

Role of Television Documentaries in Reducing Domestic Violence among Residents of Ijebu-Ode, Local Government Area, Ogun State

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Abstract:

This study investigates respondents' perceptions of television documentaries on domestic violence within the framework of cultivation theory in mass communication. It focuses on how repeated exposure to such media content shapes individuals' understanding of societal issues and social norms. The research adopted a survey design, employing convenience sampling in the Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture respondents' perspectives and experiences and were analysed using SPSS. A sample size of 384 respondents was determined using the Survey Monkey sample size calculator. Findings reveal that while respondents demonstrated widespread awareness of the existence of domestic violence documentaries, scepticism regarding their frequency of broadcast suggests a nuanced interpretation of media availability. This highlights the complex interaction between media representations and audience perceptions, a central proposition of cultivation theory. Viewership patterns reflected mixed perceptions, suggesting that media exposure continues to influence audience understanding of domestic violence. Respondents further noted that these documentaries provide preventive guidelines, supporting cultivation theory's claim that media plays a vital role in shaping public attitudes and supplying information. Overall, most respondents regarded the documentaries as highly informative and valuable, reflecting a generally favourable disposition consistent with cultivation theory's concept of resonance. Based on these findings, the study recommends that media organizations increase the production and consistent airing of documentaries on domestic violence to reinforce public awareness. Content creators should incorporate culturally relevant examples and practical solutions to ensure stronger audience engagement. Government agencies and NGOs are encouraged to collaborate with broadcasters to sustain campaigns that highlight the dangers of domestic violence and provide support resources.

Keywords: Television Documentary, Domestic Violence, Perception, Cultivation Theory. Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area

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1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence, characterized by abusive behaviour within intimate relationships, remains a pervasive issue globally, transcending cultural and socio-economic boundaries. Victims, predominantly women, endure physical, emotional, and sexual harm, often facing profound challenges in seeking help or escaping abusive situations (WHO, 2021). Despite increased awareness and efforts to combat domestic violence, it continues to exact a heavy toll on individuals, families, and communities.

In response to this pressing social problem, various stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and the media, have sought to raise awareness and address the root causes of domestic violence. The mass media, in particular, wield significant influence in shaping public perceptions and attitudes towards social issues, including violence against women (Okofu, 2014; Gavin & Kruis, 2022). Through news coverage, feature articles, and investigative reports, the media play a crucial role in highlighting the prevalence and consequences of domestic violence, as well as efforts to address it.

Television, as a powerful medium of communication, occupies a central place in the media landscape and has been increasingly utilized as a platform for addressing social issues, including domestic violence. Television documentaries, in particular, offer a compelling and immersive storytelling format that allows for in-depth exploration of complex topics (Reissler, 2006). By combining interviews, archival footage, and expert analysis, documentaries have the potential to engage viewers on an emotional and intellectual level, prompting reflection and dialogue on sensitive issues such as domestic violence.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the potential of television documentaries to raise awareness about domestic violence and inspire action for change. Documentaries have been praised for their ability to humanize victims, challenge stereotypes, and expose the dynamics of abusive relationships (Adegboyega, 2020; Odionye, Chinwe, Mirian, & Okoli, Angela, Maria, 2023). Moreover, they can provide survivors with a platform to share their stories, empowering them to break the silence surrounding domestic violence and seek support.

Television documentaries in Nigeria and elsewhere have been used to inform the public about domestic violence by portraying real survivors, expert commentary, and social consequences. For instance, televised advocacy campaigns have raised awareness of abuse and shifted public attitudes about domestic. Yet, despite this visibility, evidence suggests that such programming has not led to a substantial or sustained reduction in domestic violence. A study in Rivers State found that although television advocacy educated people, low audience engagement limited its effectiveness, and the campaign failed to curb the trend violence (Nwaubeta & Barigbon, 2021). Moreover, experimental research in rural Tanzania showed that watching a documentary about violence against

women had insignificant effects on changing attitudes toward domestic violence (Leyaro et al 2021). This gap between increased awareness and real behavioural change represents a serious problem warranting further investigation.

Despite their potential impact, the role of television documentaries in addressing domestic violence remains under- explored, particularly within specific geographic contexts such as Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area (LGA). As such, this paper seeks to examine the influence of television documentaries on perceptions and behaviours related to domestic violence in Ijebu-Ode LGA.

Objectives of the Study

- 1 To assess the awareness level among residents of Ijebu-Ode LGA regarding television documentaries on domestic violence:
- 2 To evaluate the perception of residents of Ijebu-Ode LGA towards television documentaries addressing domestic violence
- 3 To examine how residents of Ijebu- Ode LGA practice guidelines against domestic violence after being exposed to documentaries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of TV documentary

Documentary according to Nworgu (2010), is a non-fictional portrayal of reality, which may occasionally incorporate dramatizations of true events, known as docudramas. This genre offers a creative interpretation of reality and is often regarded as a means of presenting historical accounts by scholars. A documentary film, also known as a documentary, is a motion picture that aims to depict reality for educational, informative, or archival purposes (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). It is characterized by a diverse range of filming practices, cinematic traditions, and audience engagement modes. Initially, documentaries were brief, labelled as "actuality films," typically lasting a minute or less. However, they have evolved over time, encompassing various sub-genres such as educational and observational documentaries.

The educational value of documentaries is immense, often serving as effective tools for conveying complex concepts, making them popular in educational institutions. Documentary film-makers bear the responsibility of maintaining authenticity while presenting their world-view, ensuring they do not distort the subject matter deliberately. Documentaries have played a significant role in the development of realism in cinema, with contributions from film-makers worldwide. Boleslaw Matuszewski, a Polish writer and film-maker, stands out as a pioneer in recognizing the potential of documentary film production. His works, "A New Source of History" and "Animated Photography," published in 1898, were among the earliest texts to acknowledge the historical and

documentary significance of film. Matuszewski advocated for the establishment of film archives to preserve visual materials, foreseeing their importance for future generations (Chapman, 2013). Documentaries offer a distinct advantage in presenting unconventional viewpoints that may not be readily available through traditional media channels such as written publications or educational curricula (Stoddard, Marcus, 2010). They serve various purposes, including journalism, advocacy, and personal expression, enabling film-makers to narrate entire life stories or series of events. Unlike fictional films, documentaries lack a fixed format, with each production representing a unique cinematic endeavour.

2.2 Concept of domestic violence

Domestic violence, also referred to as domestic abuse or intimate partner violence (IPV), encompasses a range of behaviours wherein one partner exerts control and power over the other within an intimate relationship, such as marriage, cohabitation, or dating (Adebayo, 2014; Chikataru et al., 2013). This pattern of abuse manifests in various forms, including physical aggression (e.g., hitting, kicking, restraining), sexual abuse, emotional manipulation, and economic deprivation. Importantly, domestic violence can affect both men and women, transcending gender boundaries. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) (2015) defines domestic violence as a systematic pattern of power and control, involving behaviours such as intimidation, physical assault, sexual violence, and emotional abuse. Such abuse often occurs within the confines of intimate partnerships, where one partner seeks to assert dominance and exert authority over the other.

Violence permeates nearly every facet of human existence, spanning across various domains including political institutions, security, education, healthcare, religion, and notably, within the family unit (Hamm, 2004). Despite being considered a sanctuary, the family often serves as the breeding ground for conflicts and acts of violence, particularly evident in disputes between spouses and other family members. Instances of battery, injuries, verbal abuse, harassment, and sexual denial are all too common within familial relationships, reflecting the prevalence of domestic violence in society (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2008). These forms of abuse represent the generic manifestations of domestic violence, contributing to a culture of fear and instability within households. While there is a widespread belief that women and children are the primary victims of domestic violence, with men predominantly serving as perpetrators, empirical evidence challenges this notion (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2008). Reports from hospitals, emergency departments, police stations, and legal proceedings reveal that while women are indeed frequent victims of violence, men are also subject to abuse and violation within domestic settings.

Violence, whether in interpersonal relationships or within broader societal contexts, often stems from the human desire for a meaningful existence (Carrabine et al, 2004). Conflicts frequently arise over fundamental resources such as land, jobs, wealth, and even personal relationships, reflecting the primal instinct to secure one's livelihood and status. Neubeck and Davita (2005). highlight the role of ego preservation as a significant motivator behind acts of violence. Individuals may resort to violence to safeguard their perceived position, prestige, and relevance in social hierarchies. Surprisingly, the preservation of ego emerges as a predominant driver of violence across various historical and cultural contexts.

2.3 Theoretical framework

2.3.1 Cultivation theory

Gerbner formulated the Cultivation Theory in the 1970s and 1980s, proposing that television functions as a message system shaping our worldview. While not inherently absolute, this constructed reality gains credence as we collectively accept it, influencing our perceptions and judgements of the world around us (Barran and Davis, 2009).

At its core, the theory posits two main tenets:

1. Extensive television consumption fosters an alignment with the reality depicted on screen.
2. Individuals base their judgements and actions on this cultivated reality presented through television.

The Cultivation Theory, a media effects model, suggests that prolonged exposure to media narratives can mould individuals' perceptions of reality. Applied to scenarios such as television documentaries on domestic violence, the theory proposes that such programming could shape viewers' views by instilling fear and uncertainty, affecting attitudes towards both victims and perpetrators. Moreover, it could influence perspectives on the root causes of domestic violence and approaches to address it.

2.4 Empirical framework

Violence, an omnipresent societal issue, manifests in various forms and affects individuals across demographics. In Nigeria, as in many other societies, violence permeates multiple facets of life, including domestic relationships and the upbringing of children. However, while violence against women has garnered significant attention and advocacy efforts, there exists a noticeable gap in addressing violence against men and children within Nigerian society. The portrayal of violence against men on Nigerian television serves as a microcosm of this larger societal issue. Despite men being depicted as the stronger sex and central figures in society, little attention has been given to the prevalence of violence against them. Olaseinde and Ogwuche's (2022) study delves into this disparity, revealing a concerning trend of underreporting and societal

misconceptions surrounding domestic violence against men. Their findings highlight the reluctance of men to speak out about abuses faced from their spouses, further perpetuating the cycle of silence and societal norms that reinforce gender stereotypes. Concurrently, Adetokunbo S.S.'s (2013) documentary production, "Menace of Child Abuse," shines a spotlight on the widespread issue of child abuse in Nigeria. Through an evaluative lens, professionals analyze the documentary's portrayal of the subject matter, narration, and technical aspects, identifying both strengths and weaknesses. The documentary serves as a call to action, highlighting the societal implications of child abuse and the urgent need for collaborative efforts from the media and government to combat this pervasive menace.

Fakunmoju & Bammeke (2017) sought to bridge this gap by investigating the experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV), family violence, and attitudes toward violence against women (VAW) among adolescents in Nigeria and South Africa. Their findings revealed significant variations in exposure to violence and endorsement of VAW beliefs based on gender and country, emphasizing the urgent need for tailored prevention programs and interventions to break the cycle of intergenerational violence.

In the same way, Rowell & Laramie (2021) shed light on the role of mass media in perpetuating violence and aggression among young viewers. Their study highlighted the detrimental effects of media violence, including short-term and long-term increases in aggression, particularly among adolescents. Moreover, media portrayal of violence, whether fictional or in news broadcasts, contributes to elevated violence levels in society, underscoring the need for media literacy programs and responsible media representation to mitigate its harmful effects on vulnerable populations. Adding to the discourse, Oluremi (2017) addressed the alarming prevalence of domestic violence against women in Nigeria, where cultural norms and societal pressures often silence victims and perpetuate cycles of abuse. The study stressed the urgent need for comprehensive interventions, including premarital counselling and the establishment of counselling centres at community levels, to provide support to both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

The role of media in addressing and combating domestic violence has garnered increasing attention, with scholars recognizing its potential to raise awareness, educate the public, and serve as a deterrent to abuse. Dauda (2016) emphasises the pervasive influence of mass media in modern society, highlighting its various channels, from television and newspapers to radio and digital platforms, as vehicles for disseminating messages about domestic violence. These messages aim not only to grab attention but also to empower women, discourage gender-based violence, and prompt societal action against domestic abuse. Dauda's article contributes to a growing body of literature on the portrayal of

women in media messages, emphasising the importance of using mass media as a tool for advocacy and prevention of domestic violence, particularly in Nigeria.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized survey research methodology to collect data from a sample of individuals residing in the Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area (LGA), which has a population of 394,000 residents according to macrotrends.net (2024). Using the Survey Monkey sample size calculator, a sample size of 384 respondents was determined. Convenience sampling was employed to select participants who were easily accessible within the study area. Data was gathered through a structured questionnaire designed specifically for this research, allowing for the systematic collection of information on respondents' perspectives and experiences related to the study's objectives. Out of the 384 questionnaires administered, only 372 were rightly filled and returned for analysis.

Results

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by gender

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	248	66.7
Female	124	33.3
<i>Age</i>		
18-25	20	5.4%
26-33	35	9.4%
34-41	90	24.2%
42-49	120	32.3%
50-57	90	24.2%
58-60 above	17	4.6%
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	158	42.5%
Divorced	127	34.1%
Widowed	80	21.5%
Single	7	1.9%

The *Table 1* provides insights into the demographic composition of the sample population based on gender, age, and marital status. Among the participants, 66.7% were male, while 33.3% were female. Regarding age distribution, the majority fell within the 34-49 age range, comprising 24.2% to 32.3% each. Additionally, the marital status data indicates that 42.5% were married, 34.1% were divorced, 21.5% were widowed, and 1.9% were single.

Research Objective 1: To assess the awareness level among residents of Ijebu-Ode LGA regarding television documentaries on domestic violence:

Table 2: Rating of the frequency of level of knowledge among residents of Ijebu-Ode LGA about television documentaries on domestic violence

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	There are television documentaries on domestic violence	48.5%	17.3%	23.8%	3.5%
2	There are many documentaries about domestic violence on television.	45.2%	19.1%	24.1%	2.7%
3	The television documentaries about domestic violence are usually advertised on television.	43.3%	19.0%	22.6%	5.1%
4	The television documentaries on domestic violence are generally watched by all.	6.4%	8.9%	16.9%	68.0%
5	The television documentaries on domestic violence offer guidelines or suggestions to prevent it.	49.5%	21.3%	18.4%	4.0%

The findings from the table 2 shed light on the perceptions of respondents regarding television documentaries on domestic violence. On the existence of television documentaries on domestic violence, majority of respondents, ranging from 48.5% to 45.2%, strongly agree or agree that television documentaries on domestic violence exist. This indicates a widespread recognition among the respondents that such documentaries are produced and broadcast. Similarly, a significant portion of respondents acknowledge the existence of these documentaries, a sizeable percentage, ranging from 23.8% to 24.1%, disagree with the statement that there are many documentaries about domestic violence on television. This suggests a perception among some respondents that the frequency of these documentaries may not be as high as implied by the statement. Regarding the advertisement of television documentaries on domestic violence, a substantial proportion of respondents, ranging from 43.3% to 19.0%, agree or strongly agree that these documentaries are usually advertised on television. However, there is also a notable percentage (22.6% to 5.1%) that disagrees or strongly disagrees with this assertion, indicating scepticism about the level of advertising for such programs. The data also show

that only a small minority of respondents, ranging from 6.4% to 8.9%, agree or strongly agree that television documentaries on domestic violence are generally watched by all. Conversely, a significant majority (68.0%) strongly disagree with this statement, suggesting a perception among respondents that these documentaries are not widely viewed. In the same way a large majority of respondents, ranging from 49.5% to 21.3%, agree or strongly agree that television documentaries on domestic violence offer guidelines or suggestions to prevent it. This indicates a widespread belief among respondents that these documentaries serve a practical purpose by providing guidance on addressing domestic violence.

Research Objective Two: To evaluate the perception of residents of Ijebu-Ode LGA towards television documentaries addressing domestic violence

Table 3: Rating of the perception of Ijebu-Ode LGA towards television documentaries on domestic violence

On a scale of 1 to 5, how informative do you find television documentaries addressing domestic violence in Ijebu-Ode LGA?

Rating	Frequency	Percent
1: Not informative at all	9	2.4%
2: Slightly informative	18	4.8%
3: Moderately informative	76	20.4%
4: Very informative	98	26.3%
5: Extremely informative	171	46.0%
Total	372	100

The data illustrates that the majority of respondents found the content to be highly informative, with a substantial 46.0% rating it as extremely informative, indicating that it exceeded their expectations significantly. Furthermore, 26.3% rated it as very informative, suggesting that it surpassed their expectations to a considerable degree. While a smaller percentage rated the content as moderately (20.4%) or slightly (4.8%) informative, only a negligible 2.4% deemed it not informative at all. This distribution of ratings suggests that the content generally met or exceeded the informational needs and expectations of the respondents, highlighting its effectiveness in conveying valuable information.

Table 4: Do you think television documentaries accurately represent the realities of domestic violence?

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	12	3.2
Disagree	34	9.1
Neutral	29	7.8
Agree	144	38.7
Strongly agree	153	41.1
Total	372	100

The data shows that the majority of respondents (41.1%) strongly agreed, while 38.7% agreed with the statement, indicating a prevalent positive sentiment. A minority disagreed, with 9.1% disagreeing and 3.2% strongly disagreeing, and 7.8% remained neutral. Overall, the findings suggest a predominantly favourable attitude towards the proposition among the surveyed individuals.

Table 4: Do you believe that television documentaries addressing domestic violence contribute to prevention efforts in our community

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	311	83.6
No	15	4
Not sure	46	12.4
Total	372	100

The data reveals that the majority of respondents (83.6%) answered affirmatively ("Yes") regarding the variable, indicating a strong inclination towards acceptance or belief in it. Conversely, a small proportion (4%) responded negatively ("No"), signifying dissenting views, while a notable portion (12.4%) expressed uncertainty ("Not sure"), reflecting indecision or lack of clarity. This distribution suggests a prevailing acceptance of the variable among respondents, albeit with a minority expressing disagreement and a significant segment remaining undecided.

Research Objective 3: To examine how residents of Ijebu- Ode LGA practice guidelines against domestic violence after being exposed to documentaries.

Table 5: Rating of how often residents of Ijebu- Ode LGA practice guidelines against domestic violence

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N	D (%)	SD (%)
Television documentaries about domestic violence are effective tools for education and awareness-raising.	196	99	28	20	19
I caution myself to avoid attitudes, behaviours and other factors that can make me to commit domestic violence.	259	108	5	0	0
I notify my friends to be cautions and avoid attitudes, behaviours and other factors that can make me to commit domestic violence	156	136	70	8	2

The data presented in the table reflects respondents' attitudes and behaviours regarding domestic violence, delineated across various statements. Firstly, the overwhelming majority of respondents, comprising 99%, either strongly agreed or agreed that television documentaries serve as effective tools for education and awareness-raising on domestic violence. However, a substantial proportion expressed neutrality towards this statement (28%), while a minority exhibited some level of scepticism or disagreement (20% disagreed, 19% strongly disagreed). Moving on to personal accountability, an equally overwhelming 99% of respondents indicated their commitment to avoiding behaviours that could potentially lead to domestic violence, with none disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This unanimous agreement shows a widespread acknowledgement of individual responsibility in mitigating domestic violence. Furthermore, the majority of respondents, constituting 70%, agreed or strongly agreed with the notion of informing friends about the importance of avoiding behaviours associated with domestic violence. Nevertheless, a notable segment remained neutral (37%), reflecting hesitancy or uncertainty in actively engaging in such conversations, while a minority expressed disagreement (8%) or strong disagreement (2%) with this proposition, indicating differing levels of willingness to address the issue among respondents. Overall, while there is broad recognition of the efficacy of television documentaries and personal commitment to prevention efforts, there exist variations in attitudes towards advocating for domestic violence prevention among peers.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of respondents regarding television documentaries on domestic violence, framed within the context of cultivation theory in mass communication. Cultivation theory posits that long-term exposure to media content shapes individuals' perceptions of reality, leading to a shared understanding of social issues and norms. In this discussion, we'll examine how the

respondents' perceptions align with key tenets of cultivation theory. Firstly, the data reveal a widespread acknowledgement among respondents of the existence of television documentaries on domestic violence. This is in congruence with the findings of Olaseinde and Ogwuche (2022) revealing that the respondents were highly exposed to domestic violence content on television. The majority of respondents either strongly agree or agree that such documentaries exist. This aligns with cultivation theory, as repeated exposure to media content depicting domestic violence could contribute to a shared recognition of its existence within society. However, it's noteworthy that a significant portion of respondents express disagreement regarding the frequency of these documentaries. This scepticism suggests a nuanced perception among some respondents, implying that while they acknowledge the existence of such documentaries, they may not perceive them to be as abundant as implied. This finding reflects the complex interplay between media representations and individual interpretations, which is central to cultivation theory. Regarding the advertising of television documentaries on domestic violence, the data reveal a mixed perception among respondents. While a substantial proportion agree that these documentaries are usually advertised on television, there is also a notable percentage that disagrees, indicating scepticism about the level of advertising. This discrepancy highlights the influence of media messages on perceptions, as well as the potential for scepticism or critical evaluation among audiences.

Furthermore, the data indicate a divergence in perceptions regarding the viewership of television documentaries on domestic violence. A small minority of respondents agree that these documentaries are generally watched by all, while a significant majority strongly disagree, suggesting a perception that these programs are not widely viewed. This finding resonates with cultivation theory, which suggests that media representations may not accurately reflect real-world behaviours or attitudes. A majority of respondents agree that television documentaries on domestic violence offer guidelines or suggestions to prevent it. This highlights the perceived utility of such documentaries in addressing social issues and aligns with cultivation theory's emphasis on media's role in shaping perceptions and providing information.

Majority of respondents found the content to be highly informative, with a significant percentage rating it as extremely or very informative. This indicates that the content exceeded or met their expectations to a considerable degree, suggesting its effectiveness in conveying valuable information. The negligible percentage of respondents who deemed it not informative at all further underscores the general consensus regarding its informational value. The sentiment towards the content appears to be predominantly positive, as indicated by the high percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. This suggests a favourable attitude towards the content among the surveyed individuals, with only a minority expressing disagreement or neutrality. The data also reflects a strong inclination towards acceptance or belief in the variable under

consideration, as evidenced by the majority of respondents answering affirmatively. While a small proportion expressed dissenting views and a notable segment remained undecided, the prevailing acceptance of the variable indicates a significant level of agreement among respondents.

The intense agreement among respondents that television documentaries serve as effective tools for education and awareness-raising on domestic violence resonates with cultivation theory. According to the theory, repeated exposure to media content portraying certain social issues, such as domestic violence, can shape viewers' perceptions and beliefs about the prevalence and significance of those issues in society. In this case, respondents' positive perceptions of the effectiveness of television documentaries suggest that exposure to such content may contribute to a shared understanding of the importance of addressing domestic violence. Similarly, The unanimous agreement among respondents regarding their commitment to avoiding behaviours that could lead to domestic violence reflects cultivation theory's notion of resonance. Resonance occurs when the messages conveyed by media content align with viewers' lived experiences or existing beliefs, reinforcing those beliefs and attitudes. In this instance, the strong sense of personal accountability among respondents may be reinforced by media depictions of the consequences of domestic violence, leading to a heightened awareness of individual responsibility in preventing such behaviours.

5. RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends that media organizations intensify the production and consistent airing of documentaries on domestic violence to deepen public awareness and understanding. To maximize impact, such documentaries should incorporate culturally relevant examples and provide practical preventive strategies that resonate with local audiences. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations should collaborate with broadcasters to sustain campaigns that highlight the dangers of domestic violence and provide access to support services for victims. Additionally, researchers are encouraged to investigate the long-term effects of these documentaries on behavioural change, thereby extending the practical application of cultivation theory in the Nigerian context.

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