



ALAJOBI (KINSMAN) AND ALALE (TOWN FOUNDING DEITIES): A BASIS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN YORUBA TRADITION

Adebayo Adekunle Moses

General Studies Unit, McPherson University, Seriki Sotayo Village, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Email: adebayoam@mcu.edu.ng

Abstract

Yoruba culture, originating from southwestern Nigeria, is one of the richest and most influential African cultures. Yoruba philosophy, as part of the culture, emphasizes the interconnectedness of human existence, community and the divine. The paper explores the interconnected concepts of *Alajobi* (kinsman) and *Alale* (town founding deities). It investigates their roles in shaping community development. There is limited understanding of Yoruba concepts in community development. The cold shoulder given to indigenous perspectives in development initiatives is a contributing factor to the problem of values bedeviling our modern society. This inadequacy is what the exploration of *Alajobi* and *Alale*'s interconnection tackles. The paper analyses their roles in community development, examines their implication for sustainable development initiatives. Through the hermeneutic approach of analyzing and interpreting Yoruba texts and oral traditions, the work finds out that *Alajobi* influences community member's roles and responsibilities. *Alale* shapes community values and social norms. Interconnection between *Alajobi* and *Alale* is essential for community cohesion. For us to have steady community development initiatives, we must consider indigenous perspectives. The work therefore contributes in illuminating indigenous Yoruba perspectives on community development, By so doing, the paper challenges western dominated development discourses. Finally, the work informs policy and practices in community development initiatives.

Keywords: Yoruba tradition, community development, *Alale*, *Alajobi*, indigenous perspectives.

Introduction

Yoruba people, occupying the southwestern region of Nigeria are endowed with a rich cultural heritage. Among many concepts that guide their moral living, two stand out as pillars of community development and social justice. They are the concepts of *Alajobi* (kinsmen) and *Alale* (town founding deities). They are two principles that are deeply rooted in Yoruba tradition and philosophy, they offer a unique framework for building stronger, more equitable communities. Community development can take place if there is equitable society. A lot of Yoruba values and

principles like *omoluwabi*, *iwa*, *bibire* and even motive behind *ajo* (money contribution) or its bigger dimension, *esusu* emphasizes the importance of being a responsible and respectable member of the society. These values and principles enable individuals in the community to contribute to the well-being of their communities.

The exploration of these two concepts in this work, delves into the significance of *Alajobi* and *Alale* as two cardinal pillars that community development and social justice are built upon. The work examines their roles in community development and social justice. The work first conceptualize *Alajobi* and *Alale*, understanding their meanings and implications, then goes to how they serve as the pillars to foster community development, promote social justice and address inequalities, encourage community engagement and participation. Finally, the work explains how they can inform effective social policy. By examining these concepts, we can gain valuable insights into the Yoruba perspective on community development and social justice and explore how these principles can be applied to create positive change in our communities globally.

Conceptualizing *Alajobi* and its Connection to *Iwa* (Character).

Alajobi remains the integral component that makes up the stable human societies. There is no way the potential of any member of a society can blossom without each component of the society playing their role. In Yoruba traditional society, *Alajobi* and *Alale* play crucial roles in making sure that inhabitants adhere to all the rules that uphold fairness and social equality. *Alajobi*, which can be translated as kinsman in English language refers to a relative or family member in the Yoruba tradition (Ijaya 2020, p.34). *Alajobi* emphasizes shared ancestry, familial ties, communal responsibilities, mutual support and cooperation, collective identity and belonging. By shared ancestry, *Alajobi* means lineage (*ibi*). It emphasizes common descent from a founding ancestor, a shared heritage and cultural identity. A form of ancestral reverence and veneration. *Alajobi* represents identity formation, kinship bonds and community building. Social ancestry reinforces social cohesion and communal responsibility. It allows the continuity with the past that flows to the future. (Oyebade 2014, p.3) Ijaiya (2020) opines that *Alajobi* (kinsman) refers to the mutual support and cooperation among the family members. A feeling of solidarity within the Yoruba kinship system. The support can be in different dimensions, for example, it comes sometimes in form of emotional backing, comfort and counseling. It can also come in form of financial support, kinsmen assist one another financially by sharing resources. *Alajobi* also offers social backing, the kinsmen rally round their member that is celebrating one occasion. They even offer material support such as food, shelter, etc. (Ijaiya 2020, p.8). There is a song composed for this kind of social support in Yoruba: *Eniyan laso mi/2ce, bimo poju weyin ti mo reniyan mi, inu mi a dun, ara, mi a ya gaga, eniyan laso mi*

English translation: "People are my clothes/2ce, whenever I look back and I see my people, I'm happy and excited, people are my clothes".

The song shows the level of mutual reliance among family members. The support is always reciprocal, it fosters unity and collective identity, a kind of we-feeling that engender sense of belonging. According to Olupona (2017), *Alajobi* connotes biological relationships, an extended family structure, it carries cultural transmission and heritage. Ademola (2019) says, it is a medium for conflict resolution and mediation. Concept of *Alajobi* aligns with African communitarianism. African communitarianism refers to a philosophical framework emphasizing community and collective well-being in African cultures. A feeling of togetherness. It highlights interdependence among community members, which enables them to prioritize collective interest over individualism. (Gyekeye 1997, p.23). *Alajobi* in Yoruba culture also has a spiritual

dimension. There is a belief that concept of *Alajobi* reinforces family bond. Yoruba culture, emphasizing respect, honour, and communion with the dead ancestors. These venerated ancestors through common blood linkage in the family induced moral laws that must be adhered to by the family members. According to Awolalu (2017), *Alajobi* is linked to the collective destiny of the family and community. Family relationships are considered sacred, reflecting divine order. *Alajobi* is even used to pray for the family members. *Alajobi a gbewa o* meaning, we are going to be favored by being members of this family. There are other popular sayings in Yoruba to buttress this point;

1. *Eke ni pa eru, epe ni pa ole*
Ile dida ni pa ore,
Alajobi ni pa iyekan eni tii se bi sini

Translating to English, it means:

Deception kills slave,
curses kill thief,
betrayal kills friend,
being born in the same family (*Alajobi*) kills family
member that hurt another family member.

2. *O dale bale ku*
Eni ba dale a bale lo
Translation in English:
Whosoever betrays others
will disappear on the land.

Alajobi has a correlation with the concept of *Omoluwabi*. *Omoluwabi* is a concept that connotes being referred to as a person of good character, integrity and moral excellence. The term is derived from the Yoruba language, *omo* means 'child' and *luwabi* means 'born with good character' or 'endowed with good habits'. In Yoruba culture, being referred to as *Omoluwabi* is considered as honour and it encompasses various virtues like integrity, which connotes being truthful, honest and transparent in one's words and actions, also showing respect to elders, tradition and authority. It also enables individuals to take responsibility for one's actions and their impact on others. It enables empathy and kindness towards others.. There is no way one will possess these virtues and one will not be self-disciplined; that is, having self-control, self-awareness and self-improvement (Ademakinwa 2020, p. 5).

An *Omoluwabi* represents holistic approach to personal development. There must be personal development before there can be a community development. That is why character like integrity and moral excellence in achieving a balanced and fulfilling life cannot be overemphasized. Since *Alajobi* fosters reciprocity and responsibility within relationships, there is no way it will not reinforce *Omoluwabi* that also promotes a sense of accountability and mutual respect, the two cornerstones essential for building trust and cooperation within a stronger and more equitable society. The combination of *alajobi* and *omoluwabi* promote social cohesion, ensuring that individual and groups work together to achieve common goals and social harmony. Both *Alajobi* and *Omoluwabi* emphasize the importance of community orientation. By being a responsible and respectable member of society (*Omoluwabi*), individuals will become agents of community development because, they will be able to contribute to the well-being of their community. At the epicenter of both *Alajobi* and *Omoluwabi* is *Iwa* (character). *Iwa* in Yoruba tradition refers to character, behavior or conduct. It connotes individual's moral fiber, values and

principles that guide their actions with others. According to Ademakinwa (2020), the components of *Iwa* (character) are two, *Iwa rere* (good character), it is characterized by kindness, empathy and compassion. *Iwa buburu* (bad character) depicts dishonesty, cruelty, immorality. Yoruba tradition encourages individuals in their communities to embrace *Iwa rere* and desist from *Iwa buburu*

Yoruba proverbs and sayings often emphasize the importance of *Iwa*, such as, *Iwa l'ewa* (character is beauty). Yoruba will say, *iwa rere l'eso eniyan* (good character is the beauty therapy of man). They will admonish people by saying *toju iwa e* (take good care of your behavior), *iwa ika kope* (wicked character has no value). These admonitions come because without good behavior, there is no way individuals in the community can contribute meaningfully to the development of his community. Ademakinwa (2020) in his work, "*Iwa: Yoruba Concept of Character and Behaviour*" explores the significance of *Iwa* in Yoruba Philosophy and Culture. The work highlights how *Iwa* is intricately linked with other Yoruba concepts, such as *Omoluwabi* (the ideal person) and *Alajobi* (mutual support and cooperation inherent in kinsman). The work emphasizes that *Iwa* is not just a personal trait but also has social implications, it influences how individuals interact with others and their community. By examining the concept of *Iwa*, Ademakinwa's work provides valuable insights into Yoruba philosophy and culture, highlighting the importance of character and behavior in achieving a balanced and fulfilling life. Oyeade (2018), corroborates the work of Ademakinwa (2020), by highlighting the fact that Yoruba concept of *iwa rere* is closely tied to the idea of *Omoluwabi*. *Iwa rere* is essential for building strong relationships, fostering community cohesion and promoting social justice. (Oyeade 2018, p. 20).

The personhood of individuals which *Alajobi* in Yoruba philosophy and culture explore has a lot to do with *Iwa*. According to Adeoye (2017), *Iwa* is the cornerstone of Yoruba personhood. A person's character and their essence and existence. *Iwa* influences an individual's relationships, social interaction and overall well-being. This is what is inherent in *Alajobi*. *Alajobi* weaves moral agency to support common interests. The individual makes choices that reflect on their good character, in line with social norms, prioritizing the well-being of others and their community. *Iwa rere* influencing personhood will surely culminate into or facilitate self-actualization, enabling individuals to realize their potentials and fulfil their purpose in life. (Adeoye 2017, p. 6) In conclusion, the above works on *Iwa* and *Omoluwabi* therefore have telling effect on *Alajobi* in order to maintain balance and harmony within family and community at large. It ensures continuity with the past and ancestral heritage. There is trust and reliability, essential for building strong relationships, cooperation, social cohesion and communal well-being with communal well-being in place, there will be community development, because it will always help in the reinforcement of moral values and social norms.

Conceptualizing *Alale* (Deified Town Founders): A Basis for Communal Harmony and Balance in Yoruba Tradition

Alale (town founding Deities) are revered figures in Yoruba culture, associated with the founding and protection of towns and communities. They are credited with establishing and safeguarding their communities. *Alale* are mythical and historical figures. There are lots of stories being told about their legendary acts among their descendants. They surely have divine status, possessing supernatural powers.

The belief of Yoruba people is that *Alale* watch over their lands to safeguard it, ensuring prosperity and harmony. They are often represented through shrines or sacred objects. They foster community identity and cohesion. They play the role of creating pathway to spiritual

guidance and divine interventions. Whenever there is problem in any town in Yoruba land, divination and consultation with *Alale* is the next thing that always come to the mind of the people. Certain rituals for town purification and protection will be used to solve the problem. (Olupona 2003, p.13,; Fakeye 2018. p. 25.; Ademola 2018. p. 27).

Afolayan (2020) opines that ancestral reverence reinforces community unity and social cohesion. It does this because it promotes moral values, social norms and social order. Unfortunately, modernization and Christianity have altered ancestral reverence practices. He submits that community development should incorporate ancestral reverence. By honoring their ancestors, the Yoruba people acknowledge the significance of their heritage and the role of their forebears in shaping their identity. For example, *egungun* masquerade serves as a medium for ancestral Communication and guidance. *Egungun* masking culture ensures continuation of Yoruba tradition. (Fakeye 2020, p. 25). According to Sophie Oluwole (1997), Yoruba ethical thinking sees God as a necessary theoretical being to provide a rational solution to problem of sanctioning, due to the limitation of man in enforcing moral rules. Therefore, man in Yoruba traditional thought is not only in relation with other men but with town founding deities (*Alale*), spirits (*Ebora*), gods (*orisa*) and God (*Olodumare*).

To live a good ethical life in Yoruba tradition, like many other African traditions, man must maintain an ontological balance with dead ancestors (*Alale*), gods (*orisa*), spirit (*ebora*) and God (*olodumare*). This is so because, reality is holistic in Yoruba tradition. The implication of this is that for man to be in peace, he must live in harmony with other men and supernatural beings. In case there is a disharmony, he inquires to know through the medium of cause and effect. In Yoruba tradition, man does not rely only on naked observation. He also consults supernatural beings, too. Yoruba will say “*bonitiri ola lee mari be, nii mu babalawo difa ororun*” (as today is, tomorrow may not be like that makes diviner consults oracle every five days). (Oladele K, 2019, p. 39)

The concept of personhood in Yoruba tradition is interwoven with ethical life. *Eniyan* is more than biological man. If a Yoruba man says, somebody is a man (*eniyan ni*) or (*o se eniyan*), it means he is a good man. A biological man without being morally good, is referred to as ‘eranko’ or ‘*eniyan yepere*’, that is, an ordinary man instead of *Omoluabi* (a good man). A man that is not responsible, who cannot provide for his family is referred to as ‘*eranko lasanlasan ekeji aja*’ (animal, second to dog). Individuals are valued in themselves as a potential contributors to human communal survivor. There is no force on individuals in Yoruba traditional setting to accept being a communal being, the socialization that the individual passes through, enables them to experience love and concern, as well as internal virtues of community. That is, the virtue of considering their actions concerning others. The concept of *Alale* reflects this narrative about Yoruba concept of personhood because everybody is conscious of pleasing *Alale*. (Segun Gbadegesin 1998, p. 252).

In Yoruba Philosophy, *Alale* is intricately intertwined with communal balance and harmony that exist within the universe and human society. It encompasses the idea of maintaining societal equilibrium and stability in all aspect of community life. According to Lawal (2019), communal balance and harmony refer to the state of equilibrium and harmony within community. This balance is achieved when the individuals and social groups or institutions within the community work together in harmony with the rules or social norms of the community, respecting each other’s rights and responsibilities .*Alale* are powerful spiritual being, they can connote the dead ancestors and gods. Their actions affect the balance and harmony of the community. To maintain this equilibrium, *Alale* enforces moral order. Individual and groups adhere to moral principles and values. Communal balance and harmony require a shared moral

order where individuals and group respect and uphold common values. The basis for peace in the community is, there should be a striking balance between social order and moral order.

Moral order refers to the set of principles, values and norms that govern human behavior and guide individual actions. It encompasses the moral fabric of a society, influencing how individuals interact with each other and their environment. The key components of moral order are moral principle, moral norms and moral values. Moral principles entail fundamental principles and beliefs that guide behavior. Moral norms are shared expectations and standards that guide human behavior. Moral values entail beliefs about what is right, wrong, good or bad. Moral order can be underpinned by virtue ethics, deontology and consequentialism. Virtue ethics emphasizes the development of moral character and virtues, deontology focuses on moral rules and duties, consequentialism is all about moral actions based on the consequences. (Taylor C 2011, pp 23-24)

Social order, on the other hand, according to Giddens (2020), refers to the organized pattern of social relationships, institutions and structures that shape a society. The key components of social order are, social norms, power dynamics, institutions, and social stratification. As it has been said above, social norms entail shared expectations and standards that guide human standards. Power dynamics, is all about the distribution of authority within society: institutions encompasses established organizations and structures, such as family, education and government: social stratification is all about hierarchical arrangements of individuals and groups based on factors like wealth, status and power.

Alale, plays a crucial role in striking a balance between moral order and social order by emphasizing the importance of maintaining equilibrium and stability in all aspects of life, including the moral and social spheres. By embracing *Alale*, individuals and societies can achieve a harmonious balance, essential for social cohesion, justice and ultimately, human well-being. Moral and social order are interconnected and interdependent. The bridging factor between them is *Alale*. Making sure both work for the common good.

***Alale* and *Alajobi* as Veritable Tools in Yoruba Community Development**

The concept of *Alale* and *Alajobi* through the ethical values that the two concepts project, are the basis for the concept of personhood in Yoruba tradition, it also has serious implication on the community development. Community development involves collective efforts to improve quality of life, social welfare and economic prosperity. Community development is a process of empowering communities to control their own lives, make informed decisions and improve their social, economic and environmental conditions. (IFDC 2020). In founding the community, there are ethical principles the town founding deities established, which they believe their descendants or the sojourners in the land must adhere to. The ethical principles are encapsulated in the taboos and these taboos informed the concept of personhood in Yoruba community. *Alale* play crucial roles in community development. The fact is, *Alale* can be made angry. They can be made angry if there is violation of their rules. The punishment can be personal or even affect the whole community. In most cases, the violator will bear the consequence of his/her action alone, which can be discovered through ifa oracle when consulted. The *Alale* always strike to serve as a deterrence to others. What *Alale* do on a larger scale to the whole community is what the *Alajobi* does with the family. *Alajobi* in Yoruba tradition has a mystical dimension, which points to the power in the blood of the family lineage. There is a belief that *Alajobi* can either reward or punish any family member who do good or evil to other family members. This also informed the basis of personhood in Yoruba tradition. Yoruba people see *Alale* as necessary enforcers of what is right.

The altruistic exploits of legends in Yoruba history like *Kurunmi Owa Obokun*, *Moremi* etc, can be traced to the confidence they had then that the *Alale* will back them to succeed in the tasks they performed for their towns. These heroes have good understanding of the knowledge of *Alale*. In Yoruba land, no war can be prosecuted without seeking for the help of *Alale*. Rituals are performed to appease and fortified warriors before going to war. It is common to hear something like '*Awon Alele ile yi a si o lo*' (The town founding deities will follow you), Likewise, concerning *Alajobi*, when you see family member rally round the other family members in the time of trouble or celebration; or performing a certain task on behalf of the family, it is as a result of this understanding. One may hear something like '*Alajobi agbe o*' (The family bondline favour you), this is if somebody has done something good, if it is otherwise, it will be '*Alajobi a da*' (The bloodline will judge you). Every member of the family will prefer the first saying than the later saying. *Alajobi* also engenders cooperative economic empowerment e.g, farming and crafts within the family are made possible through the belief in it. It is a kinship based social support network; it also energizes family reunification and reconciliation initiatives, because it enhances conflict resolution mechanism due to the fact that it emphasizes kinship ties. It is common to hear the Yoruba saying, '*nitori Alajobi mo dari ji o*' (Because of *alajobi* I forgive you). More so, there is no way we can discuss knowledge transfer initiatives or socialization without talking about *Alajobi*. *Alajobi* has big correlation on community development because of the roles it plays in the family set up. *Alale* and *Alajobi* promote shared ancestral heritage and in turn has serious implication on social cohesion, which serve as tool for unity and cooperation within community. Together, *Alale* and *Alajobi* encourage community engagement, participation and ownership. This feeling of we-ness is very important for community development. The ancestral heritage it connotes informs sustainable development practices like environmental and cultural stewardship. The shared heritage-based initiatives can drive cultural tourism, like cultural festivals and events to showcase the ancestral heritage.

We need these elements discussed above, especially in this contemporary period where we are battling with the problem of cultural erosion, urbanization and modernization have made us to lose these elements mentioned above. To make the matter worse, there is problem of limited documentation of ancestral heritage, coupled with the fact that there is conflict and division within our community. There is a need to harness the power of cultural identity and collective responsibility to drive sustainable development in our community. A question that can arise concerning this work here is the relationship between *Alale* and *Alajobi*. Is it a complementary or a conflicting one? Suffice to say the relationship between the two concepts in Yoruba culture is complex. It can be complementary and conflicting. The complementary and conflicting aspects have implications on community development and its social justice. The relationship can be complementary when they engender social solidarity to enable collective interest of the community to be realized. For example, it can enable the people of the society to confront social ills endangering the whole community. It can be conflicting when members of one or two families want to use the *Alajobi* to impose their family interests on the whole community. That is where leadership ability comes into play to neutralize this conflicting impact.

Alale and *Alajobi* because of the shared ancestral heritage in most cases reinforces each other in the sense that both emphasize common roots that highlight their interconnectedness. They both pass down cultural values, traditions and practices that underpin their principles. This enables community identity possible in the form of collective responsibility (*Alajobi*) and ancestral reverence (*Alale*). This interconnectedness showcases flowering of individuals and families inside a community. Finally, it provides a form of shared history that is predicated on understanding between individuals and group. (Afolayan 2020, p.30). The complementary

aspect of both *Alale* and *Alajobi* in Yoruba culture has implication on community development because it fosters social cohesion and unity within communities. Likewise, it enable cultural preservation and continuity to take place. In many instances, it has translated into community engagement, participation, which produces sense of belonging in the people. There is no way this kind of complementarity cannot be explored for conflict resolution. The complementarity has been a driven force for economic empowerment among the members of a family or community as the case may be in Yoruba culture. It gives sense to the Yoruba proverb, *a jo je ko dun benikan ko yo* (eating together is not sweet if one person is not satisfied). However, the authority versus kinship aspects that characterize both concepts in their relationship must be well managed or else, it can culminate into a big tension. *Alale* represents divine authority, while *Alajobi* emphasizes kinship ties. occasionally, it will result to a clash between individuality and collectivity. Individual achievements and collective well-being will surely clash at one point in time. (Fakeye 2018, p. 25)

Another potential bedrock for tension between the two concepts is their adaptability nature. *Alale* represents traditional practices, while *Alajobi* has adapted to modern societal changes. There is occasional tension that can ensue between tradition and modernity that the two represent. (Ogunnaike 2017, p. 5). For example, in the olden days, *alajobi* is mostly characterized by *alajogbe* (neighborliness) but due to the industrial age we are presently, *alajogbe* is replacing *alajobi*..although in many families, to still maintain good communication, despite distance among family members, social media platform is employed. In many communities, ancestral reverence of *Alale* is having challenges, it has even resulted into big clash in many communities, e.g, clash between *oro* cult members and Hausa community in Sagamu that occurred in 1999. Some roles of *Alajobi* can be played by *alajogbe* but the role of *Alale* cannot be played by anybody. In conclusion, the concepts of *Alajobi* and *Alale* form the basis of personhood in Yoruba traditional society. The two concepts also have Implications on Yoruba traditional community development. These two concepts, has ethical foundation that is very integrative and holistic in nature. The two concepts form the basis for the interactive nature of man, dead ancestors, gods and God in Yoruba traditional setting.

Implications of *Alale* and *Alajobi* for Social Justice

Social justice refers to the equitable distribution of resources, benefits, privileges within society. Spreading equal rights and dignity for every member of a society, irrespective of age, class, disability, religion etc. In social justice, there are key points that must be there for us to say that there is social justice. They are; equity, equality, human rights, participation and empowerment. Equity means fairness to people, it also means impartiality, having undeniable access to community resources, opportunities and services. Equity means that individuals and groups have equal chances to succeed. There is impartiality, redistribution of resources when necessary. *Alale* and *Alajobi* facilitate restorative justice in traditional Yoruba community. According to Zehr (2018), restorative justice focuses on repairing harm, promoting healing and reestablishing relationships between victims, offenders and communities. Concept of *Alale* and *Alajobi* align with Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM). Victim Offender Mediation is a process where victims and offenders meet with a trained mediator. In Yoruba community, elders used concept of *Alale* and *Alajobi* to mediate in crisis. They used it to work towards a resolution and healing, until it yields reconciliation. In most cases it has led to community healing.

Ijaiya (2020) explores the intersection of Indigenous knowledge System (IKS) and social justice through the *Alajobi* perspective in Yoruba culture. He defines indigenous Knowledge System as local knowledge developed to manage their environment, social and cultural practices.

Ijaiya argues further that *Alajobi* promotes social justice by emphasizing shared humanity and interrelatedness. It acknowledges cultural identity, inclusive decision making. Yoruba communal land management can be used to illustrate this fact. (Ijaiya 2020, p.37)

Alale and *Alajobi* have serious implications on the pursuit of truth, justice and reconciliation in Yoruba tradition. *Alale* helps in uncovering the truth in the situation of conflict and injustice. This helps in addressing past wrongs and understanding the root causes of conflicts. It encourages individuals to accept responsibility for their actions, acknowledging their role in perpetuating harm of injustice. *Alale* promotes transparency in all aspects of life, including governance, institutions and personal relationships, in brevity it fosters culture of accountability. (Oyewumi 2020, p. 29). *Alajobi* helps in the area of reconciliation because it focuses on the healing and restoration in order to rebuild relationships. It preaches forgiveness and mercy in the reconciliation process, which will enable who has been offended to let go the grievances, thereby enhance a more harmonious future in the family. More importantly, it helps in rebuilding trust by bringing to the consciousness of the family members the value of togetherness, empathy and understanding, we-feeling, which are principal ingredients of social justice. In brevity, by embracing *Alale* and *Alajobi*, individuals and communities can work towards a more just, equitable and harmonious society where truth, accountability and genuine reconciliation are valued and pursued.

Alale, Alajobi, Community Engagement and Participation

Community engagement and participation play important role in community development. Community engagement and participation are essential concepts that involve working in conjunction with members of the community to achieve sustainable outcomes, equitable decision making processes and deepest relationships and trust between government, organizations and communities Armstein (2020, p.24). It is based on the idea that everyone affected by an issue should have a say in the decision making process. It highlights the fact that through the intentional interactions between leaders and community, members can influence policy. *Alale* and *Alajobi* represent traditional engagement that involves the ancestors, the leaders and members of communities. Yoruba ethical thinking sees God as a necessary theoretical being to provide a rational solution to problem of sanctioning due to the limitation of man in enforcing moral rules. Therefore, man in Yoruba thought is not only in relation with other men but with dead ancestors (*Alale*), spirits (*Ebora*) gods (*orisa*) and God (*Olodumare*). To live a good ethical life in African tradition, man must maintain an ontological balance with dead ancestor spirits, gods, God (*olodumare*). Reality is holistic in Yoruba thought. The implication of this is that for man to be at peace with himself, he must live in harmony with other men and supernatural beings. In case there is disharmony, he goes to *ifa* diviners to make enquiry to know the cause and effect. African man does not rely only on naked observation. He consults too supernatural beings through *ifa*.. Yoruba will say “*bonitiri Ola lee mari be, nii mu babalawo difa ororun*” (as today is, tomorrow may not be like that makes diviner consults oracle every five days). (Oluwole 1991, p.34).

In Yoruba traditional community, *Alale* create a sort of fear factor that makes people to be conscious of their conducts in the society, it also enables individual involvement in community engagement and participation to be done with the mindset that *Alale* are watching them, therefore, it elicits accountability on the part of community leaders, which enable them to make quality decisions,. This engenders strengthening in relationships between community leaders, social institutions and individual members living in the community. It creates the atmosphere of inclusiveness and sustainable development.

How Nigerian Social Policy can Benefit from the Concept of Alale and Alajobi

Social policy refers to the actions and decisions made by the government to address social needs and issues such as employment, education, healthcare, housing and sustenance. There are two ways to understand social policy, it can be seen as any government action aimed at addressing social needs. Secondly, as an academic discipline, social policy examines how societies distribute resources to meet individual and social needs. Effective social policies aim to reduce inequalities in access to services and support between social groups defined by socio-economic status, race ethnicity, migration status, gender, sexual orientation and age. (UNDP 2020, p. 23). The interconnectedness of *Alale* and *Alajobi* is crucial for effective public policy implementation to address challenges of governance in Nigeria. *Alale* emphasizes upholding of truth and *Alajobi* focuses on reconciliation. Truth and reconciliation are very important elements of decision making process to address problem of injustices. There is a Yoruba concept of *Alale* and *Alajobi* can help in fostering social justice. Both concept promote inclusive governance, incorporating what these two concepts represent in Yoruba tradition to formulate policies will allow protection of minority rights. After all, effective social policies in his true sense should prioritize restorative justice by focusing on repairing harm and promoting healing, rather than punishment. More so, both concepts stress the need for accountability and transparency in governance, they will engender evidence based responsive community needs. Effective social policy should be culturally sensitive and responsive. Predicating social policy on *Alale* and *Alajobi* will engender inclusivity because it will align to the cultural milieu that the policy will be implemented, thereby fostering social cohesion.

Recommendation and Conclusion

This research has explored the concepts of *Alajobi* and *Alale* in Yoruba tradition, examining their significance in providing a robust framework for community development and social justice. The findings of this study highlight the importance of these concepts in fostering social cohesion, justice and community development. The research demonstrates that the interconnectedness of *Alajobi* (kinsman) and *Alale* (town founding deities) in Yoruba tradition enable individuals and communities to foster the culture of truth-telling, accountability and reconciliation. We to dig deep into our tradition in this modern to improve what is on ground, in order to promote more inclusive and equitable community development, where the needs and right of all members are respected and addressed. By incorporating concept of *Alajobi* and *Alale*, we can build stronger, more just communities that thrive on the values of truth, reconciliation and social justice. Therefore, we recommend that community development initiatives should incorporate the principles of *Alale* and *Alajobi* in Yoruba culture. Emphasis of our modern society should be on collective responsibility and cooperation. Efforts should be made to revitalize and promote Yoruba cultural heritage, including *alajobi* and *alale*. Educational programs and awareness campaigns should be implemented to promote the understanding and appreciation of *Alale* and *Alajobi* and their significance in promoting community development and social justice. We recommend that our policy makers should consider incorporating the principles of *Alajobi* and *Alajobi* into policy development, particularly in areas pertaining to community development and social justice.

References

- Ademakinwa, A, (2020), *Iwa and Alajobi: The Interconnectedness of Character Mutual Support in Yoruba Tradition*, Journal of African Philosophy, Vol. 12, No 1, pp. 1-15
- Ademola, A. (2020), *Yoruba Cultural Heritage and Social Justice: The Intersection of Alajobi and Alale*. Journal of Social Justice Studies, Vol. 12, No 1, pp.34-47.

- Adeoye, C. (2017), Iwa and the Yoruba Concept Personhood, *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 1-12.
- Afolayan, A. (2020), Ancestral Reverence and Development: An African Perspective. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, Vol.12, No1, pp.1-12.
- Armstein, R. (2020), "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 86, No 1, pp. 10-24.
- Awolalu, J. (2017), "Yoruba Belief and sacrificial Rites, *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 17, No2, pp.23-39.
- Taylor, C. (2011), *Dilemmas and Connections, Selected Essays*, Harvard University Press.
- Fakeye, O. (2018), Yoruba Gods and Goddesses, *Journal of Yoruba Studies*, Vol. 20, No1, pp. 1-18.
- Gbadegsin, Segun, (1998), "Individuality community and the moral order" in Peter Coetzee and A.P.J Roux (eds), *The African philosophy Reader*, London: Routledge,
- Gidden, A. & Sutton, P. W. *Sociology*, Polity Press.
- International fertilizer Development Center, (2020), *Annual Report*. p.2.
- Gyekye, K. (1997), "African Communitarianism", *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. No1, pp. 24-39.
- Lawal, B, (2019), Communal Balance and Harmony in Yoruba Culture, *African Studies Review*, Vol. 62, No. 2, pp. 147-164.
- Ogunnaike, A. (2019), Yoruba Philosophy and Community Development. *International Conference on African Philosophy*, University of Ibadan.
- Oladele, K. (2019), Ancestral Reverence in Yoruba Culture, M.A Thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
- Oluwole, S. (1991), "The rational basis of Yoruba ethical thinking" in the *Nigerian philosophy* vol 4 No 1 and 2 January 1991.
- Ozumba, G (1997), "African Ethics" in Andrew Uduigwomen (ed), *Footmarks on African Philosophy* Obaroh and Ogbinaka Publishers.
- Ijaiya, H (2020). *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Social Justice: The Alajobi Perspective*. *African Journal of Social Justice*, Vol. 5. No , pp12-25
- Olupona, J. (2019), Ancestral Reverence in Yoruba Tradition, *International Conference on African Religion*.
- Oyebade, F. (2014), Yoruba Concept of Destiny, *Journal of Philosophy and Culture*, Vol.7, No2, pp.1-14.
- Oyebade, F, Iwa Rere: The Yoruba Concept of Good Character, *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 147-162.
- Oyedemi, T. (2023), Re-imagining Social Justice Through Alale And Alajobi: A Yoruba Philosophical Perspective, *Journal of Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 49, No 5, pp.553-568.
- Oyewumi O. (2020), "Alale and Alajobi: Yoruba Concept of Truth and Reconciliation in Community Engagement", *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 12, No 1, pp.1-15.
- UNDP (2020), *Sustainable Development Goals*, www.undp.org
- Zehr, H. (2018), *Restorative Justice: New Paradigm, Sensitizing or Even Practice? A Special Book Review Forum*, Routledge, Vol.3, No 3, pp.453-459.