

Oselu/Ojelu Relations in Yoruba Politics: Insights into the Untapped Capital of “Ga’nu Si”

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Abstract

The absence of good governance in Yoruba communities now has manifest effects. This article examines how “ga’nu si” predisposes *oselu/ojelu* relations to good governance advocacy in Yoruba communities. It uses a qualitative method to collect cleaned and sorted secondary data into themes consistent with its objective before conducting content and thematic analyses. Findings indicate that while “ga’nu si” was a repulsive expression that scuttled cooperative partnership among *oselu/ojelu* politicians, it remolds predominant stereotype and stigmatization into a powerful resource with a heuristic value that drives mass embrace of good governance and objection to systemic rot in the Yoruba political landscape. The article concludes that when the supporters of good governance no longer suffer stereotypes for advocating the cause of *oselu* politicians or stigmatization for discrediting their greedy *ojelu* counterparts, rational good-governance fixing choices will railroad all advocates of “ga’nu si” into active political movement for stable and prosperous polity in Yoruba communities. It suggests a policy disavowal of the negative political use of “ga’nu si” to transform it into a patriotic tool of good governance. Therefore, as the Yoruba communities evolve politically, they will reflect good governance in its endearing and enduring contents because it resonates with local realities, which “the norm of “ga’nu si” represents in the polity.

Keywords: “ga’nu si”, good governance advocacy, norms, *ojelu/oselu*, stereotypes, Yoruba

Introduction:

Good governance is the attraction of citizens from poor countries of the world. Clueless political leadership is the root cause of bad governance. Other causes range from individual to community-level concerns. While some individuals sadly desire to profit from the misfortunes of the majority, some wilfully weaken judicial ethos to take advantage of the compromised rule of law. When a population subset misconceives the mischievous tokenism of the *ojelu* politicians as patriotism at the micro level, “ga’nu si” produces

a negative manifestation. This effect may blossom into a full-blown systemic failure with widespread implications for macro-level development. Just as the bond of “we feeling” unites *oselu* politicians with their norm-compliant compatriots; the tie of “they feeling,” too, links the norm-flouting community members to their *ojelu* political mentors. However, the intimidating positive energy from the norm-compliant community members often overwhelms the mischief of their norm-flouting counterparts, leaving the *ojelu* politicians without a local refuge.

To savor the dividends of collective financial sacrifices, Yoruba people should replicate the post-civil war slogan “for self-defense, join civil defense” to “for collective survival, join the mass movement for good governance.” If Yoruba communities harness the untapped potentials of “*ga’nu si*” to capture and reconstitute the antagonists of *oselu* into advocates of good governance, the vigor of their newly added blood can verifiably modify the socioeconomic direction of Nigeria’s development. Therefore, “*ga’nu si*” is a reversible cultural expression that can socially re-engineer the psyche of Yoruba people to embrace productive good governance if well recalibrated. Other parts of this article are structured as follows. Section 1 presents the introduction, literature, theoretical, and conceptual frameworks. Section 2 handles methodology. Section 3 presents the results. Section 4 discusses findings, and Section 5 concludes with recommendations.

Literature Review:

Just as the Yoruba language is replete with *oriki* (praise words), it has numerous others with pejorative undercurrents, which almost always breed reactions. “*Ga’nu si*” (GNS) typifies such expressions. It exemplifies an intention to make ingratiating remarks for personal gains. A typical Yoruba would be uncomfortable with his/her action being regarded as such. The expression seems disturbing, but in context, it sounds different (Oladejo, 2025, n.p). In his analysis, following the virally controversial public use of “*ga’nu si*” by Wasiu Ayinde Anifowose, the *fuji* musician, at the burial of his mother on January 17, 2025, Odesola (2025) notes that ‘*ga’nu si*’ is a six-letter Yoruba phrase with three syllables. The first syllable, ‘*ga*’, means to ‘set open’, the second, ‘*nu*’, is a contracted form of ‘*enu*’ (mouth), while the third, ‘*si*’, means ‘to’ or ‘upon’. Therefore, a literal English translation of ‘*ga’nu si*’ is ‘set open the mouth to/upon.’ Even if the expression was a slang popularized by the subcultural norms of its street users in Yoruba land, in the course of common everyday interactions among Yoruba people, “*ga’nu si*”

implies disrespect, self-esteem issues, revenge, and cultural disequilibrium of some sort. That perspective has become comparatively timeworn. A newer perspective, the most contemporary, especially about good governance, “*ga’nu si*” is a normative knife with double edges. While *ojelu* politicians can use “*ga’nu si*” to subvert good governance, *oselu* politicians can intensify good governance and actualize public good.

Some scholars have represented norms so captivately in the literature. They contend that “...human life is wrapped in a tightly woven tapestry of rules... that govern every aspect of social behavior” (Anderson & Dunning, 2014, pp. 721–738). So, norms can result from spontaneously emerging behavioral regularities that acquire normative force gradually over time (Hawkins, Goodman, & Goldstone, 2019). It is for this reason that “*ga’nu si*” should transform from being an instrument of public derision to public appreciation of integrity. Therefore, portraying the volunteers for good governance as “*awon se k’a rimi*” (hypocrites) is extremely retrogressive. Inverting the former understanding of “*ga’nu si*” to rid it of its negative connotation may enrich the definition of the concept of governance as the process by which political actors “use ethical or corrupt practices to influence mass participation in political decision-making in public affairs.” (Ayodele & Adebusi, 2024, p. 101). Therefore, when political actors use ethical means to influence mass participation in political decision-making and public affairs, good governance results. The opting of political actors for corrupt practices often ends in poor governance.

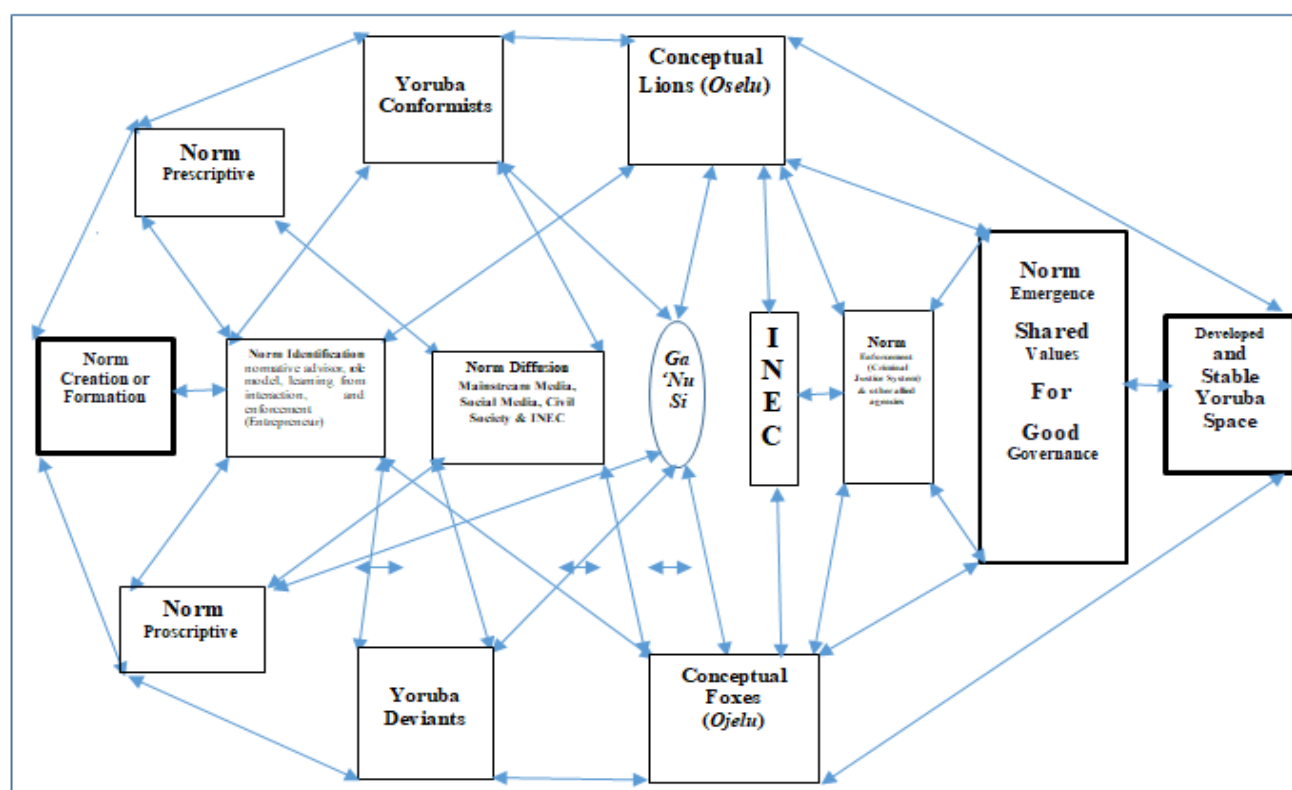
Norms give rise to the formation and sustenance of social order (Horne & Mollborn, 2020). This study replicates the virtual realities in the simulated societies of Savarimuthu & Cranefield (2011) with Durkheim’s (1982) social facts which “...consist of manners of acting...external to the individual...with a coercive power...they exercise control over him” (p. 52) in his real-life contexts of organic communities. The expanded five-stage norm life cycle of Savarimuthu & Cranefield (2011) “(i) creation, (ii) identification, (iii)

adoption, (iv) propagation, (v) emergence” (Morris-Martin, De Vos, & Padget, 2019, p.718) guided our investigation and analysis. We decided that the norm life cycle as a cyclic process better captures the reality of shared rules among human beings for suitable conduct in socioeconomic spheres to shape their individual decisions (Dimant et al., 2023). Based on the above assumption, we present the “*Ga’nu Si*” Norm Life Cycle for Good Governance Advocacy (GNS-NLCfGGA) in Fig. 1 below. The first phase in the norm lifecycle model is norm creation. In the Yoruba space, norm creation is the function of the various influential and community-based opinion leaders. The next stage is norm identification, which mostly originated in the domestic informal setting. There, it is improved by schools, places of worship, workplaces, and music. Norm propagation implies the spreading or distribution of norms to the individuals who must comply with the provisions in their communities. However, norm enforcement refers to the social process by which non-norm-compliant individuals are dissuaded through some form of penalty for norm-violating behavior. This is done right from the home, where the parents, as the natural teachers of children, crudely initiate enforcement. Norm emergence is the “process” whereby a population of agents accesses a predefined tolerance of agents following the same norm (Morris-Martin, De Vos & Padget, 2019).

Adamu (2019) acknowledged that about 1,071 persons were killed in crime-related cases across Nigeria in the first quarter of 2019. The State of Emergency that Tinubu declared in River State was an outrageous instance of bad governance capable of threatening Nigeria’s democracy and international reputation (Edward-Ekpo, 2025). At Bayero University, Kano (BUK), the lack of good institutional governance caused it to present 148 A-level results for Direct Entry admission in 2024 to the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) without due diligence. Critically vetted, JAMB discovered only six genuine cases while the remaining 142 were fake (JAMB’s Bulletin, 2025). An Army Commander, Captain, 22 soldiers, two policemen, about 100

farmers/fishermen are among the 227 persons feared killed between January and April 2025 in the analysis of terrorism in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states (Sunday Vanguard, 2025). All these combined with other yet unidentified causes must have exposed about 75.5% of rural dwellers to live below the poverty line, reflecting deepening hardship in Nigeria (World Bank, 2025). They combine to reinforce the claim that in Nigeria, “...the structures of deviant economies...are conceived in illegality, driven by the norms of illegitimacy, and profit from anomic disorganization” (Ayodele, 2021, p. 2). Norms can be functional or dysfunctional for the well-being of individuals, they are critical to the production and maintenance of social order in society (Institute for Reproductive Health, 2021).

Therefore, for norms to function as enduring social ligaments that homogenize the people into a deeply cultural collectivity, the Yoruba people place a high premium on communal life, values of collectivism, cultural rites, and traditions (Elegbe & Nwachukwu, 2017). For this reason, the objective of this article is to examine how “*ga’nu si*” predisposes *oselu/ojelu* relations to good governance advocacy in Yoruba communities. To accomplish its goal, this article answers the following questions: (i). How does “*ga’nu si*” impact norm creation that bolsters good governance in Yoruba communities? (ii). How does norm identification make “*ga’nu si*” shape the embrace of good governance in Yoruba communities? (iii). To what extent can the norm of diffusion strengthen “*ga’nu si*” to trigger good governance in Yoruba communities? (iv). How can the norm of enforcement enrich “*ga’nu si*” to reinforce good governance commitment in Yoruba communities? (v). In what imaginative ways can “*ga’nu si*” facilitate good governance in Yoruba communities? The solution of “*ga’nu si*” may “...be sought in and found from the culture of the different communities...” (Ayodele, 2017, p. 14). Therefore, how “*ga’nu si*” could shape good governance in Yoruba polity is the knowledge gap that this paper hopes to bridge.

Conceptual Framework: Fig 1 “Ga’nu Si” Norm Life Cycle for Good Governance Advocacy

Source: Author

Methodology:

The Yoruba are one of the key ethnic groups that constitute modern Nigeria. The Yoruba people are more than 40 million. This figure accounts for about 21% of Nigeria’s population. The Yoruba people are mostly in Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo states. They are in smaller groups in Edo, Kogi, and Kwara states. This article extensively reviewed the literature involving electronic searches in Research Gate, Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The content analysis systematically categorizes textual content into themes to identify patterns or trends. The explanation of textual data within socio-cultural contexts can enhance an understanding of the fundamental meanings, themes, and patterns to come up with more robust and comprehensive insights into the dynamics of social interactions in the context of good governance, the dynamics of *oselu* and *ojelu* interactions, political hypocrisy, and development in Yoruba communities. The researchers included articles relevant to this investigation. We resisted putting a minimum dateline to maintain a comprehensive coverage of

the research report, without leaving out its historical components. In the search approach, we used norms, “*ga’nu si*”, *oselu*, *ojelu*, stigmatization, development, governance,

stereotypes, Yoruba, and other related terms. We linked the terms with “AND” or “OR.” We also independently reviewed the abstracts and titles of all downloaded articles for relevance. Whichever we found relevant and suitable, we downloaded their full texts for a full review. Furthermore, we reviewed each suitable text reference list for other articles with similar themes to widen the scope of the investigation.

The exclusion/inclusion criteria ensure that articles were included if they were relevant to the focus of the article, published in the English language, and concentrated on the norms and values that are related to good governance. On the other hand, articles were excluded if they were not published in the English language and not related to the dynamics of norms in the context of good governance. By sticking with scientific procedures, we steered the article to harvest objective findings that are both valid and reliable.

We ensured that all the sources for the collection of data were credible and could be fact-checked. We observed all ethical considerations in the collection of data, particularly in terms of avoiding bias in the reporting of the collected data. After the in-depth electronic database search, we had 58 articles. The databases that we used are reputable within the scientific community, having been extensively used by colleagues to produce accurate and suitable scholarly data for both qualitative and statistical analyses. We selected the databases because they were known to comply with protocol necessities and protocol-specific factors for scientific reviews. An in-depth analysis revealed 5 duplicates from the 62 published articles, therefore, we removed the duplicated articles. Upon review of the titles and abstracts, 2 articles were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria regarding language and study focus. Overall, 55 articles were systematically reviewed for qualitative analysis. The patterns and themes of the article and its research questions emerged from the researchers’ interrogation of the literature on norm creation, norm identification, norm diffusion, norm enforcement, norm emergence, good governance, resources that enable good governance, and inhibitions to good governance from academic articles, newspapers, government reports, international organizations’ publications, and case studies.

Results:

Norm Creation and GNS-NLCfGGA in Yoruba Communities

In good governance, norms are created to validate anticipated behavior and function as group watchdogs that implement a delineated behavior for specific circumstances for each representative and community survival (Aires, Pinheiro, Lima & Meneguzzi, 2017). This segment discusses the processes of norm creation and how “ga’nu si” predisposes *oselu/ojelu* relations to good governance advocacy in Yoruba communities. “Norm creation refers to the initial or predetermined strategy to play from a set of available actions” (Morris-Martin, De Vos & Padget, 2019, p. 718). Norms exist either in the

prescriptive form to encourage positive behavior or in the proscriptive form to discourage negative behavior (Horne & Mollborn, 2020). In Yoruba land, prescriptive norms undergird and reinforce the established orientation of the *omoluabi* (the ideal norm-conforming Yoruba persons) and the proscriptive norms re-socialize the *abiiko* (culturally untrained members) and *akoogba* (norm-rejecting members), who ignore prescriptive norms or obey them more in breach. Linking these two categories to Pareto’s classification of the elites, the norm-compliant community members are Pareto’s conceptual lions (*oselu*, self-sacrificing individuals who develop the community). Conversely, *abiiko* and *akoogba*, who ultimately become *akotileta* (prodigal members), the apprentices of *agba iya*, (the worthless elder)... are Pareto’s conceptual foxes (*ojelu*, self-seeking individuals who embezzle the community commonwealth) (Ayodele & Adebuseyi, 2024). The *ojelu* destabilize the polity that the *oselu* standardize, making community life pesky, to make corruption seem “normative, and the war against it, insincere in Nigeria (Ayodele, 2021, p. 1).

However, if “altruism (*oselu*)” effectively replaces “political egoism (*ojelu*)” in Yoruba communities, there may be some hope for sustainable development... (Ayodele & Adebuseyi, 2024, p. 112). This will only occur if the norms change. Therefore, building on Savarimuthu & Cranefield’s (2011) sequence of their lifecycle model, in Fig. 1, we adopt norm creation as the first phase and discuss how it shapes “ga’nu si” in Yoruba communities for good governance advocacy. Culturally, the ‘*Ogboni*’ cult in Yoruba life, sees the Earth and the ancestors as the sources of moral law (Morton-Williams, 1960), and ‘the ‘*Ogboni*’ as an Earth God’ (Bascom, 1969, p. 92). If ‘the Earth’ is classified as the *orisa* of the ‘*Ogboni*’ (Forde, 1951, p. 18), then norms creation would revolve around ‘the Earth.’ From this historic perspective, it is clear that norm creation is not a celestial activity, but a purely earthly and inherent Yoruba culture. Therefore, from cradle to grave, norms regulate the social behavior of a Yoruba individual (Anderson &

Dunning, 2014). The nature of social norms implies that yesterday’s deep-rooted norms (“*ga nu si*”) in a dynamic (Yoruba) society have become invalid for contemporary realities. This normative reality accounts for why Yoruba communities update their social norms to take cognizance of emerging social tastes. Little wonder then that social norms involve our activities, our understanding of what others do, and what others accept and want us to do. They are inevitably situated at the intersection between behavior, beliefs, and expectations (Suruchi, Stevens, Cronin & Gordon, 2020).

If political “...actions are justified by reference to widely held values” (Risse, 2000, p. 17), then norms would often derive from the intentional creation of authorizing structures capable of encouraging and applying mutually beneficial behaviors (Piskorski & Gorbatâi, 2017). For this article, norm creation is a deliberate boundary-setting normative process used to deprive toxic interactions from anomic dissension, becoming disruptive of existing social relations of culturally resilient individuals within micro and macro social group contexts. In pursuance of good governance, any “...infraction committed arouses in those who have evidence of it or who learn of its existence the same indignation.” This unites “upright consciences and concentrates them” (Durkheim, 1964, p. 102), to make “*ga ’nu si*” a moral productive force that is inseparable from his social solidarity. This is because “... morality consists in solidarity with the group (Yoruba people) and varies accordingly to that solidarity” (Durkheim, 1997, p. 331). A commitment to the norms of “*ga ’nu si*” like the ideals of morality becomes “a moral act tomorrow,” which “must be the same as it was today” (Durkheim, 2012, p. 47). This is the only credible way to establish sustainable financial discipline, the social fertilizer of good governance. “*Ga ’nu si*” epitomizes the age of crucial analysis of the contract-driven relationship among culturally disconnected individuals (*oselu* and *ojelu* in Yoruba political space) to whose interactions are compelled to be defined and driven by a “thing” rather than “a natural social relationship”

(Durkheim, 1893/1984, 1997, p. 83). “*Ga ’nu si*” promotes the knowledge of the norms that the Yoruba people want (transparency) to attain the desired (good governance-driven sustainable development).

The GNS-NLCfGGA is unofficial, therefore, similar to that which Suruchi et al. (2020) and Cislighi & Heise (2017) conceived, it is typically an unrecorded rule that expresses tolerable and suitable actions within a particular group or community and in this instance, Yoruba communities. Challenging the norm of political complacency, which the *ojelu* politicians have normalized, Sani (2025) assessed the occurrences in the African political geography and cautioned Tinubu to avoid the pitfalls that the norms of tribal favoritism constitute. Today, INEC supervises all political contests in which participants’ deeds are expected to constitute normatively appropriate political behavior that creates new ethical norms (Kaptein, 2019). In keeping with its statutory duty, INEC sold the idea of a technology-driven electoral system to the government and people of Nigeria for the 2023 general elections. It was massively accepted as a new political norm that would usher in an epoch of good governance. Lamentably, “...uploading results from the polling units to the IREV portal” eventually, “looked like ‘the more you look, the less you see’” scenario (Sowore, 2019, p. np). Because the elites are notorious for using the norm of capturing power at all costs for personal gain, regrettably, elections remain a do-or-die affair in Nigeria (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This further deepens bad governance in the Yoruba political space.

Norm Identification and GNS-NLCfGGA in Yoruba Communities

Norm creation is followed by the norm identification phase in the norm lifecycle. The literature recognizes norm learning, also known as norm recognition or norm detection, as a widespread approach to norm identification (Savarimuthu, Cranefield, A. Purvis & K. Purvis, 2010a; 2010b). The essence of identification is the recognition of norms to regulate social

interactions. Punishment may underscore the need for members of a society to identify a norm. If a leader punishes a norm violator, other members who observe the punishment may become aware of and recognize the existence of the norm. In the context of good governance, the questions that form the focus of norm identification in Yoruba communities would be voters’ registration, polling booth behavior, voting, rigging, electoral results declaration, protests against electoral manipulation, contestation of the validity of results in courts. The literature acknowledges three ways by which social norms are spread among members of a society. The first is by vertical transmission, in which norms are spread from parents to their children. This implies that every home is a pivotal locale of norm identification in Yoruba communities.

The second is oblique transmission, norms spread from a leader of a society to his/her followers. Here, schools where teachers are role models, places of worship where spiritualists are opinion molders, mainstream media serve as agenda setters, places of work, and agencies of governments such as the National Orientation Agency and the public education unit of INEC have critical roles to play in political norm identification in Yoruba communities. The third is horizontal transmission, norms spread from peer to peer on playgrounds, in classes, in the streets (Boyd & Richerson, 1988), and more commonly, these days, on social media, in the course of unlimited virtual interactions. It is when members of Yoruba communities can identify all the features of bad governance with a dexterity that the condemnation of bad governance can be more effective. The logic of the new GNS-NLCfGGA can make the architecture for norm identification obvious in helping community members identify prohibition norms against bad governance. However, because of the potency of social media in modern times, horizontal transmission would appear to be the most widespread and probably the most effective means by which the GNS-NLCfGGA can be identified for diffusion, enforcement, and norm emergence in the Yoruba space.

Norm of Diffusion and GNS-NLCfGGA in Yoruba Communities

Norm propagation implies the spreading or distribution of norms to agents within the system (Morris-Martin, De Vos & Padget, 2019). Norms may have a single conceptual structure. However, they can assume duality of character in which case they are both stable and flexible. There is no other context in which the duality of norms displays that quality outside the process and outcomes of norm diffusion. There, individuals interact with norms (in their stable situation) or push for their modification knowingly or inadvertently (flexibly). Norms are stable social facts constantly challenged and reconstructed (Wiener, 2007, 2008, 2009). Norm diffusion implies the mobility of norms because the users take them along when they relocate from their original places of residence to their new living contexts. “Since norms evolve through interaction, normative meaning will inevitably change slightly as the context changes from actor to actor” (Wiener, 2008, p. 63; 2009). Norm diffusion is so critical in the norm lifecycle that with or without enforcement, norm emergence could still occur. Performing their traditional functions, electronic and print media, as mainstream media and social media, could produce a new norm to replace an existing one. Just as INEC is involved in the diffusion and enforcement of emerging norms in the political domain, the mainstream and social media, as well as the national orientation agency, all play similarly remarkable contributory roles in the identification and diffusion of norms at the micro and macro levels of political activities in Yoruba communities.

For example, the Vanguard Newspaper has blazed a trail in norm creation, which rewards good governance at the gubernatorial level of governance in Nigeria in the last 13 years. Recently, Governor Oborevori of Delta State received the Vanguard Newspaper’s Governor of the Year 2024 Award. This was in recognition of his exceptional dedication to good governance and transformative initiatives across Delta State. As the Vanguard and This Day Newspapers have

created new norms of reward for thoroughly inclusive and transparent administration through their corporate impacts on their behavior, other organizations will probably conform because of their role-modeling influence (Brown & Treviño, 2014). In collaboration with the agents of traditional media, social networks, reference groups, and advocacy networks, INEC disperses political norms to all Yoruba communities. For norms to be identified and diffused presuppose their existence. The diffusion of the new GNS-NLCfGGA is a compelling patriotic expectation among all Yoruba people. Therefore, if the new GNS-NLCfGGA is codified into law in the Yoruba communities, its ambiance may be diffused in Yoruba communities through Boyd & Richerson’s (1988) vertical, opaque, or horizontal transmission mechanisms. To restore the social order disrupted by the negative impact of “*ga’nu si*” that was earlier diffused in Yoruba communities, dissatisfied contestants in elections often head for the courts to challenge questionable electoral victories. The judicial interpretations of electoral compromises prejudicial to good governance are indispensable. However, *oselu* politicians know that *ojelu* counterparts have judicial norm-flouting colleagues whose cluelessness as judges could give legal authority to their alleged electoral theft that had necessitated the court action.

If the judiciary, as ethically expected, lacks men of shady legal integrity, influential politicians would not urge the disappointed politicians to go to court each time an infringement of the ethos of the electoral process is suspected and challenged. If judges were impeccably objective, judicially tested cases of electoral malpractices would have put every citizen under the rule of law for better governance in Yoruba communities. Odinkalu (2025) was probably worried about the development in the judicial arm of governance when he accused Nigeria’s Supreme Court of aiding democratic collapse. He alleged that under the leadership of Chief Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, the Supreme Court has become deeply compromised, claiming it now operates with an urgency to “send the country into perdition” (p.

n.p). He maintained that the courts were more principled under the past Chief Justice Mohammed Lawal Uwais. “The judiciary then had the independence and authority to repeatedly save Nigeria from peril,” in contrast to what he described as a weakened institution vulnerable to political interference in modern times. Culturally, however, norm-diffusing agents abound in every Yoruba community. For example, teachers and educators, messengers of God in different religions, traditional structures such as age grades, mainstream media, and lately, social media are incontrovertible media of norm diffusion. These structures extensively spread norms in Yoruba communities. Therefore, once the new norm of GNS-NLCfGGA has been created and identified, its diffusion will not pose a problem. Norm diffusion becomes even easier if the new GNS-NLCfGGA is formally codified into a law to regulate human conduct in interactive contexts. When a newly created norm contests the social space with an existing one, such as the good governance being advocated, the bad one automatically goes down for the new to gain sustainable ascendancy.

Norm Enforcement and GNS-NLCfGGA in Yoruba Communities

Norm enforcement refers to restrictions, the extent to which people respond differently to those who engage in a given behavior than those who do not. Sanctions include penalties for contraventions and compensations for compliance. Enforcing norms is frequently critical to sustaining social order using monetary penalties. Observance of norms is noticeable in settings where the behavior of an individual and one’s deviation from others does not attract immediate significant benefits. In this atmosphere, obedience is often driven by self or social image anxieties (Bicchieri et al., 2022a, 2023). These discernments imply that individuals frequently place a high premium on peer behavior to enable an understanding of the shapes in which these prescriptions and proscriptions come is critical. Apart from the architecture’s in-built mechanisms for checking norm violations and enforcing norms, other studies have proposed

mechanisms for norm enforcement (de Pinninck et al., 2008). An earlier development is the research on emotion-based mechanisms for norm enforcement (Scheve et al., 2006). The violation of a norm by some agents may cause other agents to sever relations with these agents, causing emotional isolation. This ostracism-based mechanism has dissuaded norm violators in an agent society (de Pinninck et al., 2008). While most studies suggest sanctions for norm enforcement, L’opez y L’opez et al. (2002) have similarly thought of a reward-based mechanism for norm enforcement. Criado et al. (2010) have moved the frontiers of the work of L’opez y L’opez et al. (2002) on the role of rewards in enforcing a norm further outwards.

Positive reinforcements, such as monetary compensations, have caused some researchers to consider enforcement as a component of the diffusion mechanism. Theorists have offered numerous theoretical explanations for the factors that undergird individuals’ compliance with social norms, even when their noncompliance benefits the decision maker and no foreseeable penalties for violation. These include the fear of authority (Axelrod, 1986), coherent influence of the norms (Akerlof, 1976), emotions such as infamy arising from non-adherence (Elster, 1989), readiness to follow the multitude (Epstein, 2001), making of social order enduring in society (Horne & Mollborn, 2020), and internalization of norm during socialization (Vostroknutov, 2020). With the formalization of expected behavior, communities use the instrumentality of norms to function as group regulators for enforcing a defined behavior for certain situations for every member of the community. Therefore, “when a team leader violates a norm, it weakens the norm and encourages team members also to violate, and similarly for compliance. This shows the effect a role model adopting or violating a norm can have on...” others (Balaraman & Singh, 2014, pp. 1-19). This also reminds INEC to live by the norms it has evolved for transparent elections to justify its corporate status of independence.

After a created norm has been identified and diffused, its enforcement, all things being equal,

becomes a desideratum. Norm enforcement in an electoral setting is INEC’s business. Lately, however, enforcement has become everybody’s business because of the dwindling public confidence in the independence of INEC. Ideally, INEC may indicate political norm enforcement. “...the signing of the 2022 Electoral Act, which contained the deployment of technology... and hope that the time has come for us to get things right. But did we?” (Uzoanya, 2023, p. np). However, INEC cannot be everywhere on every occasion when and where electoral crimes might be perpetrated. In this regard, a key component for every effective behavioral modification is “social conditionality”. This concept implies that the presence of individual preferences for compliance depends on two sets of expectations inherent in social norms. First, the actions of others, in this context, political participants in the opposition (empirical expectations), and what you do that others tolerate, particularly the electorates who may or may not be in your political camp (normative expectations). To the extent that behavior modification is the import of norm enforcement, the new GNS-NLCfGGA would ultimately serve as a testament to the success of that phase of transparent governance among the Yoruba people.

For the new GNS-NLCfGGA to avoid being manifestly dysfunctional in Yoruba communities, a decision must be made. All the expectations of some individuals that the present-day mainstream construction of new GNS-NLCfGGA must fit into an eternal stereotype are unrealistic. The expectation, too, that the ancient Yoruba social construction of “*ga’nu si*” should continue without a positive modification is also retrogressive. These advocates who challenge the capacity of words to transform by elevation or degradation maintain that “*ga’nu si*” has always had negative connotations. Must it eternally remain so? How is *itun iluse* (community improvement) a dishonorable engagement? It is everywhere gaining acceptance among Yoruba people that “politics is a dirty game.” This mindset should be discarded because if shameless people had not infiltrated politics, it would not

have become a nocturnal occupation conducted essentially in a cultic atmosphere. Therefore, stigmatizing politicians as irresponsible people amounts to verbal violence capable of eternally scaring new blood from active political involvement in the Yoruba political landscape. A sane environment enforces norms objectively when the independence of the judiciary is not compromised and the freedom of the press is not muzzled.

In contemporary times, Nigerian courts are being used as an instrument of justice denial rather than safeguarding it (Obasanjo, 2025). To that extent, “no serious investor will bring his money into a country where the judiciary is compromised...” (Jonathan, 2025), and where judges excessively flirt with politically exposed persons (Odinkalu, 2025). With all these, public trust in Nigeria’s judiciary has become a contentious issue, causing the citizens to see the criminal justice system as a compromised system (Obi, 2025). However, Obi is politically correct. The judiciary is fair in some cases, but the few bad judgments appear to outshine the stabilizing work of the judiciary (Erugo, 2025). It is tragically disenchanting that a law professor should see a case of injustice, no matter how insignificant, as something worthy of intellectual justification in the domain of an institution trusted to dispense justice.

Norm Emergence and GNS-NLCfGGA in Yoruba Communities

It is remiss to define norm emergence as the point of reaching the threshold, without taking cognizance of the process that led to that stage. Therefore, norm emergence occurs when a proportion of the population is understood to be embracing the norm (Morris-Martin, De Vos & Padget, 2019). Once norms are created, identified, diffused, enforced, and emerged, their reality as social facts shapes the behaviors of individuals (either to be norm compliant or norm violators) (Wiener, 2007, 2008, 2009). The observation of the extent of a population that embraces a norm is impossible without the existential history of the norm in the population by an agent or a group of agents. If given a choice, predictably, the *oselu*

politicians will most likely prefer the ethical approach to access power and use it to deliver the dividends of democracy to Yoruba electorates.

On the other hand, their *ojelu* counterparts will probably opt for and take advantage of the corrupt practices alternative for self-enrichment. Logically, all things being equal, the *oselu* politicians epitomize good governance and radically improve the well-being of the Yoruba people, while *ojelu* politicians typify retrogression, underdevelopment, and mass poverty. Most often, the *ojelu* politicians are surrounded by an educated and uneducated army of supporters who make the already tense political environment perilously precarious.

Norm emergence is extensively acknowledged to have occurred when a prearranged proportion of the population notices the norm or takes the same action. For example, Martins Vincent Otse (Very Dark Man), a popular Nigerian social media influencer, has been fearlessly dragging government officials, political officeholders, and private individuals for inappropriate practices. With his music, Eedris Abdulkareem, the author of Nigeria *jagajaga*, has come up with “Seyi, Tell Your Papa” to speak truth to power about Nigerians’ experiences of hardship. The National Broadcasting Corporation banned Eedris Abdulkareem’s song. EFCC arrested the Very Dark Man and released him following public outcry against the unjust and untidy apprehension. Today, social media is awash with accounts of young Nigerians speaking up against the government’s insensitivity and highhandedness. A virtual norm emergence in Nigeria on younger persons’ disenchantment with the government and how it manages the economy without minding its impacts on vulnerable citizens has emerged. Norms are not substantially monolithic. While some norms may be descriptive in which case they underscore what people usually do, the new GNS-NLCfGGA is essentially injunctive because it prescribes what people should do (advocate for good governance for human and community development).

If the new GNS-NLCfGGA becomes the emergent norm, it may be institutionalized to

become a law (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). When this happens, a central agency, such as a police department and an independent judiciary, will be saddled with its enforcement. Therefore, there would be no hiding space for political criminals to truncate the aspirations of the Yoruba people in their different communities. Norms suggest decision-making in social contexts and significantly facilitate the sustenance of collaborative interactions and harmonizing collective action. Yet, being norm-compliant involves behavior restriction, imposing selfishness curtailment, or suppression of private goals, thereby questioning the justification for people’s adherence to norms (Gross & Vostroknutov, 2022). Therefore, the norm of “I will vote for you to ensure good governance through transparent political behavior” becomes a social contract and shared value in the Yoruba community. This new spirit of collective principle covers the community with a canopy of freedom from clueless political machination. When a larger proportion of the Yoruba people key into the new GNS-NLCfGGA, without inhibitions, the emerging norm of transparent political leadership will usher in sustainable development in Yoruba communities.

Discussion:

The current article examines the association between the norms of “*ga’nu si*” and the predisposition of Yoruba people to good governance. To re-engineer the use of the GNS-NLCfGGA, the crusade for probity would need to begin with the intention to deprogram the existing widespread misconception of “*ga’nu si*” being a driver of unsolicited intrusion into other people’s affairs. After having done that, the reprogramming of the people into the social efficacy of the reconfigured “*ga’nu si*” in ensuring public accountability effectively replaces its earlier negative social construction. With the intensification of social, economic, political, and even religious networks in modern communities, the need to re-engineer “*ga’nu si*” to show commitment to disabling bad governance as an inclusive way of imaginatively ending the incidence of endemic poverty in Yoruba

communities cannot be at a better time. The finding of Ayodele (2017) that contextual norms significantly boosted the willing provision of local intelligence to empower “traditional jurisprudence among the Yoruba people” (p. 2) for good governance is corroborated by the criticality of “*ga’nu si*” to the provision of information about crime occurrence. To the extent that norms determine how individuals take actions subject to approval or sanctions in society, norms impact good governance among the Yoruba people. The finding of this study that “*ga’nu si*”, as a proscriptive norm, exposes the generators of crime in the Yoruba space is consistent with that of Ayodele (2016) on how ‘*afise*’ serves as a penal tool for “norm-breaking conduct” in the enforcement of compliance... (p. 242).

Conversely, the finding of this article conflicts with those of Mustafa (2018), which holds that electoral education through the electoral body in Nigeria (INEC) considerably stimulated voters’ participation in the electoral process. The finding of this article is consistent with the observation of Uzedhe & Okhaifoh (2016) that the members of the public would become indifferent to the political education of INEC once they notice that the commission is complicit in any agenda to install a candidate who is not their favorite. Therefore, the electorates will doubt the independence of INEC. To some extent, that may reflect the reality of the past. The commission can no longer easily explain away its great credibility burden for its mismanagement of the electronic device it deliberately introduced to prevent electoral malpractices. However, the finding of this article corroborates Boyd & Richerson’s (1988) about vertical, oblique, and horizontal transmission mechanisms of diffuse norms. This article slightly differs by indicating that of the three modes of Boyd & Richerson’s (1988) transmission, the potency of social media in modern times makes horizontal transmission the most widespread and effective means by which the GNS-NLCfGGA can be transmitted and actualized among the contemporary community members. In the diffusion, identification, and enforcement of norms, the partnership among

mainstream and social media, the education unit of INEC, and the national orientation agency have critical roles to cause credible elections that can usher in an epoch of good governance in Yoruba communities.

This article notes that GNS-NLCfGGA has zero tolerance for the Tinubu (2018) thesis of power not being served a la carte but fighting for it, grabbing it, snatching it, and running away with power. Therefore, it agrees with Horne & Mollborn (2020) that community life will flourish without inhibitions if norms, the behavior-regulating rules in social interaction contexts, function by shared hopes of obedience and sanctioning to achieve good governance. For the norm of enforcement to enrich “ga’nu si” and make it install and reinforce good governance among the Yoruba people would require the vigilance of not only the norm creators but also the conventional law enforcement agencies. The position of this study agrees with the Institute for Reproductive Health (2020) that, in some instances, social norms reinforce unequal power dynamics. In electoral situations when a political party is in power in an election season, usually the clueless *ojelu* politicians have the upper hand as the probably more capable *oselu* politicians are rigged out of success with the connivance and manipulations of their agents in INEC and the judiciary. Despite the inequity, the democratic norms enjoin the loser to concede success to the “winner”.

The interaction of these two critical categories of Yoruba political contestants derives from an established Yoruba social thought. *Bi o tile je’pe awon baba nla Yoruba gbagbo wipe ibi ti a ti nse, lati nje, won lodi si wombia* (Granted that Yoruba ancestors subscribe to the principle that enjoins individuals who engineer public good to reap responsibly from their social investment, they intensely loathe avarice). Therefore, the point should be noted that *oselu* and *ojelu* politicians are not collaboratively disconnected in the Yoruba political landscape. Nigerian politicians, regardless of their party affiliations, have demonstrated that they do not have a permanent

friend or foe. Therefore, carpet crossing goes on recklessly, day or nighttime, due to the absence of clear-cut political ideology in the polity. Is it not laughable that some politicians slept as members of party A yesterday and woke up this morning as members of party B?

It is a common sight for some *ojelu* politicians to hobnob openly with their *oselu* counterparts and vice versa. They also openly struggle over who outwits the other in their dishonorable gladiatorial show of corruption in the political space. The finding of this article agrees with UNICEF (2021) that when the judiciary legitimizes the electoral illegality, it makes good governance legally impossible for the escalation of the prospect of effecting enduring positive modification. This article agrees with the finding of Ayodele (2019) that “if Nigeria strengthens her law enforcement agency, criminality will be discouraged” (p. 11). However, the finding of this article disagrees with the report by Sule et al. (2018) that the political culture in Nigeria underscores the politics of violence. If the rule of law guides political conduct, ample empirical evidence supports the assumption that active young men and women will steer good governance in Yoruba communities.

Conclusion:

In this article, we have presented a comprehensive analysis of the literature on the structures that aid the understanding of the processes leading to the creation or adaptation of the new GNS-NLCfGGA, drawing on the analytical insights from the lifecycle model of Savarimuthu & Cranefield (2011) and other norm scholars. This has helped us to explain how the new GNS-NLCfGGA elegantly interfaces with good governance in Yoruba communities. We presented a conceptual framework that represents how the contending sociocultural and political forces manipulate survival tensions and contentions among the two major power contenders, *oselu* and *ojelu*, to evolve good governance as a product of normative equilibrium at both the micro and macro levels of Yoruba communities. We have built on the earlier survey of Savarimuthu &

Cranefield (2011) using the logic of their five-phase lifecycle model: norm creation concerns the bringing norms about, norm identification emphasizes norm recognition, norm diffusion is about the spreading of norms; norm enforcement deals with sanctioning mechanism to prevent norm breakers; and norm emergence which is a process by which a population reaches a predefined threshold of the compliance with the same norm by a high proportion of the population (Morris-Martin, De Vos, & Padget, 2019).

We also discussed the challenges and/or opportunities of studying the creation, identification, diffusion, enforcement, and emergence of norms in the context of GNS-NLCfGGA in Yoruba communities. To make the experience of Savarimuthu & Cranefield (2011) in their artificial societies resonate with the organic realities of the Yoruba communities, we related the conceptual variables to how the Yoruba people experience the horror of bad governance and deliberately institute advocacy interventions to install an epoch of good governance in the polity of Yoruba communities. Consequently, we presented these different conceptual variables sequentially. Moreover, we propose a new GNS-NLCfGGA which reflects the contextual realities of a political atmosphere in which the dominant interactions between the *oselu* and *ojelu* polarize the Yoruba neighborhood into two classes of political followership. We answered all the article’s research questions. Therefore, based on the above dynamics of the process of transition of norms from formation to norm emergence, we consequently present the new GNS-NLCfGGA as a culture to achieve sustainable shared values and development on which a stable Yoruba polity can be safely anchored.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the article, it makes the following recommendations:

- Public policy should recognize the GNS-NLCfGGA and codify it into a political culture across Yoruba communities.
- As a corporate social responsibility, organizations in Yoruba communities should

innovatively identify new normative ways of promoting good governance through rewards and sanctions.

- A superior norm should ensure INEC and the judiciary’s compliance with true independence.
- Empirical inquiries should probe existing cultural practices, adapt, reframe, and refocus them to perform useful functions to shore up the need for sustainable development and public safety.
- The use of social media by the youths should be deliberately recalibrated to enable the medium to serve as a potent instrument of norm identification, diffusion, and enforcement among the Yoruba people.

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