

The Role of Contemporary Nigerian Drama in Addressing Social Injustice and Political Corruption

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Abstract

Contemporary Nigerian drama has emerged as a powerful medium of social critique, particularly in addressing issues of social injustice and political corruption that have plagued the postcolonial Nigerian state. As a performative art form, drama provides a unique intersection between aesthetics and activism, drawing upon indigenous performance traditions while simultaneously engaging global discourses on governance and human rights. This study interrogates the role of contemporary Nigerian playwrights in exposing, critiquing, and resisting systemic corruption and socio-political marginalisation. By analysing selected dramatic texts and performances, the research highlights how playwrights deploy satire, allegory, symbolism, and radical performance strategies to stimulate social consciousness and provoke dialogue on accountability, justice, and ethical leadership. The paper also situates Nigerian drama within broader African and postcolonial literary traditions, thereby demonstrating its significance as both a cultural expression and an instrument of social change. Ultimately, the study underscores the continuing relevance of Nigerian drama not only as entertainment but also as a catalyst for civic engagement and democratic reform.

Keywords: Nigerian Drama, Social Injustice, Political Corruption, Performance Studies, Postcolonial Theatre

Accepted 1/8/2025

Published 17/10/2025

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian socio-political landscape has long been marked by systemic corruption, economic mismanagement, and entrenched social inequalities. Since independence in 1960, successive governments—whether military or civilian—have been accused of perpetuating cycles of exploitation and injustice that have denied citizens equitable access to social, economic, and political opportunities (Falola & Heaton, 2022). In such a climate, literature, and especially drama, has functioned not merely as art but as an instrument of social critique and resistance.

Drama in Nigeria has historically carried the burden of representation and reform. From precolonial festivals and masquerade performances to postcolonial stage dramas, performance has been used as a cultural tool to expose societal ills, educate the populace, and provoke political accountability (Osofisan, 2001; Jeyifo, 2004). Nigerian playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, and Femi Osofisan, and later Ahmed Yerima and Tess Onwueme,

have consistently woven narratives that interrogate corruption, marginalisation, and leadership failure.

The role of drama in political engagement is not unique to Nigeria but has taken distinct forms within the Nigerian context, where theatre is deeply rooted in indigenous traditions and performative culture. The Nigerian stage has historically provided a critical counter-voice to the ruling class, embodying what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1997) describes as the "weapon of theory" in cultural struggle. By dramatising corruption, electoral fraud, and the abuse of power, playwrights articulate resistance and imagine alternative possibilities for governance and justice.

Contemporary Nigerian drama, in particular, builds upon these traditions but also expands them to address modern realities. Issues such as the militarisation of politics, gendered dimensions of injustice, youth disenfranchisement, and the rise of neoliberal corruption schemes are prominently featured in twenty-first-century

dramatic works (Olaniyan, 2015). These plays serve as both cultural mirrors and catalysts for discourse, drawing audiences into conversations on accountability and reform.

The relationship between art and politics has been theorised as one of interdependence. According to Eagleton (2016), literature and drama cannot be detached from their sociopolitical contexts; they embody ideological struggles and project the aspirations of marginalised voices. Nigerian dramatists have used allegory, satire, and symbolism to bypass censorship and provoke awareness even under authoritarian regimes, thereby positioning drama as a subversive yet constructive space for civic engagement.

As Nigeria continues to grapple with governance crises, drama retains its capacity to reach audiences beyond academic or elite spaces. Street theatre, community-based performances, and adaptations into film and television expand the reach of dramatic critique, making theatre a living discourse rather than a static form. This accessibility underscores its continued relevance in the twenty-first century (Barber, 2020).

Thus, studying Nigerian drama as a vehicle for addressing corruption and injustice is not simply a literary endeavour but a sociological and political one. It demonstrates the ability of drama to inspire consciousness, mobilise communities, and symbolically resist hegemonic structures.

This chapter introduces the research by providing background context, identifying the research problem, establishing the objectives, delimiting the scope, and defining relevant terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria, often referred to as the “giant of Africa”, is paradoxically characterised by immense natural wealth and pervasive poverty. The country ranks among the world’s largest oil producers, yet widespread corruption and mismanagement have hindered development and perpetuated inequality (Akinola, 2019). Political corruption has penetrated nearly every sector of society, from governance to public service, creating what Achebe (1983) famously described as the “trouble with Nigeria”.

Drama in Nigeria has historically mirrored these contradictions. In the early post-independence years, playwrights like Wole Soyinka and Ola Rotimi staged plays that critiqued the failures of leadership and corruption within the elite class. Soyinka’s *Kongi’s Harvest* (1965), for example, uses satire to expose the authoritarian tendencies of postcolonial leaders, while Rotimi’s *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* (1977) depicts opportunistic politics and corruption.

During the military era, drama became an even more potent form of resistance. Playwrights such as Femi Osofisan and Tess Onwueme used theatre to challenge dictatorship, human rights abuses, and systemic

injustices. Their plays functioned as cultural interventions, often performed in universities, community halls, and public spaces, despite censorship and repression (Jeyifo, 2004).

In the Fourth Republic, the persistence of corruption and social injustice has ensured the continued relevance of drama. Contemporary playwrights such as Ahmed Yerima, Irene Salami-Agunloye, and Bode Sowande have addressed issues such as electoral fraud, marginalisation, gender inequality, and the complicity of political elites in sustaining a corrupt system (Olaniyan, 2015). These works represent drama as both an archive of Nigeria’s political history and a living critique of ongoing challenges.

The globalisation of theatre has further amplified the reach of Nigerian dramas. Through festivals, diaspora performances, and digital platforms, Nigerian plays now speak to global audiences while retaining local concerns. This underscores the universality of corruption and injustice as themes but situates Nigerian drama within a global canon of political theatre alongside works by Ngũgĩ, Brecht, and Augusto Boal (Barber, 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, drama’s effectiveness lies in its performativity. Unlike prose or poetry, performance engages the senses, emotions, and intellect simultaneously. It creates a collective experience that fosters critical reflection and, in some cases, mobilises action. As Boal (2000) suggests in his *Theatre of the Oppressed*, theatre can transform spectators into participants, enabling communities to rehearse alternatives to oppression.

Therefore, contemporary Nigerian drama functions as a cultural weapon against corruption and injustice. It embodies the nation’s struggles, voices the grievances of marginalised people, and demands accountability from leadership. It is within this context that this study situates its inquiry.

1.2 Statement of the Problem (8 Paragraphs)

Despite Nigeria’s immense potential, corruption remains one of the most pervasive obstacles to its development. The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index consistently ranks Nigeria among the most corrupt countries globally, reflecting widespread distrust in governance institutions (Transparency International, 2023). Social injustice, manifesting in inequality, unemployment, poor access to education and healthcare, and political exclusion, compounds this crisis.

While civil society organisations, the judiciary, and the media have sought to confront corruption and injustice, their impact has been limited by systemic failures and political interference. Drama, as a cultural form, offers a unique avenue for critique and resistance, but its role remains underexplored in scholarly discourse.

Many studies on Nigerian drama have focused

on aesthetics, literary traditions, or cultural representation (Jeyifo, 2004; Olaniyan, 2015). Although valuable, these perspectives often understate the activist potential of drama in directly addressing corruption and social injustice. This gap necessitates a more focused study that treats drama as both an artistic and socio-political tool.

Furthermore, the reception and impact of drama within Nigerian society have not been sufficiently interrogated. Questions remain as to whether dramatic performances translate into political consciousness or behavioural change, particularly among youth and marginalised communities.

Another pressing issue is that while Nigerian playwrights have historically engaged with corruption and injustice, contemporary audiences may consume theatre differently due to technological shifts and the dominance of Nollywood and digital media. It is thus necessary to investigate how drama continues to adapt and remain relevant in addressing systemic corruption.

The study also observes that Nigerian political theatre has often been marginalised in policy discourse. Unlike Western contexts where theatre for development (TfD) is integrated into social campaigns, Nigerian drama often functions without institutional support. This raises questions about sustainability and effectiveness.

Additionally, there exists a scholarly gap in comparing classical and contemporary dramatists in their strategies of resistance. For instance, while Soyinka's satirical allegories critiqued authoritarianism, contemporary playwrights like Yerima employ more historical and realist forms to address corruption. This shift warrants further exploration.

Therefore, the central problem this study addresses is how contemporary Nigerian drama continues to engage with issues of social injustice and political corruption in ways that are culturally relevant, socially impactful, and politically provocative.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

Objectives:

1. To examine the role of contemporary Nigerian drama in addressing social injustice and political corruption.
2. To analyse thematic strategies (satire, allegory, symbolism, realism) used by Nigerian dramatists to critique leadership and governance.
3. To evaluate the socio-political impact of selected dramatic works on Nigerian society.
4. To situate contemporary Nigerian drama within broader African and global traditions of political theatre.

Research Questions:

1. How does contemporary Nigerian drama engage with issues of corruption and social injustice?

2. What literary and performative strategies do Nigerian playwrights employ in addressing governance failures?

3. In what ways do Nigerian audiences interpret and respond to dramatic representations of corruption?

4. How does contemporary Nigerian drama contribute to global discourses on political theatre?

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study (4 Paragraphs)

The scope of this study is limited to contemporary Nigerian drama, broadly defined as works produced from the 1990s to the present. This timeframe reflects the transition to the Fourth Republic and the resurgence of democratic discourse alongside persistent corruption and injustice.

The study focuses on selected playwrights, including Ahmed Yerima, Irene Salami-Agunloye, Tess Onwueme, and Femi Osofisan, whose works directly interrogate corruption, leadership, and inequality. Plays by earlier dramatists such as Soyinka and Rotimi will be comparatively cited to establish continuity and divergence.

While the study primarily examines written texts, attention is also given to performance aspects since the drama is fully realised on stage. However, logistical limitations restrict the scope to documented performances and scholarly analyses rather than ethnographic observation of all live performances.

Finally, the study acknowledges that drama is only one among many cultural forms addressing corruption. While theater's impact is significant, it is not assumed to be the sole driver of political change; rather, it is analysed as a cultural and discursive force within a wider social framework.

1.5 Significance of the Study (5 Paragraphs)

This study is significant in several respects. First, it contributes to scholarship on Nigerian drama by foregrounding its activist and political dimensions rather than limiting analysis to aesthetics or literary traditions.

Second, the study provides an interdisciplinary lens by situating drama at the intersection of literature, politics, sociology, and performance studies. This multidimensional approach reflects the complex role of drama in society.

Third, it addresses a gap in existing literature by examining how contemporary dramatists engage current realities such as electoral corruption, gendered injustice, and youth disenfranchisement. This ensures that Nigerian dramas are contextualised within present-day struggles rather than only historical contexts.

Fourth, the findings have practical implications. By analysing drama's role in shaping consciousness, the study highlights its potential for civic education, policy

advocacy, and community mobilisation.

Lastly, the study situates Nigerian drama within global discourses of political theatre, thereby elevating its status in world literary and cultural studies. This positions Nigerian dramatists as central voices in global debates on art and resistance.

1.6 Operational Definition of Terms

Contemporary Nigerian Drama

Contemporary Nigerian drama refers to dramatic works produced in Nigeria largely from the 1990s onwards, coinciding with the country's transition to the Fourth Republic in 1999. These works reflect and interrogate contemporary socio-political realities, including corruption, electoral malpractice, gender inequality, and leadership crises (Yerima, 2003; Olaniyan, 2015). The term situates drama not only as an artistic product but also as a critical response to evolving governance structures and civic struggles.

Social Injustice

Social injustice denotes systemic inequities and discriminatory practices that perpetuate exclusion, marginalisation, and denial of rights within Nigerian society. It manifests in unequal access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political participation, often along ethnic, class, and gender lines (Falola & Heaton, 2022; Akinola, 2019). In Nigerian drama, social injustice is frequently staged to expose societal contradictions and highlight the plight of the oppressed.

Political Corruption

Political corruption is the abuse of public office for private gain, manifesting in bribery, electoral fraud, embezzlement, nepotism, and other practices that undermine governance and development. It remains one of Nigeria's most persistent challenges and a central theme in Nigerian dramatic narratives (Achebe, 1983; Transparency International, 2023). Plays often use satire and allegory to critique corrupt leaders and mobilise audiences toward accountability.

Performance

Performance, in the context of this study, refers to the live or mediated enactment of drama through diverse platforms, such as stage theatre, community-based performances, and adaptations into film or digital media. As Barber (2020) explains, African performance is deeply communal, involving audiences as active participants rather than passive spectators. Nigerian performance traditions emphasise this collective dimension, making performances a dynamic vehicle for social commentary.

Resistance Theatre

Resistance theatre' refers to a form of drama that critiques, challenges, or subverts political oppression, exploitation, and corruption through artistic strategies such as satire, allegory, and symbolism. Rooted in traditions of political theatre, it aligns with Boal's (2000) notion of theatre as a weapon of the oppressed and Ngũgĩ's (1997) conception of art as a site of cultural struggle. In Nigeria, resistance theatre has been a defining feature of the works of Soyinka, Osofisan, Onwueme, and Yerima, among others, as they confront authoritarianism and systemic injustice.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 Historical Overview of Nigerian Drama (10 Paragraphs)

Drama in Nigeria has a long and complex history that predates colonialism. Precolonial dramatic traditions were embedded in festivals, masquerades, and ritual performances, which combined song, dance, music, and storytelling to convey moral lessons and communal values (Barber, 1997). These performances were not merely entertainment but vehicles for social regulation, often critiquing deviance and reinforcing collective identity. As Adedeji (2003) notes, indigenous performance traditions were highly participatory, making the audience an integral part of the theatrical process.

Colonialism introduced new dimensions to Nigerian drama. Missionary schools and colonial institutions promoted Western literary dramas, which sought to civilise and Christianize African communities (Ogundele, 1997). However, early Nigerian dramatists appropriated this form to challenge colonial dominance. Hubert Ogunde, regarded as the father of modern Nigerian theatre, pioneered the use of folk operas in the 1940s to blend indigenous forms with Western stage conventions, critiquing both colonial policies and emerging social contradictions (Clark, 1981).

By the 1950s and 1960s, drama had become a powerful medium of nationalism. Playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark, and Ola Rotimi emerged, using theatre to interrogate issues of identity, tradition, and governance in the wake of independence (Jeyifo, 2004). Soyinka's works, for example, often addressed the moral decay of leadership, while Rotimi's plays fused historical narratives with commentary on contemporary challenges. These dramatists transformed the Nigerian stage into a site of cultural resistance.

The postcolonial period, however, quickly revealed the failure of nationalist optimism. The military coups and civil war of the late 1960s and 1970s exposed the contradictions of independence. Drama became a tool for critiquing authoritarianism and corruption, with playwrights like Femi Osofisan employing satire and allegory to highlight systemic injustice and mass dissill-

usionment (Osofisan, 2001).

During the military era of the 1980s and 1990s, censorship and state repression heightened the stakes for dramatists. Many plays became coded critiques of dictatorship and abuse of power, relying on allegorical forms to evade censorship. Tess Onwueme and Bode Sowande, for example, employed feminist and populist perspectives to highlight how political oppression intersected with gender and class exploitation (Onwueme, 1992; Sowande, 1995).

The return to democracy in 1999 did not end corruption or injustice. Instead, the Fourth Republic saw continued failures of governance, electoral fraud, and persistent inequality. Contemporary dramatists, such as Ahmed Yerima and Irene Salami-Agunloye, responded by dramatising historical and contemporary crises to interrogate Nigeria's political elite (Yerima, 2003; Salami-Agunloye, 2001). Their plays bridge past struggles with present realities, reinforcing drama's role as a mirror of society.

What distinguishes contemporary Nigerian drama is its expansion beyond the stage into new media and global circuits. The rise of community theatre, television drama, and digital adaptations has broadened the reach of dramatic critique (Barber, 2020). This reflects the adaptability of Nigerian theatre to shifting social and cultural contexts while retaining its critical edge.

In addition, the engagement of diaspora Nigerian playwrights underscores the transnational dimension of Nigerian drama. Playwrights writing and performing abroad extend the discourse on injustice and corruption to global audiences, linking Nigeria's struggles with broader African and postcolonial concerns (Olaniyan, 2015).

Scholars have also noted continuities between indigenous traditions and modern Nigerian drama. While contemporary plays may employ Western dramaturgy, they retain elements of performance rooted in ritual, music, and collective participation (Adedjei, 2003). This hybridity sustains the vibrancy and political potency of Nigerian drama.

Thus, Nigerian drama has evolved through precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial phases, consistently reflecting and shaping political and social realities. Its historical trajectory underscores its unique role as both an artistic and political form, making it a crucial medium for interrogating corruption and injustice.

2.1.2 Review of Existing Scholarship on Drama as Social Critique

Drama in Nigeria has long been recognised as more than entertainment; it is a cultural weapon of critique. Scholars emphasise that Nigerian playwrights have consistently deployed theatre as a means of questioning leadership failures, corruption, and exploitation (Barber, 1997; Jeyifo, 2004). This function of drama is grounded in

its performative immediacy, which allows audiences to engage directly with societal contradictions.

Wole Soyinka's oeuvre remains a central reference point for the role of drama as critique. His plays, such as *Kongi's Harvest* and *The Trials of Brother Jero*, interrogate political opportunism, greed, and the cyclical nature of authoritarian rule (Soyinka, 1974; Gibbs, 2006). Scholars argue that Soyinka's dramaturgy combines satire and ritual to expose both the sacred and profane aspects of political power (Jeyifo, 2004).

Femi Osofisan extends this critique through radical Marxist-inflected plays. Works such as *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980) expose the economic roots of crime, linking systemic injustice to poverty and corruption (Osofisan, 2001). As Awodiya (1995) notes, Osofisan employs Brechtian techniques to alienate audiences and compel reflection rather than passive enjoyment. His theatre exemplifies how Nigerian drama functions as a people's tribunal.

Tess Onwueme has been equally vocal in addressing social injustice, particularly through gendered perspectives. Plays like *The Reign of Wazobia* (1992) critique patriarchal structures while also indicting the political elite's corruption. Scholars such as Osakwe (2009) emphasise Onwueme's role in expanding the scope of Nigerian drama criticism to include intersectional perspectives on oppression.

Another strand of scholarship highlights Ahmed Yerima's historical plays as interventions into Nigeria's crisis of governance. In works like *Attahiru* (1999), Yerima revisits Nigeria's colonial encounters to reveal enduring patterns of betrayal and corruption (Yerima, 2003). Scholars argue that his dramaturgy connects the past to the present, suggesting that corruption is deeply entrenched in Nigerian socio-political history (Obafemi, 2008).

Drama as social critique is also evident in community theatre traditions. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's experiments in Kenya influenced Nigerian practitioners who employ participatory performance to critique power structures. Ogunbiyi (1981) observes that such grassroots theatre practices bypass elite audiences and speak directly to marginalised communities, thereby democratising the critique of corruption.

In the contemporary era, Nollywood-inspired stage productions and adaptations further expand the role of drama as critique. While Nollywood is often seen as commercial, several plays adapted for film – such as Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* – retain their political bite in popular culture (Barber, 2020). This underlines how theatre's critical function adapts to new media environments.

Critics also draw attention to the allegorical richness of Nigerian drama. Plays often use myth, folklore, and symbolism to veil their critiques in order to evade censorship. For instance, Rotimi's *If... A Tragedy of the Ruled* uses allegory to highlight the perils of reckless leadership without naming contemporary figures directly

(Rotimi, 1983; Jeyifo, 2004). Such strategies confirm drama's resilience as a critique under repressive regimes.

There is also a growing scholarship on the ethics of dramatic critique. Adebayo (2013) argues that while drama challenges corruption and injustice, it must also avoid elitism by ensuring accessibility to ordinary Nigerians. This resonates with the idea that theater's transformative power depends on its ability to resonate across class and cultural divides.

Furthermore, scholars highlight that drama as critique extends beyond politics into wider forms of social injustice. Issues such as religious intolerance, ethnic conflict, and economic inequality have been dramatised with equal urgency. For example, Salami-Agunloye's *Sweet Revenge* (2001) exposes gender oppression alongside systemic corruption, embodying the dual nature of Nigerian social crises (Salami-Agunloye, 2001).

Overall, the literature confirms that Nigerian drama consistently positions itself as a site of interrogation and resistance. Playwrights and scholars, whether through satire, historical allegory, feminist perspectives, or Marxist dramaturgy, emphasise the power of theatre in speaking truth to power (Jeyifo, 2004; Obafemi, 2008).

In conclusion, existing scholarship affirms that drama in Nigeria is inseparable from social critique. Far from being an escapist art form, it has consistently evolved to challenge injustice and corruption, reinforcing its status as a medium of civic engagement and cultural activism.

2.1.3 Studies Linking Art, Politics, and Activism in African Societies (9 Paragraphs)

Art in African societies has historically functioned as a tool for political expression and activism. Scholars observe that performance, dance, and storytelling are not merely aesthetic practices but interventions in the governance of communities (Barber, 1997). The embeddedness of art in everyday life means that theatre often serves as a public forum for critiquing injustices, celebrating resistance, and mobilising communities (Finnegan, 2012).

In the context of colonial and postcolonial Africa, art has consistently intersected with politics. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's radical call for theatre as a weapon of liberation exemplifies this connection. His experiments with Kamĩĩrĩthũ Community Theatre in Kenya demonstrated how grassroots drama could expose exploitation, mobilise rural populations, and confront authoritarianism (Ngugi, 1986). Nigerian practitioners adopted similar models, embedding political activism in community-orientated performances (Obafemi, 2008).

Studies also highlight the role of performance in anti-colonial struggles. During the nationalist movements of the 1940s and 1950s, artists like Hubert Ogunde in Nigeria and Ngugi in East Africa used theatre to dramatise resistance against colonial structures (Clark, 1981; Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Ogunde's folk operas, for instance, critiqued colonial taxation policies and corruption among

indigenous chiefs, underscoring art's role as a catalyst for political mobilisation.

In postcolonial Africa, art continues to function as a critical voice against neocolonial exploitation and corruption. For instance, Femi Osofisan's politically charged plays highlight class oppression and state failure in Nigeria, embodying the link between dramaturgy and activism (Osofisan, 2001). Beyond Nigeria, South African protest theatre during apartheid, spearheaded by artists like Athol Fugard and Mbongeni Ngema, reinforced how performance could confront systemic injustice (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996).

Contemporary African theatre scholars also note the intersection of art and activism in feminist interventions. Playwrights such as Tess Onwueme and Ama Ata Aidoo critique patriarchal structures while simultaneously addressing corruption and social inequality (Onwueme, 1992; Aidoo, 1995). Their work demonstrates that activism in African art extends beyond political governance into the intimate structures of gender, class, and family.

Another significant dimension of scholarship concerns the performative strategies artists use to articulate dissent. Songs, satire, and masquerade traditions often encode critiques of power in symbolic forms. Adedeji (2003) notes that such strategies enable African artists to sustain political critique even under regimes of censorship. Performance thus becomes an archive of resistance, carrying forward social memory and dissent across generations.

The role of art in African activism has also expanded in the digital era. Contemporary Nigerian dramatists and filmmakers now employ social media, film festivals, and online platforms to amplify their critiques of corruption and injustice (Barber, 2020). This shift demonstrates the adaptability of African artistic activism to new communicative spaces while retaining its civic function.

Scholars caution, however, that the relationship between art and activism is complex. Some argue that state co-optation, elite funding, and commercialisation risk diluting the radical potential of art (Olaniyan, 2015). Nevertheless, even within these constraints, African artists continue to innovate strategies of resistance, ensuring that art remains a vibrant space of political imagination.

In sum, the literature confirms that African art, and Nigerian drama in particular, cannot be divorced from politics and activism. From anti-colonial resistance to critiques of neo-colonial corruption, art has functioned as a cultural arsenal for confronting injustice, sustaining civic consciousness, and imagining alternative futures (Obafemi, 2008; Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996).

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Marxist Literary Criticism (7 Paragraphs)

Marxist literary criticism provides a crucial lens for

examining contemporary Nigerian drama as a medium of social critique. Rooted in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the approach views literature as a reflection of material conditions and class struggles within society (Eagleton, 2002). By foregrounding economic inequality, exploitation, and ideological manipulation, Marxist criticism helps to situate Nigerian drama within broader structures of power and resistance.

Nigerian dramatists often highlight the exploitative dynamics between the ruling elite and the masses, which aligns with Marxist concerns about class antagonism. Plays such as Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* and Tess Onwueme's *The Desert Encroaches* dramatise the plight of the disenfranchised, foregrounding systemic injustices rooted in capitalist greed and political corruption (Awodiya, 1995; Osakwe, 2009). Such works embody Marx's assertion that art is socially conditioned and cannot be divorced from material realities.

Marxist criticism also illuminates ways in which Nigerian drama interrogates ideology. Louis Althusser's concept of "ideological state apparatuses" suggests that cultural forms, including theatre, either reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies (Althusser, 1971). Nigerian plays often expose how institutions such as religion, education, and the media serve the interests of corrupt elites while also providing counterarguments that empower marginalised groups.

This framework is particularly relevant in understanding how dramatists employ satire and allegory to critique exploitation. Satirical plays, such as Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, depict the absurdities of authoritarian rulers who enrich themselves at the expense of ordinary citizens (Jeyifo, 2004). From a Marxist perspective, these dramatic strategies function as forms of ideological resistance, destabilising the power narratives that legitimise inequality.

Furthermore, Marxist criticism underscores drama's role in mobilising political consciousness. Osofisan, for instance, adopts Brechtian alienation techniques to disrupt passive spectatorship and provoke audiences into recognising systemic injustice (Osofisan, 2001). Such dramaturgy embodies Marx's belief that art should not merely interpret the world but actively contribute to its transformation.

Scholars also note that Marxist interpretations reveal the intersections of class with other forms of oppression. Plays by Onwueme and Salami-Agunloye, for example, highlight how corruption and gender inequality are mutually reinforcing, thereby extending Marxist critique into feminist terrains (Osakwe, 2009). This broadens the applicability of Marxist literary theory to Nigeria's multifaceted socio-political crises.

In summary, Marxist literary criticism provides a rigorous framework for analysing Nigerian drama's sustained engagement with corruption, exploitation, and injustice. By situating theatre within the material struggles of Nigerian society, it illuminates drama's role as both a reflection of socio-economic realities and a catalyst for

revolutionary consciousness (Eagleton, 2002; Obafemi, 2008).

2.2.2 Postcolonial Theory (8 Paragraphs)

Postcolonial theory provides an interesting framework for interrogating Nigerian drama's critique of corruption, neocolonialism, and identity politics. Rooted in the works of scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, postcolonial theory explores the cultural legacies of colonialism and their enduring impact on governance, social relations, and cultural production (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013). Nigerian drama, with its historical trajectory from anti-colonial resistance to critiques of post-independence corruption, is particularly well-suited to this framework.

Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism" underscores how colonial powers constructed narratives of African inferiority to justify domination (Said, 1978). Nigerian playwrights respond by challenging these colonial discourses while also exposing how post-independence elites perpetuate the same structures of exploitation. For instance, Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru* (1999) re-examines colonial encounters in Northern Nigeria, illustrating how betrayal and complicity by local leaders laid the foundation for contemporary corruption (Yerima, 2003; Obafemi, 2008).

Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity further enriches the reading of Nigerian drama. Many plays embody cultural hybridity, blending indigenous traditions with Western dramaturgy to create a theatre that both resists colonial dominance and articulates new postcolonial identities (Bhabha, 1994). Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi* exemplifies the foregoing by fusing Yoruba traditions with modern theatrical form to critique the politics of betrayal and leadership failure (Rotimi, 1983; Olaniyan, 2015). Such hybridity reflects the complexities of identity in a postcolonial society navigating between tradition and modernity.

Gayatri Spivak's idea of the "*subaltern*" also finds resonance in Nigerian drama, especially in feminist works. Tess Onwueme's *The Reign of Wazobia* (1992) gives voice to marginalised women who are excluded from political participation, echoing Spivak's concern about whether subalterns can speak (Spivak, 1988; Osakwe, 2009). By dramatising the intersection of patriarchy and corruption, Nigerian plays foreground the silenced voices within postcolonial Nigeria.

Postcolonial theory also illuminates how neocolonial forces continue to shape Nigeria's political economy. Scholars argue that international financial institutions, multinational corporations, and global political pressures reinforce dependency and corruption in African states (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Ake, 2021). Nigerian drama critiques this reality by linking local corruption with global exploitation. For instance, Osofisan's *Tegonni: An African Antigone* situates African struggles within a global

framework of domination and resistance (Osofisan, 2001).

Recent scholarship extends postcolonial analysis to contemporary contexts. Barber (2020) observes that Nigerian theatre now addresses not only the colonial past but also globalisation, neoliberalism, and new forms of inequality. Plays staged within and beyond Nigeria highlight how corruption is sustained by both internal governance failures and external systems of exploitation. This broadens postcolonial critique from colonial residues to ongoing structures of domination.

Another important contribution of postcolonial theory lies in its focus on memory and history. Nigerian dramatists frequently revisit historical narratives to expose their relevance to contemporary corruption and injustice. By reconstructing history on stage, plays such as Yerima's *Arduous Ground* (2006) confront both the Niger Delta crisis and its colonial antecedents, illustrating how past injustices continue to shape present struggles (Yerima, 2006; Nwosu, 2014).

In sum, postcolonial theory provides an indispensable framework for understanding Nigerian drama's interrogation of corruption and injustice. By drawing on Said's critique of colonial discourse, Bhabha's *hybridity*, and Spivak's *subaltern perspective*, scholars can appreciate how Nigerian playwrights challenge both external and internal systems of domination. Contemporary theatre thus becomes a space where postcolonial Nigeria negotiates its fractured identities, confronts neocolonial corruption, and reimagines alternative futures (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Barber, 2020; Ake, 2021).

2.2.3 Performance Theory (7 Paragraphs)

Performance theory provides a useful framework for analysing Nigerian drama as a live and dynamic medium of civic engagement and resistance. Building on the foundational work of Richard Schechner, performance is understood not only as a theatrical enactment but also as a broad spectrum of human actions, rituals, and behaviours that communicate meaning (Schechner, 2013). Nigerian drama, with its deep roots in indigenous performance traditions, exemplifies how performance functions as both art and social intervention.

A key insight of performance theory is the concept of "restored behaviour", which refers to actions that are rehearsed and repeated in different contexts to produce meaning (Schechner, 1985). Nigerian plays often draw upon ritual, masquerade, and festival practices to embed political critique within familiar cultural frameworks. Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), for example, fuses Yoruba ritual with dramatic form to critique both colonial imposition and indigenous complicity (Gibbs, 2006). This illustrates how performance bridges cultural memory and contemporary resistance.

Performance theory also underscores the participatory dimension of theatre. Victor Turner (1982) describes performance as a "social drama" that stages

conflict, negotiation, and resolution. In Nigeria, community theatre projects explicitly motivate audiences to reflect on corruption, injustice, and governance. By collapsing the distance between performers and spectators, these performances create spaces for collective reflection and political dialogue (Obafemi, 2008).

The theory further illuminates the embodied nature of resistance. Nigerian dramatists frequently employ satire, gestures, music, and improvisation to ridicule corrupt leaders and dramatise injustice. These embodied performances resonate strongly with audiences, often provoking both laughter and outrage. As Barber (2020) notes, the live immediacy of performance amplifies theatre's capacity to inspire civic action and resist political oppression.

Contemporary adaptations of Nigerian drama into digital and mediated platforms also benefit from performance theory's insights. While theatre traditionally relied on live audiences, dramatists now experiment with radio drama, television adaptations, and online performances, thereby extending the reach of their critique. These mediated forms retain performative qualities, engaging publics in new civic spaces (Kerr, 2021).

Importantly, performance theory highlights the liminality of theatre—the way performances create spaces between reality and imagination where audiences can re-envision social possibilities (Turner, 1982). Nigerian drama exploits this liminality to imagine alternative futures beyond corruption and injustice. Through allegory, satire, and participatory staging, theatre enables audiences to critically reflect on present crises while envisioning transformation.

In summary, performance theory provides a powerful lens for understanding Nigerian drama's role as a civic and political practice. By emphasising embodiment, participation, ritual, and liminality, the theory illuminates how theatre in Nigeria transcends entertainment and becomes a lived form of resistance and social critique (Schechner, 2013; Turner, 1982; Barber, 2020).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted for this study, which investigates the role of contemporary Nigerian drama in addressing social injustice and political corruption. The methodology is designed to align with the study's objectives by employing a qualitative approach that privileges textual analysis, performance interpretation, and contextual evaluation. This framework is appropriate given that drama operates both as a literary text and as a performed cultural practice (Schechner, 2013).

Qualitative methodologies are particularly effective in the humanities because they prioritise meaning-making, interpretation, and critical engagement with texts and contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In this study, the plays

selected serve as cultural documents that dramatise the socio-political realities of Nigeria, while performance practices offer further details about how these realities are embodied, communicated, and received by audiences. The methodology therefore integrates literary and performance studies to provide a holistic understanding of drama's critical role.

By combining textual reading with performance analysis, the study situates Nigerian drama as both literature and living cultural practice. This dual approach ensures that the plays are not only examined in terms of their thematic and symbolic content but also in relation to their enactment as civic interventions. Such an approach affirms the methodological conviction that African theatre cannot be divorced from its performative dimensions (Barber, 2020; Obafemi, 2008).

3.1 Research Design: Qualitative Textual and Performance Analysis

The study adopts a qualitative research design, specifically textual and performance analysis, to interrogate selected Nigerian plays. Textual analysis focuses on the plays as written artefacts, attending to their themes, dramaturgical structures, and symbolic strategies. Performance analysis, on the other hand, explores how meaning is realised in live enactments through embodiment, staging, music, satire, and ritual (Turner, 1982; Schechner, 2013). This dual design is appropriate for drama, which exists simultaneously as script and as performance.

This methodological choice is also supported by African theatre scholarship, which underscores the inseparability of text and performance in understanding theatrical works (Adedeji, 2003; Jeyifo, 2004). Nigerian drama, in particular, is characterised by its hybrid nature—drawing on oral traditions, ritual enactments, and Western dramaturgy—which requires both textual and performance analysis for comprehensive interpretation.

3.2 Sources of Data

The primary sources of data for this study consist of selected dramatic texts written by leading Nigerian playwrights whose works engage directly with themes of social injustice and political corruption. These include Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest and Death* and the *King's Horseman*, Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* and *Tegonni: An African Antigone*, and Ola Rotimi's *If... A Tragedy of the Ruled* and *Kurunmi*, Tess Onwueme's *The Reign of Wazobia*, Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru* and *Hard Ground*, and Irene Salami-Agunloye's *Sweet Revenge*. These plays were purposively selected for their explicit engagement with political corruption, leadership crises, and resistance.

The study also engages secondary sources comprising scholarly books, journal articles, and critical

essays that provide interpretations of Nigerian drama and its socio-political dimensions. Key works by scholars such as Jeyifo (2004), Obafemi (2008), and Barber (2020) offer critical frameworks for situating the plays within Nigerian society and African performance traditions. These texts supply the necessary scholarly grounding to validate interpretations of the primary data.

In addition, secondary sources include postcolonial, Marxist, and performance theory scholarship (e.g., Eagleton, 2002; Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013; Schechner, 2013) that provide theoretical lenses through which the plays are analysed. Together, these sources enable a triangulated approach that combines close reading, theoretical framing, and contextual grounding.

3.3 Analytical Tools: Thematic and Interpretive Analysis

The study employs thematic analysis as its central analytical tool. This involves identifying and interpreting recurring motifs, symbols, and concerns within the plays that relate to corruption, injustice, resistance, and civic engagement. Thematic analysis is well suited to qualitative studies in the humanities, as it facilitates systematic exploration of meaning across multiple texts (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Alongside thematic analysis, interpretive analysis is employed to situate the plays within broader cultural and political contexts. This approach recognises that drama is not created in a vacuum but reflects historical conditions, ideological struggles, and community concerns (Obafemi, 2008). Thus, interpretive analysis allows for connections between text, performance, and socio-political realities to be drawn.

By combining thematic and interpretive strategies, the study ensures a multi-layered reading that captures both the literary artistry of the plays and their function as interventions in Nigerian political culture. Such a dual approach highlights how drama engages audiences intellectually, emotionally, and politically, sustaining its role as a tool of resistance (Barber, 2020).

3.4 Justification of Methodology

The chosen methodology is justified by the nature of the research questions, which focus on how drama critiques corruption and injustice. Quantitative methods, though useful for measuring audience responses, would be inadequate for capturing the symbolic and performative depth of drama. Qualitative textual and performance analysis, by contrast, privileges meaning, interpretation, and socio-political engagement, which are central to this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Furthermore, this methodology is consistent with established practices in African theatre scholarship, where close reading of texts and performances is considered essential for understanding their cultural and

political significance (Jeyifo, 2004; Obafemi, 2008). By grounding the analysis in both theory and practice, this methodological framework ensures scholarly rigour while remaining sensitive to the unique character of Nigerian drama.

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter analyses selected Nigerian plays that engage with the pressing issues of corruption, social injustice, and resistance. The plays are treated as cultural texts that reflect and interrogate the Nigerian socio-political landscape. Each case study is analysed using the combined theoretical lenses of Marxist literary criticism, postcolonial theory, and performance theory. This ensures a balanced reading that pays attention to class struggles, neocolonial legacies, and the performative dimensions of theatre. The case studies also demonstrate how Nigerian dramatists deploy different dramaturgical strategies—allegory, satire, ritual, and historical reconstruction—to interrogate governance, social exclusion, and civic resistance.

4.1 Case Study One: Dramatisation of Corruption in Governance

Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* (1967) is one of the most incisive critiques of political corruption in Nigerian drama. Written shortly after Nigeria's independence, the play allegorises the authoritarian tendencies of African leaders who, despite nationalist rhetoric, replicate colonial patterns of domination (Jeyifo, 2004). Kongi, the autocratic ruler, manipulates cultural rituals, such as the annual harvest festival, to consolidate power and secure legitimacy. His attempt to subsume communal traditions under state control illustrates the ways in which political elites corrupt indigenous practices for self-preservation (Gibbs, 2006).

The play also exposes how corruption operates not only at the economic level but also at symbolic and cultural levels. Kongi's obsession with appropriating the yam festival, traditionally presided over by elders, demonstrates how governance becomes corrupt when rulers usurp communal traditions for personal glorification (Soyinka, 1967/1998). In this sense, Soyinka critiques both the erosion of cultural autonomy and the centralisation of political power.

From a performance perspective, *Kongi's Harvest* highlights how theatre embodies political critique. Staged with ritualistic pomp, dance, and music, the play reflects what Schechner (2013) terms "restored behaviour"—the re-enactment of cultural forms to produce meaning in new contexts. Here, ritual becomes a site of contestation, as audiences witness how state corruption distorts traditional practices.

Similarly, Femi Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* (1978) dramatises the frustrations of reformers confronting systemic corruption. Based on the real-life figure of Dr Tai Solarin, a noted social critic, the play depicts the absurdity of a bureaucracy resistant to change (Obafemi, 2008). Osofisan satirises public officials who trivialise reform while perpetuating nepotism and graft, underscoring how corruption thrives within state institutions.

Osofisan employs humour, parody, and Brechtian devices to provoke critical laughter. As audiences laugh at the officials' incompetence, they also recognise the parallels with Nigeria's governance. This strategy resonates with Marxist criticism, which interprets the play as exposing the contradictions between the ruling class and the reformist intelligentsia (Olaniyan, 1995).

The effectiveness of both Soyinka and Osofisan lies in their ability to balance allegory and satire with social urgency. While Soyinka situates corruption in the symbolic contest over cultural traditions, Osofisan situates it in bureaucratic dysfunction. Together, they dramatisise corruption as systemic and pervasive, cutting across cultural, institutional, and economic spheres (Barber, 2020).

Thus, Nigerian drama positions itself as a watchdog against political corruption, exposing its destructive consequences while mobilising audiences toward critical reflection. These plays embody what Obafemi (2008) calls "theatre of social vision"—a theatre that critiques injustice while imagining alternative futures.

4.2 Case Study Two: Representation of Social Injustice and Marginalisation

Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* (1988) is based on the real-life struggles of lepers in Port Harcourt who demanded better treatment and recognition. By dramaturgizing this episode, Rotimi transforms the leper colony into a metaphor for marginalised communities in Nigeria. The play exposes how systemic injustices deny dignity to vulnerable groups, reflecting the broader failures of governance (Ogunsanwo, 1995).

Rotimi's dramatisation aligns with performance theory, particularly Victor Turner's (1982) notion of "social drama". The conflict between the lepers and colonial authorities unfolds as a staged confrontation where injustice is laid bare. By centring marginalised voices, Rotimi reclaims the lepers' struggle as a narrative of agency, solidarity, and collective resistance rather than passive victimhood.

The play also highlights class struggle, a core tenet of Marxist criticism. The lepers, positioned at the lowest rung of society, are denied resources and recognition, yet they

embody collective strength by challenging authority. Their demand for justice exposes the contradictions of a society that marginalises the weak while upholding corrupt elites (Eagleton, 2002).

Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru* (1999) addresses social injustice from a historical and postcolonial perspective. By dramatising the fall of Sultan Attahiru of Sokoto to British colonial forces, Yerima illustrates how colonial domination entrenched political and social subjugation. The play resonates with contemporary struggles, suggesting that neo-colonial structures continue to marginalise communities in Nigeria (Osakue, 2014).

Yerima's use of history as dramatic material reflects the postcolonial strategy of "writing back" to empire (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013). By recovering Attahiru's resistance, Yerima critiques the erasure of indigenous histories while affirming the agency of colonised communities. Performance-wise, the staging of *Attahiru*—with its emphasis on spectacle, ritual, and heroic struggle—transforms historical memory into civic pedagogy (Salami-Agunloye, 2015).

Both Rotimi and Yerima foreground the marginalised as central figures of resistance. While Rotimi dramatises the plight of lepers in the 1940s, Yerima situates his critique within the broader historical trajectory of colonial domination and cultural erasure. Together, their plays affirm the capacity of Nigerian drama to expose systemic injustice while reasserting the dignity of oppressed groups (Obafemi, 2008).

The enduring relevance of these plays lies in their capacity to connect past and present struggles. In contemporary Nigeria, where ethnic minorities, women, and youth continue to face systemic exclusion, these dramas resonate as calls for inclusive justice and recognition (Barber, 2020).

4.3 Case Study Three: Satire and Allegory as Resistance Strategies

Satire and allegory are among the most powerful resistance strategies employed by Nigerian dramatists. Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1960) uses satire to expose fraudulent religious leaders, indirectly critiquing political opportunism. By depicting Brother Jero as a manipulative preacher who exploits the gullibility of his followers, Soyinka suggests parallels between religious and political corruption (Gibbs, 2006).

The humour in *The Trials of Brother Jero* is not trivial but subversive. It invites audiences to laugh at the absurdities of greed, hypocrisy, and manipulation while recognising their destructive implications. Performance-wise, the play thrives on comic exaggeration, gesture, and improvisation, all of which enhance its satirical force (Schechner, 2013).

Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980) deploys allegory to critique systemic corruption and economic desperation. By portraying robbers as victims of structural inequality, Osofisan shifts attention from individual criminality to societal complicity. The play uses Brechtian alienation techniques such as songs, episodic structure, and direct audience address to provoke critical reflection rather than passive consumption (Olaniyan, 1995).

Through allegory, Osofisan highlights how systemic corruption creates the conditions for violence and crime. The robbers' narrative resonates with Marxist interpretations of class struggle, as they embody the contradictions of a society where wealth is concentrated among corrupt elites while the majority face economic deprivation (Eagleton, 2002).

Satire and allegory also serve as strategies of survival for Nigerian dramatists working under authoritarian regimes. By displacing critique into humour, symbol, and metaphor, playwrights evade censorship while still conveying radical messages (Obafemi, 2008). This aligns with Turner's (1982) idea of theatre as a liminal space where new possibilities can be imagined.

Importantly, these strategies ensure that drama remains accessible and resonant for audiences. Satire entertains while educating; allegory invites layered interpretations that encourage audiences to connect stage narratives with real-life political realities (Barber, 2020).

Thus, Nigerian drama demonstrates how satire and allegory function as weapons of resistance, enabling artists to expose corruption, critique injustice, and mobilise publics toward critical awareness.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section synthesises the main arguments and findings of the study. It restates the significance of Nigerian drama in confronting corruption, exposing social injustices, and mobilising civic resistance. It also situates the contributions of drama within broader socio-political discourse in Nigeria before offering conclusions and recommendations for policy, pedagogy, and future scholarship.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study has demonstrated that contemporary Nigerian drama functions as a crucial cultural platform for interrogating governance and societal crises. Through close analysis of selected plays by Soyinka, Osofisan, Rotimi, and Yerima, it is evident that Nigerian dramatists deploy allegory, satire, ritual, and historical reconstruction

to critique corruption, authoritarianism, and systemic marginalisation. The plays serve as cultural texts that reflect Nigeria's socio-political realities while also projecting possibilities for transformation.

The findings also reveal that Nigerian drama embodies a dual nature: as text and as performance. The textual dimension conveys themes of corruption, injustice, and resistance, while the performative dimension mobilises audiences by evoking emotional, symbolic, and communal resonance (Schechner, 2013; Turner, 1982). The hybrid analysis underscores that drama in Nigeria cannot be reduced to literature alone but must be understood as a lived cultural practice rooted in African performance traditions.

Moreover, the study established that Nigerian playwrights consistently align with resistance traditions in African theatre. From Soyinka's satirical critique of autocratic rulers to Osofisan's Brechtian strategies that expose systemic corruption to Rotimi's and Yerima's historical reconstructions of marginalisation and colonial injustice, the plays reveal theatre as a site of struggle, memory, and counternarratives (Jeyifo, 2004; Obafemi, 2008).

5.2 Contributions of Nigerian Drama to Socio-Political Discourse

Nigerian drama contributes significantly to national discourse by providing a cultural mirror that reflects political corruption and social injustice. It functions as a form of what Barber (2020) describes as "popular cultural memory", through which societies critique themselves and imagine alternative futures. By staging corruption in governance (Kongi's *Harvest*, Who's Afraid of Solarin?), dramatising marginalisation (*Hopes of the Living Dead*, Attahiru), and employing satire and allegory (*The Trials of Brother Jero*, *Once Upon Four Robbers*), Nigerian theatre keeps alive a tradition of public dissent and civic education.

Drama also contributes to African intellectual traditions of resistance. It serves not only as entertainment but also as what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) terms "a weapon of struggle", reclaiming culture as a site of decolonisation. By reconstructing suppressed histories and amplifying the voices of marginalised groups, Nigerian drama aligns with postcolonial imperatives of cultural sovereignty and social justice.

Finally, drama fosters participatory engagement. The use of song, improvisation, satire, and audience interaction affirms performance theory's insight that theatre is a communal act capable of generating political reflection and solidarity (Schechner, 2013). In this way, Nigerian drama contributes to the redefinition of citizenship, civic duty, and cultural identity in postcolonial Africa.

5.3 Conclusion: Drama as Cultural Memory and Radical Instrument of Change

The evidence presented in this study underscores the enduring power of drama as both cultural memory and a radical instrument of change. As cultural memory, Nigerian drama preserves histories of resistance, critiques of governance, and narratives of marginalisation that might otherwise be silenced. As an instrument of change, it intervenes in ongoing struggles against corruption and injustice, inspiring civic consciousness and social transformation.

The study therefore concludes that Nigerian drama occupies a unique position within African cultural and political discourse. By bridging past and present, text and performance, and ritual and modernity, it asserts itself as both a repository of cultural heritage and a catalyst for radical change. Its resilience lies in its capacity to adapt—whether on stage, in community spaces, or in new digital forms—while remaining grounded in Nigeria's socio-political realities.

5.4 Recommendations

Policy Implications

1. Nigerian cultural policy should prioritise funding for theatre and performance projects that engage civic themes. Theatre for Development (TfD) initiatives, in particular, should be supported as tools for grassroots mobilisation against corruption and injustice (Mda, 1993).
2. Governmental and non-governmental organisations should incorporate dramatic forms into anti-corruption and civic awareness campaigns, recognising theatre's accessibility and emotional resonance.

Pedagogical Use of Drama in Civic Education

1. Drama should be integrated more systematically into civic and citizenship education curricula at secondary and tertiary levels. Plays that address governance, corruption, and social justice provide fertile material for teaching democratic values and ethical leadership (Obafemi, 2008).
2. Universities and cultural institutions should foster collaborations between playwrights, educators, and policymakers to expand the pedagogical reach of theatre.

Directions for Future Research

1. Future scholarship should examine the emergence of digital theatre in Nigeria, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, where online platforms have

expanded the reach of dramatic performance (Balme, 2022).

2. Further studies should also explore the intersection of Nollywood and political resistance, analysing how filmic narratives extend or transform the traditions of stage drama in addressing corruption and injustice (Haynes, 2016).

Comparative research could assess how Nigerian drama engages with wider African traditions of resistance theatre, particularly in relation to South African anti-apartheid drama and Kenyan activist theatre.

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