

EXPOUNDING THE DIVERSITY OF AFRICAN CONSTRUCTION OF FERTILITY: THE YORÙBÁ EXAMPLE

© 2020 Fausat Motunrayo Ibrahim

IBRAHIM Fausat Motunrayo, PhD, MPH, Senior Lecturer, Federal College of Forestry, Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria, Jericho Hills, PMB 5087, Ibadan, Nigeria, e-mail: fausatibrahim@gmail.com

Abstract. *While African population dynamics are typically referenced even in global demographic discourses, there is indeed a dearth of interpretive understanding of cultural construction of fertility among African ethnic groups. This article is a report of an ethnologic exploration of indigenous construction of fertility among rural Yorùbá farmers. Farmers were targeted because of their surviving 'traditionality' amongst other factors. Findings validate the commonplace assumption underscoring pro-fertile African value for children. More interestingly, findings yielded low-fertility compliant and even neutrality-laden fertility-related Yorùbá cultural construction. Among other things, findings demonstrate that the character of fertility-related Yorùbá construction is adaptive, empathetic and integrative, thereby affirming that the traditional veneration of the fertile is huge but non-sacrosanct.*

Keywords: *Fertility, Africa, Indigenous knowledge, Population, Interpretivism, Oral knowledge, Culture*

DOI: 10.31132 / 2412-5717-2020-53-4-77-95

Introduction

Population is conceptually related to numbers, enabling demographers to eschew cultural phenomenon. In delineating 'the proper role of culture in demographic explanation', Kertzer (1997, 137) expounded that demographers' 'lament', 'champion' or, like most do, 'ignore' the 'culture' predicament in demography. Demographers typically proceed in a fashion that cultural anthropologists would disapprove, with nomothetically grounded approaches that fail to acknowledge the idiosyncrasies of world peoples. 'Putting it boldly, we might say that demographic research today is rooted in the belief that people everywhere are basically the same' Kertzer (1997, 138).

The dangers of the culture-deficient approach to population scholarship are reflected in approaches towards altering or modifying population trends. Obono (2003) provided a robust review of the Nigerian population policy of 1988, which proffered a unitary standard of expected fertility in a country with diverse ethno-demographic expectations. Despite its lofty aims, the policy unsurprisingly fell short of expectations as indicated by trends showing that fertility reduction is typically marginal. The policy can hardly even take credit for the typically marginal reduction in fertility. This is because such reduction was probably consequent upon harsh economic environments occasioned by government expunction of subsidies for health and education. The government policy was to meet-up with the prerequisites of obtaining loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Obono 2003). Enough cannot be said about the importance of cultural perspectives in demographic enquiry. Demography concerns death, birth and other significant life events that concurrently constitute the essences of personal and cultural lives. In his 'Theory of Culture for Demography', Hammel (1990) expounded as follows:

Culture, it is claimed, may explain why communities or persons living under apparently identical economic conditions but differing in language or tradition, often behave very differently demographically. Culture may explain why the population of a geographic region or linguistic area continues to behave demographically in much the same way overtime, even though economic conditions change. Culture may explain why demographic differentials between populations persist even as the level of some demographic measure for all of them exhibit similar change over time. The use of culture as an analytic principle might elevate contextualization to a higher level. Thus, although an explanation grounded in a culture may offer no generality, behavioral explanations grounded in culture in general would (p. 455).

To ignore cultural dictates is to ignore a pristine tool of human understanding, thereby resulting in strategies devoid of touch with reality. Needless to say, that the 1988 Nigerian population policy experience was borne out of a myopic, 'monocultural approach' (Obono 2003, 109). The policy may be the outcome of 'official pretension or as a form of internal cultural imperialism – imposing the orientations of a majority group on the rest of the country – that passed unnoticed because accoutered in the sacred mantle of demographic science' (Ibid, 109). Culture is reality. 'As models of reality, cultural patterns constitute the perceived worlds of human actors and define the significance of behaviors and institutions for the analyst. Beginning with cultural models of reality allows demographers to discover what is significant from the point of view of the actors themselves' (Fickle 1997, 828).

Perhaps the greatest undoing of the culturally-eschewed demography is located within African demographic milieu, specifically, the demography of Africa south of the Sahara. Africa's demography is certainly unique and the literature is replete with concerns over her population growth. 'Africa is experiencing the world's highest population growth, which will add 1.3 billion people to the continent by 2050. This means that Africa is uniquely getting younger while the rest of the world prepares for ageing populations' (Lancet 2017, 96). The colossal legacies of nomothetic demographic regimes in African discourses directly indicate the ingress of decontextualised knowledge which is devoid of respect for African logics and values, thereby making several products of demography to be culturally illegitimate¹. Certainly, monolithic Africa is a mirage. A meaningful engagement of cultural materials must be ethnological, located within specific circle of a cultural bundle like the Yorùbá.

Yorùbá people are over thirty-six million in Nigeria². Long before colonialism, Yorùbá people had created 'sophisticated forms of indigenous philosophy' which serve directional functions in social relationships even in current history (Omobowale 2008, 205). Upon colonization, European influence was intense in southern Nigeria, making European culture to be more impressed in this region (Davis and Kalu-Nwivu 2001). Educated elite evolved among the Yorùbá as the people embraced Christianity and western education, and the first Nigerian university was situated in southwestern Nigeria. This promoted the study of the region with the consequence that the Yorùbá has been, debatably, the most studied ethnic group in Africa south of the Sahara (Falola 1999). Meanwhile, contrary positions have indicated that colonialism inhibited the production of knowledge rooted in the indigenous tradition of Africans in general. Even the universities that were created were done with the supposition that they will be pre-occupied with the transference of western theories and knowledge, making libraries in Africa to be plagued with the dearth of African oriented books and materials (Paulos 2008). Omobowale (2013) recounted:

The exposure of African social science scholarship to the global academy has been dependent and peripheral. Its peripheral nature is not unconnected to the fact that social

¹ This in part, has called for a reconstruction of demographic transition theory, the tool of demography par excellence (see, for example, Caldwell, 1976).

² The Yorùbá people constitute 18% (Okolie *et al.* 2018) of the Nigerian population which is currently 201 million (United Nations Population Fund, 2019).

science theories and methodology are dependent on Western discoveries and scholarship. Groundbreaking paradigmatic postulations are hardly advanced from Africa. Even when they are advanced, such paradigmatic postulations hardly gain international relevance, and they are largely spurned by the local scholarly public (p. 3).

Olutayo (2014) pointed out that respect for *verstehen* should necessarily entail the incorporation of African indigenous knowledge in research for apt policy making in the quest for African development. Other scholars including Gareau (1988) and Park (1988) have expressed concerns over dependency of African scholarship. Nonetheless, the Yorùbá are truly and richly endowed with vast oral knowledge resources with ingrained precepts and understandings.

The Yorùbá are very poetic. The values, beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, philosophies and other motivations of Yorùbá people, like several of their African counterparts, are amassed in multitude of oral resources like proverbs, sayings, songs, *Ifá* literary corpus, etc. Even personal names are not left out (Akinnaso 1983). By extension, fertility related constructions, motivations and philosophies are located within these resources. Everyday life and speech are filled with cultural oral capitals, the varying sources of these capitals notwithstanding. Barber (1984) asserted that

Yorùbá oral literature in general appears like a vast stock of verbal materials – themes, formulas, stories, poetic idioms, which can float through the permeable boundaries of all the genres and be incorporated into them to fulfill different functions. Genres freely incorporate parts of other genres, with much sharing and borrowing of material (p. 510-1).

Ifá Literary Corpus is the most sacred of all. The central thesis of Adegbindin (2014) is that *Ifá* is philosophical. It is ‘an ancient monument where the culture of the Yorùbá is encapsulated, enthroned and entombed. Also, *Ifá* is seen as a practice which embodies Yorùbá beliefs, history, sociology and ecology. ...Yorùbá practices and cultural paradigm could be discerned, studied and appreciated from many *Ifá* verses’ (Olademo 2009, 49). *Ifá* is also a central tool of Yorùbá religion, which is consulted to direct human actions towards desired ends. Yorùbá proverbs are the most featured and cited in Yorùbá oral texts (Barber 1999). Their functions are numerous, including constituting the structure for Yorùbá language (Delano 1979), such that the citing of a proverb already summarises the essence of a discussion or issue. Yorùbá people often say that *òwe l’ẹsin òrò* (proverbs are the horses of words or ideas). This indicates that proverbs drive home points or essences, as stated earlier. Proverbs are also normative, and they can be invoked for the avoidance of bluntness (Fadipe 1970). Indeed, Yorùbá oral capital is fuller than has been expounded here. Interestingly, Akiwowo (1986) developed explanatory principles from an *Ifá* Literary Corpus, *Àyáǝ Asùwàdà*. *Asùwàdà* was explicated by Payne (1992) as indicating that ‘all beings were created alone, but the perpetuation of existence is predicated upon the association of “similar types”. ... Humans are beings who possess certain intrinsic qualities that make it possible for them to bond together and form purposeful unions’ (p. 179). Although Akiwowo’s (1986) effort has been subjected to criticisms (Lawuyi and Taiwo 1990; Adesina 2002), it remains a solid evidence that Yorùbá oral capital is potential source of philosophizing. Hence, this article is a report of a study that was committed to the exploration and interpretation of fertility-related Yorùbá oral knowledge, with a view to unearthing Yorùbá motives and precepts regarding same.

Methodology

Study design

This study was designed to be exploratory and interpretive. Fertility discourses in Yorùbá oral capital were explored and interpreted.

Procedure of Data collection

The Yorùbá people of Southwestern Nigeria were the study population. Yorùbá farmers constituted the primary target for the study. This is justified because farming is the traditional

occupation of the study population and those who have remained farmers are plausibly more traditional in orientation than those who are not. This was also why the study was situated in rural communities. There are six states in Southwestern Nigeria. Oyo and Osun States were selected: Ìgbòho and Gbòngán were selected from each state respectively.

The king of Gbòngán was very resourceful in helping to gain entry at Gbòngán. He was also generous in his welcome and readiness to provide support of other varying dimensions. He helped in reaching key informants and farmers' guild. At Ìgbòho, farmer groups were approached directly. The leadership was very considerate and provided required support in reaching prospective participants. Virtually all prospective participants demonstrated willingness to partake in the study. They were screened to ensure they meet the inclusion criteria of being farmer and being Yorùbá. Participants were offered little gifts in order to register appreciation for their audience.

Data Collection Techniques

Altogether, twelve focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to evolve consensual insights. Six FGDs were conducted in each community – three among females – one each among younger, middle-age and older generations. This was replicated among males. The three generations were defined as being ≤ 29 years; being 30-59 years old and being ≥ 60 years old. Twenty-four in-depth interviews (IDIs) were also conducted. Twelve were in each research site (6 among males and 6 among females – 2 from each of the three generations). Eight key-informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted to gather uncommon knowledge from *Ifá* priests (Babaláwo) and community Chiefs. Four KIIs were conducted in each community (2 among males and 2 among females – one each from middle-age and older generations). On the whole, 128 participants were featured in the study.

The basic research question was centered on asking about fertility-related Yorùbá sayings, idioms, songs, proverbs, *Ifá* Literary Corpus and other axioms. Follow-up questions were asked to probe initial responses for more information and elaboration. To avoid loss of data, all sessions were recorded on audio devices. The influences of gender and generation on emerging codes were probed. Basic demographic information were collected.

Data Analysis

Data emersion was the initial step in data analysis. Data were played back again and again to get a sense of participants' submissions. The language of communication during data collection was Yorùbá, so data were translated to English language and transcribed. The process of translation and transcription also engendered further immersion. Analysis of data was inductive; contents of data informed the codes that were developed. Coding was aided by the Nvivo software. Verbatim accounts of Yorùbá concepts, sayings, proverbs, axioms, etc. were identified. The influence of data collection technique (FGDs, KIIs and IDIs); gender (male, female) and generation (younger, middle-age and older) were probed using coding query and matrix coding query, but this was futile.

Ethical Consideration

Participants were informed about the essence of the study. They were told that the study posed no risk to them. It was explained to them that their anonymity was guaranteed, that their submissions would be used only for research purposes, and that they were at liberty to opt out of participation at any time. Their informed consent was documented through appending their signature or thumb print on introductory forms. This study's proposal was submitted to the Faculty of Social Science, University of Ibadan Institutional Review Board for ethical approval and it was approved (assigned number UI/SSHREC/2018/0030).

Findings

Socio-demographic Profile of Participants

As anticipated, sex and generation were evenly distributed among participants. A preponderance (93%) of participants was married but a noticeable per cent (7) was single. None was divorced or widowed. The distribution of formal education among participants indicated that 35.2%, 27.3%, 25.8% and 11.7% respectively were secondary school certificate holders, had no formal education, were primary school certificate holders and had tertiary education respectively. Basic education is very satisfactory among participants. Most of the participants (53.1%) were Muslims, 28.1% practiced Christianity and 18.8% were practitioners of Traditional religion. Up to 2 out of every 10 participants identified themselves as practitioners of traditional religion. This is indeed an indication of a good measure of cultural survival among participants. This is a vindication of the basis of selecting the target population of this study. Mean age was 46.07 ± 19.48 .

Fertility-related Yorùbá Oral Knowledge

Three major constellations of fertility-related resources emerged from the data. They include:

- Value-laden, pro-fertile Yorùbá cultural knowledge
- Low-fertility compliant Yorùbá cultural knowledge
- Neutrality-laden Yorùbá cultural knowledge

Value-laden, pro-fertile Yorùbá oral knowledge

Tremendous pro-fertile Yorùbá knowledge was accrued from the data. They included pro-fertile Yorùbá sayings, pro-fertile Yorùbá songs and pro-fertile *Ifá* Literary Corpus.

Pro-fertile Yorùbá sayings

Yorùbá sayings reflecting pro-fertility were numerous. Some group discussants represented one as follows:

Yorùbá people say a person who has just one child is no different from a person who is childless (*ọlómọ kan ò kúrò lágàn*). We use this to justify the need to have many children, or to express the fear that a child could die and make his/her parents childless (Male, middle-age generation)

An in-depth interviewee also stated as follows:

Another saying is that a parent of two is the one who is no longer barren, one child is not assuring (*ọlómọ méjì ló ràgàn, ọlọ kan ò pé rará*). This is so because of sickness that used to claim the lives of children. People believed that if any of the children die, they will still have hope because the children are many (Female, younger generation)

A key informant also stated as follows:

Yorùbá people use to say that we should bear children for death and bear children for disease (*ká bí tìkú fúkú, ká bí tàrùn fàrùn*). The saying is said to emphasize that one has to bear many children in case of tragedy (Male, older generation)

Other data reflecting pro-fertile Yorùbá sayings are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Other pro-fertile Yorùbá sayings*

S/No.	Pro-fertile Yorùbá sayings
1	Yes, he who bears children indeed owns the world (<i>ọlómọ ló layé</i>). This is because a person who bears no children stands to gain nothing. When one grows old, the children will be the ones to take care of one. Child is central (<i>ọmọ ni kókó</i>)

S/No.	Pro-fertile Yorùbá sayings
2	We do say that one child is not assuring (<i>olómọ kan ò láyọ lé</i>)
3	Yorùbá people say that children are the gains of the world (<i>omọ ni èrè ayé</i>)
4	They also say children are adornments (<i>omọ ni iyi omọ nide</i>)
5	Yorùbá people love children tremendously. Children are important to the Yorùbá. Yorùbá people say that the barren has not achieved the essence of life (<i>enití ò bímọ ò rá yé wá</i>)
6	They also say it is the person who has children that is buried by children (<i>eni tó bímọ lomọ nín</i>)
7	One's child is one's tomorrow (<i>omọ eni lẹ la eni</i>). When we toil and toil but fail to achieve our desires, our children will achieve same (<i>ohun tí ọwọ mi o tẹ, ọwọ omọ mi o tẹ</i>). For example, my mother never bought a car but I have been using a car
8	Yorùbá people say that if fire dies, ashes will remain; when banana tree dies off, its offspring will replace it (<i>bíná kú a ferú bojú; bọgèdè kú fọmọ ẹ rọpò</i>)
9	They also say children are better than money (<i>omóyájowó</i>), children triumph over money (<i>omó borí ówó</i>), I cherish children more than I cherish gold (<i>omó wùmí ju góólù lọ</i>)
10	Yorùbá people also believe that a person who has no child is like a snake that crawls on a rock (<i>eni tí ò bímọ dàbí ejò tó kojá lóri àpáta</i>), leaving no traces behind

* The profile of those who provided these data is highly varied

Pro-fertile Yorùbá songs

Participants sang several songs which accentuated Yorùbá value for children and consequently pro-fertility. Most of the songs were rendered by women but some men also sang. Some group discussants sang as follows:

Olómọ ló layé éè 2x
Omọ niyì
Omọ lẹye
Olómọ ló layé

The person who has children owns the world 2x
 Children are pride
 Children are befitting
 The person who has children owns the world
 (Female, middle-age generation)

Some group discussants also rendered a song which concurrently reflects taking pride in one's child and prayer for one's child to be financially blessed:

Àjàgbé, Àlàgbé, Kábírù,
Olúwa ló fì fún mi
O ti sísé rẹ lórùn, o wá gbowó láyé
Owó Èkó pẹlú Ìbàdàn a wá ọ wálé
Owó Èkó pẹlú Ìbàdàn a wá ọ wálé
Àjàgbé, Àlàgbé, Kabiru,
 The Lord gave you unto me.
 You have toiled in Heaven and have come to get paid on earth
 Lagos and Ibadan money will come home looking for you (2x)
 (Female, older generation)

Another set of group discussants also sang a song which showcased the value of children through the readiness to make necessary sacrifices for child-care. The text of the song is as follows:

Bómọ bá ni n jó 2x
Èmi ò lè torí ijó pọmọ
Mo lè jíjọ yẹn ni Íbàdàn
Kí n jíjọ yẹn ní Èkó
Bómọ bá ni n jó 2x
Èmi ò lè torí ijó p'ọmọ

If my child asks me to dance³
 I can't make my child vulnerable
 I can perform the dance in Ibadan
 And even perform the dance in Lagos
 When my child calls me to dance
 I can't make my child vulnerable
 (Female, middle-age generation)

An in-depth interviewee rendered a value-laden, pro-fertile Yorùbá song portraying that children are worth more than properties and that children can or will bring riches:

Ọmọ ló wù mí jaşọ lọ 2x
Bí aşọ pé nílẹ̀ yóò dákísà
Bí ọmọ pé nílẹ̀ yóò di igba

I cherish children more than clothing
 If clothing lasts, it will become rag
 If children last, they will become great
 (Female, middle-age generation)

Other pro-fertile Yorùbá songs are presented in table 2.

Table 2

Other value-laden, pro-fertile Yorùbá songs

S/No.	Other value-laden, pro-fertile Yorùbá songs		
1.	<p><i>Ọmọ wù mí lè mí n jẹ o 2x</i> <i>Ọmọ ti ó raşọ fún mi lè yín wá ọla</i> <i>Ọmọ wù mí lè mí n jẹ ooo</i></p> <p>I cherish children 2x Children will buy cloth for me in the future I cherish children (Female, older generation, FGD)</p>	2.	<p><i>Ọmọ mi ni gilaasi mi 2x</i> <i>Ọmọ mi ni gilaasi ti mo fi nwoju</i> <i>Ọmọ mi ni gilaasi ti mo fi n'riran oo</i> <i>Kaye ma fo gilaasi mi</i></p> <p>My child is my mirror My child is the mirror I use to assess myself My child is the glasses I use to see Let the powerful not destroy my mirror (Male, older generation)</p>
3.	<p><i>Ọmọ t'Ọlórún fún mi kò gbọdọ yànkú (2x)</i> <i>Ọmọ t'Ọlórún bìn mi kò gbọdọ yànkú o</i> <i>Èmi l'Ọlórún fun o</i> <i>Gbogbo e ló fi fúnmi</i> <i>Ọmọ t'Ọlórún fún mi kò gbọdọ yànkú</i></p> <p>The child God gave to me must not die (2x)</p>	4.	<p><i>Orí mi jẹn jere ọmọ 2x</i> <i>Mo fọşọ, fọşọ</i> <i>Táşọ bá gbẹ ká ka a wọlé,</i> <i>Orí mi jẹ n jẹrẹ ọmọ</i> <i>Ọmọ mi má fi pamílékún 2x</i> <i>Èlẹsinmèsin tí n gbé wọn sánlẹ</i> <i>Orí mi jẹ n jẹrẹ ọmọ</i></p>

³ This is the literal translation. Figuratively, this is translated as 'if it is divine for me to dance for my child'.

S/No.	Other value-laden, pro-fertile Yorùbá songs	
	<p>The child God gifted to me must not die It is me God gave him/her to He gave all to me The child God gifted to me must not die (Female, middle-age generation, FGD)</p>	<p>O God, let me reap my labour on my children I washed clothes, washed clothes When cloths are washed, they should be brought in after drying O God, please let me reap my labour O creator, let me not weep over my children Rebuke every deadly disease over them Let me reap my labour over my children (Female, older generation, KII)</p>

Value-laden, pro-fertile Ifá corpus

Several *Ifá* corpus were rendered by *Ifá* priests which showcased Yorùbá love for children. Some of them are presented:

Òtótótó, Òróroró
Òtòtò lá jèpà
Òtòtò lá jè mumu
Adíáfún Òrúnmilà n'jò t'ó lójú omọ n pón wun
Òrúnmilà l'ójú omọ ò pón wun ooo
Àbìjù l'èrùn n bímọ ti ẹ
Àbìjù n'ikán n bímọ ti ẹ
B'ikán o ba bímọ jù, ikú oró ní pa wón je
B'èrùn o ba bímọ jù, ikú oró ní pa wón je

Òtótótó, Òróroró
 There are different ways to eat groundnut,
 As there are different ways to eat tiger nut
Òrúnmilà is said to be barren,
 But *Òrúnmilà* said he was not barren
 For he proclaimed that ants bear their offspring in large multitude,
 Termites bear their offspring in multitude
 For if ants refuse to bear multiple children,
 They die untimely
 For if the termites refuse to bear multiple children,
 They die untimely
 (Male, older generation)

Another key informant recounted '*Ìká Eléja, ikà lètùn-ún ikà lósi*' as follows:

Ìka pọmọ Alára
Ló dífa f'álára
Alára n súnkun pé òun ò lájé
Ìrètẹ Ajerò ló dífa f'ájerò
Lọjọ Ajerò sunkún pé òun ò láya
Gberẹ àjìjà ló dífa fún Dùruonàkí omọ Olódó idẹ
Lọjọ tó n sunkún pé òun ò bímọ
Alára n sunkún pé òun ò lájé
Wón ní yòò lájé
Ó sì bèrẹ tifá

Ó sì lájé, sùgbón kò lómọ
Ajerò tó sunkún pé òun ò láya
Sùgbón bó ẹ láya tó kò bímọ
Oníjùmọ̀nàkí tí ń sunkún pé òun ò bímọ
Nìgbà tí yòò bímọ, wón lọ sóde
Ìjà wá fẹ̀ ẹ̀lẹ̀, wón fẹ̀ lu Oníjùmọ̀nàkí
Sùgbón ìgbà tí wón rí ọmọ lẹ̀yìn rẹ̀
Wón pé eléyì kò ẹ̀e nà

Alára was crying for not having financial wherewithal
 Ajerò was crying for not having a wife
 Oníjùmọ̀nàkí was crying for not having children
 Alára was told that he would have financial breakthrough
 Ajerò later had wives but did not have children
 Oníjùmọ̀nàkí cried for not having children
 When he had children, they went for an event
 A fight broke out, Oníjùmọ̀nàkí was about to be beaten
 But when people saw his children,
 They said this one cannot be beaten
 (Female, middle-age generation)

Low-fertility compliant Yorùbá cultural knowledge

Interestingly, Yorùbá oral resources were also found to be low-fertility compliant. These categories of resources tended to emphasize the importance of quality as opposed to quantity of children. Their category of oral knowledge included sayings and *Ifá* corpus.

Low-fertility compliant Yorùbá sayings

Some sayings were found to downplay the importance of high fertility. These sayings recognised the desirability of having few, outstanding children. Some group discussants represented some of these sayings as follows:

A Yorùbá proverb states that eagle bears two offspring and called them the braves while the bat bears many offspring and call them plenty (*àşá bímọ méjì ó pè wón lákin, àdán bímọ tiẹ ó pè é lòòdè rẹ̀rẹ̀*) (Female, middle-age generation)

We can say ‘giving birth to twenty like cocoyam bulbils, giving birth to thirty like water-yam bulbils amount to nothing compared with having one outstanding child’ (*ogún ni mo bí, ọmọ koóko, ọgbón ni mo bí, ọmọ ewùrà, bó bá jẹ ẹyọ kan ni mo bí tó jógàá, òun ni kókó*) (Female, younger generation)

Yorùbá people also say that there is no third child (figuratively, there is no third sex) (*kòsì ẹ̀kẹta ọmọ*) (Male, older generation)

Some in-depth interviewees also stated as follows:

We also say that the person who is buried by children is the person who has actually had children (*eni ọmọ sin ló bímọ*) (Male, middle-age generation)

We say many children, great poverty (*ọmọ bẹ̀rẹ̀, òsì bẹ̀rẹ̀*). This means a lot of children is not advisable, that number of children you can take care of is what you should give birth to because many children begets poverty (Male, younger generation)

Key informants also recounted as follows:

Yorùbá people also say that rather than have two hundred slob, I will just have one top kid, I will take pride in the child before the world, I would have something worth bragging about. A single àràbà (kapok tree – *Ceiba pentandra*) is worth more than a thousand òsúnsún (cattle stick – *Carpolobia lutea*). A well-mannered child is worth more than two hundred mannerless children (*kàkà kí n bí egbàá òbun, ma kúkú bí òkansoso ògá, ma róun yán aráyé lójú, ma róun gbéraga. Òkan soso àràbà ki se egbegba òsúnsún, omọ tó já fáfá kan soso kì íse igba irúbí omọ*) (Male, older generation)

We can compare people who give birth to a child in their lifetime with plantain or banana trees because it bear fruits once in their lifespan (*èèkan lògèdè n bímọ*). So, it does not have the opportunity to bear as many as possible. Once it bears its fruits and it is harvested, the tree has to sprout again from another sucker (Male, middle age generation)

Low-fertility compliant Ifá corpus

A key informant was of the opinion that fertility is based on a person's destiny and people should not be compared. Some are like pigs, giving birth to children like pigs while others are destined to have a single child. He rendered an *Ifá* verse as follows:

Èlùbọ dānù a ò kó o
Adiá fún Ìjẹmólá tó n pé òun ò bímọ
Wón ní iwọ arábinrin; o òò bímọ
Şùgbón omọ méjì lomọ è o
Ó ló dáa
Nìgbà tí yòò bìl ló bí Ojúkanèpà
Nìgbà tí yòò bí ló bí Ojúkaneèré
Ó wá bèrè sí ní tójú wón, aájò pọ
Wón wá bèrè kí ló dé táájò pọ báyìí
Ó ní atOjúkanèpà, atOjúkaneèré;
Èwo ló wáyẹ kó bàjẹ nínú wón

Ìjẹmólá lamented over her inability to have children
 She was told that she would bear two children
 She bore *Ojúkanèpà* (literally, one-eyed groundnut)
 She also bore *Ojúkaneèré* (literally, one-eyed bean)
 She took care of them greatly
 She was asked:
 Why this great care?
 She replied:
 Of the two children, which deserves to perish?
 (Male, older generation)

Neutrality-laden Yorùbá cultural resources

It even more interesting to encounter fertility-related Yorùbá oral knowledge which is considerably neutrality-laden. These included Yorùbá concepts used to describe fertile people and neutral fertility-related Yorùbá sayings.

Yorùbá concepts used to describe fertile people

The concepts that Yorùbá people use to describe fertile people are vast and can be generally classified as animal-related and otherwise. Fertile people, especially women, are compared with typically fertile animals including pig, bush rat, etc. However, there are some other nomenclatures that have nothing to do with animals. Some data reflecting these animal-

related nomenclatures and non-animal-related nomenclatures are presented in table 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3

Animal-related nomenclature for fertile people*

S/No.	Animal-related nomenclature used to describe fertile people
1	Most times they liken fertile people to animals, for example pig. Yorùbá people say that such people give birth like pigs (<i>ó'n bímọ bi ẹlẹdẹ</i>). They say about fertile women that they have the body of pigs (<i>ó lá ra ẹlẹdẹ</i>), once their husbands copulate with them, they will bear children like pigs
2	Yorùbá people say a fertile woman gives birth to children like bush rat (<i>ó bímọ bii eku ẹdá</i>). The bush rat is one tiny specie of rat. It gives birth at once to many pups
3	They also say that fertile people give birth like a particular kind of rat (<i>eku ẹdá</i>). That rat can harbor up to twenty fetuses in its uterus
4	The Yorùbá also liken fertile people to bats (<i>ẹye àdán</i>) because once a bat gives birth another fetus is set in its uterus for delivery (<i>àtọlẹdólẹ ni ọmọ nínú àdán</i>). Bats are typically used as part of materials used as sacrifice (<i>ẹbọ</i>) to seek children for the childless
5	Yorùbá people do say that fertile people bear many children like <i>yindinyindin</i> (<i>bímọ púpọ bii yindinyindin</i>). <i>Yinndinyidin</i> (hormiga) is a typical local insect that lays many eggs and whenever we open where it lays, we can find almost two thousand eggs there. The eggs survive and even grow into mature insects
6	We can also say a woman bears many children like a fowl (<i>ó bímọ dàálẹ bii adiyẹ</i>).

*The profile of those who provided these data is highly varied.

Table 4

Non-animal-related nomenclature for fertile people*

S/No.	Non-animal-related nomenclature for fertile people
1	' <i>Abiyamọ</i> ' which simply means a mother
2	They can describe the person as ' <i>alábiyamọ</i> ' – the mother.
3	' <i>Ìyá ọlómọ púpọ</i> ' which means the mother of many children
4	' <i>ìyá ẹwe</i> ' which means the mother of young children
5	Fertile people are called one who has many little children ' <i>ọlómọ wẹrẹ</i> ', ' <i>ọlómọ yoyọ</i> '

*The profile of those who provided these data is highly varied.

Neutral fertility-related Yorùbá sayings

Some Yorùbá sayings were found to be neutral, in that they neither applaud fertility or the absence of it. They downplay the importance of having children. Some group discussants expressed one as follows:

We say that the one who bears children will struggle and one who bears not will also struggle, life is vanity upon vanity and yet that is what we seek (*ẹni bímọ á se wàhálà, ẹni tí ò bí á saá ọn, asán nínú asán laye yi òwun la sì n wá kiri*) (Male, middle-age generation)

An in-depth interviewee also stated as follows:

We also say that one who bears children will struggle and one who bears not will die struggling to have children (*ẹni bímọ á se wàhálà, ẹni tí ò ibí lóri mo fẹ bí ló ma kú sí*) (Female, younger generation)

A key informant stated as follows:

We also say that if you bear no children, bear peace. Those endowed with children, and those not so endowed will be buried by children (*bò bímọ bá'áláfà. Ẹni bímọ ọmọ ló má sín, ẹni tí ò bímọ ọmọ ló máa sín*) (Male, middle-age generation)

Discussions

Findings have indicated that fertility-related Yorùbá oral knowledge are generally value-laden – pro-fertile; low-fertility compliant and neutrality-laden. Some pro-fertile Yorùbá cultural resources were found to justify the notion that high fertility was cultural adaptivity to child mortality. One of these resources indicates that a person who has just a child is no different from a person who is childless (*olómọ kan ò kúrò lágàn*). This is a justification for high fertility. It is an element of a culture that was plagued with a high level of child mortality. A person who has just a child in such circumstance is prone to childlessness. This saying is closely tied to the one that claimed that ‘a parent of two is the one who is no longer barren, one child is not assuring’ (*olómọ méjì ló ràgàn, oló kan ò pé rará*). A person who has two children is more secured than the one with a child. The saying ‘one child is not assuring’ (*olómọ kan ò láyò lé*) is also closely tied to the previous. Perhaps, the saying that is most quintessential of the problem of child mortality is the one enjoining people ‘to bear children for death and bear children for disease’ (*ká bí tikú fúkú, ká bí tàrùn fárùn*). This saying was remarkably expressed pervasively during data collection. It prompts one to feel the social pains that must have pervaded a community to warrant the evolution of such an axiom. These axioms showcase the adaptivity of high fertility. People were anxious about child mortality and therefore have more children to compensate for expected tragic loss of their child or children. The child mortality phenomenon is known as *àbíké* among the Yorùbá. An *àbíké* is a child who die upon birth, during childhood or even adulthood without reaching old age. The third category are more specifically known as *àbíké àgbà*. The accrued *òtótótó, òróróró Ifá* corpus is very instructive with regard to the issue of child mortality. It is said in the corpus that ‘*Orúnmilà*⁴ denied being barren but proclaimed that ants bear their offspring in large multitude, termites bear their offspring in multitude, for if ants refuse to bear multiple children, they die untimely. And if the termites refuse to bear multiple children, they die untimely’ (KII, Male, older generation). The child-mortality phenomenon is indeed a very significant factor underpinning resistance to fertility change in many parts of Africa. Caldwell, Orubuloye and Caldwell (1992) expounded that fertility transition was earlier in Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Kenya. Their infant mortality rates in the early 1990s were below 70 per thousand live births as opposed to other parts of Africa where infant mortality was far higher. It follows therefore that attaining a lowered level of infant mortality was ‘the necessary condition for African fertility decline’ (Ibid, 212). All these pervade the notion that high fertility is cultural adaptivity.

Several pro-fertile Yorùbá cultural knowledge uphold a return on investment ideology and an ideology of pride in children. It must be stressed that these ideologies are distinct, but can hardly be distinguished in many circumstances. This suggests the concurrent appreciation of both ideologies as motivations of fertility among the Yorùbá. Owomoyela (2005) asserted as follows:

Indeed, one of the comments one hears the Yorùbá make about any person who has lived a good life is *Ayé yẹ e* (“Life suited him or her well”), and one of their wishes for a person to whom they are well disposed is *Ayé á yẹ e* (“Life will suit you well”). The underlying, somewhat Calvinistic world view holds that if the gods favor a person, the evidence will be manifest in this life in the guise of the person’s access to such good things as wealth – especially wealth in children, relatives, people (friends), and the like – as well as health, a good reputation, and so forth (p. 34).

A person’s fortune is describable in terms of being wealthy and wealth is located in having children. The saying that children are the gains of the world’ (*omọ ni èrè ayé*) suggest

⁴ *Orúnmilà* is ‘the Yorùbá deity of wisdom, knowledge, and divination’ (Yai 1993, 31).

an attraction to economic gains of having children but then gaining something from coming to the world sounds beyond economic gain. The concept of ‘the prime child’ (*olú ọmọ*) among the Yorùbá is a classical case begetting dilemma in the two ideologies under consideration. The Yorùbá desire to have *olú ọmọ*, as they pray that ‘God grant us prime child’ (*Èdùmarè fun wa l’ olú ọmọ*). A person who attains uncommon feats usually within the larger family circle is typically referred to as *olú ọmọ*. Such persons are typically wealthy, at the same time they command tremendous respect by virtue of occupying enviable social positions that gives the entire family so much pride. What counts in describing *olú ọmọ* includes wealth but it is not so limited.

Pro-fertile Yorùbá cultural knowledge upholding the return on investment ideology are numerous. The desire for financial well-being is immanent and whether people can personally attain it or not, they look forward to see their children become wealthy. This would mean automatic wealth for a parent in a culture that engrosses itself with strong family values. The concept of *ounje ọmọ* (literally, child’s food; idiomatically, a child’s return – money, food, properties and other goods) is very ubiquitous among the Yorùbá. Even in contemporary times, the concept features too frequently in Yorùbá social life. It is an essential prayer point that can be expected to be offered to, and by every parent. Interestingly, the average child also wants to be able to offer his or her parents with *ounje ọmọ*. This concept underscores the return on investment ideology. The Yorùbá people also say that ‘when the *òkété* (pouched rat) grows old, it feeds on its child’s breast’ (*bòkété bá dàgbà tán, ọmú ọmọ rẹ ní mu*). This also pervades the return on investment ideology. Several accrued pro-fertile Yorùbá oral knowledge also pervade this ideology: ‘one’s child is one’s tomorrow (*ọmọ ẹni lẹ la ẹni*). When we toil and toil but fail to achieve our desires, our children will achieve same (*ohun tí ọwọ mi o tẹ, ọwọ ọmọ mi o tẹ*). The ‘O God, let me reap my labour on my children’ song (*orí mi jẹn jẹrẹ ọmọ*) provides classic support for the return on investment ideology. The song reads that ‘I washed clothes, washed clothes, when clothes are washed, they should be brought in after drying, O God, please let me reap my labour. O creator, let me not weep over my children, rebuke every deadly disease over them, let me reap my labour over my children’ (KII, female, older generation). Although concerns over child mortality are obviously represented in the song, the song is literally a representation of return on investment ideology.

Ideology of pride in children is pervaded by several pro-fertile Yorùbá oral knowledge. This ideology appears to be the most pervasive motivator of having children. Taking pride in children is literally without reason. Merely having a child or children attracts so much joy and contentment. This ideology is reflected in the Yorùbá saying that ‘it is the person who has people that is wealthy’ (*ẹni to lẹyàn lo lowo*). Although people here do not necessarily mean one’s biological children, children are central part of one’s people. Having people or children is valued just for having sake, although this may translate to socio-economic and political power at some other time. Caldwell (1981) stated that ‘the ability of an old man to put his view and to influence policy in an African village meeting may well depend on his having strong sons in the audience’ (p. 6). Simply having children is pride-ridden, and it affords respect among community members. The *Ifá* corpus story of *Alára*, *Ajerò* and *Oníjùmọ̀nàkí* as recounted by a key-informant is very instructive here. In the story, *Alára* cried over not having financial wherewithal, *Ajerò* cried over not having a wife but *Oníjùmọ̀nàkí* cried over not having children. *Alára* later encountered financial breakthrough, *Ajerò* later had wives but did not have children and *Oníjùmọ̀nàkí* later had children. *Oníjùmọ̀nàkí* and his children went for a function where a fight broke out and *Oníjùmọ̀nàkí* was about to be beaten. When people saw his children, they resolved that such a person could not be beaten (KII, female, middle-age generation). The lesson of the story is to assert the worth of children over other endowments. *Alára*’s story underscores the importance of seeking children above wealth. Though the consequence of *Alára*’s quest for wealth was not recounted, the general attitude of

the corpus was quite critical of his quest. Even though it was apt for *Ajerò* to weep over not having a wife because of course having a wife is necessary to have children, the attitude of the story reflect that it would have been more apt to weep over not having children. *Onijùmọ̀nàkí*'s story was the only one completed, and it was the only one with a happy ending. Some relevant accrued sayings included: 'children are better than money' (*omọ́yájowó*), 'children triumph over money' (*omọ́ borí ówó*), 'I cherish children more than I cherish gold' (*omọ́ wùmí ju gòdù lọ*). Accrued data also include the saying that 'the barren has not achieved the essence of life' (*enití ò bímọ ò rá yé wá*). These are indications that the ideology of pride in children is more superior to the return on investment ideology among the Yorùbá.

Other sayings including 'one who bears children owns the world' (*olomọ́ ló layé*) is prototype of pride-ridden motivation for fertility. Others include 'child is central' (*omọ́ ni kókó*); 'children are adornments' (*omọ́ ni iyi omọ́ nide*); 'a person who has no child is like a snake that crawls on a rock' (*eni tí ò bímọ dàbí ejò tó kọ́já lóri àpáta*); if fire dies, ashes will remain; when banana tree dies off, its offspring will replace it (*bíná kú a ferú bojú; bọ̀gèdè kú fọmọ è rọ̀pò*). The 'my child is my mirror' song (*omọ́ mi ni gilaasi mi*) is another classical representation of the ideology of pride in children.

Accrued pro-fertile Yorùbá knowledge also showcases the importance attached to childcare. The 'if my child asks me to dance' song (*bómọ́ bá ni n jó*) is an important case in point. The song literally indicates a singer's willingness to dance for a child even if the dance will be in two different towns (Lagos and Ibadan⁵). The song reads that 'I can't make my child vulnerable, I can perform the dance in Ibadan, and even perform the dance in Lagos' (Female, middle-age generation). In Yorùbá culture, it was not uncommon for diviners to find upon divination that certain children want their mothers (or fathers, or both) to dance round a community if they (the child/children in question) would not be stillborn. Some Yorùbá folklore showcase examples of mothers or parents who fail to yield such warning and who end up losing their children. This phenomenon was very relevant during the high child-mortality era where children were very vulnerable to death. The 'my child shall not perish' song (*omọ́ t'Ọ̀lórún fún mi kò gbọ̀dọ̀ yànkú*) is another exemplification of the notion of centrality of childcare. The childcare demand in this song is implicit rather than explicit. A person who prays that his or her child should not perish will most likely be concerned about his or child well-being and work towards same. Yorùbá people say that 'one should care for children for the sake of tomorrow' (*ẹ̀ tọ́jú omọ́ nítorí ọ̀la*).

Low-fertility compliant Yorùbá cultural knowledge was indeed very instructive. This category of data reflects the empathetic and integrative character of Yorùbá culture. The saying that 'an eagle bears two offspring and called them the braves while the bat bears many offspring and call it plenty' (*àṣá bímọ méjì ó pè wón lákin, àdán bímọ tiẹ́ ó pè é lóddè rẹ̀rẹ̀*) (female, middle-age generation) is partially low-fertility compliant. It is an integrative expression that balances appreciation for few and numerous children. Another low-fertility accepting saying include 'giving birth to twenty like cocoyam bulbils, giving birth to thirty like water-yam bulbils amount to nothing compared with having one outstanding child' (*ogún ni mo bí, omọ́ koóko, ogbọ̀n ni mo bí, omọ́ ewùrà, bó bá jẹ ẹ̀yọ kan ni mo bí tó jógàá, òun ni kókó*) (female, younger generation). The saying is a literal, unalloyed acceptance of the notion that an ideal child is far worth more than numerous children. 'There is no third child' (*kòsì ẹ̀keta omọ́*) (male, older generation) is typically used to assert that there are only two sexes. Idiomatically however, this saying is used to convey the idea that once a person is able to bear a girl and a boy there is nothing special to look forward to any longer. In essence, a two-child-family endowed with both sexes of children is ideal. These are indications that Yorùbá

⁵ These two towns, especially Lagos are biggest urban centers in Southwestern Nigeria, right from colonial periods.

recognise quality as opposed to quantity of children. Accrued data also reflect that Yorùbá people reason that ‘the person who is buried by children is the person who has actually had children’ (*eni omọ sin ló bímọ*) (male, middle-age generation). This saying applies to everyone regardless of the number of children he or she has. It is often used to settle rivalry disputes between wives most especially when one has many children and oppresses the other wife who probably has one or two children. It is to warn the parties and remind them that only a parent who is survived by children after death is regarded as parent indeed. It is a Yorùbá belief that a parent is so called until he or she dies and is buried by his or her children. Elaborate funeral is important to Yorùbá people (Adamolekun 2001). Although having so many children around is appreciated in the culture, this saying downplays the importance of same, in the light that the children or some of them could die. The saying is motivated by the unenviable child-mortality situation in traditional Yorùbá society. Perhaps, the most popular low-fertility compliant saying was ‘many children, great poverty’ (*omọ beṛe, òsì beṛe*). This was a highly referenced saying during data collection, highlighting the truism that lots of children breeds poverty. It indicates that people had learned over time that having lots of children creates economic strain. Another very interesting saying is that ‘rather than have two hundred slob, I will just have one top kid, I will take pride in the child before the world, I would have something worth bragging about. A single *àràbà* is worth more than a thousand *òsúnsún*. A well-mannered child is worth more than two hundred mannerless children’ (*kàkà kí n bí egbàá ọbun, ma kúkú bi ọkansoso ọgá, ma róun yán aráyé lójú, ma róun gbéraga. Ọkan soso àràbà ki se egbegba ọsúnsún, omọ tó já fáfá kan soso kì íse igba irúbí omọ*) (KII, male, older generation). The story of *Ìjẹmólá* in an accrued *Ifá* corpus also showcases the integrative character of fertility-related Yorùbá knowledge. *Ìjẹmólá* was said to lament over her inability to have children. She was told that she would bear two children. She bore *Ojúkanèpà* (literally, one-eyed groundnut) and *Ojúkaneèré* (literally, one-eyed bean). She took care of them greatly, making people to question the essence of the great care. She retorted that neither of the two children deserves to perish (KII, male, older generation). The value of high fertility is implicitly embedded in the *Ìjẹmólá* story but acceptability of low-fertility is explicitly represented in the story. Indeed, Yorùbá oral knowledge is integrative in their value for high and low fertility. This knowledge is emphatic towards those with low fertility.

Neutrality-laden Yorùbá cultural knowledge was also encountered during data collection, including concepts used to describe fertile people and other sayings. The concepts were animal-related and otherwise. ‘Having the body of a pig’ (*ó lá ra ẹlédè*) was pervasively expressed by participants. Sometimes fertile people are simply called pigs (*ẹlédè*) or said to be ‘giving birth like pigs’ (*ó n bímọ bi ẹlédè*). Pigs are known for high fertility, making the nomenclature to be merely descriptive since fertile humans are merely compared with the fertile pigs. Bush rats, bats, a typical local insect (*yindinyindin*) and chickens are some other animals that are compared with fertile humans in fertility-related Yorùbá knowledge. Non-animal-related nomenclatures for fertile people included ‘mother’ (*abiyamọ* or *alábiyamọ*). Mothers are typically referred to as *abiyamọ*, and the name is also suited for highly fertile people as well as very caring parents. Others include ‘a mother of many children’ (*iyá ọlómọ púpọ*); ‘a mother of young children’ (*iyá èwe*); ‘one who has many little children’ (*ọlómọ wẹrẹ* or *ọlómọ yoyọ*). These concepts are highly descriptive. They may be value-laden, but this will depend on context and intonation of language. ‘Yorùbá is a tonal language, so that the same word may have different meanings depending on how it is pronounced’ (Lawal 2001, 498). Hence, these nomenclatures generally showcase the neutral character of fertility-related Yorùbá knowledge.

Neutrality-laden Yorùbá sayings also uphold neutrality. It is said that ‘one who bears children will struggle and one who bears not will also struggle, life is vanity upon vanity

and yet that is what we seek' (*eni bímọ á se wàhálà, eni tí ò bí á saá pọn, asán nínú asán laye yi òwun la sì n wá kiri*) (male, middle-age generation). It is also said that 'one who bears children will struggle and one who bears not will die struggling to have children' (*eni bímọ á se wàhálà, eni tí ò ibí lóri mo fẹ bí ló ma kú sí*) (female, younger generation). Further, it is said that 'if you bear no children, bear peace. Those endowed with children, and those not so endowed will be buried by children' (*bòò bímọ bá'áláfìà. Eni bímọ ọmọ ló má sín, eni tí ò bímọ ọmọ ló máa sín*) (male, middle-age generation). It is God that grants children (*Ọlọhun ní nse ọmọ*). These sayings downplay the importance of having children, neither applauding fertility nor the absence of it. These are resources that are typically used to placate the barren in the society. Concepts used to describe fertile people and neutral fertility-related Yorùbá sayings accentuate the neutral character of fertility related discourses among the Yorùbá.

On the whole, fertility-related Yorùbá oral knowledge are found to be generally value-laden – pro-fertile; low-fertility compliant and neutrality-laden. Indeed, this is revealing. It is almost taken for granted that African culture, Yorùbá culture inclusive, venerates high fertility. This is a very valid position but also an incomplete one. The fascinating encounter of low-fertility compliant and neutrality-laden fertility-related oral knowledge reiterates the value of *verstehen* and the interpretive paradigms; as well as what they represent including social constructionism, hermeneutics and language games. Borrowing from the thesis of Olutayo (2014), it is argued that enough cannot be said of the importance of respect for *verstehen* that necessarily incorporates African indigenous knowledge. Indeed, 'contextual content of 'everyday sociology' is necessary for "*verstehen(ing)*"' (Ibid, 230). The worth of the philosophical bases of qualitative research has once again been proven by the event of unearthing wholistic cultural capitals. Ebenso *et al.* (2012) analyzed Yorùbá proverbs to understand attitudes towards leprosy and reported that 'contrary to *fragmentary evidence* portraying Yorùbá attitudes to leprosy as entirely negative, there is a mixed pattern of social responses to leprosy which range from drastic exclusion to empathy and acceptance of people affected by leprosy' (p. 208, italics mine). Ibrahim and Jegede (2017) also explored Yorùbá construction of body size and reported 'the evidence that though there are antecedents of traditional veneration of large body, the traditional Yorùbá culture invokes frames of references that impose limitations on such veneration' (p. 236). They further asserted that the focal contribution of ... (their) study lies in its *articulation of tremendous traditional ... limitations to this ideology* (traditional veneration of large body). Even in traditional Yorùbá society, economic exposition limits veneration of large body, making economic exposition to be an integral part of Yorùbá traditional attitude toward large body size (p. 253, brackets and italics mine).

It seems logical therefore to assume that the more cultural elements are explored using the holistic mechanism of interpretivism, the more wholistic understanding of same is engendered. Current findings have affirmed that the traditional veneration of the fertile is not sacrosanct. Hammel (1990) asserted that culture is a 'fund or repertoire of behavior (culture as content) specific to actors in particular circumstances of time, place, and social position (culture as identifier)' (p. 474). Further, cultural actors 'are aware of the symbolic effect of their behavior on co-actors (culture as expression). Their election of behaviors from the cultural repertoire is designed to achieve a balance between competing critics and to optimize the net social morality of their position (culture as a negotiated set of understandings)' (p. 474-5). Low-fertility compliant and neutrality-laden fertility-related Yorùbá oral knowledge are cognitive resources that enable Yorùbá people to exhibit their sense of humaneness. Even as they value fertility, they understand that not everyone will be so endowed and the society must necessarily capture everybody.

Conclusions

Value-laden – pro-fertile fertility-related Yorùbá oral knowledge have generally unearthed the return on investment ideology and the ideology of pride in children which are concurrently distinct and difficult to distinguish in many Yorùbá oral knowledge. Nevertheless, the ideology of pride in children is more superior to the return on investment ideology among the Yorùbá. Value-laden – pro-fertile fertility-related Yorùbá oral knowledge also engenders the notion that high fertility is cultural adaptivity and impress the idea that childcare is central to Yorùbá people. Low-fertility compliant Yorùbá cultural knowledge reflects the empathetic and integrative character of Yorùbá culture. They indicate that Yorùbá recognise quality as opposed to quantity of children. Neutrality-laden Yorùbá cultural knowledge showcased animal-related and non-animal-related concepts used to describe fertile people and other sayings. These unearthed neutral characters of fertility-related Yorùbá knowledge. Current findings have affirmed that the traditional veneration of the fertile is huge but non-sacrosanct.

References

- Abimbola, W. 1976. *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus*. Ibadan, Oxford University Press.
- Adamolekun, K. (2001). Survivors' Motives for Extravagant Funerals among the Yorubas of Western Nigeria. *Death Studies* 25(7), pp. 609–619.
- Adegbindin, O. 2014. *Ifa in Yoruba Thought System*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.
- Adesina, J.O. (2002). Sociology and Yoruba Studies: Epistemic Intervention or Doing Sociology in the 'Vernacular'? *African Sociological Review/Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 6(1), pp. 91–114.
- Akinnaso, F.N. (1983). Yoruba Traditional Names and the Transmission of Cultural Knowledge. *Names* 31(3), pp. 139–158.
- Akiwowo, A.A. (1986). Contributions to the Sociology of Knowledge from an African Oral Poetry. *International Sociology* 1(4), pp. 343–358.
- Awolalu, J. O. (1973). Yoruba Sacrificial Practice. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 5(2), pp. 81-93.
- Barber, K. (1984). Yorùbá "Oríki" and Deconstructive Criticism. *Research in African Literatures* 15(4), pp. 497–518.
- Barber, K. (1999). Quotation in the Constitution of Yorùbá Oral Texts. *Research in African Literatures* 30(2), pp. 17–41.
- Beier, H. U. (1956). Yoruba Vocal Music. *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music* 1(3), pp. 23–28.
- Caldwell, J.C. (1981). The Mechanisms of Demographic Change in Historical Perspective. *Population Studies* 35(1), pp. 5-27.
- Caldwell, J.C. (1976). Toward a Restatement of Demographic Transition Theory." *Population and Development Review*, pp. 321–366.
- Caldwell, J. C., Orubuloye, I.O. and Caldwell, P. (1992). Fertility Decline in Africa: A New Type of Transition? *Population and Development Review*, pp. 211–242.
- Davis, T.J., and Kalu-Nwiwu, A. (2001). Education, Ethnicity and National Integration in the History of Nigeria: Continuing Problems of Africa's Colonial Legacy. *The Journal of Negro History* 86(1), pp. 1–11.
- Delano, I. O. 1979. *Owe lesin Oro: Yoruba Proverbs, their Meaning and Usage*. Ibadan, University Press Limited.
- Ebenso, Basse, et al. (2012). Using Indigenous Proverbs to Understand Social Knowledge and Attitudes to Leprosy among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria. *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 24(2), pp. 208–222.
- Fadipe, N. A. 1970. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan University press.
- Falola, T. 1999. *Yoruba Gurus: Indigenous Production of Knowledge in Africa*. Africa World Press.

- Fricke, T. (1997). The Uses of Culture in Demographic Research: A Continuing Place for Community Studies. *Population and Development Review* 23(4), pp. 825–832.
- Gareau, F.H. (1988). Another Type of Third World Dependency: The Social Sciences. *International Sociology* 3(2), pp. 171–178.
- Hammel, E. A. (1990). A Theory of Culture for Demography. *Population and Development Review*, pp. 455–485.
- Ibrahim, F.M., and Ayodele S.J. (2017). Tradition and Limits: Polemical Construction of Body Size Among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of African American Studies* 21(2), pp. 236–255.
- Kertzer, David I. (1997). "The Proper Role of Culture in Demographic Explanation." Chapter 7 in *The Continuing Demographic Transition*, edited by G.W. Jones, R.M. Douglas, J.C. Caldwell, and R.M. D'Souza. Oxford University Press, pp.137–157.
- Lancet, The. (2017). An African-driven Health Agenda. *Lancet*, (editorial) 390 (10090): 96.
- Lawal, B. (2001). Aworan: Representing the Self and its Metaphysical Other in Yoruba Art. *The Art Bulletin* 83(3), pp. 498–526.
- Lawuyi, O. B., and Taiwo, O. (1990). Towards an African Sociological Tradition: A Rejoinder to Akiwowo and Makinde." *International Sociology* 5(1), pp. 57–73.
- Morton-Williams, P. (1960). Yoruba Responses to the Fear of Death. *Africa* 30(1), pp. 34–40.
- Obono, O. (2003). Cultural Diversity and Population Policy in Nigeria. *Population and Development Review* 29(1), pp. 103–111.
- Okolie, V. O., et al. (2018). Population Data of 21 Autosomal STR Loci in the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba People of Nigeria. *International Journal of Legal Medicine*, pp. 1–3.
- Olademo, O. (2009). *Gender in Yorùbá Oral Tradition*. Lagos, Nigeria: Concept Publications Limited, for: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization.
- Olutayo, A. O. (2014). 'Verstehen', Everyday Sociology and Development: Incorporating African Indigenous Knowledge." *Critical Sociology* 40(2), pp. 229–238.
- Omobowale, A. O. (2008). Clientelism and Social Structure: An Analysis of Patronage in Yoruba Social Thought. *Africa Spectrum* 43(2), pp. 203–224.
- Omobowale, A. O. (2013). Guest Editor's Introduction: African Social Sciences Scholarship in a Globalized Academy. *International Journal of Sociology* 43(1), pp. 3–7.
- Owomoyela, O. (2005). Yoruba Proverbs. USA: The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska.
- Park, P. (1988). Toward an Emancipatory Sociology: Abandoning Universalism for True Indigenisation. *International Sociology* 3(2), pp. 161–170.
- Paulos, A. (2008). Library Resources, Knowledge Production, and Africa in the 21st century. *The International Information & Library Review* 40(4), pp. 251–256.
- Payne, M. W. (1992). Akiwowo, Orature and Divination: Approaches to the Construction of an Emic Sociological Paradigm of Society. *Sociological Analysis* 53(2), pp. 175–187.
- United Nations Population Fund (2019). State of World Population 2019. Accessed 18th May 2019. https://nigeria.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/SWP19%20-%20EN%20report-web-%204%20April_3.pdf
- Yai, O.B. (1993). In Praise of Metonymy: The Concepts of 'Tradition' and 'Creativity' in the Transmission of Yoruba Artistry Over Time and Space. *Research in African Literatures* 24(4), pp. 29–37.

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ МНОГООБРАЗИЯ АФРИКАНСКИХ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ КОНСТРУКТОВ, СВЯЗАННЫХ С ПЛОДОВИТОСТЬЮ НА ПРИМЕРЕ ЙОРУБА

© Фаусат Мотунрайо Ибрахим

ИБРАХИМ, Фаусат Мотунрайо, PhD, MPh, старший преподаватель Федерального колледжа лесного хозяйства Нигерийского института исследования лесного хозяйства. Нигерия, Ибадан, e-mail: fausatibrahim@gmail.com

***Аннотация.** Статья посвящена исследованию традиционных для африканского общества социальных конструктов, связанных с плодовитостью и рождаемостью. Представление о социальной реальности как о совокупности социальных конструктов становится важным трендом не только современной мысли, но и общественной практики. В этом ракурсе автор анализирует результаты собственного этнологического исследования, проведенного в сельских районах Нигерии среди крестьян, принадлежащих к этнической группе йоруба. Одним из факторов, обусловивших выбор данной социальной группы в качестве фокус-группы исследования, стала выраженная приверженность к ценностям и культуре традиционного общества нигерийской аграрной глубинки, позволившей сохранить большой пласт устного культурного наследия йоруба. Результаты исследования позволили произвести оценку распространенных конструктов в пользу многочисленности потомства. Интересным явилось выявление у йоруба конструктов в пользу невысокой плодовитости и нейтральных конструктов, не имеющих выраженной оценочной характеристики в отношении высокой или низкой рождаемости. Анализируя полученные результаты, автор приходит к выводу, что культурные конструкты йоруба, связанные с плодовитостью и рождаемостью, являются адаптивными, эмпатическими и интегративными, что, по мнению автора, свидетельствует о том, что традиционное стремление к многочисленности потомства, несмотря на свою огромную роль, не является у представителей данного этноса абсолютным.*

***Ключевые слова:** рождаемость, плодовитость, Африка, традиционные знания коренных народов, население, интерпретивизм, устное знание, культура*

DOI: 10.31132 / 2412-5717-2020-53-4-77-95