

Assessment of Community Participation in The Preservation of Cultural Heritage Resources Among Rural Households in Southwest Nigeria

AYOADE R. A.¹, OGUNJUMO M. A.², ADEWOLE W.³, TIAMIYU A. O.⁴

^{1, 2, 3, 4}Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso

Abstract- *The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) rightly posits that Nigeria is blessed with outstanding cultural, natural and significant heritage resources. Meanwhile, the country is facing multiplicity of problems in her attempt at cultural transformation particularly concerning the proper preservation of her abundant cultural heritage. This study assessed the level of community participation in cultural heritage resources preservation among the rural household in South West Nigeria. Multistage sampling procedure was employed for the selection of 221 respondents for the study. Data were collected using a mixed method of well structured questionnaires and interview schedule. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, Weighted Mean Score (WMS) were used to describe the socioeconomic characteristics, enumerate the benefits of cultural heritage preservation, examine challenges to cultural heritage preservation and to examine the level of community participation on cultural heritage preservation. t-test analysis was used to test the hypothesis of the study. The findings revealed that the mean age of the respondents was 54 years in Oyo and 57 years in Ogun States. The mean household size was 7 people in both Oyo and Ogun States. Preserving traditional entrepreneurial skills (99.5%) was the most benefit derived from cultural heritage preservation. Lack of technical experts and poor professionalism (WMS = 1.26) was the most challenge encountered in preservation. The t-test result shows that there was no significant difference in the level of community participation in the preservation of cultural heritage resources between Oyo and Ogun States ($t=1.766$, $p=0.081$). The study concluded that benefits of cultural heritage influenced the level of participation. The study therefore recommends that funds should be allocated to researchers, conservators and other professionals to build their capacities in conservation process*

Key Words: Cultural heritage, Community participation, Preservation and Rural households

I. INTRODUCTION

Over time, the meaning of cultural heritage has expanded from single monuments identified as

objects of art to cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, historic cities and serial properties to relate to material structures, institutional complexes and practices, and at the same time carries a powerful emotional charge and a value structure emanating from the idea of belonging and of shared cultural meanings” (Terngu et al., 2021). Cultural heritage is, therefore seen as an expression of the ways of living, developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values.

Cultural heritage is a concept which offers a bridge between the past and the future with the application of particular approaches in the present. Due to its attached values for these groups or societies, cultural heritage is maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. (Central European University, 2020).

Community participation in heritage conservation on the other hand, represents how groups of people are organized and interact in a given neighborhood. In this context, the connections that people have, which are based on shared culture, history, experiences, and emotions as part of their heritage are contributory factors to the development of that locality as observed across the world. Action or techniques adopted to identify and incorporate stakeholders to take part in the process and influence project outcomes are regarded as participation (Oladeji et al., 2022).

Preservation of cultural heritage resources can only spur sustainable development where necessary strategies mobilized through a collective and coordinated actions are taken by local actors. Globally, the importance of cultural heritage preservation to countries and even in developing nations like Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. This

is due to its economic, historical, tourist, aesthetic, educational and research significance. Heritages are cherished characteristics features of a society passed down from generation to generation through conscious preservation. (Onyima, 2016).

Unfortunately, these fascinating cultural heritage resources are not well preserved. On a general level, adequate attention has not been allotted to heritage management in Nigeria. In 2017, UNESCO expressed the view that Nigeria's cultural heritage constitutes a substantial part of the country's tourism resources; and that, if properly harnessed, protected and managed, it can contribute significantly to the country's economic development goals (Terngu et al., 2023).

As opined by Oladeji, the rich cultural heritage resources of Yoruba speaking of South Western Nigeria are yet to be fully explored. Available literature in Nigeria has been skewed to the conservation of heritage sites like Osun Osogbo Sacred grove (Oladeji et al., 2022). Badagry Slave trade relics (Oladeji and Olatuyi, 2020) and Idanre Cultural Landscape (Oladeji, 2021). There is therefore a need to explore the involvement of more communities in the conservation and management of both the tangible and intangible heritage resources in selected states among the Yoruba ethnic region of Nigeria (Oladeji et al., 2022). Therefore, this study assessed the level of community participation in preservation of cultural heritage resources in Southwest Nigeria. Specifically, the study described the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, examined the benefits of cultural heritage preservation and examined the challenges to cultural heritage preservation in the study area. It was hypothesized that there is no significant difference in the level of community participation in the preservation of cultural heritage resources between Oyo and Ogun States

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Oyo and Ogun States in Southwestern geopolitical zone of Nigeria. They were both selected as a result of their richness and significant in both cultural and natural heritage resources and besides less study had been carried out on both states as opined by Oladeji that the rich cultural heritage resources of Yoruba speaking of South West Nigeria are yet to be fully explored.

(Oladeji et al., 2022) Multistage sampling technique was used with a mixed method of a well-structured open-ended questionnaires and interview schedule to obtained data from 221 respondents The targeted population were matured men and women that had lived in the area not less than 10years. The first stage involved purposive selection of Oyo and Ogun. The second stage involved random selection of 10% local governments in each selected State. The third stage involved 40% villages randomly selected from each local government. The last stage was 20% randomly selected from the entire registered households from each village. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage mean, standard deviation WMS and GMS. The inferential statistics tool used was t-test analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents

Results presented in Table 1 revealed that in Oyo state, slightly more than half of the respondents were male (52.3%), while 47.7% of the respondents were female. Likewise, in Ogun state (52.8%) of the respondents were male while (47.2%) of the respondents were females. This implies that more males were actively involved in cultural heritage resources preservation than the female counterpart. From the pooled result, slightly above half 52.7% of the respondents were male while 47.3% were females. This could be attributed to the fact that household heads were majorly involved in community decision making. This also corroborate with the observation of Oladeji et al., (2022) that decision making and custodians of cultural heritage resources at local, regional or at the national levels are often male dominated than females.

Table 1 also revealed the distribution of respondents by age. The mean age of the respondents in the study area was 56years which indicated that majority of the respondents from both States were still in their active age and were therefore expected to be able to participate fully in preservation of cultural heritage resources in their various communities.

Similarly, Table 1 also gave the distribution of respondents by their religion, the result provided valuable insights into the religious dynamics within the study area. The pooled result gave an average percentage of the respondents 50.0% to be Christians while 42.3% were Muslims and 7.7% were traditional

worshippers. The result was an indication that different religion co-exist. Meanwhile, it is plausible to infer that while religion affiliations may not directly oppose the preservation processes, they may as well influence the extent of the involvement of their members through certain restrictions or ethical considerations based on religious teachings and beliefs. As noted by Eke, (2011) cited by Ikejiaku (2017), that the spread of Christianity and Islam has led to a decline in traditional practices as many Nigerians are converting to foreign religions which had led to loss of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge as well as a shift in values and beliefs. Further research could delve deeper into the interceptions of religious beliefs on preservation of cultural heritage resources.

Furthermore, Table 1 also gave the distribution of the respondents by the number of years they had spent in their various communities. It was revealed that the respondents had a good knowledge of what is going on in their communities because over 80% of them had lived in the study area for more than 30 years which was an indication that they have gotten enough experience on community participation as well as

involving in different ways of preservation of cultural heritage resources in their area. This finding also agreed with the observation of Kreps (2008) cited by Nguyen et al., (2024) that local communities offered indigenous construction techniques with traditional practices that provides congruent solutions for heritage conservation.

Lastly, Table 1 also revealed the distribution of respondents based on their membership of various community organization the pooled results revealed that majority of the respondents 85.1% indicated they belong to one community organization or the other while 14.9% indicated they do not belong to any community organization. It is expected that their affiliation with a community organization will influence their level of participation in preservation of cultural heritage resources because they can easily access more knowledge and exposure through interaction with other people. This finding also agreed with Oladeji et al., (2022) that preservation of cultural heritage resources can only spur sustainable development where necessary strategies are mobilized through a collective and coordinated actions by local community organizations.

Table 1 Distribution of respondents by socioeconomic characteristics

Socioeconomic characteristics	OYO (n=132)	OGUN (n=89)	Pooled (n=221)
Sex			
Male	69(52.3)	47(52.8)	52.7
Female	63(47.7)	42(47.2)	47.3
Age (years)			
≤ 30	9(7.0)	1(1.1)	10(4.5)
31 - 40	12(9.0)	3(3.3)	15(6.8)
41 - 50	23(18.0)	20(22.5)	43(19.5)
51 - 60	44(33.0)	31(34.7)	75(33.9)
61 - 70	31(23.0)	21(23.8)	52(23.5)
71 and above	13(10.0)	13(14.6)	26(11.8)
Mean	54 yrs	57 yrs	56 yrs
Religion			
Christianity	65(49.3)	45(50.6)	110(50.0)
Islam	56(42.4)	37(41.6)	93(42.3)
Traditional	11(8.3)	7(7.8)	18(7.7)
Years spent in the community			
0 - 10	5 (3.8)	3(3.4)	8(3.6)
11 – 20	7(5.3)	3(3.4)	10(4.5)
21 – 30	21(15.9)	8(9.0)	29(13.2)
31 and above	99(75.0)	75(84.2)	174(78.7)
Members of community organization			
Membership	115(87.1)	73(82.0)	188(85.1)
No-membership	17(12.9)	16(18.0)	33(14.9)

Percentage (Figures in parenthesis)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Benefits of cultural heritage preservation

Table 2, shows the distribution of the respondents as regards the benefits they derived from cultural heritage resources. From the pooled results 99.5% of the respondents agreed that cultural heritage preservation helps to preserve traditional entrepreneurial skills like goldsmithing, carving etc. 99.1% of the respondents said that it contributes to community social amenities like good roads, health centers etc. another 98.2% of the respondents stated that it promotes cultural diversity and allows assimilation of other people's culture, 97.7% of the respondents agreed to sustainability of the community identity with a sense of belonging and pride, 97.3% of the respondents were into creativities that led to economic profitability through entrepreneurial skills, 96.8% of the respondents

accepted that it promote social cohesion and equity another 96.8% of the respondents agreed that it helps to increase income generation through exhibitions and festivals while another 96.4% of the respondents agreed that it helps to established memorable infrastructures like museum, library, etc. 95.0% of the respondents agreed to the fact that it creates employment opportunities, another 95.0% of the respondents stated that it fosters community engagement through traditional practices. The implication was that respondents benefited greatly from cultural heritage resources available in the study area. The result of this finding also corroborates the discovery of Terngu et al., (2023) that cultural heritage is one of the cardinal pillars of the sustainable development of local economies which has recently become the most important tool in fostering sustainable development in multicultural societies such as Nigeria.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by benefits of cultural heritage Preservation

Benefits*	OYO F(%)	OGUN F(%)	POOLED F(%)
Creativity which leads to economic profitability.	125(95)	89(100)	214(97.3)
Sustainability of community	126(95.5)	89(100)	215(97.7)
Promote social cohesion and equity	125(94.7)	88(98.9)	213(96.8)
Create employment opportunities	123(93.2)	86(96.6)	209(95.0)
Fosters community engagement through traditional practices	124(93.9)	85(95.5)	209(95.0)
Establishment of memorable infrastructures	127(96.2)	85(95.5)	212(96.4)
Preserve traditional entrepreneurial skills	131(99.2)	89(100)	220(99.5)
Promote unity of cultural diversity	127(96.2)	89(100)	216(98.2)
Contribute to community social amenities	130(98.5)	88(98.9)	218(99.1)
Increase income generation through exhibition and festivals	125(94.7)	88(98.9)	213(96.8)

Percentage (Figures in parenthesis)

*Multiple response

F = Frequency

% Percentage

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Challenges of cultural heritage preservation

The distribution of respondents according to the various challenges encountered was presented in Table 3, from the pooled result, the severeness of the challenges were ranked as follows, lack of technical experts and poor professionalism (WMS = 1.26), weak legal policies from the government and community leaders (WMS = 1.23), poor funding by

the government and stakeholders (WMS = 1.22), poor documentation process (WMS = 1.20), ignorance and neglect from the community members (WMS = 1.07), illegal trade and theft of the cultural artifacts (WMS = 0.81), urbanization and developmental projects (WMS = 0.78), natural disasters (WMS = 0.72), religious beliefs and iconoclasm (WMS = 0.76), war and crisis from within or outside the community (WMS = 0.61).

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by the challenges encountered in preservation of cultural heritage in Southwest Nigeria (Pooled)

Challenge statements*	Serious F(%)	Mild F(%)	Not a Challenge F(%)	WMS	Rank
Ignorance and neglect from community members	62(28.2)	111(50.5)	47(21.4)	1.07	5 th
Illegal trade and theft of cultural artifacts	23(10.5)	132(60.0)	65(29.5)	0.81	6 th
Natural Disasters	24(10.9)	111(50.5)	85(38.6)	0.72	8 th
Urbanization and developmental projects	28(12.7)	116(52.7)	76(34.5)	0.78	7 th
War and crisis within or outside the community	27(12.3)	80(36.4)	113(51.4)	0.61	10 th
Poor funding by the government and stakeholders	87(39.6)	94(42.7)	39(17.7)	1.22	3 rd
Weak legal policies from the government and community leaders	87(39.6)	95(43.2)	38(17.3)	1.23	2 nd
Lack of technical experts and poor professionalism	97(44.1)	81(36.8)	42(19.1)	1.26	1 st
Poor documentation process	88(40.0)	87(39.6)	45(20.5)	1.20	4 th
Religious beliefs	30(13.7)	86(39.1)	104(47.3)	0.67	9 th

Percentage (Figures in parenthesis)

WMS: Weighted Mean Score

Source: Field Survey, 2025

*Multiple response

F = Frequency

% = Percentage

Level of community participation in preservation of cultural heritage resources in Southwest Nigeria

The respondents' level of community participation in preservation of cultural heritage resources in Southwest was shown in Table 4. From the pooled results, under conservation, sensitizing others on importance of conserving cultural heritage resources is (WMS = 3.09), taking measures to protect cultural heritage sites (WMS = 3.01), use of technology (WMS = 1.97), adequate funding from the government (WMS = 1.74). For custodian, sense of ownership (WMS = 3.10), financial obligation towards community development projects (WMS = 2.25), hosting cultural display activities for youths (WMS = 1.87) and local artisans access to financial credit (WMS = 1.80). Under decision making, participating in community decision making (WMS = 3.30), using traditional knowledge to handle community leadership (WMS = 3.30), while favourable policies and laws that sensitize people on importance of cultural heritage preservation is (WMS = 2.90). For maintenance, vigilantly monitoring the level of adherence to cultural values (WMS = 3.36), engaging in activities for maintaining cultural

heritage sites (WMS = 3.31), official staff are attached to heritage sites (WMS = 2.77). Under transmission, use of mother tongue (WMS = 3.50), passing traditional values to the younger ones (WMS = 3.49), utilizing opportunities to contribute skills and knowledge to conserving heritage resources (WMS = 3.46), promoting traditional professionalism by organizing workshops and exhibition programmes (WMS = 3.45), providing adequate training for conservators and stakeholders (WMS = 3.42). For reporting, reporting any case of challenge or non-compliance to local leaders (WMS = 3.45) and relevant authorities promptly address reports and concerns (WMS = 3.40). From the result of the two states pooled the level of community participation can be ranked as transmission (GMS = 3.46), reporting (GMS = 3.42), decision making (GMS = 3.16), maintenance (GMS = 3.14), conservation (GMS = 2.45) and custodian (GMS = 2.25). Based on this finding, it was revealed that transmission through passing traditional moral values and use of mother tongue were the highest level of community participation in Southwest Nigeria. This is also in agreement with the work of H. Jang and J. Mennis (2024) who both examined the pivotal role of oral traditions in heritage conservation, they further illustrated how the narratives and lore recounted by community elders are fundamental to comprehending the context of preserving cultural heritage resources and facilitating the intergenerational transmission of knowledge of the cultural values.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by level of community participation in preservation of cultural heritage resources in pooled data

Statements*	WMS	Rank	GMS	Rank
Conservation				
Use of technological tools, online exhibitions etc.	1.97	3rd		
Sensitizing others on the importance of conserving cultural heritage	3.09	1st	2.45	5th
Taking measures to protect cultural heritage site in any community	3.01	2nd		
Getting adequate funding from the government	1.74	4th		
Custodian				
Financial obligation towards community development projects	2.25	2nd		
Having a sense of ownership and responsibility towards cultural heritage	3.10	1st	2.25	6th
Local artisans access to financial credit	1.80	4th		
Hosting cultural display activities for youths	1.87	3rd		
Decision Making				
Participating in community decision making	3.30	1st		
Using traditional knowledge to handle community leadership	3.30	1st	3.16	3rd
Having favourable policies and laws	2.90	2nd		
Maintenance				
Official staff are attached to the cultural heritage site(s) in my area	2.77	3rd		
Engaging in activities for maintaining cultural heritage sites	3.31	2nd	3.14	4th
Vigilantly monitoring the level of adherence to cultural values	3.36	1st		
Transmission				
Passing traditional moral values to younger ones	3.49	2nd		
Use of mother tongue	3.50	1st		
Utilizing opportunities to contribute skills and knowledge to cultural heritage resources	3.46	3rd	3.46	1st
Promoting traditional professionalism	3.45	4th		
Providing adequate training	3.42	5th		
Reporting				
Reporting any case of challenge or non-compliance	3.45	1st	3.42	2nd
Relevant Authorities promptly address reports	3.40	2nd		

Percentage (Figures in parenthesis)

WMS: Weighted Mean Score

Source: Field Survey, 2025

*Multiple response

F = Frequency

% = Percentage

Table 4. T-test analysis showing the significant difference in the level of community participation in the preservation of cultural heritage resources between Oyo and Ogun States

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the level of community participation in the preservation of cultural heritage resources between Oyo and Ogun States.

The result of the independent T-test in table 4.10 revealed that there was no significant difference in the level of community participation in the

preservation of cultural heritage resources in Oyo and Ogun States ($t=1.766$, $p=0.081$). This result implies that there was no significant difference in the level of community participation in preservation of cultural heritage resources in Oyo State and the level of community participation in preservation of cultural heritage resources in Ogun State. Reasons for this maybe because they both shared the same historical origin with similar cultural values, norms and cultural heritage resources.

Table 4. T-test analysis showing the significant difference between the level of community participation in the preservation of cultural heritage resources in Oyo and Ogun States

Variable	Mean	t-value	p-value	Decision
Level of community participation and preservation of cultural heritage resources	0.180	1.766	0.081	Not significant

Source: Computed Data, 2025

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study affirmed that lack of technical experts and poor professionalism was a serious challenge encountered in preservation of cultural heritage resources and also discovered that the level of community participation in preservation of cultural heritage resources in the study area was moderate. The study therefore recommends that communities should promote cultural festivals, performances and local crafts display periodically with the spirit of competition with prizes giving to winners at the community, state and federal levels respectively. Moreso, stakeholders should increase the capacity building and empowerment of the professionals who will in-turn create an aggressive public awareness towards recognition, promotion and proper means of preservation of cultural heritage resources sustainably.

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