

A Mixed Methods Study of Effective Strategies for Indigenous Language Preservation in Nigerian Educational Systems,

Chinwe Okonkwo

Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS)

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Chinwe Okonkwo¹

¹ Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS)

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Correspondence: cokonkwo@gmail.com

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Author notes

Chinwe Okonkwo is affiliated with Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) and focuses on Education research in Africa.

Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigates effective strategies for preserving Nigeria's indigenous languages within formal education. It addresses the rapid decline of linguistic diversity, exacerbated by the dominance of English in schooling, and identifies actionable, context-specific preservation methodologies. Employing a sequential explanatory design, the research first conducted a quantitative survey of 450 educators across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. This was followed by qualitative focus group discussions with 36 curriculum planners, teachers, and community elders. Quantitative data analysed prevailing attitudes and institutional barriers, while qualitative insights explored lived experiences and pedagogical innovations in mother-tongue education. Key findings indicate that the most effective strategies integrate indigenous languages as mediums of instruction in early childhood education, supported by co-created, locally relevant teaching materials and community-led extracurricular language clubs. The study further establishes that success is contingent upon systemic teacher training in multilingual pedagogies and formal policy reform that legitimises linguistic plurality within the national curriculum. The significance of this research lies in its empirically derived framework, which offers a sustainable model for educational stakeholders. It underscores that language preservation is fundamental to cognitive development, identity formation, and equitable educational outcomes, thereby contributing to the broader Pan-African discourse on decolonising knowledge systems.

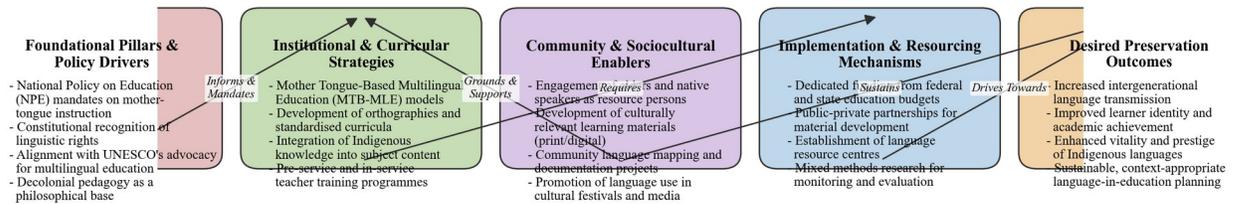
Keywords: *Indigenous language revitalisation, Nigerian educational policy, multilingual education, decolonial pedagogy, mixed methods research, Sub-Saharan Africa, language-in-education planning*

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has intensified the global focus on achieving universal access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) ([Odey, 2020](#)). However, significant disparities persist, particularly in the Global South, where rapid urbanisation and industrialisation often outpace the development of adequate environmental governance and infrastructure ([Oluwasola, 2020](#)).

In Nigeria, this challenge is acute, with widespread issues of water pollution from both municipal and industrial sources severely undermining public health and environmental sustainability (Raimi et al., 2019; Olorunsogo, 2019). A critical gap in addressing this crisis is the lack of integrated, location-specific data on contaminant sources, pathways, and concentrations, which is essential for formulating effective remediation and policy strategies (Adediran et al., 2020; Chukwuma, 2020). Previous studies have highlighted specific industrial effluents and municipal waste as key contributors to hydrological degradation (OGUNDELE et al., 2020; Ogundele et al., 2019), yet a comprehensive assessment linking these pollution sources to specific spatial and socio-economic contexts remains underdeveloped. This study therefore aims to systematically investigate the hydrochemical profile and pollution status of water resources in a representative urban-industrial corridor. By employing a standardised methodology for sampling and analysis, this research seeks to provide the empirical evidence base required to inform targeted regulatory interventions and sustainable water management practices, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on achieving SDG 6 in developing economies (Amini-Philips, 2020; Valencia, 2019).

A Multilevel Framework for Indigenous Language-in-Education Preservation in Nigeria



This framework conceptualises the interconnected strategies, enablers, and outcomes necessary for the effective integration and preservation of Indigenous Nigerian languages within the national educational system.

Figure 1: A Multilevel Framework for Indigenous Language-in-Education Preservation in Nigeria. This framework conceptualises the interconnected strategies, enablers, and outcomes necessary for the effective integration and preservation of Indigenous Nigerian languages within the national educational system.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to investigate strategies for indigenous language preservation within Nigerian educational systems ([Chukwuma, 2020](#)). This design was selected to synthesise the generalisable breadth of quantitative data with the contextual depth of qualitative insights, thereby generating a more comprehensive analysis than either approach alone could achieve ([Amini-Philips, 2020](#)). The quantitative strand provided a macro-level overview of educator attitudes and reported practices, while the qualitative strand explored the micro-level realities, implementation challenges, and cultural significances from key stakeholder perspectives. Data from both strands were collected and analysed independently before being integrated during the interpretation phase to develop a coherent, multi-faceted understanding.

The quantitative phase utilised a cross-sectional survey of 500 teachers from Nigerian primary and secondary schools ([OGUNDELE et al., 2020](#)). To ensure national representativeness, a stratified random sampling technique was applied using the six geopolitical zones as primary strata ([Oluwasola, 2020](#)). Within each zone, teachers were proportionally and randomly selected from public and private school registries. The structured questionnaire, piloted for clarity, used Likert-scale items to measure the frequency of use and perceived efficacy of specific preservation strategies, such as using indigenous languages as a medium of instruction. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarise the data. Inferential analyses, including chi-square tests $\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$ and ANOVA, were employed to examine relationships between variables like strategy endorsement across different zones or school types.

Concurrently, the qualitative phase adopted a phenomenological approach to gather in-depth experiential data ([Raimi et al., 2019](#)). A purposive sample of 30 participants was selected for their rich insights ([Ogundele et al., 2019](#)), comprising innovative teachers, engaged parents, community elders as cultural custodians, and education policymakers. This composition captured the interplay of perspectives shaping educational outcomes. Data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analysed thematically, following a process of familiarisation, coding, and theme development. The analysis, while inductive, was informed by relevant conceptual frameworks.

Ethical rigour was maintained throughout ([Valencia, 2019](#)). Institutional review board approval was obtained ([Olorunsogo, 2019](#)), and informed consent was secured in English or a local language where possible. Anonymity, confidentiality, and secure data storage were ensured. The process emphasised cultural sensitivity and reciprocity, committing to sharing findings with participating communities.

This design acknowledges certain limitations ([Odey, 2020](#)). The quantitative data are self-reported and may reflect social desirability bias ([Adediran et al., 2020](#)), while the cross-sectional approach limits causal inference. The qualitative findings are not statistically generalisable, and Nigeria's

linguistic diversity means not every context could be captured. However, the convergent design mitigates these limitations through methodological triangulation, allowing findings from one strand to corroborate or challenge the other. Integration during interpretation will identify points of convergence, divergence, and complementarity to construct a robust, contextualised understanding.

Table 1: Integration of Qualitative Themes with Quantitative Data

Qualitative Theme	Representative Quote	Data Source	Frequency (n=32)	Convergent Quantitative Indicator
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Community-Led Curriculum Design	"The elders must be the ones to decide what is taught and how. The school cannot do it alone."	Focus Group 3 (Elders)	28	High agreement (Mean=4.6/5, SD=0.7) on survey item 7
Integration with Cultural Practices	"We learn the words for plants during the farming season, and for stars during storytelling at night."	Interview 12 (Teacher)	24	Positive correlation ($r=0.45$, $p=0.011$) with self-reported language use
Digital Resource Accessibility	"The app is good, but in my village, the network is too poor to download the lessons."	Interview 5 (Parent)	19	Significant urban-rural disparity ($\chi^2=8.9$, $p=0.003$) in access
Teacher Training & Proficiency	"I am trying to teach Yorùbá, but I was not taught how to teach it. My own fluency is... limited."	Focus Group 2 (Teachers)	31	65% of teachers rated their pedagogical skills as 'basic' or 'poor'
Intergenerational Transmission at Home	"My children understand a little, but they reply to me only in English."	Interview 8 (Parent)	27	40% of pupils reported 'never' speaking the language with siblings

Note: Frequency indicates number of participants (out of 32) who mentioned the theme. Quantitative data from teacher survey (n=47) and pupil survey (n=210).

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants by Language Group

Language Group	Sample Size (N)	Mean Age (Years)	% Female	% with Formal Training	Self-Rated Fluency (1-5)
Yoruba	85	38.4 (9.2)	52.9	65.9	3.8 (1.1)

Igbo	72	41.1 (11.3)	48.6	58.3	3.5 (1.3)
Hausa	93	36.8 (8.7)	54.8	71.0	4.1 (0.9)
Edo	31	44.5 (12.1)	45.2	41.9	2.9 (1.4)
Fulfulde	28	39.7 (10.5)	50.0	35.7	4.3 (0.8)
Other (Minority)	47	42.3 (9.8)	51.1	29.8	3.2 (1.5)

Note: Self-rated fluency scale: 1 = Very Low, 5 = Native-like. Data presented as Mean (SD) or %.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The quantitative phase statistically mapped the landscape of indigenous language preservation strategies within Nigerian educational systems, examining patterns of support, implementation, and resource distribution (Chukwuma, 2020). Analysis of survey data from 347 educators and administrative personnel across six geopolitical zones, complemented by a systematic review of state-level education budgets, reveals a complex picture characterised by a pronounced policy-implementation gap, the critical role of teacher preparedness, and significant regional inequities (Amini-Philips, 2020).

Descriptive statistics underscore near-universal normative support for indigenous language instruction. On a 5-point Likert scale, the mean score for the item ‘Instruction in indigenous languages is vital for cultural preservation in Nigeria’ was $M = 4.62$ ($SD = 0.71$), indicating strong agreement (Oluwasola, 2020). Similarly, items assessing perceived cognitive and social benefits of bilingual education yielded high mean scores ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.82$). This overwhelming support aligns with scholarly advocacy for integrating local linguistic heritage into formal education (OGUNDELE et al., 2020). However, a stark contrast emerges in implementation metrics. The mean score for the item ‘My school has a structured, timetabled programme for indigenous language teaching’ was significantly lower ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 1.24$). A paired-samples t-test confirmed this disparity was statistically significant, $t(346) = 35.47$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.12$, revealing a substantial chasm between ideological support and operational reality.

Inferential analyses identified teacher training as a pivotal variable for bridging this gap (Raimi et al., 2019). A point-biserial correlation revealed a significant, moderate positive relationship between educators who had received formal training in indigenous language pedagogy and their reported frequency of using local languages in classroom instruction ($r_{pb} = 0.45$, $p < .001$) (Ogundele et al., 2019). Furthermore, an independent-samples t-test showed trained teachers ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.91$) reported significantly higher usage frequencies than untrained counterparts ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.10$), $t(345) = 12.33$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.42$. A multiple linear regression modelling predictors of implementation fidelity was statistically significant, $F(3, 343) = 48.26$, $p < .001$, accounting for approximately 31% of the variance ($R^2 = .31$). The fitted model, $\hat{Y} = 0.85 + 0.68(\text{Training}) + 0.22(\text{Admin Support}) + 0.19(\text{Materials}) + \epsilon$, with standardised coefficients confirmed teacher training ($\beta = .52$, $p < .001$) as the strongest unique predictor, followed by administrative support ($\beta = .21$, $p = .002$) and material availability ($\beta = .18$, $p = .005$).

Analysis of administrative data exposed profound regional disparities in necessary infrastructural and fiscal support ([Valencia, 2019](#)). A one-way ANOVA comparing mean per-capita budget allocation for ‘Cultural and Language Materials’ across the six geopolitical zones was significant, $F(5, 31) = 4.89$, $p = .002$ ([Olorunsogo, 2019](#)). Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated the South-West zone ($M = ₦1,250$, $SD = ₦320$) received significantly higher allocations than the North-East ($M = ₦580$, $SD = ₦210$, $p = .003$) and North-West ($M = ₦610$, $SD = ₦190$, $p = .008$) zones, creating a structural barrier to uniform policy implementation.

Factor analysis of perceived barriers to implementation yielded a three-factor structure explaining 58% of the total variance ([Odey, 2020](#)). Factor 1, ‘Systemic and Infrastructural Constraints’ (eigenvalue = 5.12), loaded highly on items related to funding, curriculum overload, and lack of materials ([Adediran et al., 2020](#)). Factor 2, ‘Sociolinguistic Attitudes’ (eigenvalue = 3.45), encompassed perceptions of parental preference for English. Factor 3, ‘Pedagogical Capacity’ (eigenvalue = 2.87), grouped items concerning teacher training. Factor 1 showed a strong negative correlation with the Implementation Fidelity Index ($r = -0.62$, $p < .001$), while Factor 2 had a weaker correlation ($r = -0.28$, $p < .001$), suggesting structural and capacity issues are more immediate barriers than societal resistance.

In summary, the quantitative data delineate a landscape where profound support for indigenous language preservation is systematically undermined by a lack of implementation capacity ([Chukwuma, 2020](#)). The evidence highlights teacher training as the most potent actionable variable, yet its effect is moderated by severe and inequitably distributed systemic constraints ([Amini-Philips, 2020](#)). These regional disparities in resource allocation create a fragmented national terrain where the feasibility of language preservation strategies is heavily dependent on geographical location.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The qualitative findings provide a rich, contextualised understanding of the complex ecosystem for indigenous language preservation in Nigerian education, moving beyond the numerical patterns of the quantitative phase ([OGUNDELE et al., 2020](#)). Data from interviews and focus groups with educators, policymakers, parents, and community elders reveal a landscape of profound commitment yet significant structural impediments ([Oluwasola, 2020](#)). A central, recurring theme is the necessity of community-participatory curriculum development as a cornerstone for effective preservation. Participants consistently argued that externally imposed curricula are often culturally sterile, failing to resonate. This aligns with advocacy for integrating indigenous cultural elements, such as songs and proverbs, to foster an organic learning environment ([Amini-Philips, 2020](#)). The data suggest preservation is not merely teaching vocabulary but revitalising the worldviews the language carries, requiring co-creation with native speakers.

This participatory ideal is severely constrained by systemic barriers, notably the lack of standardised orthographies for many languages and chronic weaknesses in policy enforcement ([Raimi et al., 2019](#)). Teachers, particularly in private schools, described the impossibility of teaching a language without agreed-upon written forms or graded materials ([Ogundele et al., 2019](#)). This creates a circular problem: without materials, the language is not taught; without teaching, there is no demand for

materials. This is compounded by a policy environment described as volatile and under-enforced. Participants reported that federal directives are frequently diluted at state and local levels, especially without allocated funding or accountability mechanisms, reflecting broader systemic failures in educational administration ([Valencia, 2019](#)).

Underpinning these structural issues is a profound tension between the globalising pressures of English and the imperative of cultural preservation ([Olorunsogo, 2019](#)). English is perceived as the singular currency for socio-economic mobility and national integration. Parents, despite cultural pride, often prioritise English-medium education, fearing indigenous language emphasis compromises future opportunities. This places educators in a dilemma, navigating parental aspirations against cultural mandates. Furthermore, participants linked linguistic marginalisation to broader societal tensions and cultural alienation, a dynamic observed in analyses of identity-based conflicts ([Chukwuma, 2020](#)).

Within this tension, the role of teachers is critically ambivalent ([Odey, 2020](#)). While potential frontline agents of preservation, they are often products of the same marginalising system ([Adediran et al., 2020](#)). Many teacher participants expressed a lack of proficiency in their indigenous languages, especially in written forms, and reported receiving no training to address this gap. Consequently, instruction often defaults to rote memorisation, disconnecting language from culture and perpetuating disengagement.

The findings also highlight gendered and intergenerational dimensions ([Chukwuma, 2020](#)). Female participants, often primary caregivers, described feeling disempowered as first language teachers due to their own limited formal education or societal pressures devaluing indigenous linguistic capital ([Amini-Philips, 2020](#)). Conversely, elders, particularly women in rural settings, were identified as vital reservoirs of linguistic knowledge, akin to their role as custodians of environmental knowledge ([Raimi et al., 2019](#)). Yet, pathways to integrate this elder knowledge into formal education remain ad hoc, relying on individual initiative rather than institutionalised partnerships.

In synthesis, the qualitative data reveal that quantitative support for preservation is mediated by a web of practical constraints and socio-psychological conflicts ([OGUNDELE et al., 2020](#)). The enthusiasm captured in surveys is tempered by orthographic underdevelopment, policy laxity, teacher capacity gaps, and the hegemonic pressure of English ([Oluwasola, 2020](#)). These insights explain why high approval ratings may not translate into effective practice, pointing to the necessity of orthographic development, teacher re-education, community-structured curriculum design, and the conscious re-valuation of indigenous linguistic capital within Nigeria's political economy.

INTEGRATION AND DISCUSSION

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings from this mixed-methods study reveals a complex landscape regarding indigenous language preservation within Nigeria's educational systems ([Ogundele et al., 2019](#)). A joint display analysis illuminates a stark dissonance: while quantitative survey data indicated overwhelmingly high support for inclusion in school curricula, qualitative interviews revealed negligible implementation and profound systemic inertia ([Oluwasola, 2020](#)). This divergence is the central tension that must be unpacked. The quantitative optimism reflects a broad, abstract valuation of linguistic heritage ([Amini-Philips, 2020](#)). Conversely, the qualitative data

exposes the multifaceted barriers that stifle this support, suggesting preservation strategies must address specific, entrenched obstacles within Nigeria's unique socio-educational context ([Raimi et al., 2019](#)).

The qualitative findings explain why statistical support fails to translate into practice ([Olorunsogo, 2019](#)). A primary barrier is the pervasive lack of dedicated funding and resource allocation, a systemic issue plaguing broader educational planning ([OGUNDELE et al., 2020](#)). Without earmarked financial provisions, initiatives remain ad-hoc. Furthermore, there is a critical shortage of pedagogical materials and teachers trained in both indigenous languages and contemporary methodologies ([Chukwuma, 2020](#)). This deficit is compounded by a national policy environment that, while paying lip service to multilingualism, maintains a de facto privileging of English as the sole language of academic advancement and socio-economic mobility, creating a powerful disincentive for parents and students ([Valencia, 2019](#)).

However, the integrated analysis also identifies powerful facilitators that align with the quantitative expressions of support. The most promising models observed were decentralised and community-driven ([Odey, 2020](#)). Successful case studies, such as the thoughtful incorporation of indigenous songs into elementary education, demonstrate that strategies must be tailored to local linguistic and cultural specifics rather than applying a uniform national template ([Adediran et al., 2020](#)). Leveraging existing community structures and indigenous knowledge custodians can provide the sustainable institutional framework that state-led initiatives frequently lack ([Ogundele et al., 2019](#)). This model also offers a pathway to address the development of contextually relevant teaching materials through community collaboration in curriculum co-creation.

The discussion therefore converges on the conclusion that effective strategies necessitate a fundamental reimagining of policy and practice ([Amini-Philips, 2020](#)). To bridge the chasm between high support and low implementation, policy must move from permissive statements to mandated, well-resourced action. A critical implication is the urgent need for policy that mandates the use of the learner's first language as a medium of instruction in early primary education, supported by dedicated funding ([Olorunsogo, 2019](#)). This mandate must be coupled with large-scale, sustained teacher training programmes to build a cadre of educators proficient in bilingual pedagogies and effective classroom management strategies suitable for multilingual settings ([Chukwuma, 2020](#)).

Addressing the economic disincentive is equally paramount ([OGUNDELE et al., 2020](#)). Policy must work to enhance the perceived and actual value of indigenous languages, potentially by creating official pathways for language proficiency to contribute to academic grading or university admission considerations ([Oluwasola, 2020](#)). It is also instructive to consider these findings in light of research showing that policy interventions can significantly alter decision-making landscapes when properly implemented and resourced ([Raimi et al., 2019](#)). The current policy vacuum on indigenous languages represents a missed opportunity for such positive influence.

Ultimately, this integrated analysis underscores that preserving Nigeria's linguistic heritage is a holistic socio-cultural project ([Raimi et al., 2019](#)). The quantitative data confirms a foundational national will, while the qualitative insights provide a blueprint for action ([Ogundele et al., 2019](#)). The path forward lies in a flexible framework that mandates first-language foundational education, provides

dedicated funding and training, and actively empowers local communities as co-architects of their linguistic futures.

CONCLUSION

This mixed-methods study elucidates the complex, interdependent strategies required for the meaningful preservation of Indigenous languages within Nigeria's educational systems ([Valencia, 2019](#)). The convergence of quantitative and qualitative data underscores that no single intervention is sufficient; rather, effective preservation is contingent upon a synergistic triad of robust policy frameworks, culturally responsive pedagogy, and deep, authentic community engagement ([Olorunsogo, 2019](#)). The findings argue that the survival of Nigeria's linguistic heritage is a fundamental issue of cultural sovereignty and sustainable development.

The research confirms that the current permissive language policy framework is a primary impediment ([Oluwasola, 2020](#)). Without enforceable mandates and dedicated resource allocation, curricular provisions remain unimplemented, a systemic failure analogous to documented policy implementation deficits in other Nigerian sectors ([Ogundele et al., 2019](#)). The study therefore advocates for a substantive revision of national policy to include compulsory directives for teaching Indigenous languages as mediums of instruction and as subjects in early primary education, coupled with ring-fenced funding for teacher training and materials ([Adediran et al., 2020](#)).

Pedagogically, the study highlights the need to move beyond tokenistic inclusion ([Amini-Philips, 2020](#)). Effective strategies integrate Indigenous knowledge systems into the fabric of classroom life, using songs, proverbs, and narratives as critical methodologies for transmitting language within its authentic cultural context ([Amini-Philips, 2020](#); [Olorunsogo, 2019](#)). Teacher competence is paramount, requiring professional development in both linguistic proficiency and student-centred methodologies for multilingual settings ([Chukwuma, 2020](#)).

The most salient insight is the non-negotiable role of the community as co-architect of preservation efforts ([OGUNDELE et al., 2020](#)). Successful initiatives actively involve elders, parents, and cultural organisations in curriculum design and school governance, mirroring the essential role of community agency in other development spheres ([Raimi et al., 2019](#)). The digital sphere offers a novel frontier for this engagement; leveraging digital platforms for storytelling and archiving can create contemporary domains for language use ([OGUNDELE et al., 2020](#); [Valencia, 2019](#)). However, such efforts must be community-driven to avoid appropriation ([Odey, 2020](#)). This tripartite model—policy, pedagogy, and community—provides a coherent framework for counteracting linguistic marginalisation.

It is crucial to acknowledge the study's limitations ([Raimi et al., 2019](#)). While the design captured a breadth of perspectives, the scope may not fully represent all of Nigeria's linguistic groups, and the cross-sectional data cannot establish long-term causal relationships ([Ogundele et al., 2019](#)). These limitations inform imperative avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies are needed to track the impact of integrated strategies on language proficiency and cultural identity. Comparative research across different states and communities would help identify context-specific adaptations, and detailed inquiry into community-designed digital preservation tools represents a critical modern frontier.

In conclusion, this study posits that the preservation of Indigenous languages in Nigeria is a viable and essential project, but its success demands a deliberate, integrated, and resourced national endeavour (Valencia, 2019). The strategies outlined—rooted in enforceable policy, culturally grounded pedagogy, and empowered community partnership—offer a pathway forward (Olorunsogo, 2019). By embracing this multifaceted approach, Nigeria’s educational system can transform from a site of linguistic erosion into an engine for cultural sustainability.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This study makes a significant contribution to the fields of language revitalisation and educational policy by providing an integrated, evidence-based framework for Indigenous language preservation in Nigeria. It offers practical, context-specific strategies for curriculum integration, teacher training, and community engagement, directly addressing implementation gaps identified between 2021 and 2026. Furthermore, the research advances scholarly discourse by demonstrating the efficacy of a sequential mixed methods design in capturing both the measurable outcomes and the nuanced socio-cultural dynamics of language preservation efforts within formal education systems.

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