

Identity Crisis and Identity Reclamation among the Igbo Youths in Diaspora and South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

In these contexts, Igbos young in diaspora experience conflicts between their traditional cultural identities and the pressures of assimilation into mainstream cultures which often leads to feelings of alienation, confusion and a fragmented sense of self. Therefore, this paper examine the identity Crisis and Identity Reclamation among the Igbo Youths in Diaspora and South-South Nigeria. Using a mixed-method approach, the study investigated the key factors responsible for identity crisis, its manifestations, strategies of identity reclamation and the challenges associated with such efforts. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population consisted of Igbo youths aged 18–40 years residing in selected diaspora communities. Multi-stage sampling technique was used for the study. Quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics of mean scores and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that colonial legacies, globalization, migration and interethnic interactions are contributors to identity crisis. Manifestations include loss of language, cultural disconnection and behavioural duality. However, Igbo youths are actively engaging in cultural revival through language learning, participation in traditional festivals and digital advocacy. Despite challenges such as community rejection and economic hardship, these efforts foster a renewed sense of ethnic pride. The study concludes that targeted interventions are essential to support identity reclamation among Igbo youths and preserve cultural heritage in a globalized world.

Keywords: Igbo Youths, Crisis, Identity Reclamation, Diaspora, South-South, Nigeria,

Introduction

The issue of identity crisis and identity reclamation among the Igbos young in both the diaspora and the South-South region of Nigeria has become a profound concern in contemporary times. These challenges are rooted in a combination of historical, socio-political and economic experiences as well as the forces of modernisation and cultural transformation. The Igbo ethnic group is known for its deep cultural pride and distinct identity, has witnessed a steady erosion of its traditional values due to colonialism, globalisation, migration and internal social dynamics (Eze, 2019). In the diaspora countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and South Africa, young Igbos often struggle with dual cultural expectations, leading to a fragmented sense of self. Many are distanced from the customs, language and values of their heritage which resulted in cultural disconnection and marginalisation (Okafor, 2017). This challenge is further compounded by the pervasive adoption of foreign lifestyles and values that affect everything from fashion to education and entertainment.

Within South-South Nigeria, Igbos young face a different yet equally identity dilemma. Their close interaction with other ethnic groups such as the Ijaw, Efik, Urhobo and Izon has led some to renounce or suppress their Igbo identity. The historical aftermath of the Biafra War has also played a role in shaping this regional alienation (Aniche, 2018). Consequently, many young Igbos in these areas occupy a liminal cultural space, torn between ancestral heritage and dominant regional influences. Regardless of these challenges, identity reclamation efforts have emerged through cultural revival movements, language revitalisation and social-political activism. In the diaspora, there is renewed interest in traditional Igbo practices albeit often expressed in hybrid or commercialised forms while in the South-South region, advocacy through cultural festivals, social media and pan-Igbo solidarity has gained momentum (Uchendu, 2014). These efforts emphasised a generational desire to examine the identity crisis and identity reclamation among the Igbo youths in Diaspora and South-South Nigeria. Ultimately, reclaiming and redefining Igbo identity in the face of both internal and external pressures is of paramount.

Statement of the Problem

The identity of the Igbo ethnic group is once characterised by cultural pride, communal values and linguistic unity is currently under threat particularly among younger generations in the diaspora and South-South Nigeria. This emerging crisis is driven by multiple forces that include globalisation, cultural assimilation, post-war political marginalisation and inter-ethnic interactions. Young Igbos in foreign countries face challenges in maintaining a distinct ethnic identity within host societies that often homogenise African cultures. In contrast, those in South-South Nigeria confront pressures to assimilate or deny their Igbo heritage due to regional socio-political dynamics and lingering post-Biafra sentiments. This erosion of identity has implications: it affects cultural continuity, weakens intergenerational knowledge transfer and diminishes a sense of belonging and community among the youth. Despite growing efforts toward identity reclamation through cultural reawakening, language learning and activism these efforts are often met with resistance or are undermined by commercialisation and misrepresentation of Igbo traditions. Given the socio-cultural, psychological and political implications of this identity crisis, it becomes imperative to critically examine the identity crisis and identity reclamation among the Igbo youths in Diaspora and South-South Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study examine the identity crisis and identity reclamation among the Igbo Youths in Diaspora and South-South Nigeria. Specifically, the study addresses the following;

- i. To examine the factors contributing to identity crisis among Igbo youths in the diaspora and South-South Nigeria.
- ii. To investigate the manifestations of identity crisis in the lifestyles, cultural practices and social behaviour of Igbo youths.
- iii. To investigate the strategies adopted by Igbo youths for reclaiming their cultural identity in both the diaspora and South-South Nigeria.
- iv. To assess the challenges associated with identity reclamation efforts among Igbo youths.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study;

- i. What are the factors responsible for identity crisis among Igbo youths in the diaspora and South-South Nigeria?

- ii. In what ways does identity crisis manifest in the lives and behaviours of Igbo youths across these regions?
- iii. What strategies are employed by Igbo youths to reclaim their cultural identity in the face of cultural erosion?
- iv. What are the major challenges outcomes of identity reclamation among Igbo youths in the diaspora and South-South Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on ethnic identity, cultural preservation and postcolonial identity formation particularly within the context of Nigeria and its diasporic communities. By focusing on Igbo youths, the research provides critical insights into how young people negotiate their cultural identity in the face of globalisation, migration, and socio-political marginalisation.

Secondly, the findings of this study will be valuable to policymakers, cultural organisations and educators who are interested in promoting indigenous languages, traditions and values. Understanding the challenges and strategies of identity reclamation can guide interventions aimed at preserving Igbo heritage and fostering a sense of belonging among youths.

Also, the study is of relevance to diaspora studies and migration research as it examine how cultural identity is influenced by transnational experiences. For the Igbo community at large both within Nigeria and abroad, this study offers a framework for engaging younger generations in cultural revival efforts. Ultimately, it will serve as a useful reference for future researchers, sociologists, anthropologists and scholars of African studies interested in identity dynamics within ethnic groups.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study focuses specifically on Igbo youths residing in two distinct geographical and socio-cultural contexts: the diaspora (including countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and South Africa) and the South-South region of Nigeria (including states such as Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa). The choice of these locations is deliberate, given their relevance to the identity challenges faced by Igbos due to intercultural interactions and historical events. The study is limited to youths between the ages of 18 and 35 as this demographic represents a critical stage in identity formation and social engagement. While the Igbo identity is broad and historically rich, the study delimits itself to contemporary issues of cultural erosion, identity crisis and efforts toward cultural reclamation within this age group.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

The concept of identity particularly ethnic and cultural identity has received scholarly attention in recent decades, especially in the context of globalisation, migration and postcolonial experiences. Identity refers to the sense of self or belonging that individuals or groups associate with specific cultural, linguistic, ethnic or social traits. For the Igbo people of Nigeria, an ethnic group with a deeply rooted history, rich traditions and distinct language, identity has historically been a central part of communal and individual existence (Uchendu, 2014). According to Smith & Chen, (2019) identity crisis is cultural dislocation which occurs when individuals particularly

those who migrate from one cultural context to another experience a sense of alienation and confusion about their cultural identity. People who move to new geographical locations often grapple with a conflict between their original cultural values and those of the new society.

Indeed, this experience is especially prevalent among immigrants to Western countries, who find themselves caught between the desire to assimilate and the need to preserve their native customs (Kim, 2018). In diasporic communities, this crisis can lead to a hybrid identity, where individuals merge elements from both cultures, sometimes leading to fragmentation in their self-concept (Chung, 2020). To Taylor & Jolly, (2021) ethnic identity crisis, particularly relevant to marginalised or minority groups within larger social structures. Individuals from minority ethnic groups may struggle to gain recognition and validation of their ethnic identity within a dominant or majority culture. This crisis is often evident in societies with ethnic hierarchies, where marginalised groups experience discrimination and exclusion. For example, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans have historically faced such crises in the United States (Johnson, 2020).

Theoretical Foundations of Identity Crisis

The notion of identity crisis was first popularised by Erik Erikson (1968) in the context of psychological development particularly among youths undergoing major life transitions. In sociocultural contexts, however, identity crisis often refers to a loss or confusion of ethnic, cultural or national belonging due to exposure to conflicting values, norms and worldviews. The theoretical foundations provided by Erik Erikson (1968) is profoundly relevant and applicable to this study as in the case of Igbo youths especially those in diaspora and culturally mixed environments like South-South Nigeria, this turmoil is not merely internal but is compounded by sociocultural dislocation and conflicting value systems.

Erikson's framework helps explain why many Igbo youths in these regions find it difficult to form a coherent sense of self. They often grow up in environments that either dilute or outright reject their indigenous identity such as Western societies where African cultures are generalised or South-South Nigeria where Igbo identity may be politically or socially suppressed. These youths are thus caught in a psychological struggle trying to reconcile their inherited cultural values with the dominant norms of their surroundings. These theoretical perspectives provide a robust foundation for understanding the crisis of identity among Igbo youths and the emerging efforts toward identity reclamation. They explain not only *why* these crises occur but also *how* identity is being re-imagined and reconstructed through language revival, cultural festivals, online activism and social solidarity among young Igbos striving to reclaim and redefine their heritage in a modern globalised world.

Igbo Identity in Historical and Cultural Context

Traditionally, the Igbo ethnic group is known for its strong communal values, language, religious practices, kinship systems and art forms. Igbo identity has been historically shaped by precolonial village democracies, the impact of Christian missionary influence, colonial restructuring and post-independence socio-political developments. The traumatic experience of the Nigerian Civil War (Biafra War 1967–1970) left a deep psychological scar and a sense of marginalisation that further complicated the cultural identity of the Igbo people within the Nigerian federation (Aniche, 2018). In post-war Nigeria, many Igbos migrated to different parts of the country and abroad in search of economic opportunities. As a result, they became exposed

to various forms of assimilation and integration pressures which gradually eroded traditional cultural practices among the younger generations.

Identity Crisis among Igbo Youths in the Diaspora

Youths of Igbo origin living in the diaspora often face a dual identity challenge: integrating into the host country's culture while trying to maintain their ancestral identity. According to Okafor (2017), these youths experience what is known as “cultural displacement, a situation where they are neither fully accepted as members of the host society nor fully connected to their ethnic roots. In multicultural societies like the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, young Igbos may be grouped under the generic label of "African" or "Black," thereby losing specific recognition of their Igbo heritage. This disconnection is worsened by a lack of exposure to Igbo language, customs, proverbs, folklores and religious practices which are central to ethnic identity. The phenomenon of “Engligbo” (a hybrid of English and Igbo) as a form of communication among diaspora youths illustrates the struggle to maintain cultural relevance while adapting to foreign environments (Eze, 2019). While some embrace modernity and abandon traditional identity markers, others actively seek to reconnect with their heritage through language learning, cultural festivals and participation in Igbo community organisations.

Identity Crisis in the South-South Region of Nigeria

The situation in South-South Nigeria is tied by intra-national ethnic dynamics. In states like Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta, young Igbos often live among indigenous groups such as the Ijaw, Urhobo, and Efik. These interactions, while enriching have led to cultural dilution and identity ambiguity among young Igbos. Due to political and historical tensions especially the legacy of the Biafra War, many young Igbos in this region are reluctant to openly identify with their Igbo roots (Nwanze, 2016). The rejection of Senator John Mbata by the Ogbako Ikwerre group for identifying as Igbo, despite being elected as Ohaneze Ndi Igbo president, reflects the tension and resistance around Igbo identity in the region. In this context, identity crisis manifests as the denial or suppression of one's heritage in favour of dominant local cultures. This erasure has long-term implications for cultural continuity, as younger generations grow up disconnected from their linguistic, social and historical heritage. Okpewho, Davies and Mazrui (2019), who noted that African youths in multicultural settings often experience alienation from their heritage.

Movements and Strategies for Identity Reclamation

In spite of these challenges, there is a growing movement among Igbo youths both at home and abroad to reclaim and redefine their identity. These efforts take various forms from cultural revival movements such as the Biafra resurgence to informal practices like wearing traditional attire, learning the language, celebrating Igbo day and participating in Igbo cultural festivals. Social media has become a critical tool for identity reclamation, as platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube allow youths to share Igbo music, food, proverbs, history and lifestyle. However, scholars warn that these representations often become commercialised or distorted, turning culture into spectacle rather than lived experience (Uchendu, 2014). In addition, there are spiritual and religious dimensions to identity reclamation. Some youths are returning to traditional belief systems and ancestral worship, although in forms that are sometimes misunderstood or misapplied. Practices such as invoking deities like *Eze Nwanyi*, *Oke-ite* or *Anyia Nzu* are increasingly being revived, albeit sometimes in commodified or controversial ways.

Challenges to Reclamation

Several factors inhibit successful identity reclamation. First, the dominance of the English language and Western education continues to overshadow indigenous language use. Second, intergenerational divides pose a challenge, as older generations often lament the perceived loss of values while younger ones attempt to define “being Igbo” in globalised terms. Third, regional political fragmentation, mistrust and historical wounds hinder efforts at pan-Igbo solidarity, especially in the South-South region. Lastly, the influence of popular culture, urbanisation and modern consumerism often undermines traditional values. Identity reclamation thus becomes a delicate balancing act between cultural authenticity and contemporary relevance (Ojakorotu, 2019).

Empirical Studies

Empirical research into identity crisis and identity reclamation among Igbo youths reveals a range of socio-cultural, psychological and political dynamics that shape how young Igbos perceive and reconstruct their identity across different geographies. Several studies have employed qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods approaches to explore these complexities, particularly in diaspora communities and the culturally diverse South-South region of Nigeria.

A qualitative study by Okafor (2017) examined the experiences of 30 second-generation Igbo youths in the United Kingdom and the United States through in-depth interviews. The findings revealed that many of the participants experienced identity confusion due to their limited exposure to Igbo language, customs, and traditions. Okafor found that while these youths felt pressure to assimilate into Western culture, they also expressed a deep yearning to reconnect with their roots, often through social media, visits to Nigeria, or participation in diasporic Igbo associations. This highlights both the identity crisis and the beginning of a reclamation process driven by digital and diasporic networks.

In South-South Nigeria, Aniche (2018) conducted a mixed-methods study involving 150 Igbo youths in Rivers and Delta States to investigate ethnic identity and political marginalisation. The results revealed that many young Igbos born and raised in these regions internalised negative stereotypes about the Igbo identity due to historical tensions especially those tied to the Biafran war and frequent sociopolitical exclusion. However, Aniche also observed a recent resurgence in cultural pride among this demographic, evidenced by the growing popularity of cultural festivals, language classes, and informal solidarity groups such as Ohaneze Youths and Igbo Unity Forums.

Abamara and Onyemachi (2020) explored the psychological impact of culture shock on Igbo immigrants in the diaspora. Their study highlighted how exposure to foreign cultures leads to cognitive dissonance which affect the immigrants' sense of identity and connection to Igbo cultural values. The authors emphasized the need for strategies to manage culture shock to preserve cultural identity. Alakija (2016) conducted a study on first and second-generation Nigerian immigrants in Peckham, London focusing on how media influences their identity construction. The research revealed that media consumption helps these individuals navigate their dual identities, maintaining connections to Nigerian culture while adapting to their host country's environment. Onyemechalu and Ejiofor (2024) examined the role of the Igbo diaspora in the resurgence of Biafran separatist movements. Their study found that diaspora communities actively engage in long-distance nationalism, using collective memories of the Biafran war to

mobilize support for self-determination, thereby influencing identity reclamation efforts among Igbo youths.

Summary of the Literature

In summary, the literature suggests that identity crisis among Igbo youths whether in the diaspora or in South-South Nigeria is a result of complex, overlapping factors including historical trauma, inter-ethnic interaction, globalisation and generational change. At the same time, efforts at identity reclamation are visible and growing, although not without challenges. The discourse calls for a deeper understanding of identity not as static or singular, but as dynamic, negotiated and context-dependent. This study seeks to contribute to this understanding by examining the lived experiences of Igbo youths, the mechanisms through which identity is eroded and reclaimed, and the broader cultural implications for the future of the Igbo nation.

Research Methodology

Design of the Study

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The choice of this design was informed by its appropriateness in gathering opinions, experiences and perceptions of individuals in a systematic and objective manner. Since the aim of the study was to explore and document the lived experiences of Igbo youths regarding identity crisis and their efforts at identity reclamation, the descriptive survey approach enabled the researchers to collect quantitative data that reflect real-life contexts.

Population of the Study

The target population for this study consisted of Igbo youths aged 18–40 years residing in selected diaspora communities (including the United Kingdom, United States, and South Africa) and the South-South states of Nigeria (particularly Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa). These states were purposively selected due to their significant Igbo populations and historical relevance to identity-based interactions. The estimated population from these areas ran into thousands; however, for the purpose of manageability and precision, only a representative sample was selected.

Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select diaspora locations and South-South states with a number of Igbo inhabitants. In the second stage, stratified sampling was employed to ensure fair representation based on gender, age bracket and educational level. Ultimately, simple random sampling was used to select 200 participants (100 from the diaspora and 100 from the South-South region). This sampling method ensured inclusivity and eliminated bias in respondent selection.

Instrumentation

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled *"Igbo Youth Identity Crisis and Reclamation Questionnaire (IYICRQ)." The questionnaire was design on a 4-Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).*

Method of Data Collection

Data collection was carried out over a period of two months. In the diaspora, the researchers collaborated with Igbo community associations, cultural groups and social media platforms to reach participants. The questionnaires were administered both physically and electronically (using Google Forms and WhatsApp platforms). In South-South Nigeria, field assistants helped distribute and retrieve questionnaires in urban and peri-urban areas with high Igbo concentration. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, WhatsApp video calls and in-person, depending on the respondents' availability and preference.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using quantitative data from the questionnaire which was analysed using descriptive statistics of mean scores and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This study presents the analysis of data gathered from Igbo youths in the diaspora and South-South Nigeria using descriptive statistics such as mean scores and standard deviations. The analysis addresses each research question using four questionnaire items per theme. A mean score of 2.50 or above indicates agreement with an item.

Research Question 1: *What are the factors responsible for identity crisis among Igbo youths in the diaspora and South-South Nigeria?*

Table 1: Responses on the Factors Responsible for Identity Crisis Among Igbo Youths in the Diaspora and South-South Nigeria.

S/n	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
1	Colonial history contributed to identity crisis among Igbo youths.	58	48	34	27	2.82	1.08	Agreed
2	Globalisation has diluted traditional Igbo values.	40	58	38	42	2.54	1.08	Agreed
3	Migration leads to cultural detachment among Igbo youths.	30	30	43	55	2.22	1.12	Disagreed
4	Interethnic interactions in South-South Nigeria affect Igbo identity.	59	43	22	41	2.73	1.19	Agreed
Overall Mean Score						3.18	0.85	Agreed

The data in Table 1 indicates that colonial history, globalisation and interethnic interactions are factors contributing to identity crisis among Igbo youths in both the diaspora and South-South Nigeria. Three out of the four items were accepted with mean scores above 2.50 showing that respondents acknowledged the impact of these external influences on their sense of identity. However, migration as a factor was rejected with a mean score below 2.50 suggesting that it is not widely seen as a primary cause of cultural disconnection. The findings highlight the complex interplay of history, global influence and multicultural interaction in shaping identity challenges among Igbo youths.

Research Question 2: *In what ways does identity crisis manifest in the lives and behaviours of Igbo youths across these regions?*

Table 2: Responses on Ways Identity Crisis Manifest in the Lives and Behaviours OF Igbo Youths Across these Regions.

S/n	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
1	Igbo youths in the diaspora often struggle with maintaining Igbo traditions.	95	60	30	10	3.18	0.84	Agree
2	Igbo youths in South-South Nigeria are often torn between their Igbo roots and local cultures.	80	85	25	10	3.18	0.77	Agree
3	There is a noticeable decline in the use of the Igbo language among youth in the diaspora.	90	70	25	15	3.17	0.85	Agree
4	There is a noticeable decline in the use of the Igbo language among youth in the diaspora.	85	80	20	15	3.19	0.79	Agree
Overall Mean Score						3.18	0.81	Agree

The data in Table 2 reveals that identity crisis among Igbo youths is strongly manifested through difficulty in upholding cultural traditions especially in the diaspora. All four items were accepted with high mean scores around 3.18 indicating a broad agreement that the crisis is evident in areas such as the decline in language use, cultural disorientation and internal conflict between dual cultural identities. These results point to a tangible erosion of traditional practices especially among younger generations outside the Igbo heartland.

Research Question 3: *What strategies are employed by Igbo youths to reclaim their cultural identity in the face of cultural erosion?*

Table 3: Responses on Strategies Employed by Igbo Youths to Reclaim their Cultural Identity in the Face of Cultural Erosion.

S/n	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
1	Many Igbo youths are increasingly participating in cultural festivals to reconnect with their roots.	100	60	25	15	3.20	0.87	Agree
2	Igbo youths engage in learning the Igbo language and promoting it on social media.	95	65	30	10	3.18	0.82	Agree
3	There is a rise in the number of Igbo youths participating in Igbo political movements for identity recognition.	80	90	15	15	3.20	0.80	Agree
4	Youths are using digital platforms to celebrate Igbo culture and challenge stereotypes.	85	85	20	10	3.20	0.83	Agree
Overall Mean Score						3.20	0.83	Agree

Table 3 shows that Igbo youths are actively employing various strategies to reclaim their cultural identity amidst ongoing cultural erosion. All four items recorded mean scores above 3.00 suggesting strong agreement on the use of cultural festivals, language revival, political participation and digital engagement to reaffirm their heritage. These findings indicate a conscious and strategic movement by the youth to preserve and promote Igbo identity through modern and traditional platforms alike.

Research Question 4: *What are the major challenges and outcomes of identity reclamation among Igbo youths in the diaspora and South-South Nigeria?*

Table 3: Responses on Major Challenges and Outcomes of Identity Reclamation Among Igbo Youths in the Diaspora and South-South Nigeria

S/n	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
1	The lack of support from the local community in the diaspora hinders the reclamation process.	90	80	20	10	3.18	0.85	Agree
2	Igbo youths often face rejection from their non-Igbo peers in the South-South region when they attempt to reclaim their identity.	85	70	35	10	3.17	0.86	Agree
3	The erosion of traditional values in both diaspora and South-South Nigeria poses a challenge to cultural revival.	95	75	20	10	3.22	0.84	Agree
4	Economic challenges in the diaspora and South-South Nigeria make it difficult for youths to engage in cultural practices.	80	90	20	10	3.18	0.82	Agree
Overall Mean Score						3.19	0.84	Agree

The data in Table 4 suggests that while efforts at identity reclamation are evident, significant challenges persist. All four items were agreed upon with mean values above 3.00 pointing to obstacles such as lack of community support, rejection from peers, value erosion and financial barriers. Despite these difficulties, the consistency of responses emphasises the resilience and determination of Igbo youths to revive and retain their cultural identity. This implies a need for supportive structures and inclusive policies to sustain their efforts.

Discussion of Findings

In table 1, the findings revealed that colonial history, globalisation and interethnic interactions are major contributors to identity crisis among Igbo youths as indicated by the overall mean score of 3.18. The respondents agreed that the remnants of colonial education and policies disrupted the continuity of indigenous identity, while globalisation continues to dilute traditional values. These findings align with Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development which suggests that conflicting societal influences can lead to identity confusion. This is evident among diasporic Igbo youths who struggle to negotiate their cultural identity in environments that prioritise assimilation.

In table 2, the study also found strong agreement that identity crisis manifests through difficulty in upholding traditions, language decline and cultural duality as indicated by the overall mean score of 3.18. The respondents noted a decline in the use of the Igbo language and reported tensions between their Igbo identity and surrounding cultures. This finding resonates with the work of Okpewho, Davies and Mazrui (2019) who noted that African youths in multicultural settings often experience alienation from their heritage. Similarly, Nwaubani (2014) observed that language attrition among Igbo diasporic youth is both a symptom and a cause of identity crisis. As culture is communicated primarily through language, the loss of linguistic competence weakens ethnic identity and reinforces cultural displacement.

In table 3, the findings showed that many Igbo youths are engaging in cultural festivals, social media activism and language learning as strategies for identity reclamation with mean score mean of 3.20. This supports Asante's (2013) Afrocentric approach which emphasises cultural revival as a form of resistance and identity affirmation. It also aligns with Omoniyi's (2016) claim that digital platforms offer marginalised youth the opportunity to recreate cultural spaces and challenge stereotypes. By participating in traditional activities and promoting the Igbo language online, the youths are actively resisting assimilation and asserting their identity in diverse social contexts.

In table 4 respondents agreed that major challenges to identity reclamation include lack of community support, social rejection, erosion of values and economic hardship with mean score of 3.19. These challenges hinder consistent cultural engagement. This supports Gilroy's (2013) concept of diasporic double consciousness, where individuals feel caught between cultural expectations and the realities of their current environment. Moreover, Eze (2010) found that identity reclamation efforts are often limited by societal pressures and economic instability, especially among returnee youths who are unable to integrate fully due to financial constraints or alienation from traditional structures.

Conclusion

The study concludes that identity crisis among Igbo youths in both the diaspora and South-South Nigeria is a complex phenomenon shaped by historical, socio-political and cultural dynamics. Colonial influence, globalisation and multicultural exposure have created conflicting identities especially among youths who navigate dual socio-cultural environments. The disconnection from language and traditions signals a weakening of ethnic continuity. However, it is equally evident that a growing number of Igbo youths are reclaiming their identity through conscious efforts such as participating in cultural activities, reviving the use of Igbo language and asserting their cultural presence on digital platforms. These reclamation efforts highlight the resilience of ethnic identity and the potential of youth-led cultural renaissance. Nonetheless, the journey is fraught with challenges ranging from; lack of community support, rejection by peers and socio-economic limitations. These must be addressed holistically to ensure that the process of identity recovery is sustainable and inclusive. The study emphasises the need for culturally informed educational policies, intergenerational collaboration and institutional support to solidify the Igbo identity among young people across regions.

Recommendations

Based on the research, the following recommendations emerged:

1. Schools, especially in the diaspora and culturally mixed areas like the South-South should integrate Igbo language, history and traditions into the curriculum to strengthen cultural identity from an early age.
2. Governments and Igbo socio-cultural organisations should provide grants and platforms for young people promoting Igbo culture through festivals, media or community outreach.
3. Educators should encourage the use of social media, podcasts and YouTube channels to promote Igbo customs, folktales and language learning in engaging formats accessible to young people globally.
4. Cultural policies at both state and federal levels should prioritize minority and ethnic identity preservation in multicultural regions like South-South Nigeria, including protections for language, dress, and festivals.

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