

Investigating Social Identity and Motive in Main Characters in Muyiwa Ojo's *Merchants of Perfidy*

Babatunde O. Adebua and Lizzy F. Akomolafe

Department of Languages and Literary Studies, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo

Abstract

The paper analyses the portrayal of characters in Muiyiwa Ojo's *Merchants of Perfidy*, a drama text, in an attempt to unravel the reasons for characters' attitudes in society. The study employs Tajfel's Social Identity Theory and McClelland's Theory of Motivation to shed light on how identity and motivation are connected and impact characters. The research is qualitative and adopts content analysis in an attempt to understand the behavioural motivation of the main characters as portrayed by the playwright. The Social Identity Theory aids in the analysis of the main characters by providing insights into understanding how they categorise themselves and their relationships with others in society, while the Motivation Theory describes the influences that inspire drive and tenacity in the pursuit of goals in the characters. The study's findings are consistent with the notion that behaviour is strongly influenced by purpose and that everyone strives for self-fulfilment, despite the possibility that someone else could occasionally get hurt in the process. In addition, the findings reveal that a character's behaviour is also developed from social influences, which can be physical, as revealed by both theories. The study concludes by affirming that every individual has a motive for their action and, therefore, exploring the roles that motivation play in shaping human behaviours.

Keywords: Character portrayal, Behavioural motivation, Physical influences, Social identity, Social influences

1. Introduction

Studies on identity are garnering significant worldwide interest as a result of the recent increased prevalence of identity-related concerns. Identity, according to Ossai, is "what makes or shapes an individual. It is the unique quality that makes a person different from others, and it is a combination of race, gender, culture, religion, and nationality, among others" (1). Further discussing the concept, he notes that the primary obstacle that people have to preserving their sense of self is the constant change that is an inherent aspect of human biological creation. Identity may also relate to how people are classified and regarded in society, as it is an individual's sense of themselves and others as belonging to specific social groupings. This assertion is backed by Schwartz et. al.'s definition, which states that identity involves the qualities, appearance, personality, and/or attributes that distinguish an individual or a group (10). Social psychologists Franco-Zamudio and Dorton further explain the concept as a manner of conceptualising the links between the social and the personal, or how an individual's social and

psychological elements are interwoven to produce a coherent idea of themselves (257). Noting the concept as a long-time debate among scholars, Ritivoi explains that philosophers have long discussed the subject of identity, especially as it relates to Western traditions, and how people might stay true to who they are in spite of the ever-changing world (231).

As fields of sociology and psychology have been employed to intently discuss issues regarding identity in literature, many works on identity abound in the novel genre, while a number of studies have investigated the importance of social identity in drama. Hastings and Saueroff look at how social dramas and Irish theatre are used to create and regulate social identities. Hastings examines the negotiation of Indian identity in the United States (309), while Saueroff applies positioning theory to the many themes utilised in Irish plays to construct national identity (17). Hammock broadens this idea by looking at how theatrical community practice may be utilised to shape identities, particularly in the context of avoiding dating violence (368). Finally, Zapf examines how Bertolt Brecht and Edward Bond used play to critically examine and question cultural conventions and systems (360). These studies emphasise the rich and diversified significance of theatre in shaping and reflecting social identities.

Emerging and important issues worthy of discussion in drama are those that concern character and identity in society. Consequently, researchers have investigated identity through drama to understand characters; for instance, Driscoll assesses identity in selected Shakespearean dramas, where Shakespeare's interest in the issue of character identification was rigorously examined and he disclosed an ideal identity through dream and stage metaphors (202). Examining identity and society through film, Hawraz and Paiman investigate the implications of social identity as it relates to an individual's role as an actor in life, but from theoretical and sociological perspectives. They perceive individuals of one social group as being both similar to one another within the group and distinct from those of another social group. Within the group, the simultaneous occurrence of these two traits becomes a sign of identification (18). In Nigerian drama, particularly more contemporary research studies have emphasised more on the origin of drama, theme analysis, language, dialectical readings of history and politics, characterization, playwright dramaturgy, and theatre.

In terms of identity-related themes, researchers have focused on character deconstruction, gender representation, psychoanalytic study of characters, archetypal interpretation of characters, and ethnographic investigation of the names of a few chosen characters. As seen by Onu and Ideh (2018), they examine character development in Anaelechi Chukuezi's *Udo ka Mma* and *Akwa Nwaand*, focusing on characterization by naming under the following headings: allegorical characterization, characterization by allusion, and characterization by conflict (48–57). However, considering its contribution to Nigerian drama, through the employment of social identity and motivation theories to assess literary characters, there appears to be a paucity of reviews. Based on this assumption, this study attempts an investigation to uncover characters' social preferences to concretize identity and the motivators that

influence their behaviour individually and collectively among social groups in society. The study, therefore, investigates the employment of social identity and motivation theories to analyse the main characters and their motives for behavioural motivation in Muiyiwa'Ojo's *Merchants of Perfidy*. The research adopts a phenomenological qualitative research design and, through content analysis, provides explanations for the behavioural motivation of the main characters in the selected drama text. Data for analysis were collected from primary and secondary sources. The theories of social identity and motivation are expanded further to illustrate how personalities' behaviours are influenced in society.

Social identity theory by psychologist Henri Tajfel, which was further developed by Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, is employed to examine the presentation of the main characters in the texts to reveal how characters categorise themselves and their relationships with others in society, and motivation theory by David McClelland is employed to describe the influence of social and mental processes that inspire drive and tenacity in the pursuit of goals in characters. In addition, since studies on identity are garnering renewed global attention as a result of the increasing prominence of identity-related concerns, the study addresses the existing gap by examining the aforementioned areas in the contemporary Nigerian drama, Muiyiwa Ojo's *Merchants of Perfidy*. The selection of the text easily aids in an in-depth analysis of the main characters, society, and the motives for their actions.

2. Literature Review

The Concept of Contemporary Nigerian Drama

Drama is a vital component of all human cultures, and the concept of Nigerian drama idealises drama works written by Nigerians. The genre draws its features from the rich cultural heritage of the Nigerian people, and the writers of the genre have explored the history of society as well as the portrayal of the social issues that beset it. Drama in its context suggests literary dramas, staged plays, theatrical plays, and films. However, the focus of this research is on the textual (literary) form of drama. Drama has been proven to be crucial in developing a trustworthy, effective, and responsive representative institution and in widening Nigerian society's growth bounds in the Nigerian setting. Discussing the origin of Nigerian drama, Roy-Omoni carries out a brief historical survey of contemporary Nigerian drama right from its inception in 1956, noting the different attempts made by scholars and critics to document the Nigerian drama. Notable among his mentions are works by Oyin Ogunba, Yemi Ogunbiyi, Biodun Jeyifo, Chris Dunton, and Olu Obafemi, to name a few. He further claimed that Nigerian drama, a sub-genre of Nigerian literature, has become a "hotbed of African literature, judging from its qualitative and quantitative outputs" (p. 8). Not failing to peg the inception of the Nigerian drama on oral traditions found in story-telling, dance, music, masquerade parades, and the activities of the traditional Yoruba travelling theatre group known as Alarinjo and the works of Ogunde and his contemporaries, Roy-Omoni successfully traces a four-generational succession of playwrights, with each generation possessing

slight differences but generally all investigating critical themes peculiar to the Nigerian nation (p. 15).

In identifying the forms of contemporary Nigerian drama, scholars and critics of the genre have proffered various contradictory yet slightly related groupings. For instance, Obafemi divides Nigerian drama into three categories: emergent, dominating, and residual. He defines residual theatre in Nigeria as those indigenous dramatic forms, including early modern indigenous theatres, local communities' indigenous dramatic traditions, dramatic ritual and festival performances, and local dramatic traditions. He claims that English-language literary drama is part of dominating drama, but the "young generation of dramatists" make up the majority of rising drama (p. 90). Etherton names traditional drama, arts theatre (found in colleges), and theatre for development (found in communities) as the three primary subgenres of Nigerian drama. The categorization made by Jeyifo, however, was based on ideologies; he divides Nigerian theatre into three groups: "traditional, modern, and revolutionary" (p. 78). Of the forms of Nigerian drama above stated, what is constant is that scholars identify Nigerian drama as possessing local elements while also having foreign elements.

Considering the nature of contemporary Nigerian drama, the genre has been reflective of culture, which is a people's way of life. The Nigerian dramatists obviously reflected their particular cultural origins, revealing the variety of their characteristics to connect with their audiences and thereby showcasing the relationship between language and culture. Dasylva exposes the nature of Nigerian drama by noting the playwright's creative vision, particularly their awareness of the potential to elevate the culture of the nation to the pedestal of a global dramatic culture and their penchant for incorporating and accommodating the traditions of others, which may be credited with the enormous support that drama enjoys from both local and international audiences (23). Consequently, other cultures, due to a number of factors, significantly affect contemporary Nigerian writing. This is especially true of the Nigerian drama, which "favours intertextuality and, like the other two major generic forms, seems to be hybrid in form" (24).

Contemporary Nigerian dramas cannot be delineated from themes that reflect the true state of the nation because playwrights have seized the genre to discuss deteriorating social issues such as exploitation and corruption in society and political instability, to mention a few. Confirming the portrayal of social issues in Nigerian drama since the nation gained independence, Ukpokodu states that "socio-political theatre has had a vibrant existence in Nigeria" and that it "has always found ways of responding to the changes and challenges of a newly independent nation" (p. 200).

Social Groups, Society, and Drama

Drama, in its distinctiveness, continues to depict the prevalence of social groupings in society. It depicts two or more individuals coming together to interact and have a sense of oneness and common identity characterised by collective interaction, mutual awareness, feeling, and reciprocity. Identification with a social group is required for the

sharing of similar norms and values, as well as solidarity and collective action. Four fundamental social groups recognised in society are primary groups, secondary groups, collective groups, and categories (Forsyth 76; Litwak and Szelenyi 466). A social group is any number of individuals who identify as group members, who anticipate particular behaviour from other group members that they do not expect from outsiders, and who are perceived by others to be group members (Merton 3). These groups give people a sense of belonging, and they differ from one another. Sociologists distinguish between numerous types of social groupings; just as noted above, the primary, secondary, collective, and categories have been identified. Interaction, or inter-influence within each group, is necessary for each social group to function.

In the world of drama, groups are clearly described because each has its own set of principles, culture, and traditions. Close-knit groups, such as the primary groups, are recognised in drama, as some playwrights depict small, personal, and typically long-lasting connections. Similarly, bigger groups are provided. This paper focuses on the collective social group as it is identified in the selected text. This social group reveals a group of people with unique characteristics, the same racial and ethnic heritage, political affinity, and nationality, who have come together to achieve particular predetermined social goals.

The Concept of Social Identity in Nigerian Drama

Identity is one of the most complex concepts in the social sciences and humanities, and as such, it attracts the interest of many academics and scholars (Asieh 26). Social lives are totally impossible without a framework and basis for constructing social and personal identities; without them, no one can form permanent or reliable connections with others. As such, the social nature of human beings gives rise to social identities. Ugbem explains identity as the basis for how people and groups are defined in relation to one another in society; as a result, identity became a vital aspect of social interaction. When identity was initially conceptualised, it was thought to remain constant and unaffected by a person's social circumstances throughout the course of their life (2). With the development of Sigmund Freud's identification theory, which describes how a child forms an identity via social interaction, the psychodynamic tradition was born. By employing social identity as the foundation for recognising socially important "similarities" and "differences" between individuals and groups, it is feasible to establish continuous communication and long-term engagement in the community (Podvoyskiy and Soleimani 829).

The interest of researchers in the field of literature and social identity is evident in the many literary research studies carried out, and this has helped to reveal connections between the two. A good example of this is Gaeini et al.'s research on social identity, along with two other concerns of cultural studies: language and religion in James Joyce's collection of short stories, *Dubliners*. The study clarifies how James Joyce reflects notions of language, social identity, and religion as cultural practices, as well as how they construct social and cultural products within the framework of cultural

materialism, in order to demonstrate how James Joyce criticised Irish culture at the turn of the twentieth century (90). Likewise, in drama, Agboluaje analyses how identity is constructed in modern African play through a comparison of Wole Soyinka and Zakes Mda. Afrocentric, universal humanism is the foundation on which Soyinka and Mda built African identities. A variety of African identities are possible since both dramatists situate them in the relationship between the person and the community. Due to the unique social and historical circumstances of their individual African environments, they have diverse perspectives on how African identities are created (20).

Studies have shown how literary works have mirrored the concepts of identity and society in humans' daily actions. Nigerian playwrights also construct their works to reflect their social identities. As some critics like Ademeso believe, playwrights should represent the socioeconomic climate of their communities while maintaining a strong sense of their cultural identities. He notes that:

...dramatist must be acquainted with the prevailing socio-political events, literary and performance styles and techniques in his society in order to withstand these global tides of re-orientating and re-ordering the world or else he will lose his cultural identity (9).

The aforementioned strengthens the case for the significance of identity in Nigerian drama and for playwrights.

Character Portrayal in Nigerian Drama

Character portrayal, also known as characterization, is a literary strategy that is employed in literature to highlight and clarify the specifics of a character in a story. Aristotle, according to Berry and Brown, lists the six elements of drama (plot, character, thought or theme, diction, song, and spectacle) of which characters serve as illustrations of particular morals or characteristics, as well as how those features affect the development of the storyline (288). The dramatist presents the character in the first act with a clear emergence, then frequently discusses the character's conduct after introducing him; as the narrative advances, the character's cognitive processes are then revealed. Abrams defines it as people that appear in a dramatic or narrative work and have moral and dispositional traits that are displayed in their speech, acts, and words (42). The main goal of character presentation is to convey the characteristics of the characters in a play. In Nigerian drama, characters are presented in line with the nature of societies within the country, bearing in mind the different tribes and languages. To qualify as a Nigerian drama, the work must have been written by a Nigerian; irrespective of where the playwright writes from, the setting of events must reflect Nigeria and describe Nigerian experiences. The themes must centre on Nigerian culture and common happenings in the nation, and the characters must depict Nigerians (Akinbobola 24).

Nigerian dramas have, in their truest state, represented characters in terms of cultural heritage, history of the nation, diversity of the country, and the portrayal of the social issues that beset society. For Nigerian playwrights, the craft employed in developing their characters reveals there is more to characterization for them than mere imitation of roles, while the plot carries the same strength as the themes discussed in the dramas. With characterization as a literary tool, Nigerian dramatists portray their characters in diverse ways, revealing them as cultural and social beings, agents to effect social change, and beings responsive to stimuli—that is, they respond to or react to activities in their environment.

Character and Motivation

Motivation, a mechanism that drives goal-oriented behaviour, is defined by Arnold and Boshoff as the motive and reason for doing something (40). Having a goal is thought to be insufficient for success, as Sasay et al. expound on the components of motivation, which include activation, persistence, and intensity. They explain activation as the decision to undertake behaviour in order to be a part of a group, in order to differentiate oneself in society, and joining a group may not be the aim but merely a means to an end. Persistence is described as a person's on-going endeavour to achieve a desired goal. Individuals may overlook the ills associated with a group, but persistence keeps the person in the group persistently unyielding. Intensity refers to the focus and energy put into the behaviour in order to achieve the desired result (47). Sasay et al.'s explanation of motivation reveals that people are motivated to achieve their goals in life, regardless of the obstacles they experience. Character becomes important in comprehending a wide range of human behaviours and pursuits; it is the fundamental component of human personality. It is made up of a person's attitudes, beliefs, and values. The nature of character demonstrates that it must be developed; it is not innate. Consequently, character development is largely dependent on the influences of other people and society at large. According to Pradhan, character is "the core component of humanity" (3); it is a synthesis of biological, sociological, and psychological elements. Understanding both motivation and character, Suárez et al. note decades of research that have shown motivation as an innate state that drives people to engage in goal-oriented behaviour in a way that affects both the type of action taken and how much time and perseverance are put into completing it (425). Nigerian playwrights have in their works shown the correlation between motivation and character by employing the characters they have developed to expose what motivates them to act in certain ways as a response to events in society.

Synopsis of the Text

The drama opens with a group of politicians from Igbeyinland receiving, in one of their meetings, Chief Ololade's kind gesture of sending in gifts in cash and kind to members of the political party. Kashi Ola, an elderly and retired school principal, frowns at such a gesture being in opposition and in contest with Chief Ololade for a seat in the National

Assembly, but the likes of Iyaloja, Reverend Olasupo, and Chief Olowolagba see nothing bad in the nicety displayed. Chief Ololade, being younger and having enough money to throw around to garner support for becoming an honourable, wants Kashi Ola, his former teacher, whom he sees as old and poor, to concede defeat to enable him to represent the community. Kashi Ola rejects another money gift intended to kill his political ambitions from his counterpart. Seeing the mockery, Kashi Ola and his loyalists, comrade Aluta, Madam Okenta, and the youth leader in Igbeyinland, stand firmly against Ololade and tag him as a "yahoo guy," a popular name to describe fraudsters, due to his questionable wealth, while they solicit help from the general public to raise funds needed to clinch the political seat. As the plot progresses, Chief Ololade confirms his wealth is ill-gotten and his activities are clandestine when he is seen in the midst of other young men who are discussing how to win votes by crookery, to later visit a chief priest for rituals to attain a new level of wealth and power, and to invite a criminal, Jingosa, to help source for and perpetrate the ritualistic acts highlighted by the chief priest. Chief Ololade is finally nabbed in his acts, and at the end, moralistic principal Kashi Ola, whom all in the community reposed their trust in, faces the polls unopposed at the National Assembly elections and wins.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Social Groups in *Merchants of Perfidy*

The study reveals the division of society into two opposing classes: the powerful and the helpless, the incredibly affluent and the impoverished, which has produced a boundary between groups and created conflict in the text. The identified social group in the text is the collective social group, which explains that people of the same racial or ethnic heritage, gender, religion, or nationality come together to accomplish specific predetermined goals. Two collective social groups have been identified in the text: *Merchants of Perfidy*. One group is headed by Chief Ololade Temiyemi, a car dealer and hotelier in his 30s and an aspirant to the National Assembly in Igbeyin Land; the other group is headed by Mr. Kashi Ola (Baba Principal), a retired school principal in his 60s and also an aspirant to the National Assembly in Igbeyin Land. These two major social groups engage in discriminatory behaviour against each other based on differences in social status and political values (p. 12). This confirms Rubin and Hewstone's standpoint that the cause of discrimination among social groups emanates from an unequal share of limited resources, and differences in religious or political values can often be cited as legitimate causes of intergroup discrimination. The discrimination in the text is influenced by the wealth status, age, and political affiliations of both group heads against each other, and this has aided in the conflict constructed by the dramatist in the text. Hence, the two groups compete to have the dominant and more powerful social identity.

Investigating Social Identity in the Text

According to social identity theory, the self is reflective because it views itself as an item that can be categorised, identified, or classified in specific ways in relation to other social categories or classifications. Social categorization is the process of evaluating people in terms of the groups they belong to, and it is how an identity is formed. Every character in the play operates as a metaphor for how members of society interact with one another, creating a social network of linked characters in the drama under discussion. Social classification and categorization become useful for understanding individuals and their social surroundings. Principal Kashi Ola and youthful Chief Ololade's two factions in the scenario classify each another as opposing forces and engage in violent conflict without holding back. Both men are aware of their social environment and make use of it.

In social categorization, individuals naturally categorise others into social groups, which influences their learning, thinking, perception, and behaviour. Chief Ololade categorises himself as young and wealthy and believes that he will be able to obtain what he wants. Based on this, he surrounds himself with praise singers who are prepared to respond to his beck and call in order to help him reach his ultimate goal of becoming an honorable. In the same vein, he categorises the school principal, Mr. Kashi Ola, as an old and weaker opponent who is not as wealthy as him.

- Chief Ololade:** ... I am too young to be contesting any my position with you. ...willingly concede this position to me as your son. Let me go and represent you at the National Assembly and bring all the glory back to you.
- Kashi Ola:** And I say no! Ololade, No! The National Assembly is not a place for toddlers...
- Chief Ololade:** Baba Principal sir, that is one of the things that has changed in the politics of our nation. The youths are tired of the politics of wretchedness that gives our elders pride in their filthy rags.
- Kashi Ola:** And the society is equally tired of young wealthy men whose sources of income stink... (12-13).

Chief Olowolagba and Iyalaja confirm the existence of categorisation within the groups fueled by disparity in wealth status when they state:

- Chief Olowolagba:** Politics is a game of number and people go where there is money. Our baba Principal does not have the type of money that can mobilise and encourage voters. (15)
- Iyalaja:** ..Baba Principal must find a way of increasing his financial strength, otherwise he may not stand a chance against this yahoo boy.(17)

Members of Principal Kashi Ola's ingroup labels themselves as the ones who are good and, categorises the outgroup headed by young Chief Ololade as a party of scum and fraudsters based on the disparity in possession of wealth within the groups. In addition, social categorization happens spontaneously, without much consideration on the part of the group, making it easy for the two groups to label each other negatively as seen in the extract below:

- Madam Okenla:** This is one of the reasons we need somebody like our dear Baba Principal... We need people with good conscience to make laws that will rid our society of scums like Ololade.
- Youth Leader:** In fact, the yahoo boys and other fraudsters are now a serious menace to our society. Young children now see them as the real symbol of success. They go around spreading their dirty cash like a deadly virus...
- Kashi Ola:** The most annoying thing is the casual acceptance of the odious wealth by virtually all strata of the society. You should have seen the pretense by our party leaders today. They all acted as if the open bribery by the silly boy was a normal thing. (18)

The above confirms that under social categorization, social groups are bound to develop stereotypes, a set of unfavourable or favourable assumptions made about the traits of a group, and could therefore become the standard for acting towards members of those groups in accordance with those ideas. Both groups identified in the drama possess stereotypical assumptions about each other, as the ingroup headed by Principal Kashi Ola nurse preconceived ideas and simplistic images of his counterpart, and vice versa, and this influences the way both groups interact with and treat each other.

Principal Kashi Ola, his in-group brandish Chief Ololade, and any of his group members as satanic—even a clergyman like Reverend Olasupo is not left out of the stereotype of being a member of Chief Ololade's ingroup.

- Kashi Ola:** You should have seen Revd. Olasupo defending a bottle of alcohol as if it was the Holy Bible.
- Madam Okenla:** That one sold his soul to the devil a long time ago. He will gladly accept money even from the devil himself. I wonder why they still call him a man of God.
- Kashi Ola:** Perhaps, because he loves the disguise of a man speaking for a holy God. And when I now pointed at the impropriety of receiving such gifts at a meeting where

impartiality was required, Ololade had the effrontery to plead that I should step down for him.

Comrade Aluta: So, the boy actually made the offer? He is indeed bold and reckless.(19)

Other features of social categorization are intergroup prejudice and ingroup favouritism. Prejudice is an unfavourable attitude towards an outgroup or its members, and ingroup favouritism is the propensity to be more receptive to members of an ingroup than members of our outgroups. Prejudice can appear as dislike, fury, fear, disgust, discomfort, and even hatred; these are the kinds of feelings that could lead people to act in a way that is unfavourable to those who belong to an outgroup. At the point where Chief Ololade tries to help his counterpart, Principal Kashi Ola, raise funds for the smooth running of his campaign, members of Principal Kashi Ola's group are confrontational, and there is a display of fury, disgust, and hatred towards him.

Chief Ololade: I come in peace and dare say my mission is not too different from yours. I heard my former school principal is raising fund for his political campaign ..., I have come to make my own contribution.

Comrade Aluta: Look Ololade, we are not here for any of your subterfuge. This is a serious and noble struggle and you know quite well that the fund being raised here will be used to campaign against you... Your contribution will not be needed here.(39-40)

Similarly, each party member favours his or her in-group above the outgroup. Along with attributing traits in ways that benefit themselves, Chief Ololade's and principal Kashi Ola's groups also attribute traits in ways that assist their ingroups.

Discrimination, resulting from stereotypes and prejudice, is a major social problem with long-term negative consequences, as revealed in the play as another feature of social categorization. Discrimination is the inappropriate use of negative actions towards outgroup members based on their membership in that group. From the text, both groups discriminate against each other, as revealed below by Principal Kashi Ola's loyalists against chief Ololade, and vice versa.

Comrade Aluta: (Miffed by the bravado of Ololade) What effrontery? What nerve? What does this rascal think he is doing? Bringing his dirty money to pollute our noble course? (He flings the paper dropped by Ololade to the floor).

Youth Leader: (Picking up the paper and putting it back on the table) I have never seen this kind of thing in my entire life. A man

claims to love and respect an older man, he is ready to commit his money to his project, yet he stands as the biggest obstacle to that project... (41-42)

The extracts above demonstrate that social categorization characteristics such as prejudice and in-group favouritism, discrimination, and stereotyping have an effect on the relationships between social groupings and have an impact on how each group member interacts with the others in responses and behaviour. These explain why Principal Kashi Ola's group and Chief Ololade's group are in conflict and harshly criticise one another.

The Role of Social Identity and Inter-group Differences in *Merchants of Perfidy*

Through a social comparison process, persons who are similar to the self are categorised with the self and are labelled the in-group; persons who differ from the self are categorised as the out-group. Forsyth notes that groups have power over their members; they exert influence on their attitudes, on their behaviour, and even on the kinds of activities in which their members engage (89). A fundamental aspect of human existence is social comparison. This is so because the most common way for people to assess themselves is by comparing themselves to others. There are several reasons why people decide to compare themselves to others. Informational concerns are undoubtedly of utmost importance since individuals desire to be aware of their positions on various issues (Yzerbyt et al. 174).

The main characters compare themselves to each other to show that they are superior to each other in terms of riches, as in the case of Chief Ololade, and moral behaviour, as in the case of Principal Kashi Ola. The use of social comparison in the text displays the characters' emotional responses, behavioural habits, and cognitive evaluations of one another. The primary focus of social comparison is on how the characteristics of social events in the environment change perceivers' preexisting conceptions about their social surroundings and affect how they form comparisons between themselves and other people. Comparison has in turn affected how each group's members react to the other group, as seen below:

Chief Ololade: ...The youths are saying, only the appropriate dress for a season should be displayed at the celebration of the season'. Let our elders keep their rags at home and allow those who know the appropriate design, style, and material for the current season represent the community.

Kashi Ola: ...Are you all going to just sit here and allow this young boy to insult me while nothing? Is this what our politics has turned to? (12-13)

With intergroup comparison, feelings of animosity and jealousy frequently accompany the perception that the members of a certain group are more affluent, bright, and moral than the others, as confirmed above. According to the social comparison, characters from each group in the text have a strong sense of loyalty to their group, which fuels their resentment of the other group and increases their desire to confront it (177). Members of groups also exert influence over one another. Social groups have an impact on their members' attitudes, behaviours, and even the kinds of activities they participate in.

Motive and Character in *Merchants of Perfidy*

Character motivation is what drives a character's conduct and actions in a specific scene or across the course of a story. Motivations are inherent wants; they might be psychological or existential requirements, like love or success, or external needs related to survival. The text reveals and confirms McClelland's description of what influences behaviour. Such features noted by McClelland (achievement, power, and affiliation as basic wants) are identified in the characters, further revealing that everyone has a mix of these traits, although one is generally dominant. The characters display essential needs that they acquire as a result of their life adventures.

In the text, there is an establishment of the need for power and achievement as the motivators for Chief Ololade's behaviour within his society. To attain power, he does everything he can to motivate his behaviour to achieve his goals. His need for power is first revealed when he makes his intention known to contest with his teacher, Principal Kashi Ola, for a seat in the National Assembly. At first, both men's exchange of words seemed harmless political banter, but Chief Ololade's later acts prove otherwise.

Chief Ololade: My dear Baba Principal sir... I want you to willingly concede this position to me Let me go and represent you at the National Assembly and bring all the glory back to you.

Kashi Ola: And I say no! Ololade, No! (12)

Chief Ololade's interest in representing his community at the National Assembly at first seems sincere, but his need for the post and power become evident from the series of events that take place. Consequently, he seeks the help of three shady business counterparts of his to raise money for his political ambition and to buy the consciences of the would-be voters through gift-giving, as shown below. His strong drive for power is further confirmed when he engages a chief priest for spiritual help to attain power at all costs.

Chief Priest: Ololade, you have heard the demands of the gods for this new level of wealth and power you aspire to...

Chief Ololade: Thank you my father. It cannot be otherwise. The next level is a higher level and one must be prepared. Once I get to the National Assembly, anything is possible... I must therefore go there spiritually and financially fortified.(47)

Just as he employs a criminal, Jingosa, to achieve his goals.

Chief Ololade: I have an urgent task for you, Jingosa, and it must be delivered in the next two days.

Jingosa: I knew it must be urgent the way you sounded on the phone. Let me know what you have in mind so we can know how to handle it.

Chief Ololade: I need a sacrificial lamb and it must be an unblemished female. (49)

Chief Ololade's desires for achievement and power impact his behaviour, and these desires result in the various strengths and faults he demonstrates. On the one hand, the urge for achievement manifests as an emotional drive towards advancing ahead of his peers and elders rapidly, achieving at any cost, rising to high positions in society, and other potentially competitive consequences. The need for power, on the other hand, manifests as an emotional yearning for prestige, influence, and control over others. Having good relationships with others does not matter, so long as money can help him achieve whatever he desires. As seen in the text, power and achievement matter more, with power being the dominant motivator. Chief Ololade's party members realise by the end of the play that what they see of his character is only a small portion of who he truly is; what was under the surface turns out to be far more nuanced (68).

The motivation of the main character, Principal Kashi Ola, is best understood by his yearning for achievement and affiliation. To lead his people and to be a problem solver are noted to be dear to him, and these became the key motivators that influenced his behaviour within his society. Kashi Ola valued the friendship of others; effective friendships offer a strong sense of connection, lessen loneliness, and improve life satisfaction and self-esteem, and this is what he latched into to attain his goal of becoming the community's representative at the national assembly (21). Principal Kashi's ingroup stays true to him, and this influenced his behaviour towards them within the social group. In return, Principal Kashi Ola pledges his loyalty and commitment to the group.

The achievement motivator evident in Kashi Ola's behaviour is displayed through his morality, which is guided by the prevalence of social and individual moral

standards. Honesty, loyalty, good faith, and responsibility are all examples of personal morality that serve as the foundation for human judgements and decisions. Fairness, which is a cornerstone of law and aids in regulating society and influencing individual conduct, is what social morality is all about (Bhupendra 5675).

The above traits Kashi Ola displays and reveals, and also confirms in his words:

Kashi Ola: What a nation have we become? What a people we are? Common criminals now strut the streets like kings and no one, no one can shout on them for shame. They have all soiled their hands by eating from the dirty food they carry around. Some stupid people call it reparation. (21)

Kashi Ola: And in your mind, a little boy with a dubious source of income is that best candidate for our zone? All the sacrifices of the past, the integrity of the individuals and even the values of our society could not count for anything in your reckoning? (70)

Kashi Ola is seen to be motivated by morality to pitch his tent against his counterpart, whom he describes as filthy in his activities. Instead of focusing solely on the benefit of being an Honourable at the expense of others, morality enables Principal Kashy Ola to collaborate with members of his ingroup towards a shared aim. He is also driven by moral principles to make personal sacrifices for the greater welfare of everyone, choosing instead to rely on the support of his supporters rather than accepting a free donation from his opponent to finance his campaign (43). Despite his age, lower financial level, and lower popularity among the community's youth, his desire to become an Honorable drives him to passionately compete with the outgroup headed by Chief Ololade (19).

5. Conclusion and Summary of Findings

The application of social identity and motivation theories to the drama demonstrated that classification and comparison played critical roles in characters identifying themselves within groups and their intergroup relations. The behaviour of the main characters to associate with certain persons and dissociate from others became possible because classification and comparison, which are features of social identity, allowed the main characters to assess one another, draw conclusions, and team up with others that shared similar views. Further findings from the analysis of the text revealed that motivators such as power, achievement, and affiliation, as revealed by McClelland's theory of needs, influenced the behaviour of the characters. The conclusions drawn from each main character established that identity, social groups, and human behaviour have an overall influence on how society operates, and most of the motivating factors that influenced the characters are more physical than psychological. In conclusion, the

drama text reveals that irrespective of age, achievement, and experience, motivation in individuals is a shared experience, and it is the driving force to attain goals through tenacity, as established by Chief Ololade and Principal Kashi's characters. To understand society, the underlying motivations that drive characters' actions and behaviours that influence group dynamics and intergroup relations are worthy of study.

Work Cited

Primary Source

Ojo, M. *Merchants of Perfidy*, Medialinks Publishers, 2021.

Secondary Sources

Abrams, M. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 2009, p 42.

Agboluaje, O. "Constructions of Identity in Contemporary African Drama: A Comparative Study of Wole Soyinka and Zakes Mda." *PhD thesis The Open University*, 2003.

Akinbobola, L. Oral Aesthetics in the Projection of the Nigerian Experience: The Example of Femi Osofisan's *Once upon Four Robbers* and *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen*, An Unpublished Master Dissertation, University of Lagos, 2017, p 24.

Arnolds, C. and C. Boshoff. "The Challenge of Motivating Top Management: A Need Satisfaction Perspective." *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 27.1, 2001, pp 39-42.

Asieh, A. "Social Identity: A Composite Concept in Social Sciences Research", *Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, no. 03, vol. 8, 2020, pp 26-32.

Berry, M., and S. Brown. "A Classification Scheme for Literary Characters." *Psychological Thought*, vol. 10, no. 2, Oct. 2017, pp. 288-289, doi.org/10.5964/psyct.v10i2.237.

Bhupendra, D. Concepts of Social and Moral Values. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, Vol. 6, No. 8, 2022, p 5675.

Dasyilva, A. "Cross-cultural Influences and Correspondences in Contemporary Nigerian Drama." *University of Ibadan*, 2006, pp 23-24.

Driscoll, J. "Identity in Shakespearean Drama." *Lewisburg, Pa: Bucknell University Press; London-Toronto: Associated University Presses*, 1983, p. 202.

Etherton, M. "Trends in African Theatre", *African Literature Today: Retrospect and Prospect* 10 1979, pp 57-85.

Forsyth, D. "Social Comparison and Influence in Groups." *Handbook of Social Comparison*, 2000, pp.81–103, link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-1-4615-4237-7_5, doi.org/10.1007/978-14615-4237-7_5.

Franco-Zamudio, J., and H. Dorton. "Collective Identity." *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*, 2014, pp. 256–259, link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4614-5583-7_381.

- Hammock, A. "Identity Construction through Theatrical Community Practice." *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, vol. 10, no. 3, 9 Aug. 2011, pp. 364-380, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325011408481>.
- Hastings, S. "Social Drama as a Site for the Communal Construction and Management of Asian Indian "Stranger" Identity." *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, vol. 34, no. 3, July 2001, pp. 309-335, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327973rlsi34-3_2.
- Hawraz, M. and A. Paiman. "Social Identity in Kurdish Film from a Theoretical and Sociologists Perspectives". *Journal of Kurdistan for Strategic Studies*. No. 3, 2023, 10/10.54809/jkss.vi3.233.
- Jeyifo, B. "The Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre of Nigeria". *Nigeria Magazine*, Lagos, 1984.
- Litwak, E. and I. Szelenyi. "Primary Group Structures and Their Functions: Kin, Neighbors, and Friends." *American Sociological Review* 34(4): 1969, pp 465-481, [doi:10.2307/2091957](https://doi.org/10.2307/2091957).
- Merton, R. In Deflem, M's." *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, 4 Dec. 2017, pp. 1-3, doi.org/10.1002/9781118430873.est0244.
- Obafemi, O. "Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision". *Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC)*, Lagos, 2001, p 90, 168.
- Ossai, O. "Identity in the 21st Century Nigerian Fiction: A Case Study of *Blackass* by Igoni A.Barrett." *Beyond the Margins: A Journal of Graduate Literary Scholarship*, vol. 2, 3 June 2022, <https://doi.org/10.46428/btm.2.6>.
- Podvoyskiy, D. and S. Soleimani. "The Concept of Social Identity: Basic Research Approaches." *RUDN Journal of Sociology*, vol. 19, no. 4, 15 Dec. 2019, pp. 825-834, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2272-2019-19-4-825-834>.
- Pradhan, R. "Character, Personality and Professionalism." *Social Science International*, vol 25, no. 2, 2009, p. 3.
- Ritivoi, A. "Identity and Narrative." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, (Eds) D. Herman, J. Manfred and R. Marie-Laure, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 231.
- Roy-Omoni, A. "Modern Nigerian Drama and its Generation of Playwrights". *Tropical Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Volume 2, Number 2, 2020, 8-17, DOI: 10.47524/tjah.v2i2.8.
- Sasay, A., et al. "Using Motivation as a Conceptual Framework for Institutional Capacity Building and Development." *International Journal for Research in Social Science and Humanities* 3.12:47, 2017.
- Saueroff, E. "Irish National Identity and Irish Drama: A Social Psychological Analysis." (2011).
- Schwartz, Seth J. et al (Eds). *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*. New York, NY, Springer New York, 2011.

- Suárez, R. et al. "Incidence of Value Motivational Strategies on High School Students' Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies." *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 27, 2016, pp. 421–435, doi.org/10.5209/rev_RCED.2016.v27.n2.46329.
- Ugbem, C. "The Social Relations of Identity Constructions and Reconstruction among Ethnic Groups in Benue State, Nigeria". *IFRA Nigerian Working Papers*, No 8, 2013, p 2.
- Yzerbyt, V., et al. "Social Comparison and Group-Based Emotions." *Social Comparison and Social Psychology: Understanding Cognition, Intergroup Relations, and Culture*, edited by Serge Guimond, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 174–177.
- Zapf, H. "Two Concepts of Society in Drama: Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* and Edward Bond's *Lear*." *Modern Drama*, vol. 31, no. 3, Sept. 1988, pp. 352–364, doi.org/10.3138/md.31.3.352.