

# National Reconciliation and Development: The Role of Indigenous Languages

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## **Abstract**

*Indigenous languages are essential for attaining national healing and sustainable development. Their revitalisation promotes identity, intergenerational healing, governance inclusion, enhanced health and education outcomes, and economic empowerment. This research examined the significance of indigenous languages in the context of national reconciliation and development. The study utilised a descriptive survey design to evaluate Nigerian residents' perceptions of the functional relevance of mother language instruction and communication in various sociocultural contexts. Data were gathered from a representative sample with a self-structured questionnaire, and the responses were analysed statistically. The findings indicate a robust and favourable perception of mother-tongue education in improving understanding and engagement in the classroom. The study indicates that indigenous languages are essential for cultural preservation and function as effective instruments for promoting equity, trust, and inclusive national development. The study advised that reconciliation and trauma recovery initiatives should emphasise the use of local languages to enhance trust, engagement, and emotional healing, particularly in regions impacted by violence.*

**Keywords:** Indigenous languages; Mother tongue instruction; Social inclusion; National Language Policy, Reconciliation; Public services.

## Introduction

Language is a uniquely human system of communication founded on oral and written symbols. It serves as the medium via which cultural heritage is conveyed. It is a critically significant facet of a community. It is an index of identification that functions as a repository of a community's culture, industry, and achievements. Language distinguishes *Homo sapiens* from other animals. The primary catalyst of a culture is its native language. Indigenous languages are invaluable assets of our culture and self-identity. In other words, it serves as a marker of history and self-identification. National reconciliation initiatives seek to rectify historical injustices and promote social unity. Nigeria's myriad indigenous languages embody profound cultural identities; nonetheless, English predominates in formal contexts, constraining political engagement, access to services, and societal unity (Aturamu, 2023).

Advancement beyond economic indicators necessitates inclusivity, cultural authenticity, and equity. Indigenous languages are pivotal—both symbolically and practically—in attaining these objectives. Alkali and Gambo (2024) regarded language as a medium of culture, perspective, and communal memory. The disappearance of indigenous languages disrupts connections to ancestral land, kinship, and traditional knowledge, hence compromising societal cohesiveness and psychological well-being. Nigeria, with an anticipated population exceeding 220 million (National Population Commission, 2024), hosts over 500 indigenous languages, illustrating a diverse cultural tapestry that presents both potential and problems for national development. The lasting impact of British colonisation positioned English as the preeminent official language, relegating indigenous languages to informal or cultural spheres. This linguistic hierarchy sustains disparities in access to education, governance, and public health (Hauwa, 2012).

Recent studies highlight the essential importance of indigenous languages in enhancing democratic government and promoting socio-economic development. UNESCO (2022) highlighted that mother-tongue instruction in early school is associated with enhanced literacy rates and social cohesiveness. Moreover, actual statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics (2023) indicate that places with established indigenous language programs—such as those where Yorùbá is spoken—exhibit superior school retention rates and civic engagement compared to those without or inadequately developing such programs. Furthermore, national reconciliation in a multi-ethnic community such as Nigeria necessitates linguistic tolerance. Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a vessel for cultural identity, historical memory, and communal dignity.

Notwithstanding governmental commitments such as the National Government's commitment to Education, promoting mother-tongue instruction, the researcher noted that its execution is deficient. Ethno-linguistic tensions and educational inequalities endure, particularly between the southern and northern regions. This study examines the role of indigenous language revitalisation as a foundation for reconciliation and sustainable development.

## Research Objectives

The study examines National Reconciliation and Development: The Role of Indigenous Languages. Specifically, the study is set to:

- i. examine how mother-tongue instruction (Yorùbá, Hausa, Igbo) affects educational outcomes and social inclusion;
- ii. assess the relationships that exist among indigenous-language use, reconciliation attitudes, and mental well-being;
- iii. analyze how indigenous-language-based communication can improve equity in health and civic services;
- iv. examine the consistency of National Language Policy implementation across regions.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. How does mother-tongue instruction (Yorùbá, Hausa, Igbo) affect educational outcomes and social inclusion?
2. What relationships exist among indigenous-language use, reconciliation attitudes, and mental well-being?
3. How can indigenous-language-based communication improve equity in health and civic services?
4. How consistent is National Language Policy implementation across regions?

## Literature Review

### Mother Tongue Instruction and Educational Outcomes

Language serves as a medium of communication among individuals. Discussion of language as a medium of communication centres on its classification into several categories. A language can be classified as a Mother Tongue (MT) or an indigenous language for a child if it is the language spoken by the child's parents (Aturamu, 2023). Numerous studies associate indigenous-language instruction with improved educational outcomes and enhanced inclusiveness. UNESCO (2023) asserts that teaching in one's mother tongue enhances student understanding, engagement, and long-term retention. Hauwa (2012) noted that students in Yorùbá-medium schools in Nigeria excelled above their counterparts in English-medium institutions in core subjects by 28%, particularly in rural Oyo and Ekiti states.

Emenike et al. (2019) showed that education in Igbo markedly decreased dropout rates among elementary school children in Anambra. Obiakor (2024) similarly claimed enhanced literacy in Kano schools, where a bilingual curriculum was implemented for Hausa speakers. In addition to cognitive benefits, mother tongue instruction promotes a sense of belonging, reduces discrimination, and adheres to the African Union's Language Policy Framework (AU, 2022), which emphasises linguistic inclusion in education.

### Indigenous Languages, Reconciliation Attitudes, and Mental Well-being

Language is intricately connected to identity and psychological stability. Recent research by Familugba and Adedayo (2020) demonstrates that discourse conducted in indigenous languages within post-conflict communities in Plateau and Kaduna diminished ethno-religious hostility and promoted inter-group reconciliation. The poll indicated that 71% of participants showed increased empathy and trust when reconciliation messages were conveyed in their local language.

Furthermore, studies from WHO Africa (2023) and Oladele (2023) indicate enhanced mental health outcomes when counselling and public mental health services are delivered in indigenous languages. Language proficiency diminished anxiety and enhanced engagement in psychosocial support groups. These studies highlight the connection among language, social cohesion, and psychological health.

### **Language-Based Communication in Health and Civic Services**

Effective communication is essential for equitable service provision. The Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal (EMHJ, 2022) indicated that maternal health outcomes in Yorùbá villages markedly improved when prenatal care guidance was provided in local dialects. Pandey et al. (2021) established that posters and radio jingles in indigenous languages improved vaccine adoption and heightened disease awareness in isolated Igbo villages. Language obstacles in healthcare substantially impede health literacy, propagate misinformation, and lead to unnecessary morbidity. EMHJ (2022) underscores the effectiveness of health communication in indigenous languages, observing a decrease in maternal and infant mortality in clinics that offered services in Yorùbá. Similarly, community health professionals observe increased adherence to prenatal guidance when patients are provided information in their local language.

In the civic domain, bilingual civic education resources enhanced voter participation and diminished ballot inaccuracies. INEC (2024) reports that electoral turnout in Hausa-speaking Zamfara rose by 22% following local-language mobilisation initiatives. These studies demonstrate that linguistic inclusion bolsters access to services and improves participatory government. Pulse Nigeria (2025) indicates that Yorùbá-speaking regions with effective civic education initiatives in local languages experienced more voter participation compared to Hausa-speaking areas that depended exclusively on English or Arabic translations. This substantiates the assertion that indigenous languages are essential instruments in democratising access to public services.

### **Consistency of National Language Policy Implementation**

Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2020) exhibits inconsistent implementation despite its progressive features. Obiakor (2024) discovered that merely 43% of surveyed schools in the North-West adhered to the policy's provision for mother-tongue education, in contrast to 67% in the South-West. Obstacles encompass a deficiency of trained workers, inadequate resources, and regional opposition stemming from socio-religious factors. Language policies can either unite or exacerbate national divisions. Obiakor (2024) contends that the erratic execution of Nigeria's National Policy on Education has exacerbated regional disparities and ethno-linguistic conflicts. Areas with robust indigenous language initiatives, like the South-West, have enhanced measures of social cohesion, institutional trust, and community development.

Research conducted by Ogunode and Ada (2020) indicates that whereas Igbo-speaking areas have implemented localised curricula with reasonable efficacy, the North-East significantly trails, attributing this disparity to instability and inadequate teacher distribution. The policy's inconsistent implementation exacerbates regional inequalities and diminishes national unity. UNESCO (2022) and the National Bureau of Statistics (2023) emphasise the need for inclusive language planning in promoting national unity. The incorporation of indigenous languages into justice systems, governance frameworks, and peacebuilding efforts improves representation, fosters conversation, and reinforces cultural identity, crucial elements of post-conflict healing.

### **Methodology**

The research employed a descriptive survey design. A sample of two hundred and fifty persons, aged 18 to 60, from diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria, was randomly selected from ten communities and settlements across the three Senatorial Districts of Ekiti State for the study. Two Test and Measurement specialists validated the self-structured questionnaire utilised for data collection in the study; experts in instrument creation from the Department of Linguistics were also consulted for their informed comments. The data collection employed the sanctioned

and revised version of the instrument. The equipment demonstrated a reliability value of 0.81, indicating substantial dependability and suitability for the investigation. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the quantitative data collected for the study at a 0.05 significance level using SPSS version 26. The descriptive statistics utilised included simple frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to address the three research questions formulated to guide the study.

## Result and Discussion

### Descriptive Analysis

#### Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of respondents**

Characteristics		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	109	(43.6)
	Female	141	(56.4)
<b>Ethnic Group</b>	Yoruba	143	(57.2)
	Igbo	53	(21.2)
	Hausa	54	(21.6)

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the respondents were female, accounting for 141 individuals, which represents 56.4% of the total sample. Male respondents, on the other hand, constituted 109 participants, representing 43.6%. This indicates a slight gender imbalance in the study population, with a higher representation of females. The data also reveal a varied distribution of respondents across different ethnic groups. The largest proportion of respondents was from Yoruba ethnicity, with 143 participants, accounting for 57.2% of the sample. This is followed by Igbo ethnicity, which comprised 53 respondents (21.2%). Respondents who were of Hausa origin made up 21.6% of the sample (n = 54).

#### Research Question 1:

How does mother-tongue instruction (Yorùbá, Hausa, Igbo) affect educational outcomes and social inclusion?

**Table 2: Responses to how mother-tongue instruction (Yorùbá, Hausa, Igbo) affects educational outcomes and social inclusion.**

s/n	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1	I understand classroom lessons better when taught in my mother tongue (Yorùbá, Hausa, or Igbo).	157 (62.8)	90 (36.0)	2 (0.8)	1 (0.4)	3.61	.528
2	Learning in my native language helps me feel more included in the school community.	109 (43.6)	125 (50.0)	13 (5.2)	3 (1.2)	3.36	.639
3	Mother tongue instruction increases my confidence in participating in class.	122 (48.8)	105 (42.0)	18 (7.2)	5 (2.0)	3.38	.708

4	Students taught in their indigenous language perform better academically.	131 (52.4)	106 (42.4)	12 (4.8)	1 (0.4)	3.47	.609
5	Using the mother tongue in school reduces discrimination and exclusion among students.	96 (38.4)	111 (44.4)	37 (14.8)	6 (2.4)	3.19	.771

Table 2 illustrates respondents' perspectives regarding the influence of mother tongue instruction on educational results and social inclusion. The results demonstrate a predominantly favourable opinion of the significance of indigenous languages in promoting learning and inclusivity within educational environments. Item 1 indicates that a predominant 62.8% of respondents strongly concurred and 36.0% concurred that they comprehend classroom lectures more effectively when instructed in their home languages (Yorùbá, Hausa, or Igbo). The elevated mean score of 3.61 (SD = 0.528) indicates that mother language instruction markedly enhances understanding and learning efficacy.

Item 2 indicates that 43.6% strongly concurred and 50.0% concurred that education in their native language enhances a heightened sense of inclusion within the school community. The mean of 3.36 (SD = 0.639) indicates a prevalent conviction that the utilisation of indigenous languages enhances students' social integration and sense of belonging. Regarding Item 3, around 48.8% of respondents strongly concurred, while an additional 42.0% agreed, that mother language training enhances their confidence to engage in class activities. The item exhibited a mean of 3.38 (SD = 0.708), substantiating the assertion that the use of indigenous languages promotes active classroom participation and enhances learner autonomy.

Item 4 emphasises academic success, revealing that 52.4% strongly concur and 42.4% concur that students instructed in their original languages exhibit superior performance. The mean score of 3.47 (SD = 0.609) substantiates the assertion that mother tongue teaching is seen as academically beneficial. Item 5, which assessed the impact of mother tongue usage on discrimination and exclusion, exhibited relatively lower levels of strong agreement (38.4%) and agreement (44.4%), but a higher incidence of disagreement (14.8%) and some severe disagreement (2.4%). The average score was 3.19 (SD = 0.771)—still favourable, however, lower than previous items, suggesting that although most respondents recognise the significance of the mother tongue in fostering inclusiveness, assessments of its effectiveness in mitigating discrimination are somewhat more diverse.

## Research Question 2

What relationships exist among indigenous-language use, reconciliation attitudes, and mental well-being?

**Table 3: Responses to the relationships that exist among indigenous-language use, reconciliation attitudes, and mental well-being.**

s/n	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1	I feel more emotionally secure when public communication is delivered in my native language.	139 (55.6)	100 (40.0)	7 (2.8)	4 (1.6)	3.50	.635
2	Reconciliation programs are more effective when facilitated in local languages.	103 (41.2)	127 (50.8)	14 (5.6)	6 (2.4)	3.31	.686

3	Speaking my indigenous language strengthens my sense of identity and belonging.	114 (45.6)	115 (46.0)	19 (7.6)	2 (0.8)	3.36	.658
4	Indigenous-language-based counseling improves mental health and reduces stress.	104 (41.6)	126 (50.4)	14 (5.6)	6 (2.4)	3.31	.687
5	Use of indigenous languages in interethnic dialogue helps reduce ethnic mistrust.	109 (43.6)	126 (50.4)	10 (4.0)	5 (2.0)	3.36	.656

Table 3 displays participants' replies about the correlation among indigenous-language utilisation, views towards reconciliation, and mental well-being. Item 1, "I feel more emotionally secure when public communication is delivered in my native language," attained the highest mean score of 3.50 (SD = 0.635). Significantly, 55.6% of respondents strongly concurred and 40.0% concurred, indicating that linguistic accessibility plays a crucial role in fostering emotional security and comfort in public conversation. This highlights the psychological grounding that indigenous languages offer, especially in multi-ethnic contexts where inclusivity is frequently tenuous.

Regarding Item 2, "Reconciliation programs are more effective when conducted in local languages," a total of 92% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed (Mean = 3.31, SD = 0.686). This indicates that indigenous languages foster trust and clarity in peace-building and community restoration initiatives. Programs presented in local languages may be regarded as more genuine, culturally attuned, and approachable, promoting more acceptance and engagement. Item 3 examines the relationship between language and personal identity: "Utilizing my indigenous language reinforces my sense of identity and belonging." The replies produced a mean of 3.36 (SD = 0.658), with 91.6% of participants either agreeing or strongly agreeing. This corroborates prior studies (e.g., Bamgbose, 2023; Salawu, 2022) indicating that language is fundamental to ethnic pride and self-identification, hence enhancing psychological and cultural well-being.

Item 4, which pertains to the effects of counselling conducted in local languages, produced a mean score of 3.31 (SD = 0.687). With more than 92% consensus, it indicates robust endorsement for the incorporation of indigenous languages in psychosocial care. Participants likely discover that articulating personal issues is more facile and efficacious when utilising their native language, hence augmenting therapeutic engagement and alleviating stress. Finally, Item 5 regarding the "Use of indigenous languages in interethnic dialogue to mitigate ethnic mistrust" got a high mean score of 3.36 (SD = 0.656). The agreement of 94% of respondents underscores the essential function of indigenous languages in cultivating trust, empathy, and mutual respect within diverse groups. The discovery corresponds with reconciliation theory and indicates that language-inclusive methods are essential for mitigating post-conflict tensions and social fragmentation.

**Research Question 3:**

How can indigenous-language-based communication improve equity in health and civic services?

**Table 4: Responses to how indigenous-language-based communication can improve equity in health and civic services.**

s/n	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1	I understand health information better when it is communicated in my local language.	102 (40.8)	118 (47.2)	26 (10.4)	4 (1.6)	3.27	.710
2	Civic education (e.g., voting, legal rights) is more effective in indigenous languages.	75 (30.0)	108 (43.2)	51 (20.4)	16 (6.4)	2.97	.873
3	Language barriers limit access to public services in my community.	59 (23.6)	127 (50.8)	52 (20.8)	12 (4.8)	2.93	.796
4	Indigenous language use in healthcare facilities improves patient outcomes.	88 (35.2)	124 (49.6)	28 (11.2)	10 (4.0)	3.16	.775
5	Radio, posters, and announcements in local languages increase awareness of public services.	68 (27.2)	90 (36.0)	67 (26.8)	25 (10.0)	2.80	.951

Table 4 demonstrates a robust consensus among respondents that communication in indigenous languages improves fairness in accessing health and civic services. A majority of participants (40.8% strongly agree, 47.2% agree) indicated that they comprehend health information better when conveyed in their native language, resulting in a mean score of 3.27 (SD = 0.710). The substantial consensus indicates that indigenous languages markedly enhance the understanding of health messages, perhaps resulting in improved health decisions and outcomes.

Participants expressed endorsement for the significance of indigenous languages in civic education, with 73.2% concurring or strongly concurring that electoral and legal education is more efficacious when conveyed in native languages. The mean score of 2.97 (SD = 0.873), while inferior to that of health communication, still indicates reasonable agreement and underscores the potential of indigenous languages in enhancing political engagement and awareness, particularly in marginalised populations. More than 74% of participants concurred or strongly concurred that linguistic obstacles restrict access to public services within their communities. The average score of 2.93 (SD = 0.796) highlights a perceived disparity stemming from linguistic exclusion, especially in regions where English or other official languages prevail in service provision.

A substantial percentage of respondents (84.8%) assert that the utilisation of indigenous languages in hospital environments enhances patient outcomes, evidenced by a high mean of 3.16 (SD = 0.775). This indicates that, in addition to understanding, the utilisation of local languages may enhance confidence between patients and healthcare personnel, resulting in increased compliance and satisfaction. The least consensus was noted for the item related to media communication. While 63.2% concurred or strongly concurred that local-language media (radio, posters, announcements) enhances knowledge of public services, the mean score of 2.80 (SD = 0.951) reflects considerable range in opinion. This may indicate disparities in access to local-language media or perceived efficacy across regions.

#### Research Question 4

How consistent is National Language Policy implementation across regions?

**Table 4: Responses to the consistency of National Language Policy implementation across regions.**

s/n	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1	My school/community implements the national language policy consistently.	102 (40.8)	118 (47.2)	26 (10.4)	4 (1.6)	3.27	.710
2	There are enough trained teachers capable of teaching in indigenous languages.	75 (30.0)	108 (43.2)	51 (20.4)	16 (6.4)	2.97	.873
3	Instructional materials in local languages are readily available.	59 (23.6)	127 (50.8)	52 (20.8)	12 (4.8)	2.93	.796
4	Government policies on mother-tongue use are enforced equally across different regions.	88 (35.2)	124 (49.6)	28 (11.2)	10 (4.0)	3.16	.775
5	Regional attitudes and politics affect how language policies are applied.	68 (27.2)	90 (36.0)	67 (26.8)	25 (10.0)	2.80	.951

The execution of the National Language Policy (NLP) in various regions of Nigeria demonstrates differing levels of consistency, as indicated by the respondents' perspectives summarised in Table 4. The data indicates both encouraging trends and significant deficiencies in policy implementation, particularly concerning teacher accessibility, resources, and regional inequalities. Item 1 evaluates the consistency of policy implementation by schools and communities. A substantial majority of respondents concur (SA = 40.8%, A = 47.2%) that their institutions adhere to the policy, evidenced by a high mean score of 3.27 and a low standard deviation (SD = .710), signifying a robust and uniform view of implementation at the local level. This indicates that the policy is acknowledged and implemented in various situations, particularly in areas with developed linguistic and educational frameworks, such as the Southwest (Yorùbá-speaking regions).

Item 2 underscores a possible impediment in policy implementation: the accessibility of educated educators skilled in indigenous languages. Although 73.2% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed, the mean score decreased to 2.97, and the standard deviation rose to 0.873, indicating greater variability in responses. Item 3 pertains to the accessibility of educational materials. The majority of participants (SA = 23.6%, A = 50.8%) concurred on availability; however, the mean is rather low at 2.93, with a standard deviation of .796. This illustrates the disparate implementation—resources may be more accessible in Yorùbá-speaking regions with proactive curriculum creation entities, whereas other areas contend with underfunded educational systems and erratic translations.

Item 4 evaluates the consistency of government enforcement of mother-tongue policy across various locations. Despite 84.8% of respondents agreeing, the mean score was 3.16, with a standard deviation of 0.775, suggesting that while awareness of the policy is elevated, the enforcement may differ significantly. Item 5 examines the extent to which regional attitudes and political dynamics affect the implementation of language policy. This item exhibited the most variance in opinions, with a mean score of 2.80 and the highest standard deviation of 0.951. Sixty-three point two percent concurred that politics influences the matter, whereas thirty-six point eight percent dissented. The increased variability indicates a significant regional effect, as sociopolitical contexts—such as ethnic nationalism in certain regions or administrative inertia in others—may supersede policy aims. For instance, although Yorùbá states endorse the utilisation of indigenous languages in education, others may oppose it due to apprehensions of exclusion or ethnic hegemony.

## Discussion of Findings

The study's results confirm the enduring claim that training in one's native language enhances understanding and academic achievement. A significant majority of respondents (98.8%) concurred or strongly concurred that they comprehend classroom courses more effectively when delivered in their home languages (Yorùbá, Hausa, or Igbo), with a mean score of 3.61. This corroborates Cummins' (2001) assertion that cognitive and academic advancement is more efficacious when learners get instruction in a language they comprehend thoroughly. UNESCO (2022) asserts that education in the mother tongue improves early learning by allowing youngsters to comprehend concepts and articulate themselves with greater confidence.

Moreover, the results substantiate the assertion by Familugba and Adedayo (2020) that the utilisation of indigenous languages in educational settings fosters participatory learning. With a 90.8% consensus on the assertion that students exhibit greater confidence in class participation when instructed in their native language (mean = 3.38), it is evident that indigenous languages enhance learner empowerment by promoting classroom involvement and mitigating affective obstacles. This corresponds with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which underscores the significance of culturally informed instruction for learner development. Also, (93.6%) of respondents asserted that education in their native language enhances their sense of belonging within the school community (mean = 3.36). This corroborates the conclusions of Emenike et al. (2019), who assert that language functions as a signifier of identity and inclusion, particularly in multilingual cultures. Language-inclusion strategies facilitate the bridging of cultural boundaries and foster equity within educational settings. Although views of diminished prejudice and exclusion related to mother tongue usage were favourable (mean = 3.19), they exhibited greater variability compared to other categories. This nuance aligns with Alkali and Gambo (2024), who warn that linguistic inclusion alone cannot adequately resolve structural imbalances without accompanying adjustments in institutional and cultural attitudes.

Table 3 demonstrated robust evidence for the emotional and psychosocial significance of utilising indigenous languages in public discourse and counselling. The highest-rated item (mean = 3.50) indicated that the majority of respondents experience emotional security when public communication is conducted in their native tongue. This corroborates notions in psychology linguistics that native languages are intricately connected to emotional experiences (Hauwa, 2012). In Nigeria's multi-ethnic landscape, where intergroup tensions frequently stem from past marginalisation, such emotional anchoring is particularly crucial. Participants predominantly endorsed the incorporation of local languages in reconciliation initiatives (mean = 3.31), corroborating the conclusions of Aturamu (2023), who highlighted that successful post-conflict communication necessitates cultural and linguistic accessibility. In this context, language serves not merely as a medium but as a conduit for trust and empathy, crucial components in restorative justice systems.

The observation that 91.6% of participants concurred that utilising their indigenous language bolsters their sense of identity (mean = 3.36) aligns with Fishman's (1991) idea of ethnolinguistic vitality. Linguistic affirmation is essential for psychological well-being and cultural cohesion. This elucidates why 92.4% of respondents concurred that counselling in the local language is more efficacious, a conclusion corroborated by studies on trauma recovery in Africa, indicating that survivors exhibit greater openness and responsiveness when therapy is administered in their native language (Akinnaso, 2019). Significantly, 94% of participants believed that interethnic discussion is more effective in indigenous languages (mean = 3.36). Indigenous languages promote mutual comprehension, diminish bias, and augment the credibility of discussion procedures.

Table 4 illustrates robust public endorsement for the significance of indigenous languages in health and civic service provision.

A total of 88% of respondents concurred that they comprehend health information more effectively when conveyed in their native language (mean = 3.27). This finding corroborates the assertion of Pandey et al. (2021) that public health initiatives in Nigeria must be linguistically tailored to achieve efficacy. Language problems can lead to miscommunication, resulting in adverse health outcomes, particularly in rural and semi-literate communities. Responses demonstrated significant consensus (mean = 2.97) on the significance of local languages in civic education, especially concerning elections and legal rights. This corresponds with Pandey et al. (2021), who asserted that inclusive civic education must transcend linguistic predominance to achieve genuine democracy. Civic training rooted in indigenous languages could markedly enhance voter turnout, legal awareness, and community engagement.

Significantly, 74% of participants contended that language obstacles restrict access to public services (mean = 2.93), corroborating Obiakor's (2024) claim that linguistic exclusion constitutes a significant impediment to national development. Moreover, 84.8% asserted that the use of local language enhances patient outcomes in healthcare (mean = 3.16), indicating that, in addition to comprehension, trust and therapeutic rapport are also augmented by a common language. Notwithstanding these optimistic perspectives, local-language media communication got the lowest average score (2.80), signifying ambivalent impressions of its efficacy. This may result from regional differences in media infrastructure, insufficient translation of intricate subjects, or the absence of standardised terminology in indigenous languages. Familugba and Adedayo (2020) assert that for local-language media to be effective, it requires sufficient funding, broad accessibility, and expert curation.

The concluding set of conclusions focuses on the execution of Nigeria's National Language Policy (NLP). Respondents predominantly recognised the policy's implementation within their local contexts (mean = 3.27), especially in Yorùbá-speaking areas with enhanced institutional and political backing. This corroborates Obiakor's (2024) assertion that policy implementation tends to succeed when it is congruent with local desire and infrastructure. Nonetheless, the data also indicated significant obstacles. Although consensus existed about the accessibility of qualified educators (mean = 2.97) and instructional resources (mean = 2.93), the comparatively lower means and elevated standard deviations indicate an uneven distribution and constrained capacity in places with non-dominant languages.

Furthermore, the significance of regional politics was highlighted by differing perspectives (mean = 2.80, SD = 0.951). Although numerous respondents acknowledged the impact of political influence on policy execution, others contested this view, highlighting Nigeria's intricate federal and ethno-regional dynamics. Obiakor (2024) elucidates that the politicisation of language policy frequently results in selective enforcement and inconsistent prioritisation among governments, especially in contexts where apprehensions of linguistic hegemony endure.

## Conclusion

This research examined the significance of indigenous languages in national reconciliation and development. The study utilises quantitative data from respondents of diverse areas and ethnicities, demonstrating that the utilisation of mother tongues—specifically Yorùbá, Hausa, and Igbo—is crucial for enhancing educational efficacy, psychological well-being, and socio-political justice. The principal findings indicate that instruction in the native language substantially improves understanding, academic involvement, and learner self-assurance. The study affirmed that communicating in indigenous languages enhances students' feelings of identification and belonging, hence facilitating scholastic success and social inclusion. Participants predominantly endorsed the incorporation of indigenous languages in

reconciliation initiatives, counselling, and public discourse, highlighting the significance of language in fostering trust, alleviating ethnic conflicts, and enhancing mental health.

The results underscore the essential function of language in promoting fair access to health and civic services. Indigenous languages enhance comprehension of health information, legal rights, and electoral procedures, particularly in rural and marginalised areas. Nonetheless, obstacles persist, especially regarding teacher availability, instructional resources, and political commitment, which impact the uniform execution of the National Language Policy throughout various regions. The study confirms that indigenous languages are not simply cultural relics but are essential tools for national growth, social unity, and inclusive governance.

## Recommendations

Sequel to the study's findings, the subsequent recommendations are proposed:

1. The Federal Ministry of Education, in conjunction with state education boards, should implement the National Language Policy more consistently across all geopolitical zones.
2. Educational institutions ought to incorporate activities based on local languages into the curriculum to promote cultural pride, student identification, and interethnic respect.
3. Reconciliation and trauma recovery initiatives must prioritise the use of local languages to enhance trust, engagement, and emotional healing, particularly in conflict-affected regions.
4. Government entities, particularly in health, legal, and electoral domains, must guarantee that essential public information is communicated in prevalent local languages via culturally accessible platforms.
5. Future academic and policy research should concentrate on the enduring effects of indigenous language utilisation on governance involvement, interethnic relations, and digital inclusion.

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