

Romantic Deception, Wealth Aspirations, and Ritual Killings: The Targeting of Young Women in Nigeria

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Abstract: *In Nigeria, ritual killings of young women are common, frequently committed by romantic or potential romantic partners of the victims to satisfy their avarice for quick wealth.*

This study examined the notable rise in ritual killings of young women in Nigeria, evaluating how excessive aspirations for riches, conformity pressures, and discontent render young women more susceptible targets through romantic relationships. A mixed research methodology investigated ritual crime patterns by examining quantitative data and gathering individual perspectives through open-ended questioning. Responses were collected from 150 individuals acquainted with victims, randomly selected from three Nigerian states, employing SPSS software for comprehensive data analysis. The findings indicated that young women who actively seek wealth build associations with wealthy partners in 84% of cases; pressures of conformity and discontent contributed to 65.8% and 67.7% of individuals falling prey to ritualistic murders masquerading as partners, respectively. The study concluded that an excessive focus on financial gain makes young women more vulnerable to manipulation and more likely to enter into precarious relationships with wealthy partners without concern for the origin of the wealth. The research recommended that young women prioritize financial empowerment via skill acquisition, entrepreneurship, and education. Diverse entities, including family-related, government, educational institutions, and religious leaders, must collaborate to educate society about such detrimental behaviours and fall prey to them. The study highlights the importance of assessing both social, economic and personal factors that lead to young women being victims of ritual killings. Therefore, initiatives to safeguard young women from abuse and structural improvements for a safer society must be devised.

Keywords: Ritual Killings, Romantic Deception, Young Women, Discontentment, Conformity Pressure, Excessive Wealth Aspirations, Vulnerability, Wealthy Partners.

1. Introduction

A romantic relationship is a means by which individuals cultivate intimacy and depend on one another for moral, psychological, and social support. These connections are founded on trust, respect, and a shared objective for personal and societal growth, enhancing motivations; nonetheless, placing trust in a partner's benevolent intentions can often be illusory (Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). This observation highlights the duality of partnerships, characterized by positive interactions, effective communication, and mutual understanding, while simultaneously acknowledging the negative aspects, including manipulation, infidelity, and physical violence, amongst others. In Nigeria, there is a troubling phenomenon involving the systematic killing of young women, especially those aged 17 to 24, by their romantic partners for ritualistic purposes. This deviant behavior, arising from cultural, economic, and societal issues, prompts critical questions regarding trust, betrayal, and abuse in intimate relationships. Enaikele, Adeleke, and Adeoye (2022) elucidated that "money rituals" utilize lifeless human body parts in ceremonies intended to invoke supernatural prosperity. Ritual killings are not a novel occurrence in Nigeria; nonetheless, there is increasing recognition of a disturbing trend wherein young women are murdered by their partners for this purpose. Such victims are typically lured by the exhibition of love, affection, and financial security, only to be murdered by these perpetrators in meticulously orchestrated schemes aimed at fulfilling their avarice. This represents an ideal convergence of cultural ideas and insufficient productive and sustainable livelihood options amongst young women.

According to Abalogu and Azor (2024), ritual killings are escalated because the Nigerian economy provides a conducive environment for such happenings due to the rising unemployment rate, evident in elevated poverty and inadequate quality education among the youth. Adebogun, Josephine, Daramola, and Ridwan (2024) acknowledge how challenging it is for youths to secure gainful employment to support themselves, much less pursue an education. For many individuals, ritual killings offer a reprehensible yet pragmatic opportunity for financial security (Laleye, 2024). This issue is more prevalent among young women from underprivileged backgrounds as societal expectations compel them to seek financial stability in their relationships. On the other hand, Odejide, Atowoju, and Agboola (2024) added that culture heightens the risk, as the prevailing cultural norms in many Nigerian communities prioritize money as a sign of financial stability. Therefore, societal pressures compel several young women to partner with males who offer financial assistance despite the potential risks. Partners use this loophole, manipulating their victims to provide whatever they desire through charm, emotional persuasion, and deception. Additionally, the psychological dynamics exhibit a distinct pattern of sociopathic behaviour, as the attacker exploits the victim by feigning love and desire. People who engage in immoral and unethical behaviour frequently show little or no empathy and take advantage of their partners. As a result, these behaviours are closely linked to the prevalence of money rituals in Nigerian communities (Okpokwasili, 2024; Oyewole and Ekpo, 2024). The idea that a society can achieve perfect wealth by sacrificing its members is the foundation of this culture, and such views persist in cultural traditions, folklore, and theological doctrines, among others. Systemic issues, such as inadequate law enforcement and corruption, intensify this normalization.

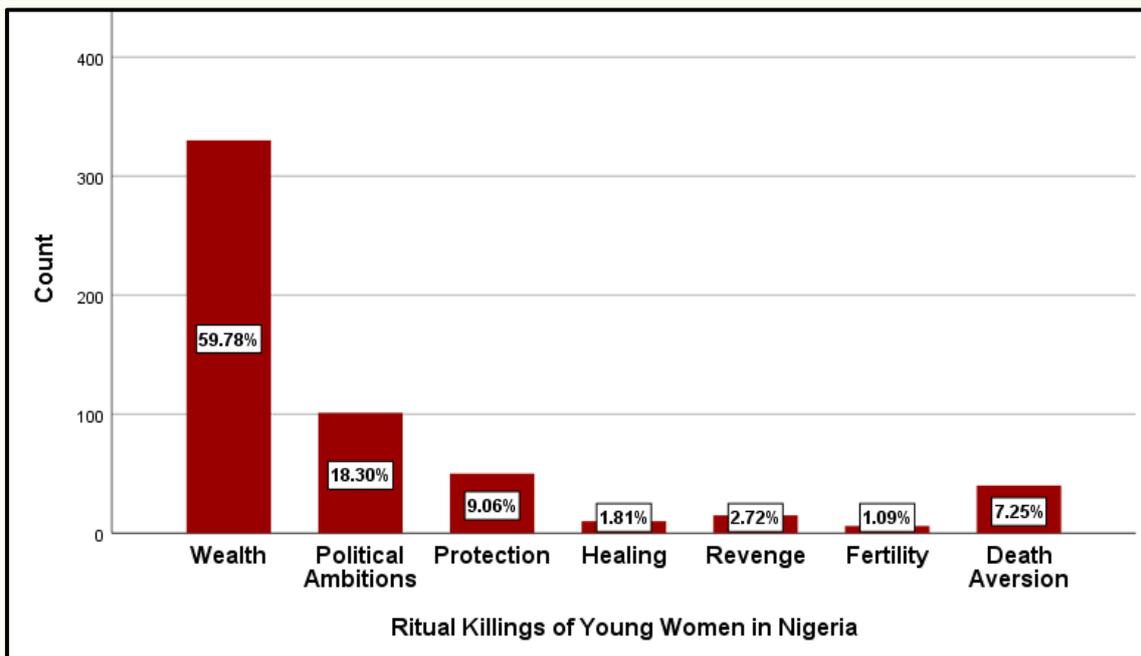
The psychological ramifications of these homicides are profound, impacting families, friends, and the community at large. The departure leaves families engulfed in profound pain, resentment, fear and a sense of betrayal; communities are challenged to confront the issue of social and cultural determinism that influences such behaviours. Mshelia, Kpada, and Jeffrey (2024) affirmed that the prevalence of ritual killings undermines social trust, causing individuals to exercise greater caution in forming close relationships due to fears of deception or harm. These impacts have extensive implications for social cohesion, gender dynamics, and the sustainability of communities as trust declines (Lopez, 2024). Furthermore, the desire for materialism by female folks drives certain young women to become continuously susceptible to dangerous and toxic love partners. Personal greed emanates from the inside, compelling individuals to engage in pursuits focused on personal enrichment, frequently at the expense of their well-being (Geldenhuys, 2024). This especially applies to women predisposed to material benefits, such as luxury items, an affluent lifestyle, and elevated social standing.

Johnston (2024) contends that the urgent need for prosperity drives some women to intentionally pursue relationships solely with men based on their income, irrespective of the dubious sources of that wealth. They willingly associate with guys considered hazardous due to their motives for financial stability, according to the perceived benefits of such associations. These women, driven by financial incentives and personal satisfaction, become submissive tools for any man as far as they are financially capable. This form of greed constitutes a significant vulnerability since the offenders are keenly aware of the destitute victims' aspirations for money gain and use this desire to secure a partnership. The males portray themselves as providers of the luxurious lifestyles the women desire, only to exploit them. This cycle of deception demonstrates how materialism can force an individual to endanger their own life. Therefore, this study is crucial as it examines the factors that render young women especially susceptible to ritual murders in relationships. Thus, the study's findings contribute to developing policy, advocacy, and community practice to understand and eliminate this issue through a comprehensive approach.

Young ladies in Nigeria confront an increasing danger of ritualistic killing from their love or potential romantic partners, frequently following assurances of improved financial status. These lethal incidents arise to satisfy the pursuit of wealth through rituals, demonstrating how offenders exploit their partners' trust. Research indicates a rise in this behaviour among youth seeking quick financial gain, with the primary categories of ritual crimes comprising Yahoo-Yahoo Boys, Baddoo Cult, Yahoo Plus, and several other ritualistic acts (Okoli & Agada, 2022). Reports on ritualistic crimes in Nigeria indicate that the majority of perpetrators are male. At the same time, females are frequently the victims, with female reproductive parts, especially breasts and vulvas, identified as the primary targets of these actions, highlighting a culture that devalues women.

Throughout history, there have been numerous ritualistic actions perpetrated against young women to generate wealth for the perpetrators. A report by ThisDay (2025) showed that in

September 2024, four men were arrested for the brutal murder of a 17-year-old undergraduate. In a similar occurrence, three men were apprehended on January 3, 2022, for the attempted ritualistic murder of a 13-year-old female victim in Bayelsa State (Punch, 2022). On January 29, 2022, four adolescent males aged 17 to 19 were arrested in a community in Ogun State for beheading a 20-year-old female for a financial ritual, thereafter incinerating her skull to ashes (Vanguard, 2022). On January 22, 2022, two male suspects were arrested in Osun State, having admitted to the murder of approximately 70 girls whose body parts were harvested for sale (Jungle Journalist, 2022). From January 5 to December 28, 2021, statistics reveal about 168 ritual-related fatalities across 20 Nigerian states, with the majority of victims' genders being females (WANEP, 2022). A review of diverse data sources, including Nigerian newspaper reports, indicates that young women are disproportionately victims of ritualistic killings, with the primary motive for perpetrators being to acquire wealth, accounting for approximately 60%, the pursuit of political achievement (18.3%), protection (9.6%), preventing death (7.25%), seeking retribution (2.72%), restoring health (1.81%), and enhancing fertility (1.09%). These figures reveal significant community issues, including income disparities, the intersection of politics and spiritual practices, the influence of traditional medical methods on safety, and pervasive gender violence against young women.



Source: *Iyobhebhe and Sherifat (2025)*

A meticulous examination reveals that romantic or potential romantic connections, motivated by the promise of financial benefits to the victims, substantially impact all these ritual killing cases. Perpetrators exploit the trust and affection extended by their victims to lure them into a false sense of financial security. Research by Ademola (2023) indicates that 78% of victims are murdered for money-making rituals following dating the perpetrators for over six months, illustrating the premeditated nature of these killings. On the flip side, Ogbo (2022) discovered that the Nigerian judicial system is deficient, with convictions for proven ritual killings

below 20%, while such crimes are increasing. This study examines the excessive financial aspirations, discontent, and conformity pressures faced by young Nigerian women, which render them susceptible to romantic deceit in their pursuit of fortune, ultimately making them targets for ritualistic killings.

2. Method

of ritualistic killings of young women in Nigeria. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were therefore highly utilized; they facilitated the collection of precise numerical data while also elucidating the practical reasons behind such unfortunate occurrences. The study participants were intentionally chosen from three Nigerian states because of the high prevalence of ritual killings of young women in those regions. The participants comprised 150 individuals, comprising friends and family members of young women who have fallen victim to ritual murders. This study employed simple random sampling, ensuring that each individual in the study area had an equal probability of being chosen as a participant. This was executed to reduce selection bias in the study, enhancing sample generalisability. Questionnaires were distributed to all 150 participants. The questionnaires were quantitatively designed to assess the participants' experiences, perceptions, and knowledge of ritual killings. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data, allowing participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives regarding the subject matter. The interview responses were transcribed and encoded thematically; encoding was performed using a Likert scale to align with the replies from the quantitative data, facilitating the identification of patterns and trends within the collected information. Furthermore, all data were analyzed using SPSS software, facilitating a comprehensive grasp of the problem.

Research Hypotheses

H₁: Excessive wealth aspirations among young women significantly influence their vulnerability to wealthy partners.

H₂: Conformity pressure significantly influences young women's vulnerability to becoming victims of ritual killings.

H₃: Discontentment significantly increases young women's vulnerability to becoming victims of ritual killings.

3. Result and Discussion

Excessive Wealth Aspirations

The aspiration for money is a fundamental driving force prevalent in numerous countries and is influenced by cultural and societal standards. In Nigeria, happiness encompasses financial prosperity, comfort, recognition, and esteem traits within society. While this objective is prevalent and frequently inspiring, it becomes detrimental when it compels individuals to partake in undesired or hazardous endeavors in the quest for riches. Like many others, Nigerian society has prioritized achievement, perceiving wealth as the paramount indicator of success and social acceptance. According to Flipo, Alexander-Haw, Breucker, and Dütschke (2025), such aspirations are predominantly influenced by familial and communal expectations, wherein an individual, especially a male, is expected to support his family. Inasmuch as wealth can enhance individuals' quality of life, excessive wealth aspiration often leads to preoccupation, causing

individuals to prioritize money gain over morality. Obute (2021) asserts that socioeconomic conditions amplify these wants. In Nigeria, poverty, unemployment, and inadequate education hinder many individuals from achieving success through legal and morally ethical means. The nation is confronting economic issues that push individuals, particularly the youth, to seek alternative income sources. This often entails criminal actions such as cybercrime, fraud, trafficking, and, among the most egregious, ritual murders.

Shademanpoor (2025) asserts that to achieve wealth, some individuals frequently disregard legal or ethical standards, compelling themselves to engage in illegal behaviors in pursuit. Moreover, pursuing wealth has been shown to influence behavior; dominant cultural norms in Nigeria expect men to earn while women get financial support, rather than the reverse or equal distribution. On the other hand, social standards significantly influence young women's perceptions of their relationships, as many young women perceive relationships with affluent men as avenues for financial stability in a bid to fulfil their quest for excessive wealth acquisition (Munro, Parker, Rahayuningtyas, Fithry, & Baransano, 2024). This dynamic is reinforced by societal beliefs that assert riches and power result in happiness and success. Therefore, George (2024) noted that excessive monetary aspirations are associated with love choices, prompting young women to make significant compromises, including disregarding indicators of manipulation or abuse partners in pursuit of financial assistance or social advancement.

Conformity Pressure

The term "conformity pressure" describes the kind of peer pressure that people face to shape their attitudes, actions, and choices to fit in with the majority (Bautista & Mabulay, 2023). Skok (2025) observed that people permit societal pressure to govern their behaviour rather than emphasize safety and values. The Nigerian culture conditions young women from an early age to adhere to societal norms of achieving financial success and luxury; this shapes women's roles, behaviours, and life objectives. The commitment to these cultural traditions is heightened by familial interactions, religious mandates, and societal expectations (Tabassum, 2025). Accordingly, young women face social pressure to align themselves with affluent individuals or groups; unfortunately, some exploit this to their advantage.

Additionally, the captivating nature of social media's portrayal of the lives of the rich and famous greatly influences the desire to conform. People admire celebrities and influencers who exhibit wealth as a marker of success and worth, aspiring to emulate their lifestyles (Kruglanski & Moskalenko, 2025). Due to their exaggerated expectations stemming from constant comparisons with others, certain individuals are readily exploited by those who guarantee immediate wealth or social status. Ibrahim and Olawale (2023) assert that the proliferation of social media has significantly increased vulnerabilities, particularly among young women. These victims are used by individuals who capitalize on their aspirations and entice them into perilous situations, including ritualistic homicides. Furthermore, the pressure to conform is significantly affected by peer influence. Ojiakor-Umenze, Etodike, Uchechukwu, and Alex (2024) discovered that numerous young women conform to social circles by adopting particular dressing styles, associating with certain individuals, or engaging in specific activities. Risky behaviours, such as

interacting with affluent yet destructive individuals, are often motivated by young women's apprehensions of rejection or disapproval. Nwachukwu (2023) asserts that young women are particularly vulnerable to exploitation due to the interplay of peer pressure and cultural norms.

Discontentment

Research reveals that the discontent levels among young women arise from several societal, cultural, and personal demands and the quest for wealth. Young women continually encounter substantial societal pressure to conform to wealth-centric norms dictated by a male-dominated culture (Abalogu & Nwokedi, 2024). In a society emphasizing materialism, numerous young women are coerced into believing their value is contingent upon their capacity to secure prosperous partners. This discontent stems from young women's conviction that their financial status correlates with respect and recognition. As these expectations increase, young women become entangled in relationships with males capable of fulfilling these demands. Accordingly, some of these relationships involve emotional manipulation, as perpetrators generally entice their victims with significant financial rewards. Research in self-psychology on gender identification revealed differences among many young women who face emotional and social discontent (Pavlenko, Nathan, Yom, Stachnik & Yarrow, & Rubin, 2024). It stresses that many women often fail to acknowledge their inherent worth, jeopardizing it for the quest for wealth, feeling reduced when their financial standing does not exhibit affluence and power. This mindset creates a cycle of discontent as young women persist in obviously toxic relationships in search of an unattainable future. The emotional toll of this unfulfilled yearning for stability and prestige makes young women susceptible to manipulation by malicious characters.

Vulnerability of Wealthy Partners

The persistent occurrence in Nigeria, wherein affluent men abuse young women, is alarming; hence, the need to address the conditions that make these women vulnerable to predation by wealthy persons, who frequently jeopardize their lives. Young women's relationships with affluent men are often viewed as a strategy for attaining financial status and social advancement (Gaetano, 2024). Power dynamics typically define these relationships in which the financial giver wields significant influence over the young woman's life. The primary catalyst for this development is sometimes linked to economic limitations, particularly among the youth, notably women. According to the World Bank, over 40% of the Nigerian population lives in poverty, with women being the most adversely impacted (World Bank, 2023). Accordingly, The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2024) indicates that 74.63% of Nigerian women lack income-generating activities, with men receiving more remuneration than women. This situation, where women earn considerably less than men or often encounter unemployment, increases the probability of young women seeking support from wealthy men. In Nigeria, the predominant objective often prioritizes financial dominance over emotional and physical security. Nevertheless, in situations where women earn more than men, there are instances where greed drives women to seek only affluent men, frequently without regard for the source of the wealth.

Liao (2024) observed that numerous young women believe a relationship with an affluent man could improve their quality of life. Such links are sometimes viewed sentimentally as transitioning from one level of illegal activity to a higher domain and far more

dangerous risks. Consequently, reliance on an affluent spouse for financial security subjects the woman to an emotionally and potentially physically abusive relationship in which she cannot make independent decisions without the man's consent. These dynamics result in various forms of abuse, including the male partner exerting control to dominate the female partner's thoughts and overall lifestyle through economic power. In numerous cases, such partnerships exhibit emotional abuse, as the woman, under coercion and entrapment, is compelled to stay with her lover owing to financial dependence (Johnston, 2024).

Vulnerability to Becoming Victims of Ritual Killings

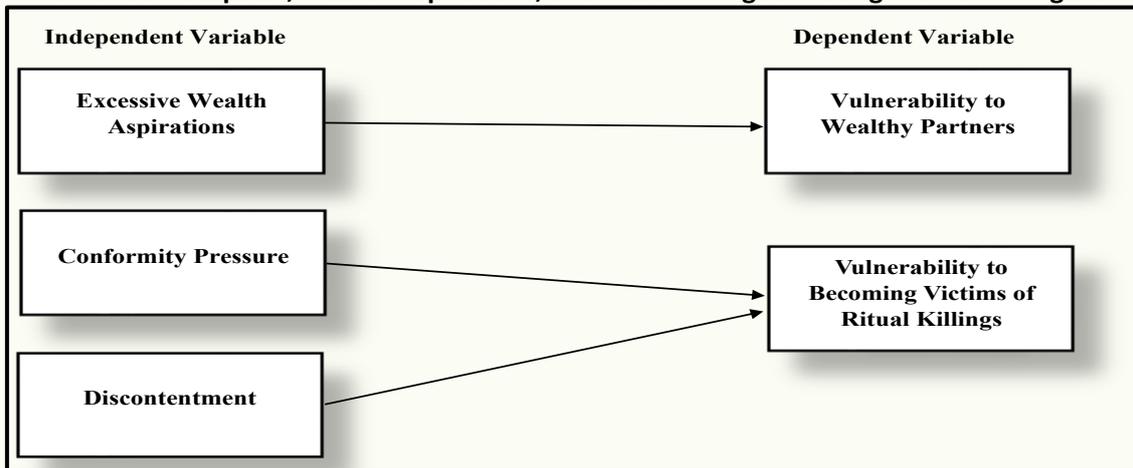
Ritualistic rituals, especially those involving the murder of young women in Africa, have emerged as a notable trend in Nigeria. Superstition, cultural forces, societal chaos, and individual egotism generally lead to evil behavior such as this. Emmanuel (2024) noted that the superstition around human sacrifice for wealth, power, or prosperity is widespread in several regions of Nigeria. Ajayi, Adesope, and Oso (2024) affirm that ritual killings are commonly utilized as a means to attain quick wealth for the perpetrators and motivate their conduct. An examination of Patience's (2024) journal regarding rapid wealth acquisition syndrome and murder of young women reveals an increase in ritual killings in Nigeria, as media reports underscore this escalating problem, particularly the murders of young women by their partners. Sacrificial murders often involve brutal deaths, wherein body parts or the complete body are incorporated into ritualistic practices aimed at invoking supernatural fortune or power. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that such killings are often perpetrated by those intimately connected to the victims, such as lovers, inflicting profound emotional and psychological distress on the victims' family and friends.

Soluade, Abdu-Raheem, Agboola, Balogun, and Atawodi (2024) elucidated that individuals engaged in ritual killings of their romantic partners employ various disguises, including assuming the persona of a romantic partner, offering lavish gifts, and feigning concern for their welfare. This capitalizes on the vulnerabilities of young women, rendering them susceptible to exploitation and abuse. Conversely, the frequent occurrence of such acts shows that Nigeria's justice system is not sufficiently equipped to combat this illegal activity. Urban and Ogah (2024) noted that the Nigerian legal system had faced criticism for its slowness, corruption, and particularly its failure to ensure that perpetrators of ritual killings are held accountable under the law. This structural inadequacy, combined with the inadequate and trivialized management of ritual activities in the country, promotes these crimes. Abubakar (2024) observed that culture, economic instability, psychological manipulation, and greed all contribute to the plight of young women in Nigeria, making them easy targets for ritual killings, with poverty and greediness being the main causes. This economic and personal desperation drives young women to engage with financially stable men, overlooking warning signs and trivializing worries about the partners intentions (George, 2024). The necessity to escape poverty or attain a specific status renders them oblivious to the dangers associated with engaging with individuals involved in illegal or ritualistic practices.

A major factor contributing to the elevated risk for young women is the societal perceptions surrounding the rituals linked to financial acquisition. A survey revealed that most regions in Nigeria believe that rituals involving human bloodshed result to material wealth (Ezenweke &

Nwachukwu, 2023). This approach is continuously supported by local authorities, religious leaders, and notable citizens who say such initiatives are essential for success. In numerous communities, these beliefs are seen as normative and perceived as the most effective methods for attaining success, compelling or conditioning individuals to engage in these practices. Furthermore, psychologically, young women are more vulnerable due to their emotional and developmental stages. Many young women are still in the process of forming their identities and are more susceptible to the emotional manipulation utilized by perpetrators of ritual killings (Abbas, Ali, Gull, & Begum, 2025). These perpetrators often use psychological tactics such as gaslighting, emotional blackmail, or charm to establish trust, making it difficult for the victims to recognize the danger they are in until it is too late. In many cases, these young women believe they are in loving relationships and may not perceive any threat from their partners until the situation escalates into violence or murder. Therefore, the susceptibility of young women to becoming victims of ritual killings in Nigeria is a complex issue driven by a combination of economic desperation, societal pressures, greed, psychological manipulation, and cultural beliefs. As the prevalence of these crimes continues to rise, it is clear that deeper societal and cultural changes are necessary to address the root causes of ritual killings and to protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation and harm.

Romantic Deception, Wealth Aspirations, and Ritual Killings of Young Women in Nigeria



Source: *Iyobhebhe and Sherifat (2025)*

Hypothesis One: Excessive wealth aspirations among young women significantly influence their vulnerability to wealthy partners.

| Model Summary ^b | | | | ANOVA | Coefficients ^a |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Sig. | Sig. |
| 1 | .918 ^a | .843 | .748 | .000 ^b | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Excessive Wealth Aspirations

b. Dependent Variable: vulnerability to Wealthy Partners

The result indicates that young women's desire for excessive riches significantly influences their attractiveness to affluent partners, evidenced by a substantial correlation (R-value = 0.918). Young women in Nigeria who pursue substantial riches face an increased likelihood of associating with affluent males. Also, the susceptibility of these women to affluent males for material gain and financial stability accounts for 84% of the observed pattern, as shown by an R Square value of 0.843. The results indicate an ANOVA value and coefficients of 0.000, below the predetermined significance threshold, suggesting that the statistical analysis offers

substantial evidence that excessive wealth ambitions among young women considerably affect their vulnerability to affluent partners. Thus, it is evident that the cultural dynamics in Nigeria cultivate a wealth-oriented mindset, leading young women to prioritise the financial status of their partners over other attributes, consequently increasing their vulnerability to exploitation in relationships.

Hypothesis Two: Conformity pressure significantly influences young women's vulnerability to becoming victims of ritual killings.

| Model Summary ^b | | | | ANOVA | Coefficients ^a |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Sig. | Sig. |
| 1 | .811 ^a | .658 | .637 | .000 ^b | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Conformity pressure

b. Dependent Variable: Vulnerability to Becoming Victims of Ritual Killings

The model indicates that young women face increased risks of ritual killings due to significant conformity pressure, as evidenced by an R-value of 0.811. An R Square score of 0.658 signifies that conformity pressure constitutes 65.8% of the factors contributing to young women in Nigeria becoming victims of partners involved in ritual killings. The results reveal an ANOVA value and coefficients of 0.000, which is below the established significance threshold, providing evidence that conformity pressure among young women significantly influences their susceptibility to becoming victims of partners involved in ritual killings. Therefore, this indicates that women who strive to meet societal expectations by engaging with wealthy individuals or prioritising the accumulation of excessive wealth become vulnerable to ritualistic exploitation by their partners, as social coercion drives them into hazardous relationships driven by the pursuit of riches.

Hypothesis Three: Discontentment significantly increases young women's vulnerability to becoming victims of ritual killings.

| Model Summary ^b | | | | ANOVA | Coefficients ^a |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Sig. | Sig. |
| 1 | .823 ^a | .677 | .673 | .001 ^b | .001 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Discontentment

b. Dependent Variable: Vulnerability to Becoming Victims of Ritual Killings.

The result reveals that discontentment substantially predisposes young women to become victims of ritual killings, as indicated by an R-value of 0.823. The R Square value of 0.677 signifies that dissatisfaction with material status among women accounts for 67.7% of the factors contributing to young women's susceptibility to relationships that end up in ritual killings. The ANOVA reveals a p-value of 0.001, indicating a significant correlation between young women's dissatisfaction and their likelihood of being victims of ritual killings in toxic relationships.

4. CONCLUSION

The study examined the attraction of young women with an excessive wealth mindset to affluent partners and the related dangers associated with ritual killings. It concentrated on their financial

objectives, the compulsion to conform, and their sentiments of discontent. The research indicated that young women aspiring for substantial wealth predominantly select partners based on financial status rather than evaluating emotional or social compatibility. Hence, pursuing wealth influences partner selection, as young women frequently prioritize financial status, thus resulting in precarious circumstances. The emphasis on wealth as an indicator of success increases the likelihood of these women engaging in unscrupulous relationships. In addition, young women are at greater risk of becoming victims of ritual killings when they feel pressured to conform through comparison. Many seek relationships with wealthy men due to social expectations and the desire to fit in. Hence, people are pushed to pick partners mainly based on finances rather than safety; because of this, women are more likely to end up with dangerous partners. Furthermore, the research indicates that discontent young women are more likely to become victims of ritual killings. Women dissatisfied with financial circumstances frequently choose precarious love relationships to pursue fortune or status. Consequently, young women's pursuit of alleviating financial difficulties by engaging only with affluent partners facilitates their exploitation by predators.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research indicates that young women constitute only a segment of the target demographic and population vulnerable to ritual killings in Nigeria. Individuals, including older folks and male victims, also experience these acts. Data regarding young women in relationships with affluent males from 2022 to 2024 indicates that these women encounter an increased risk of becoming victims of ritual killings compared to other groups. The study reveals that cultural factors, individual aspirations, conformity pressures, and financial limitations combine to make this demographic (young women) vulnerable to exploitation. Consequently, our research recommendations pertain to all individuals, albeit they predominantly emphasize young female victims based on statistical data. Combatting ritual killings through the exploitation of relationships necessitates universal support and engagement; therefore, balance among several sectors, including families, community leaders, government, educators, and society as a whole, is crucial to tackling these challenges. Consequently, in light of the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed;

1. Young women should cultivate financial independence by acquiring skills or pursuing education while exploring entrepreneurial ventures. By sustaining financial independence, young women can influence their relationship choices.
2. Parents should educate their children about the potential dangers of excessive wealth-based relationships to their safety. Parents can guide their daughters toward sound relationship choices by imparting comprehensive knowledge and essential life concepts.
3. Community leaders should initiate projects to demonstrate the significance of learning and basic values over monetary gain; the efforts should promote improved behaviors that foster personal development and security.
4. Educational institutions should incorporate fundamental teachings on financial management and personal success abilities into standard curricula, enabling individuals to establish autonomous finances and make advantageous decisions.

5. The government should make efforts to disseminate information to educate individuals on the detrimental effects of ritual killings on both victims and society; it should be geared towards imparting essential life lessons to ensure that young ladies and other individuals are aware of these threats to promote safety.
6. Law enforcement in Nigeria must enhance its efforts to combat ritualistic homicides and affluent folks who target vulnerable young women all in the name of a relationship. The government must enforce stricter regulations, devote comprehensive attention to investigations, and hold culprits accountable to prevent further atrocities.
7. Religious leaders should impart moral lessons to their audience regarding the consequences of succumbing to peer influence, the dangers of discontentment, and an excessive wealth-seeking mindset through romantic relationships.
8. The media should showcase financially independent women who succeed through persistence and courage; these endeavors can assist individuals in perceiving beyond the present compulsion to seek quick affluence and conform to society's standards.
9. Our Societal norms must transition from associating human worth with financial prosperity to emphasizing values such as diligence, patience, skills, and education.

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