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ASSESSMENT OF APPRENTICESHIP PRACTICES IN UYO METROPOLIS, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study meticulously evaluated apprenticeship practices among the principal ethnic group traders—Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba—in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The objectives were to delineate the socio-economic characteristics of apprentices and to identify the varieties of apprenticeship practices. A purposive and snowball sampling technique was employed to select 96 respondents, while descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and a Likert scale continuum were utilized for analysis. Findings indicated that apprenticeship is predominantly youth-driven, with 93.2% of respondents aged 21–30 years and 75.3% unmarried. Apprentices were primarily male (93.2%), modestly educated (over 90% with 0–9 years of schooling), and earned predominantly ₦20,000–₦29,000 monthly. The Igbo constituted the majority (52.1%), followed by Hausa (31.5%) and Yoruba (16.4%). Ethnic disparities were apparent: 84.2% of Igbo masters refrained from paying stipends but provided settlement upon completion of training, Yoruba (91.7%) paid stipends, while Hausa adopted a hybrid model. Settlement was most pronounced among Igbo (86.8%), underscoring structured empowerment. Recruitment was predominantly family-based among Igbo (68.4%), personal agreements among Yoruba (58.3%), and mixed among Hausa. The duration of apprenticeship also varied, with Igbo favoring 5–6 years, while Hausa and Yoruba leaned towards 2–3 years. The study concludes that apprenticeship remains pivotal for youth empowerment but necessitates formalization, financial incentives, certification, gender inclusion, and mentor capacity building to enhance sustainability.*

KEYWORDS: *Apprenticeship Practices, Ethnic Groups, Trading, Uyo Metropolis*

INTRODUCTION

Capacity building is an essential component of skill and knowledge acquisition requisite for the growth of industries globally. Entrepreneurial development is an expanding sector that is currently augmenting household incomes and enhancing the overall well-being of the populace. In numerous

developing economies, apprenticeship systems are highly formalized and integrated into national education and labor frameworks. This system amalgamates classroom instruction with practical, on-the-job training in industries, ensuring that apprentices acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The dual system has been lauded for Germany's low youth unemployment rate and elevated levels of workforce productivity. Similarly, Switzerland's apprenticeship programs underscore collaboration among employers, educational institutions, and the government to cultivate skilled labor aligning with market needs. These programs encompass various industries, including finance, healthcare, and engineering, establishing them as a cornerstone of Switzerland's competitive economy. In the United Kingdom, apprenticeship schemes have been expanded and modernized to cater to a broad spectrum of sectors, from traditional trades to emerging fields such as digital technology and green energy. In the United States, apprenticeship is increasingly recognized as a viable alternative to conventional higher education, particularly in industries such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and construction. Federal initiatives like "ApprenticeshipUSA" aim to promote apprenticeship as a pathway for workforce development while addressing skills gaps in critical industries.

In sub-Saharan Africa, apprenticeship remains predominantly informal, deeply entrenched in cultural and community traditions. The region’s apprenticeship systems are crucial for skill acquisition, employment generation, and poverty alleviation, especially within the informal sector, which employs a significant proportion of the population. Unlike the formal systems in developed countries, apprenticeship in sub-Saharan Africa often operates without standardized curricula or formal certifications. Instead, it relies on interpersonal relationships, community networks, and practical, hands-on training.

In Nigeria, apprenticeship constitutes an integral aspect of the socio-economic fabric, particularly among the nation's three major ethnic groups: the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa. The Igbo apprenticeship system, known as "Igba Boi" or "Imu Ahia", is a traditional economic framework practiced by the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. This system gained prominence following the Nigerian-Biafran War, as many parents, in the wake of the civil war's hardships, were compelled to send their children to learn trades from other Igbo entrepreneurs. These children ranged in ages from eight to twenty years. In this apprenticeship system, the ‘Oga’ (Igbo entrepreneur-Boss), ‘Nwaboyi’ (the apprentice), and his family typically enter into an informal agreement for a period ranging from 4 to 7 years before the Oga can settle him. The mode of settlement is usually articulated in the informal agreement, whereby the ‘Oga’ assists in establishing a business for the graduated apprentice (Nwaboyi) by

covering shop outlet rent for a few years (1-3 years) and providing a financial infusion to initiate a business or supplying goods to the graduated apprentice worth a substantial amount for him to commence operations. Additionally, the Oga grants access to goods procurement on credit for a period, with repayment expected after sales, thereby promoting economic self-sufficiency and community wealth distribution. The origins of this system are believed to date back to pre-colonial times, evolving as a means to foster economic growth and stability within Igbo communities. Notably, the Igbo apprenticeship model has been recognized as a significant contributor to the development of small and medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria, enhancing business growth and providing sustainable livelihoods.

The Yoruba apprenticeship model has its roots in pre-colonial Yoruba society, where skill acquisition was deeply embedded in both the guild system and the Aje (trading) tradition. Artisans such as blacksmiths, woodcarvers, bead makers, and weavers were organized into guilds, where young apprentices (omo-ise) were trained under master craftsmen (baba-ise) through a structured process that combined skill mastery with cultural and ethical education (Fadipe, 1970). Furthermore, the Yoruba trading class, predominantly comprised of women in marketplaces, operated an informal mentorship system wherein business knowledge, financial management, and negotiation skills were imparted from experienced traders to younger ones (Adeyemi &Adeyinka, 2003). In contrast to the Igbo "Igba-Boi" system, which emphasizes post-apprenticeship financial settlement, the Yoruba model prioritizes long-term skill development, professional networking, and social capital, ensuring apprentices gain both technical expertise and robust business relationships within their communities (Ogunrin, 2015). This model has sustained various industries, including textile production, pottery, carpentry, and herbal medicine, while preserving Yoruba cultural identity and fostering economic stability.

The Hausa apprenticeship model is a traditional system of informal skills acquisition and business mentorship practiced in Northern Nigeria and parts of West Africa. Rooted in Islamic and communal values, it is predicated on trust, loyalty, and enduring relationships between the master ("ubangida") and the apprentice ("yaro") (Fafunwa, 1974). Unlike the Igbo "Igba-Boi" system, which emphasizes entrepreneurship and settlement at the conclusion of training, the Hausa model often integrates apprentices into existing businesses, offering them long-term employment rather than startup capital (Meagher, 2010). Learning is hands-on, encompassing trades, crafts, and services such as leatherwork, blacksmithing, and tailoring, with apprentices initially undertaking menial tasks before gradually assuming greater responsibilities (Abba & Ushie, 2020). The system thrives on verbal

agreements and robust social networks, reinforcing ethical values through religious teachings (Mahmud, 2019). It has sustained businesses for generations, fortified community ties, and provided economic stability, albeit limiting social mobility due to its lack of formal structure and financial empowerment (Umar, 2017). This study, therefore, endeavors to assess the apprenticeship practices of these traders in Akwa Ibom, focusing on their operational structures, training methodologies, and challenges.

The apprenticeship system is a traditional and pragmatic method for skills transfer and business training among various ethnic groups in Nigeria, notably the Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba traders. This system has been instrumental in fostering economic growth, entrepreneurship, and youth empowerment. However, despite its successes, the apprenticeship practices of these ethnic groups have confronted challenges, particularly in multicultural settings like Akwa Ibom State, where diverse cultural and social dynamics intersect. Among the Igbo, the "Igba-odibo" system is well-documented for its efficacy in transitioning apprentices to independent business owners. However, its adaptability in non-Igbo regions like Akwa Ibom raises inquiries about cultural integration, mentorship quality, and resource accessibility (Eze, 2020). Similarly, the Hausa traders' apprenticeship model often emphasizes family and communal ties, which may restrict participation by non-Hausa individuals and pose integration challenges in ethnically diverse settings (Aliyu, 2018). For the Yoruba, the apprenticeship system is frequently less formalized and varies considerably, yet it grapples with challenges related to consistency and standardization in multicultural environments. Given the unique socio-economic and cultural context of Uyo Metropolis, understanding how these apprenticeship systems operate, adapt, and interact is imperative. There is a dearth of comprehensive studies assessing the effectiveness, challenges, and prospects of apprenticeship practices across these ethnic groups in this state. This gap constrains policymakers and stakeholders' ability to devise inclusive strategies that leverage the strengths of these systems for sustainable economic development. The study seeks to answer the following questions: What are the socio-economic characteristics of Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba traders in Uyo Metropolis? What are the predominant types of apprenticeship practiced by these ethnic groups? To address these queries, the study aimed to: describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and identify the types of apprenticeship practices among the Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba traders.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Human Capital Theory: Human Capital Theory, developed by Becker (1964), elucidates how investments in education, training, and skill development enhance individuals' productivity,

culminating in economic growth and improved earning potential. The theory posits that knowledge and skills are forms of capital that yield enduring benefits, akin to physical or financial capital. Social Learning Theory posits that individuals acquire new behaviors, skills, and knowledge through observation, imitation, and modeling. Unlike traditional learning theories that emphasize direct reinforcement, this framework highlights that individuals learn from social interactions, role models, and their environment. This learning process is facilitated by four key mechanisms: attention, whereby individuals focus on a model's behavior; retention, where they remember observed actions; reproduction, where they replicate the behavior; and motivation, where external rewards or internal satisfaction encourage continued practice. Entrepreneurial Learning Theory elucidates how individuals acquire entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, and mindset through experience, reflection, and social interactions. The theory, developed by scholars such as Cope (2005) and Politis (2005), asserts that entrepreneurship is a continuous learning process shaped by both formal and informal experiences. The Theory of Informal Learning, formulated by Marsick and Watkins (1990, 2001), posits that individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies outside formal educational settings, often through daily experiences, observations, and interactions. Unlike structured learning that adheres to a curriculum, informal learning occurs spontaneously, often without conscious effort, and is deeply embedded in real-life situations.

Nwosu (2016) employed a mixed-method approach, integrating surveys and in-depth interviews with 150 Igbo traders and their apprentices in Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. The study reported that Igbo traders are predominantly male (85%), with a mean age of 35 years, and possess a relatively high level of education, with 60% having completed secondary school. Igbo traders typically engage in various trades, including motor parts trading, electronics trading, furniture making, tailoring, and fashion design. Adegbite (2012) utilized a qualitative approach, conducting focus group discussions and case studies with 30 Hausa traders and their apprentices in Kano, Kano State, Nigeria, and discovered that Hausa traders are predominantly male (90%), with a mean age of 40 years, and have a relatively low level of education, with 40% having completed primary school. Hausa traders are generally involved in various trades, encompassing textile trading, leatherwork, butchery and livestock trading, as well as spices and condiments trading. Ogunjimi (2017) adopted a quantitative approach, analyzing data from a survey of 200 Yoruba traders and their apprentices in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, and found that Yoruba traders are predominantly male (80%), with a mean age of 38 years, and possess a relatively high level of education, with 70% having completed secondary school. Nwosu (2016) employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating surveys and in-depth interviews with 150 Igbo traders and their apprentices in Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. The study found that Igbo

traders' apprenticeship practices rely heavily on informal skills and knowledge transfer mechanisms, such as observation, imitation, and hands-on training. Ogunjimi (2017) utilized a quantitative approach, analyzing data from a survey of 200 Yoruba traders and their apprentices in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study discovered that Yoruba traders' apprenticeship practices rely on a combination of formal and informal skills and knowledge transfer mechanisms, including apprenticeship training programs, workshops, and seminars. Ogunjimi (2017) utilized a quantitative approach, analyzing data from a survey of 200 Yoruba traders and their apprentices in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study identified several challenges confronting Yoruba traders, including limited access to modern technology, inadequate market information, and intense competition from other traders.

METHODOLOGY

Uyo Metropolis, situated in Akwa Ibom State within Nigeria's South-South region, serves as a critical trading nexus due to its strategic positioning and burgeoning economy. It is centrally located within Akwa Ibom State, positioned between latitudes 4° 50'N and 5° 7'N, and longitudes 7° 45'E and 8° 05'E. The region is characterized by a humid tropical climate, exhibiting two distinct seasons: dry and wet. The topography is predominantly flat, with an average elevation of 60 meters above sea level, with the exception of a ravine located in the northeastern sector. The area is traversed by the Ikpa River, along with several minor tributaries, which flow in tributaries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Socioeconomic Characteristics of Apprentices of the Respondents

Socio-Economic Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (Years)	21-25	34	46.6
	26-30	34	46.6
	31-35	5	6.8
Marital Status	Single	55	75.3
	Married	18	24.7
Years of Experience	1 - 5	55	75.3
	6 - 10	18	24.7
Income Level (Naira)	20,000-29,999	46	63
	30,000-39,999	25	34.3
	40,000-49,999	2	2.7
Educational Status (Years)	0	9	12.3
	6	37	50.7
	9	21	28.8
	≥ 12	6	8.2
Gender	Male	68	93.2
	Female	5	6.8
	1 – 4	58	79.4

Number of Fellow Apprentices Under Training	5 – 8	15	20.6
Ethnic Group	Igbo	38	52.1
	Hausa	23	31.5
	Yoruba	12	16.4

Source: ***Field Survey, 2025***

Types and Conditionalities of Traditional Apprenticeship Practices in the Study Area

Stipend Measures in Apprenticeship

The findings on stipend practices among the three ethnic groups reveal clear variations. majority of Igbo traders (84.2%) do not pay stipends to their apprentices, suggesting adherence to the traditional Igbo apprenticeship system (Igba Boi), where settlement replaces regular stipends. Conversely, 91.7% of Yoruba traders report paying stipends, indicating a hybrid or wage-based apprenticeship structure more reflective of formal job training models. Among the Hausa, a fairly balanced picture emerges: 52.2% pay stipends while 47.8% do not. This reflects a flexible structure that may combine both traditional and semiformal systems.

This ethnic variation supports the findings of Obasi and Nwachukwu (2021), who noted that while Igbo apprentices often work without financial remuneration in expectation of capital settlement, Yoruba systems are more inclined towards paying allowances to sustain apprentices' basic needs. The Hausa system seems less rigid and could be shaped by the Islamic cultural emphasis on fairness and mutual assistance in learning trades (Bello & Ahmad, 2019).

Recruitment Measures into Apprenticeship

Recruitment practices also differ significantly across ethnic lines. Among the Igbo respondents, 68.4% were recruited through family arrangements, signifying the communal and trust-based foundation of the Igbo system. In contrast, 58.3% of Yoruba apprentices were recruited by direct personal agreement with the master trader, reflecting individual initiative and less reliance on family brokerage. Hausa traders demonstrate a somewhat hybrid system: 52.2% were recruited through family arrangements, while 34.8% came by personal agreement.

Monitoring and Control of Apprentices

A high proportion of Igbo (81.6%) and Hausa (73.9%) traders exercise strict control over their apprentices, compared to 66.7% of Yoruba traders who reported doing so. The Igbo's strict control aligns with their belief in molding character and instilling work ethics-values deeply entrenched in their apprenticeship culture (Nwachukwu & Egbuta, 2020). Yoruba traders' relatively lower emphasis

on strictness may reflect a belief in guided autonomy, a system that allows apprentices some independence while being nurtured professionally.

Settlement Arrangements after Apprenticeship

The data revealed that the tradition of settlement at the end of apprenticeship is predominantly observed among Igbo traders, with 86.8% confirming they provide financial or material support to their apprentices upon completion. This is a hallmark of the *Igba Boi* system, where settlement is both a reward and a launchpad for the apprentice's independent career (Uche, 2022). In contrast, only 33.3% of Yoruba traders and 47.8% of Hausa traders indicated they settle their apprentices. These disparities underscore how the Igbo system is uniquely oriented toward wealth transfer and business proliferation through structured mentoring, a point emphasized by Eze and Ogbu (2020). Hausa and Yoruba approaches may lack this definitive endpoint and are more focused on skill transfer, leaving post-training decisions to individual negotiation or family support.

Conditionalities for Continuation and Expulsion

Data showed that most ethnic groups enforce conditions for continuing or terminating apprenticeship. Among the Igbo, 84.2% reported conditional agreements, such as obedience and commitment. Similarly, 73.9% of Hausa traders and 66.7% of Yoruba traders affirm that apprentices must meet certain behavioral and performance benchmarks. While this shows general convergence, it also highlights that Igbo traders are most structured in applying conditional rules, consistent with the quasiformal nature of their apprenticeship model. This aligns with Onoh and Ekwueme (2019), who documented how disciplinary codes are often embedded into informal apprenticeship agreements among the Igbo, serving as a performance management mechanism.

Written agreements were rare across all groups, but there are ethnic differences. Only 13.2% of Igbo, 21.7% of Hausa, and 25.0% of Yoruba respondents report having any form of written agreement. This finding reflects the persistent informality in Nigeria's apprenticeship system across ethnic lines, although Yoruba traders show slightly higher adoption of documentation, possibly due to urbanization and business registration trends. As Nwosu (2018) suggests, the lack of formal agreements often contributes to disputes and broken apprenticeship arrangements, particularly in cases where expectations were not clearly set.

Table 2. Traditional Apprenticeship Practices

Traditional Apprenticeship Practices	Ethnic Group	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Recruitment Measures						
Apprentices are recruited through family connections	Igbo	6 (16.0)	21 (55.0)	4 (11.0)	7 (18.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	2 (9.0)	16 (69.0)	3 (13.0)	2 (9.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (33.0)	8 (67.0)	0 (0.0)
Apprentices must be referred by relatives or friends	Igbo	3 (8.0)	9 (24.0)	16 (42.0)	10 (26.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	2 (9.0)	7 (30.0)	9 (39.0)	4 (18.0)	1 (4.0)
	Yoruba	1 (8.0)	4 (34.0)	6 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (8.0)
Apprentices are required to pay a fee before training	Igbo	17 (45.0)	8 (21.0)	0 (0.0)	11 (29.0)	2 (5.0)
	Hausa	6 (26.0)	6 (26.0)	1 (4.0)	8 (35.0)	2 (9.0)
	Yoruba	2 (16.7)	2 (16.7)	2 (16.7)	6 (50.0)	0 (0.0)
Apprentices must serve a specific number of years before completion	Igbo	28 (74.0)	10 (26.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	14 (61.0)	8 (35.0)	1 (4.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	7 (59.0)	4 (33.0)	1 (8.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Accommodation is provided for apprentices	Igbo	15 (39.0)	8 (21.0)	1 (3.0)	14 (37.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	8 (35.0)	8 (35.0)	1 (4.0)	6 (26.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	6 (50.0)	1 (8.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (42.0)	0 (0.0)
Stipend Measures						
Apprentices receive stipends or allowances during training	Igbo	0 (0.0)	23 (61.0)	15 (39.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	1 (4.0)	13 (57.0)	9 (39.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	0 (0.0)	8 (67.0)	4 (33.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
The master trader covers cost of learning materials/tools	Igbo	24 (63.0)	8 (21.0)	3 (8.0)	2 (5.0)	1 (3.0)
	Hausa	15 (66.0)	6 (26.0)	1 (4.0)	1 (4.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	8 (67.0)	3 (25.0)	1 (8.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Apprentices contribute financially to business during training	Igbo	1 (3.0)	7 (18.0)	16 (42.0)	8 (21.0)	6 (16.0)
	Hausa	1 (4.0)	3 (13.0)	13 (57.0)	5 (22.0)	1 (4.0)
	Yoruba	0 (0.0)	4 (33.3)	3 (25.0)	1 (8.3)	4 (33.3)
Apprentices participate in household responsibilities	Igbo	14 (37.0)	5 (13.0)	2 (5.0)	8 (21.0)	9 (24.0)
	Hausa	10 (43.0)	8 (35.0)	3 (13.0)	2 (9.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	3 (25.0)	6 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (25.0)	0 (0.0)
Control Measures						
Apprentices are disciplined via verbal warnings	Igbo	24 (63.0)	11 (29.0)	3 (8.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	15 (65.0)	7 (31.0)	1 (4.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	6 (50.0)	5 (42.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (8.0)	0 (0.0)
Apprentices disciplined via fines/deductions from earnings	Igbo	2 (5.0)	5 (13.0)	3 (8.0)	24 (63.0)	4 (11.0)
	Hausa	1 (4.3)	2 (8.7)	2 (8.7)	20 (87.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	0 (0.0)	1 (8.3)	1 (8.3)	9 (75.0)	2 (16.7)
Apprentices disciplined through physical punishment (e.g., flogging)	Igbo	2 (5.0)	1 (3.0)	2 (5.0)	19 (50.0)	14 (37.0)
	Hausa	1 (4.3)	2 (8.7)	2 (8.7)	16 (69.6)	2 (8.7)
	Yoruba	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	10 (83.0)	2 (17.0)
Apprentices take an oath or make formal contract before training	Igbo	6 (15.8)	8 (21.1)	7 (18.4)	9 (23.7)	8 (21.1)
	Hausa	4 (17.4)	7 (30.4)	4 (17.4)	5 (21.7)	3 (13.0)
	Yoruba	2 (16.7)	3 (25.0)	5 (41.7)	1 (8.3)	1 (8.3)
Family members act as guarantors for apprentices	Igbo	11 (28.9)	25 (65.8)	2 (5.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	6 (26.1)	14 (60.9)	3 (13.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	4 (33.3)	9 (75.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Settlement Measures						
Traditional Apprenticeship Practices	**Ethnic Group**	**Always**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**
Apprentices receive financial settlement upon completion	Igbo	18 (48.0)	9 (24.0)	4 (10.0)	7 (18.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	11 (48.0)	7 (31.0)	4 (17.0)	1 (4.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	4 (33.0)	3 (58.0)	1 (8.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

Apprentices are helped to set up their own business after training	Igbo	19 (50.0)	12 (32.0)	7 (18.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	11 (48.0)	7 (30.0)	5 (22.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	6 (50.0)	4 (33.0)	2 (17.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
A formal ceremony is held to mark the end of apprenticeship	Igbo	4 (10.5)	8 (21.1)	2 (5.3)	15 (39.5)	9 (23.7)
	Hausa	3 (13.0)	5 (21.7)	2 (8.7)	17 (73.9)	1 (4.3)
	Yoruba	2 (16.7)	3 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (66.7)	0 (0.0)
Apprentices return to their master for business advice after training	Igbo	3 (7.9)	20 (52.6)	15 (39.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	3 (13.0)	14 (60.9)	6 (26.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	1 (8.3)	11 (91.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Conditionalities of Traditional Apprenticeship Measures						
Apprenticeship duration is fixed and must be fully completed	Igbo	35 (92.0)	3 (8.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	19 (83.0)	3 (13.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (4.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	13 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Apprentices are expected to remain loyal to their master	Igbo	31 (82.0)	7 (18.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	19 (83.0)	4 (17.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	10 (84.0)	2 (16.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Apprentices who violate rules can be dismissed without settlement	Igbo	7 (18.0)	19 (50.0)	12 (32.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	4 (17.0)	11 (48.0)	7 (31.0)	1 (4.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	4 (33.0)	6 (50.0)	2 (17.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Apprentices must not engage in competing business during training	Igbo	2 (5.3)	20 (52.6)	7 (18.4)	10 (26.3)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	1 (4.3)	11 (47.8)	4 (17.4)	7 (30.4)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	1 (8.3)	6 (50.0)	2 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (25.0)
Apprentices must not disclose trade secrets to outsiders	Igbo	5 (13.2)	20 (52.6)	14 (36.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	3 (13.0)	11 (47.8)	7 (30.4)	2 (8.7)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	2 (16.7)	5 (41.7)	6 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Masters may extend apprenticeship if apprentice not ready	Igbo	0 (0.0)	2 (5.3)	11 (28.9)	19 (50.0)	6 (15.8)
	Hausa	0 (0.0)	1 (4.3)	6 (26.1)	12 (52.2)	4 (17.4)
	Yoruba	0 (0.0)	1 (8.3)	4 (33.3)	6 (50.0)	1 (8.3)
Apprentices must contribute to master's business before being settled	Igbo	28 (73.7)	10 (26.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	16 (69.6)	7 (30.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	11 (91.7)	1 (8.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Apprentices must adhere to strict discipline from master	Igbo	23 (60.5)	14 (36.8)	1 (2.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	14 (60.9)	8 (34.8)	1 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	8 (66.7)	5 (41.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
If an apprentice quits before completion, they forfeit financial settlement	Igbo	17 (44.7)	16 (42.1)	5 (13.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	13 (56.5)	11 (47.8)	1 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	7 (58.3)	4 (33.3)	1 (8.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Family members held responsible if apprentice absconds	Igbo	11 (28.9)	16 (42.1)	8 (21.1)	3 (7.9)	0 (0.0)
	Hausa	7 (30.4)	13 (56.5)	2 (8.7)	1 (4.3)	0 (0.0)
	Yoruba	4 (33.3)	6 (50.0)	3 (25.0)	1 (8.3)	0 (0.0)

Source: ***Field Survey, 2025 NOTE: Figures in parentheses represents percentages and those outside represents frequency***

The duration of apprenticeship also varied. Among the Igbo, a longer duration of 5–6 years was more common (60.5%), while Yoruba apprenticeships tended to be shorter, with 58.3% lasting 2–3 years. Hausa durations were more mixed, with 47.8% also indicating 2–3 years, but with a notable portion stretching longer. This is consistent with the structured timeline characteristic of the Igbo

apprenticeship model, which is not just skill based but also character-building, as discussed by Mbah and Ezeibe (2017). Yoruba and Hausa systems may prioritize faster turnover due to market dynamics or lesser emphasis on capital settlement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The socioeconomic characteristics of apprentices of Nigeria's major ethnic groups in Uyo Metropolis revealed that the apprenticeship system is mainly driven by young adults. A remarkable 93.2% of the respondents felt within 21–30 years age range, marital status data corroborated this, as 75.3% of apprentices were single, reflecting their flexibility and readiness to commit to lengthy training periods without the constraints of family responsibilities. In terms of experience, most apprentices were still in the early to mid stages of their journey, with over 75% reported 1–5 years of experience and a modal duration of 2 years. Their income levels, mostly within ₦20,000–₦29,000, More than 90% of the respondents had 0–9 years of schooling, highlighting the appeal of informal sectors like trade for those with limited formal qualifications. The study also revealed that, 93.2% of the apprentices were males. The analysis of replication practices among trainers indicates a moderate apprenticeship spread, with most training 2–4 apprentices, suggesting a healthy continuity in informal knowledge transfer. Ethnically, the Igbo dominated the sample at 52.1%, reflecting their entrenched culture of entrepreneurial mentorship and apprenticeship. The Hausa (31.5%) and Yoruba (16.4%) were also present, showcasing the multicultural nature of Uyo's trading system, though possibly with less formalized apprenticeship traditions. Overall, the findings present a comprehensive picture of a youthful, male-dominated, modestly educated, and ethnically diverse apprentice population actively sustaining informal economic practices in Uyo Metropolis. The findings from this study offer a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics, practices, within traditional apprenticeship systems among Nigeria's major ethnic groups trading in Uyo Metropolis. The socioeconomic profile highlights that apprentices are predominantly young, single, modestly educated males, with the Igbo ethnic group being the most represented -reflecting deep-rooted cultural affiliations to entrepreneurial mentorship. Despite variations in structure, apprenticeship practices across the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa groups are primarily informal and culturally embedded. Distinct differences were observed in stipend systems, recruitment styles, settlement provisions, control mechanisms, and apprenticeship durations. The study is recommended as follows: government should enact and enforce policies to formalize apprenticeship frameworks, including registration, certification, and minimum standards across ethnic and cultural lines, introduce financial support schemes (e.g., stipends or training grants) for apprentices, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to reduce dropout rates and increase access, deliberate

sensitization and policy efforts should be made to encourage female participation in trade apprenticeships, especially in ethnic groups or trades traditionally dominated by males, organize periodic workshops and training for mentors to enhance their pedagogical skills, improve ethical mentoring, and promote standardized knowledge transfer techniques. stablish partnerships with vocational institutions and trade unions to provide apprentices with recognized certifications at the end of training, enhancing post-apprenticeship employment opportunities and develop community-based monitoring and mediation platforms to handle conflicts, prevent exploitation, and protect the rights of both mentors and apprentices within the informal sector.

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