

Family, Kinship, and Village Associations in Ngwa Land

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ABSTRACT

The human family is a group of people who are closely related by blood. Kinships in the human community exist as a result of closely knit family ties. In a village, which is a rural settlement of a group of people, that may or may not be biologically related, associations do exist which are platforms on which religious, social, and economic status of individuals and the community in general can improve their lot. Some of the objectives of this paper are: to demonstrate that the Ngwa community places great value in the human family, that kinship relations are highly respected in Ngwa land, and to show that the formation of associations enhances the development of the individual in Ngwa land. The primary source of data for this paper is obtained through in-depth interviews with twenty Ngwa people, aged 50-60 years. The framework on which this paper is carried out is Ethnography of communication. This theory is concerned with the linguistic and sociocultural rules that are operational amongst a group of people. Some of the findings of this paper are: that the family in Ngwa land is the basic association that an individual belongs to, that the family shapes the kinship relation that an individual has, that social organizations are training grounds to persons in Ngwa land, that kinship relations create a strong bond amongst families in Ngwa land, that kinship relations in Ngwa land leads to a communal welfare system where everybody cares for one another.

1. Introduction

The family is a primary locale of every association in human life. It is usually the reference point on which every other thing that a person does is based. The family determines the type of education, religion, occupation and social networks that a person might be associated with in life. For instance a person born to agrarian parents is likely to be a farmer, while a person that is born by parents who are artisans is likely to acquire and be groomed in such skills as metal works and black smithing. In other words, a person's family background gives him the platform on which he grows; mentally, socially, religiously and otherwise. In the subsections that follow, the paper will discuss the following concepts: association, culture, family, kinship, Ngwa land, Ethnography of communication and method of data collection.

1.1 Conceptual Review

Egbezor (2002) asserts that the family is the nucleus of any society, whether developed or developing. It is described as a social unit composed of individuals united by ties of marriage and blood, thus establishing that the human family is rooted in the union between a man and a woman through marital and biological bonds. Egbezor (2002) outlines several essential roles of the family, including the procreation of children, regulation of sexual behavior, development and maintenance of emotional and social stability, provision of the child's initial economic support, and the socialization of members into universal norms and values necessary for integration into the broader community. He further explains that extended family members include uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and similar relatives. This classification underscores the existence of referents for each family member and reveals the structured nature of the family as an organized social unit. Consequently, the family serves as the foundational platform through which the physical, emotional, and financial needs of the child are initially addressed.

In a similar vein, Iheanacho (2002) describes the family as “a primary group where its members interact in a personal, intimate and face-to-face milieu” (p. 7). This definition highlights the family as a closely bonded and affectionate unit within society, where mutual care and interpersonal relationships are central. Interestingly, the term “family” extends beyond biological and marital connections. Matthews (2007) notes that “the word family refers to a group of languages that have developed from a single ancestor,” using the Indo-European language family as an example. This broader conceptualization of “family” allows for classifications such as the Christian family, Islamic family, political family, academic family, medical family, food family, plant family, and animal family, among others—each group unified by shared philosophies, principles, or characteristics.

Furthermore, the family is consistently regarded as the basic unit of society. As Olugasa, Bamidele, Alonge, and Onwuka (2015) affirm, the family forms the bedrock of societal development. They identify two main types of families: the nuclear family and the extended family. The nuclear family may consist of a man, his wife, and their children, or in polygamous contexts, a man, his wives, and their children. In contrast, the extended family encompasses two or more nuclear family units and includes relations from both paternal and maternal lineages. Thus, the extended family is understood as a larger familial structure comprising close blood relatives.

According to Odedele and Egotanwa (2016), a family is defined as a group of individuals closely related by blood or marriage. They distinguish two primary types of families: the nuclear family, comprising parents and their children, which can be monogamous or polygamous. A monogamous nuclear family consists of a husband, wife, and their children, while a polygamous nuclear family includes multiple wives. Anyakoha (2016) emphasizes the family's foundational role in society, stating that it serves as the fundamental unit of community life. Anyakoha (2016) further categorizes families into three types: nuclear families consisting of a single husband and wife, polygamous families with multiple wives, and extended families encompassing additional relatives such as uncles, aunts, and grandparents. The head of the family is typically the eldest member. Values play a crucial role in family dynamics, influencing behaviors and promoting harmonious relationships among members. Positive values, such as honesty and respect, contribute to familial cohesion, while negative values, like envy and dishonesty, can disrupt it (Anyakoha, 2016). Hence, the family represents a primary social unit wherein each member assumes distinct roles and upholds shared values essential for collective well-being and societal stability.

Britannica (2022), sees the the family as a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, constituting a single household and interacting with each other in their respective social positions, usually those of spouses, parents, children, and siblings. This shows that the family can be formed by biological or social ties, where each person in the unit has a social role to play that is based on the family status of the person. BBC (2022), notes the following as different types of the human family:

2a. The Nuclear Family: This type of family unit consists of two adults and any number of children living together. The children might be biological, step or adopted.

- b. The Extended Family: this type of family apart from the husband, wife and children has other members included in its membership such as: grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousin, all living within the same house.
- c. The Reconstructed Family: this type of family is also known as a step family. This is a family where one or both adults have children from an initial marriage.
- d. The Single Parent Family: This type of family consists of a parent, not living with a partner, who has most of the day-today responsibilities for raising the children. The children will live with this single parent for the majority of the time, but they may still have control with their other parent.

The Same-sex Family: This is a civil partnership family that was legalized in 2014. Same-sex couples cannot conceive, so their children may be adopted or be the biological children of one member of the couple. They also may be from a donor or a surrogate birth mother.

In the human family, a family is extended by relationships. The relations contracted through extended family relations result into kinships. Some of the terms used to refer to kinship relations are presented below:

- 3a. Father: The male parent of a child/person.
- b. Mother: The female parent of a child or person.
- c. Brother: The male sibling of a person.
- d. Sister: The female sibling of a person.
- e. Uncle: the brother of one's father or mother.
- f. Aunt: the sister of one's father or mother.
- g. Nephew: the son of one's brother or sister.
- h. Niece: the daughter of one's brother or sister.
- i. Grandfather: the father of one's father or mother.
- j. Grandmother: the mother of one's father or mother.
- k. Great grandfather: the father of one's grandparents.
- l. Great grandmother: the mother of one's grandparents.
- m. Father-in-law: the father of one's husband or wife.
- n. Mother-in-law: the mother of one's husband or wife.
- o. Sister-in-law: the sister of one's husband or wife, or the wife of one's brother.
- p. Brother-in-law: the brother of one's husband or wife, or the husband of one's sister.

Relations from the father's side are known as *paternal relations*, while those from the mother's side are known as *maternal relations*. Some of the functions of Kinship relations are that:

- 4a. It promotes social continuity by connecting people of biological relations together.
- b. It allows for the transference property, office or tradition from one generation to another
- c. It encourages exogamy which states that one marries outside his blood relatives. This is to avoid incest.
- d. It encourages positive social values such as: respect, dignity of labour, patience, orderliness, honesty, tolerance, punctuality, fairness, compassion and so on, and discourages negative values of: envy, falsehood, selfishness, theft, bribery and so on. This is because a negative mark on a person will affect all other members of the family kinship relation.
- e. Kins support one another in social, political, economic and religious alliances.
- f. Kins help to provide social care for the sick and poor ones amongst them.

Having seen, the definition of the word *family* in relation to human beings, in the next subsection, the paper will give a brief explanation of what the term *culture* is.

Musgrave (1973), asserts that culture is a body of recipe knowledge that is needed for everyday social living and interaction, including the norms that govern etiquette and dressing mode. This means that culture refers to all the behaviours that a person exhibits which include: his architectural design, agriculture, food types, marriage, names, burials, festivals, clothings, religion, language and so on, that enable him to be a functional member of his society. Musgrave goes on to add that culture is the basis of man's education and dictates one's behavioural patterns, language, thought patterns, language attitude to things, values and beliefs. This implies that the characteristics of people in a society are determined by the cultural norms of that society. Lyons (1981), notes that Culture may be described as a socially acquired knowledge, that is the knowledge that someone has by virtue of his being a member of a particular society. This, in other words means that culture is a socially conditioned behavior, which a person lives by, in order to operate as a functional member of a specific group of people. Culture (2019), asserts that: culture is the characteristic and knowledge of a particular group, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts". From the assertion above, it is obvious that culture involves the totality of all that make up a person. From religion to music, dance, paintings, crafts, language, marriage, birth, death, name giving, taboos, and so on and this is the view that this paper adopts. Kemjika (2002), refers to culture as a body of knowledge and ways of thinking, feeling, goals, moves and ideals". This means that culture refers to the things that a group of people do by which they can be identified with. One must not fail to mention that cultural elements are not inherited but are transmitted from generation to generation through the training of individuals in the society. Having briefly explained the term culture, one will in the next paragraph give a brief explanation of the term *association*.

The term *association* originates from the Latin word *associare*, which means "to unite" or "to ally. It first appeared in Medieval English as a verb ("associate") and evolved into its nominal form by the 17th century, coinciding with the grammatical stabilization of the English language (Oxford Languages, 2022). As defined by Hornby (2015), an association refers to "an official group of people who have joined together for a particular purpose" (p. 79). In this sense, an association is understood as an organized body of individuals united in the pursuit of a shared objective. Oxford Languages (2022) also lists alternative terms such as "alliance" and "consortium" as synonymous with association. The term is discipline-specific and assumes various interpretations across fields. In ecology, it refers to a stable plant community marked by the prevalence of characteristic species. In chemistry, it denotes the intermolecular bonding between molecules, typically via hydrogen bonding. In psychology, association describes the mental connection or linkage between ideas or experiences, a concept foundational to theories of memory and learning (American Psychological Association, 2020). In linguistics, the term captures the co-occurrence of linguistic units, such as phonemes, morphemes, words, syntactic structures, or semantic fields (Yule, 2022). Yourarticlelibrary (2022) further clarifies that association represents "a group of persons collected together with some particular aim," and distinguishes it from broader societal constructs by emphasizing its tangible and functional nature. Unlike society, which is abstract and diffuse, an association is a visible, goal-oriented collective. This operational understanding of association as a formal and purposive social grouping serves as the working definition employed in this paper

Some of the functions of an association are:

- 5a. To provide opportunities to meet and engage with peers and colleagues
- b. To exchange views on a given topic
- c. To pursue a common goal
- d. To provide financial aid to members in need
- e. To educate members on specific areas relevant of the association
- f. To care for one another.

On the other hand, some of the features of an association are:

- 6a. An association is usually guided by rules and regulations.
- b. An association has some degree of permanency.
- c. An association usually has a legal status.
- d. The membership in an association is usually voluntary.
- e. There is usually a co-operative spirit in an association.
- f. Associations are usually guided by common aims and objectives.

Having briefly discussed what an association is, one will in the next sub-section discuss the theoretical framework under which this paper is considered.

1.2 Theoretical Framework: Ethnography of Communication

This study is anchored in the theoretical framework of the *Ethnography of Communication* (EoC), a sociolinguistic approach developed by Dell Hymes. According to Okeke (2017), the Ethnography of Communication goes beyond examining the structural components of language to analyze the social and cultural contexts in which language is used. As Okeke (2017) explains, “The sociolinguistic approach to language study known as Ethnography of Communication was developed by Dell Hymes. Ethnographic study is not concerned simply with the structure of language used in communication, but with its use, paying extra attention to underlying socio-cultural rules that form the basis of the language in use” (p. 160). This implies that communicative competence involves not only mastery of linguistic forms but also a deep understanding of the socio-cultural norms governing language use. In this context, such norms include knowledge of prevailing family structures, social relationships, and community systems among native speakers, as these elements reflect the underlying worldview embedded within the language.

From an ethnolinguistic perspective, the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) reinforce the idea that language learners acquire more than grammar and vocabulary. Instead, they must also learn the appropriate use of language in real-life social contexts. As Okeke (2017) further notes, “beyond the linguistic forms are how to properly use them so as to perform the kind of function that people in the society do, using language” (p. 162). This aligns with Hymes' (1972) emphasis on *communicative competence*, which includes the ability to recognize when and how to speak appropriately in specific cultural contexts. The Ethnography of Communication also interrogates the role of language within broader cultural systems, including food, clothing, architecture, religion, kinship, rituals, festivals, and social organizations. It holds that the meaning of an utterance is best understood within the *speech event*—a culturally recognizable occasion in which communicative norms are enacted (Saville-Troike, 2021). Language is thus not a neutral medium but a cultural artifact that reflects and sustains the identity and values of its users. Based on this theoretical orientation, the present study examines family structures, kinship systems, and village associations among the Ngwa people as part of their communicative and cultural repertoire. These institutions not only facilitate social organization but also embody the cultural norms that shape language use in the community.

1.3 Methodology

The method of data collection used for this paper is through the interview of native Ngwa-Igbo speakers, aged 50-60 years. Each of the informants were interviewed on two different occasions while the researcher recorded every information that was given by them. Having introduced the premise on which this paper will be considered, the family, kinship and village associations in Ngwa, will be discussed in the subsections that follow.

1.4 Ngwa

Ngwa is classified as an Igboidean lect within the Niger-Congo language family, specifically under the New Benue-Congo subgroup (Williamson, 1989). The term *Ngwa* refers simultaneously to the language, the people, and the geopolitical territory known as Ngwa land. The Ngwa people are predominantly located in Abia State, within the Federal Republic of Nigeria. They are distributed across seven local government areas, namely: Aba North, Aba South, Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa South, Obingwa, Osisioma Ngwa, and Ugwuagbo. According to Nwankwo (2009), Ngwa land spans approximately 512.8 square miles and possesses one of the most fertile and scenic tablelands among Igbo communities in Nigeria. Geographically, the Ngwa territory is bounded to the west by the Imo River, which separates it from Asa and Nteke in the southwest, and from their Mbaise kin in the west. To the north lie the Oghuhy, Umuahia, and Bende clans of the old Bende division. The southeastern boundary is shared with the Ndoki

people, while the Anaang and Ibibio groups are situated to the east. Although the precise date of the Ngwa people's settlement in their current location is unknown, oral traditions suggest that they originated from Umuneoha in Owerri (Owere). The migration was reportedly driven by a search for cultivable land, better hunting grounds, and enhanced trade and exchange opportunities (Ezeibe, 2009, Nwankwo, 2009, Ugorji, 2019, Ugorji, 2020).

1.5 The Family in Ngwa

Recall, that the Ngwa dialect is a dialect of Igbo that is spoken in Abia State in the seven Local Government Areas of: Aba North, Aba South, Isiala-Ngwa North, Isiala-Ngwa South, Obingwa, Osisioma, and Ugwuagbo. The term *Ngwa*, refers to the geo-political area of Ngwa land, the dialect and the people. The Ngwa family set up could be nuclear or polygamous, but with extended family relations involved in the affairs of the family. The nuclear family type in Ngwa is formed when an adult male person according to laws of the Ngwa land, fulfills all the marriage rites that qualify him to be given a maiden by his prospective in laws. This family type is made up of the man, his wife and children only. By the norms of the Ngwa culture, as soon as a man marries, he lives in his own house. However, he will still relate harmoniously with his kins and kiths, who are biologically or socially related to him. The parents, or relations of any of the couple could visit them without any notice. On such visits, the couple are expected to welcome them with smiles, warmth, and delicious meals. Discussions of the welfare of other family members not present could be carried out during such a visit. An extended family member who visits, and wants to stay some days with a relation is allowed to do so without hesitation.

The polygamous family pattern does equally exist in Ngwa land. This family type exists where the man has the desire to have more than one wife who are legally married to him according to the marriage custom of the Ngwa people. Under this situation, the man is expected to have a very large compound because each of the wives will have her own house, where she will abode with her children. Each of the houses is expected to have a space at the backyard where the planting of some edible vegetables like: pepper, pumpkin, fluted pumpkin, basil leaf, *uha tree*, *ukazi*, *uziza*, orange, pepper fruit tree, cocoa, coconut, African pear, avocado pear, plum, star apple tree, walnut tree, and so on can be planted, for the immediate need of the family. One of the major reasons for the existence of the polygamous family in Ngwa land, is to enable a farmer have large farm hands to work on his farm. Morseso, polygamy was a thing reckoned only with the wealthy persons of the society, because it is expected that a man who takes more than one wife, should be able to cater for their physical, social and psychological needs. He should also satisfy their conjugal needs so that the women do not go astray. In such situations, the man is expected to be a disciplinarian in order to keep the large family under control. Distant and near relations, can also from time to time pay a visit to their kiths and kin in a polygamous family. Another, reason why the polygamous family pattern does exist in the Ngwa land is when a man is an only son and needs to expand and re-establish the family name, he may take more than one wife. In some instances, the polygamous family could come to be in Ngwa land, if a man's first wife had no children, he may take another wife who will bear children and re-establish the family name and lineage. Finally, the polygamous family can be formed, where a man and his wife gets old, and needs someone to help around in the house, the man's wife may suggest to him to take a young maiden as a wife, who will be able to care for them. Under this situation, the older wife will be the nurse to the children that will be borne by the young maiden, so that she can go around to fend for the husband and the older wife. One thing that must be mentioned in a polygamous family is that, the eldest wife gives instruction to the younger wives, which they are bound to obey. In a harmonious polygamous setting, food is cooked in turn by the wives, and everyone eats from the same pot. Children from different wives in a polygamous family are meant to see themselves as one. There must not be any sort of disparity in the family. Likewise, the wives are expected to care for each child as her own. This, the husband and the first wife will enforce. Having seen the two major types of family in Ngwa land, one will in the next section of this paper, discuss the type of kinship relations that are prevalent in Ngwa.

1.6 Kinship in Ngwa

Recall that in section 1.1, it was established, that in the human family, a family is extended by relationships. The relations contracted through extended family relations result into kinships. In Ngwa, kinship relations could be based

on biological or socio-cultural contracts that one finds him or herself in. In Ngwa land, some of the kinship relations that one can have in relation to the family are:

- 7a. Father: the male parent of a person called, *nná*.
- b. Mother: the female parent of a person called, *nné*.
- c. Brother: the male sibling of a person called, *nwá nné m nwókó*.
- d. Sister: the female sibling of a person called, *nwá nné m nwànyị*.
- e. Uncle: the brother of one's father or mother, called, *nwánné nwókó nná m, mà ó bụ nwánné nwókó nné m*.
- b. Aunt: the sister of one's father or mother, called, *nwánné nwànyị nná m, mà ó bụ nwánné nwànyị nné m*.
- c. Nephew: the son of one's brother or sister, called, *nwá nwánné m nwókó, mà ó bụ nwá nwánné m nwànyị nwókó*.
- d. Niece: the daughter of one's brother or sister, called, *nwá nwánné m nwókó, nwànyị, mà ó bụ nwá nwánné m nwànyị nwókó*.
- e. Grandfather: the father of one's father or mother, called, *nná nná m, mà ó bụ nná nné m*.
- f. Grandmother: the mother of one's father or mother, called, *nné nná m, mà ó bụ nné nné m*.
- g. Great grandfather: the father of one's grandparents, called, *nná nná nná m, mà ó bụ nná nná nné m*.
- h. Great grandmother: the mother of one's grandparents, called, *nné nné nná m, mà ó bụ nné nné nné m*.
- i. Father-in-law: the father of one's husband or wife, called, *ógò m nwókó*.
- j. Mother-in-law: the mother of one's husband or wife called, *ógò m nwànyị*.
- k. Sister-in-law: the sister of one's husband or wife, or the wife of one's brother called, *nwánné, nwànyị m nwánné dí m nwànyị, mà ó bụ kwányị nwúnyé dí mmádụ*.
- l. Brother-in-law: the brother of one's husband or wife, or the husband of one's sister, called: *nwánné dí m nwókó, mà ó bụ nwánné, nwànyị m nwókó*.

Having seen the kinship relationships obtainable in Ngwa, one must stress that these relations exist for a harmonious co-existence. Everyone in the relationship is revered. Everyone is honoured in his or her own family status of the kith and kin, and there is usually love exhibited amongst everyone. In the next subsection, a discussion on the types of village association in Ngwaland will be presented.

1.7 Village Associations in Ngwa

Recall, that the word *association* originates from the Latin word *associare*, which means to *unite*, or *ally*. Some notions of the word as used in some fields of study have been briefly mentioned in this paper. However, the notion of the term *association* as applicable in this paper is that it is, an organization of people who have agreed formally to come together in pursuance of a common interest. In the subsections below, the types of association in Ngwa will be presented.

1.7.1 Ámá-àlà úkwú (General Village Association)

The *Ámá-àlà úkwú*, which means the General Village Association, is constituted of the entire adult members of the community. This association is headed by a Chairman, called *Ónyé isí óchè* that is supported by a Secretary called in the Ngwa dialect as '*Ódé ákwúkwò*', a Treasurer called, '*Óchèákù*', and the *Ójèózì* called 'the Public Relations Officer'. In this association, the members are registered and have an annual levy which each member pays. If there is any pressing need in the community such as: rural electrification, communal water project, building of community primary and secondary schools, community health centre, community road project, or any other major thing that the community may want to embark on, such issues are brought to the General Village Association where they are presented to every adult person to be on the know of the need of the present project of the community. Here, members will task themselves of some amount of money to achieve the project. The informants of the corpus for this paper actually confirmed that this method was how the Rural Electrification Project, building of schools, markets, building of roads, and the building of some health centres in the Ngwa community were achieved. Also, if a member of the

association dies or is bereaved, members task themselves for some money to support such a member as a token from the association. Where a member dies, the family of the bereaved, buys a cow to be killed for the General Village Association members. Members, who are in dire need of some financial help, can also borrow money from the association with a written agreement to return the money at a set time. The General Village Association, is a regulatory body that checks the activities of its members.

1.7.2 *Òtù Ûmỳ Nwókó (Men's Village Association)*

Òtù Ûmỳ Nwókó translated as 'Men's Village Association', is an association that is exclusively for men in the Ngwa Community. In this association, men talk of affairs that are of relevance to them. The association is headed by a Chairman, called *Onye isi oche* that is supported by a Secretary called in the Ngwa dialect as *Ódé ákwìkwó*, a Treasurer called, '*Óchèákù*', and the *Ójèózì* called 'the Public Relations Officer', as his principal officers. Here, they talk of the parcels of land that a village has. They decide on what section of the land to farm on each year. The association sees to it that the gods of the land are appeased before any farming season. The association reveres the oldest man in the community, because he keeps the *ófó* (the image of the god of the land). It is equally him who pours the libation and offers sacrifice of any type on behalf of the entire village. Any male or female person who commits any crime is first interrogated in their separate clan association before it is brought to the General Village Association. The Men's Association, also has an annual levy, which each member pays. It also has a social welfare scheme which allows members to put down money for thrifts, which are to be taken in turns. From this, members can build financial capital for themselves. Members can help the needy, such as: paying the school fees of some children in the community, building houses for the homeless, helping the orphans and the widows amongst them. Members who are in financial need can be helped, by lending them some money which will be paid at a specified time. In the Men's Association, a male adult person is could be advised to take another wife to avoid the temptation of illicit relationship that may earn him a bad identity. These are some of the things that are done in the Men's Association.

1.7.3 *Òtù Ûmỳ Nwàànyí (Women's Village Association)*

According to the woman leader who was interviewed by the researcher's, the *Òtù Ûmỳ Nwàànyí* translated in the English language as, 'Women's Village Association', is an association, that is exclusively for women. It is headed by a Chairperson (a lady), called *Ónyé ísì óchè* that is supported by a Secretary called in the Ngwa dialect as '*Ódé ákwìkwó*', a Treasurer called, '*Óchèákù*', and the *Ójèózì* called 'the Public Relations Officer'. Another woman interviewed explained that *Òtù Ûmỳ Nwàànyí* is mainly a welfare association and a reconciliatory forum. In the Women's Association, the women have an annual levy which they pay. They meet every two weeks to discuss their pressing needs. The women financially help themselves by having a thrift, which helps them to raise some capital for their personal needs. In the Women's Association, the Chairperson organizes the women and leads out on how to weed the village roads. They support, the old women, by helping to prepare meals for them, cleaning their house, washing for them or caring for their farmlands. When a member is bereaved, they support the person in cash and in kind. When a member is dead, the members also support the family of deceased person by offering to buy the casket for the burial of the member. The women in the association advise themselves to keep their homes neat and be humble to their husbands. They also advise themselves to nurture their children in the right order. Persons, who are in need of money for a pressing need, can borrow some money from the welfare scheme of the association which they are bound to pay back on an agreed time. When a woman has a quarrel with her husband, or any other person, the council makes every possible effort to see to it that the woman and her husband or the other party at logger heads with the complainant are reconciled.

1.7.4 *Ndị Ísì Ópàrà (Association of the First Born Sons)*

An aged man interviewed by the researcher's opined that *Ndị Ísì Ópàrà*, translated into the English language as, 'Association of the First-Born Sons' is an exclusive association for the first-born sons in a village in the Ngwa community. This association sees to it that their right as the first born son in the family is upheld. Like the previous associations that have been discussed in this paper, the Association of the First Born Son, is headed by a Chairperson called *Ónyé ísì óchè* that is supported by a Secretary called in the Ngwa dialect as '*Ódé ákwìkwó*', a Treasurer called, '*Óchèákù*', and the *Ójèózì* called, 'the Public Relations Officer'. This association too, has a welfare scheme

where members can contribute thrifts for their personal use. Members too, who are in need of some financial help could borrow some money from the association. The association can embark on any project that they want to in the village. Members of the association, support greatly a member whose mother is deceased, because in Ngwa land, it is the first born son that performs the burial rites of the mother, thus he is expected to spend much money at the burial of his mother. The Association of the First Born Son, can also help in the resolution of a conflict between a member, and other person (s). They are known in helping to share the property of a late father between a member and his siblings. These are some of the activities engaged in by the Association of the First Born Sons (As reported by participant during the in-depth interview, 2024).

1.7.5 *Úmụ́ Àdhá* (Association of the First Born Daughters)

Úmụ́ Àdhá, translated into the English language as, ‘Association of the First Born Daughters’, is an exclusively female association of the first daughters from every family. This association is headed by a Chairperson, called *Ónyé ísì óchè* that is supported by a Secretary called in the Ngwa dialect as ‘*Ódé ákwùkwó*’, a Treasurer called, ‘*Óchèákú*’, and the *Ójèózí* called ‘the Public Relations Officer’. The Secretary of the association writes down every minute of the meetings of the association, while the treasurer records and gives account of every financial activity of the association. The Association of the First-Born Daughters, is a very active association in Ngwa land. It equally has a welfare scheme, by which members can be financially helped when in need of money. Since in Ngwa land, it is the first daughter that performs most of the burial rites of a dead father, members see to it that they help a member under such a condition, both in cash and in kind (As reported by *Ódé ákwùkwó* of *Úmụ́ Àdhá* during the in-depth interview, 2024). The Association of the First-Born Daughters, also helps the needy in the village, such as: the widow or widower, the elderly and the poor who cannot pay their school fees. These are some of the activities of the Association of the First Born Daughters in Ngwa land.

1.7.6 *Ndị Ntòro ọbịa* (Association of the Youths)

As reported by a participant during the in-depth interview (2024), *Ndị Ntòro ọbịa* translated into the English language, as the ‘Association of the Youths’ is made up of the male and female unmarried persons in the village. The association is headed by a Chairperson, called *Ónyé ísì óchè* that is supported by a Secretary called in the Ngwa dialect as ‘*Ódé ákwùkwó*’, a Treasurer called, ‘*Óchèákú*’, and the *Ójèózí* called ‘the Public Relations Officer’. Their objective is to see to it that things are rightly done in the village. They can constitute themselves into village vigilantes, by seeing to it that movement into and out of the village is controlled, and checking illicit movements in the night. The Association of the Youths, sees to it that the village roads are cleared and clean. They can also go to war with another community where there is a boundary dispute or murder of an innocent soul. This association can meet once or twice in a month. The association can engage in inter –village or intra-village football matches at the end of the year when farm activities are less.

1.7.7 *Ọgbákọ Ọnụmàrà* (Association of Close Kindreds/Clans)

Ọgbákọ Ọnụmàrà means ‘Association of Close Kindreds or Clans’, in the English language. This association like the name implies is constituted of just close kindreds. The association is headed by a Chairperson, called *Ónyé ísì óchè* that is supported by a Secretary called in the Ngwa dialect as ‘*Ódé ákwùkwó*’, a Treasurer called, ‘*Óchèákú*’, and the *Ójèózí* called ‘the Public Relations Officer’. By close kindreds as mentioned here, means that the members must be biologically related by blood or adoption in a village. Some of the functions of this association as gathered during the Researcher’s in-depth (2024) are :

- 6i. To see to it that every birth and death within the kindred is recorded.
- ii. That every male and female child is meaningfully equipped with the skills of the local trade.
- iii. That farm lands belonging to the kindred is protected.
- iv. That conflict is resolved amongst members.
- v. That members are actively involved in the welfare of the old ones.
- vi. That the *o 8 3 o 8 3*, ‘god of the land’, is sacredly venerated.
- vii. That a daughter is not given to the wrong man in marriage, nor a son allowed to take a wayward or lazy woman as a wife, by doing proper investigation before the contraction of any marriage.

viii. That the burial rites of any member is fully observed.

Having seen, some of the associations in Ngwa land, and how they operate, one can now conclude in the next subsection that follows.

2. Conclusion

The focus of this paper has been to examine the family, kinship and village associations in Ngwa land. From the family types in Ngwa land, it was observed that in Ngwa land the monogamous family type does exist where the man and his children constitute a family, but this does not mean that they do not relate with other family members. The polygamous family does exist too in Ngwa land, where a man has more than one wife. The reason for the polygamous family type, it was discovered was for the need to have more hands to help out on farm works, or where a man's first wife was unable to bear children for him, thus he may be led to take another wife for procreation and a continuation of the family name and lineage, or where a man just loves to have a large family size, or in pursuance of a title. From this paper, it was observed the same sex family type does not exist in Ngwa land. It is an abomination for even such to be mentioned amongst the people. The reconstructed family type may exist, but the children from an initial marriage will belong the male partner of that first marriage, since the Ngwa people are patrilineal in inheritance. In this paper, it was observed that different types of kinship do exist in Ngwa such as: Uncle: the brother of one's father or mother, called: *nwánné nwókó ínná m, mà ó bụ nwánné nwókó ínné m*, or Aunt: the sister of one's father or mother, called: *nwánné nwànyị ínná m mà ó bụ nwánné nwànyị ínné m*.

These showed the type of family ties prevalent in Ngwa land. These also showed the socio-cultural roles expected from one person to the other for the peaceful co-existence of one another in Ngwa as an ethnic society that is unique on its own. Finally, the different associations in Ngwa land point to the fact that there are organized groups in Ngwa land that protect the interest of the group for which it is formed and also for the welfare of the people. The General Village Association called, *Ámá-àlà úkwú*, poised for the protection of the entire kindreds that constitute a village. The *Ámá-àlà úkwú*, also engages in projects such as the construction of roads, building of schools, hospitals and the electrification of rural communities in Ngwa land. The paper also shows that the Youth Association acts as the local military force in Ngwa land. Finally, the associations also provided a social outfit for members in Ngwa land so that everyone is connected and can receive help from the group that one belongs to. This paper is not exhaustive in all that can be said about: family, kinship and village associations in Ngwa land. It rather encourages a comparative research between Ngwa and other communities in the Igbo world or other ethnic groups. The use of the principles of Ethnography of Communication, has shown that the acquisition of the language of a people is intertwined with the acquisition of the socio-cultural set up of the people. Thus, Okon (2010) notes that: "... within the cultural domain of a people, one gets to understand the belief system, the taboos, the totems, the values, the ethos, the fears, and hopes, the foods, the traditions, the clothes, the ceremonies, the names and the naming systems and whatever identifies the people by way of their mental and creative outputs: religion, literature, and the arts in general, economic well-being, education and so on". In other words, whatsoever an ethnic group of people are associated with, can be referred to as an integral part of their life style; their culture which is embedded in their language.

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