
Deconstructing Contemporary Discourses on Ògbòrà Witchcraft: A Critical Examination of Igbo Societal Perspectives

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Abstract

‘Ògbòrà’ (witchcraft) occupies a pivotal role in the cultural beliefs of the Igbo people, eliciting curiosity, fear, and widespread misconceptions among scholars and the public. This study examines Igbo perspectives on the beliefs, practices, and social implications of witchcraft, highlighting its enduring significance and impact on individuals and communities. Using an analytical survey research design and quantitative data collection, the study gathers insights through a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal the nature of witchcraft in Igbo culture, promoting cultural understanding while addressing the stigma faced by accused individuals. It fosters informed discussions, dispelling misconceptions and encouraging sensitivity toward traditional beliefs.

Keywords: Ògbòrà, witchcraft, Igbo culture, traditional beliefs, social implications, stigma and accusations, cultural understanding.

Introduction

Witchcraft is a complex and often misunderstood subject, deeply rooted in human history and culture. In contemporary Igbo society in southeastern Nigeria, it is primarily linked to evil, magic, and spells—a perception shared globally to varying degrees. Misfortunes such as disease, premature death, and societal crises are frequently attributed to witchcraft. Studies, including those by Wodu (2022) and Nejo (2023), highlight the brutal treatment of accused individuals. For instance, the Research Directorate (2005) documented a case in Ozalla, Edo State, where suspected witches were forced to ingest a concoction to determine whether they were witches and wizards or not, leading to mass killings. Accused individuals often face severe torture and deadly ordeals, resulting in numerous innocent deaths.

The debate surrounding witchcraft, lacking scientific verification, remains contentious. The 2019 International Conference on Witchcraft at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) exemplifies this, with controversy arising from misinterpretations and fears of witchcraft attacks (Erezi, 2019). Despite opposition from the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and attempts to disrupt the event, academics supported the conference's objectives. This incident highlights the deep-seated beliefs in witchcraft within society, even among educated individuals (Jayeola-Omoyeni et al., 2015). The controversy underscores the tension between secular academic inquiry and religious beliefs. This situation presents an opportunity for research into the perspectives on witchcraft among the Igbo people of southeast Nigeria.

According to Uchem (2001, p.36), the Igbo region in modern-day Nigeria is primarily made up of the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, as well as parts of the Northern Delta and Rivers states. It is essential to critically examine how contemporary Igbo society interprets the phenomenon of witchcraft, emphasising its sociocultural dimensions rather than pursuing scientific validation. By analysing the culturally embedded perceptions and the functional roles attributed to witchcraft, a more nuanced understanding can be achieved regarding its significance and influence in present-day Igbo life.

Conceptual Clarification of Witchcraft

Witchcraft holds diverse meanings across cultures, with African and European contexts differing significantly. Evaluating African spiritual practices through a European lens often leads to misconceptions, particularly in contemporary Igbo Christianity, where biased attitudes toward witchcraft persist (Falola & Griffin, 2021). Clarifying these differences is vital for resolving conflicting interpretations of witchcraft within Igbo culture.

Belief in witchcraft is a near-universal phenomenon, historically present across both so-called primitive and advanced societies (Ankarloo & Clark, 2001). Cohn (1975) distinguishes witches from sorcerers, noting that witches possess innate, often unconscious powers, whereas sorcerers rely on external tools—a distinction echoed by Muscato (2019).

Throughout history, many cultures have attributed misfortunes such as illness, famine, or conflict to witchcraft. Muscato (2019) observes that accusations often targeted marginalised individuals—those who deviated from societal norms—serving political or social ends. Scholars like Thomas (1997), Wilby (2006), and Perrone et al. (1993) affirm that, particularly in African and African diasporic contexts, witchcraft is typically associated with individuals believed to wield harmful supernatural powers.

In the African context, witchcraft is broadly understood as the belief in supernatural powers used for both harmful and, to a lesser extent, benevolent purposes. Quarcoopome (1987) defines a witch as one believed to possess a spirit capable of causing harm or good. Ekwunife (2011) views witchcraft as an occult practice driven by greed and dominance, where hidden means are used to harm others. Similarly, Jayeola-Omoyeni et al. (2015) describe it as the belief that individuals can harness supernatural forces to influence others' behaviour.

Terminologies for witchcraft vary across Nigerian cultures—*ili amosu* (Igbo), *aje* (Yoruba), *obayifo* (Twi), *aze* (Fon), *ega* (Nupe), and *obubit ifot* or *afia ifot* (Ibibio) (Ekwunife, 2011; Offiong, 1991; Metuh, 1987; Arazu, 2003; Adibe, 2009). While both men and women may be linked to witchcraft, the witch is traditionally female, and the wizard male. Among the Igbo, witchcraft beliefs are deeply rooted; witches are thought to operate nocturnally, detach their souls, transform into animals such as owls, and attend invisible, secret gatherings (Ejeh & Ugwu, 2021).

Tegbe and Chinenyemba (2022) note, that in African belief systems, witches possess inherent powers often used for harm, though sometimes for protective purposes, such as aiding their children. In Igbo society, witchcraft is largely associated with women, though men may also possess such powers (Okonkwo et al., 2021). These powers can be inherited or acquired, often unknowingly, typically through food-based initiation rites (Ekwunife, 2011). Witches are believed to shape-shift into animals like black cats, owls, bats, or rats, with their death linked to that of the transformed creature (Okpalike, 2024; Ekwunife, 2011). They are also thought to corrupt medicinal practices using herbal knowledge and, at times, work in collaboration with traditional healers (Adibe, 2009).

Ògbòmà is an Onitsha (Ònìchà) Igbo dialect. According to Williamson (1972, p.247) in the Dictionary of Ònìchà Igbo, the word 'ògbòmà is a noun meaning wizard; a kind of male witch capable of travelling where it wishes unseen by day. Fewer in number than the ordinary witch, but capable of greater damage once offended (cf. Yoruba *osò*)'. Williamson (1972, p.28) further recorded that the word '*Amōosu* is a noun meaning witch; *ezè amōosu*, chief of witches; *-ta amōosu*, be a witch; practice witchcraft.'

Witchcraft is often categorised by intent: *white witchcraft* (*amosu nche uno*) is protective; *black witchcraft* (*amosu ikpo nsi*) aims to intimidate for respect; and *red witchcraft* (*ògbòmà*) is destructive, akin to vampire-like figures (Arazu, 2004; Ekwunife, 2011). Beyond the supernatural, “witchcraft” also functions as a metaphor for exceptional skill. For instance, footballers like Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi may be described as “wizards” of the game, reflecting the Igbo view that witchcraft involves extraordinary, often mysterious abilities. This dual usage underscores the deep-rooted and multifaceted nature of witchcraft beliefs in Igbo society.

Material and Method

This study adopts an analytical survey design to explore underlying causes of specific phenomena (Oppenheim, 2000), addressing gaps in existing research and testing hypotheses (Valcárcel, 2017; Omair, 2015). A quantitative approach is used, drawing on both primary and secondary data to yield insights and inform decision-making. Data is collected from both primary and secondary sources to enhance understanding and support informed decisions.

The research focuses on southeastern Nigeria, home to the Igbo people and covering approximately 15,800 square miles between latitudes 5–7°N and longitudes 6–8°E (Ekwunife, 1990). The region, within the equatorial rainforest zone, comprises Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states, with major cities like Aba, Enugu, Onitsha, and Owerri (Obaro, 2006). It shares boundaries with various ethnic groups and accounts for about 18% of Nigeria’s population, estimated at 36 million (Population of Cities in Nigeria, 2024).

Primary data were gathered using structured questionnaires targeting youth, middle-aged, and elderly respondents. Youth participants (500 in total) were randomly selected from four densely populated cities in southeastern Nigeria— Onitsha (Anambra), Aba (Abia), Enugu (Enugu), and Owerri (Imo)—with equal representation of men and women. The middle-aged group comprised 40 individuals (with 10 randomly selected from each of the four sampled states), while the elderly group included 120 individuals (with 30 from each state). Three tailored questionnaires, combining open- and closed-ended questions, were administered directly by the researcher. Secondary data were sourced from books, journals, libraries, and media. A descriptive-analytical approach, supported by quantitative analysis, was used to interpret the findings.

Results and Data Analysis

The study results are presented in three sections corresponding to the three respondent groups. Frequencies and percentages were derived from the returned questionnaires and displayed in tables. Each table includes questionnaire items (QI), figures (F), and percentage (%), detailing responses from the respective groups.

Table 1: Responses by the Youths of South Eastern Nigeria

For this group, eleven questionnaire items administered to five hundred youths were used for data elicitation. The questionnaire items and the youths’ responses are as follows

S/No	Questionnaire items	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Strongly Disagree		Disagreed		Undecided		No Response	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Witchcraft is real and actively practiced in Igbo land.	250	50	214	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	36	07
2	Witchcraft is an	250	50	250	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	integral part of Igbo traditional beliefs and culture.												
3	Stories about witchcraft influence the behaviour and decisions of young people in Igbo communities.	321	64	179	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Witchcraft is caused by evil spirits and supernatural forces.	179	36	321	64	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	I believe in witchcraft because of personal experiences and encounters	108	22	286	57	-	-	106	21	-	-	-	-
6	The belief in witchcraft is more prevalent among the older generation in Igbo land, especially women.	38	08	286	57	-	-	71	14	36	07	69	14
7	Accusations of witchcraft create social stigma for individuals in Igbo	178	36	250	50	36	07	36	07	-	-	-	-

	communities												
8	Religious teachings and beliefs influence my perception of witchcraft in Igbo land.	179	36	143	29	-	-	71	14	36	07	71	14
9	The belief in witchcraft has a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of youths in Igbo land.	179	36	179	36	-	-	71	14	71	14	-	-
10	Modern education has not reduced the belief in witchcraft among youths in Igbo land.	-	-	-	-	287	57	213	43	-	-	-	-
11	Advances in science and technology have not weakened the belief in witchcraft among young people.	-	-	-	-	321	64	179	36	-	-	-	-

Source: Field study

The responses from the youth group, as presented in Table 1, reveal significant belief in the reality and influence of witchcraft in Igbo land. For **QI-1**, 464 (93%) affirmed belief in witchcraft, with 50% strongly asserting its practice. In **QI-2**, all respondents agreed that witchcraft is integral to Igbo traditional beliefs, with half expressing strong affirmation.

For **QI-3** and **QI-4**, 321 respondents (64%) agreed that both stories of witchcraft influence youth behaviour and that witchcraft is caused by supernatural forces. In **QI-5**, 394 (79%) attributed their belief in witchcraft to personal experiences, while 106 (21%) rejected it for the same reason. Regarding **QI-6**, 324 (65%) agreed that belief in witchcraft is more prevalent among older generations, particularly women, while 107 (21%) disagreed and 69 (14%) remained undecided. **QI-7** shows that 428 (86%) acknowledged that witchcraft accusations lead to social stigma. For **QI-8**, 322 (65%) agreed that religious beliefs influence perceptions of witchcraft; 71 (14%) disagreed, another 14% were undecided, and 7% offered no response. **QI-9** shows that 358 (72%) agreed that belief in witchcraft negatively affects youth mental health, while 14% disagreed and another 14% were undecided. Lastly, **QI-10** and **QI-11** received unanimous rejection of the claims that modern education and scientific advancement have failed to reduce belief in witchcraft. A total of 100% of respondents disagreed, with 57% and 64% strongly disagreeing, respectively, underscoring the perceived impact of education and technology in weakening such beliefs.

Table 2: Responses by the Middle-aged People in South-Eastern Nigeria

To generate data from this group, eleven questionnaire items were equally prepared for forty respondents. The responses are as follows:

S/No	Questionnaire items	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Strongly Disagree		Disagreed		Undecided		No Response	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Witchcraft is a real phenomenon that influences events in Igbo communities.	36	90	4	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Witchcraft is a widespread problem in Igbo land that affects many families.	20	50	8	20	4	10	8	20	-	-	-	-
3	Witchcraft serves as an explanation for certain unexplainable occurrences in Igbo society.	14	35	14	35	8	20	4	10	-	-	-	-
4	Accusations of witchcraft often disrupt family and community relationships in Igbo land.	12	30	20	50	8	20	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	The belief in witchcraft is declining among middle-aged people due to exposure to	-	-	4	10	12	30	20	50	-	-	4	10

	formal education.												
6	Witchcraft has a significant impact on the social and economic development of Igbo land.	-	-	10	25	26	65	4	10	-	-	-	-
7	Religious teachings in Igbo land strongly oppose the belief in witchcraft.	-	-	-	-	8	20	28	70	-	-	4	10
8	Individuals accused of witchcraft are often subjected to unjust treatment in Igbo communities.	12	30	16	40	8	20	-	-	-	-	4	10
9	Witchcraft is caused by a combination of factors, including poverty, lack of education, and cultural practices.	8	20	16	40	-	-	16	40	-	-	-	-
10	Modernisation and exposure to global culture have weakened the influence of witchcraft beliefs in Igbo land.	-	-	-	-	28	70	12	30	-	-	-	-
11	Witchcraft practice is necessary for the survival and prosperity of the Igbo society.	-	-	-	-	28	70	12	30	-	-	-	-

Source: Field study

The data in Table 2 reflect a strong belief in the reality and influence of witchcraft among middle-aged respondents. In **QI-1**, 90% strongly agreed and 10% agreed that witchcraft is real and influential, indicating near-universal belief. For **QI-2**, 70% viewed witchcraft as a widespread issue, though 30% disagreed. Similarly, **QI-3** shows that 70% believe witchcraft explains unexplainable events, while 30% disagreed. In **QI-4**, 80% agreed that witchcraft

accusations disrupt familial and communal relationships, with 30% strongly agreeing; 20% strongly disagreed. **QI-5** revealed skepticism about education reducing belief in witchcraft among the middle-aged, as 80% disagreed with this idea, and only 10% expressed agreement. Four respondents (10%) did not respond. **QI-6** shows that 75% rejected the notion that witchcraft significantly impacts socio-economic development in Igbo land, while 25% believed it does. In **QI-7**, 90% disagreed that religious teachings in Igbo land strongly oppose witchcraft beliefs, with no affirmative responses and 10% non-responses. For **QI-8**, 70% agreed that accused individuals often face unjust treatment, while 20% disagreed, and 10% did not respond. In **QI-9**, 60% believed witchcraft is driven by factors like poverty, lack of education, and cultural practices, while 40% disagreed. Lastly, in **QI-10** and **QI-11**, all respondents unanimously rejected the notions that modernisation has not weakened witchcraft beliefs and that witchcraft is necessary for Igbo society's survival, indicating a strong shift away from such traditional views.

Table 3: Data Presentation for Other Respondents (the elderly people in Southeast Nigeria)

The questionnaires for this group study consist of six (6) items that were shared among one hundred and twenty respondents. The questionnaire items and the responses of the respondents are presented below:

	Questionnaire items	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Strongly Disagree		Disagreed		Undecided		No Response	
S/No		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	The existence of witchcraft is a fundamental reality in Igbo society.	108	90	12	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Belief in witchcraft is deeply rooted in Igbo cultural practices and traditions.	60	50	24	20	12	10	24	20	-	-	-	-
3	Witchcraft is often caused by human jealousy, envy, and greed.	54	45	54	45	-	-	12	10	-	-	-	-
4	The fear of witchcraft significantly influences	24	20	48	40	-	-	48	40	-	-	-	-

	decisions and relationships among individuals and families in Igbo land.												
5	Elders and community leaders in Igbo land have no role to play in addressing the issue of witchcraft.	-	-	-	-	84	70	36	30	-	-	-	-
6	Traditional practices and customs in Igbo land, such as the use of charms and amulets, are essential for protecting against witchcraft.	24	20	60	50	24	20	12	10	-	-	-	-

Source: Field study

Table 3 presents the responses of elderly participants, reflecting a strong consensus on the reality and cultural entrenchment of witchcraft in Igbo society. In **QI-1**, all respondents affirmed the existence of witchcraft, with no dissenting views. For **QI-2**, 70% agreed—either strongly (50%) or minimally (20%)—that witchcraft is rooted in Igbo cultural practices, while 30% disagreed. In **QI-3**, 90% attributed witchcraft to human emotions such as jealousy, envy, and greed, with only 10% dissenting. **QI-4** shows that 60% believed fear of witchcraft significantly affects interpersonal and familial relationships, while 40% disagreed. Responses to **QI-5** show unanimous rejection of the idea that elders and community leaders have no role in addressing witchcraft, with 100% disagreement (70% strongly, 30% moderately). For **QI-6**, 70% supported the protective role of traditional practices like charms and amulets, while 30% disagreed to varying degrees. These findings underscore the elderly respondents' strong belief in the reality, causes, and cultural significance of witchcraft, as well as the vital role of traditional institutions and practices in its management.

Discussion of findings

The findings reveal a deeply entrenched belief in the reality and influence of witchcraft within Igbo society, underscoring its significant cultural and social dimensions. The empirical data, as presented in Q1 of Tables 1, 2, and 3, demonstrate an overwhelming consensus among respondents affirming witchcraft as a tangible phenomenon. This belief is not merely widespread but is profoundly integrated into the Igbo worldview, shaping individual and communal interpretations of personal experiences, social interactions, and inexplicable events (Falola & Griffin, 2021).

Witchcraft holds a central place in Igbo cosmology, reflecting the interplay between spiritual and physical realms. It functions as a key explanatory model for misfortune and mystery, grounded in the dualistic logic of Igbo thought. Sustained through oral traditions, rituals, and divination, witchcraft remains a vital part of daily life (Aderibigbe & Falola, 2022; Das, 2022). Deeply embedded in cultural norms, it offers a lens for interpreting interpersonal and societal tensions (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998; Nwaezeigwe, 2021).

Ekwunife (2011) defines true witches as those who intentionally inflict harm for selfish ends—be it moral, physical, or economic. This resonates with Williamson's (1972) notion of *ògbòmà* and Olupona's (2000) view of witchcraft as a lived reality in Igbo society. Elder generations, more rooted in tradition, accept it as an unquestionable truth. Despite modernisation, belief in witchcraft endures, reinforced through familial and communal narratives (Arazu, 2003; Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979), illustrating its resilience as a cultural and social force.

Contrary to the notion that witchcraft is limited to rural or uneducated populations, evidence shows its presence across all social classes, including elites, academics, politicians, and religious leaders. Ekwunife (2011) and Mbiti (1974) note that individuals from all backgrounds may secretly engage in witchcraft to pursue personal goals. Gender plays a major role in witchcraft accusations, with 65% of respondents linking it to women. However, scholars like Ekwunife (2011) and Kwame (1996) argue that witchcraft is not gender-specific and affects both men and women across social strata. The common association with women reflects societal bias rather than factual distribution. While some scholars see witchcraft as a lens for understanding social tensions (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998), others view it as a tool for enforcing social norms (Okpalike, 2024) or consider it entirely imaginary (Nwobodo, 2022).

In Igbo culture, behaviours like excessive individualism, quarrelsomeness, or exceptional skill may provoke witchcraft accusations, reflecting a deviation from communal norms. Such accusations often emerge when individuals are perceived as threats to social cohesion. Awortwe et al. (2023) and Olupona (2000) note that these claims carry severe consequences, including stigma, shame, and ostracism for both the accused and their families.

According to Mbiti (1992) and Ekwunife (2011), as long as evil exists, witchcraft accusations will persist as a way to explain misfortune or target perceived enemies. Findings show that these accusations strain social relationships, often arising from unresolved conflicts or attempts to assign blame (Isidienu, 2020). They result in exclusion from community life, damaging reputations and fostering long-term social alienation (Nnama-Okechukwu & Erhumwunse, 2021).

In Igbo society, elderly women are particularly vulnerable, often targeted due to societal biases and power imbalances (Isichei, 1988; Agazue, 2021). Accusations against them frequently arise from envy, jealousy, or as a scapegoating mechanism for those perceived as "different" or "troublesome" (Cimpric, 2010). This dynamic not only perpetuates marginalisation but also fuels intergenerational conflict, with younger family members or in-laws accusing elderly women, leading to abandonment, mistreatment, and fractured family unity.

Witchcraft accusations in Igbo society contribute to deep social fragmentation, often targeting vulnerable individuals such as the elderly, widows, and step-relatives, and leading to broken family ties or violence (Onuorah, 2018). At the communal level, such accusations foster mistrust, sow division among neighbours or clans, and weaken social cohesion.

Beyond social disruption, these accusations inflict severe emotional and psychological harm. Accused individuals frequently suffer trauma, anxiety, and depression due to social exclusion

and abuse (Yakubu et al., 2024). For accusers, such actions may reflect underlying guilt, stress, or attempts to explain personal or communal misfortunes. Data from Table 2 (Q1-4) reveals that community youths are often the source of these allegations. Scholars like Robbins (2022) and Igwe (2017) warn against unjustly targeting vulnerable populations, urging careful investigation. Krause and Shaw (2000) argue for compassion and support, stressing that social inclusion can significantly improve the well-being and self-worth of those at risk.

The findings indicate that witchcraft accusations erode trust and disrupt communal harmony, fostering fear and suspicion that hinder open relationships and effective conflict resolution (Ojelabi & Sulaimon, 2022). Traditional dispute-settlement mechanisms are often bypassed in favour of punitive responses, further weakening social cohesion. Paradoxically, accusations may create a false sense of unity, as Igbo culture values social cooperation, yet even close associates of the accused are seen as compromised (Bering & Johnson, 2005).

Scholars such as Mallan (2013), Adinkrah (2015), and Onuorah (2023) criticise the scapegoating of innocent individuals for misfortune. In extreme cases, accusations escalate to mob violence, torture, or murder, with property destruction used as a form of communal “cleansing” (Cohan, 2011). The accusers and accused span all social categories, reflecting the widespread vulnerability to witchcraft allegations in Igbo society.

The persistent belief in witchcraft among the Igbo illustrates the syncretism between traditional and religious worldviews (Aderibigbe & Medine, 2015). Though Christianity condemns witchcraft, deliverance ministries often reinforce it through exorcism and spiritual warfare practices (Princess Ayelotan, 2024). Rituals using holy water, oils, or prayer items mirror traditional charms, blurring lines between Christian and indigenous practices (Kunz, 2023). Witchcraft beliefs offer explanations for misfortune and existential anxieties, filling gaps left by formal religious teachings. Deeply rooted in social and cultural identity, these beliefs persist, as rejecting them may be seen as rejecting Igbo heritage itself.

Though often downplayed, witchcraft beliefs indirectly hinder development in Igbo communities by masking systemic issues like poverty, poor governance, and inadequate infrastructure. Rooted in socioeconomic hardship and limited education, these beliefs offer supernatural explanations for misfortunes, diverting attention from real causes (Princess Ayelotan; Fabian, 1998; Agazue, 2013). They also erode social cohesion, fuelling suspicion and weakening collaboration on community projects (Ekundayo, 2022). Fear of witchcraft can discourage education and healthcare use, while resources are diverted from essential services to address perceived spiritual threats (Iyalomhe & Iyalomhe, 2014).

Despite modernisation, witchcraft beliefs persist in Igbo society due to their deep cultural roots and emotional significance (Okoro, 2020). They offer explanations for misfortunes and are tied to traditional identity, passed down through generations and reinforced by elders (Falola & Griffin, 2021; Udoeye, 2011). These beliefs coexist with Christianity, often reinforced by religious leaders to explain spiritual battles or attract followers (Princess Ayelotan, 2024; Agazue, 2013).

Modernisation and education challenge but also reinforce witchcraft beliefs in Igbo society. Economic hardship makes witchcraft a convenient explanation for misfortune (Gershman, 2022), while young people remain influenced by family traditions and social norms (Nnoruga, 2024). These beliefs offer emotional comfort and communal identity, with resistance to modern ideologies reinforcing their persistence (Amadiume, 2024). Though they explain misfortunes, witchcraft beliefs can disrupt social cohesion, causing stigma, conflict, and violence.

Addressing them requires a balanced approach combining education, economic reform, and culturally sensitive strategies.

Conclusion

Witchcraft beliefs remain a deeply embedded and emotionally charged element of Igbo cultural identity, shaped by the intersection of tradition, religion, and socio-economic conditions. While offering explanatory models for misfortune, these beliefs often undermine social cohesion, perpetuate stigma, and incite conflict. Their persistence amid modernisation highlights their enduring cultural relevance.

Mitigating the adverse effects of witchcraft accusations necessitates a holistic, culturally sensitive strategy. Educational reforms promoting scientific literacy, critical thinking, and awareness of the social and psychological impacts of accusations can provide alternative frameworks. Concurrently, economic empowerment, poverty reduction, and improved access to healthcare and education are essential to addressing the structural drivers of these beliefs.

A critical analysis of the socio-cultural mechanisms sustaining witchcraft beliefs—including the role of religious institutions in reinforcing traditional narratives—is crucial. Promoting dialogue between indigenous and modern epistemologies can cultivate a more nuanced understanding and guide effective interventions. Ultimately, reducing the harms of witchcraft accusations and promoting social cohesion requires integrated approaches that honour cultural heritage and confront underlying systemic challenges.

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