of Enugu capital city in informal market settings using survey research, statistical and percentage tables, mean scores as well as to inferential statistics test the study hypotheses. The study further sought to determine and explain the extent to which use of Pidgin by various sociolinguistic groupings (ethnic, educated, un-educated, Pidgin literate/digital skilled groups and occupational distribution of the study population) impact economic development of the study sample.

The units of observation and analysis were buyers and sellers of goods and services in designated study area.

The mode of observation employed was survey instrument, which consisted of a structured questionnaire. However, personal interviews were combined.

While the study area consists of Artisan, Ogbette, and Ariara/New markets in Enugu capital city, the study population consists of 250 traders that owns shops in Artisan market, 5700 shop owners in Ogbette market and 570 shop owners in New market. Hence the total number of shop owners in the three markets is 7,400.

The total population of buyers that patronize shops in the three markets is 14, 800 estimated from an approximate number of two buyers patronizing a particular shop daily. Hence, a population of 14, 800 buyers that patronize the markets was used for the study. The study population is therefore 22,200.

A simple single-stage, stratified sampling was used involving probability sampling using random numbers for the selection of 163 study sample.

Population of Sellers/Shop owners in the three markets:

Market/Division	Population	Sample
Ogbette market	5700	5700 *2.5/100 – 142.5
Artisan market	250	250 * 2.5/100 _= 6
Ariara/New market	570	570 * 2.5/100 = 14
Total	7400	163

Clusters/Groups or Strata size:

Group/Cluster	Sample Size
Uneducated rural sellers (URS)	82
IPL *(Improved Pidgin Literate)*	15
PEI (Pidgin English Illiterate)	33
Educated (Formal education)	33
Total	163

Results

A stratified sample of a total of163 respondents were randomly selected from across the three markets in Enugu capita city and consist of four classes/groups: Uneducated rural sellers (82), Improved Pidgin literate (15), Pidgin English illiterate (33) and Educated (33) groups. Data generated were statistically tabulated and analyzed from Tables 1, 2 and 3 presented below. Results were obtained, which addressed the following research objectives:

1. To ascertain the extent to which Pidgin English is preferred as a medium of communication in trading transactions in the markets under study, and
2. To explain why and how Pidgin English use in trade enhances information access and yields economic benefits through better social cohesion.

Objective 1: To ascertain the extent to which Pidgin English is preferred as a medium of communication in trading transactions in the three major markets in Enugu capital city.

Table 1: Extent to which Pidgin English is preferred as a medium of communication in trading transactions by clusters of respondents under study.

Groups/Strata

Extent to which Pidgin English is used in informal market setting.	Uneducated Rural Sellers (URS)	Educated	IPL	PEI
High				
Moderate	82(50%)			
Low		33 (20%)	15 (9%)	33 (20%)
Total (N =163)				163 (100)

Comparing scores for groups/clusters of respondents in Table 1, result show that preference of Pidgin English use in the markets by respondents in URS Stratum were moderate while the Educated (33%) and PEI (33%) groups were relatively low. Improved Pidgin Literate (15%) remained remarkably low. Further, analysis of scores reveals that very small proportion of respondents indicated that Pidgin English use is less preferred as shown by low preference score of the IPL (15%), though to a lesser extent by the educated group, representing 33% of the study sample.

Objective 2: To explain why and how Pidgin English use in trade enhances information access and yields economic benefits through better social cohesion and market engagement.

Table 2: Summary of opinions of clustered respondents on the potential of Pidgin English use in trade in enhancing information access and yielding economic benefits through better social cohesion.

N =163

	SD	D	A	SA
Item (in survey questionnaire)	Uneducated[1] rural sellers (URS)	Educated[2]	Improved Pidgin Literate (IPL)[3]	Pidgin English Illiterate (PEI)[4]
I think the use of Pidgin English in trading transactions in the markets makes it possible for me to know about business and how to avoid being lazy.	29	5	1	13
I think the use of Pidgin English on any of the markets makes it possible for me to know about market trends and to make wise sales or purchases.	23	6	1	10
I think the use of Pidgin English in trading transactions in the markets makes it 4ossible for me to increase my income /profits.	21	6	2	5
I think Pidgin English literacy and digital skills use in trading transactions in the markets significantly contributes to wealth creation.	3	8	4	2
I believe Pidgin literacy improves job market access, particularly in informal trade sector trade, where Pidgin thrives.	5	6	3	2
I believe Pidgin literacy and digital shills enable me to engage on online commerce and thus create wealth.	1	2	4	1
N	82	33	15	33

Source: Authors' Computation

Note. SD=Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

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[1] *Uneducated Rural Sellers (USR): This group includes peasant rural traders who bring their wares to the city markets, who rely mostly on their local languages and may or may not be proficient in we+spoken Pidgin, though could understand Pidgin English.*

[2] *The Educated cluster includes respondents with formal education who may or may not be literate in Pidgin but nevertheless occasionally speaks Pidgin English.*

[3] *Improved Pidgin Literacy (IPL). This group or cluster of respondents includes people literate in Pidgin English and also with digital skills*

[4] *Pidgin English Illiterate (PEI). This cluster of respondents consists of people who can speak, but cannot read and write in Pidgin English and largely includes the non-educated.*

Table 3: Analysis of opinions of clustered respondents on a five point Likert scale on the potential gains of Pidgin English use in trade

Pidgin English use in trade enhances information access and yields economic benefits through better social cohesion and market engagement	X	f	_f(x)	_μ_	S	%
Uneducated rural sellers, URS (N=82)	5 4 3 2 1	3 6 21 52 0	15 24 63 104 0	2.5		4 7.3 26 63.4 0
Educated group (N=33)	5 4 3 2 1	8 8 6 6 5	40 32 18 12 5	3.24		24.2 24.2 18.2 18.2 15.2
Pidgin English illiterate **PEI**, (N=33)	5 4 3 2 1	3 5 10 13 2	15 20 30 26 2	2.82		9.1 15.2 30.3 39.4 6.1
Improved Pidgin literate, **IPL** (N=15)	5 4 3 2 1	7 4 2 1 1	35 16 6 2 1	4.0		47 27 13.3 6.5 6.5

Note: 1= No view, 2= strongly disagree, 3=Disagree, 4= Agree, 5= strongly agree

Table 2 presents data on the potential economic benefits of Pidgin English use in the markets under study. From the table, the potential gains of Pidgin English use to facilitate trade transactions were highlighted by many of the respondents. Interpreting the Table vertically, most of the respondents in URS and the PEI clusters either 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that the use of Pidgin English on any of the markets 'makes it possible for me to know about market trends and to make wise sales or purchases'. The same response pattern was observed across all the items in the table for these groups.

However, findings from Table 3 further show that most respondents in the IPL group with mean 4.0 and Educated category with mean 3.24 almost close to 4.0 either 'agree or strongly agree' that Pidgin English literacy and digital skills use in trading transactions in the markets significantly contributes to wealth creation. For these groups the same pattern of responses was observed for the two items indicated as:

I. 'Pidgin literacy improves job market access, particularly in informal trade sector trade, where Pidgin thrives', and

II. 'Pidgin literacy and digital shills enable me to engage on online commerce and thus create wealth'.

These findings suggest that Pidgin English literacy and digital skills use in trade and commercial sectors could be powerful driver for socio-economic development particularly in informal settings.

Discussion of Results

To state the obvious, this study sought to achieve the following two objectives first, to ascertain the extent to which Pidgin English use is preferred as a medium of communication/trading transactions in the three major markets in Enugu capital city and second, to explain why and how Pidgin English use in trade enhances information access and yields economic benefits through better social cohesion and market engagement. Findings from analysis of data reveal that preference of Pidgin English use in the markets by respondents in the UIRS group is moderate with 50% score as indicated in Table 1 while very small proportion of respondents in the Educated group with 20% score, PEI with 20% score while the PEI cluster has 15% indicating that generally Pidgin English use is less preferred particularly among these group. These findings suggest that Pidgin is widely used in informal market settings by diverse groups, a result which is supported by previous empirical studies in literature. In this context, the findings are consisted with the study by Ehondor, (2020) who argued that Pidgin English has assumed a significant role in communication in Nigeria, especially between and among diverse groups that do not share common language or socio-economic status in society. The present study's findings therefore suggest that Pidgin English is used in different contexts and settings by both the educated and non-educated, a view that is further echoed by Onjewua and Okpe (2015), who investigated the preference for pidgin instead of Standard English by students of English as a foreign language. The authors revealed that many of the students in the study sample preferred the use of Pidgin English especially in areas outside the formal school settings. Previous studies on the extent of Pidgin English usage have also shown that many people prefer the use of the language within formal and informal settings highlighting the significance of Pidgin English use in different settings (Gana, 2007). These findings on the significant role of contexts and settings provide the insight on how contexts or contingent conditions (such as predisposition towards Pidgin, Pidgin English literacy and digital skills as causal mechanisms or pathways) could enhance Pidgin English use and impact wealth creation.

Further, in pursuit of Objective 2, findings from analysis of data show that most of the respondents in URS and the PEI clusters either 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that the use of Pidgin English on any of the markets 'makes it possible for me to know about market trends and to make wise sales or purchases'. The implication is that for these groups, Pidgin English use is not necessarily a facilitator of trade transactions. A plausible explanation is that URS respondents most often relied on the dominant local and indigenous languages to conduct economic activities, while predisposition towards Pidgin English use particularly by the Educated group, which leads them to regard Pidgin as substandard or describe it in derogatory terms, seem to largely explain their less preference for Pidgin even in informal settings and often underrate the

potential gains of Pidgin English use in business activities.

On the other hand however, findings from analyses of data in Tables 2 and 3 further reveal that most respondents in the IPL and Educated categories either 'agree or strongly agree' that Pidgin English literacy and digital skills use in trading transactions in the markets significantly contribute to wealth creation; improve job market access, particularly in informal trade sector, and ultimately provide opportunities to engage on online commerce and thus creates wealth'.
These findings suggest that Nigerian Pidgin is a key linguistic asset driving communication, economic participation and human development in Nigeria's diverse population, more so if people are literate in Pidgin and exposed to the digital world. This finding is supported in literature by studies, which show that online education platforms leverage Pidgin to boost literacy, fostering economic growth and new business opportunities by improving access to education and empowering communities (Dipo Olowookere, 2025). The finding also aligns with Nigeria's digital literacy goals, as over 50% of the Nigerian population lacks digital skills according to the World Bank published records. It would appear therefore that better Pidgin literacy enables online commerce, freelancing and entrepreneurship, reducing unemployment, which commonsensically could affect a majority of Nigerian school graduates lacking digital skills. Reflecting on the Impact of Online Education Platforms, Dipo Olowookere, (2025) observed that,

> *Platforms like Naija.gur enhance Pidgin proficiency with resources like dictionaries and interactive forums, addressing the needs of Nigeria's diverse population. These tools eliminate geographical and socioeconomic barriers, democratizing education. Projects like AfriDataHub and the Nigerian Pidgin ASR dataset support digital infrastructure for Pidgin, enabling educational tools and natural language processing applications.*

The author further noted that global digital education market, projected to reach $133 billion by 2030, offers opportunities for Pidgin-focused platforms. Subscription-based models, premium content, or corporate training for Pidgin-speaking regions could generate revenue. Partnerships with media like BBC Pidgin or tech firms could create new income streams. These platforms also foster entrepreneurship by enabling monetized digital content creation on platforms like YouTube. In fact, it is in light of these views that some scholars, persuaded by the immense gains that could accrue from enhanced Pidgin English literacy, have suggested the inclusion of Pidgin in Nigeria tertiary education curricula and improving Pidgin literacy (Eke, and Ochuba, 2023); Bearth, 2013:20); Bunyi, 1999: 338). Consistent with the results of the present study, which show that economic and human development gains could accrue from enhanced Pidgin English literacy and its use in economic activities in the informal sector, Makoni (2021:229–230) stressed the compatibility of the informal economy and creative language practices to solve problems and sustain a living in an economy. Evidently, the implication of the finding that reveals the important role of Pidgin literacy and digital education in economic growth and wealth creation is in fact large and provides penetrating insights from the current study. In addition to contributing to discussions in literature, the present study also contributes to expansion of knowledge in the domain of Pidgin English use in economic activities and human development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As the language of communication, Pidgin, a linguistic resource, is vital vehicle in the thriving informal markets and, in addition, could serve in thriving market transactions that expand household incomes and support wealth creation. In this context, this study pursued the following two objects, which include first, to ascertain the extent to which Pidgin English is preferred as a medium of communication in trading transactions in the three major markets in Enugu capital city; and second, to explain why and how Pidgin English use in informal market settings enhances information access and yields economic benefits through better social cohesion and market engagement. Results show that Pidgin English is widely used in informal market settings by diverse groups though very small proportion of respondents indicated that Pidgin English use is less preferred. The study further revealed that Pidgin English literacy and digital skills use in trade and commercial sectors could be a powerful driver for socio-economic development particularly in informal settings.

Hence, based on the findings of this study, the following bullet point recommendations are proffered in order to actualize and consolidate on the potential gains of Pidgin English use in informal economic activities in Nigeria.

- Since Nigerian Pidgin is spoken and understood by most Nigerians both educated and uneducated, by almost all classes of people, the Nigerian public policy makers should initiate public law to encourage the use of the language in both formal and informal settings. The derogatory clothed perception, predisposition and attitude towards Pidgin English particularly by the educated class should be discouraged, more so in the current situation in Nigeria where Pidgin has gained prominence over time and spoken by all irrespective of status and background. Nigerian Pidgin is a vital part of linguistic resource and for this, calls for a revisit of Nigeria language policy.
- Besides, current realities reveal that economic prospects for Nigeria are not unconnected to the promotion of indigenous languages including Nigerian Pidgin while this reality is equally beginning to be recognized in the formal sector. It

has become for instance an undeniable fact that the expansion of banking services in rural communities, where people who lack proficiency in the official language speak indigenous languages has produced new attitudes towards the Pidgin language pointing to the need to encourage Pidgin's wider acceptability. In this context, Peter and Wolf, (2007) suggests that,

> *If Pidgin is promoted by national governments as an instrument to mobilize people to move from the informal to the formal sector of the economy, its image will improve and the negative attitudes towards the language will change. Promoting, standardizing and codifying Pidgin will boost its prestige.*

The use of a codified and accepted Pidgin as an instrument for upward economic mobility will positively impact both the official and users' perception of the language. Going beyond recognizing Nigerian Pidgin as an ordinary facilitator of economic activities, policymakers should equally accept that Pidgin could also play a role in the formal economy. Pidgin is a valuable language that calls for special attention in language policy planning, which is geared towards mobilizing people and economic activities from the predominantly informal economy into the formal sector in Nigeria. In this regard, it is therefore recommended that sociolinguistic researchers should engage more in applied research, perhaps in the domain investigating the potency of Nigerian Pidgin in mobilizing people in the informal economy into the formal sector. Further, this study recommends a policy mix approach towards a national language policy and measures that integrates Nigerian Pidgin and other indigenous languages.

- Finally, in order to maximize the gains of improved Pidgin English use, policy makers must necessarily encourage Pidgin English speakers to make use of online education platforms, such as Naija.gur to enhance Pidgin proficiency with resources like dictionaries and interactive forums, which addresses the needs of Nigeria's diverse population. These tools could eliminate geographical and socioeconomic barriers, democratizing education. Projects like AfriDataHub and the Nigerian Pidgin ASR dataset could support digital infrastructure for Pidgin, enabling educational tools and natural language processing applications.

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About the Author



***Dr Frederick Ugwu Ozor** is currently an Adjunct Lecturer at Enugu State College of Education (Technical). He has also held positions as Associate Professor of Public Administration, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, 2017; Senior Lecturer Full-time contract, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, 2015; Lecturer 1/HOD, Department of Public Administration, Caritas University, Enugu, Nigeria 2014-2016; and Country Expert for the Gambia, Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project, V-Dem Institute, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 2013 to date.*

He holds a B.Sc. in Political Science, M.Sc. in Public Administration from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and a Doctorate from St Clements University. Dr Ozor is a Professional Fellow of the International Guild of Academicians, South Africa and a Doctoral Fellow of the Institute of Professional Financial Managers, UK as well as a Fellow of the Institute of Management Consultants. He has served in senior management positions of the Nigeria Education Management Board for several years and authored several scientific journals. Dr Ozor can be reached by e-mail at frederickozor@gmail.com

SOVEREIGNTY UNDER SIEGE: SOMALIA, SOMALILAND AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF RECOGNITION IN THE RED SEA CORRIDOR

Dr Sharif Sheikh Amin*, Ph.D.
St Clements University – Department of Political Science

Abstract

The Horn of Africa has re-emerged as one of the most strategically contested regions in contemporary international politics, and Somalia occupies a central position within the intensifying struggle over sovereignty, maritime access, and geopolitical influence along the Red Sea corridor. The renewed contestation surrounding Somaliland's international recognition, particularly following the January 2024 Memorandum of Understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland and broader regional realignments, has transformed Somalia's internal state-building challenges into a major international security concern. This study examines how the politics of recognition intersect with strategic competition in the Red Sea corridor, where global powers, Gulf states, and regional actors increasingly shape domestic sovereignty outcomes. Drawing on a qualitative document analysis of policy texts, treaty material, United Nations reporting, and secondary scholarship, the study applies theories of sovereignty, contested statehood, and geopolitical realism to explain how Somalia's sovereignty is challenged by both domestic fragmentation and external strategic calculation. The findings demonstrate that Ethiopia's maritime ambitions, Gulf port diplomacy, Egypt's regional security concerns, and the broader militarisation of the Red Sea have intensified tensions surrounding Somaliland's status while weakening African Union norms of territorial preservation. The article argues that recognition in the Horn of Africa is increasingly determined by strategic utility rather than legal legitimacy, and that Somalia's sovereignty crisis reflects a wider transformation in African geopolitics in which external interests are redefining statehood, territorial integrity, and regional order.

Keywords: *Somalia; Somaliland; sovereignty; recognition politics; Red Sea geopolitics; Horn of Africa.*

1. Introduction

The Horn of Africa has become one of the most geopolitically significant regions in the contemporary international system, and the chokepoint at Bab-el-Mandeb has placed Somalia at the centre of a renewed maritime contest (Verhoeven, 2018; Vertin, 2023). Positioned along the strait that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, the region has attracted sustained attention from global powers, regional rivals, and Gulf states competing for influence, security access, and economic advantage (Verhoeven, 2018; Vertin, 2023). At the centre of this geopolitical transformation lies Somalia, a state whose sovereignty remains deeply contested both internally and externally. The combination of domestic fragmentation and external strategic interest has produced a sovereignty environment that cannot be analysed through legal categories alone.

For more than three decades, Somalia has struggled with state collapse, fragmented governance, federal disputes, insurgency, and weak institutional legitimacy (Menkhaus, 2018; Ingiriis, 2018). Since the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in January 1991, efforts to rebuild Somali statehood have been constrained by internal political fragmentation and by external geopolitical interventions whose objectives have rarely aligned with Somali institutional priorities. Simultaneously, Somaliland, which declared the restoration of its independence in May 1991, has maintained relative political stability, established functioning institutions, and pursued international recognition as a sovereign state (Bradbury, 2008; Hoehne, 2015). However, despite meeting several practical criteria of statehood, Somaliland remains diplomatically unrecognised, largely because the African Union has remained committed to the preservation of colonial-era borders and the prevention of secessionist precedents.

The recognition question acquired renewed urgency on 1 January 2024, when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Somaliland President Muse Bihi Abdi signed a Memorandum of Understanding under which Ethiopia would lease a twenty-kilometre stretch of coastline in the Awdal region for fifty years, with the prospect of a naval facility, in exchange for the eventual recognition of Somaliland (International Crisis Group, 2024). Berbera was reserved for commercial trade, and Somaliland was to receive a stake in Ethiopian Airlines as part of the broader package. The agreement triggered an immediate diplomatic crisis between Mogadishu and Addis Ababa, drew sustained protest from Egypt and Eritrea, and generated active mediation efforts by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and Türkiye. What had previously been treated as a domestic territorial dispute became, almost overnight, a continental security concern.

This article argues that Somalia's sovereignty is under siege not merely because of domestic institutional weakness but because external strategic actors increasingly prioritise maritime access, military positioning, and geopolitical competition over legal

principles of territorial integrity. Recognition politics in the Horn of Africa are no longer governed solely by international law or post-colonial norms; they are increasingly shaped by strategic calculations tied to the Red Sea corridor and to broader Middle Eastern rivalries (Meester et al., 2018; de Waal, 2015). Professor Ahmed Samatar's long-standing concern that Somali governance has been hollowed out by elite transactions and external rents speaks directly to this transformation, because the externalisation of recognition compounds the very weaknesses that domestic state-building efforts have struggled to address (Samatar & Samatar, 2022).

The study seeks to answer three central research questions. First, how has the politics of Somaliland's recognition evolved within the context of Red Sea geopolitics? Second, how do Ethiopia's maritime ambitions and external actor involvement challenge Somalia's sovereignty? Third, what are the broader implications of these developments for African Union norms on territorial integrity and post-colonial state legitimacy? The study contributes to the literature by bridging domestic Somali state-building debates with international relations theories of sovereignty, recognition, and geopolitical realism, treating recognition not as a free-standing legal puzzle but as a strategic outcome embedded in the political economy of port concessions and military basing.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on sovereignty and recognition theory, African statehood norms, and Red Sea strategic competition. Section 3 sets out the methodology. Sections 4.1 to 4.4 examine, in turn, Somalia's sovereignty crisis, Somaliland's recognition question, Ethiopia's maritime ambitions, and the role of external actors in the Red Sea corridor. Section 5 discusses the theoretical and policy implications, and Section 6 concludes with a synthesis of the findings and a set of recommendations for Somali state-building, African Union policy, and external engagement with the Horn of Africa.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sovereignty and Recognition Theory

Sovereignty remains one of the foundational yet most contested concepts in political science and international relations. Traditional accounts define sovereignty as the supreme authority of a state over its territory, population, and political institutions in the absence of external interference, and the Westphalian framing emphasises legal equality among states and the principle of non-intervention (Krasner, 1999). However, post-Cold War conflicts, state collapse, humanitarian intervention, and contested statehood have unsettled this classical formulation, particularly in regions where the gap between juridical recognition and effective authority has widened.

The Montevideo Convention of 1933 provides the most widely cited legal framework for statehood, identifying four qualifications: a permanent population, a defined territory, an effective government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states (Crawford, 2006). However, the convention does not resolve the longstanding debate between the declaratory and constitutive theories of recognition. Declaratory theory holds that a political entity becomes a state once it satisfies the objective criteria, regardless of whether it has been formally recognised; constitutive theory maintains that statehood depends on formal recognition by existing states. Somaliland presents one of the clearest contemporary illustrations of this tension. Although it possesses functioning institutions, effective governance, and territorial control, it lacks formal recognition. Pegg (1998) describes such polities as de facto states, while Caspersen (2012) classifies them as unrecognised states whose domestic legitimacy persists in the absence of external sovereignty.

Krasner (1999) further argues that sovereignty often functions as organised hypocrisy, in which international actors apply legal principles selectively in line with political interests. The recognition of Kosovo, South Sudan, and Eritrea illustrates that legal consistency is frequently secondary to geopolitical considerations, and the same logic is now visible in the Horn of Africa, where strategic utility increasingly shapes diplomatic recognition (de Waal, 2015; Vertin, 2019). Recognition politics therefore cannot be understood through legal frameworks alone; they must be analysed within the broader strategic context in which major powers determine legitimacy on the basis of regional security, economic interest, and alliance structure.

2.2 African Statehood and Territorial Integrity

African statehood has been shaped by the legacy of colonial boundaries and by post-independence efforts to preserve territorial stability. The principle of *uti possidetis juris*, adopted by the Organization of African Unity at its founding and inherited by the African Union, established that colonial borders should remain intact in order to forestall widespread territorial disputes and secessionist conflicts (Herbst, 2000). The principle has anchored African interstate order for more than six decades, and its underlying rationale has been the fear that the redrawing of borders would trigger fragmentation across institutionally fragile and ethnically diverse states.

Somaliland's case directly challenges this doctrine. Unlike many separatist movements, Somaliland argues that it is not seceding from Somalia but reclaiming the sovereignty it briefly held as the independent State of Somaliland between 26 June and 1 July 1960, prior to its voluntary union with the former Italian Somaliland to form the Somali Republic. This legal argument distinguishes Somaliland from conventional secessionist claims and complicates African Union policy responses (Bradbury, 2008; Walls, 2014). Scholars remain divided. Walls (2014) argues that recognition would reward successful governance and strengthen regional stability, while Englebert (2009) warns that recognition could encourage separatist movements elsewhere on the continent, including in

Ethiopia, Cameroon, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The African Union has adopted a posture of strategic ambiguity, acknowledging Somaliland's relative stability while declining to confer formal recognition.

The recognition of Eritrea in 1993 and South Sudan in 2011 demonstrates that exceptions to the territorial-preservation rule are possible when geopolitical circumstances align, but both cases followed prolonged armed conflict and an international diplomatic consensus that has not coalesced around Somaliland (Englebert, 2009). Somaliland's peaceful but prolonged de facto independence presents a different challenge to African norms, and the absence of consensus has now been complicated by external actors whose strategic interests are not bound by African Union procedure.

2.3 Red Sea Strategic Competition

The Red Sea corridor has become one of the most strategically contested geopolitical spaces in the contemporary international system. The Bab-el-Mandeb Strait connects Europe, Asia, and the Middle East along one of the busiest maritime trade routes globally, and approximately ten to twelve per cent of global seaborne trade and roughly thirty per cent of global container traffic passed through the corridor in the period preceding the Houthi attacks of late 2023 (World Bank, 2025). However, the attacks on commercial shipping that began in November 2023 reduced vessel traffic through the strait by approximately three-quarters by the end of 2024, as shipping lines rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope. The strategic significance of the corridor has therefore increased rather than diminished, because the disruption has clarified the dependence of the global economy on uninterrupted Red Sea passage.

Control over access to this maritime route has elevated the strategic importance of Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Sudan. Gulf states, particularly the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, have expanded their influence through port investments, military facilities, and diplomatic alliances; Türkiye, China, and the United States maintain substantial security and basing interests; and France, Japan, and Italy maintain longstanding presences in Djibouti (Melvin, 2019). The United Arab Emirates has been particularly active in Somaliland through the DP World investment in the Berbera concession, transforming the port into a major logistical and strategic hub (Cannon & Rossiter, 2018). However, Türkiye has deepened its relationship with the Federal Government of Somalia through military training, infrastructure investment, and defence cooperation; and Egypt views Ethiopian access to the Red Sea as a direct strategic concern linked to the broader Nile Basin dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (Donelli, 2018; Sucuoğlu & Stearns, 2020).

Ethiopia, despite being one of Africa's largest economies and military powers, has remained landlocked since Eritrea's independence in 1993 (Styan, 2016). Its dependence on Djibouti for more than ninety per cent of its maritime trade has created a strategic vulnerability that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has framed as a national security imperative (Cannon & Rossiter, 2018). The Somaliland Memorandum of Understanding must therefore be understood within this broader geopolitical context. Red Sea competition is no longer primarily economic; it is tied to military projection, regime security, and regional order, and Somalia's sovereignty crisis increasingly reflects these external calculations rather than purely domestic political dynamics.

The literature reviewed above reveals an important gap. Although sovereignty and recognition have often been studied separately from maritime geopolitics, the Somali case demonstrates that these domains are now inseparable. This article addresses the gap by integrating recognition politics with strategic competition in the Red Sea system, and by treating port concessions and basing arrangements as the material substrate on which recognition outcomes are increasingly negotiated. The argument that follows therefore departs from accounts that treat recognition primarily as a juridical or normative question, and from accounts that treat the Red Sea primarily as a logistical or commercial corridor, and instead reads the two domains as a single political economy in which the legal categories of sovereignty are continuously reshaped by the contracts, leases, and basing arrangements that structure access to the coastline.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the relationship between sovereignty, recognition politics, and geopolitical competition in Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa. Given the complexity of contested statehood and the strategic character of external intervention, a qualitative approach provides the most appropriate framework for analysing how legal principles, political decisions, and regional power dynamics interact in shaping Somalia's sovereignty crisis. Sovereignty is not merely a measurable institutional condition; it is also a political and normative construct shaped by historical narratives, diplomatic practices, and strategic interests, and the case of Somaliland's recognition therefore requires interpretive analysis rather than statistical measurement.

The article employs a single-case analytical framework centred on Somalia and Somaliland while situating the case within the broader Red Sea geopolitical system. Somalia represents a critical case for examining how fragile statehood intersects with external strategic competition, and Somaliland, as a de facto state with effective internal governance but no international recognition, provides a particularly useful site for testing theories of recognition and sovereignty in contemporary Africa.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

The study relies on secondary qualitative data drawn from academic literature, official policy documents, government statements, regional agreements, institutional reports, and credible international policy analyses. The principal sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, African Union policy documents, United Nations Panel of Experts reports on Somalia, and publications from the International Crisis Group, the Clingendael Institute, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, and the World Bank. Particular attention is given to the January 2024 Memorandum of Understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland, which serves as a major empirical reference point, and to the public diplomatic statements issued by Mogadishu, Addis Ababa, Hargeisa, Cairo, Ankara, Abu Dhabi, and the African Union Commission.

In addition, historical analysis of Somaliland's political evolution since 1991 and of Ethiopia's post-1993 maritime strategy is incorporated to provide temporal depth and policy continuity. Comparative references to Eritrea and South Sudan are used to contextualise exceptional recognition outcomes within Africa. The use of document analysis enables the identification of recurring themes such as sovereignty claims, territorial legitimacy, strategic recognition, maritime security, and regional balancing behaviour.

3.3 Theoretical Approach

The analytical framework combines geopolitical realism with recognition politics theory. Geopolitical realism emphasises the pursuit of power, security, and strategic access within an anarchic regional system, and assumes that state behaviour is primarily driven by national interest rather than by legal norms or moral principle (Mearsheimer, 2001). In the Somali case, Ethiopia's search for sea access, Egypt's balancing strategy, and Gulf port diplomacy reflect realist calculations of power and security. Recognition politics theory complements realism by explaining how international legitimacy is granted selectively on the basis of strategic utility rather than legal compliance alone. Although Somaliland satisfies many practical criteria of statehood, recognition has remained constrained because external actors evaluate recognition through its broader geopolitical consequences. Combining these approaches, the article argues that Somalia's sovereignty crisis is best understood as a product of both domestic institutional fragility and external strategic competition, in which recognition has become an instrument of power rather than a neutral legal judgement.

3.4 Analytical Procedure

The study applies thematic analysis to organise the evidence into four analytical categories: internal sovereignty and state fragility in Somalia; Somaliland's historical and legal claim to recognition; Ethiopia's maritime ambitions and strategic calculations; and external actor competition in the Red Sea corridor. These themes are examined sequentially in order to demonstrate how domestic fragmentation interacts with external geopolitical pressure. Rather than treating sovereignty as a static legal condition, the analysis traces how sovereignty is continuously negotiated through diplomacy, security alignment, and strategic bargaining. The thematic structure also supports the broader argument that recognition in the Horn of Africa is increasingly shaped by maritime strategy and regional competition rather than by legal doctrine alone.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

The study relies on secondary data and on official public statements, which may reflect strategic political messaging rather than fully transparent policy intention. Access to confidential diplomatic negotiations, intelligence assessments, and internal governmental decision-making remains limited, and as a result some strategic calculations must be inferred from policy behaviour and from public institutional response. The rapidly evolving nature of Red Sea geopolitics means that developments may continue to shift beyond the temporal scope of this study; the analytical cutoff is set at April 2025. Despite these limitations, the available evidence provides sufficient analytical depth to identify the broader structural patterns that connect sovereignty, recognition, and geopolitical rivalry in the Horn of Africa.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1 Somalia's Sovereignty Crisis: State Fragility and Internal Fragmentation

Somalia's sovereignty crisis cannot be understood without reference to the collapse of the central state in January 1991 following the fall of President Mohamed Siad Barre's regime (Bradbury, 2008). The collapse of state institutions produced one of the most prolonged cases of state failure in modern African political history, and unlike conventional post-conflict reconstruction sequences, Somalia experienced the fragmentation of authority into clan-based administrations dominated by the Hawiye, Darod, Isaaq, Dir, and Rahanweyn confederations, warlord territories, insurgent zones, and later semi-autonomous federal member states (Menkhaus, 2018; Elmi, 2010). The absence of a functioning central government for more than two decades fundamentally weakened the practical foundations of sovereignty, and the entrenched grievances of marginalised communities over land, water, and political voice were left to accumulate in the absence of a credible national arbiter (Hesse, 2015). Although Somalia retained international legal recognition as a sovereign state, its empirical sovereignty, meaning the actual capacity to govern territory and exercise authority, remained severely constrained (Jackson, 1990).

The establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia in 2012, following the Provisional Federal Constitution and the Roadmap process that closed the transitional period, marked an important step toward

institutional reconstruction (Elmi, 2010). The 4.5 power-sharing formula, originally institutionalised at the Arta Peace Conference of 2000, allocated equal political representation to four major clans with a half share for minority groups, and although it ensured a measure of inclusivity it also entrenched clan divisions and undermined the meritocratic selection of leaders (Hesse, 2015). However, federalism itself became a source of political contestation rather than of consolidation. Disputes between Mogadishu and the federal member states of Puntland, Jubaland, Galmudug, Hirshabelle, and South West have repeatedly undermined national cohesion, and federal member states often operate as extensions of dominant clans rather than as instruments of equitable national administration (Dahir & Sheikh Ali, 2024; Bradbury, 2008). Questions concerning constitutional authority, resource distribution, electoral processes, and security sector control have remained unresolved, and federalism has often functioned less as a mechanism of decentralisation and more as a contested arena of elite bargaining. Professor Ahmed Samatar has argued that Somali federalism, in the absence of a binding constitutional settlement and a transparent fiscal architecture, risks reproducing the clan-based and patronage-driven politics that federalism was designed to transcend (Samatar & Samatar, 2022).

The continued presence of Al-Shabaab further undermines sovereignty by challenging the state's monopoly on violence (Hansen, 2019; Ingiriis, 2018). Large rural areas remain under insurgent influence, and recurrent attacks in Mogadishu demonstrate the fragility of security institutions despite extensive support from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia and its successor mission, from Türkiye, and from the United States. The legitimacy deficit is compounded by public perceptions of corruption, elite competition, and external dependency, and international donors, peacekeeping missions, and foreign security partnerships remain central to state survival even as they reinforce the patterns of dependency that long-term institution-building requires Somalia to overcome. This paradox produces a distinctive condition. Somalia is internationally recognised as fully sovereign while remaining practically constrained in the exercise of sovereign authority, and this configuration creates structural openings for external actors whose strategic interests, particularly those involving maritime access and port control, can be advanced without confronting the federal centre directly. Somalia's sovereignty crisis is therefore not simply a domestic governance problem; it is a structural condition that invites geopolitical intervention.

4.2 Somaliland's Recognition Question: De Facto Statehood without De Jure Recognition

In contrast to the prolonged institutional fragility of southern Somalia, Somaliland has maintained relative political stability, internal security, and administrative continuity since declaring the restoration of its independence in May 1991 (Bradbury, 2008). Following the collapse of the Somali Republic, Somaliland argued that it was reclaiming the sovereignty it had briefly held as the State of Somaliland between 26 June and 1 July 1960, prior to its voluntary union with Italian Somaliland, rather than constituting a new secessionist entity (Hoehne, 2015). This legal argument is central to Somaliland's claim and distinguishes it from conventional separatist movements elsewhere on the continent. The political settlement that supported the Somaliland reconstruction was driven primarily by the Isaaq clan, with significant contributions from the Dir and Darod sub-clans of the north, and the inclusion of these constituencies into a single administrative framework has been one of the achievements that Somaliland's advocates point to as evidence of effective bottom-up state-building (Bradbury, 2008; Hoehne, 2015).

Unlike many de facto states, Somaliland has built functioning institutions of governance, including an executive authority, a bicameral legislature, a judicial administration, police forces, an independent currency, and a sequence of relatively peaceful electoral transitions. Walls (2014) and Hoehne (2015) argue that Somaliland represents one of the most successful cases of bottom-up state-building in post-Cold War Africa. Its democratic credentials, although imperfect, often compare favourably with those of internationally recognised neighbouring states, and Hargeisa has avoided both the scale of insurgent violence and the federal-regional dysfunction that have shaped politics in Mogadishu. However, international recognition has remained absent. The African Union has declined formal recognition primarily because of the precedent that recognition would create for separatist claims elsewhere on the continent, including in Biafra, Ambazonia, Cabinda, and the Oromia movement within Ethiopia (Englebert, 2009).

The contradiction is politically significant. Governance success does not automatically produce diplomatic legitimacy, and recognition has been determined by political calculation rather than by institutional performance. The point is illustrated by comparison with internationally recognised neighbours, several of which have weaker institutional capacity, more contested electoral records, and higher levels of insurgent violence than Somaliland, but which retain unambiguous diplomatic standing because their statehood was established at the moment of decolonisation rather than reconstituted thereafter. Somaliland's case demonstrates the limits of the declaratory theory of recognition and offers empirical support to constitutive interpretations in which international acceptance remains decisive. External partnerships have further complicated the issue. The Emirati investment in Berbera through DP World, military cooperation with Gulf actors, and the deepening of relations with Ethiopia have strengthened Somaliland's strategic relevance without delivering formal recognition (Cannon & Rossiter, 2018). The 2016 Berbera concession originally allocated DP World a fifty-one per cent share, the Somaliland Port Authority a thirty per cent share, and Ethiopia a

nineteen per cent share, although the Ethiopian stake was rescinded in 2022 after Addis Ababa failed to meet the conditions of the deal, and the equity has since been redistributed between DP World and the Somaliland Port Authority.

The January 2024 Ethiopia–Somaliland Memorandum of Understanding transformed the recognition debate by linking diplomatic recognition to maritime access. Reports indicating that Ethiopia could become the first state to recognise Somaliland elevated the issue from diplomatic ambiguity to regional crisis (International Crisis Group, 2024). For Somalia, the recognition of Somaliland represents an existential threat to territorial integrity. For Somaliland, continued non-recognition despite functional statehood represents a prolonged international inconsistency and a political injustice. The recognition question therefore lies at the intersection of law, history, governance, and geopolitical strategy, and is no longer a constitutional dispute between Mogadishu and Hargeisa alone; it has become a regional security question with continental implications.

4.3 Ethiopia's Maritime Ambitions and the Reordering of Somali Sovereignty

Ethiopia's pursuit of maritime access represents one of the most significant geopolitical drivers of the current sovereignty crisis in Somalia (Vertin, 2023). Since the independence of Eritrea in 1993, Ethiopia has been landlocked, and more than ninety per cent of its maritime commerce now passes through Djibouti, producing a structural dependence on a single corridor that Ethiopian policymakers have increasingly described as a strategic vulnerability (Styan, 2016). For Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, access to the sea has been framed not merely as an economic necessity but as a question of national survival and sovereign dignity, and a country of more than 120 million inhabitants, in this framing, cannot indefinitely depend on neighbouring states for maritime access. The narrative has elevated sea access from a logistical concern to a first-order strategic priority.

Ethiopia has historically explored alternatives, including access through Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya, and, prior to the renewed Tigray conflict, Eritrea (Verhoeven, 2018). However, political tensions, regional instability, and limited bargaining leverage have constrained these options. Somaliland's coastline, particularly the Berbera corridor, emerged as an attractive alternative because of its relative stability, its proximity to the Ethiopian highlands, and the existing infrastructure investment supported by the United Arab Emirates (Cannon & Rossiter, 2018). The Memorandum of Understanding signed on 1 January 2024 marked a major turning point. Although the full text of the agreement has not been placed in the public domain, the parties confirmed that Ethiopia would lease a twenty-kilometre stretch of coastline near Saylac in the Awdal region for a fifty-year period to host a prospective naval facility, that commercial trade would continue through Berbera, that Somaliland would acquire a stake in Ethiopian Airlines, and that Ethiopia would consider extending recognition to Somaliland (International Crisis Group, 2024).

The Federal Government of Somalia condemned the Memorandum as a direct violation of Somali sovereignty and territorial integrity (United Nations Security Council, 2023). Mogadishu interpreted the agreement not as a bilateral commercial arrangement but as an existential threat to the unity of the Somali state, arguing that Somaliland, lacking international recognition, possessed no legal authority to negotiate sovereign territorial arrangements with foreign states (Bradbury, 2008). From this perspective, Ethiopia's engagement bypassed the recognised federal government and undermined international legal norms. Egypt strongly supported the Somali position, viewing Ethiopia's Red Sea ambitions through the broader lens of Nile politics and the ongoing dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and Cairo has since signed a defence-cooperation framework with Mogadishu and despatched personnel and matériel to the African Union mission. Eritrea, given the historical legacy of conflict and unresolved regional distrust, has viewed Ethiopia's maritime ambitions with deep suspicion. Türkiye, which maintains a substantial military and political relationship with Mogadishu through the TURKSOM training facility opened in 2017, has supported Somali territorial integrity while seeking to preserve its diplomatic flexibility. The United Arab Emirates has occupied a more complex position because of its commercial exposure at Berbera and its broader Gulf competition with Türkiye and Qatar.

Ethiopia's actions reveal an important transformation in regional politics. Sea access is increasingly being pursued through political recognition rather than through conventional interstate diplomacy, and recognition has therefore become transactional (de Waal, 2015). Sovereignty is negotiated not through legal frameworks alone but through strategic bargaining over ports, military access, and economic corridors. This development challenges the African Union norm of territorial preservation. If recognition can be exchanged for maritime access, the principle of fixed colonial borders becomes vulnerable to geopolitical reinterpretation, and Ethiopia's Somaliland policy therefore has implications beyond Somalia, because it tests the stability of African interstate order itself (Englebert, 2009). However, Ethiopia's strategy also reflects realist calculation rather than ideological revisionism. From the perspective of Addis Ababa, strategic autonomy requires the diversification of maritime options, and pursuing this objective through Somaliland has transformed a national security strategy into a regional sovereignty crisis. The reordering of Somali sovereignty has therefore taken place through external strategic necessity, and Ethiopia's maritime ambitions have not simply challenged Somalia's borders; they have reshaped the meaning of sovereignty in the Horn of Africa, where recognition increasingly follows strategic utility rather than legal legitimacy.

4.4 External Actors and the Red Sea Corridor: Strategic Competition beyond Somalia

The sovereignty crisis in Somalia cannot be fully understood without examining the role of external actors whose interests increasingly shape political outcomes in the Horn of Africa. The Red Sea corridor has become a strategic arena in which Gulf monarchies, regional powers, and global actors compete for military positioning, trade routing, political alliance, and regime influence (Meester et al., 2018; Verhoeven, 2018). Somalia and Somaliland are now embedded within this broader geopolitical system, and the domestic political settlement is increasingly conditioned by the choices of external patrons.

The United Arab Emirates has emerged as one of the most influential external actors in Somaliland and the wider Horn of Africa (Meester et al., 2018). Through DP World, Abu Dhabi has invested heavily in the development of Berbera, transforming the port into a major commercial and logistical hub, and the strategic value of the facility lies not only in trade but also in its proximity to Bab-el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden (Cannon & Rossiter, 2018). For Abu Dhabi, port diplomacy serves both economic and security objectives, enabling the projection of influence across East Africa and the Red Sea, and the Emirati engagement with Somaliland has strengthened Hargeisa's de facto international legitimacy even in the absence of formal diplomatic recognition. Economic partnership has thus functioned as a substitute for political recognition, and this dynamic reflects a broader trend in which strategic investment generates a quasi-sovereign legitimacy that exists outside formal international law.

Türkiye represents a contrasting model of external engagement. Ankara has built one of the closest partnerships with the Federal Government of Somalia, investing in port and airport operation through Albayrak, in infrastructure, in humanitarian assistance, in education, and in military training (Donelli, 2018; Sucuoğlu & Stearns, 2020). The TURKSOM facility in Mogadishu, opened in September 2017, is the largest Turkish overseas military training base, and its operation has supplied successive cohorts of trained personnel to the Somali National Army. Unlike the Emirati engagement with Somaliland, the Turkish relationship reinforces rather than circumvents the sovereignty of the Somali federal state, and the divergence between the two engagements reflects broader Middle Eastern rivalries that have been exported into the Horn. Gulf competition increasingly overlaps with domestic Somali political fragmentation, and federal institutions and regional administrations have become arenas of external influence.

Egypt's involvement is driven primarily by strategic balancing against Ethiopia. Cairo's support for Mogadishu intensified after the January 2024 Memorandum because any Ethiopian expansion toward the Red Sea is read in Cairo through the broader lens of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam dispute and Nile Basin power politics, and Somali territorial integrity has therefore become entangled with Egyptian national security calculation. Saudi Arabia, while less directly engaged in Somaliland politics, regards Red Sea stability as integral to energy security and to broader regional influence, and Saudi diplomacy has increasingly sought a balance between Gulf competition and stabilisation. The United States and China also maintain significant strategic interests. Washington's principal concerns are counterterrorism, maritime security, and the limitation of extremist threats associated with Al-Shabaab, while China, with its People's Liberation Army Support Base in Djibouti, opened in August 2017, and its expanding Belt and Road interests, treats the Red Sea as essential to global trade security and to long-term strategic positioning (Blanchard & Flint, 2017). Djibouti itself plays a critical role as the current maritime lifeline of Ethiopia and as the host of multiple foreign military bases, including those of the United States, France, Japan, Italy, and China, and Ethiopia's search for alternatives directly affects Djibouti's economic leverage and regional importance (Styan, 2016).

Russia has also become a relevant external actor, primarily through the 2020 naval logistics agreement with the Sudanese government covering Port Sudan (Vertin, 2023). Although the agreement has stalled in the wake of the Sudanese civil war that began in April 2023, Moscow's continued interest in a Red Sea facility, alongside reports of Russian advisory engagement with regional actors, has added a further layer to the patron landscape that surrounds Somalia. The cumulative effect of these external engagements is that Somali political actors now operate in an environment in which almost every significant decision over coastal infrastructure, security cooperation, or regional alignment intersects with the strategic calculations of multiple foreign powers.

These overlapping external interests have transformed Somalia from a domestic governance challenge into a geopolitical battleground (Verhoeven, 2018). Sovereignty has become fragmented not only by internal federal disputes but by competing external patronage networks, and recognition politics are shaped increasingly by who controls ports, security partnerships, and diplomatic alliances rather than by constitutional legitimacy alone (de Waal, 2015). Somalia's territorial integrity therefore faces pressure from multiple directions simultaneously: internal institutional weakness, Somaliland's de facto autonomy, Ethiopia's maritime ambitions, and the strategic calculation of external powers seeking footholds in the Red Sea system. The findings suggest that sovereignty in the Horn of Africa is increasingly negotiated through geopolitical competition rather than protected through legal principle, and Somalia represents the clearest contemporary example of how fragile states become arenas in which global and regional actors redefine statehood itself.

5. Discussion

5.1 Recognition as Strategy Rather than Law

The findings of this study demonstrate that recognition politics in the Horn of Africa are increasingly shaped by strategic calculation rather than by legal doctrine (Krasner, 1999). Classical legal approaches to statehood emphasise objective criteria, including territory, governance capacity, population, and diplomatic competence, and Somaliland satisfies these criteria more comprehensively than several internationally recognised states in the region (Crawford, 2006). However, recognition has remained absent. The contradiction illustrates that recognition is not merely a juridical outcome but a political instrument, and Somaliland's lack of recognition reflects regional strategic calculation and international caution about precedent rather than institutional incapacity (Caspersen, 2012; Pegg, 1998).

Ethiopia's 2024 engagement with Somaliland reinforces this argument (International Crisis Group, 2024). Recognition was not framed as a response to democratic legitimacy or to legal statehood; it was articulated as part of a strategic exchange involving maritime access. In this configuration, sovereignty becomes negotiable and recognition becomes transactional. States do not recognise entities simply because they meet legal criteria; they recognise them when recognition serves wider strategic interests (de Waal, 2015). The Somali case therefore supports Krasner's (1999) argument that sovereignty often functions as organised hypocrisy, in which international norms are applied selectively in line with political convenience, and the selective recognition of Kosovo, South Sudan, Eritrea, and the long-standing Taiwan question all illustrate that the global recognition regime is shaped by power politics. However, the implication is not that legal categories no longer matter; rather, legal categories now operate alongside strategic calculation, and recognition increasingly follows geopolitical utility.

5.2 Somalia's Federal Fragility and External Vulnerability

Somalia's internal political structure significantly amplifies its vulnerability to external intervention. Federalism was introduced as a mechanism for accommodating clan diversity, reducing centralised authoritarianism, and supporting post-conflict stabilisation (Elmi, 2010). However, federalism has often institutionalised fragmentation rather than consolidated statehood, and the parochial interests of clan-based regional elites have frequently eclipsed the national interest in the design and implementation of federal policy (Dahir & Sheikh Ali, 2024; Bradbury, 2008). Federal member states frequently operate with significant autonomy and competing political interests, and disputes between Mogadishu and the regional administrations have continued to weaken national cohesion (Hesse, 2015). Constitutional ambiguity over power-sharing, electoral authority and resource control has produced recurring legitimacy crises, and external actors have proven able to bypass the federal centre and cultivate direct influence through regional administrations or strategic economic partnership (Menkhaus, 2018).

Somaliland represents the most extreme case of this dynamic, but similar tensions exist in Puntland and Jubaland, where political relations with Mogadishu have remained unstable (Hoehne, 2015; Menkhaus, 2018). The weakness of the centre reduces Somalia's diplomatic and institutional capacity to defend its territorial integrity, and the condition produces what Jackson (1990) described as negative sovereignty: international legal recognition without effective domestic authority. Somalia retains juridical sovereignty but lacks full empirical sovereignty, and external actors respect Somalia formally while operating around it strategically. The Memorandum signed at the start of 2024 reveals how fragile sovereignty can be exploited through institutional asymmetry, because Ethiopia engaged directly with Somaliland on the calculation that practical control over territory weighed more heavily than formal constitutional recognition. Internal federal fragility and external geopolitical pressure are therefore not separate problems but mutually reinforcing dynamics.

5.3 The Red Sea Corridor and the Transformation of African Geopolitics

The Red Sea corridor is no longer a peripheral maritime zone; it has become a central arena of global strategic competition (Verhoeven, 2018; Vertin, 2023). The Horn of Africa's geopolitical significance derives from its location at the intersection of Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, and control over ports, naval access, trade routes, and military logistics increasingly determines regional power (Melvin, 2019). This transformation has altered how sovereignty operates in Africa. During the post-independence period, the dominant concern was the preservation of territorial stability through fixed colonial borders. However, maritime strategy and geo-economic competition increasingly challenge that framework, and ports such as Berbera, Djibouti, Assab, Mogadishu, and Port Sudan now function as instruments of international power projection rather than as residual national infrastructure (Vertin, 2023; Melvin, 2019).

The Emirati port diplomacy, the Turkish military partnership with Mogadishu, the Egyptian balancing against Ethiopia, and the Chinese strategic positioning in Djibouti collectively demonstrate that sovereignty is increasingly embedded within transregional competition (Meester et al., 2018; Donelli, 2018). African territorial questions are no longer resolved exclusively through African institutions; they are shaped by Middle Eastern rivalries, by global security calculation, and by the politics of economic corridors. The pressure on the African Union's doctrine of territorial preservation has therefore grown, and if strategic necessity legitimises recognition or territorial bargaining, the normative stability of colonial borders weakens (Herbst, 2000; Englebert, 2009). Somaliland

may become a precedent not because of legal doctrine but because external actors normalise recognition through practical engagement, and the Red Sea corridor therefore functions as a laboratory for the redefinition of sovereignty in Africa. Somalia is not simply experiencing a domestic political crisis; it sits at the centre of a continental transformation in which recognition, legitimacy, and statehood are increasingly determined by strategic relevance.

5.4 Implications for Regional Order and African Union Legitimacy

The implications of this sovereignty crisis extend beyond Somalia and Somaliland. At stake is the credibility of the African Union's commitment to territorial integrity and to peaceful interstate order (Herbst, 2000). If Somaliland eventually achieves recognition through external strategic alignment rather than through African Union consensus, the authority of continental norms may be substantially weakened. The African Union faces a difficult dilemma. Continued refusal to engage Somaliland despite its institutional success undermines the legitimacy of governance-based statehood norms, while formal recognition risks encouraging separatist claims elsewhere (Englebert, 2009; Walls, 2014). Strategic ambiguity may preserve short-term stability, but it also prolongs unresolved conflict and creates opportunities for external manipulation.

Ethiopia's pursuit of maritime access raises a parallel set of questions about the limits of post-colonial border norms. If major regional powers are able to renegotiate territorial arrangements through strategic bargaining, smaller and fragile states become more vulnerable to sovereignty erosion. For Somalia, the long-term challenge is not only that of resisting external interference but that of rebuilding internal legitimacy strong enough to ensure that sovereignty does not become externally negotiable. Professor Samatar's argument that meaningful sovereignty in Somalia depends on inclusive constitutional reform, transparent fiscal federalism, and the reduction of external dependency therefore acquires renewed urgency in a regional environment where recognition is increasingly traded against access (Samatar & Samatar, 2022). For the region, sustainable order requires moving beyond zero-sum geopolitical competition and toward institutionalised maritime cooperation and diplomatic mechanisms capable of balancing recognition disputes with regional security needs. Such mechanisms would need to operate at three levels simultaneously: at the level of the Somali federation, where transparent fiscal arrangements and a binding constitutional settlement on coastal authority remain unfinished; at the level of the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, where a coherent Red Sea strategy that articulates the continental position on port concessions and basing arrangements has yet to be developed; and at the level of the wider Red Sea, where the Council of Arab and African States of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, established in 2020 but largely dormant, offers a potential platform for the disclosure norms and dispute-resolution procedures that the present situation requires. Without such reform, the Horn of Africa risks becoming a permanent arena in which sovereignty is continuously contested and statehood itself becomes subordinate to strategic competition.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined how Somalia's sovereignty crisis has evolved beyond a domestic problem of state fragility into a broader geopolitical struggle shaped by recognition politics, maritime competition, and regional power rivalry in the Red Sea corridor. The central argument advanced throughout the study is that Somalia's sovereignty is under siege not only because of internal institutional weakness but because external strategic actors increasingly prioritise access, security, and geopolitical advantage over the internationally recognised principles of territorial integrity. The analysis has demonstrated that Somaliland's recognition question cannot be understood through legal doctrines of statehood alone. Although Somaliland satisfies many practical criteria associated with effective governance and de facto sovereignty, international recognition has remained constrained by African Union norms of territorial preservation and by fears of continental fragmentation, and Ethiopia's pursuit of maritime access through Somaliland has transformed the recognition debate from a constitutional dispute into a major regional security crisis.

The January 2024 Memorandum of Understanding marked a significant turning point in this process (International Crisis Group, 2024). By linking potential recognition to strategic sea access, the agreement revealed that sovereignty and recognition in the Horn of Africa are increasingly negotiated through geopolitical bargaining rather than through legal consistency, and recognition has become transactional while territorial legitimacy has become vulnerable to strategic necessity (de Waal, 2015). The study has further shown that external actors, including the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and China, have embedded Somalia within a wider Red Sea competition. Port diplomacy, military partnership, and security alignment have transformed Somalia and Somaliland into arenas of international rivalry, and sovereignty has become fragmented not only by federal political dispute but by competing external patronage systems that reshape domestic political authority.

The implications for African regional order are significant. The African Union's commitment to territorial integrity is under growing pressure as maritime strategy and geo-economic competition challenge the stability of colonial borders, and Somaliland's case is testing whether governance performance, historical claims, and strategic utility can override long-standing continental norms. Ethiopia's maritime strategy raises parallel questions about how post-colonial sovereignty is negotiated in an era of

renewed geopolitical competition. For Somalia, the path forward requires more than the diplomatic defence of territorial integrity. Sustainable sovereignty depends on strengthening internal legitimacy, on resolving the federal constitutional disputes that the 2012 Provisional Constitution left unresolved, on improving institutional capacity, and on reducing the dependency on external security patronage that has become structural since 2007 (Dahir & Sheikh Ali, 2024; Samatar & Samatar, 2022). Without stronger domestic state-building, sovereignty will remain vulnerable to external negotiation. For the Horn of Africa more broadly, regional stability demands institutionalised maritime cooperation, diplomatic conflict-management mechanisms, and a more coherent continental framework for addressing contested statehood. Strategic ambiguity may delay confrontation, but it cannot resolve the structural tensions surrounding recognition and sovereignty.

Somalia ultimately illustrates a broader transformation in contemporary African politics. Sovereignty is no longer guaranteed by international recognition alone; it is increasingly shaped by strategic relevance, by geopolitical bargaining, and by the capacity of states to defend legitimacy both internally and externally. Addressing this transformation will require a nuanced approach that combines domestic reform, regional institutional strengthening, and a more disciplined external engagement, and the Red Sea corridor will continue to function as the laboratory in which the future meaning of African statehood is being redefined. Future research should test the arguments developed here against parallel cases along the Gulf of Guinea and the Swahili coast, and should incorporate micro-empirical work on port revenue flows and customs records in order to refine the relationship between fiscal extraversion and political authority that this study has identified at the regional level.

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About the Author



***Dr Sharif Sheikh Amin** is a policy scholar and practitioner specializing in governance reform, federalism, and socio-economic development in fragile and post-conflict states. His work integrates rigorous academic research with extensive field-based experience across the United States and the Horn of Africa, with a particular focus on institutional resilience, decentralization, and state-building processes.*

He currently serves as Director of Programs at the Center for Strategic Policy and Development (CSPD) in Columbus, Ohio, where he leads multidisciplinary initiatives aimed at strengthening governance systems, advancing social inclusion, and promoting evidence-based policy innovation. In this role, he collaborates with governmental, academic, and civil society actors to design and implement programs that address institutional capacity, equity, and sustainable development.

Dr Amin previously served as Senior Political and Rule of Law Advisor to the Office of the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, where he contributed to national reform efforts in justice sector development, anti-corruption frameworks, and democratic governance. His professional background also includes senior roles in law enforcement reform, behavioral health services, and nonprofit leadership, reflecting a multidisciplinary approach to policy and development challenges.

He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science, with a research focus on federalism and development outcomes in post-conflict Somalia. His scholarship examines the opportunities and constraints of decentralized governance systems in fragile contexts, contributing to ongoing academic and policy debates on state-building, peacebuilding, and institutional transformation.

Dr Amin's work is guided by a commitment to ethical leadership, applied research, and inclusive development, with an emphasis on translating policy frameworks into practical and sustainable outcomes.

Email: senioradvisor.spf@gmail.com

Orcid ID: 0009-0001-3384-3931

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