

Article

Ethics and Sustainability in Nsukka Cashew: A Historical and Future-Oriented Appraisal (2000–2024)

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Abstract

Nsukka cashew is globally recognized, yet unethical business practices within its value chain threaten market value, sustainability, and reputation. This study provides a holistic appraisal of where such practices occur in the Nsukka cashew sector (2000–2024) and their prospective consequences for industry growth. Employing a convergent mixed-methods design anchored in the concept of future self-continuity, the research integrates historical analysis with qualitative insights from key stakeholders across the cashew value chain. Findings indicate that unethical practices are perpetrated by both men and women driven by short-term gains and low future self-continuity. The study identifies specific hotspots along the value chain—production, processing, pricing, contract enforcement, and export documentation—and links these practices to adverse outcomes for market access, consumer trust, and long-term sustainability. The results underscore the need for institutional oversight and accountability mechanisms. Accordingly, the paper recommends the establishment of a regulatory body for cashew products to standardize practices, enhance traceability, and safeguard the industry's future viability.

Keywords: Language, Bullying, childless context, functional analysis, Nollywood videos

Introduction

In Nigeria and Nsukka in particular, unethical business practices are seen in many businesses, in a bid to acquire more and unlimited wealth among businessmen and women. The cashew industry is not exempt from these unwholesome practices. According to Bello and Aliyu (2018), the Nigerian society is characterized by many unethical business environments. Nigeria has lost several billion naira through these unethical business practices in the various sectors of the nation's economy. Unethical business practices are the kind of practices that are deceptive, exploitative, and dangerous to human life. They are those actions that do not conform to the acceptable standard of business. The various social criticisms of marketing can be classified into those alleged to hurt individual consumers, society as a whole, and other business firms. They went on to say that there are many instances where businessmen and women act within the law, but their actions hurt society and are generally considered to be unethical. To them, there are many ways businessmen and women engage in unethical conduct, exploiting their workers, their customers, and even the public at large. In some cases, it may be an individual within a business who is unethical in the course of his/her job, and sometimes, a corporate entity, where the whole business is corrupt from the top down, with disastrous results for society. Unethical business practices can destroy a business's reputation and possibly lead to legal troubles (Ayuba & Aliyu,2018).



In view of the above, it is obvious that these unethical business practices are found in many business establishments in Nigeria, and these ugly and unwholesome attitudes of some businessmen and women have featured in the cashew industry in Nigeria and Nsukka in particular. These unethical business practices in the cashew industry were seen in various areas in the cashew industry in a bid to outsmart unsuspecting consumers or customers and other business associates without consideration of the long-term consequences on the industry.

However, in a view to do justice to this study, a concept was adopted to have a holistic navigation of the topic under discourse.

The Concept of Future Self-Continuity

The future self-continuity theory states that the decisions that individuals make are associated with the extent to which they perceive their present selves as connected to their future selves (Iheanacho,2021). This indicates that decisions are made by people in various sectors of the economy in relation to present selves and future selves. These decisions might be in the business world, academic world, as well as other sectors of human endeavours. A person with a high future self-continuity tends to make decisions that would be ethical in nature, thereby promoting continuity in the industry, while a person with a low future self-continuity tends to make decisions that are unethical in nature, which inhibit the growth of the industry, for an instant or immediate benefit.

Iheanacho (2021) cited Hershfield, where he argues that this influence follows a mechanism that assigns to an individual whose present self and future self share connectedness a high likelihood of acting in ways that will benefit both him/her and society in the future. Conversely, the perception of the future self as a stranger lessens or reduces the motivation to act in ways that would benefit the future self or society. Therefore, the lack of continuity in the future self leads to unethical choices.

In view of this concept, some stakeholders in the cashew industry in the Nsukka region with low future self-continuity are seen taking decisions without the consideration of the future selves. These decisions are taken for an instant benefit without taking cognizance of the long-term implications on the future continuity of their industry. This concept of future self-continuity vividly captures the economic sabotage in this industry, as it helped in the interrogation and appraisal of the various areas of this cashew industry, where these unethical business practices are seen, and their implications on the industry

Study Context and Methods

The study covers the area known as the Nsukka Division of the colonial era, formerly made up of four county councils, namely Igbo-Etiti, Igbo-Eze, Isi-Uzo, and Uzo-Uwani. Currently, the Nsukka region has been further split into seven Local Government Areas. They are Igbo-Etiti, Igbo-Eze North, Igbo-Eze South, Nsukka, Isi-Uzo, Uzo-Uwani, and Udenu. The region occupies the northern tip of Igboland, which ethnographers have traditionally described as the Elugwu (Enugu) subcultural group of the Northern Igbo (Afigbo, 1981). Below is the map of the Nsukka

Region or the Nsukka cultural zone showing areas of massive cashew plantations and business activities.

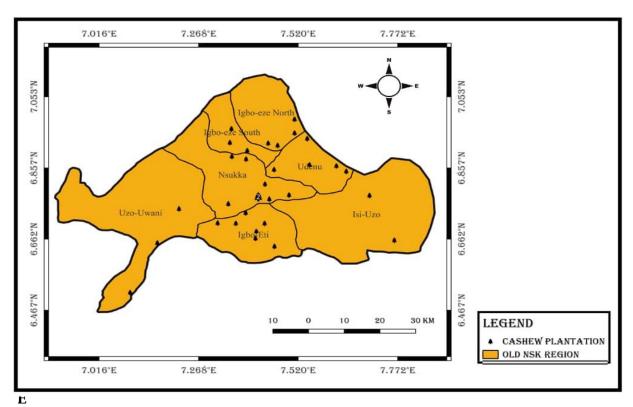


Fig. 1: Map showing the Nsukka Region or Nsukka cultural zone, showing areas of massive cashew plantations and businesses.

Source: Department of Geography, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

It is also referred to as the Old Nsukka Division, Nsukka Cultural Zone, Igbo Nsukka, Northern Igbo, and Enugu North Senatorial Zone. The above names refer to the same area of the study called the Nsukka region in this study, located in Enugu State, Southeastern Nigeria. This region holds a strategic position in the South-Eastern region, serving as a meeting point for traders from the North and South-Eastern Nigeria. The soil and climate of this region support cashew production, and this accounts for the widespread presence of cashew trees in the area. However, cashew plantations are predominantly found in Igbo-Etiti, Igbo-Eze South, Nsukka, Uzo-Uwani, and Udenu, with scanty of them found in Isi-Uzo and Igbo-Eze North areas of the region. The region has a total population of 1,378,408 with an area of 4,593 square kilometers, as released by the National Population Commission in 2006 (NPC, 2006).

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach of historical research design, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to gather comprehensive information on the research. Qualitative method includes in-depth interviews conducted across the seven Local Government Areas of the region with 105 knowledgeable key informants, participant observations, books, journals, online sources, and the quantitative method included the statistical data gathered in the course of the fieldwork, which were presented in tabular form and bar chart. Out of the 105 key informants interviewed, 5 of them in Udenu, 2 in Nsukka, 3 in Igbo-Etiti, 2 in Igbo-Eze South, 4 in Uzo-Uwani, and 1 in Isi-Uzo were unwilling to reveal

the areas of unethical practices and their future consequences on the cashew industry. However, after a long persuasion from one of the researchers, they responded to the questions positively. The fieldwork was conducted between January 2022 and December 2024.

Unethical Business Practices in Nsukka Region

These unethical business practices in the cashew industry included, but were not limited to, the following areas:

- Arranging cashew apples for marketing.
- ➤ Re-bagging of raw cashew nuts for marketing.
- Soaking of raw cashew nuts before marketing.
- Packaging of processed cashew nuts for marketing.

The above unethical business practices in the Nsukka region, which had become a serious threat to the survival of this industry, are appraised hereunder.

Cashew Apples for Marketing

In the Nsukka region, cashew farmers, under the pretext that cashew apples are soft, succulent, and fresh fruits that require a sort of cushion to avoid the piercing of the cashew apples, as well as causing damage to the cashew apples, applied leaves beneath the cashew apples while arranging them for marketing. This practice of applying fresh leaves on the cashew container before putting the cashew apples on top had become an avenue to defraud unsuspecting customers. These cashew containers were usually a very big basin (*Afere-azu*), local baskets, and plastic baskets, among others. To protect the cashew apples from damage, a kind of cushion was prepared on which these cashew apples rested (Obetta, 2023).

In view of this available practice in the area of study, the evil-minded and dubious cashew farmers with low future self-continuity started taking an undue advantage of this practice by using fresh leaves and other soft materials to fill half of the container, and sometimes very little space was left before putting cashew apples on top, under the pretext that the cashew apples filled the container. Many unsuspecting customers had fallen victim to these practices in Nsukka, which had caused them a huge financial loss in the industry. Many cashew farmers, in a bid to maintain the quantity of cashew apples that they usually supplied to the market daily, used leaves and other soft materials to fill the container before adding the few cashew apples to conceal the leaves(Ezea,2023). The cost of the basin, local baskets, and plastic basket were fixed depending on the size of the basin.

Pictures of Cashew Fruits in Local Baskets





Plate 1. Cashew fruits/apples in a local basket with fresh leaves beside it Source: Picture taken during fieldwork on 15 February 2023

The cost of cashew apples is determined by the size of the basin, the size of the cashew apples, and probably the quantity of cashew apples in the basin, if properly checked by the customer before payment (Okpe, 2022).

This has become a common phenomenon in the area of study, where most customers from Onitsha, Port-Harcourt, Lagos, and Enugu towns ensured that they verified any cashew container before payment. They did this by lifting the cashew container to weigh or check the weight, and sometimes opening a particular area of the cashew container to see the quantity of cashew apples and the quantity of fresh leaves in the cashew container. These unethical business practices among the cashew farmers had created a bad image and reputation, as well as distrust and fear in the minds of first-time cashew apple dealers. The business of cashew apples was no longer as attractive as it was before the unethical business practices featured in the business, as the future continuity of the industry was threatened (Okpe,2022).

According to Onah (2023), a cashew farmer in Eha-Alumona, who argued that the use of fresh leaves and other materials to serve as a cushion for cashew apples was a normal practice, which the cashew apple dealers from Enugu town also carried out to protect the cashew apples from damage or piercing the succulent skin. To her, the practice would only be considered unethical and dubious when a farmer knew that the quantity of cashew apples plucked for sale was few and decided to use a large local basket, filling it up with leaves without the customer identifying it. These unethical business practices in the cashew industry caused environmental pollution in most cashew-producing communities, as the leaves were left in the market after selling the cashew apples. Most of these cashew apple markets in Nsukka are littered with leaves and other soft materials, causing environmental problems in the land.

Raw Cashew Nuts for Marketing or Exporting

This is another area in the cashew business that has attracted so many condemnations from both the stakeholders in the industry and non-stakeholders. For raw cashew nuts to be seen as worthy for export or international markets, some standards must be followed by the raw cashew nuts dealers or the raw cashew nuts merchants. These included, but were not limited to the following:

- Proper storage
- Pests and diseases-free
- Free from particles

Be that as it may, the middlemen as well as the exporters of raw cashew nuts to India, Vietnam, Brazil, and China had been alleged to have devised a dubious means of defrauding foreign investors. This dubious means is contrary to the above expected standard, which quality cashew nuts must follow or conform to. It is also important to state that once any of the above standards was compromised, the unethical business practice was witnessed. In the Nsukka region, precisely in Udenu Local Government Area, in 2001, one of the major raw cashew nuts exporters was alleged to have sent fraudulently bagged raw cashew nuts to an Indian foreign investor, who had already paid hugely for the raw cashew nuts to be supplied. The alleged major raw cashew exporter intentionally added some quantity of chippings (stones) in the course of sealing the jute bags for cashew nuts

export without recourse to the future in the business. This unsuspecting foreigner had been a close business associate of the major exporter for years and had traded with him without any unethical business practices being recorded (Onoja,2023). In 2001, the industrial demands from foreign investors increased tremendously in the global cashew market, and foreign investors were placing orders for the supply of raw cashew nuts. Some of the foreign investors also travelled to major countries in Africa, such as Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Tanzania, and Nigeria, for the products. The said major exporter, with a low future self-continuity, had sold some quantity of raw cashew nuts meant to be supplied to his foreign investor who had made payment in advance in an expectation of his consignment. And the alleged marketer was unable to procure enough raw cashew nuts to replace the sold raw cashew nuts meant for his Indian investor, and he decided to indulge in unethical business practices (Onoja,2023).

However, it is imperative for one to know that raw cashew nuts for export and sometimes for local processing were measured using the metric system, such as kilogram, to ascertain the weight and the price equivalent to the weight of the consignment or raw cashew nuts. This is why the quantity of raw cashew nuts exported yearly or annually was measured in metric tonnes instead of bags. In view of the above method of weighing or costing the value of raw cashew nuts for export, this major cashew exporter purposely added stones in the course of bagging or packaging the raw cashew nuts in the warehouse without taking cognizance of the long-term consequences on his business (Ibe,2022).

These unethical business practices on the part of this major raw cashew nuts exporter affected and destroyed the reputation of the majority of Nsukka raw cashew exporters, like *United*, *We Stand Raw Cashew Dealers Association*, and National Cashew Association of Nigeria (NCAN), and to a lesser extent, African Cashew Alliance. The major foreign investors avoided Nigeria and the Nsukka region in particular. This mistrust witnessed in Nigeria affected the quantity of raw cashew nuts exported from Nigeria from 2002 until a decade after that. These foreign investors started gradually patronizing Nsukka region cashew nuts, but the patronage had never been the same. Below is a bar chart showing the volume of cashew nut export from the area of the study. The **X** represents the years, while **Y** represents the volume of export in tonnes. It indicates that in 2000, the volume of exports declined to 4,500 tonnes and later rose little 5,500 tonnes in 2001. From 2002, the export reduced to 4,000 tonnes due to the dubious act of a major exporter, and remained stagnant for almost a decade, and in 2010, rose to 6,000 tonnes.

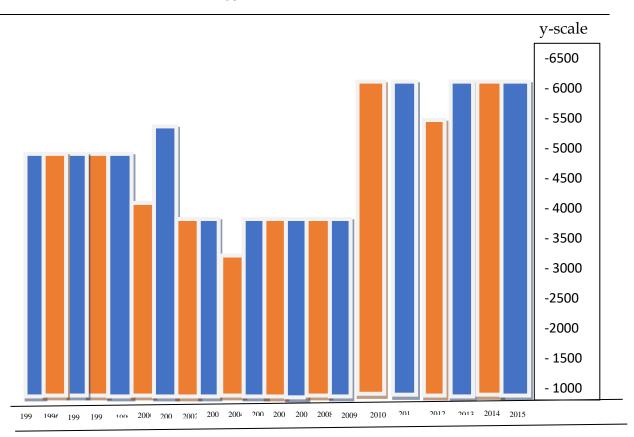
Bar Chart: Showing the level of patronage before and after the unethical practice

Vol. in tons

y-scale

x-scale

Source: Field Work



x-scale Source: Field Work

In a bid to eradicate such unethical business practices, particularly the issue of stone, the *United We Stand Cashew Dealers Association* came up with a stringent sanction on any member caught in any unwholesome act. The sanctions include: **1** ten (10) cartons of Heineken, six (6) cartons of beer such as Life/Hero brands, eight (8) kola nuts, and four (4) kegs (twenty litres) of palm wine to be provided by the member during their monthly meetings. **2**. The member could be placed in a state of incommunicado with other members, depending on the gravity of the offence. **3**. Withdrawal of membership license. This measure had improved the strength of patronage of the foreign investors in raw cashew nuts in the Nsukka region (Iziga,2023).

Prior to this stringent sanction, some major cashew exporters intentionally avoided the proper or adequate drying of raw cashew nuts meant to be exported. Some allowed these unethical practices to ensure that the weight of the cashew nuts would be rated high when weighed or measured, which also translated into more money in their bank accounts. The handpicking of rotten and spoiled raw cashew nuts was usually avoided by the businessmen and women (Amaechi, 2023). The challenge posed by these unethical business practices within the area of study has not been totally eradicated, as pockets of sharp practices or unethical practices were still being witnessed in some areas.

Below is a table showing the quantity of cashew nuts purchased and exported or supplied by seven selected cashew nut dealers in the Nsukka region from 2001-2004, where a total decline was recorded from 2002 up to ten years after the unethical business practice. Ten (10) bags of 100kg of raw cashew are equivalent to

one (1) tonne of raw cashew nuts. So, to arrive at the figures below, we divided the total number of bags available by 10 to get the total tonnes. Mathematically, Number of bags $\div 10$ = Tonnes.

Table 1: Patronage after the Unethical Business Practice of a Major Exporter

			2001		2002		2003		2004	
S/N	Names of cashew nut	Location	Quantity of cashew nuts purchased	Quantity exported	Qty purchased	Qty exported	Qty purchased	Qty exported	Qty purchased	Qty exported
	dealers									
1	Meche- Agro Enterprise	Obollo- Afor	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	23,500 bags of 100kg (2,350 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)
2	Udoamak a Diogbe	Diogbe Igbo-Etiti	45,000 bags of 100kg (4,500 tons)	42,000 bags of 100kg (4,200 tons)	45,000 bags of 100kg (4,500 tons)	24,000 bags of 100kg (2,400 tons)	45,000 bags of 100kg (4,500 tons)	24,000 bags of 100kg (2,400 tons)	45,000 bags of 100kg (4,500 tons)	24,000 bags of 100kg (2,400 tons)
3	Onoja James	Orba	37,500 bags of 100kg (3,750 tons)	34,500 bags of 100kg (3,450To ns)	37,500 bags of 100kg (3,750 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	37,500 bags of 100kg (3,750 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	37,500 bags of 100kg (3,750 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)
4	Mama Vincent	Orba	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	22,500 bags of 100kg (2,250 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)
5	Smelter	Obollo- Afor	36,000 bags of 100kg (3,600 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	36,000 bags of 100kg (3,600 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	36,000 bags of 100kg (3,600 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	36,000 bags of 100kg (3,600 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)
6	Hon. Boniface	Orba	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)
7	Alhaji Waziri	Obollo- Afor	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	12,000 bags of 100kg (1,200 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	12,000 bags of 100kg (1,200 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	12,000 bags of 100kg (1,200 tons)

Source: Field Work

Discussion

Table 1 shows the functional types of sentences extracted from the home videos. What becomes obvious is that all functional types of sentences are deployed by the women to bully their co-women in childless contexts. However, the sentences are used for different derogatory intentions, some of which are deliberate and others that are unintended. The frequency of each sentence type is presented in the succeeding Table 2 to investigate which is predominantly used by the bullying women.

Table 2: Frequency of the Sampled Functional Sentence Types

Sentence Types	Frequency	%
Declarative	12	44.4
Imperative	8	29.6
Interrogative	6	22.2
Exclamatory	1	3.7
Total	27	100

The statistics represented in Table 2 above are expected. Declarative sentences take the lion's share by occurring 12 times, representing 44.4%, while imperative sentences are 8, representing 29.6%. Interrogative sentences come next with 6 appearances, taking 22.2% while exclamatory sentences appear once, taking just 3.7%. Apart from the fact that the declarative sentence is usually the most used construction in any human interaction, it becomes the means for stating the cold facts for the bullying woman in a childless context. The women who use declarative sentences need to come out straight, bold, and blunt to express their anger, dislike for the childless situation of their co-women, and hatred for their ineptitude. The declarative constructions do not hide feelings and do not know how to pretend or mince words. This is exactly what played out in several instances where one woman or the other is found deploying the use of declarative sentences to bully the childless woman. For example:

- 1. You cannot buy what I need in the market.
- 2. You are supposed to have a father, mother, and children so that your table will be full and your food will be sweeter.
- 3. I have brought to my son a real woman.

The sentences above were statements uttered by the mother-in-law to bully the childless son's wife. The first is a hash reply to a simple request from the daughterin-law for the mother-in-law to say what she would like her to buy from the market. Instead of the mother-in-law appreciating the request and returning the courtesy, she decided to open up on the delicate matter of the daughter-in-law's childless situation without regard for her feelings. The reply "you cannot buy what I need in the market" is loaded with meanings and at the same time poignant. What else will a woman need in such a situation that cannot be bought in the market than a child? That blunt statement is enough to immediately water down the enthusiasm of a daughter-in-law who is seeking by all means to satisfy a visiting mother-in-law. It can dampen her morale and activate her sad mood. While it is a fact that a child cannot be bought in the market, one does not expect the mother-in-law to subject the daughter-in-law to such ridicule, particularly at such an auspicious moment when the latter is trying to be nice to the former. The second sentence is equally blunt but somehow contains both statements of fact and untruth. While having a table surrounded by father, mother, and children makes the table full, interesting, and enjoyable, it becomes untruth when it determines the taste that the food gives. However, the mother-in-law is only venting her annoyance at the scanty table that lacks the presence of children. This is an indirect way of insulting the daughter-inlaw for her childlessness and to mock her. The third declarative sentence is the most fierce and unexpected. It is used to issue a quick quit warrant to the daughter-inlaw without giving any room for negotiation. The too sharp, straightforward sentence momentarily announces the sack/rejection of the childless woman without an appeal. The sentence is also used indirectly to blackmail the childless woman emotionally by implying that she is not a "real" woman. It becomes obvious that declarative sentences in the sampled home videos are used to mock, provoke, demoralize, taunt, insult, accuse, lambast, badly tag the childless woman, and declare open rejection for her.

The second most used sentences by the bullying women in childless contexts are the imperative sentences. Imperative sentences occur 8 times and represent 29.6% of the total number of functional sentences used in the sampled home videos. Imperative sentences are normally used to issue direct orders or commands, requests, invitations, warnings, or instructions. The bullying women use imperative sentences in childless contexts to show some level of imposition on their bullied counterparts. The use of imperative sentences by women in matrimonial matters in the sampled videos reveals the socio-cultural disposition of the African setting, which puts the elderly women in a position where they can exercise control over the young women. And that is the socio-cultural right the mother-in-law or sister-in-law enjoys over their daughter-in-law or the wife of their brother, as the case may be. Some of the imperative sentences are meant to express unquestionable vetoes, impolite requests, and outright hostility to the childless woman by the bullying cowoman. These are some examples from the extracted structures:

- 4. Let her cry and confess her sins.
- 5. Not one more word from you.
- 6. You should be starving in this house until you have given me a baby.
- 7. Precious, leave that food.

A critical examination of the sentences from the excerpted structures above points to utterances made by merciless women to bully their co-women. The fourth was uttered by a mother-in-law to dissuade others from placating a crying woman after she had been humiliated for her childless condition. The wicked mother-in-law "encouraged" the woman to continue to cry and confess her sins as if the crying would absolve her of her sins. This imperative sentence only succeeds in subjecting the crying woman to a moment of emotional turmoil and humiliation. "Let her cry and confess her sins" as a statement indicts the woman and inculpates her as the cause of her childless situation. The Yoruba socio-cultural environment, where the film is set, believes that a woman who is a witch might have sworn never to give birth to any child. The statement is therefore an indirect way of saying she is a witch and that she has a skeleton in her cupboard. This is not only insulting, it is also name-calling.

The fifth sentence is more authoritative in silencing the childless woman. Her situation, notwithstanding pathetic, was not seen as something that could give her a voice in society. This voice is not only commanding, it is also issuing a threat. This commanding tone is intended to subjugate and suppress the barren woman. The statement is meant to exert serious psychological tension and gravity on her helpless condition. It is to cow her and enslave her consciousness. It inflicts pains of an inferiority complex upon the childless sufferer and renders her at the mercy of the oppressing voice. "Not one more word from you" is uttered to completely

withdraw the right of the traumatized and stigmatized childless woman to any opinion.

The sixth and seventh sentences carry heavy weight in traumatizing and suppressing the childless woman as well. The woman's right to have any say is not the only thing threatened; her right to live is also boldly challenged. The sentences question her right to have access to any food unless she can produce children. The orders allow no options. The obligatory tone achieved by the deontic modality "should" does not permit the woman to eat. The direct reference achieved by the summon "Precious" is to identify the subject of the attack and to confront her openly. Then, "leave that food" is an order that she must obey at all costs. Thus, imperative sentences in the sampled text openly challenge the rights of the barren women to live or have a say, even in their matrimonial homes.

Another functional sentence type used to bully the childless woman in the sampled videos is the interrogative sentence. Interrogative sentences in the sampled texts are 6, taking 22.2% in the statistics. The interrogative sentence's question is deployed to probingly indict the childless woman and to subject her to very deep thought about her condition. These questions are to further traumatize her and make her feel sorry for her situation. Examples:

- 8. Who knows the number of abortions she committed and the number of children she killed?
- 9. Why are you eating? Are you not supposed to share food with your children?
- 10. What are you cooking? Is that what you came to this house to do? Cooking for whom?

In the interrogative constructions cited above, the bullying woman is using sentence 8 to indirectly adduce the childlessness of the woman to several abortions that she is likely to have committed. The question is both rhetorical and indicting. It portrays the woman as a useless person who has probably lived a reckless life before marriage. The two questions contained in the single sentence are not asking for her opinion on the matter but pronouncing judgment upon her in being somehow precise about her tendency to commit a "number of abortions" and killing a "number of children". This is to deliberately grieve the childless woman and to mock her condition.

Example 9 contains two questions asked in quick succession. The first is a non-polar question, while the second is a polar question. The questions are to query the audacity of the childless woman to eat without children around her table. The questions are to trouble her peace of mind and destabilize her emotions. Number 10 is too akin to number 9. It contains three questions in successive aggravations. The opening question, "What are you cooking?" is non-polar, while the other two, "Is that what you came to this house to do? Cooking for whom?" are polar questions. Although none of the questions were expected to be replied to by the addressee, they come in the form of rhetorical enquiries to directly flog and wound the conscience of the childless woman. The questions are expected to call her attention to her condition of childlessness in order to plunge her into deep sorrow and inflict her with shame. They are to remind her that her role in her husband's house is far

more than just cooking, and that the essence of cooking by a wife in the matrimonial home is for the children.

There is only one use of an exclamatory sentence in the sampled texts, which translates to 3.7%. This is a sparing occurrence, no doubt. The implication is that the bullies in childless contexts hardly ever raise their voice to intimidate or threaten the childless woman. They do so with craftiness and technical subtlety in order not to easily give themselves away to the people around them, that they are bullying the woman. The bully will, in most cases, keep quiet once she notices that someone is approaching, and perhaps displays a positive disposition to muffle her resentment for the childless woman. Exclamatory sentences are rarely used, but by necessity in provocative situations when the bully is ready to damn the consequences and does not care who is listening or around. Thus, the sentence, "Useless girl, good for nothing!" coming as an exclamatory construction was uttered by the angry mother-in-law against her childless daughter-in-law to write her off and to make her feel worthless. This is to further taunt the lady and to traumatize her.

Conclusion

Language as a social tool defines every social relationship as well as gives meaning within social contexts. The four functional sentences in the English language have been identified to be in use in bullying situations, particularly by women against cowomen in childless contexts. Relying on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, which establishes the fact that language can be used to perform social functions, it is obvious from the analysis done in this research that the bullying women use functional sentences in their discourses, especially in the context of childlessness, to bully their co-women. These functional sentences act as bullying tools for mothersin-law against childless daughters-in-law. The declarative sentences are used to state facts or give information that reminds the childless woman of her condition of childlessness. The interrogatives are used to elicit psychological or mental torture. The imperatives are used to intimidate or subdue the childless woman. The exclamatory is sparingly used, but essentially used to express serious provocation against the childless woman, which mostly results in name-calling and writing off the woman. There is no doubt that these functional sentences are used as devices to threaten, insult, mock, taunt, exclude, spread false rumours, intimidate, as well as elicit or provoke emotional torture on the victims. The study, therefore, recommends appropriate language use in contexts by women to avoid the psychological torture they put their sisters through. There is a need for more studies into women's language use in different contexts and intentional education of women on the realities of their language use on their fellow women.

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