

**Proceedings of the 38th Annual National Conference of
Technology Education Practitioners Association of Nigeria
(Formerly Nigerian Association of Teachers of Technology,
NATT)**

**Theme:
Utilization of Digital Skills and AI on TVET for
Economic Diversification in the 21st Century
Educational Landscape**

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EXPLORING INDIGENOUS ART FORMS AND CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS: A STUDY OF FINE ART PRACTICES IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines indigenous art forms and cultural expressions in the Fine Art landscape of Niger State, Nigeria. Its aim is to document traditional visual practices, analyze their influence on contemporary artistic creativity, and identify challenges to their sustainability. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 120 practicing artists, art educators, and cultural custodians through questionnaires and interviews. Results show that indigenous practices such as pottery, weaving, and woodcarving are culturally significant, positively influence contemporary creativity, and face systemic challenges like lack of documentation and institutional support. The findings affirm that indigenous art remains vital for cultural identity and heritage preservation, but require deliberate integration into formal art education and cultural policy frameworks.

Keywords: Indigenous art, cultural expressions, Fine Art, art education, cultural heritage, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria's artistic heritage is rooted in a tapestry of indigenous visual traditions that have functioned for centuries as repositories of cultural knowledge, social values, and spiritual identity. Indigenous art forms including pottery, weaving, carving, dyeing, and beadwork—are not merely decorative; they have historically communicated social narratives, rites of passage, and cosmological beliefs within communities (Oladunni, 2025). These traditions predate colonial influence and testify to the complexity and richness of pre-colonial artistic civilizations in the region. Pottery, for example, dates back centuries before the Common Era, with archaeological finds across Nigeria demonstrating advanced ceramic traditions long before Western contact. Traditional visual arts such as woodcarving and textile production

have similarly been recognized as cultural signatures of various ethnic groups (Africa-Press.net, 2025).

These indigenous practices continue to influence contemporary art, though modern Fine Art education in Nigeria has historically emphasized Western paradigms of form, medium, and aesthetic criteria. This has often resulted in a disconnection between localized artistic knowledge and formal artistic training. Recent scholarship advocates for the integration of indigenous artistic practices into art education as a strategy for cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and socio-economic empowerment (Oladunni, 2025). In this context, Niger State serves as a vital site for investigative research into the current state, relevance, and sustainability of indigenous Fine Art practices.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the cultural wealth embodied in indigenous art forms, several problems diminish their visibility and continuity in Niger State. First, there is *insufficient documentation* of traditional techniques and symbolic meanings; many practices are transmitted orally and risk extinction as elders pass on without formal record (Nonye, 2016). Second, *institutional art education* in Nigeria, including within Niger State, has been critiqued for privileging Western artistic conventions at the expense of localized knowledge systems. This has created a pedagogical gap that distances emerging artists from ancestral techniques and cultural contexts that once anchored artistic identity formation. Third, *limited patronage and economic incentives* for indigenous artisans has led many young people to disengage from traditional practice, heightening the risk of cultural loss and weakening the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous artistic heritage.

Purpose of the Study

1. To identify and describe indigenous art forms and cultural expressions practiced in Niger State.
2. To assess the influence of indigenous art techniques on contemporary artistic creativity.
3. To examine challenges and opportunities for sustaining indigenous Fine Art practices in Niger State.

Research Questions

1. What indigenous art forms and cultural expressions are practiced in Niger State?
2. To what extent do indigenous artistic practices influence contemporary artistic creativity?
3. What challenges and opportunities exist for preserving indigenous Fine Art practices in Niger State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no statistically significant relationship between knowledge of indigenous art forms and artistic creativity.
2. Exposure to indigenous art techniques does not significantly influence artists' skill development.
3. Challenges facing indigenous art practices do not significantly affect their sustainability.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design involving 120 participants (practicing artists, educators, and cultural custodians) from both urban and rural communities within Niger State. Participants were selected via stratified random sampling to ensure representative demographic and artistic backgrounds. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation to test hypotheses; qualitative data were analyzed through thematic content analysis.

Results

Table 1: Indigenous Art Forms in Niger State

Art Form	Frequency (n=120)	Percentage (%)
Pottery	40	33.3
Weaving	32	26.7

Art Form	Frequency (n=120)	Percentage (%)
Woodcarving	28	23.3
Textile Dyeing	12	10.0
Beadwork	8	6.7

Interpretation: Pottery (33.3%) and weaving (26.7%) are the dominant indigenous art forms in Niger State, reflecting deep cultural roots in traditional material arts.

Table 2: Influence on Contemporary Artistic Creativity

Level of Influence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	58	48.3
Moderate	42	35.0
Low	20	16.7

Interpretation: Nearly half of respondents reported that indigenous practices have a high influence on their creative outputs, indicating a strong continuing cultural linkage.

Table 3: Challenges Facing Indigenous Art Practices

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of documentation	52	43.3
Limited patronage	36	30.0
Insufficient institutional support	22	18.3
Youth disengagement	10	8.3

Interpretation: Lack of systematic documentation (43.3%) emerged as the most significant challenge, affirming concerns that indigenous art is at risk of decline without formal preservation mechanisms (Nonye, 2016).

Table 4: Hypothesis 1 (H1)

There is no significant relationship between knowledge of indigenous art forms and artistic creativity among Fine Art practitioners in Niger State.

Variable	Test Used	Calculated Value	p-value	Decision
Knowledge of Indigenous Art Forms vs Artistic Creativity	Pearson Correlation	$r = 0.62$	0.000	Reject H0

Interpretation: A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.62$) indicates that greater knowledge of indigenous art forms significantly enhances artistic creativity. The null hypothesis is rejected, confirming a meaningful relationship between traditional knowledge and creative output.

Table 5: Hypothesis 2 (H2)

Exposure to indigenous art techniques does not significantly influence technical skills among contemporary artists in Niger State.

Variable	Test Used	Calculated Value	p-value	Decision
Exposure to Indigenous Techniques vs Technical Skills	Pearson Correlation	$r = 0.57$	0.000	Reject H0

Interpretation: There is a moderate to strong positive correlation ($r = 0.57$), showing that hands-on exposure to traditional art techniques significantly improves technical skills. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6: Hypothesis 3 (H3)

The challenges facing indigenous Fine Art practices do not significantly affect their sustainability in Niger State.

Variable	Test Used	Calculated Value	p-value	Decision
Challenges (Documentation, Patronage, Institutional Support) vs Sustainability	Chi-Square Test	$\chi^2 = 38.4$	0.001	Reject H0

Interpretation: The test reveals that challenges significantly impact the sustainability of indigenous art. Lack of documentation, low patronage, and minimal institutional support threaten the continuity of traditional practices. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The results affirm the vibrancy of indigenous artistic traditions within Niger State's cultural ecology. Pottery and weaving, deeply rooted in local history, are not just crafts but cultural symbols that embody community memories and practices (Africa-Press.net, 2025). These forms continue to act as foundations upon which contemporary artists build creative identities.

The high degree of reported influence on artistic creativity aligns with wider Nigerian art scholarship that describes how indigenous visual vocabularies continue to shape contemporary expression. Printmaking and local material experimentation in Nigerian art, for example, have been interpreted as ongoing dialogues between tradition and modernity (Ijisakina, 2021). This creative interplay corroborates the survey findings that many artists in Niger State draw from indigenous themes and techniques to inform their contemporary works.

Challenges such as lack of documentation and limited institutional support resonate with broader cultural heritage studies that identify systemic neglect of indigenous knowledge systems across Nigeria. Scholars argue that inadequate policy frameworks and educational integration contribute to the erosion of traditional arts and cultural expressions over time

(Nonye, 2016; Oladunni, 2025). Moreover, absence of formal archiving practices undermines the potential for intergenerational transmission of artistic knowledge—a threat highlighted in both academic literature and field observations.

Conclusions

Indigenous art forms in Niger State continue to play a vital role in cultural expression and artistic creativity. Despite persistence of these traditions, systemic challenges—especially lack of documentation and institutional backing—impede their broader sustainability and appreciation. Nevertheless, indigenous arts remain central to cultural identity and offer potential for enriching art education and heritage policies.

Recommendations

1. Establish community art archives to preserve traditional techniques and narratives.
2. Integrate indigenous artistic practices into formal art education at all levels.
3. Government and cultural bodies should provide grants and platforms for indigenous artisans to thrive.

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