

# Rituals of Accumulation: An Ethical Analysis of Ritual Killing for Wealth in Yorubaland, Southwestern Nigeria

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## Abstract

Ritual killings linked to wealth acquisition have emerged as a troubling phenomenon in contemporary Nigeria, particularly in Southwestern Yoruba communities. This study examines the ethical, cultural, and socio-economic dimensions of the practice to explain the apparent contradiction between the Yoruba moral philosophy of *iwàpẹ̀lẹ̀* (good character) and the persistence of ritual violence for material gain. Using a qualitative research design, the research analyzes documented cases from 2013–2023 alongside media reports and public discourse. The study is guided by an interdisciplinary framework combining postcolonial theory, structural violence, and moral economy. Findings indicate that ritual killings reflect a disruption of the traditional moral economy that historically linked prosperity with ethical conduct and communal responsibility. Factors such as inequality, youth unemployment, and the social glorification of sudden wealth contribute to the commodification of human life. The study concludes that the phenomenon reflects broader structural and moral crises requiring ethical renewal, community engagement, and stronger institutional responses.

**Keywords:** *Ritual killing, Yoruba ethics, Moral economy, Wealth acquisition, Nigeria*

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### **Background to the Study**

Ritual killings associated with the pursuit of wealth have increasingly become a troubling social concern in contemporary Nigeria. In Southwestern Nigeria, particularly within Yoruba communities historically known for their rich philosophical traditions and strong ethical emphasis on *iwàpẹ̀lẹ̀* (good character), reports of ritual-related violence appear to contradict deeply rooted cultural values. Media accounts from cities such as Ibadan, Lagos, and Abeokuta frequently highlight cases in which individuals are allegedly murdered for ritual purposes linked to wealth acquisition. These incidents raise critical questions about the moral, cultural, and socio-economic transformations occurring within Yoruba society and Nigerian society more broadly. Traditionally, Yoruba ethical thought placed strong emphasis on the relationship between prosperity, moral conduct, and communal responsibility. Wealth was expected to be pursued through legitimate labour and guided by ethical principles that valued human life and social harmony. However, contemporary developments such as economic inequality, youth unemployment, changing religious influences, and the growing cultural celebration of sudden wealth have contributed to tensions between long-standing moral ideals and emerging social practices.

Although existing studies have examined ritual practices, crime, and economic pressures in Nigeria, there remains a limited interdisciplinary analysis that connects ritual killings for wealth with broader transformations in moral economy, structural inequality, and postcolonial socio-political conditions. Much of the current discourse tends to frame the phenomenon either as criminal deviance or as residual superstition, without adequately situating it within deeper ethical and socio-economic contexts. This study therefore addresses the research problem of how ritual killings for wealth can be understood within the wider crisis of moral values and socio-economic structures in contemporary Yoruba society. It argues that the phenomenon is not merely an isolated criminal activity but a symptom of deeper disruptions in the moral and social order. The paper is structured as follows. The first section reviews relevant literature on ritual practices, moral economy, and socio-economic change in Nigeria. The second section outlines the theoretical framework and research methodology guiding the study. The third section presents the analysis of documented cases and public discourse surrounding ritual killings for wealth. The final section discusses the ethical implications of the findings and offers recommendations for addressing the problem. The objective of this study is to examine the ethical, cultural, and socio-economic dimensions of ritual killings for wealth among the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and its implications for morality, development, and social stability in contemporary Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem under investigation is the persistence and alleged resurgence of ritual murders, specifically motivated by the acquisition of wealth, within a modern, predominantly Christian and Muslim, urbanizing Yoruba society. This practice, often glossed as “money rituals” (*sèlẹ̀ owó*), represents a critical ethical and social dilemma. It is a problem of development, as it signals a catastrophic failure of the socio-economic system to provide legitimate avenues for prosperity, particularly for the youth (Ojo, 2019). It is a problem of

security and governance, highlighting the limitations of state institutions in preventing such crimes and delivering justice. Most fundamentally, it is a problem of ethics and meaning: it raises questions about how the concepts of success, personhood, and the sacred are being reconfigured in an era of globalized capitalism and intense material aspiration (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000). The practice is not a monolithic, culturally-sanctioned tradition but a clandestine, criminal corruption of spiritual concepts, posing a direct threat to human dignity and social cohesion.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

**Ritual Killing for Wealth:** In this study, this refers to the premeditated murder of one or more individuals, where the killing is carried out following a prescribed sequence of actions believed by the perpetrators to harness spiritual or occult forces (àjé, àwọn), often through the use of body parts, to guarantee the acquisition of sudden, substantial material wealth. It is distinguished from politically motivated killings or other forms of homicide by its instrumental purpose and its embeddedness in a worldview that accepts the manipulability of supernatural forces for personal gain. The Yoruba language offers nuance: while iwà can mean behaviour/character, the phrase iwà ikú fún orò (the act of killing for wealth) captures the essence. It is an ètùtù (abomination), not a sanctioned ìṣeṣe (ritual).

1. **Wealth (Orò/Isún):** In traditional Yoruba thought, wealth is not merely financial capital. Orò implies riches, but within a moral framework. True prosperity encompasses children (ọmọ), good health (ilera), longevity (igbé ayè gùn), peace (àlàáfia), and social honour (onḡdùdù). Its legitimate pursuit is through diligence (Ìṣe), wisdom (Ọgbón), ancestral blessing (ibùkúnn baba íla), and divine favour (Ànfààní Ọlórún). The contemporary crisis often reduces wealth to ostentatious material accumulation (owó, ọkọ, ilé—money, car, house), detached from its ethical moorings.
2. **Ethics:** The analysis employs a multi-perspectival approach to ethics: a) Yoruba Traditional Ethics, based on the ideal of the Omolúàbí—a person of good character, humility, and communal responsibility—and the concept of Ètọ (rights/due); b) Christian and Islamic Ethics, drawing on commandments against murder and idolatry, and teachings on just wealth; c) Secular Human Rights and Legal Ethics, grounded in the inviolability of the right to life and the rule of law.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To critically analyze the disruption of the traditional Yoruba moral economy of wealth and its link to the rise of ritual violence.
2. To evaluate the phenomenon through an integrative ethical triangulation.
3. To identify the structural and agential factors that create a permissive environment for such practices.
4. To propose a robust set of conceptual, practical, and policy recommendations for mitigation.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study holds significant scholarly and societal value. Theoretically, it moves beyond Western-centric analyses of “occult economies” by deeply grounding the phenomenon in

Yoruba philosophical concepts, thereby contributing to African ethics and postcolonial studies. It bridges often-siloed disciplines: anthropology, religious studies, criminology, and political economy. Practically, its findings and recommendations are aimed at policymakers, community leaders, and religious institutions in Nigeria, offering a nuanced understanding to inform more effective, culturally-sensitive interventions beyond mere law enforcement. By taking ritual killing seriously as an ethical crisis rather than just a criminal or supernatural one, the study contributes to the urgent national conversation on values, youth integration, and sustainable development.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The geographical scope is Southwestern Nigeria, the primary homeland of the Yoruba people. The temporal focus is predominantly the post-1999 democratic era, a period marked by both increased openness and intensified socio-economic pressures, with specific case studies drawn from 2013-2023. The study focuses on killings explicitly linked to wealth acquisition, excluding ritual killings for political power or other purposes. It relies on documented cases and publicly available discourses; it does not include direct ethnographic fieldwork with perpetrators due to obvious ethical and safety constraints, a limitation acknowledged in the methodology.

### **Literature Review**

The phenomenon of ritual killing for wealth sits at a turbulent confluence of several robust academic streams. To understand its ethical implications, one must navigate discourses on the anthropology of value, the political economy of postcolonial Africa, the sociology of religion and “occult economies,” and the specific ethical systems of the Yoruba world. This review synthesizes these literatures, identifying key debates, theoretical advancements, and, crucially, the gaps that this study seeks to address. The existing scholarship tends to cluster around two poles: macro-theoretical explanations of “occult economies” in global capitalism, and micro-descriptive accounts of specific incidents. The space between—a rigorous, culturally-grounded ethical analysis that links the systemic to the agential—remains underexplored.

### **The Anthropology of Wealth Acquisition in Africa: From Moral Economies to Illegitimate Accumulation**

The foundational work on African concepts of wealth moves beyond mere materialism. Guyer's (1995) seminal concept of “wealth-in-people” underscores how, in many African societies, prosperity was historically rooted in social networks, dependents, and lineage, not just inanimate objects. This created a moral economy where wealth was inseparable from social responsibility and obligation. The Yoruba ideal of the *ọlọlà* (the wealthy one as custodian for the community) exemplifies this (Falola & Akinyemi, 2022). The violent rupture of these moral economies forms a critical backdrop. Jean and John Comaroff (2000), in their influential thesis on “millennial capitalism,” argue that the late 20th century saw a global eruption of “occult economies” the commodification of mystical forces for material ends. They link this to the experiences of neoliberal dispossession, where formal routes to accumulation are blocked, prompting a turn to “magical means for meting out modern

goods” (p. 310). In the Nigerian context, Smith's (2022) recent work powerfully adapts this, arguing that ritual killing represents a desperate and grotesque form of “enlistment” into global circuits of value, using the human body as the ultimate, localized raw material. This scholarship provides a crucial macro-framework but sometimes risks reducing specific cultural logics to a generic symptom of global capital.

### **Yoruba Cosmology, Religion, and the Ethics of Prosperity**

To avoid this reductionism, one must engage deeply with Yoruba indigenous thought. A vast literature details Yoruba cosmology: a universe pulsating with àṣẹ (the power to make things happen), populated by the Òrìṣà, and governed by principles of balance and reciprocity (Abimbola, 2015). Within this system, pathways to prosperity (àlàáfíà, encompassing well-being) are clearly delineated and ethically bounded. The Ifá literary corpus, for instance, is replete with verses (Odù) that prescribe diligence (Iṣẹ́), honesty (Òtító), and reverence for the gods and ancestors as the legitimate means to orò (Abimbola, 2015; Bascom, 1991). The central ethical concept is Iwàpẹ̀lẹ̀ good, gentle, and balanced character, which is the prerequisite for all blessings. The individual embodying this is the Omolúàbí, for whom wealth is a byproduct of virtue, not its goal (Lawuyi, 2019). Scholarship in this tradition (e.g., Gbadegesin, 2016; Ikuenobe, 2020) rigorously explores Yoruba personhood (èniyàn) and ethics, establishing that the community (ilú) has a vested interest in the moral conduct of its members. Ritual murder for personal gain is, from this perspective, the ultimate act of Ìwà ìkà (bad character) and a catastrophic violation of the cosmic and social order. It severs the individual from humanity (èyàn) and community.

### **The Nigerian Political Economy and the Crisis of Aspiration**

The dissonance between this traditional ethic and contemporary practice must be understood within Nigeria's specific political economy. Scholars have meticulously documented the “oil curse” the way petro-wealth has fostered a rentier state, massive corruption, and a decoupling of reward from labour (Watts, 2019). This has bred what has been termed the “get-rich-quick” syndrome or the Ànfààní culture, where success is perceived as stemming from luck, connection, or mystical favour rather than merit (Ojo, 2019). The literature on youth in Nigeria is particularly salient. With unemployment rates among graduates staggeringly high, a generation faces a profound “crisis of hope” (Honwana, 2019). In this context, the allure of instantaneous wealth, even through horrific means, can become a warped form of agency against a system perceived as fundamentally rigged. Studies on cybercrime (Yahoo Yahoo) in Nigeria (Akinbode, 2021; Salifu, 2023) reveal a similar logic: a blend of technological savvy and ritual practice (Yahoo Plus) aimed at guaranteeing success. This literature connects the macro-structural (failed governance, economic collapse) to the psycho-social (frustration, altered aspirations).

### **Occult Economies and Ritual Killings: Scholarly Engagements**

Direct scholarly engagement with ritual killing in Nigeria has grown. Early works often approached it from a criminological or sensational angle. More recent studies have employed deeper theoretical lenses. Smith's (2022) ethnographic work is pivotal, showing how ritual killings are embedded in networks that include not just the poor but also the already-rich

seeking to consolidate fortune or harm rivals. Ukah's (2018) analysis of the Pentecostal prosperity gospel provides a crucial parallel discourse, arguing that its emphasis on miraculous, faith-enabled wealth creation shares a contiguous logical space with occult economies; both promise breakthrough outside of conventional economic pathways, though they are morally opposed. Media and cultural studies scholars (Haynes, 2021; Akande, 2021) have analyzed the representation of ritual killing in Nollywood films and news reports, noting how these representations often simultaneously condemn, exploit, and inadvertently circulate the symbolic “knowledge” of these practices. A significant portion of this literature, however, remains focused on description or macro-theory, with less sustained effort at a systematic ethical evaluation that takes indigenous philosophy as a serious normative resource.

### **Ethical and Theological Responses**

The ethical condemnation from established religious frameworks is clear and forms a substantial part of public discourse. Christian ethical scholarship in Nigeria (Turaki, 2018; Ogunbamuru, 2020) condemns ritual killing as the apex of sin: it combines idolatry (seeking power from spirits other than God), murder (violation of the *imago Dei*), and covetousness. Pentecostal rhetoric often frames it as a literal battle with demonic forces. Islamic scholarship similarly condemns it as *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) and a grievous crime (*ḥarām*) (Abdul, 2019). Secular human rights and legal perspectives (Alemika, 2020) frame it as a gross violation of Sections 33 of the Nigerian Constitution (right to life) and a crime under the Criminal Code. What is often missing in these condemnations is a reflexive engagement with how the socio-economic environment fostered by both state and, at times, the ostentatious culture of some religious elites, creates the fertile ground for the very idolatry of wealth they decry. The critique can appear decontextualized.

### **Identified Gaps and Synthesis**

This review reveals three interconnected gaps this study aims to fill. First, there is a theoretical-methodological gap: while the Comaroffs' “occult economy” thesis is influential, it requires tighter coupling with the specific ethical concepts of the culture in question (Yoruba) and with middle-range theories like Structural Violence to explain mechanism. Second, there is a normative-analytical gap: much scholarship is either descriptive (reporting the phenomenon) or condemnatory (from religious/human rights views), but few works undertake a sustained, comparative ethical analysis that holds Yoruba, religious, and secular frameworks in a single critical conversation. Third, there is an applied gap: literature offering nuanced, multi-level recommendations that go beyond strengthening policing to include cultural, educational, and economic restructuring is sparse. This study, therefore, positions itself to bridge these gaps. It will use an integrative theoretical framework (Postcolonial, Structural Violence, Moral Economy) to structure an analysis that is both systemic and culturally precise. Its core contribution will be a thick ethical analysis that takes Yoruba philosophy not merely as an object of study but as a vital source of normative critique, placing it in dialogue with other ethical systems to fully illuminate the profound implications of ritual killing for wealth in Yorubaland.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To dissect the complex ethical implications of ritual killings for wealth, a singular theoretical lens proves insufficient. The phenomenon is simultaneously a legacy of historical disruption, a product of present-day structural pathologies, and a violation of normative orders. Therefore, this study employs an integrative theoretical framework that triangulates three complementary perspectives: Postcolonial Theory, Structural Violence, and Moral Economy. This tripartite framework allows for an analysis that moves from the macro-historical to the mezzo-structural and finally to the micro-normative, providing a holistic explanation of the conditions, mechanisms, and ethical breaches inherent in the practice. Ritual killing for wealth is a polyvalent event. To view it only as a crime ignores its cultural and spiritual dimensions. To see it only as a cultural artifact ignores its embeddedness in global political economy. To treat it solely as an economic act ignores its profound ethical violence. An integrative framework is necessary to capture this complexity without reductionism. Each theory illuminates a different facet: Postcolonial Theory explains the historical condition of possibility; Structural Violence reveals the ongoing generative mechanisms; and Moral Economy provides the normative benchmark for its evaluation as a profound transgression. Together, they form a robust scaffold for ethical analysis.

### **Postcolonial Theory: Disruption, Hybridity, and Necropolitics**

Postcolonial theory provides the historical depth and critical lens to understand the disruption of pre-colonial Yoruba moral worlds and the creation of the hybrid, often contradictory, modernities in which ritual killing emerges. Key theorists inform this perspective:

**Disruption and Hybridity:** The colonial encounter, as articulated by scholars like Mudimbe (1988) and Quayson (2014), did not merely impose a new system but created a fractured, "enchanted" modernity where traditional cosmologies were suppressed but not erased, and Western models of progress were introduced but often unattainable. This produced what Homi Bhabha (1994) might term a "hybrid" space, a Third Space where traditional beliefs in àṣẹ and Òrìṣà collide with the brutal materialism of colonial and postcolonial political economy. Ritual killing for wealth can be seen as a monstrous hybrid practice: it uses a form of "traditional" ritual logic (the manipulation of spiritual force) in the service of a purely modern, materialist end (ostentatious wealth), severed from the communal ethics that traditionally bounded such power.

**Necropolitics:** Achille Mbembe's (2001) concept of "necropolitics" the power to dictate who may live and who must die is critically illuminating. In the post colony, Mbembe argues, sovereignty is often expressed through the creation of "death-worlds," where populations are subjected to conditions of life that confer the status of the living dead. The logic of ritual killing extends this necropolitical logic to the micro-level. The perpetrator, often themselves a subject of socio-economic "social death" (Honwana, 2019), exercises a grotesque, inverted sovereignty over another, even more vulnerable body (often a child, a woman, a poor relative). They reduce that person to homo sacer bare life that can be killed without the consequence of sacrifice (Agamben, 1998) to extract value. This represents a horrifying internalization and privatization of the state's failure to guarantee dignified life.

### **Structural Violence: The Silent Engine of Desperation**

While Postcolonial Theory sets the historical stage, Structural Violence theory explains the ongoing, silent machinery that makes ritual killing a perceived viable option for some. Developed by Johan Galtung (1969) and powerfully applied in medical anthropology by Paul Farmer (2004), structural violence refers to harm inflicted not by a direct, individual actor, but by unjust and inequitable social, economic, and political structures.

**Mechanisms of Infliction:** In the Nigerian context, structural violence manifests as: a) Economic Exclusion: Pervasive youth unemployment, underemployment, and the lack of a merit-based system (Akinbode, 2021). b) Political Abandonment: The failure of the state to provide basic security, education, or healthcare, rendering populations vulnerable. c) Cultural-Symbolic Violence: The media and celebrity culture's glorification of ill-gotten wealth without scrutiny, stigmatizing poverty while offering no legitimate ladder of ascent.

This violence is "structured" because it is embedded in the normal functioning of the system, and "violent" because it results in preventable suffering, injury, and death—including deaths from desperate acts like ritual murder. The theory posits that when individuals are systematically denied access to the "good things" a society has to offer (wealth, dignity, hope) through legitimate channels, they may turn to illegitimate ones (Farmer, 2004). Structural violence does not excuse the perpetrator's moral agency but crucially explains the context that radically constrains choice and shapes a worldview where such a horrific option can be rationalized.

### **Moral Economy: The Normative Benchmark and Its Collapse**

The concepts of Postcolonial disruption and Structural Violence explain the "how" and "why" of the phenomenon's possibility. The theory of Moral Economy provides the essential "so what?" the normative framework for its ethical evaluation. E.P. Thompson's (1971) original use of the term analyzed the pre-capitalist norms that governed food riots, where crowds enforced a communal sense of a "just price." Adapted by scholars like Didier Fassin (2009) and James Scott, it refers to the "production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space" (Fassin, 2009, p. 125).

**The Traditional Yoruba Moral Economy:** As outlined in the literature review, the traditional Yoruba world possessed a coherent moral economy. Wealth (orò) was tied to virtue (iwà), social responsibility (ìdúnìlówó), and communal validation. The ọlọlà was a custodian. This system was underpinned by a cosmological order that rewarded Iwàpẹlẹ and punished Ìwà ikà.

**Collapse and the Rise of a Necro-Economy:** The postcolonial, neoliberal order has systematically dismantled this moral economy, replacing it with an amoral economy of accumulation. In this new regime, wealth is detached from character, often flaunted as the result of ànfààní (luck/connection) or outright fraud. Ritual killing for wealth represents the most extreme and pathological form of this new economy a necro-economy. It is an economy

that literally produces capital from death, utterly inverting the traditional logic where life and vitality (èmi) were the supreme values and sources of prosperity. This framework allows us to ethically condemn the practice not merely as illegal or sinful in an abstract sense, but as a fundamental betrayal of a specific, culturally-rooted social contract that links economic activity to the sustenance of life and community.

### **Methodology**

This study is situated within the interpretivist (constructivist) paradigm. This philosophical position posits that social reality is not an objective, external fact waiting to be discovered, but is constructed through the meanings, beliefs, and interpretations of individuals within their specific cultural and historical contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenon of ritual killing for wealth is not merely a discrete criminal act but a profoundly meaningful event embedded in complex webs of belief about power, success, spirituality, and desperation. An interpretivist approach is therefore essential to: (1) understand the subjective meanings actors attach to these practices (whether perpetrators, community members, or commentators); (2) analyze how these meanings are constructed through language, media, and cultural narratives; and (3) interpret the ethical implications within the specific socio-cultural matrix of Yorubaland. The goal is not to establish universal causal laws but to achieve a deep, contextual understanding (Verstehen) that can inform ethical and practical reasoning. Given the paradigm and the nature of the research questions, this study employs a qualitative research design, specifically integrating document-based case study analysis with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This design is optimal for an in-depth, multi-faceted exploration of a complex, sensitive contemporary issue where direct fieldwork with perpetrators is ethically and logistically prohibitive.

**Case Study Approach:** A multiple-case study design (Yin, 2018) is used to examine specific, documented instances of alleged ritual killings for wealth. This allows for a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of each case, examining its context, actors, and the narratives surrounding it. Cases serve not as statistical samples but as revelatory units that illuminate the broader theoretical and ethical problem. **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA):** Complementing the case studies, CDA (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2015) is employed to systematically analyze the language used to represent, explain, and judge the phenomenon in public discourse. CDA is premised on the idea that discourse is a form of social practice that both shapes and is shaped by society. It allows us to critically examine how media reports, religious sermons, legal documents, and popular culture (films, music) construct the "problem" of ritual killing, assign blame, propose solutions, and thereby exercise power. Data was gathered from a triangulated set of documentary sources to ensure robustness and multiple perspectives.

### **Primary Case Data**

**Selection Criteria:** Publicly documented cases of alleged ritual killing for wealth in Southwestern Nigeria (2013-2023). Cases were selected based on:

- (a) High media profile and public documentation;
- (b) Apparent wealth-acquisition motive as reported by police/investigations;
- (c) Availability of detailed reporting from multiple sources.

**Sources:** Fifteen (15) cases were identified and analyzed. Data came from: Court records and police charge sheets as reported in legal journalism (e.g., The Premium Times judicial reports).

Investigative journalism from reputable Nigerian outlets (The Punch, The Guardian, Sahara Reporters). Official statements from the Nigerian Police Force (Lagos, Oyo, Ogun State commands).

Secondary Discourse Data (The "How it is Talked About"):

- (a) **Media Discourse:** A purposive sample of 50 news articles (editorials, reports, features) from the above outlets covering the selected cases and the general phenomenon.
- (b) **Religious Discourse:** Published sermons, pastoral letters, and official statements from prominent Christian (e.g., Christian Association of Nigeria - CAN, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria - PFN) and Islamic (e.g., Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs - NSCIA) bodies in Southwestern Nigeria from 2018-2023. Also, analysis of relevant teachings from influential Yoruba Christian and Muslim clerics.
- (c) **Popular Culture:** Content analysis of twenty (20) Nollywood film synopses and plotlines (2015-2022) with central themes of ritual killing for wealth. Lyrical analysis of ten (10) selected Fuji and contemporary Nigerian pop songs referencing "ritual" or "sèlè."

### Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a two-stage, iterative process guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis and Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of CDA.

**Stage 1:** Thematic Analysis of Case Data and Broader Literature:

1. **Familiarization:** Immersion in case documents and scholarly texts.
2. **Initial Coding:** Generating initial codes from the data (e.g., "perpetrator profile: unemployed graduate," "victim profile: relative," "claimed ritual method," "community reaction: mob justice," "police response").
3. **Searching for Themes:** Collating codes into potential themes. This was guided by the theoretical framework, leading to themes such as "The Commodified Body," "The Rupture of Kinship," "Ineffective Justice," and "The Spectacle of Wealth."
4. **Reviewing Themes:** Checking themes against the dataset for coherence and distinctiveness.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** Refining the essence of each theme.

**Stage 2:** Critical Discourse Analysis of Textual Data:

1. **Text Analysis (Description):** Examining the linguistic features of media reports, sermons, and song lyrics (vocabulary, metaphors, argumentation schemes). E.g., Metaphors of "demonic," "evil," "primitive," or "poverty-driven."
2. **Discourse Practice Analysis (Interpretation):** Analyzing how these texts are produced, disseminated, and consumed. E.g., How does a Pentecostal pastor's

framing of the issue as a "spiritual warfare" construct a particular reality for his congregation? How does sensationalist newspaper headline language shape public perception?

- 3. Social Practice Analysis (Explanation):** Connecting the discourse to the broader social practices identified in the thematic analysis and theoretical framework. E.g., How do media discourses that focus solely on individual "evil" obscure the structural violence context? How do religious condemnations that ignore their own prosperity teachings potentially contribute to the idolization of wealth?

### **Ethical Considerations**

**Sensitivity and Non-Stigmatization:** The analysis consciously avoids language that stigmatizes the Yoruba people or African traditional belief systems as a whole. The focus is on a specific criminal corruption of cultural concepts.

**Anonymity of Victims and Families:** In discussing cases, the names and identifying details of victims and their families are minimized or generalized to prevent re-traumatization.

**Responsible Representation:** Findings are presented in a manner aimed at understanding and solution-building, not sensationalism. The agency and humanity of all involved are respected, even while the act is condemned.

**Intellectual Rigour and Context:** The study strives to present a balanced, evidence-based analysis that acknowledges complexity and avoids simplistic, alarmist conclusions.

### **Analysis and Findings**

The analysis of documented cases and public discourse reveals a complex tapestry where horrific acts are rooted in a confluence of shattered ethical norms, desperate economic contexts, and a morbid commodification of life. The findings are organized into four interlocking themes that emerged from the data, each reflecting a dimension of the ethical catastrophe.

#### **The Profound Rupture of the Yoruba Moral Cosmos**

The most salient finding is that ritual killing for wealth represents not a continuation of tradition, but its violent inversion and betrayal. Analysis of traditional texts and contemporary ethical commentaries (Gbadegesin, 2016; Lawuyi, 2019) establishes a clear, normative pathway to àlàáfíà (comprehensive well-being). This path is built on Iṣẹ́ (diligent work), Ọgbọ́n (wisdom, often sought through Ifá consultation for guidance, not magic), iwàpẹ̀lẹ̀, and communal responsibility.

The documented cases, however, present a stark antithesis. Perpetrators consistently bypass Iṣẹ́ entirely, seeking instantaneous wealth. For instance, in a 2019 Lagos case, a 24-year-old unemployed graduate confessed to killing his friend, believing a ritualist's promise that using the victim's heart would grant him a visa and wealth abroad (The Punch, June 12, 2019). This reflects a complete severance from the virtue of patience and effort. Furthermore, the choice

of victim repeatedly violates the core Yoruba principle of *Ìbátan* (kinship, deep relationship). Cases frequently involve the murder of siblings, nieces, or even one's own children. A 2021 Ogun State case involved a man who killed his twin brother for a money ritual (Premium Times, March 15, 2021). This is not just murder; it is *ìwà ìkà* of the highest order - the destruction of one's own *idílé* (lineage), the very source of identity and support in Yoruba worldview.

The discourse analysis of community reactions in news reports often captures this sense of cosmic rupture. Elders are quoted using phrases like “*Ó ti di àlùjánnu*” (“He has become a demon”) or “*Òrìṣà ò gbà*” (“The gods will not accept this”), indicating that the perpetrator is seen as having placed himself outside the bounds of humanity and communal pardon. The practice is thus ethically evaluated within the indigenous framework as a catastrophic, self-exiling act of moral and spiritual self-destruction.

### **The Body as Capital in a Necro-Economy**

Building on the theoretical concept of a necro-economy, the findings provide grim evidence of the human body's reduction to a commodity for speculative spiritual investment. Forensic and confessional details from police reports highlight a gruesome inventory: hearts, genitals, tongues, and heads are frequently cited as the required “materials.” This reflects a specific, perverted symbolic logic where body parts are believed to concentrate *è mí* (life force) or *àṣẹ*, which can be magically converted into financial capital. The socio-economic profile of actors in this economy is revealing. Analysis of the 15 cases shows perpetrators are not uniformly the abject poor. They include:

**The Desperately Aspirational:** Unemployed youths and struggling low-level workers (constituting ~60% of cases).

**The Consolidating "Elite:** Surprisingly, several cases (~25%) involved individuals already perceived as moderately successful—small business owners, mid-level civil servants—seeking to amplify or protect their wealth, or to harm a rival. A 2022 Ibadan case implicated a fairly well-known merchant who sought a ritual to “corner the market” from his competitors (The Guardian, August 4, 2022).

**The "Experts:** A network of so-called Babalawo or “mallams,” often portrayed as charlatan figures who provide the ritual “service” for a fee. This demonstrates that the necro-economy has both a “base” of desperate entrants and a “superstructure” of those already within the capitalist system but seeking an occult competitive edge (Smith, 2022). The victims, conversely, are disproportionately the vulnerable: children, house helps, unemployed relatives, and young women. They represent, in this twisted logic, the lowest-cost, highest-*è mí* yield “raw material.” The discourse in Nollywood films, while often moralistic, inadvertently details this “transactional” process, visually educating audiences on the imagined link between body parts and bank accounts, thus potentially normalizing the underlying commodification logic even while condemning the act.

### **Narratives and Rationalizations in Public Discourse**

Critical Discourse Analysis reveals competing, and sometimes conflicting, narratives used to explain and condemn the phenomenon.

**The "Poverty and Ignorance" Narrative:** Dominant in mainstream media and policy circles, these framing attributes the acts to a lack of education and economic hardship. Headlines like “Poverty Drives Youth to Ritual Killings” (Vanguard, October 31, 2020; Salifu, 2023) are common. This narrative, while highlighting structural violence, often individualizes the problem as one of poor choices by uneducated people, thereby obscuring the deeper crisis of value and the involvement of the non-poor.

**The "Demonic and Primitive" Narrative:** Prevalent in Pentecostal Christian discourse, this frame spiritualizes the issue entirely. It is framed as a manifestation of “ancient witchcraft covenants” or “family idols” fighting back. Sermons proclaim the need for “violent spiritual warfare” to “pull down strongholds.” This narrative powerfully mobilizes moral outrage but can lead to a neglect of socio-economic solutions and sometimes fuels stigmatization of traditional cultural symbols unrelated to crime.

**The "Moral Decay" Narrative:** Found in editorials and Islamic commentaries, this frame laments the loss of societal values, parental upbringing (itójú), and fear of God (èrù Ọlórún). It calls for a return to ethics but can be vague on the institutional reforms needed to make ethical living a viable option.

**The "Sensationalist-Curious" Narrative:** Nollywood plots and Fuji music lyrics (e.g., in songs by Qdot or Olamide referencing “sèlè”) often walk a fine line. While the moral ending usually sees the perpetrator punished, the detailed, glamorous portrayal of the wealth acquired and the ritual process itself can produce a morbid fascination and, for the suggestible, a form of tacit “how-to” symbolism.

These discourses rarely intersect. The poverty narrative ignores the spiritual beliefs; the demonic narrative ignores the political economy; the moral decay narrative ignores the structured lack of opportunity. This discursive fragmentation itself hampers a comprehensive societal response.

### **Institutional (In) Effectiveness and Community Retribution**

The analysis of state and community responses reveals an ethical quagmire. Formal state institutions the police and judiciary are often portrayed in media reports as reactive, corruptible, and inefficient. Cases frequently report missing evidence, prolonged trials, and the phenomenon of “mysterious” releases of suspects. This fosters a profound lack of trust in the state's ability to deliver justice, a key component of Structural Violence.

In this vacuum, community and vigilante justice emerges, presenting its own severe ethical dilemmas. Multiple cases report that alleged ritual killers were discovered not by police, but by vigilant neighbours or mobs, often leading to extrajudicial killings or brutal torture. A 2018

case in Osun state saw a suspected ritualist burned alive by a mob before police arrival (Sahara Reporters, May 7, 2018). While community anger is understandable from a Moral Economy perspective, where the people take it upon themselves to enforce the ultimate taboo, this response constitutes a further layer of violence and a breakdown of the rule of law. It creates a cycle where the state's failure legitimizes (in the eyes of the crowd) communal violence, which further undermines the state. Religious institutions, meanwhile, primarily offer spiritual warfare and pastoral care to victims' families but are less engaged in advocacy for systemic judicial or economic reform.

The findings paint a picture of a society grappling with a practice that is at once:

- i. An Ethical Abomination: A complete inversion of the Yoruba ideal of the *Omolúàbí*.
- ii. An Economic Symptom: A desperate and grotesque strategy within a necro-economy born of structural violence.
- iii. A Discursive Battleground: Explained through competing, fragmented narratives that prevent a unified understanding.
- iv. A Governance Failure: Highlighted by ineffective formal institutions and the rise of ethically problematic communal retribution. These findings set the stage for the integrated discussion in the next chapter, where they will be interpreted through the theoretical framework to articulate the full ethical implications.

## **Discussion**

The findings presented in Chapter 5 reveal a practice of such profound violence that it constitutes an ethical crisis of the first order for Yoruba society and the Nigerian state. This discussion integrates these findings with the theoretical framework of Postcolonial Disruption, Structural Violence, and Moral Economy to move beyond description to a holistic evaluation. It argues that ritual killing for wealth is not an anomaly but a logical, albeit extreme, symptom of a tripartite collapse: of a culturally-rooted normative order, of socio-economic justice, and of effective sovereign authority.

### **The Necro-Economy as a Syndrome of Collapse**

The ritual killing for wealth is most accurately understood as the core ritual of an emergent necro-economy. This necro-economy is not a separate sphere but a parasitic formation within Nigeria's political economy, flourishing in the spaces created by multiple failures. It operates on a perverse logic where life (*èmi*), the supreme value in Yoruba cosmology, is extracted and destroyed to create a facsimile of its opposite: material wealth utterly disconnected from social vitality. The findings on victim selection (the vulnerable) and perpetrator profiles (both the desperately aspirational and the consolidating elite) confirm Smith's (2022) observation that this is a market with both entry-level and high-net-worth segments. It is a gruesomely literal embodiment of the Comaroffs' (2000) "occult economy," where the enchantments of the market demand magical, and in this case mortal, inputs.

### **Theoretical Integration: From Historical Condition to Normative Violation**

The Postcolonial lens illuminates the historical making of this necro-economic logic. The colonial and postcolonial state's failure to become a reliable provider of security, dignity, or

opportunity has, as Mbembe (2001) theorized, disseminated the power over life and death. The perpetrator of ritual killing embodies this internalized necropolitics. Denied a dignified life by the structural violence of the state, he exercises a grotesque, hyper-localized sovereignty by determining that another must die for his potential life-improvement. This is not a reversion to “traditional” sovereignty but a monstrous mimicry of the state's own failure, performed on the most intimate scale the kin group. The hybridity is evident in the blending of a residue of Yoruba spiritual causality (the belief that ritual can manipulate outcomes) with the crudest form of capitalist accumulation, devoid of the communal ethics that traditionally tempered power.

### **Structural Violence as the Generative Mechanism**

The findings on unemployment, shattered aspirations, and the glorification of illicit wealth provide concrete evidence of the structural violence theorized by Galtung (1969) and Farmer (2004). This violence is not a passive backdrop but an active, generative force. It systematically closes legitimate pathways to *itẹ́sìwájú* (progress) while saturating the public sphere with images of success achieved through *ànfààní* or fraud. In this context, the ritualist's promise becomes a perverse form of “insider knowledge” or a “sure bet” in a system otherwise perceived as rigged. The turn to ritual killing is thus an act of agency, however horrific a desperate attempt to navigate and exploit a system that has already inflicted profound violence upon the perpetrator's life chances. This does not excuse the moral agency of the killer but clarifies that such agency is exercised within a cage of radically constrained, structurally-imposed choices.

### **Moral Economy: The Measure of the Catastrophe**

It is through the lens of Moral Economy that the full ethical weight of the practice becomes clear. The traditional Yoruba moral economy, as described by scholars like Gbadegesin (2016), was a system where economic activity was embedded in and regulated by social relationships and ethical norms (*Iwàpẹ̀lẹ̀*). Wealth was legitimate only when it enhanced the vitality (*alááfià*) of the lineage and community. The ritual killing for wealth represents the absolute antithesis of this - the final, total disembedding of the economic from the social and ethical. It severs all ties: the kinship tie (by killing a relative), the communal tie (by acting in secret against the community's interest), and the cosmic tie (by perverting *àṣẹ* for selfish ends). The perpetrator becomes, in the true sense, an *aláíníwà* (one without character), a living negation of the *Omólúàbí* ideal. Therefore, the primary ethical implication from the Yoruba perspective is not merely the taking of a life (*pa èniyàn*) but the comprehensive annihilation of the relational personhood (*èniyàn*) of both victim and perpetrator. It is an act of social and spiritual suicide.

### **Dialoguing with Literature: Affirmation, Complication, and Extension**

This study affirms the core of the “occult economies” thesis but insists on a deeper cultural-ethical specification. While Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) rightly link it to millennial capitalism, this analysis shows that in Yorubaland, the horror resonates specifically because it violates a pre-existing and deeply held moral economy centered on *iwà* and communal vitality. The practice is shocking not because Nigerians are “becoming superstitious,” but because they are witnessing the utter demolition of a cherished ethical framework.

The findings complicate the simplistic “poverty and ignorance” narrative prevalent in media. The involvement of the moderately successful reveals that the crisis is not just about lack of money, but about a crisis of value and legitimacy. It is about what society deems a valid method of accumulation. When political office is a shortcut to billions and corruption is normalized, the moral high ground for condemning the ritualist becomes unstable. As Ojo (2019) notes, the prosperity gospel's focus on miraculous wealth can unwittingly share a contiguous logic with the ritualist's promise, even as they morally condemn each other. Both can foster an impatience with the virtuous, gradual accumulation endorsed by traditional ethics. Furthermore, this study extends the literature on Nigerian religious ethics. The condemnation from Christian and Islamic scholars (Turaki, 2018; Abdul, 2019) is robust but often theologically abstract. This analysis grounds that condemnation in the specific social rupture caused, showing that the sin of idolatry manifests here as the idolization of wealth to the point of committing homicide, which is also a catastrophic social sin against the community.

### **Triangulated Ethical Evaluation**

The integrative framework allows for a powerful, multi-perspectival ethical condemnation:

**Yoruba Traditional Ethics:** It is the ultimate Ètùtù (abomination). It violates Ètò (the right to life of the victim), destroys Ìbátan (kinship), extinguishes Ìwà (character), and represents a treacherous use of Àṣẹ (cosmic power). It exiles the perpetrator from the human community.

**Christian/Islamic Ethics:** It constitutes the sins of idolatry (placing wealth above God), murder (violating the sacredness of life created by God/Allah), and covetousness. It is a direct rebellion against divine law and a destructive force in society.

**Secular Human Rights & Legal Ethics:** It is a gross violation of the fundamental right to life (UDHR, Art. 3; Nigerian Constitution, S.33). It is premeditated homicide, the most serious crime against the person and the state's monopoly on legitimate force. The convergence of these three frameworks on a verdict of profound condemnation is striking. The ritual killing for wealth is revealed as a rare ethical absolute: it is wrong from every conceivable normative standpoint within the society it plagues.

### **Broader Implications: Trust, Development, and the Social Fabric**

The implications extend far beyond the individual crime. First, it erodes social trust to its core. When a relative can be a source of mortal danger, the foundational unit of Yoruba society, the *idíléis* is poisoned. Second, it undermines sustainable development. A necro-economy that consumes the young and productive for ephemeral capital is the opposite of development; it is societal auto-cannibalism. Third, it challenges the state's legitimacy. The ineffectiveness of formal justice and the rise of mob violence create a vicious cycle that further entrenches a Hobbesian reality.

### **Original Contribution**

This study's primary contribution is providing the first integrated ethical analysis of ritual killing for wealth that takes Yoruba moral philosophy seriously as a normative resource, rather than merely as anthropological context. By triangulating Postcolonial Theory, Structural

Violence, and Moral Economy, it moves the scholarly conversation from what it is and why it happens to a rigorous evaluation of why it constitutes a total civilizational breakdown. It argues that the deepest trauma inflicted is not just the physical death, but the death of a moral order that once bound wealth to virtue and community. The practice is thus a mirror held up to postcolonial Nigeria, reflecting not a primitive past, but a harrowing present of fractured values, systemic failure, and a desperate, often deadly, struggle for a place within a global order that has left too many behind.

### **Conclusion**

This study set out to critically examine the phenomenon of ritual killing for wealth among the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria, with the aim of understanding the deeper socio-cultural, economic, and moral dynamics that sustain it. Rather than approaching the issue as an isolated criminal activity or an irrational cultural remnant, the research investigated it as a complex social phenomenon embedded within broader historical, economic, and moral transformations in Nigerian society. The findings reveal that ritual killing for wealth is closely linked to the erosion of a historically grounded moral economy within Yoruba society. Traditionally, Yoruba ethical thought emphasized the inseparable relationship between prosperity (*orò*), moral character (*ìwàpẹ̀lẹ̀*), and communal well-being. However, contemporary realities marked by economic hardship, social inequality, youth unemployment, and the normalization of illicit wealth have significantly weakened these moral foundations. Within this context, ritual killing emerges as part of a distorted system of value production—an economy in which human life is commodified and moral boundaries are transgressed in the pursuit of material success. The study further demonstrated how structural inequalities, weak institutional governance, and fragmented public narratives contribute to the persistence and normalization of such practices.

The research contributes to existing scholarship by offering an integrative analytical framework that combines postcolonial theory, structural violence, and moral economy to interpret ritual killing not merely as criminal deviance but as a symptom of deeper social and moral dislocation.

By situating the phenomenon within Yoruba ethical philosophy and contemporary socio-economic realities, the study expands the conversation beyond moral condemnation toward a broader understanding of the structural and cultural conditions that enable it. In terms of practical implications, the findings highlight the need for a multi-dimensional response. Addressing ritual killings cannot rely solely on criminal prosecution; it must also involve strengthening socio-economic opportunities for young people, restoring ethical value systems through education and religious institutions, and improving the capacity and legitimacy of state institutions responsible for justice and security. Community leaders, policymakers, religious organizations, and educational institutions all have critical roles to play in rebuilding a moral culture in which wealth is once again tied to integrity, dignity, and social responsibility. This study is not without limitations. Its focus on the Yoruba cultural context means that its conclusions may not fully represent patterns in other regions of Nigeria with different cultural and religious dynamics. Future research may therefore undertake

comparative studies across ethnic groups or examine the role of digital cultures, social media influence, and emerging cybercrime networks in shaping contemporary ritual practices. Ultimately, the study underscores that the tragedy of ritual killing lies not only in the destruction of human life but also in the deeper erosion of the moral foundations that sustain social order. When a society begins to legitimize wealth detached from virtue and community welfare, the very meaning of prosperity becomes distorted. Confronting this crisis therefore requires more than law enforcement; it demands the restoration of a moral imagination in which human dignity, communal responsibility, and ethical integrity once again define the pursuit of success.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Reclaiming the Ethical Narrative through Conceptual and Educational Reform**

A foundational response to the necro-economic logic underlying ritual killing is the deliberate recovery and re-articulation of Yoruba ethical philosophy within contemporary educational and intellectual life. The displacement of *iwàpele*—moral restraint, integrity, and character, by a predatory obsession with rapid wealth accumulation has created a normative vacuum, particularly among young people. This vacuum must be filled not by moral panic or coercion, but by sustained ethical formation rooted in indigenous moral thought. To this end, formal education should serve as a primary site of ethical reconstruction. Ministries of Education in Southwestern Nigeria, working in partnership with the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, should develop and institutionalize curriculum modules on Yoruba ethics and civic responsibility at the primary and secondary school levels. These modules should critically engage concepts such as *Omolúàbí*, the moral obligations attached to wealth, communal reciprocity, dignity of labour, and the categorical rejection of *owó àìníwà*—wealth devoid of moral legitimacy. Instruction should move beyond folklore and moral slogans to reflective engagement with ethical reasoning, social consequences, and contemporary applications.

Universities and research institutions have a complementary responsibility to deepen the intellectual foundations of this ethical recovery. Departments of Philosophy, Religious Studies, Linguistics, and African Studies should collaborate in producing pedagogical materials, teacher-training programs, and public scholarship that translate Yoruba ethical insights into modern social, economic, and political contexts. In parallel, religious institutions must support critical theological scholarship that interrogates prevailing prosperity narratives. Christian theology should re-anchor prosperity within covenantal responsibility, justice, and honest labour, while Islamic scholarship should reinforce teachings on halal wealth, zakat, and the prohibition of all forms of exploitation. Philosophical inquiry must articulate a modern Yoruba humanist ethics capable of guiding business practice, governance, and civic life. Together, these efforts provide intellectual depth to moral condemnation, shifting discourse from fear-based denunciation to a constructive vision of ethical success.

### **2. Strengthening Community Structures and Moral Agency at the Grassroots**

While ethical narratives are formed conceptually, they are sustained socially. Communities remain critical arenas for prevention, moral regulation, and early intervention, yet many have

been weakened by economic hardship, mistrust of state institutions, and the erosion of traditional authority. Revitalizing community capacity is therefore essential to disrupting the social pathways that lead to ritual violence. Local Government Authorities should facilitate the establishment of community-based ethical vigilance and support networks that bring together traditional rulers, respected elders, religious leaders, women's groups, and youth representatives. These networks would function as early warning systems, identifying individuals exhibiting obsessive fixation on sudden wealth or involvement with known ritual practitioners and providing timely counseling and moral guidance. They would also offer social support to vulnerable families, particularly children and economically dependent relatives who are disproportionately at risk of victimization.

Importantly, such community structures should operate as lawful intermediaries rather than instruments of vigilantism. By creating trusted channels for reporting credible threats and suspicious activities to law enforcement agencies, they can reduce reliance on mob justice while addressing widespread distrust in formal institutions. In this way, traditional norms of communal oversight are not abandoned but redirected into preventive, rights-respecting mechanisms that complement the rule of law. Alongside moral surveillance, communities must also be empowered economically. Faith-based organizations, civil society groups, and state microfinance institutions should collaborate to promote culturally grounded entrepreneurship programs explicitly framed by Yoruba ethical values. These initiatives should combine access to seed funding and technical business training with mentorship from entrepreneurs who embody moral discipline and social responsibility. Participants should be encouraged to conceptualize wealth as *idúnìlówó*—a blessing that circulates within the community by integrating social impact components into their ventures. By creating visible, ethically validated pathways to prosperity, such programs offer tangible alternatives to the necro-economy.

### **3. Reforming Law Enforcement and the Justice System to Restore Credibility**

No ethical or community-based intervention can succeed in the absence of a credible justice system. The persistence of ritual killing is sustained by impunity, weak investigations, prolonged trials, and public perception that wealth, however acquired can purchase freedom. Addressing these failures requires targeted institutional reform. The Nigerian Police Force should establish specialized investigative units on ritual and occult-related crimes within Southwestern state commands. These units must be trained in forensic investigation, victim-centered approaches, and contextual understanding of belief systems relevant to such crimes, while adhering strictly to human rights and anti-corruption standards. Their mandate should be professional, evidence-driven investigation rather than reliance on confessions or public spectacle.

Within the judiciary, the creation of designated fast-track courts for serious violent crimes, including ritual murder, would significantly reduce delays and enhance public confidence in the justice process. Such courts must be supported by effective witness protection mechanisms to ensure that fear does not undermine prosecution. In addition, the state must regulate media and popular culture by enforcing laws against the glorification or normalization of ritual

killing and cybercrime narratives. Cultural products that implicitly legitimize violence as a route to success erode moral boundaries and must be treated as threats to public ethics and security.

#### **4. Addressing Structural Violence and Reorienting National Values**

At the deepest level, ritual killing for wealth is nourished by structural violence: chronic unemployment, visible inequality, and the collapse of faith in meritocratic advancement. Government intervention must therefore confront these conditions directly. Large-scale, transparent youth employment initiatives focused on labour-intensive infrastructure, agro-processing, and the digital creative economy are essential in Southwestern Nigeria. Such programs must be merit-based and visibly insulated from patronage if they are to restore confidence in legitimate pathways to success.

In parallel, a sustained national ethical re-orientation campaign should be launched, coordinated by the National Orientation Agency but implemented at grassroots levels through schools, religious institutions, media platforms, and community organizations. This campaign must actively celebrate models of success grounded in honest work, character, and social contribution, while publicly stigmatizing corruption and illicit wealth. Above all, the consistent and impartial enforcement of anti-corruption laws is indispensable. When society witnesses that ill-gotten wealth, whether accumulated through political theft, cybercrime, or ritual murder leads inevitably to disgrace and punishment, the moral calculus that sustains the necro-economy begins to collapse. In sum, the recommendations advanced in this chapter call for deliberate synergy across sectors. Academia must provide the intellectual frameworks and empirical insights that inform reform. Religious and traditional institutions must deploy their moral authority and community reach to reshape values. Civil society and the media must sustain advocacy and responsible discourse. Government must supply policy coherence, funding, and credible enforcement. Together, these actors can restore the broken link between wealth and virtue, between personal success and communal well-being, ensuring that the pursuit of *orò*—wealth, never again demands the sacrifice of *è mí* (human life).

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