

IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON WITCHCRAFT BELIEFS AND HUMAN IDENTITY IN IGBOLAND

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on witchcraft beliefs and human identity in Igboland, southeastern Nigeria. Witchcraft, known locally as Amosu, has long been a core component of Igbo spirituality and social structure, traditionally serving as an explanation for misfortunes and a mechanism for maintaining social order. However, the rapid development and integration of AI technologies — defined as machines capable of performing tasks requiring human intelligence — present new challenges and opportunities for these beliefs. Using a qualitative research approach, participant observation, and content analysis to examine how AI intersects with traditional spiritual practices and societal roles. The findings reveal that AI is perceived by some as a new form of “spiritual power” akin to mystical forces, while others see it as a scientific challenge to witchcraft beliefs. Additionally, the study highlights shifts in the attribution of misfortunes, erosion and adaptation of traditional beliefs, and the implications of AI on human identity and agency. Despite concerns about technological determinism, many respondents emphasized the resilience of Igbo cultural identity and the potential for integrating AI into indigenous knowledge systems. This evolving dynamic between modern technology and traditional frameworks underscores the need for a culturally sensitive understanding of AI’s impact on belief systems and human identity in Igbo society.

Keywords: Impact, Artificial Intelligence, witchcraft, Human identity, Igboland

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence as advanced witchcraft in Igbo land, the trending impacts of Witchcraft has evolved around the notions it creates both to the bewitched and those who have witnessed their atrocities in one way or the other. Hence, this concept has long been understood in Igbo communities as “Amusu”, therefore it is an integral part of the belief systems in many African societies, including Igboland, although it plays a vital role in shaping social structures, morality, and human identity. In shaping social structure, most often people are conscious of the evils that revolve in their communities attributing it to witchcraft practices and therefore it creates a sense of resistance on how to avoid such relationship in order to exonerate oneself from the calamities and consequences of intermingling with witches and wizards. Priest (2012) avers that Witchcraft is the practice that stems from the belief of someone called a witch or wizard to cause misfortune to others through psychic, magical or other occult powers. Moreso, as in morality itself, witchcraft practices in Igbo are often seen as evils that deter the progress of the land. Nevertheless, their identity is often treated with suspicion and disgust as pertaining to bad reputations. Hence, it is believed generally that despite the selfish nature of witchcraft practices that good things can never come from them, this notion is still valid in Igbo beliefs and they often say things like “Amusu adiyi ewete iye oma (witches do not bring good things), Ofu nbosi Onye Amusu ga ata italita (one day the witches will confess of their evils). However,

witchcraft practices are often perceived in Igboland as something that leads to misfortune, illness and death and most often are ultimately detested as it works against the general good of the community. Nevertheless, In recent years, the rapid development and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into everyday life have introduced new challenges and opportunities for these traditional belief systems. The introduction of AI as machines capable of performing tasks that require human intelligence—raises significant questions about its impact on human identity, social roles, and spiritual beliefs within Igbo culture. The invention of this AI technologies gave rise to the possibility of Machines acting as robots and performing human roles which often are assumed to be modern advanced witchcraft because of its ability to perform multifaceted functions and providing results as pertaining to the input versus output. The Dibia are often consulted when people in the community faces deep seated afflictions and pestilence resulting from witchcraft misgiving . Hence , in contemporary time, AI can be seen as the Dibia who people beckon onto for solutions . However, when incantations are made the Dibia waits to hear rightly from the gods and by so doing he proffers the solution. Thus, it is pertinent to also align this approach to AI as regards to when people input information in AI machines and wait to grasp information , hence, in this sense connotes rebranded kind of incantations method .

Consequently, witchcraft has historically been a significant aspect of African cultures, including the Igbo society of southeastern Nigeria. Witchcraft beliefs help explain misfortunes, regulate social behaviors, and maintain communal balance. It forms an essential part of the spiritual identity of the Igbo people, linking them to their ancestors and the metaphysical world. Nwobodu (2021) agrees that, “the Igbo people of Nigeria like other African cultures believed in witchcraft. Interactions with both the ones at home and in diaspora reflect their strong belief in these mystical activities which they speak about with much certainty “ (p.145) .In recent decades, the world has witnessed a surge in technological advancements, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) at the forefront. AI is reshaping industries, transforming societies, and even impacting cultural beliefs and practices, including those traditionally attributed to supernatural forces such as witchcraft.

This paper lay credence on the relationship between traditional witchcraft beliefs and modern technological advancements, particularly AI, within the Igbo community. The focus is on how AI challenges or reinforces existing social constructs related to witchcraft and human identity in the region. Through an analysis of social, ethical, and cultural implications, this paper seeks to examine the evolving dynamics between these seemingly disparate domains.

Background of Witchcraft Beliefs in Igboland

Historical Context

In most Igbo communities the believe that dissidents and atrocities against the good of the community are often associated to widespread of witchcraft manipulations in the land.

In Igboland, witchcraft practices are integral to the cosmology of the people, shaping their worldview, perceptions, and social organization. Obviously, the way people who are suspected to be witches , often signal the impression of abstinence or resistance by the

indigene of such communities as it is normally believed in Igbo land that witchcraft practitioners often bring bad lucks and misfortune in their communities. Historically, witchcraft is seen as a potent and enigmatic force influencing both physical and spiritual realms. It serves to explain unexplained phenomena such as illness, death, or misfortune. Individuals believed to possess supernatural abilities, such as witches, diviners, or spiritual healers, hold significant authority within Igbo society. However, witchcraft, referred to as “Amusu” in Igbo culture, is deeply embedded in the belief systems of Igboland. It plays a critical role in shaping social structures, morality, and human identity. Traditionally, witchcraft is viewed as a source of misfortune, illness, and death, and is generally opposed as it is believed to disrupt communal harmony. The male individuals that practice witchcraft are often called wizards (Nwoke Amusu) while the female individuals are referred to as witches (Nwanyi Amusu). Consequently, since in Igbo communities, the concept of community good is held ultimately and cherished by the people, so also the notion that distort such progress from emerging are often channeled through the misfortunes that comes from witches in the land. Throughout Igbo history, witchcraft was often blamed for societal ills, particularly during times of crisis or communal strife. If a natural disaster occurs, a loved one died unexpectedly, or a plague swept through the community, Diviner / Dibia was frequently invoked to explain these occurrences. The belief was that witches, out of jealousy, spite, or malevolence, could cause harm to others. As a result, individuals suspected of witchcraft were often ostracized or punished, sometimes leading to violent outcomes. Consequently, witchcraft in Igboland was not just used to explain bad things that happened, but it also acted as a way to control people’s behavior. It helped set the moral rules of the community. People were scared of being called witches, which stopped them from acting in ways that were harmful to others. Since Igbo people cared a lot about living together peacefully and helping the community, witchcraft was seen as something that could break this harmony. Witches were believed to act out of selfishness, putting their own needs before the good of everyone else. In the past, accusations of witchcraft in Igboland were not limited to just men or women. Both men (called Nwoke Amusu or wizards) and women (called Nwanyi Amusu or witches) could be accused of practicing witchcraft if some characters traceable in them are suspicious and questionable. However, women were accused more often than men. This reflected the society's views on gender, power, and control, where women were more easily blamed. Accusing people of witchcraft was a way to enforce social rules and keep the community united by punishing those who were seen as threats to the well-being of the group.

In Igbo society, communal living (was highly valued, meaning that people were expected to work together for the good of the whole community. Witchcraft, on the other hand, was seen as a threat to this, because witches were thought to secretly use their powers to harm others and stop them from being successful. This created a culture of fear, where people were always worried about being attacked by witches. In Igbo land people who do mysterious things that are above ordinary explanation are often suspected as witches or wizards. Nevertheless, in the way incantations and the oracles are consulted in shrines, the Dibia who consult the gods often hear the voice of the gods alone and provides directions to the solution seekers. Hence, AI as a modernized system of witchcrafts does some incantation through the uses of machines and also renders assistance. Despite that foreign beliefs hold that some Igbo culture

have some elements of fetish beliefs , it is crucial beyond doubt that AI presents a modern witchcraft elements as it presents ways of seeking solutions traditionally irrespective of it lapses relies it strength .

Witchcraft also affected the way political and spiritual life works in the community. Some people, like diviners or spiritual healers, who were believed to have special powers, were given a lot of respect and power. They would help by diagnosing witchcraft or providing solutions to problems caused by witches. However, these people are always careful, because if something went wrong in the community, their powers could easily be mistaken for witchcraft, leading to suspicion against them as well.

Pre-Colonial Era: Witchcraft as Part of the Igbo Worldview

Before colonization, the Igbo worldview integrated the spiritual and physical realms, with witchcraft representing one of the ways spiritual forces manifested in the physical world. According to Umeh (1999), issues such as illness, poor harvests, or unexplained deaths were often attributed to witchcraft. Accusations of witchcraft were common, especially in cases of social transgressions. Elders, diviners (dibia), and spiritual leaders played crucial roles in identifying and addressing witchcraft, using rituals and sacrifices to restore communal balance. In other words , before the arrival of colonizers in Igboland, the Igbo people had a unique way of seeing and understanding the world. Their worldview was deeply rooted in the belief that the spiritual and physical worlds were closely connected. They believed that many of the things that happened in the physical world, such as sickness, bad harvests, or sudden deaths, were not just random events but were influenced by spiritual forces. One of the ways these spiritual forces were thought to affect everyday life was through witchcraft. Mesaki (n.d) envision that “ the practice and threat of witchcraft was one of the numerous moral artifacts of culture of sanctioning behavior and imposing conformity “(p.50)

However,witchcraft was seen as a powerful and dangerous force in the Igbo worldview. It was believed that certain people had the ability to control supernatural powers and use them for good or evil. These individuals, known as witches or wizards, were thought to be capable of causing harm to others in the community, such as bringing illness, death, or other misfortunes. As a result, witchcraft was feared and regarded as a serious threat to the well-being of the community.

According to Umeh (1999), when things went wrong in the community—whether it was a sickness that could not be cured, crops failing during harvest season, or unexplained deaths—witchcraft was often blamed. The belief in witchcraft was so strong that people did not just see it as an excuse for bad luck but as a real, powerful force affecting their lives. For example, if a family had a poor harvest or if someone fell seriously ill without a clear cause, it was common for people to think that a witch was behind it.

In Igbo communities, accusations of witchcraft were particularly common when someone broke social rules or caused conflict in the community. If someone was seen as causing

trouble, not respecting the elders, or doing things that went against the accepted norms, they might be accused of practicing witchcraft. This was not just a way of punishing people but a way of explaining why certain bad things were happening in the community.

To address the issue of witchcraft, the Igbo people relied heavily on the wisdom and authority of elders, diviners (known as *dibia*), and spiritual leaders. These figures played key roles in identifying and dealing with suspected cases of witchcraft. The *dibia* were believed to have the ability to communicate with the spiritual world and determine whether witchcraft was indeed involved in a particular situation. They would use rituals, divination, and sometimes sacrifices to get answers and resolve problems in the community.

When a person was accused of witchcraft, the elders or *dibia* would carry out rituals or spiritual consultations to confirm the accusation. If the person was found guilty, different measures would be taken depending on the severity of the case. In some cases, sacrifices or cleansing rituals would be performed to remove the harmful effects of witchcraft and restore peace and balance to the community. These rituals often involved the use of symbolic items, prayers, and offerings to the gods or ancestors, with the aim of protecting the community from further harm.

However, the accusation of witchcraft was not just about finding and punishing wrongdoers. It was also about maintaining social order and reinforcing communal values. By accusing someone of witchcraft, the community was able to identify behaviors that were seen as dangerous or harmful and take steps to prevent them from spreading. Witchcraft accusations were a way of keeping the community together, ensuring that people followed the rules, and protecting the group from outside threats.

Additionally, witchcraft beliefs in pre-colonial Igbo society helped to explain things that were otherwise difficult to understand. Before the advancements in modern science and medicine, many natural events such as epidemics, crop failures, and sudden deaths could not be easily explained. Without a clear cause for these events, witchcraft provided a way for people to make sense of their experiences. It offered an explanation that made sense within the Igbo spiritual and cultural framework.

Witchcraft also played a role in maintaining the moral and ethical structure of the community. Since witches were believed to act out of jealousy, greed, or malice, accusing someone of witchcraft was a way of condemning these negative traits. People were encouraged to behave in ways that promoted harmony, generosity, and cooperation, while those who were selfish or caused harm were viewed with suspicion and often accused of witchcraft. This reinforced the importance of moral behavior and the collective well-being of the community. Lumwe (2017) postulated that witchcraft beliefs reflect on the concept of causation, which remains a guiding principle among African in explaining misfortune occurrences. This principles suggest that all misfortunes are caused by unseen forces and power. Most African groups have expression alluding to such beliefs.

Summarily ,during the pre-colonial era, witchcraft was a significant part of the Igbo worldview. It was believed to be a real force that could influence everyday life, particularly in times of illness, death, or other misfortunes. Accusations of witchcraft were common and were used to explain negative events and reinforce social norms. Elders, diviners, and spiritual leaders played vital roles in addressing witchcraft through rituals and sacrifices, aiming to restore balance and protect the community. Ultimately, the belief in witchcraft helped to maintain order, explain the unexplainable, and reinforce moral values in Igbo society.

The Role of Diviners (Dibia) in Witchcraft

In traditional Igbo society, dibia (diviners) played a very important role, especially when it came to dealing with issues related to witchcraft. The dibia were spiritual experts who were believed to have special knowledge and powers that allowed them to communicate with the unseen world. They were regarded as people who could talk to ancestors, deities, and other spirits, which gave them the ability to understand things that ordinary people could not. Because of this, they were highly respected in the community and often turned to in times of crisis or confusion.

When something bad happened in the community, like an unexplained illness, death, or a series of misfortunes, it was common for people to suspect that witchcraft was involved. The Igbo people believed that witches had the power to cause harm through supernatural means, and that these powers could not be seen or understood by everyone. This is where the dibia came in. The community would consult them to find out whether witchcraft was responsible for the problems they were facing.

Achebe (2002) explains that in situations where witchcraft was suspected, people would go to the dibia to help them figure out what was going on. The dibia had the knowledge to interpret signs and look for clues in the spiritual world. They performed special rituals to identify the source of the problem, whether it was indeed witchcraft or something else. Through these rituals, the dibia could help restore peace and order in the community. By identifying the cause of the problem and offering a solution, the dibia helped ease people's fears and gave them a sense of control over their situation.

The rituals performed by dibia were often very elaborate and symbolic. These rituals involved the use of special tools, prayers, chants, and offerings to the gods or ancestors. The purpose of the rituals was not just to discover whether witchcraft was involved but also to ask for protection and guidance from the spiritual world. For the Igbo people, these rituals were a way to connect with the supernatural forces that they believed controlled much of what happened in the world.

One of the key roles of the dibia was to maintain harmony in the community. In Igbo society, communal living and cooperation were highly valued. Anything that disrupted the peace and balance of the community was seen as a threat to the well-being of everyone. Witchcraft, being a force that could cause harm and division, was one such threat. By identifying witches

and resolving issues related to witchcraft, the dibia helped to keep the community united. Their actions helped to resolve conflicts and restore trust among people who might have been suspicious of one another. Diviners, or dibia, were regarded as spiritual experts capable of interpreting signs and determining the involvement of witchcraft in various issues. They were believed to communicate with ancestors, deities, and spirits. When witchcraft was suspected, people consulted dibia to perform rituals in order to identify the source of problems, for solution to be made which foster community order and providing peace of mind of individuals. Diviners also offered protection from witchcraft, reflecting the belief that supernatural forces could be controlled through spiritual knowledge and rituals. Nevertheless, in Igbo communities, when problems arise due to certain circumstances or misgiving, the people often summon the presence of Dibia to know the root cause of the matter and to know certain procedures to be taken to resolve the problem. However, at the arrival of the Dibia, (native doctor/ diviner, some incantation are to be done to seek the face of the gods/ ancestors and after those necessary traditional rites are done by the diviner then solution and direction is given. Moreso, the diviners are given considerable respect in Igbo setting as they are believed to be mouth speakers of the gods and by such implication, they meditate between the people of the community and the gods or ancestors. Moreso, matters that ordinarily are above physical explanations and requires metaphysical explanations, the diviners are called to give answers to such questions.

In addition to identifying witches, dibia also offered protection from witchcraft. Many people in Igbo society believed that witchcraft was a constant danger and that anyone could be affected by it at any time. As a result, people often sought out the help of dibia not only when they suspected witchcraft but also as a way to prevent it from happening in the first place. The dibia could provide charms, amulets, or perform protective rituals to safeguard individuals or families from the harmful effects of witchcraft.

The belief that supernatural forces could be controlled through spiritual knowledge and rituals was central to the role of the dibia. People believed that through their deep understanding of the spiritual world, dibia could manipulate these forces to bring about positive outcomes. This belief gave the dibia a lot of power in the community, as they were seen as the gatekeepers between the physical and spiritual worlds. Their ability to interact with these forces and protect the community from harm made them invaluable.

Another important aspect of the dibia's role was their ability to offer explanations for things that were otherwise difficult to understand. In a time before modern science and medicine, many natural events were mysterious and frightening. Things like sudden illnesses, crop failures, or unexpected deaths could not be easily explained, and this uncertainty caused a lot of fear and anxiety. The dibia provided a way to make sense of these events by attributing them to supernatural causes, such as witchcraft. This gave people a sense of closure and allowed them to move forward with their lives, knowing that the problem had been identified and dealt with.

While the dibia were highly respected, their role was not without challenges. In some cases,

their powers could be questioned if things went wrong in the community, or if their predictions or remedies did not work as expected. The line between a dibia and a witch was sometimes thin, and in certain situations, a dibia could even be accused of practicing witchcraft themselves if they were believed to have caused harm. This made their position both powerful and precarious, as they had to constantly prove their abilities to the community. In summary, the dibia played a crucial role in the spiritual and social life of the Igbo people, especially when it came to witchcraft. They were seen as the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds, capable of interpreting signs, performing rituals, and providing protection from witchcraft. Their role helped to maintain peace and order in the community by identifying and addressing the causes of misfortune and fear. Through their deep knowledge of the spiritual realm, the dibia provided comfort and security to the people, helping them to navigate the challenges of life with the belief that supernatural forces could be understood and controlled.

The Influence of Colonialism and Christianity on Witchcraft Beliefs

The arrival of Europeans in Igboland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries introduced new ideas that impacted traditional witchcraft beliefs. Christian missionaries, collaborating with colonial officials, sought to replace traditional practices with Christianity. They condemned witchcraft as evil and promoted Christian teachings instead. Ilogu (1974) asserts that while witchcraft was reinterpreted within Christian terms, it remained an important aspect of Igbo spirituality. Many Igbo people continued to practice traditional religion, blending it with Christianity.

Witchcraft in Modern Times: Adapting to Change

Even though Christianity and Western education have spread in Igboland, many people still strongly believe in witchcraft. While these beliefs are not as powerful as before, they still affect how people think about bad events like illness, death, or other misfortunes, especially when the reasons are unclear.

Today, people who are accused of witchcraft are often the most vulnerable, like older people, children, or women. These accusations can lead to serious harm, including being rejected by the community, violence, or even death. Sometimes, witchcraft accusations are made to take away someone's property or wealth.

However, some Christian leaders and human rights activists are working to change these beliefs. They argue that communities should focus on finding real solutions to their problems instead of blaming witchcraft. While these efforts have helped a bit, belief in witchcraft is still deeply rooted in Igbo culture.

Post-independence Nigeria saw continued evolution in witchcraft beliefs, influenced by economic challenges, political instability, and rapid social changes. Witchcraft has also become commercialized, with traditional healers adapting their services to modern demands, combining spiritual protection with promises of financial success. This commercialization illustrates how witchcraft has adapted to contemporary social realities while retaining its

traditional roots.

Witchcraft and Its Role in Igbo Society

In Igboland, the belief that witchcraft practices hinder progress often signals a sense of precariousness in how community members view the accused person, who is believed to have been bewitched. In other words, Igbo people believe that witchcraft practices hinder progress often leads to suspicion and stigmatization of the accused person.

Although, witchcraft in Igbo culture is not solely about malevolence but also about power balance, social harmony, and community identity. It helps explain misfortune, allocate responsibility, and regulate social behavior. Witchcraft accusations often stem from personal rivalries, economic competition, or unexplained calamities. Traditional spiritual leaders, or *dibia*, mediate between the physical and metaphysical worlds, reinforcing the role of witchcraft in spiritual understanding.

Spirituality and Human Identity in Igboland

Human identity in Igbo society is deeply connected to spiritual beliefs. Individuals are seen as part of a larger cosmological order involving ancestors, deities, and spirits. The concept of “Chi,” representing a person’s spiritual essence or personal god, is central to Igbo identity. This connection to the spiritual world and ancestors shapes self-perception and community roles. Chi / God / gods are transcendental beings that controls spiritual realms and render assistance and benevolence to people who serve them and they are reverence with honor and respect. However, in Igbo communities, the respect one have for his chi often draws his consciousness to live peacefully and harmony with his neighbors and therefore avoiding those sacrosanct which deter active participation and observance of ultimate benevolence for everyone in the community as individuals are tide to live together in love for one another. Hence, individuality becomes an avenue to reconnect with each others despite the varied nature of each person kind and therefore the sense of coexistence is appraised dearly but the notion of avoidance of entangling or relating with people is detested deeply as communal lifestyle strive in Igbo worldview. Kanu (2024) agrees that, African indigenous people have long related their environment in a spirit of respect, solidarity and complementarity. Consequently, this notion will help them to live a better life and to avoid bad behaviors which in future have spiritual consequences. For instances, the Igbo people believe that anyone who live a good life will be a good ancestor when death ensue but those who denied the community good and bad behaved person will suffer and wander in the ancestral court and will not find rest in spiritual abode (wandering ghost). Thus, this signal a behavioral blueprint for the Igbo people and enables them to behave properly for the community good as there is reward in doing good now and also its afterlife significance.

Definition and Evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence refers to the simulation of human intelligence by machines, encompassing fields such as machine learning, natural language processing, and robotics. In other words, artificial intelligence encompasses a systematic processes of machine performing human tasks and rendering a result without stress. AI systems are designed to perform tasks

requiring human-like intelligence, including visual perception, speech recognition, and decision-making. Since its inception in the mid-20th century, AI has evolved rapidly, influencing various sectors like healthcare, education, and finance. According to Roy (2023) since the dawn of digital age artificial intelligence has undergone a dramatic evolution.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is when machines and computer programs can do tasks that usually need human intelligence. This means they can understand language, recognize patterns, solve problems, and make decisions. AI systems learn from experience and can get better over time. By trying to think like humans, AI aims to help or even do some tasks better than people.

Evolution of AI

The story of AI goes back a long time. Ancient thinkers wondered about how people think and understand, which set the stage for later ideas. In the 1950s, computer scientists like Alan Turing started serious research on AI. Turing suggested that machines could mimic human thinking and created the Turing Test to see if a machine could behave like a human. Marr (2023) says that, the journey of AI emerged in 1950s with the pioneering work of Alan Turing who proposed the Turing Test to ascertain if a machine can mimic human intelligence. In the 1960s, AI gain momentum with the invention of the first AI programming language, LISP by John MC carthy .

In the 1960s and 1970s, early AI programs were made to solve problems and play games like chess. Researchers worked on algorithms, which are sets of rules that help machines make decisions. During this time, “expert systems” were developed. These systems used knowledge from human experts to solve specific problems, like diagnosing illnesses.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, machine learning became important. This type of AI allows computers to learn from data instead of just following fixed rules. By looking at large amounts of data, these systems can find patterns and make predictions, which helps them get better over time.

Recently, deep learning has changed AI significantly. This method uses neural networks to analyze big data and has greatly improved things like recognizing images and understanding speech. Deep learning allows machines to not just look at data but also understand it, leading to new uses for AI.

Today, AI is everywhere in our daily lives. It helps in healthcare for diagnoses, in finance for risk assessments, and in entertainment for recommending shows. From virtual assistants that can understand voice commands to self-driving cars, AI is becoming smarter and more common.

Looking to the future, AI has many exciting possibilities. Researchers are working to create systems that can interact with people in more natural ways. As AI keeps evolving, it will change industries and improve our daily lives, making tasks easier and introducing new innovations.

Applications of AI in Modern Society

AI's integration into modern society has transformed industries and daily life. From

automation to personalized algorithms on social media, AI is reshaping work, communication, and interaction. In Nigeria, AI is penetrating agriculture, healthcare, and education, offering tools for precision farming and improved medical diagnosis. As AI becomes more prevalent, it intersects with local cultural practices and belief systems, presenting both opportunities and challenges. However, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI)—machines capable of tasks that require human-like intelligence—introduces new variables into these traditional belief systems. While it helps in easier task outcome it also creates the sense of replacement in terms of allocating works to human beings since AI performs both digital / computer works and that of man.

The Intersection of AI and Traditional Witchcraft Beliefs and Modern Technological Innovations in Igboland

Igboland has seen technological advancements, including AI. Technologies such as smartphones and automated systems are reshaping interactions. However, these technologies are often viewed through traditional beliefs, either with suspicion or admiration based on their perceived spiritual alignment. The Intersection of AI and Traditional Witchcraft Beliefs. Biri and Manyonganise (2022) agrees that , witchcraft is perceived as one of the major causes of retrogression in everyday aspect of life . The religious practitioners tries to protect themselves, their families and communities through rituals to the gods/ ancestors in order to stop evil from lingering and their also revenge by sending back the ills intended for the victims by witches.. The link between artificial intelligence (AI) and traditional witchcraft beliefs is an interesting topic. As AI technology develops, it starts to influence how people practice their beliefs, including witchcraft. This raises important questions about belief, technology, and our experiences in life. The development of AI machines can as well help the traditionalists or herbalists to be knowledgeable on how to use some different harms in curing illnesses . Despite the growing need of AI in traditional advancing traditional medicine it also raises some questions on how it distort the old pattern of solving problems through incantations and divination. In other words , getting firsthand directions from the metaphysical being / realm which is the gods/ ancestors. Gombe (1986) envisions that, if a family becomes vulnerable to attacks, rituals are carried out and incantations are made to ancestral spirits. They confront the ancestral spirits demanding protections . However, in alignment, AI can be thoughtful linked to modern day ancestor because of its multifaceted nature in solving problems. Therefore, when matters that are above human abilities emerge , it is used for enabling effective outcome despite there are still invented by man.

Understanding Traditional Witchcraft Beliefs

Traditional witchcraft beliefs are closely tied to nature, spirits of ancestors, and mystical forces. These beliefs can differ from one culture to another but often include practices like using herbs for healing, predicting the future, and doing rituals for protection or good luck. Many people who practice witchcraft see it as a way to connect with nature and the spiritual world.

AI's Role in Cultural Practices

As AI becomes more common in our daily lives, in Igbo community, it changes how people

interact with their beliefs. For example, AI can quickly analyze large amounts of information, helping practitioners learn more about the properties of different herbs. Some might use AI to help with divination, where computers provide insights based on data patterns. This mix of technology and tradition can lead to new practices that honor old ways while adapting to modern life. The advancement in technologies can also be helpful in cultural practices, for instances the Dibia (diviner or herbalist) can as well use AI machines in getting information on how to solve some difficult problems while still retaining his/her cultural relevance and tradition. Hence, since AI performs tasks, stores information and provides necessary assistance which ordinary might waste time when humans embark on such tasks, however, many historical facts can be made known through the use of AI machines therefore most of the problems faced in Igbo community can be revealed through AI and the means of solutions of such problems are made known. Hence, preservation of cultural heritages. Thus, this should not be taken for granted when attending to recent cultural misgivings because of its great impacts and directions it renders.

The Potential for Conflict

However, introducing AI into witchcraft can also create conflicts. Some traditional practitioners may see AI as a threat to their ancestral pattern of consulting oracles, doing incantation or divination that is their authentic practices. Olasode (2023) points that, it is undeniable that AI has the potential to disrupt and transform traditional practices. From music composition to culinary arts, AI is challenging the notion of human exclusivity in various fields. In traditional settings people might worry that relying on technology takes away from the spiritual and personal aspects of witchcraft. Thus, this reflects on broader debate about how technology fits into spiritual beliefs. Hence, its effects and merits. Some people view technology as helpful, while others see it as a distraction that might weaken their beliefs.

Reimagining Practices

Despite these conflicts, the combination of AI and traditional beliefs offers new possibilities. AI can help people connect with their cultural heritage. For instance, digital platforms can store traditional knowledge, allowing practitioners to share experiences and learn from each other. This can create a sense of community. AI can also help preserve fading practices by documenting them in new ways, ensuring important knowledge is not lost.

Ethical Considerations

Using AI in this way brings up important ethical questions. Who controls the data that AI creates? How can practitioners make sure their traditions are represented accurately while retaining its cultural significance via the use of AI? These questions are crucial as technology advances, and discussions about the ethical implications of balancing modern technology with ancient beliefs.

Obviously AI has raised ethical questions within Igbo cultural landscape. Some of these questions it raises are often used to checkmate its dethronement of human responsibilities in relating with supernatural forces. Some the questions that AI raises are: How can man connect to his ancestors and grasp some knowledge through the uses of AI machines?. Also,

when can diviners / herbalists who deviated from traditional pattern of consultation/ rituals and adopt modernize technological approaches via AI means follow the right ways of solving problems and seeking solutions as ordained by the ancestors in Igbo setting? . Thus, does AI study the mysteries in spiritual realm and mediate between the cosmos?. However, , all these questions are therefore used to ascertain how old pattern of cultural heritages are adjusted within the advent of the new age. Despite that AI helps to store traditional informations and the believes of the people yet there is also some lapses it may not fully encroach. For instance , when there is poor networking and inadequate knowledge on how to input/ send data in the AI system, the reverse becomes the case as it will tend not to work out well or even provide appropriate information expected of it. Consequently, in most rural areas where there are mass illiteracy on how to make use of AI machines, there is little or no need of its provision in such areas . Moreso, since AI is human created/ invented machines, it can as well be manipulated by man for his selfish reasons just as witches in Igbo setting uses their mystical/ magical powers to manipulate the good of the community diverting it to their personal desires and therefore exacerbating distortion of progress ,development and escalating evil in Igbo communities leading to social decay.AI presents the digression of old pattern of traditional style of ritual and cultural practices when used by Dibia/ herbalist (Ndi ogwu) in finding the root causes of problem. However, the modern Dibia/ herbalist may not frown at this new system of divination but it is crucial to balance the old system and the new system of cultural practices. Therefore, in the old system the Dibia is seen actively consulting the gods before taking up decisions and directions on how to solve problems but in the new system, the Dibia while still seeking solutions from the gods uses AI machines and therefore AI now becomes an Oracular spectrum or mouthpiece of the gods . Nevertheless, In Igbo communities, the outburst of sacrilegious act/ taboos are treated respectively based on a particular tradition attached to such taboos. Moreso, can AI still disrupt the old pattern of culture while still redirecting people on how to surmount its consequences ? In addressing taboos respectively, cleansing rites must be followed without questioning due to the severe punishment attributed to the disobedience to comply , hence , can AI still maneuver these sacrileges and outcomes while still providing solutions for the victims?. Furthermore, despite its benevolent nature there are lapses it can never cover . Thus, insofar that man exist and the ability of craftsmanship / creativity is undoubtedly prevailing and it is high time people are told that AI are made by man and therefore man to serve and they cannot supersede the physical world to the spiritual realm despite their rich knowledge on how spiritual forces operates and have their way in both the spiritual world and the physical world. Hence, to transit into the spiritual realm one have to spiritual for it to be achievable. Although, witches are physical beings yet spiritual beings due to dual identities and their superficial power, they can venture into the physical realm while still operating in the mystical world so also AI can have knowledge and preserve cultures of Igbo society. The notion of Amusu (witchcraft) can as well be reinterpreted through Igbo calligraphic term Oji agbani eje na ndiuchichi (people who operate at night spiritually) . Thus, they operate secretly because of their evil intentions/ motives. Therefore, since these evils are prevailing in our society hence it raises ethical dilemma within the social fabrics of Igbo cultural landscape. The problem of man in his society are numerous which witchcraft practices are not exempted because of its ability to hinder progress.

Summarily, the intersection of AI and traditional witchcraft beliefs is a lively area to explore. While there are challenges, there are also many opportunities for new ideas and growth. By thoughtfully harnessing this intersection, practitioners can honor their traditions while using technology to enhance their practices. This conversation between old and new can lead to a better understanding of both AI and the ongoing importance of traditional beliefs in our changing world.

Perceptions of AI in Relation to Witchcraft Beliefs

AI's mysterious nature sometimes leads to its association with witchcraft. Thus, ability of a machine performing human tasks and responsibilities are often linked to modern witchcraft that sprang from human invention. However, the question on how can a mere machine invented by man perform duties more adequately and faster than the people who made them? However, rural areas with low technological literacy, AI's abilities—such as decision-making and prediction—are compared to supernatural powers. Jibunoh (2024) agrees that, In the realm of the supernatural and the unexplained, that there are two disparate worlds and they are the witchcraft and artificial intelligence (A.I) one is steeped in centuries - old traditions, mysterious practices, and tales of magic, while the other represents the forefront of human innovation. Thus, technologies like facial recognition or voice assistants may be seen as modern forms of magic. However, as the belief that witches possess superficial power and are most often are mysterious from ordinary humans so also the growth of AI machines often confuse the interior rural villagers as they lack the sense on how to operate such machine. In other words, they do not know or have the knowledge on how to operate such machines and therefore this sense of ignorance draws them to liken AI to Amusu Ndiocha (white man's witchcraft) as regards to something new different from the past state of being.

AI as a “Magical” Entity: Social and Psychological Perspectives

In Igbo communities, the enigmatic/ mysterious nature of AI can lead to its perception as a modern equivalent of witchcraft. The fear or reverence for unfamiliar technologies mirrors attitudes toward supernatural forces. Hence, AI as machines which performs multiple functions are liken to witchcraft practices whereby witches and wizards are believed to possess attributes of humans and also transcend into the spiritual world to create their desired aims. Thus, they are humans yet spirits. Similarly, AI challenges traditional cognitive frameworks, occupying a similar space in social imagination as witchcraft. Miri, Kermani, Zedeh, Piresteh and Dohghan (2022) agrees that, irrespective of unsolved Jared problems, the tension in AI has provided tested proofs of necessary principles of intelligence and mind; people most adapt to open development rooted in needs and desires, being situated in and dependent on the environment through the sensorimotor system. Nevertheless, AI machines are often capable of solving complex tasks, used for information purposes, social interactions and among others.

The Impact of AI on Human Identity in Igboland :Identity Formation in Traditional and Modern Igbo Society

In traditional Igbo society, identity is fundamentally shaped by communal relationships, spirituality, and a deep connection to ancestors. This communal bond forms the backbone of

social interaction, where individual identity is inextricably linked to one's role within the community and the broader spiritual world. Elders, spiritual leaders, and ancestors play crucial roles in guiding individuals, offering wisdom, and maintaining a cohesive cultural identity.

In contrast, modern influences, particularly the rise of technology and artificial intelligence (AI), are shifting how identity is formed in contemporary Igbo society. AI's rapid integration into daily life, from decision-making processes to technological advancements in healthcare, education, and communication, is creating new avenues for self-perception. However, this shift is creating a tension between the preservation of traditional Igbo values and the adoption of modern, technology-driven roles. This tension affects both individual and collective identity as the Igbo navigate the complexities of aligning traditional values with contemporary technological advancements.

The shift in roles traditionally held by spiritual leaders and elders to more technology-centered positions creates an identity crisis for some individuals. Those who once found identity through community service, spiritual leadership, or ancestral reverence now face challenges in adapting to a world where technological skills and AI-based roles are increasingly prioritized. This displacement challenges the foundational aspects of Igbo identity, leading to questions about what it means to be Igbo in a world where AI plays an expanding role.

AI's Influence on Self-Perception and Social identity

AI's growing influence is reshaping not only how individuals perceive themselves but also how society views their roles. Traditionally, Igbo self-perception is grounded in spiritual and communal obligations. Individuals derive self-worth from fulfilling their roles within the family, clan, and spiritual hierarchy. However, AI challenges this foundation by assuming roles that were once the exclusive domain of humans. For instance, decision-making in agriculture, healthcare, or financial management is increasingly driven by AI algorithms, which process large amounts of data to offer solutions that may be perceived as more efficient than human intuition or spiritual guidance.

This shift in responsibility has profound effects on self-perception. The reduction of human roles in these key areas may lead to a diminished sense of personal agency and significance within the community. Social identity, traditionally tied to one's contribution to communal life, may now become more fragmented as AI systems take over decision-making processes, leaving some individuals questioning their value in the larger societal context.

Furthermore, AI's influence on communication and social interaction alters the way Igbo individuals connect with each other. The increasing use of AI-driven platforms for communication and information sharing can weaken the communal bonds that are at the heart of Igbo identity. Social identity, once solidified through face-to-face interactions and communal gatherings, may become more individualized as AI-mediated communication becomes more prevalent.

Displacement of Traditional Roles and Practices

AI's rise in Igboland is beginning to displace some traditional roles, particularly in areas like decision-making, healthcare, and conflict resolution. Spiritual leaders, such as diviners and healers, who traditionally provided guidance and healing through spiritual insight, are now being challenged by AI systems that offer data-driven, scientific approaches to solving problems. In healthcare, for instance, AI-powered diagnostic tools can provide rapid, accurate assessments of illnesses, which may undermine the role of traditional healers who have long relied on spiritual practices to diagnose and treat ailments.

This displacement affects not only individual roles but also communal practices. Divination, for instance, has long been a central practice in Igbo spirituality, offering individuals insight into their futures, resolving conflicts, and seeking guidance from ancestors. As AI technologies provide alternative methods for decision-making, the role of diviners may diminish, leading to a gradual erosion of this spiritual practice. Similarly, the communal approach to healing, which often involves ritual and spiritual intervention, may be sidelined as AI-driven healthcare solutions gain traction in the community.

The potential decline of these practices raises significant questions about the future of Igbo spirituality and cultural identity. While AI may offer efficiency and improved outcomes in some areas, its adoption could lead to the loss of traditional practices that have sustained Igbo society for generations.

AI and the Future of Witchcraft Beliefs in Igboland

Challenges to Traditional Beliefs

AI poses a direct challenge to traditional beliefs, particularly those associated with witchcraft. In Igbo culture, witchcraft has long been a way to explain mysterious or harmful occurrences, such as illness, misfortune, or unexplained deaths. Spiritual leaders, diviners, and healers often played key roles in identifying and combating witchcraft through rituals and spiritual intervention.

However, as AI-driven solutions offer scientific explanations for phenomena once attributed to witchcraft, traditional beliefs may lose their hold on the community. For example, AI-based healthcare systems can diagnose diseases with a level of precision that may undermine the belief that certain illnesses are caused by witchcraft or spiritual forces. As AI continues to provide rational, data-driven explanations for previously unexplained occurrences, the belief in witchcraft may begin to fade, leading to a significant shift in how Igbo individuals understand and interpret the world around them.

Adaptation or Rejection of AI in Traditional Practices

Irrespective of the challenges AI presents to traditional beliefs, it is possible that some Igbo communities may choose to adapt AI into their spiritual practices rather than rejecting it outright. For instance, AI technologies could be used alongside traditional spiritual practices,

enhancing the efficiency of decision-making while maintaining the spiritual integrity of the process. Kelly, Kaye and Oviedo- Trespalacio (2023) avers that, in response to the technological advancement of AI, there has been a recent increase in studies that have investigated the antecedents of AI acceptance framework. Some diviners may incorporate AI tools to gather data or make more informed decisions, thereby blending modern technology with traditional spiritual practices.

On the other hand, some communities may resist the encroachment of AI into traditional practices, viewing it as a threat to their cultural and spiritual identity. For these communities, the rejection of AI may be seen as a way to preserve their connection to their ancestors and the spiritual world, which they believe cannot be replaced or replicated by technology. Ade-Ibijoba and Okonkwo (2023) posits that, AI is a game changing innovation with potential to improve all sectors of African social systems. However, the adoption and use of AI applications in African society raises some issues including skills acquisition, ethics, programming, data integration, users attitudes , government policy and insufficient infrastructure and network connectivity.

Ethical Implications of AI in Igboland's Social and Religious Contexts :AI and Moral Questions within Traditional Belief Systems

AI introduces new ethical questions into the traditional Igbo moral framework. In traditional Igbo society, moral responsibility is deeply tied to spiritual beliefs, with the community and spiritual leaders guiding individuals in making ethical decisions. However, as AI systems take over decision-making roles, questions arise about responsibility and accountability. For example, who is responsible when an AI system makes a decision that leads to harm or conflict? Traditional moral systems, which emphasize human agency and spiritual guidance, may struggle to address these new dilemmas.

Furthermore, AI's impact on human agency raises concerns within the context of Igbo spirituality. Traditional belief systems emphasize the importance of human action and responsibility in shaping one's destiny and maintaining balance within the community. The increasing reliance on AI to make decisions and solve problems may undermine this sense of agency, leading to a disconnection from the spiritual and moral values that have long been central to Igbo life.

Consequently , the integration of AI into Igbo society presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI offers the potential for improved efficiency and problem-solving, it also threatens to disrupt traditional roles, beliefs, and practices that have defined Igbo identity for generations. As AI continues to influence self-perception, social identity, and spiritual practices, the Igbo must navigate the complex task of balancing modern technological advancements with the preservation of their cultural and spiritual heritage. Whether through adaptation or rejection, the choices made in response to AI will shape the future of Igbo identity and its relationship with the rapidly changing world.

Conclusion

The intersection of AI and traditional witchcraft beliefs in Igboland represents thoughtfully complex dynamic between modern technology and historical spiritual practices. AI's influence on human identity and social roles reveals both challenges and opportunities for integrating technology with traditional beliefs. As AI continues to evolve, its impact on cultural and spiritual frameworks will shape the future of Igbo society, requiring careful consideration of ethical and social implications. Thus, despite it lapses relies it strength and it is crucial to understand its vital functions and how it correlates with traditional values before accepting or rejecting its usefulness in Igboland.

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