

## A cross-cultural analysis of communication patterns between two cultures in Southwest Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Communication scholars estimate that two-thirds of communications are influenced by the culture of the communicator. On this basis, this study examined the Igbo and Yoruba socio-cultural relationships as they influence the management of their communication patterns. Employing the mixed-method research design, the study revealed the cultural affinity in both ethnic groups' communication patterns in the use of honorific greeting, silence, expressiveness (direct or indirectness and touch) and eye contact. This shows that culture has a significant influence on some of the communication patterns of both ethnic groups ( $p > 0.000$ ) while gender also has an influence on both groups ( $r = 0.7$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This shows a slight variation in both ethnic groups in relation to their culturally held values. The findings of this study will play a significant role in the promotion of effective communication and peaceful coexistence among cultural groups.*

**Keywords:** Communication patterns, cultural norms, Igbo, Yoruba, Southwest Nigeria

### Introduction

The development of human culture is made possible through communication, and it is through communication that culture is transmitted from one generation to another. In other words, culture and communication are intertwined (Olaniyi 2017:58). In the process of communicating, difficulties occur as a result of the differences between languages, beliefs or values of the interlocutors involved. All are aspects of culture. Moreover, communication scholars estimate that some two-thirds of communication are non-verbal, accounting for 65% of all communication behaviours (Gamble and Gamble 2002; Novinger 2008). These behaviours are greatly influenced by the culture of the communicator (Novinger 2008). Gudykunst and Kim (2003) emphasize that culture always affects the way interlocutors communicate, because competent speakers know what is or is not acceptable and appropriate in a given context. They know this because they have been socialised into a particular culture and have been made aware of the rules and expectations from an early stage (Olaniyi 2017:58)

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, is estimated to have over 400 different languages and over 300 distinct ethnic groups (Awogbade 2004). In previous decades, especially before the coming of the British to Nigeria, different ethnic groups lived within their geographical territories. There was little contact among these groups. However, over the decades, Nigeria has experienced a rapid influx into new, culturally different territories across the country. Communication among these culturally different people is inevitable. Communication covers all activities that transfer meaning, whether through the spoken word, non-verbal actions or general body language. In transferring meaning, communicators must draw from such factors as their previous experience, cultural affiliations and the present communication environment (Novinger 2008). The communicative behaviour of individuals stems from what their culture has taught them. Novinger (2008) posits that people speak volumes through the behaviour their culture has drilled into them. Culture dictates when individuals may speak and how they may speak. From culture, individuals know when to keep quiet and when to maintain eye contact with an older person. They are

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taught what is 'acceptable' behaviour in public and when eating. Moreover, the types of clothing worn are culture-bound. Novinger (2008) further asserts that most individuals assume that their culture is 'normal': their behaviour and communication patterns are the normal, natural order of things. With the mingling of people and cultures come various forms of communication conflict as culturally different people attempt to live together. Indeed, as Merkin (2009) points out, the mingling of culturally different people highlights the divergence of perspectives between members of different cultures. Careful considerations of these factors show that the individual cannot but see the world through the limited lens of his culture. He believes his learned behaviour is normal until he encounters a person from a different culture. Thus, when such individuals interact with people from other cultures and experience different behaviours and patterns of communication, a sense of irritation and even anger sets in. This is followed by a breakdown of communication.

Moreover, individuals bring certain social and cultural variables to the communication event, as postulated by the concept of ethnography. These variables represent their culture and affect their management of the communication event as seen in their use of certain communication patterns. This study seeks to assess the influence of culture on individual communication patterns among the Igbos living in the Iba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State. This approach will help in resolving various conflicts arising from individual communication patterns influenced by different cultural patterns.

### **Research questions**

What are the communication patterns of the Igbo and the Yoruba people living in Iba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State?

What are the differences between the communication patterns of the Igbo and the Yoruba people living in Iba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State?

How do differences in communication patterns relate to their culturally held values?

How does culture influence the communication patterns of the Igbo and the Yoruba people living in Lagos State?

### **Literature review**

Culture is a process learned formally or informally which encapsulates all societal behaviours. Culture is also people-specific and accounts for the variation in cultural norms among different people. Awogbade (2004) agrees with researchers on one explanation for the difference in culture across peoples. He states that culture is influenced by environmental conditions. This explanation suggests that the physical conditions of a place help to shape the culture of the group of people found there. This is evident among the Igbo people in Lagos State which is a Yoruba environment.

The Igbo people are one of the three largest groups in Nigeria. The population of Igbo people in Nigeria is about 30 million, out of the total population of Nigeria which is approximately 186.86 million (National World Population Review 2017; National Bureau of Statistics 2017). They are located in the east of the lower Niger valley. Their prominent neighbours are the Efik and Ibibio. The Igbo people did not have a large political group or kingdom. Historical accounts say little of the development of Igbo society. However, the linguistic evidence suggests that the Igbo language with other related languages (Yoruba, Edo, Igala and Idoma) evolved in the Niger-Benue sub-family of the Niger-Congo languages (Kwa subfamily) (Awogbade 2004). However, scholars such as Ugorji (2009) support the existence of communal life by stating that the traditional preference for gerontocracy, extended family and communal life is crucial to the definition of the people. The Igbo culture is expressed in the Igbo language, dressing, agriculture, values and beliefs, food, customs in childbirth, marriages and burial, as well as social norms and religion. Hence, this is directly or indirectly manifested in their communication patterns just as the culture of any other people around them.

The Yoruba ethnic group is one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Yoruba constitute over 40 million people and they make up 21% of the country's population of approximately 186.86 million

(National World Population Review 2017; National Bureau of Statistics 2017, see above). The Yoruba people are located in Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo states. They can also be found in Edo, Kogi and Kwara states. Linguistic evidence suggests that the Yoruba language evolved in the Niger-Benue sub-family of Niger-Congo languages (Kwa subfamily) (Awogbade 2004). The Yoruba language is spoken by over 20 million people in Nigeria as a first or second language. This linguistic group, part of the Niger-Congo family, can be further divided into three dialects: Northwest Yoruba, Southeast Yoruba, and Central Yoruba.

Villages in Yoruba land are headed by an *Oba* (King) who oversees all aspects of the community. The position usually runs through the royal family and is inherited. Tasks are delegated to men and women in accordance with gender. The Yoruba Cultural Orientation (2008) states that women are thought to be associated with *ero* or coolness, which is necessary for child rearing, while the men are associated with *lile*, or toughness. In addition, the male is the head of the household and women in the family are subordinate to him. Regarding the extended family, the senior male is the head of the family. Like other groups in Nigeria, the Yoruba people value communal life. They are collectivist, valuing the group over the individual.

In a study of cultural patterns, Awogbade (2004) highlights two major patterns of culture: the ideal and the real culture. The ideal illustrates the behavioural pattern which culture creates and expects of the people. It is how a culture expects individuals to react in given situations. However, ideal patterns may not always be what is acted out in the society, hence the place of real culture. The real pattern refers to the actual behaviour which members of a culture display in real-life situations. For instance, the expected code of conduct in a particular culture may be to vacate a seat for an older person. However, a person may choose to retain a seat in the presence of an elder who is perhaps a stranger. The individual is aware of the expected behaviour in that setting, but does not comply with it appropriately. The ideal culture may be in the head, but the real culture is that which is acted out. People's reaction to issues is not always in accordance with established cultural guidelines, because humans are flexible and can adapt to different situations. Merkin (2009) asserts that factors such as globalisation have increased contact between people from different cultures. As people from different cultures relate, their communication will nevertheless influence their individual cultures. Giri (2003) states that communication and culture have a great influence on one another. An individual's culture certainly influences the way he communicates because of the huge impact that culture has on behaviour. He agrees with Novinger (2008) that a society's culture provides the members with knowledge of how to behave and interpret behaviour in different situations. He makes a relevant point when he explains that as culture advances, communication patterns change. Regarding the influence of cultural norms and values on communication, Merkin (2009) points out that Korean citizens will employ indirect communication because they tend to value Confucianism, which emphasizes harmony and impartiality. Hence, because harmony in relationships is an important Confucian value, Koreans will help others to save face when the issue is sensitive. They do this by ambiguous communication strategies that hide direct requests so that their peer is at liberty to accept or reject their statement.

Thani (2011) discusses the difference in communication styles as the main trigger of misunderstanding in the workplace in his study on the cultural impact on organisational communication. This especially happens between speakers from various cultural backgrounds. He views communication styles from two perspectives: direct/indirect and formal/informal. A traditional Oman saying, "advise me in private but don't embarrass me in public", shows the Oman preference for indirect communication. As stated earlier, certain cultures value people and warm relationships. These traits are categorised as feminine traits, hence such cultures fall under the feminine cultural dimension as classified in an earlier study by Hofstede (2011). The above Oman statement also reflects other feminine traits, such as sensitivity to insult, which induces face-saving behaviour and the unacceptability of public criticism. He further points out that the inability to adapt one's communication style to that of a fellow interactant from a different culture can result in conflict.

On cultural norms and their influence on communication, Thani's (2011) observation of Omani workers' attitude to work is relevant. The Omani worker is more relationship-oriented than task-oriented – a quality of the feminine cultural dimension. For the Omani worker, work is not as important as family and friends. This is evident in Omani employees' tendency to find it challenging to meet deadlines and to be punctual going to work. The study also reports them as being late for meetings and constantly requesting a break. Indeed, an Omani employee says, "Work to me is not everything. My private life and family are far more important." The study opines that Omani workers can discuss home-related issues during working hours. This demonstrates the low power distance present in an Omani work environment as well as the Omani society. Furthermore, family ties are considered important; hence, as an example, funeral attendance by Omani workers can be accepted as an excuse for leaving work. The study states that Omani workers show a preference for group work and are concerned with family relationships and the importance of face-saving. This outlook implies a strong affinity towards the collectivist as well as the feminine cultural dimensions. This study also affirms Hofstede's (2011) description of the Middle Eastern society as collectivist. Hofstede's (2011) theory of Cultural Dimension proposed five dimensions of culture: power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Cultures are multifaceted and dynamic; hence three dimensions of the theory were applied in the study: individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity and power distance.

The Individualism versus Collectivism dimension shows the strength of the ties people have to others within the community. Some cultures place a higher value on individual goals, but others value group goals more. Communities that value group goals are collectivist. In collectivist cultures, relationships are very important. Because the relationship is valued above the cause for discord, collectivist cultures usually avoid direct confrontation. The Masculinity versus Femininity dimension shows 'the extent to which the dominant values in society are "masculine" – that is, assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things, and not caring for others, the quality of life, or people' (Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson 2006: 286). However, cultures that value behaviours such as nurturing and caring for others are feminine in nature. According to a study, achievement, accumulation of wealth and aggressiveness are dominant in masculine cultures while feminine cultures value interpersonal relationships, nurturing, service to and caring for others, particularly the poor and unfortunate (Maloney 2003:3). The Power Distance dimension described the extent to which the less powerful members of a society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Maloney 2003). When a society has a high power distance, it means that members agree that everyone has a specific position. The consensus is that not everyone is equal. Conversely, low power distance implies that the consensus is that everyone is equal and so should be treated equally. Maloney (2003) further states that people in high power distance societies believe in a defined order of inequality with everyone having their rightful place. People learn to respect those in certain positions. Researchers assert that such cultures tend to be more authoritarian and may communicate in ways that emphasize the differences between people.

### **Study methodology**

The study employed mixed-methods research design, while it adopted the survey research method to gather data from the target population. The questionnaire (quantitative method) was used to explore the communication patterns of the study population. Focus group discussion guide and in-depth interview guide were employed to collect data the researcher used to assess the possible cultural source of identified communication patterns.

The study population comprises all the Igbo people living in Iba LCDA. While those of Igbo extraction supplied most of the data for this study, the study gained from relevant information derived from the host culture (the Yoruba people). The inclusion of the Yoruba people was to help distinguish communication patterns displayed by the Igbo people, which are different from those of the Yoruba people. The researcher believed that this distinction would help ascertain and categorise such patterns as culture-based. The study was set in Iba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State, an area subsumed under

Ojo Local Government. It is located off the Lagos/Badagry express road. The people in this area are predominantly Igbo people because of its proximity to the popular Alaba International Market, a vibrant Igbo-dominated electronics market. The nearness of the market has made Iba LCDA 'home' for the merchants who operate in the market.

Demographic information of sex, age and education level of participants in the study were shown in Table I.

<b>Table I: Demographic information of the respondents</b>		
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	150	47.3%
Female	167	52.6%
Total	317	100%
<b>Age</b>		
1-18 years	31	10.3%
19-25 years	131	41.3%
26-30 years	74	24.7%
31-35 years	29	9.7%
36-40 years	24	8.0%
41 years	28	9.3%
Total	317	100%
<b>Educational level</b>		
Educated below Secondary Level	99	31.2%
Educated above Secondary Level	218	79.3%
Total	317	100%

Information in Table I reveals that more female respondents (52.6%) participated in the study than male respondents (47.3%). The age distribution has most of the respondents (41.3%) falling in the age bracket 19-25 years while the least represented age bracket (9.3%) is 41 years and above. Additionally, the majority of the respondents (79.3%) have studied above secondary school level in their various categories.

The purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting Iba LCDA in Lagos State, ensuring that only people from the target ethnic groups were picked. Hence, 400 respondents (200 Igbo people and 200 Yoruba people) who belonged to the target ethnic groups were selected to participate in the study. However, the convenience sampling technique was used to select respondents for the FGD and in-depth interview. The FGD session had 10 participants; six from the Igbo ethnic group and four from the host culture (Yoruba). In addition, the in-depth interview was carried out on four respondents from both ethnic groups. In the end, 317 duly completed copies of the questionnaire were used for analysis of the survey.

Data were collected using the questionnaire, FGD and the in-depth interview guide with the help of research assistants. All information collected through the FGD and in-depth interview sessions was recorded on tape for easy retrieval and transcription for analysis. Data from the FGD and interview sessions were analysed based on the responses derived, while the Friedman T. Test was used to analyse the quantitative data. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test was used to produce a Z-value derived from ranks of responses. The significant value  $p < 0.05$  indicated a statistically significant difference in responses to the questions being compared.

## Results

The three dimensions of the Cultural Dimension theory were applied to analyse the result of the study: individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity and power distance. However, all the findings are presented based on research questions to study the extent to which culture relates to the communication patterns of the two ethnic groups (Igbo and Yoruba).

### **Research Question One: What are the communication patterns of the Igbo and the Yoruba people living in Iba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State?**

The research question is set to observe and highlight the communication patterns employed by the groups under study. Focus group discussion and the interview sessions were employed. Communication patterns here cover actions as well as choice of words and are sometimes situation-bound. The following are the observations from this study.

The study revealed that the communication patterns of both ethnic groups include greeting, use of honorific expressions, silence, expressiveness (direct or indirectness and touch) and eye contact. Both cultures agreed that greeting is a sign that one respects the person being greeted; it also helps to open the door for further interaction. Both cultures dismiss a handshake as a pattern of greeting, saying it is not African. While the Yoruba culture recognizes bowing, curtsying and prostrating, the Igbo culture recognizes a slight bow or at least some bodily movement that helps to indicate respect for the person being greeted. Also, both cultures strongly require the use of honorific expressions when referring to an older person and defaulters are usually scolded. The majority of the participants from both cultures believe that it is disrespectful to address an older person by name. However, in the case of addressing the younger with an honorific, two exceptions were made for the Yoruba ethnic group. First, if the younger is royalty, an honorific is used to address him/her. Second, women who join a particular family by marriage are required to address younger members of their new family with an honorific. Observation from the study revealed an immense importance accorded to age in both cultures, with more emphasis on the Igbo culture. Apparently, the cultural dimension of power distance is closely related to the place of "age" in the cultures under study. Silence may sometimes be necessary for peace, such that if speaking up would lead to chaos, it would be better to keep quiet. This opinion is in line with the collectivistic inclination to save people's face. It emphasises that the cultures under study value people and warm relationships and since these traits are categorised as feminine traits, the target cultures fall under the feminine cultural dimension.

The majority of the respondents from both cultures are subtle about airing their views if they disagree with another's opinion. As one person explained:

if an elder is concerned, disagreement must be stated with subtlety. In this case, the individual may approach another elder, outside the formal gathering, to state the disagreement. That elder then presents the disagreement in place of the individual. Among age mates, however, disagreements can be made directly (A male Igbo participant).

Also, both cultures expect a high control of emotion. It was discovered that a high control of emotion is needed, as showing affection is hardly encouraged. It was pointed out that though emotions are to be restrained, men have no reservations about expressing anger openly, even though they are practically forbidden to cry openly. Hence, the premise: certain emotions may be expressed, but not some others.

As one person put it:

showing unnecessary emotion is not acceptable except perhaps between mother and child and pecking and hugging are strange to the culture. Culture expects high control of emotion even between spouses. The family arranges the marriage so the issue of love is hardly a factor for marriage as marriage is basically for procreation. The wife is usually under the care of her mother-in-law and is called upon whenever her husband needs her to satisfy his sexual needs (A male Igbo participant).

Another Yoruba interviewee observes that:

In Yoruba culture, a high control of emotion is needed as showing emotion is hardly encouraged and seen as a sign of weakling. Though emotions are to be restrained, men have no reservations about expressing anger openly even though they are practically forbidden to cry openly. Hence, the premise; certain emotions may be expressed, but not some others.

This shows the importance of men controlling their emotion in both cultures. Worthy of note is the demarcation made by the Yoruba ethnic group: when one is being reprimanded for a wrong action, one looks away. However, one is expected to look up when one is being advised. While maintaining eye contact in the first case may be interpreted as defiance or lack of remorse, looking away in the second case may communicate a lack of interest in what is being said. In addition, an Igbo interviewee maintains that eye contact should be intermittent when listening to an elder.

**Research Question Two: What are the differences in the communication patterns of the Igbo and the Yoruba people living in Iba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State?**

This question aimed to probe the differences present in the communication patterns of the ethnic groups under study. Tables 2 and 3 were used to indicate the responses received on the issue.

S/N	Interpersonal communication	YORUBA	IGBO
1.	I believe greeting is a way of communicating respect	98%	96.4%
2	My culture considers it disrespectful to call an older person by name	95.1%	83.8%
3	My culture considers it disrespectful not to greet an older person	94.5%	94%
4	I consider it disrespectful not to greet an older person	90.2%	91.7%
5.	I believe greeting is an obligation	70.3%	77%
6	My culture considers a handshake not adequate as a greeting style (while encouraging bowing, curtsy etc)	84.6%	50%
7.	I consider a younger person disrespectful if he/she calls me by my name	63.4%	60.1%
8.	My culture accepts a handshake as a greeting style	23.8%	57.1%
	SD	20	16.6
	N=273, Chi-square= 12.9, df= 1, sig= 0.000		

Table 2 establishes the differences in the communication patterns of the ethnic groups using the Friedman nonparametric test. This shows a significant difference in communication patterns in the interpersonal communication relationship among the Igbo and Yoruba people (Chi-square= 12.9, df= 1, p.value<0.000). This shows that interpersonal communication has a significant role to play in both cultures. In essence, both share similar beliefs as far as interpersonal communication is concerned. However, there exist minute difference on the issue of a handshake as shown in item 8. This means that while the Igbo accept a handshake, the Yoruba may consider it as disrespectful.

S/N	Verbal/ Non-verbal communication	YORUBA	IGBO
1.	I keep quiet when I have nothing to say during a conversation	95.9%	95.9%
2	My culture considers it respectful to be quiet when older ones are having a conversation	93.1%	94.1%
3	My culture considers it rude to look directly at an elder during a conversation	83.3%	52.9%
4	Silence in conversation makes people uncomfortable	77.8%	82.8%
5	My culture equates silence with wisdom	73.6%	62.6%

6.	I find something to say even when I have nothing to say during a conversation	24.3%	35.9%
7.	My culture equates silence with ignorance	18.4%	28.0%
8.	My culture encourages direct eye contact with an elder during a conversation	16.7%	42.1%
	SD	14	12
	N= 273, Chi-square= 1.6, df= 1, sig= 0.202		

Table 3 establishes the communication pattern in the use of verbal and non-verbal communication among the Igbo and Yoruba people. The test shows a significant difference in communication pattern in the use of verbal and non-verbal communication in both cultures (Chi-square= 1.6, df= 1, p.value<0.202). This shows that verbal and non-verbal communication has a significant role in both cultures. In essence, both cultures share similar beliefs in the use of verbal and non-verbal communication.

### **Research Question Three: How do differences in communication patterns based on gender relate to culturally held values?**

The question seeks to explore the relationship between communication patterns and cultural values based on gender; how culture shaped greeting styles and direct/indirectness in communication, and how it influences particular communication styles. The interview sessions revealed certain distinctions in the communication pattern based on gender.

The two ethnic groups show that there are distinctions in the gender communication pattern as revealed in the study. In the marriage setting, the wife is expected to address the husband in an honorific way. The woman is permitted to be expressive even though it is seen as an expression of weakness. The masculine gender is not permitted to be expressive (though a man has no reservations about expressing anger). Although age grade meetings are gender-specific, women do not talk in meetings that are not gender-specific – such as family meetings. In essence, if men are present, women are restricted from speaking. They may speak freely in meetings that are female-only. An interviewee added that whatever is served at those non gender-specific meetings gets to the men first, especially the eldest. Here, gender supersedes age in which younger men are served before older women.

On the matter of expressiveness, while males may disagree directly without any hitch, females may not. One of the Yoruba interviewees stated that:

though anyone can express disagreement directly, the man may get away with it more easily than the woman. Women who react directly may be reprimanded for doing so while their male counterpart may not (A female Yoruba participant).

S/N	ITEMS	MALE	FEMALE
1.	I believe greeting is a way of communicating respect	156.5	159.9
2.	I believe greeting is an obligation	149.9	156.1
3.	I consider it disrespectful not to greet an older person	153.4	157.3
4.	My culture considers it disrespectful not to greet an older person	150.0	152.6
5.	My culture considers a handshake not adequate as a greeting style (while encouraging bowing, curtsy, etc.)	152.8	155.4
6.	I consider a younger person disrespectful if he/she calls me by my name	151.7	162.9
7.	My culture considers it disrespectful to call an older person by name	140.6	157.1
8.	My culture accepts a handshake as a greeting style	135.6	173.6
	SD	7.9	5.2
	N= 135, chi square=20.7, df= 1, sig=0.000		



Table 4 shows the mean rank of the responses from respondents of both ethnic groups; that the differences in the interpersonal relationship of male and female respondents is significant (chi square=20.7, df= 1,  $p < .05$ ). This shows that gender has an influence on interpersonal communication in both cultures. Participants in the FGD and the interview sessions revealed some of the differences in the communication patterns between the females and the males. Based on the issue of wives addressing their husbands with an honorific, in Yoruba a wife may not call her husband by his name. Because the culture teaches that he is lord of her, she must use an honorific to address him. Another difference is the liberty of the males to disagree directly while females may not. An interviewee from the Yoruba group stated that:

although males and females could disagree directly, the female had a higher chance of being reprimanded for being so vocal. Hence, over time, females may adopt an indirect pattern of disagreeing or airing their opinion (A female Yoruba participant).

The Igbo members of the FGD stated that Igbo culture requires the females to “be seen and not heard” hence they may not air an opinion without being called upon to do so. They will also adopt an indirect pattern of disagreeing or airing their opinion. Moreover, males may not be expressive (except for emotions like anger) while females are at liberty to be somewhat expressive of their emotions. An interviewee asserted that:

while the males will be considered weak if they cry in public, females feel no restrictions in that regard. A woman is permitted to be expressive even though it is seen as an expression of weakness; thus, the discreet relationship between women and weakness. In meetings, where women are present, they do not talk. Also, any refreshment shared in such meetings gets to the men first even if the women present are older than any of the men. Here, gender supersedes age (A male Igbo participant).

Having considered the cultural placement of women in both cultures and observed some imbalance, it is not unusual to find that communication patterns such as the use of an honorific, the use of silence and expressiveness will be utilised differently by the two cultures. Hence, gender influences communication patterns to a large extent.

#### **Research Question Four: How does culture influence the communication patterns of the Igbo and the Yoruba people living in Lagos State?**

This question seeks to assess the level of influence culture has on the communication patterns of the study population. Using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test, the study compared respondents’ responses to questions about their communication patterns versus questions on what their culture expects of them.

Table 5 shows the result of the test. “Ties” are for responses that are the same for both questions whereas “negative” and “positive” ranks represent the cases where the responses did not tally. It produces a Z-value which is derived from ranks of responses. The significant value  $p < 0.05$  indicates a statistically significant difference in responses to the questions being compared. This difference illustrates that individuals’ communication pattern is significantly different from their culture’s expectation.

Questionnaire Items	Yoruba			Igbo		
	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks

Question 4/3 My culture considers it disrespectful not to greet an older person/I consider it disrespectful not to greet an older person.	Negative Ranks	6	4.00	24.00	Negative Ranks	10	8.50	85.00
	Positive Ranks	1	4.00	4.00	Positive Ranks	6	8.50	51.00
	Ties	134			Ties	150		
	Total	141			Total	166		
	Z	-1.890			Z	-1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.059			Sig. (2-tailed)	.317		
Question 8/7 My culture considers it disrespectful to call an older person by name /I consider a younger person disrespectful if he/she calls me by my name.	Negative Ranks	45	24.00	1080.00	Negative Ranks	44	25.00	1100.00
	Positive Ranks	2	24.00	48.00	Positive Ranks	5	25.00	125.00
	Ties	94			Ties	110		
	Total	141			Total	159		
	Z	-6.272			Z	-5.571		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
Question 21/17 My culture prefers subtle disagreement/ If I disagree with somebody, I find a subtle way to say so.	Negative Ranks	22	32.00	704.00	Negative Ranks	34	30.00	1020.00
	Positive Ranks	41	32.00	1312.00	Positive Ranks	25	30.00	750.00
	Ties	72			Ties	91		
	Total	135			Total	150		
	Z	-2.394			Z	-1.172		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017			Sig. (2-tailed)	.241		
Question 20/18 My culture prefers direct disagreement/ If I disagree with somebody, I say so directly.	Negative Ranks	12	25.00	300.00	Negative Ranks	26	32.50	845.00
	Positive Ranks	37	25.00	925.00	Positive Ranks	38	32.50	1235.00
	Ties	90			Ties	91		
	Total	139			Total	155		
	Z	-3.571			Z	-1.500		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			Sig. (2-tailed)	.134		

Table 5 revealed that the Yoruba group's responses to questionnaire items 3/4, 8/7, 21/17 and 18/20 were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), while for the Igbo group, only items 8/7 were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the Yoruba group culture has a significant influence on the individuals' greeting pattern ( $p > 0.000$ ), a way of showing disagreement ( $p > 0.017$ ), how individuals show disagreement and manage conflict ( $p > 0.000$ ). The similarity to questions 8/7 in both culture, shows that their communication style here may not conform to the culture's expectation as they will permit younger ones to address them using their names. It could be inferred that the communication pattern of the Igbo people is, to a higher degree, affected by the culture in comparison to the Yoruba.

## Discussion

Greeting as a communication pattern was shown in the interaction of the cultures. Abioye (2011:72) stated that, "... greeting is regarded as a social interaction facilitator and a precursor for enhanced positive results ..." Ayanleke (2013:142) confirmed further:

One of the aspects of Yoruba traditional education is greetings. It is one of the most important virtues of the Yorubas which they always pass on to their children is respect for elders and

reverence for one another. This is clearly demonstrated in greetings. As a child grows up, he will be taught how to greet people. A boy prostrates while a girl kneels down when greeting to show sign of respect. As the child grows up, he/she becomes used to this tradition.

Both cultures strongly support the use of honorifics when referring to an older person, which is however influenced by age. Moreover, Ugorji (2009) affirmed that the use of honorifics is a form of respect. Hence, the younger greets first and the older responds. Observation from the study reveals an immense importance accorded to age in both cultures with more emphasis on the Igbo culture. Nevertheless, Nwoye (2011) hints at the importance of age because, from the Igbo ethnic group, age is highly valued. Elders are recognized through their caps which carry a number of eagle feathers; the more feathers, the higher the age/level of the elder so that respect is accorded appropriately. This assertion agrees with Ugorji's (2009) report that violation of the address requirements offends the cultural sensibilities of the society. Hence, offenders are usually rebuked and expected to make necessary adjustments. This is respect for elders with the traditional gerontocracy practised by the Igbo where leadership is by elders, suggesting an interrelationship among the variables of authority, age and status. However, Elegbeleye's (2005:21-25) study reveals that the Yoruba and Igbo culture have very similar belief and attitudes towards greeting. He, therefore, asserts that greeting behaviour as it is construed by the two ethnic groups serves similar social interactional purposes, even though the scripting symbols or emblems may be different.

The address requirements include addressing older ones by their title, praise name or the generally accepted "Dede/Dada". This communication pattern seems to be less enforced among the Igbo people than among the Yoruba people. This little difference between their communication patterns shows the better inter-ethnic relationship between both cultures. Regarding expressiveness and cultural values, Ene's (2000) view on the Igbo traditional creed shows they demand unflinching fidelity to family and friends making individualism unattractive in the Igbo society. Lozanski (2010) presents West Africa (Nigeria inclusive) to be ranked 20% on the individualism scale. This shows that Nigerian society is far more collectivist than individualist.

Several studies confirm that in collectivist cultures, relationships are very important. Because the relationship is valued above the cause for discord, collectivist cultures usually avoid direct confrontation. Thus, a person will prefer to wait for the tension to subside before presenting a matter that can cause discord. The implication is that elders will not confront another elder in front of a younger person so as to save the face of the older one. The relationship is more important than the discord, so usually people can wait before presenting their argument. Both cultures show a collectivist approach to the relationship which suggests that there will be cordial communication between both cultures. This is supported by Awogbade (2004) who acknowledges that the Yoruba are known to be diplomatic in their dealings among themselves and with the outsiders. This may relate to their penchant to be very expressive whether in showing gratitude or other emotions. An interview of Yoruba origin claims that the Yoruba are effusive in their greeting style. This diplomatic tendency may be responsible for their ability to turn on such expressiveness as suits the particular situation. This assertion can be linked to Ayanleke's (2013:143) views that:

Yoruba traditional education revolves around good character (*iwa*), Yoruba lay more emphasis on *Iwa* and it is the end product of all training that one gets from both home and society. If one is called 'Omoluabi' (a well-behaved person) such person is regarded as a highly responsible person. It means such as person is from a good home, has a good character and has all it takes to be associated with.

The communication pattern based on gender shows some distinction. The women are expected to address their husbands with an honorific; they are not permitted to be expressive in a male gathering. Women do not talk in meetings that are not gender-specific – such as family meetings, gender supersedes age such that younger men are served before older women and females who react directly may be reprimanded for doing so while their male counterparts may not. This may be due to the women's economic

power in relation to gender and the cultural value system in Nigeria which affirms that women are economically disadvantaged because most ethnic groups in Nigeria do not allow the Nigerian woman to be economically independent. Nwankwo (2001) established that, in the Igbo society, a woman is not permitted to inherit her husband's estate. Instead, she is inherited along with the estate by another male in the family Nwoye (2011). This further supports that masculinity dominates the gender ideology among the Igbo. Regarding the Yoruba society, Familusi (2012) notes that it is not impossible for single women to inherit property (from their fathers), but this is not always the case for married women because of the belief that they belong to their husbands. This economic disadvantage may manifest in communication styles that restrict women from talking when men are talking, permit the man to disagree directly without fear of being reprimanded, while the woman must be cautious of direct disagreement, addressing males (mostly husbands) with an honorific and other such communication patterns that suggest the subordination of the female. Having considered the cultural placement of women in both cultures and observed some imbalance, it is not unusual to find that communication patterns such as the use of an honorific, the use of silence and expressiveness will be utilised differently by the two groups. Hence, gender influences communication patterns to a large extent.

This can be linked to Familusi's (2012; 300) study which states that

The Yoruba nation like many other African societies is essentially patriarchal; hence men are understood to be more privileged than women. Such a society is described (Ubrurhe 1999:82) as that which is characterized by male superordination and female subordination ... Men show superiority over their women counterparts, who are usually relegated to the background. This has consistently manifested in various ways ...

This assertion hints that the ethnic societies under study are patriarchal. As a result, men are more favoured than women. This privilege has manifested in various ways including the communication patterns of the male and female groups. Regarding interpersonal relationships, it is clear that these two groups have different styles of communicating. One cultural dimension from the working theory is the masculinity/femininity dimension. In highly masculine cultures, social roles between men and women are more clearly defined. While males are more likely to undertake task-related roles, females will take on socio-emotional roles. In such societies, males are usually dominant in the society and occupy the power structures. Regarding age and cultural values, Ugorji (2009) notes the "traditional gerontocracy practised by the Igbo where leadership is by elders". This statement helps highlight the value of age in the Igbo society. Also, the Yoruba Cultural Orientation (2008) states that the elderly are always respected in the Yoruba society.

The reason is that the Yoruba believe that knowledge comes with age. Hence, these societies honour the elderly and its young look forward to growing old as there is an evident relationship between age and authority. Indeed, Nigeria is ranked (alongside other West African countries) at 77% on the power distance scale and this apparent distance between the young and the old is evidence of this ranking. Also, the disparity in a culture's expectation and individual's behaviour may not be unconnected with the assertion from Merkin's (2009) study to the effect that globalisation and an increased level of cultural integration have a significant effect on prevailing cultural beliefs and practices. On the other hand, responses that corresponded with cultural expectations further conform to Merkin's findings that despite widespread global influences, cultural values still have some impact on communication. "Thus, even though global forces appear to be strong, so are our traditions". Previous studies opine that collectivist communities such as the groups under study will favour the indirect approach in communication to avoid conflict, save others' face and build warm relationships. As Merkin (2009) says, substituting direct communication with indirect communication is considered to be an important way to help others save face. Thanni's (2011) study explains that Omani workers are concerned with family relationships and the importance of face-saving; an outlook that implies a strong affinity towards the collectivist cultural dimension. The ethnic groups under study – being collectivistic – have this outlook of face-saving. This is

advanced by an interviewee's view that a subtle way of expressing disagreement is preferred because "anger may be fresh" at the point of conflict so time is given to let the anger dissipate.

### Conclusion/recommendations

The study established that culture has a significant influence on the people's communication patterns based on gender, greeting, honorific, silence, expressiveness (direct or indirectness and touch) and eye contact and others. The intercultural relationship among people opens doors for various forms of communication conflict as culturally different people attempt to live together. This inter-relationship of different people highlights the divergence of perspectives between them based on their different cultures. The smooth interpersonal/cultural relationships between both cultures (Yorubas and Igbos) was based on their cultural affinity which eventually affects their communication relationships. Hence, with globalisation and an increase in intercultural relations through political, economic and educational connections, it is important that cultural differences are studied and harnessed to work for the good of ethnic groups. Such knowledge will surely help in checking disasters that can result from poor intercultural communication ethics and possibly reduce the inclination toward ethnocentrism. Regarding family relationships, family members should make an effort to understand some of these cultural norms that drive patterns of communication. This is especially relevant even in intercultural marriages so that potential conflict situations are reduced as much as possible. Hence, understanding variations in the Igbo/Yoruba cultural communication will help ethnic groups anticipate probable areas of communication conflict while promoting effective communication and peaceful coexistence among cultural groups. We note more commonalities than differences in communication behaviour among communities with similar cultural traditions.

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