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GBAGYI NATION AND HER QUEST FOR NATIONAL IDENTITY AND RECOGNITION

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Abstract

The Gbagyi Nation, with deep historical roots in central Nigeria, primarily inhabits areas like the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Niger, and Nasarawa States. They are one of the most culturally vibrant yet politically overlooked ethnic groups in the country. This study takes a close look at the Gbagyi people's historical origins, their socio-cultural identity, and the challenges they face today in their fight for national recognition. It's guided by four main research questions that delve into how the development of Abuja as Nigeria's capital has influenced the Gbagyi Nation's socio-political standing, highlights the key obstacles to their recognition, and assesses strategies for boosting their visibility within the Nigerian framework. Using a descriptive survey research design, the study involved 300 participants from a total of 450 Gbagyi community members across the FCT and nearby states. Data was gathered through structured questionnaires and analyzed with descriptive statistical methods like mean scores and frequency distributions. The results show that the Gbagyi people have a clear historical and socio-cultural identity, yet they face ongoing marginalization due to forced displacement, a lack of political representation, and being left out of national narratives. Respondents strongly voiced the need for constitutional recognition, political inclusion, and cultural preservation through focused advocacy and policy efforts. The study wraps up by asserting that the Gbagyi Nation's quest for recognition is not just valid but also urgent in the context of Nigeria's diverse society. It suggests comprehensive constitutional reforms, restitution policies, and national awareness campaigns to tackle historical injustices and ensure the Gbagyi people receive the recognition they deserve. This research adds to the growing conversation around indigenous identity, minority rights, and the importance of inclusive nation-building in postcolonial African states.

Keywords: *Gbagyi Nation, national identity, cultural marginalization, Abuja, indigenous rights, political recognition, Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a vibrant nation, home to a rich tapestry of ethnic groups, each with its own distinct languages, cultures, and histories. However, despite this incredible diversity, the recognition and inclusion of these groups often fall short, leading to the marginalization of minorities in the socio-political and cultural landscape. One such group is the Gbagyi (or Gwari) nation, primarily found in the North Central region of Nigeria, particularly in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), as well as in Niger, Kaduna, and Nasarawa States.

The Gbagyi nation also referred to as Gwari is among Nigeria's most culturally vibrant and geographically widespread indigenous ethnic groups, mainly situated in the Middle Belt region. The Gbagyi people occupy significant areas of Niger State, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and parts of Kaduna and Nasarawa States. With a population estimated at over 5 million, they are arguably the largest ethnic group in the FCT and among the oldest continuous inhabitants of the central Nigerian highlands (Agbo, 2019; and Nadel, 1942).

When it comes to language, the Gbagyi people communicate using two primary dialects of the Gbagyi language: Gbagyi-Nupe (spoken around Niger and parts of the FCT) and Gbagyi-Kaduna (spoken in Southern Kaduna). This language is part of the Kwa sub-group within the Niger-Congo language family (Blench, 2019). Although there are no early written records, oral traditions strongly suggest that the Gbagyi people can trace their roots back to the Nok culture a prehistoric society renowned for its sophisticated terracotta art and early metallurgy, dating as far back as 500 BC (Fagg, 1977). Traditionally, Gbagyi society operates in a decentralized manner, centered around clans and villages led by elders and traditional leaders known as Esu. The Gbagyi people are well-regarded for their peaceful nature, adaptability, and unique cultural practices, such as their preference for carrying loads on their shoulders instead of their heads an act that symbolizes strength, dignity, and identity (Agbo, 2019).

Historically, the Gbagyi have been celebrated for their peaceful demeanor, rich cultural heritage, and agricultural skills, playing a vital role in Nigeria's socio-political landscape. Yet, they often find themselves overlooked in national conversations, frequently overshadowed by more dominant ethnic groups. The establishment of Abuja as Nigeria's capital in the 1970s thrust the Gbagyi into the national limelight, but unfortunately, it was through displacement and cultural disintegration rather than empowerment or acknowledgment. During the colonial period, the Gbagyi were subjected to indirect rule by neighboring emirates, particularly Zazzau and Suleja, which undermined their traditional governance and diminished their autonomy (Ochonu, 2008). However, the most profound disruption occurred after Nigeria gained independence when Abuja was declared the Federal Capital in 1976. As the original inhabitants of Abuja, countless Gbagyi families were forcibly displaced without fair compensation or a voice in the city's urban planning and governance (Emejuru, 2015; Ibrahim & Kazah-Toure, 2003).

This ongoing marginalization has sparked decades of struggle for recognition, with the Gbagyi advocating for constitutional acknowledgment as the original residents of the FCT, the preservation of their cultural traditions, and fair access to land and political representation. Despite these hurdles, the Gbagyi remain steadfast in their identity, cultural pride, and resilience, even as they navigate the challenges of modernity and increasing state centralization. The Gbagyi nation's journey toward establishing a national identity and gaining recognition has been shaped by years of socio-political neglect, cultural decline, and a lack of historical documentation. This situation has sparked a strong demand for equity, inclusion, and the preservation of their culture. To truly understand the Gbagyi struggle is to embrace the values of inclusiveness, acknowledge indigenous rights, and work towards a genuinely representative Nigerian nation.

Even though the Gbagyi people are the original inhabitants of the Federal Capital Territory, they have consistently faced socio-political marginalization. Their language, cultural traditions, and traditional leadership have often been overlooked in both state and national policy-making. The loss of land during the development of Abuja has worsened their economic situation, and their limited political representation has made it difficult for them to assert their identity on a national scale. The core issue is that the Gbagyi nation's significant contributions to Nigeria's history and development have gone largely unrecognized, leaving their quest for acknowledgment and national identity unfulfilled. This study aims to delve into the historical, cultural, and political factors that have led to the marginalization of the Gbagyi people and to explore potential pathways for redress, representation, and inclusion in the national narrative.

Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to explore the Gbagyi nation's journey toward establishing a national identity and gaining recognition within Nigeria. The specific goals include:

- i. To trace the historical roots and cultural identity of the Gbagyi people.
- ii. To evaluate how Abuja's development has influenced the socio-political status of the Gbagyi nation.
- iii. To pinpoint the challenges the Gbagyi people encounter in their quest for national recognition.
- iv. To suggest policy recommendations that promotes the inclusion and acknowledgment of the Gbagyi nation in Nigeria's national conversation.

Research Questions

- i. What are the historical roots and cultural identity of the Gbagyi people?
- ii. How has the development of Abuja affected the socio-political standing of the Gbagyi nation?
- iii. What significant challenges do the Gbagyi people face in their pursuit of national recognition?
- iv. How can policy and advocacy work to improve the visibility and acknowledgment of the Gbagyi people within Nigeria?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of National Identity and Recognition

National identity is all about that shared feeling of belonging to a nation, shaped by our common history, language, culture, values, and political dreams. As Adeyemi and Olatunji (2022) put it, national identity is "the psychological and emotional attachment individuals or groups feel towards a nation, anchored in shared symbols, historical narratives, and collective memory, which contribute to a sense of belonging and national consciousness." For indigenous groups like the Gbagyi, this sense of identity is deeply rooted in their connection to a specific territory, built on shared language, cultural heritage, values, and a sense of ancestral continuity. Adeyemi and Olatunji (2022) further emphasize that this identity is tied to the emotional and psychological bonds individuals or groups have with their nation, grounded in shared symbols and collective memories. For the Gbagyi, their identity is closely linked to their historical presence in the Abuja region, their unique language and cultural expressions, and the spiritual significance they attribute to their land.

However, as Akinwale (2024) points out, national identity can become a contentious issue when indigenous communities find themselves sidelined from the official narrative of nation-building. This leads to what he describes as "fractured citizenship" a situation where individuals have deep national roots but are overlooked in governance and policy discussions. National recognition is about formally or informally acknowledging a group's historical, cultural, political, or territorial claims by a state or society. Nwosu and Ibrahim (2023) suggest that "national recognition entails both legal and sociopolitical acceptance of a group's status, heritage, and contributions within the national framework, serving as a pathway to equitable participation and representation in state affairs."

National recognition refers to both the formal and informal acknowledgment by a state of an indigenous group's existence, rights, and their contributions to the nation's development. According to Nwosu and Ibrahim (2023), it's described as "the legal and sociopolitical acceptance of a group's status, heritage, and contributions within the national framework,

paving the way for fair participation and representation.” For the Gbagyi people, this recognition means acknowledging their status as the original inhabitants of Abuja, ensuring fair compensation for any displacement, and including them in both federal and local governance structures. Eze and Tanko (2025) point out that without this recognition, communities face systemic marginalization, loss of land, cultural erosion, and exclusion from national narratives. So, recognition isn’t just a token gesture it’s crucial for justice, preserving identity, and ensuring political inclusion for communities like the Gbagyi.

The Historical Development of Gbagyi Nation

The Gbagyi Nation, often referred to as the Gwari people, stands as one of the oldest ethno-linguistic groups in central Nigeria. Their historical roots run deep into the precolonial Nigerian Middle Belt, with oral traditions connecting them to the ancient Nok civilization, famous for its terracotta artistry and early metallurgy between 1000 BCE and 300 CE (Fagg, 1977; Blench, 2019). While archaeological evidence doesn’t definitively prove a direct lineage, the cultural continuity seen in pottery, settlement styles, and language evolution suggests a possible link.

Precolonial Era

The Gbagyi people once roamed across a wide expanse that includes what we now know as Niger State, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Kaduna State, and Nasarawa State. They were primarily farmers, blending subsistence agriculture with hunting and crafting. Their communities were organized around clans, with elders and the Esu (traditional chief) at the helm, guiding justice, rituals, and diplomacy between groups (Agbo, 2019). In contrast to many of Nigeria’s more centralized ethnic groups, the Gbagyi had a decentralized political system. Their unity came from shared customs and deep-rooted connections to their ancestral lands rather than from formal state structures. They fostered strong inter-community ties and engaged in trade with neighboring groups like the Nupe, Koro, Gwandara, and Hausa.

Colonial Disruption and Indirect Rule

The arrival of British colonialism in the late 19th century brought about major shifts in the Gbagyi’s sociopolitical landscape. Through indirect rule, British officials placed Gbagyi communities under the authority of more centralized emirates like Zazzau (Zaria) and Suleja (formerly Abuja), whose leaders often lacked any ancestral or cultural links to Gbagyi territory (Ochonu, 2008). This colonial takeover weakened traditional leadership, disrupted indigenous governance, and introduced Islamic authority in regions that had historically been Gbagyi. Additionally, colonial mapping practices overlooked the Gbagyi’s territorial identity, slicing their land into various provinces and fracturing their cohesive cultural space. This division set the stage for the marginalization they would face in the postcolonial Nigerian state.

Post-Independence and the Abuja Displacement

A significant moment in history for the Gbagyi people came in 1976 when the Nigerian federal government decided to move the capital to Abuja, which is their ancestral home. Although this policy was intended to promote national unity, it led to the widespread displacement of Gbagyi communities, the loss of their ancestral lands, and a sidelining of their voices in urban planning and governance (Ikejiofor, 2006; Ibrahim & Kazah-Toure, 2003). Even though the Gbagyi are the original inhabitants of the Federal Capital Territory, they have not been recognized as a distinct ethnic group within Abuja’s political framework.

This oversight has resulted in decades of fighting for visibility, representation, and compensation—issues that are still unresolved today.

Contemporary Struggles and Cultural Resilience

In the present day, the Gbagyi are actively asserting their identity through cultural practices, preserving their language, and organizing within their communities. They hold annual festivals like Zhibaje and Akatakpa, which not only celebrate their rich heritage but also amplify their calls for recognition. Activists and scholars are increasingly highlighting their struggles, connecting them to the broader global conversations about indigenous rights, cultural autonomy, and fair development (Eze&Tanko, 2025). Their pursuit of national identity and recognition is not just about political inclusion; it's a profound demand for restorative justice, cultural dignity, and acknowledgment of their historical grievances.

Theoretical Review

Social Identity Theory (Henri Tajfel, 1979)

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was introduced by Henri Tajfel back in 1979. It came out of social psychology and aimed to shed light on how group behavior, identity formation, and relationships between different groups work. At its core, Social Identity Theory suggests that a big part of who we are and how we see ourselves comes from the social groups we belong to—like our ethnic, cultural, religious, or national communities. Tajfel pointed out that people tend to sort themselves and others into “in-groups” and “out-groups.” This sorting is what shapes our social identity. When we feel positively connected to our in-group, it can really boost our self-esteem and pride. On the flip side, if society views us negatively or excludes us, it can lead to feelings of being marginalized and having our identity suppressed.

Core Components of the Theory

Social Categorization: We categorize ourselves and others into groups to make social interactions easier (think Gbagyi vs. non-Gbagyi).

Social Identification: Once we categorize ourselves, we start to adopt the identity of that group and behave according to its norms and values.

Social Comparison: Members of a group often compare their in-group to others, usually highlighting the superiority or uniqueness of their own identity. This theory is particularly important when looking at the Gbagyi Nation's pursuit of national identity and recognition for a few key reasons:

Understanding Identity Assertion: The Gbagyi people's fight for a place in Nigeria's national conversation is a clear example of social identity assertion. As SIT suggests, their desire to define their culture and build group solidarity comes from a need to create a respected identity that stands out against the dominant groups shaping national narratives.

Explaining Marginalization: SIT provides insight into how the lack of national recognition impacts the Gbagyi people's social standing and self-image.

Explaining Marginalization: Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides insight into how the Gbagyi people's lack of national recognition impacts their social standing and self-image. Being seen as an “out-group,” even though they are the original inhabitants of the Federal Capital Territory, leads to feelings of social isolation.

Mobilizing Collective Action: This theory also helps us understand why the Gbagyi actively participate in activism and work to preserve their culture. These efforts serve as a way to

strengthen their identity and push back against the harmful effects of being politically overlooked. In essence, Social Identity Theory gives us a powerful framework to explore and comprehend the political, cultural, and psychological aspects of the Gbagyi people's struggle for identity.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive survey design, which is perfect for capturing the perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of the Gbagyi people about their identity and their desire for national recognition. The study focused on a population of 450 Gbagyi indigenes, including elders, youth, traditional leaders, civil society members, and professionals from the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Niger, and Nasarawa States. A sample of 300 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure a balanced representation across gender, age groups, and socio-political backgrounds. The sample was divided as follows:

Table 1: Sample Size

Category	Sample Size
Community elders/leaders	80
Youth and women groups	100
Civil society and advocates	60
Academics/policy influencers	60
Total	300

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and the questionnaire included a 5 likert scale (ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) along with open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (like frequency, percentage, and mean), while qualitative responses were analyzed thematically.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis were as presented in Tables 1 to 6. The results and the findings from the study were presented according to the stated researcher question. In this section, the study dive into the analyzed data based on the research questions. The find descriptive statistics laid out in Tables, showcasing frequencies, percentages, and mean scores.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	160	53.3
	Female	140	46.7
	Total	300	100
Age Group	18–30	90	30.0
	31–50	140	46.7
	51 and above	70	23.3
	Total	300	100
Education Level	Primary	60	20.0
	Secondary	110	36.7
	Tertiary	130	43.3
	Total	300	100

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The result from Table 2 shows that out of the 300 respondents, 160 representing 53.3% were male, while 140 representing 46.7% were female. This distribution indicates that both genders participated actively in the study, with a slight dominance of male respondents. The near balance between male and female participants suggests that the views captured in the study reflect a fair representation of both genders within the Gbagyi population. This gender mix enhances the reliability of the findings, as issues relating to national identity and recognition are likely to be influenced by both male and female perspectives within the community.

The age distribution reveals that 30.0% of the respondents were between 18 and 30 years, 46.7% were between 31 and 50 years, while 23.3% were 51 years and above. This implies that the majority of respondents fall within the active and economically productive age group of 31–50 years, who are likely to be more involved in social, political, and cultural engagements. Their responses, therefore, provide insightful opinions on the challenges and aspirations surrounding the Gbagyi Nation’s quest for national identity and recognition. The inclusion of younger and older respondents further enriches the diversity of opinions, ensuring that the findings reflect both contemporary and traditional viewpoints within the community.

The educational background of respondents shows that 20.0% attained primary education, 36.7% had secondary education, while 43.3% possessed tertiary education. This indicates that a large proportion of respondents are educated, with nearly half having higher education qualifications. Such a distribution suggests that most participants are literate and capable of understanding issues related to identity, governance, and cultural recognition at both local and national levels. The relatively high level of education among respondents also implies that their perspectives are informed and critical, which adds depth to the analysis of the Gbagyi people’s struggle for recognition within Nigeria’s socio-political landscape. Overall, the demographic data reveal that the respondents were diverse in gender, age, and educational background, providing a balanced foundation for analyzing the Gbagyi Nation’s quest for national identity and recognition. The representation across different demographic categories ensures that the findings capture varied experiences and opinions within the Gbagyi population, thereby enhancing the validity and comprehensiveness of the study’s conclusions.

Responses to Research Questions

Table 3: RQ1 - What is the historical origin and socio-cultural identity of the Gbagyi people?

Statement	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean
Gbagyi are the original settlers of Abuja and its surroundings	180	85	5	20	10	4.47
Gbagyi people have a unique language and cultural practices	160	90	10	30	10	4.37
Gbagyi culture places a strong emphasis on tolerance and traditional leadership	140	105	5	40	10	4.27

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

This Table 3 explores the socio-cultural attributes and historical background of the Gbagyi people, focusing on their identity and practices. The majority of respondents strongly agreed (180) or agreed (85) with this statement, indicating widespread acknowledgment of the Gbagyi people as the indigenous inhabitants of Abuja. A small minority were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The high mean score of 4.47 reflects a strong consensus on this historical identity.

Similarly, most respondents strongly agreed (160) or agreed (90), affirming the distinctiveness of the Gbagyi language and cultural practices. A smaller number were neutral (10), disagreed (30), or strongly disagreed (10), suggesting some variance in perception, but the mean score of 4.37 signifies general agreement. A significant number strongly agreed (140) or agreed (105), highlighting the values of tolerance and traditional leadership within Gbagyi culture. Neutral (5), disagreed (40), and strongly disagreed (10) responses were limited, but the mean score of 4.27 indicates that these cultural traits are widely recognized. The data strongly supports the historical and socio-cultural identity of the Gbagyi people, emphasizing their indigenous status, unique cultural practices, and values related to tolerance and leadership. The results provide a strong narrative about the Gbagyi people that they are widely recognized as the indigenous people of Abuja, with distinct language, cultural practices, and values of tolerance and leadership.

Table 4: RQ2: What is the impact of Abuja’s development on the socio-political status of the Gbagyi nation?

Statement	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean
Gbagyi lands were taken without fair compensation	170	95	5	20	10	4.43
Abuja’s growth has led to the political marginalization of the Gbagyi	160	110	10	10	10	4.40
The loss of cultural sites due to urbanization is impacting Gbagyi identity	150	100	10	30	10	4.30

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Interpretation: Respondents confirmed that urban expansion, particularly in Abuja, has had a significant impact on the political and socio-cultural rights of the Gbagyi people. This Table 4 addresses the effects of urbanization and development in Abuja on the socio-political and cultural standing of the Gbagyi people. Most respondents strongly agreed (170) or agreed (95), indicating widespread belief that the Gbagyi people experienced land dispossession without adequate compensation. The mean score of 4.43 underscores the perceived injustice and displacement felt by the community. Abuja’s growth has led to the political marginalization of the Gbagyi (Mean Score: 4.40). Similar, a large number of respondents strongly agreed (160) or agreed (110), emphasizing the political exclusion of the Gbagyi people as a result of urban development. Neutral (10), disagreed (10), and strongly disagreed (10) responses were minimal, reflecting high agreement overall. The loss of cultural sites due to urbanization is impacting Gbagyi identity (Mean Score: 4.30).

More so, significant numbers strongly agreed (150) or agreed (100), showing that urbanization has led to the destruction of cultural landmarks, negatively affecting the Gbagyi identity. While some respondents were neutral (10), disagreed (30), or strongly disagreed (10), the mean score of 4.30 suggests that this impact is broadly acknowledged. The data highlights the adverse effects of Abuja’s development on the Gbagyi people, including, land dispossession without fair compensation, political marginalization and loss of cultural sites, contributing to the erosion of their identity. In the same vein, urban development in Abuja has led to significant socio-political challenges for the Gbagyi people, including loss of land, political exclusion, and cultural degradation. These insights highlight the need for addressing historical injustices and protecting the cultural identity of the Gbagyi nation amidst urban growth.

Table 5: RQ3: What are the major challenges facing the Gbagyi people in their quest for national recognition?

Statement	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean
The Gbagyi are often overlooked in national and FCT politics	155	112	3	20	10	4.38
The absence of constitutional recognition limits their voice	170	90	0	30	10	4.40
Younger Gbagyi individuals are drifting away from cultural values.	140	120	0	30	10	4.30

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

This table highlights the primary obstacles preventing the Gbagyi people from achieving national recognition and preserving their cultural identity. From the Gbagyi are often overlooked in national and FCT politics, the majority of respondents strongly agreed (155) and agreed (112), which indicates that the Gbagyi people are widely perceived as politically marginalized within both Nigeria’s national political sphere and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Only a small number of respondents were neutral (3), disagreed (20), or strongly disagreed (10), reflecting consensus among respondents about this challenge. The mean score of 4.38 further emphasizes the strong belief that political exclusion is a major obstacle for the Gbagyi people. This suggests that political representation and advocacy are areas that require urgent attention to address the marginalization of the community.

In regard to the absence of constitutional recognition limits their voice, a significant number of respondents strongly agreed (170) and agreed (90), demonstrating overwhelming agreement that the lack of constitutional recognition is a critical issue preventing the Gbagyi people from amplifying their voice and securing their rights. Notably, there were no neutral responses, which show that respondents have strong opinions on this matter. A minority of respondents disagreed (30) or strongly disagreed (10), but the mean score of 4.40 reflects a nearly unanimous concern about this constitutional gap. This statement highlights the need for constitutional reforms to formally recognize the Gbagyi people and their contributions to Nigeria’s development.

Lastly, for the statement on younger Gbagyi individuals are drifting away from cultural values, the responses reveal significant concern about cultural erosion among younger Gbagyi generations. Strongly agreed (140) and agreed (120) responses dominate, signaling widespread acknowledgment that younger individuals are moving away from traditional Gbagyi cultural values. There were no neutral responses, indicating the firmness of respondents' opinions on this matter. A smaller number of respondents disagreed (30) or strongly disagreed (10), but the mean score of 4.30 suggests that this issue is broadly recognized. This challenge highlights the need for cultural preservation efforts, particularly targeted at younger generations, to ensure the longevity of Gbagyi traditions and identity.

The responses in Table 5 underscore three critical challenges facing the Gbagyi people which include; political marginalization which means that Gbagyi people are perceived as underrepresented in both national and FCT politics, limiting their influence in decision-making processes. Another challenge is the lack of constitutional recognition indicates the absence of formal constitutional recognition prevents them from advocating effectively for their rights and interests. Lastly, cultural drift among youth where younger generations are increasingly moving away from traditional Gbagyi cultural values, posing a threat to the preservation of their heritage. These challenges call for focused efforts in political advocacy, constitutional reform, and cultural education to address the issues and empower the Gbagyi nation. The responses show a clear agreement that political and legal marginalization is significant hurdles to the Gbagyi's national identity.

Table 6: RQ4 - In what ways can policy and advocacy enhance the recognition of the Gbagyi people?

Statement	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean
The Constitution should acknowledge the Gbagyi as indigenous to the FCT	180	90	0	20	10	4.47
Cultural education can help strengthen Gbagyi identity.	160	100	0	20	10	4.40
Having Gbagyi representation in the Senate or FCT council is essential for recognition.	165	100	5	20	10	4.45

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 6 provides insights into the ways policy and advocacy can enhance the recognition of the Gbagyi people. The data highlights three key strategies: constitutional recognition, cultural education, and political representation. The majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Constitution should acknowledge the Gbagyi as indigenous to the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), with a mean score of 4.47, underscoring the importance of formal acknowledgment in addressing historical exclusion. Similarly, cultural education was widely supported (mean score: 4.40) as a vital tool for strengthening and preserving Gbagyi identity, emphasizing the role of educational programs in mitigating cultural drift. Finally, respondents expressed strong agreement (mean score: 4.45) on the need for Gbagyi representation in the Senate or FCT council, recognizing political inclusion as essential for advocacy and improving socio-political status. Together, these strategies highlight the importance of targeted policy reforms and advocacy to promote equity, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance the recognition of the Gbagyi people. There's a strong agreement on the necessity

for legal reforms and public education to elevate the national recognition of the Gbagyi people.

Summary of Findings

Table 7: Research Question

Research Question	Mean Score	Response	Interpretation
Historical and socio-cultural identity	4.47		There's a strong agreement that the Gbagyi people are historically indigenous and culturally distinct.
Impact of Abuja development	4.40		There's a solid consensus on the socio-political marginalization they face.
Challenges to national recognition	4.30		They highlighted issues like displacement, a lack of political voice, and cultural erosion.
Role of policy and advocacy	4.52		There's robust support for advocacy and the need for constitutional reform.

The Gbagyi people have a vibrant cultural heritage and identity, deeply rooted in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The development of Abuja has led to forced displacements and a decline in traditional authority and socio-political relevance. Key challenges include the absence of constitutional recognition, political marginalization, and insufficient cultural documentation. Respondents widely supported policy reforms and targeted advocacy campaigns as essential solutions.

Discussion of Findings

Historical Origins and Socio-Cultural Identity

The study showed a strong affirmation of the Gbagyi people's indigenous status, especially in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Participants highlighted the Gbagyi's rich cultural identity, which includes their traditional governance systems, language (Gbagyi/Gbari), and values of peaceful coexistence (Yakubu, 2020). These findings support anthropological accounts (Isah, 2021) that the Gbagyi are among the earliest settlers in central Nigeria. The development of Abuja as Nigeria's capital back in 1991 led to the forced displacement of countless Gbagyi people, who received neither proper compensation nor resettlement plans (Ezekiel, 2022). The research indicates a shared understanding that the socio-political standing of the Gbagyi has declined, largely due to their diminished influence within the administrative frameworks of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). This observation aligns with the arguments made by Ocheni and Nwankwo (2021), who pointed out that urbanization tends to worsen the marginalization of indigenous communities.

When it comes to national recognition, participants highlighted issues like structural marginalization, which includes being left out of national media narratives, having limited representation in governance, and experiencing cultural dilution as a result of displacement and interethnic blending. Musa (2023) notes that the Gbagyi's absence in national policies and historical accounts plays a significant role in their lack of recognition. This study backs up those assertions and underscores the pressing need for institutional reforms.

On the advocacy front, the findings reveal strong support for initiatives aimed at promoting the Gbagyi identity within Nigeria. Respondents expressed their backing for legislative changes to officially recognize the Gbagyi as the original inhabitants of the FCT, push for fair political appointments, and establish cultural heritage centers. This aligns with the perspective of Adeyemi and Eze (2020), who highlighted the impact that advocacy and policy can have on reshaping the narratives surrounding minority groups.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research examined Gbagyi nation and her quest for national identity and recognition. Four research questions were evaluated using inferential statistics. Findings revealed that The Gbagyi people have a vibrant cultural heritage and a strong sense of identity, deeply connected to the FCT.

The development of Abuja has led to forced displacements, undermining traditional authority and diminishing their socio-political significance. More so, the key challenges they face include a lack of constitutional recognition, political marginalization, and insufficient documentation of their culture. Respondents widely supported policy reforms and focused advocacy campaigns as essential solutions.

In conclusion, the study finds that the Gbagyi people, despite being the original inhabitants of the FCT, continue to experience marginalization on both political and cultural fronts. Their pursuit of national recognition is grounded in valid historical and human rights claims. Without immediate reforms to validate their identity and political standing, the Gbagyi risk being permanently overlooked in Nigeria's evolving national identity narrative.

Based on the conclusion, the study recommends that the Gbagyi should be officially recognized as the original inhabitants of the FCT in Nigeria's constitution. Secondly, the principles of federal character should be broadened to ensure Gbagyi representation in the governance of the FCT.

Policies for restitution and compensation must be established for Gbagyi communities that have been displaced. In the same vein, educational institutions in the FCT should integrate Gbagyi language and history into their curricula. In term of national awareness campaigns, media outlets and civil society organizations should elevate the Gbagyi's struggles through documentaries, public discussions, and legislative advocacy.

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