

# Animal Bewitchment in a Nigerian City: An Anthrozoological Study of Human-Cat Relations in Lagos State

Nnaemeka E. Enemchukwu

Department of History, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA

Email: nnaemeka.enemchukwu@siu.edu

**How to cite this paper:** Enemchukwu, N. E. (2024). Animal Bewitchment in a Nigerian City: An Anthrozoological Study of Human-Cat Relations in Lagos State. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 12, 47-69. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2024.122004>

**Received:** December 29, 2023

**Accepted:** February 6, 2024

**Published:** February 9, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

## Abstract

This paper examines the growing prevalence of inhumane human-cat relationships in Nigeria. Despite Lagos State being one of the most educated urban areas in West Africa, persistent cultural practices of cat cruelty exist within various communities. This study investigates the complex socio-cultural, religious, and environmental factors contributing to such attitudes. By utilizing primary sources like participant observations, fieldwork, and interviews and secondary sources like journal articles, books, conference proceedings, online news, and websites, this research aims to unravel the various dynamics shaping these inhumane interactions. Ultimately, it seeks to shed light on the anthrozoological culture surrounding human-cat relations among Nigerians living in Lagos State. The paper will adopt a qualitative methodological approach to achieve this objective, employing a phenomenological perspective to analyze and discuss its findings.

## Keywords

Cats, Nigerians, Animals, Animal Cruelty, Witchcraft

## 1. Introduction

In the eerie nights of August 2023, a chilling incident unfolded in Lagos when a relative witnessed a cat stealthily traversing the yard fence, its haunting meows echoing through the darkness. Stricken with fear, she instinctively invoked fervent prayers akin to those resonating within the walls of Pentecostal churches scattered across the suburbs of Lagos. Her supplications, filled with fiery invocations for divine intervention, were aimed at obliterating what she perceived as a supernatural adversary—the mysterious feline intruder. Swiftly categorizing the

cat's presence as an ominous sign, she fervently prayed for protection against potential malevolent forces targeting her household (Author observation, August 23, 2023). This visceral reaction, far from an isolated incident, mirrors a widespread phenomenon among religious individuals in Lagos, and indeed, throughout Nigeria and Africa.

While Nigerians, especially Lagosians, commonly embrace various domestic animals as pets or for husbandry, the inclusion of certain animals on this roster is remarkably scarce. Among those more commonly kept are dogs, cockerels, hens, goats, rabbits, parrots, sheep, monkeys, ducks, and turkeys. Astonishingly, negative connotations have relegated cats, with their enigmatic aura, to an unfavorable position in both slum and highbrow areas. Even in the face of the potential for violence posed by dogs, these animals are more favored as pets when compared to their less aggressive feline counterparts. The anthrozoological dynamics of human-cat relations have thus far been less compassionate than those observed with other animals. Even more surprising is that this rational/irrational fear or disdain for cats cut across various people of different ethnicities, classes, educational levels, genders, and religions in Nigeria.

Therefore, this paper seeks to unravel the intricate factors contributing to the inhumane treatment of cats in Lagos State. To achieve this objective, the study will conduct a comprehensive exploration of the spiritual and symbolic significance assigned to animals in selected Nigerian societies, shedding light on how these beliefs shape people's thoughts and worldviews. It will delve into the overarching Nigerian perspective on animals, scrutinizing the government's role in animal protection, encompassing dogs, cockerels, hens, goats, rabbits, sheep, ducks, and turkeys. Furthermore, the paper will investigate the presence of cats in Lagos State and the prevailing perceptions surrounding them. Highlighting recorded instances of cat cruelty, the study will dissect the factors sustaining the inhumane relationship between cats and humans in Nigeria. Through this multifaceted analysis, the paper aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics influencing the treatment of cats, alongside other animals, in Lagos. Ultimately, this exploration contributes to broader conversations on animal welfare and human-animal interactions in the context of Nigeria's intricate cultural and religious landscape.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This research employs a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to delve into the complex dynamics of human-cat relationships in Lagos State. The study draws on the author's personal recollections and participant observations, closely examining cat behavior and the intricate ties that bind these animals with humans in the urban landscape of Lagos. This firsthand perspective contributes a nuanced understanding of the day-to-day interactions between cats and the residents of Lagos. The research extends its reach through interviews with Lagosians, predominantly facilitated through the widely used social media platform

WhatsApp. The selection of interviewees follows a random sampling method, ensuring diverse perspectives on the general perceptions surrounding cats in Nigeria. The questions posed during these interviews aim to unravel the multifaceted cultural, religious, and societal influences shaping attitudes toward cats.

Moreover, the study taps into the vast reservoir of public discourse on micro-blogging platforms such as Nairaland and Quora. The commentaries and discussions among Lagosians provide valuable insights into the anthrozoological relations between cats and humans in Nigeria. This social media exploration enhances the research's comprehensiveness by incorporating a diverse array of opinions and experiences from individuals across different demographics. Additionally, the research encompasses secondary sources, including books, journals, and online news platforms, to enrich the analytical framework.

This study adopts a synthesis of descriptive, narrative, and phenomenological approaches to present a cohesive and insightful analysis. The descriptive approach allows for a detailed exploration of the observed behaviors and interactions, while the narrative approach weaves a compelling storyline around the human-cat relationship. The phenomenological approach delves into individuals' lived experiences and perceptions, offering a deeper understanding of the subjective realities that shape the anthropological connections between cats and humans in Lagos. In amalgamating these approaches, the research aims to provide a holistic and engaging exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of human-cat relations in the vibrant and diverse context of Lagos State.

### 3. Literature Review

As of the documentation of this research, there is a notable absence of coherent and comprehensive academic attention devoted to the examination of animal bewitchment, labeling, and subsequent cruelty in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos. Remarkably, there is a scarcity of research in the field of anthrozoological culture in Nigeria, especially concerning human-cat relations, which are largely driven by religious and cultural worldviews. Despite this gap, several studies have explored themes relevant to the present research, including supernatural beliefs, witchcraft, witch-hunting, and animal cruelty. This section aims to review diverse literature addressing these themes, serving as a foundation for the current research.

The relationship between Lagosians and animals is a captivating subject deeply rooted in cultural beliefs. Numerous studies have delved into the impact of local belief systems, including those infused with supernatural elements, on attitudes and behaviors towards animals. The perception of animals as participants or agents within these belief systems significantly influences how Lagosians interact with them. [Amos Luka \(2023: pp. 3-4\)](#), referencing [Arnold \(1997: p. 17\)](#), underscores the foundational role of a belief in evil spirits in spiritual warfare among Lagosians. This belief system, deeply rooted in the reality of the spirit world, is a longstanding phenomenon in Africa. The spiritual world is perceived

as vivid and proximate in Africa, with its forces intricately woven into and inspiring the visible world, irrespective of pagan or Christian beliefs (Parrinder, 1962 cited in Luka, 2023: p. 4). African Traditional Religion (ATR) is pivotal in ancient and contemporary Africa, providing the foundational framework for comprehending spiritual warfare (Luka, 2023: p. 4). Luka (2023) notes that ATR emphasizes the integral role of religious beliefs and practices in African life, with an inherent religiosity among Africans. The African belief system encompasses supernatural powers such as witchcraft, sorcery, magic, and a Supreme Being. Despite raising questions about knowledge and existence, the belief in these magical powers persists in modern Africa, with witchcraft recognized as a pervasive force causing fear and death (Parrinder, 1970: p. 9 cited in Luka, 2023: p. 4).

Within African Traditional Religion (ATR) paradigm, there is the belief in witchcraft among larger population of Nigerians. According to *Jayeola-Omoyeni et al. (2015: p. 365)*, the belief in witchcraft is characterized by the manifestation of mystical forces, either inherited or acquired. Witchcraft, often intertwined with malevolent magic, is thought to cause harm intentionally or unintentionally. Witches hold a feared status in the community, leading to avoidance of association, meals at their homes, and conflicts due to the fear of potential bewitching. Discussions about witches and witchcraft instil significant fear in African communities. Witches are believed to convene atop trees, engaging in activities like sucking the blood or consuming the souls of their victims—actions described as spiritual cannibalism. Initiates are required to bring a victim, typically a child from their own family, and the witches proceed to cook and consume the victim, perpetuating the ominous nature of their practices (*Jayeola-Omoyeni et al., 2015: p. 365*).

*Federici (2008: p. 22)* exposes a pervasive fear and hostility towards witches and practitioners of witchcraft, sparking widespread witch-hunting across Africa. He reported that despite the prevalent belief that fear of witchcraft is deeply ingrained in Africa's cultural systems, the 1990s witnessed an unprecedented surge in assaults on individuals labeled as "witches", surpassing historical levels (*Federici, 2008: p. 22*). Accurate figures are elusive due to underreported incidents, but available data highlights the severity of the issue. For instance, *Federici (2008: p. 22)* citing *Berg (2005)* reported that in the North of Ghana, around one thousand women currently reside in "witches camps", having fled their communities under the imminent threat of death. In Southwestern Kenya's Gusi (Kisii) district between 1992 and 1994, at least three hundred people fell victim to well-organized groups of young men following the directives of relatives or other interested parties (*Federici, 2008: p. 22*). South Africa's Northern province experienced intense persecutions post-apartheid, prompting the African National Congress to establish a commission of inquiry due to substantial loss of human lives (*Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999: p. 282* cited in *Federici, 2008: p. 22*). Routine attacks on alleged "witches" leading to fatalities have been recorded in

Nigeria, Cameroon, Tanzania, Namibia, and Mozambique. Federici (2008: p. 22) estimates that between 1991 and 2001, around 23,000 “witches” were killed in Africa, a figure considered conservative. “Cleansing” campaigns involve witch-finders traveling from village to village, subjecting individuals to humiliating interrogations and exorcisms. In Zambia, for example, one hundred and seventy-six witch-finders were active in the summer of 1997, with ongoing witch-hunts resulting in the expulsion of accused individuals from their villages, confiscation of possessions, and instances of torture and killing (Hinfelaar, 2007: p. 233 cited in Federici, 2008: p. 23). Thus, the examination of Federici’s analysis and the works of other scholars referenced in his study reveal a negative portrayal of witchcraft and its practitioners. Consequently, the perception of witchcraft and the concept of being bewitched are associated with adverse connotations, prompting swift and violent responses from diverse societies in Africa.

Beyond perceiving witches solely as human agents, findings indicate that witchcraft can also manifest through non-human entities, including animals. Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) underscored that witches, possessing inherent psychic abilities globally, can project their spirits invisibly. They can do so independently or through intermediary creatures to cause harm to others. These witches are believed to operate collectively in guilds while also having the capacity to act autonomously. The belief extends to witches utilizing birds or other animals as familiars in their operations. Hence, this study establishes the groundwork for developing a framework on human-animal collaboration in witchcraft or the involvement of non-human entities in witchcraft practices in Nigeria. Moreover, it contributes to the understanding that not only humans but also animals face hunting, stigmatization, brutality, and even death due to being perceived as agents of witchcraft. This perspective forms the basis for comprehending instances of animal cruelty, especially towards cats, in Lagos.

Mogbo et al. (2013: pp. 95-96) conducted a comprehensive analysis, revealing the alarming prevalence of notably seven forms of animal cruelty in Nigeria. The first category, simple neglect, involves the failure to provide essential elements such as food, shelter, water, or veterinary care to a small number of animals, often due to ignorance. This widespread form of cruelty is exemplified by dog owners chaining their dogs without proper care or shelter (Randour, 2004 cited in Mogbo et al., 2013: p. 95). The second category, gross neglect, is characterized by intentional withholding of food or water from animals, leading to dehydration or starvation. Instances include callously abandoning sick dogs or leaving them exposed to harsh weather conditions (Lockwood, 2006 cited in Mogbo et al., 2013: p. 95). The third category is intentional abuse, a significant concern linked to serious crimes like drug offenses, gang activity, and domestic violence. Cases of intentional cruelty pose a potential danger to the public, with clear connections to a history of aggressive or antisocial behavior (Lockwood, 2006 cited in Mogbo et al., 2013: p. 95). Prosecuting intentional abuse is relatively easier than neglect or hoarding cases due to the visible impact on the victim and

the recognized intentionality of the offense. The fourth category, animal hoarding, involves accumulating a large number of animals without providing essential standards of nutrition, sanitation, and veterinary care, negatively impacting both animal and human health within the household (Arluke and Lockwood, 1997 cited in Mogbo et al., 2013: p. 96). They further reported that various forms of animal cruelty exist in Nigeria. This study's significance to the current research lies in the abundant examples and various manifestations of animal cruelty, offering a crucial foundation for examining the specific types of cruelty experienced by cats in Lagos.

Despite the prevalence of animal cruelty in Nigeria, Olufemi Mobolaji (2018: p. 5) noted that surprisingly, Nigeria has legal provisions for animal rights and ethics. He highlighted existing laws ensuring the welfare of domestic and wild animals in various contexts, including rearing, experimentation, mobility, and slaughter. These regulations, coupled with the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Animals 1978, encompass municipal laws addressing animal slaughter, registration, management of slaughterhouses, and the prevention of undue suffering to animals (Olufemi Mobolaji, 2018: p. 5). However, there is a significant lack of public awareness regarding these laws and the importance of animal welfare. In recent times, stakeholders in animal production have recognized the necessity to prioritize animal welfare. The Nigerian Institute for Animal Science, in collaboration with other relevant bodies, is actively working towards raising awareness and promoting animal welfare issues in Nigeria (Olufemi Mobolaji, 2018: pp. 5-6). Therefore, this study indicates to the ongoing research that despite the widespread occurrence of animal cruelty in Nigeria, efforts have been undertaken to safeguard animals, revealing an increasing trend towards humane interactions between Nigerians and animals.

In conclusion, the comprehensive examination of relevant literature holds particular relevance to the present study, as it delves into crucial themes such as witchcraft and animal cruelty. However, a consistent and conspicuous gap emerges across these works, specifically pertaining to animal cruelty, particularly in the context of cat cruelty, driven by cultural and religious beliefs among Nigerians. This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by exploring the underlying reasons for the existence of cat cruelty and identifying the factors contributing to the persistent stigmatization and mistreatment of cats within the cultural and religious framework in Nigeria. By doing so, the research seeks to shed light on the motivations behind such practices and contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural dynamics influencing attitudes and behaviors towards animals, particularly cats, in the Nigerian context.

#### **4. Conceptualizing Animal Cruelty**

This study employs a dual approach to define animal cruelty, considering both the common understanding and the legal perspective. According to Mogbo et al. (2013: p. 94) and Duel (2000) incidents of animal cruelty frequently capture

headlines globally, ranging from the person harming a neighbor's cat to the hoarding of sick animals or a family leaving their freezing dog tied up outdoors in winter. These actions typically align with the common understanding of animal cruelty and would likely violate animal cruelty statutes in any state. However, perceptions of animal cruelty vary widely when it involves animals other than cats and dogs. Traditional agricultural practices such as de-beaking, tail docking, castration, and confinement on factory farms may be viewed as cruelty by animal activists, but factory farmers and some state animal cruelty laws may disagree (Randour, 2004 cited in Mogbo et al., 2013: p. 94).

While some may define animal cruelty based on the degree of suffering an animal experiences or the pain it endures during death, animal rights activists argue that the amount of suffering is not the primary concern. Instead, they emphasize that animals have the right to live free from human exploitation and abuse. Definitions may also hinge on the type of animal involved or its perceived intelligence. For instance, some individuals may consider the slaughter of dogs, horses, or whales as extreme cruelty, while the killing of cows, pigs, and chickens for food is deemed acceptable by the same individuals (Randour & Davidson, 2008 cited in Mogbo et al., 2013: p. 94). Additionally, the general public is more likely to label harm as animal cruelty when it involves culturally beloved animals or unusual forms of harm. In contrast, animal activists have a broader view, considering a wider range of harms as cruelty, irrespective of their commonality or legal status.

On the legal front, animal cruelty, as defined by the California Penal Code, involves malicious or intentional actions such as maiming, mutilation, torture, or wounding of a living animal. The law states that anyone who overworks, tortures, torments, deprives of necessary food, drink, or shelter, cruelly beats, mutilates, or cruelly kills an animal can be charged with a misdemeanor or felony. Additionally, individuals engaged in dog fighting, either by owning, possessing, keeping, or training a dog for exhibition fighting, or knowingly attending such exhibitions as spectators, are also considered guilty of a misdemeanor. Willfully abandoning any animal is further classified as a misdemeanor (Lockwood, 2006 cited in Mogbo et al., 2013: p. 94).

## 5. Animal Protection Laws in Nigeria

Animal cruelty is a notable problem in Nigeria, marked by numerous instances that often escape reporting and legal consequences. It is worth noting that, despite a dedicated law or regulation addressing animal welfare, specific provisions within existing laws address different manifestations of cruelty towards animals.

“(1) Any person who:

- (a) cruelly beats, kicks, ill-treats, over-rides, over-drives, over-loads, tortures, infuriates, or terrifies any animal, or causes or procures, or being the owner, permits any animal to be so used; or
- (b) by wantonly or unreasonably doing or omitting to do any act, or caus-

ing or procuring the commission or omission of any act, causes any unnecessary suffering, or being the owner, permits any unnecessary suffering to be caused to any animal; or

(c) conveys or carries, or being the owner, permits to be conveyed or carried any animal in such manner or position as to cause such animal unnecessary suffering; or

(d) willfully without any reasonable cause or excuse administers, or causes or procures, or, being the owner, permits such administration of, any poisonous or injurious drug or substances to any animal, or willfully without any reasonable cause or excuse causes any such substance to be taken by any animal; or

(e) subjects, or causes or procures, or, being the owner, permits, to be subjected, any animal to any the operation which is performed without due care and humanity; or

(f) causes, or procures, or assists at the fighting or baiting of any animal, or keeps, uses, manages, or acts or assists in the management of any premises or place for the purpose, or partly for the purpose, of fighting or baiting any animal, or permits any place to be so kept, managed or used, or receives or causes or procures any person to receive money for the admission of any person to such premises or place, is guilty of an offense of cruelty and is liable to imprisonment for six months or to a fine of fifty naira or to both such imprisonment and fine” (Section 495 of the Criminal Code Act of Nigeria).

## 6. Animal Spirituality and Worldviews in Traditional Nigerian Societies

Animals hold a tremendous significant symbolism among various indigenous societies in Nigeria, especially in precolonial and colonial times. Among the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria, animals are classified based on various parameters such as their groups (*ówó*), habitat (*eran omi* for water animals and *eran ilé* for land animals), and physiological traits (e.g., *eran abiwo* for animals with horns, *eran afayáfà* for reptiles) (Olusola, 2005: p. 156). The Yoruba also categorize animals as domestic or wild, reflecting their worldview of binary complementarities. Animals are further grouped based on physiognomy, with lions representing furry animals, ostriches for those with feathers, and pythons for squamates, primarily reptiles (Olusola, 2005: p. 156). The Yoruba hold various taboos and myths about animals, reflecting their relationships with them and the cultural philosophy surrounding specific species. For example, killing a mating animal is considered taboo, drawing parallels with human sexual relationships and emphasizing moral concerns for animals’ well-being (Olusola, 2005: pp. 157-159).

The Yoruba have developed a complex relationship with animals, incorporating them into their folklore, myths, and rituals. There are specific rules and taboos, such as the prohibition of killing certain animals like vultures and ground hornbills (Olusola, 2005: p. 157). The parrot is considered sacred, and only its



feather is used in ritual performances. The Yoruba exhibits a deep respect for animals' divinity, believing that animals, like humans, can feel pain, pleasure, and other emotions. This perspective is reflected in taboos like the one against killing a mating animal, emphasizing the Yoruba belief that animals possess a divine essence deserving of reverence (Olusola, 2005: p. 157). Myths, like the one about the buffalo, further illustrate the intricate connections between humans and animals, highlighting the consequences of breaking these sacred bonds and the subsequent establishment of worship practices, such as that of the deity Oya, linked to the buffalo (Olusola, 2005: pp. 158-159).

In African ontology, the sacredness of animals, such as the python, owl, vulture, parrot, ram, tortoise, and chicken in Igbo-African traditional societies, is rooted in the belief that these creatures house powerful spirits (Kanu, 2021: p. 6). The reverence for these animals is deeply ingrained, with specific rituals and taboos safeguarding their existence (Kanu, 2021: p. 6). For instance, the python is regarded as a symbol of ancestral spirits, and its accidental killing is met with burial rites akin to those for humans (Kanu, 2021: p. 5; Achebe, 1982; Ifesieh, 1989). The owl symbolizes vigilance and is not harmed, as its cries are seen as messages from ancestors (Kanu, 2021: p. 7). Similarly, the vulture, parrot, ram, tortoise, and chicken each carry unique cultural significance and are protected from intentional harm or consumption (Kanu, 2021: pp. 6-8). Additionally, animals frequently play roles in traditional folklore and narratives transmitted through generations. In Igbo folklore, for example, the tortoise is commonly linked with cleverness, cunning, and wisdom; the lion is often connected with bravery, courage, and royalty; the snake is typically associated with mystery, wisdom, and malevolence; and the cat is linked with resilience. These animals have featured even in modern-day literature.

Beyond cultural and spiritual considerations, the ecological significance of these sacred animals lies in the protective taboos associated with them. Traditional African societies employed these taboos to conserve animal species and promote biodiversity. Practices such as refraining from killing or hunting specific animals and avoiding certain actions near water bodies served as ecological guardians, contributing to the preservation of the natural environment and its diverse fauna (Kanu, 2021: pp. 9-10).

## 7. The Lagos Environment and Its Cat Population

Lagos, situated in the southwestern part of Nigeria, holds the record of the country's most populous city, boasting a staggering population of 15,945,912 residents (World Population Review, 2023). Despite its demographic significance, the city faces numerous challenges that contribute to its reputation as the second-most unlivable city globally (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022: p. 3; Apanpa, 2023). Key issues include a severe housing deficit, overpopulation, insecurity, environmental pollution originating from both industrial and residential sources, and a poorly managed drainage system. The extensive open drain-

nage system, particularly the longest canal in Nigeria, is rife with a variety of pollutants such as defecation, food wastes, plastics, nylons, clothes, and chemical wastes from both residential and industrial facilities (Fieldwork, June-September, 2023). This environmental pollution has given rise to a proliferation of rodents, notably rats, which have become a significant menace for residents. The types of rats found in Lagos, particularly in densely populated areas found on the Mainland Area, include the house rat (*Rattus rattus*), commonly found in homes, shops, and markets; the roof rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), often located in sewers, drains, and buildings, known for their climbing abilities; and the African multimammate rat (*Mastomys natalensis*), a fast-breeding rodent prevalent in fields, houses, and storage areas. In response to the rat infestation, various methods have been adopted, including the use of food poisoning, traps, and the employment of cats—although not very popular—to hunt down these troublesome rodents. The management of rat populations remains a pressing concern for Lagos residents grappling with the environmental and health challenges associated with the city's urban complexities.

Among certain Nigerian groups, particularly during pre-colonial and colonial periods, cats were domesticated for various purposes. The primary motivations included providing companionship to homeowners and acting as effective hunters to control the notorious rat infestations that plagued their food supplies, often leading to spoilage. According to Enemchukwu (2022), her mother, residing in Anambra State, Southeastern Nigeria, maintained a substantial number of well-cared-for cats. These feline companions were not only housed and fed properly but were also treated to luxury foods such as canned sardines and tinned milk. In the northern region of Nigeria, Dikko Law (2019) observed that cats were commonly kept as pets and were even more preferred than dogs. However, participant observation suggests that in Lagos, many residents opt for metal and gum traps for rodent control, with fewer choosing cats due to less favorable public perceptions toward these animals (Author observation, 2000-2023). Conversely, in the Obudu area of Cross River State, located in the south-south region of Nigeria, cats are extensively employed by residents and shop owners to combat mice and rat issues, with the cats themselves being considered integral members of households (Author observation, 2019-2020).

While many Lagosians harbor negative attitudes towards cats, the city's feline population has paradoxically seen a surge. This seeming contradiction can be traced to the city's worsening rodent problem. Lagos struggles with over a million rodents, thriving in the polluted open drainage systems (Ojoye, 2017). This abundance has inadvertently created a haven for cats, natural predators skilled at rodent control. Consequently, their own population has flourished, aided by their remarkable reproductive capacity, with litters ranging from one to a dozen kittens. Despite the observable presence of approximately 100 - 150 cats per street in one of Lagos' ghettos, Ijeshatedo in Surulere, with many being homeless, chasing rodents through shallow drainages, climbing over fences, and play-

ing near refuse dumps along the Lagos Canal (Fieldwork, 2023), there is no precise data accounting for the total number of cats in Lagos. Regrettably, the essential role that cats play in controlling rodent infestations is overshadowed by persisting acts of cruelty towards them.

## 8. Cats and Superstitious Thoughts in Lagos

Cats are notoriously believed to possess supernatural powers and are seen as agents of witchcraft and misfortunes. This belief is compounded by the existing economic woes Lagosians find themselves in. Nigerian statistics report that 8.5 percent of the nearly 21 million people living in Lagos, Nigeria, live in poverty—about 1.7 million people (Kellogg, 2018). According to Justice and Empowerment Initiatives Nigeria, 65 percent of the people living in Lagos are urban poor who live in slums and settlements (Kellogg, 2018). These ugly conditions have played a role in cementing the obnoxious beliefs that poverty is a result of supernatural forces, especially malevolent spirits and animal agents. With the rapid rise of slums and urban poverty coupled with environmental pollution from open sewages, drainages, and open refuse dumping, which has aided the multiplication of rodents and the subsequent attraction of cats to impoverish neighborhoods where rats abound, with the aim to feed on them, many Lagosians have found themselves besieged not only by rodents but also by cats. Moreover, to make matters worse, the prevailing perception of cats as agents of misfortunes and witchcraft has made cat-human relations in this city inhumane.

Lagos is a city with most of its population adhering to one of the mainline religions of Christianity and Islam, and an insignificant population adhering to the African Indigenous Religion (ATR). However, with Christianity and Islam becoming popularized and organized religions in Lagos in the mid-1800s, superstitious beliefs did not decline and were, in fact, incorporated into these organized religions. Moreover, the city is inhabited by various ethnic groups from across the country who carry with them indigenous belief systems where mysticism, magic, witchcraft, juju, voodoo, black magic, and animal spiritisms are shared belief systems among different indigenous societies and held in common knowledge among different ethnic groups. In a city where nearly every misfortune, such as sickness and poverty, is attributed to malevolent spirits, witches, and non-human witchcraft agents, such as cats, rats, owls, and bats, the people live in constant fear and paranoia. Hence, many are on the lookout for human agents and non-human agents who are responsible for their misfortunes.

The stories of humans transforming into cats—and other animals such as owls—at nights through the use of supernatural powers to cause physical and emotional harm to victims are common in Lagos and other cities across the country (Orjinmo, 2022; Author's Recollections). As earlier stated, belief in African traditional religions and their juju components is widespread in Lagos, with many combining them with either Christianity or Islam (Pew Research Center, 2010). Many Nigerians believe that magic charms can allow humans to

morph into cats (Orjinmo, 2022). These beliefs are not just held by the uneducated; they exist even at the highest level of Nigeria's academia. Jude Akanbi, a lecturer at the Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary in Abẹ̀òkúta, is also unequivocal about juju. He argues that,

This ability to be able to transform yourself to [a] cat, to disappear and reappear, these things are possible within the dynamics of traditional African religion...Although [it] sounds illogical, like old wives' tales, however from what we have seen and heard, these things are possible (Akanbi interviewed in Orjinmo, 2022).

According to Olanunmi (2019), many Nigerians hold the belief that objects, including animals, can be used for malevolent purposes by witches. This extends beyond cats—seeing a bird within one's compound can trigger an evacuation due to perceived witchcraft. Similarly, the encounter with a snake may be readily attributed to supernatural forces. Convincing individuals that their dwelling is not under attack can be challenging, especially if a black cat is present (Olanunmi, 2019). The fear often stems from the cat's confident gaze and striking eye color, misconstrued as an "evil eye" rather than a natural characteristic. This apprehension is even more pronounced with owls.

While modern expressions of animal demonism might seem relatively new, they could be re-packaged versions of older witchcraft beliefs still prevalent in Africa. Studies by anthropologists like Bastian (1993) and Apter (1993) show how the language of witchcraft remains relevant in contemporary West Africa, offering explanations for life's hardships and hidden forces at play, both in urban and rural settings. Bastian (1993: p. 133) highlights the ongoing value of witchcraft narratives in the Nigerian popular press, while Apter (1993: p. 124) points to its continued use as a way to understand failed economic development. Similarly, Adam Ashforth's personal account of a friend battling suspected witchcraft in Soweto reveals its connection to a broader "spiritual insecurity" within everyday life (Ashforth, 2000).

## 9. Cases of Cat Cruelty in Lagos

In a society bedeviled by superstitious beliefs and official neglect from governmental agencies in addressing urban poverty, poor city planning, inadequate drainage management, and rodent invasion, many Nigerians often resort to self-help to address what they consider their pressing problems, primarily poverty and its causative factors. These responses to problems, especially those they consider supernatural and malevolent, are often crude. According to a news report on Nairaland, a resident in Lagos set fire to cats discovered in the engine compartment of his abandoned car. The report, posted by a Nairaland user, detailed the incident in Oke Afa, Lagos, where a suspected witch, allegedly disguised as a cat, faced a dire fate. The cat was discovered inside the car's bonnet during a repair at a mechanic's workshop, prompting the mechanic to raise an

alarm. As many residents gathered at the scene, the cat was killed. The perpetrators claimed that the cat's alleged evil activities had caused them numerous sleepless nights (@APROKOGIRL, 2018). Many Nigerians on the microblogging platform reacted differently. A Nairaland user, *AerialMapper* (2018), further recounted a disturbing incident he witnessed involving a neighbor who discovered a litter of kittens in the engine of his abandoned car. Believing that the presence of the kittens had somehow caused his already non-functional car to "die," he proceeded to place them in a box, doused them in fuel, and set them on fire. Notably, the individual identified as Yoruba and a Cherubim and Seraphim church member, leading the commentator to express a disapproving opinion about this combination of cultural and religious affiliations (*AerialMapper*, 2018).

In another Nairaland forum, a user, *ennon92* (2019), recounted an incident where a cat in the ceiling disrupted his family's sleep at night. Initially not intending to harm the cat, the situation escalated when the feline trespassed its boundaries, running and crying in the ceiling before eventually entering the room by damaging the PVC roof. Faced with no other option, the poster felt compelled to address the situation by killing it. Another Nairaland user, *Grandstar* (2019), expressed curiosity about owning a cat in Lagos without risking harm (killing it), prompting a query about the specific location within Lagos.

It is crucial to acknowledge that cat cruelty and witch persecution are closely intertwined in Nigeria. The belief that cats have the ability to transform into humans, and vice versa, has led to instances where individuals, thought to be witches capable of assuming cat form, have been persecuted, wounded and even killed. This phenomenon has been widely reported in various news outlets in Lagos. For instance, in the Surulere area of Lagos, residents of Aguda were reportedly left in shock after witnessing a cat purportedly transforming into an old woman in broad daylight (*Odinaka*, 2017; *Nairaland Forum*, 2017). This news, sourced from a Lagos-based Facebook user known as Energetic Jay, has been shared on the social networking platform along with photos, recounting the startling incident of a cat allegedly metamorphosing into an elderly woman with grey hair (*Odinaka*, 2017). The poster wrote;

Wonders... I use to think it's only in Nigerian movie, cat do turn to human... Not until one happen for my area this morning... A cat when stoned by a little boy, turned into a woman with grey hair... Confessing that they are sixteen in number... Abeg, I wan relocate ooo (*sic*).

It added in another post, "Live in my area...this one no be Nigerian movie ooo...a cat after being stoned, turned to a woman with grey hair (*Odinaka*, 2017) (*sic*)."

Based on the aforementioned news, it is evident that Lagos residents, driven by a fear of the unknown fueled by entrenched superstitious beliefs and a desire to address perceived and actual misfortunes, resort to acts of cruelty towards cats. This mistreatment has, at times, resulted in instances of human persecution and jungle justice under the guise of combating witchcraft.

## 10. Determinants of Persisting Inhumane Conduct towards Cats

A convergence of multifaceted factors has significantly influenced and continues to influence the manner in which residents of Lagos perceive and interact with cats within their surroundings. At the forefront of factors contributing to the stigmatization of cats as agents of witchcraft and malevolent supernatural entities in Nigeria is the prevalence of spiritual and superstitious beliefs among the populace. Despite a significant number of Lagosians adhering to Islam (56%) or Christianity (40.7%) (Ostien, 2012: pp. 3-4), these superstitious notions persist, deeply ingrained in everyday thought patterns and discourse. Leo Igwe (2022) highlights the commonplace occurrence of animal torture and ill-treatment associated with witchcraft across Nigeria and beyond, emphasizing the overlooked and condoned nature of cruelty to animals linked to witchcraft. The pervasive belief that witches can transform into animals, such as cats, dogs, bats, and owls, to inflict harm on humans and their possessions is deeply rooted in African culture (Igwe, 2022). Black cats and owls, in particular, are often associated with witchcraft, rendering them endangered species subjected to attacks, torture, and killing whenever they are encountered in communities. The presence of these animals triggers panic, occult fears, and anxieties, as people assume an imminent threat of witchcraft attack. In response to this perceived danger, individuals resort to killing these “witch animals,” such as cats, without showing any compassion, viewing them as a necessary precaution against potential harm (Igwe, 2022). In short, the Yorùbá maintain a belief that human spirits can inhabit certain animals, insects, or birds, including cats, goats, deer, grasshoppers, bush rodents, and various birds (Olusola, 2005: p. 159). This metaphysical phenomenon persists despite the influence of foreign religions such as Islam and Christianity, as well as the global spread of civilization, which have not eradicated but rather entrenched this particular belief system. This leads us to our second factor responsible for the persisting factor responsible for inhumane relations between cats and humans.

The second factor contributing to the persisting cruelty towards cats in Lagos is religious institutions, particularly the emergence of firebrand Pentecostal churches that propagate negative connotations and interpretations of animals as agents of witchcraft (Olasunkanmi, 2019; Idowu, 2023). Since the advent of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria in the 1980s, many of which are headquartered in Lagos State, there has been an extensive campaign against witchcraft, deemed responsible for poverty, sickness, ill luck, and deaths among Lagos residents. Some of these Pentecostal churches actively engage in combating witchcraft through prayers and fasting, including the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC), Living Faith Church (LFC), and notably, the Mountain of Fire Ministries (MFM). The MFM is renowned worldwide for its consistent spiritual warfare against malevolent and nefarious forces, particularly witches and wizards. The increased emphasis on demonology within certain Christian denominations, particularly MFM, has coincided with a nota-

ble rise in the fear of witchcraft and its supposed animal agents, especially cats (Hackett, 2003: pp. 65-70). This fear is often fueled by widely available materials like books, bulletins, websites, and even social media content promoting “warfare prayers” against witchcraft and its non-human forms (Author observation, 2000-2023).

The focus on demonological doctrines has gained significant traction, attracting a large following among Nigerians who attribute their struggles in various aspects of life, such as finances, relationships, and health, to the presence of malevolent forces. This fear has found expression in various forms, one notable example being the demonization of cats on the website of Orekhie (2023). In a blog post on the website, it is stated that while cats are wonderful animals, people often prefer dogs due to their natural understanding, playfulness, and sociability. However, the narrative takes a dark turn as it asserts that cats have consistently been utilized by agents of darkness. Moreover, the post suggests that dreaming about cats can lead to negative outcomes such as stagnation, loss, and backwardness. The post claims that individuals pursued by cats often face compounded problems, and being attacked by cats signifies enemies infiltrating one’s life. In this interpretation, a dream about cats symbolizes an evil link between the dreamer and the witchcraft world, with encountering cats in real life standing as a harbinger of misfortune and bad luck (Orekhie, 2023). The rise of demonological doctrines, evident in such interpretations, has become a notable aspect of Christianity and, notably, a profitable business, as many Nigerians attributing their misfortunes to demonic agents actively engage with these doctrines. Another religious page on Facebook known as *Deliverance from Witchcraft Oppression* (2013) reads:

Every animal in the dream is witchcraft activities in your life. If you see household animals like cat, dog, rat, it signifies household witchcraft power attack on your personality. Each has its own agenda e.g. rat is for poverty. Other animals like serpents are marine witchcraft power attack. Lion is an unrepentant enemy and also set to kill (*sic*).

According to Hackett (2003: p. 65), the business of deliverance in Pentecostal churches, such as MFM, thrives, as many Lagosians actively seek to combat malevolent spirits and their agents, including animals perceived to be responsible for various misfortunes such as poverty, sickness, or the death of a loved one. In response, MFM has established a spiritual vigilante wing known as Battle Cry Ministries, tasked with organizing members for spiritual warfare (Hackett, 2003: p. 65). This church has gone so far as to provide books and bulletins for these exercises, which are sold and contribute to the church’s revenue generation. Olasunkanmi (2019) asserts that this phenomenon of combating witchcraft, supernatural forces, and their non-human agents should be attributed to the nation’s religious system and the so-called religious leaders who, in their pursuit of exploitation, fabricate various doctrines that encourage practitioners to perceive others as adversaries. Consequently, even when individuals are afflicted with

common ailments like malaria, the superstitious and uncivilized religious practices lead them to harbor resentment towards their neighbors, suspecting anyone as the potential cause of the illness. Rather than seeking medical assistance, the average Nigerian tends to turn to churches and mosques, praying against malaria (Olasunkanmi, 2019). Furthermore, a Nairaland user, Fratermathy (2016), also highlighted the impact of religious institutions in stigmatizing cats. Expressing his dismay, he lamented that it is unfortunate that in Nigeria, cats face assault, stigma, and unfortunate circumstances. The high level of religiosity, particularly among Southern Christians, combined with beliefs in witchcraft and other superstitions, has rendered these cute, adorable, and shy animals among the most disliked in the country (Fratermathy, 2016). Upon mentioning or sighting a cat, Christian fundamentalists often react with exclamations like “blood of Jesus”, “you cannot suck my blood”, “my enemies have come”, and so on. This unfortunate reaction may lead to the unwarranted killing of the cat. The user expressed pity for his nation and its predominantly gullible Christian population, emphasizing the irrationality of hating cats based on the belief that they can cause spiritual harm (Fratermathy, 2016).

Thirdly, the role of the media and entertainment industry has played in a role in shaping the negative anthrozoological perception of cats among Lagosians. At the forefront of this is the Nigerian movie industry known as Nollywood, which came into existence in the early 1990s. Several studies have shown that Nollywood has been at the forefront of the misinterpreting and mis-conceptualizing indigenous sociocultural and religious beliefs in Nigeria (Nwaoboli et al., 2021: p. 25; Euphemia et al., 2015: p. 98, 102). Nwaoboli et al. (2021: p. 25) observed that Nollywood movies prominently feature themes such as ritual, fraud (also known as 419), cultism, witchcraft, and voodoo, aiming to reflect the social and cultural idiosyncrasies of Nigeria. However, these themes often take center stage in most home videos, consistently portraying good triumphing over evil. This depiction has contributed to certain perceptions, including the belief that elderly individuals in rural areas are often associated with witchcraft, a pervasive sense that malevolence constantly looms like a ticking time bomb, and a notion that many Nigerians are deeply entrenched in fetish practices, hindering the progress of their compatriots. In short, study respondents believe that Nollywood significantly contributes to the amplification of animals as bearers of witchcraft, especially cats (Idowu, 2023; Enemchukwu, 2023; Ajibola, 2023; Chukwu, 2023; Uzoma, 2023). It is even quite interesting that none of them could single out a movie that has influenced this perception, but they all agree that there countless Nollywood movies where cats have been depicted as agents of witchcraft. Odili Emmanuel Olisa (2019) also concurs, asserting that Nollywood has perpetuated the belief that cats are associated with malevolence and evil. An internet user expressed a similar sentiment, suggesting that,

These thoughts can be traced to the influence of dumb and stupid low budget movies such as Helen Ukpabio’s End of the Wicked, the same movie



that advocated for the branding of children as witches and which led to an international outrage just a few years ago. In her low quality movie, children transform to cats, owl, snakes, etc., to wreck havoc (*sic*) (Fratermathy, 2016).

Explicitly stating the role Nigerian movies played in vilifying cats, Adeyinka Olaiya (2022) observed that black cats in precolonial Yoruba culture were symbolic as they represented fortune and wealth. However, such positive connotations of cats were corrupted in the 1980s and 1990s when the father of Nigerian theater, the Late Hubert Ogunde, launched his bestseller film *Aiye* (Olaiya, 2022). It was noted that the movie further damaged the symbolic representation of cats as it described black cats, known as the *Ologbo Dudu*, as bearers of witchcraft (Olaiya, 2022). Moreover, in the acclaimed Nollywood film *The Evil Cats*, starring renowned actors such as Ngozi Ezeonu and Regina Daniels, and released on YouTube in 2018, cats were portrayed as instigating fear in the community by engaging in acts of violence, including killing people and consuming the flesh of their victims (Nollywoodpicturestv, 2018). This representation contributes to the negative perception of cats, painting them as malicious creatures and heightening the aversion towards them among Nigerians.

Fourthly, the persistent cruelty towards cats in Lagos is also influenced by a combination of environmental, idiosyncratic and psychological factors. The plight of many homeless cats, left without proper care, is exacerbated by a lack of awareness among Lagosians regarding animal behavior. According to Adeyinka (2023), ignorance about cat behavior and communication often leads to misunderstandings and frustration, resulting in abusive treatment towards them. Some cats cry during the night due to hunger or pain, but residents, driven by fear, often misinterpret these cries as manifestations of witchcraft, as the cries of cats and witches have become historically synonymous (Author observation, 2000-2023). Furthermore, the prevailing environmental challenges contribute to the mistreatment of cats. Efekodo (2020) highlighted the issue, emphasizing the impact of insecurity and superstitious beliefs in Nigeria. He noted that many Nigerians, influenced by superstitions, may disregard scientific explanations and attribute mischievous behavior to cats. The lack of adequate outdoor lighting in Nigerian towns, often due to unreliable electricity, creates an environment where cats, known for their nocturnal activities, can cause fear and displeasure (Efekodo, 2020). Efekodo pointed out that the darkness, especially after 9 pm when most places lack electricity, can lead to heightened anxiety, with sneaky cats perceived as potential threats. In contrast, dogs, which are more likely to stay put, are seen as obedient to their owners' calls (Efekodo, 2020). The interplay of ignorance, superstition, and environmental conditions thus contributes to the unfortunate mistreatment of cats in Lagos.

## 11. Rethinking Cat Perception and Protection in Nigeria

To address the prevalent issue of cat cruelty in Nigeria, it is imperative to im-

plement a comprehensive strategy that targets various aspects, aiming to reshape public perceptions of cats. An essential first step involves the implementation of orientation programs designed to portray cats in a positive light. Emphasizing their integral role in rodent control and highlighting the psychological and emotional benefits they offer to owners can be pivotal in fostering a more positive view of these animals. A key recommendation is to underscore the multifaceted advantages of cat ownership. Beyond providing companionship with affection and loyalty, cats contribute to stress reduction and lower blood pressure through interactions like petting or playing, fostering an overall sense of well-being (Newman, 2018; Lundgren & Segal, 2023). Their playful and curious nature also introduces an entertaining element to households, bringing joy to their owners. Moreover, owning a cat has been associated with various health benefits, including a reduced risk of heart attack and stroke. The relatively low maintenance nature of cats, their adaptability to indoor living, and their natural inclination for rodent control make them convenient and beneficial companions. Additionally, cats exhibit an intuitive understanding of human emotions, offering emotional support and comfort during challenging times (Newman, 2018; Lundgren & Segal, 2023). To disseminate these positive aspects of cat ownership, a collaborative effort between the private and public sectors is essential. Leveraging various mediums such as educational campaigns, media platforms, and community outreach programs can effectively communicate the numerous advantages of having cats as pets. By fostering a more informed and positive attitude towards cats, it becomes possible to mitigate cat cruelty and promote responsible and compassionate treatment of these animals nationwide.

Furthermore, there is a need for the general public and government agencies to discourage and regulate the influx of movies and entertainment materials portraying animals, such as cats, as evil and malevolent. This approach can help counteract the negative orientations held about cats in Nigeria. Additionally, the government and animal protection agencies must enact and enforce laws that protect animals, ensuring the prosecution of offenders engaged in animal cruelty. Lastly, academia and public opinion influencers should play a role in reshaping the mindset of Nigerians. Shifting the focus from ascribing the causes of poverty to malevolent supernatural forces toward understanding empirical data is crucial. Nigerians need to recognize that financial misappropriation, government corruption, misguided economic and political policies, and personal idiosyncrasies such as poor financial management and possessing low in-demand skills are primary drivers of poverty, while poor sanitary conditions, substandard living conditions, and harmful lifestyles are fundamental causes of illness and death.

## **12. Conclusion**

Despite the prevalent inhumane treatment and victimization of cats, there is an emerging shift in the perceptions of many Lagosians and Nigerians in general

towards cats. Some respondents in this study posit that ailurophobia among Nigerians, particularly in Lagos State, stems from both intentional and unintentional portrayals of cats by various entities, including the Nigerian movie industry and religious organizations such as churches, mosques, and indigenous worship centers, which tend to be largely negative; however, the perspective is gradually shifting (Idowu, 2023; Enemchukwu, 2023). Furthermore, the increasing influence of globalization, where young and mobile Nigerians engage with the broader world through social media and the internet, exposes them to cultures, especially in the West, that place a significant emphasis on animal welfare and protection. This exposure has led to a heightened awareness of animal behavior, particularly regarding cats, and an understanding of how they are well-cared for as pets in other societies (Enemchukwu, 2023). Moreover, the pervasive impact of Hollywood movies and animations, where cats are often portrayed positively, is shaping the perceptions of many urban dwellers in Lagos and beyond (Enemchukwu, 2023). However, the proliferation of Pentecostal and mainstream churches across Lagos State continues to contribute to the perpetuation of fears among Lagosians. Religious leaders, in their teachings, often disseminate tales of witchcraft and demonological doctrines, characterizing cats and other animals as carriers of mystical powers associated with misfortunes and evil omens. This religious narrative fosters a climate of animosity towards cats and contributes to the persistence of negative beliefs about them in the region.

As Nigeria grapples with an increasing descent into poverty, affecting nearly half of the nation's population, a significant number of Nigerians readily turn to religious centers for succor and solutions, where there is a persistent attribution of supernatural forces as the major causes of poverty, sickness, deaths, and other societal challenges. What is even more unfortunate is that the Nigerian movie industry remains unrepentant in producing films that portray animals such as cats, owls, goats, and others as agents of witchcraft. These movies are widely consumed by Nigerians, either in traditional home video formats, on online platforms like YouTube, or even on Netflix. In fact, this study has revealed that one's level of literacy has not been able to override the fear of witchcraft or supernatural forces in Nigeria. Discussions on witchcraft, tales of human-animal metamorphosis, and metaphysical occurrences resonate within the walls of institutions of higher learning. This is a consequence of Nigerians being notoriously religious as a people. Hence, cat cruelty, rooted in metaphysical beliefs, supernatural fears, and even a lack of awareness, will persist as a problem for years to come.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### References

@APROKOGIRL (2018). *Cat Found in Bonnet of Car Killed in Lagos, Accused of Being A*

- 'Witch' (Pictures—Religion (3) [Online Forum Comment]. Nairaland. <https://www.nairaland.com/4551107/cat-found-bonnet-car-killed/2#68316982>
- Achebe, C. (1982). *Arrow of God*. Heinemann.
- Adeyinka, A. (2023). *Interview with Ade Adeyinka [Telephone Conversation]*. Southern Illinois University.
- AerialMapper (2018). *Cat Found in Bonnet of Car Killed in Lagos, Accused of Being A 'Witch' (Pictures—Religion (3) [Online Forum Comment]*. Nairaland. <https://www.nairaland.com/4551107/cat-found-bonnet-car-killed/2#68316982>
- Ajibola, E. (2023). *Interview with Esther Ajibola [WhatsApp Chat]*. Southern Illinois University.
- Apanpa, O. (2023). *Report Ranks Lagos 4th Worst City to Live In*. Punch. <https://punchng.com/report-ranks-lagos-4th-worst-city-to-live-in/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20Lagos%20was%20the,unrest%2C%20terrorism%2C%20and%20conflict>
- Apter, A. (1993). Atinga Revisited: Yoruba Witchcraft and the Cocoa Economy, 1950-1951. In J. Comaroff, & J. Comaroff (Eds.), *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (pp. 111-128). University of Chicago Press.
- Arluke, A., & Lockwood, R. (1997). Society and Animals, Special Theme Issue: Animal Cruelty. *Washington Grove*, 54, 112-134.
- Arnold, C. E. (1997). *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*. Baker Books.
- Ashforth, A. (2000). *Madumo: A Man Bewitched*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226774527.001.0001>
- Awolalu, J. O., & Dopamu, P. A. (1979). *West African Traditional Religion*. Onibonoje Press.
- Bastian, M. L. (1993). Bloodhounds Who Have No Friends: Witchcraft and Locality in the Nigerian Popular Press. In J. Comaroff, & J. Comaroff (Eds.), *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (pp. 129-166). University of Chicago Press.
- Berg, A. (2005). *Witches in Exile [Film]*. California Newsreel. <https://www.newsreel.org/>
- Chukwu, L. (2023). *Interview with Chukwu Lawson [WhatsApp Chat]*. Southern Illinois University.
- Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. (1999). Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony. *American Ethnologist*, 26, 279-303. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1999.26.2.279>
- Deliverance from Witchcraft Oppression (2013). *Every Animal in the Dream Is Witchcraft Activities in Your Life. If You See a House... [Facebook Post]*. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/137447159632494/posts/every-animal-in-the-dream-is-witchcraft-activities-in-your-life-if-you-see-house/503457949698078/>
- Dikko Law (2019). *Why Don't Nigerians Believe in Having Cats? [Quora Answer]*. Quora. <https://www.quora.com/Why-do-Nigerians-dislike-cats>
- Duel, D. (2000). *Violence Prevention and Intervention: A Directory of Animal-Related Programs*. The Humane Society of the United States.
- Economist Intelligence Unit (2022). *The Global Liveability Index 2022: Recovery and Hardship*. <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/global-liveability-index-2022/>
- Efekodo, J. (2020). *Why Don't Nigerians Believe in Having Cats? [Quora Answer]*. Quora. <https://www.quora.com/Why-don-t-Nigerians-believe-in-having-cats>
- Enemchukwu, C. (2022). *Conversation with Chinelo Enemchukwu [Personal Communication]*. Ogun State.

- Enemchukwu, W. (2023). *Interview with Wisdom Enemchukwu [WhatsApp Chat]*. Lagos.
- Ennon92 (2019). *I Killed This Cat Disturbing My Peace [Online forum Comment]*. Nairaland. <https://www.nairaland.com/5166285/killed-cat-disturbing-peace/9#78067292>
- Euphemia, A. C., Ben, O. I., & Unekwu, O. E. (2015). The Representation of Nigerian Indigenous Culture in Nollywood. *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*, 7, 97-107. <https://doi.org/10.9734/JSRR/2015/15596>
- Federici, S. (2008). Witch-Hunting, Globalization, and Feminist Solidarity in Africa Today. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 10, 21-35.
- Fratermathy (2016). *The Persecution of Cats in Nigeria [Online forum comment]*. Nairaland. <https://www.nairaland.com/3485816/persecution-cats-nigeria/3>
- Grandstar (2019). *I Killed This Cat Disturbing My Peace [Online Forum Comment]*. Nairaland. <https://www.nairaland.com/5166285/killed-cat-disturbing-peace/9#78067292>
- Hackett, R. I. (2003). Discourses of Demonization in Africa and Beyond. *Diogenes*, 50, 61-75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03921921030503005>
- Hinfelaar, H. F. (2007). Witch-Hunting in Zambia and International Illegal Trade. In G. ter Haar (Ed.), *Imagining Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (pp. 229-246). Africa World Press.
- Idowu, S. (2023). *Interview with Samuel Idowu [WhatsApp Chat]*. Southern Illinois University.
- Ifesieh, M. (1989). *Religion at the Grassroots (Studies in Igbo Religion)*. Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Igwe, L. (2022). "Witches" Can't Turn to Animals, Stop Being Cruel to Animals in Africa. <https://saharareporters.com/2022/02/22/witches-cant-turn-animals-stop-being-cruel-animals-africa-leo-igwe>
- Jayeola-Omoyeni, M. S., Oyetade, E. M., & Omoyeni, J. O. (2015). Witchcraft in the 20th and 21st Centuries in Nigeria: An Analysis. *European Scientific Journal*, 11, 361-374.
- Kanu, I. A. (2021). Sacred Animals and Igbo-African Ecological Knowledge System. In I. A. Kanu (Ed.), *African Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Systems: Religion, Philosophy and the Environment* (pp. 1-17). The Association for the Promotion of African Studies Publications. <https://acjol.org/index.php/jassd/article/view/1899>
- Kellogg, N. C. (2018). *10 Facts about Poverty in Lagos*. The Borgen Project. <https://borgenproject.org/10-facts-about-poverty-in-lagos/#:~:text=Nigerian%20statistics%20report%20that%208.5,pov%20E2%80%94%20about%201.7%20million%20people>
- Lockwood, R. (2006). Animal Cruelty Prosecution: Opportunities for Early Response to Crime and Interpersonal Violence. *American Prosecutor Research Institute*, 39, 110-121.
- Luka, A. Y. (2023). Spiritual Warfare in Africa: Towards Understanding the Classical model in Light of Witchcraft Practices and the Christian Response. *HTS Theological Studies*, 79, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8402>
- Lundgren, K., & Segal, R. (2023). *The Joys of Owning a Cat*. Help Guide. <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-living/joys-of-owning-a-cat.htm>
- Mogbo, T. C., Oduah, F. N., Okeke, J. J., Ufele, A. N., & Nwankwo, O. D. (2013). Animal Cruelty: A Review. *Journal of Natural Sciences Research*, 3, 94-98.
- Nairaland Forum (2017). *Video of the "Cat That Turned to a Woman in Lagos" as Claimed by a Facebook User—Religion*. Nairaland. <https://www.nairaland.com/3713959/video-cat-turned-woman-lagos>
- Newman, K. M. (2018). *The Science-Backed Benefits of Being a Cat Lover*. Greater Good

- Magazine.  
[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the\\_science\\_backed\\_benefits\\_of\\_being\\_a\\_cat\\_lover](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_science_backed_benefits_of_being_a_cat_lover)
- Nollywoodpicturestv (2018). *The Cat Season 1 (Tales By Moonlight)—2018 Latest Nigerian Nollywood Movie Full HD*. YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=IWwM2zUVcI0>
- Nwaoboli, E. P., Arijeniwa, A. F., Oviasuyi, U. C., & Tiekuro, U. A. (2021). Perception of the Portrayal of Witchcraft in Nollywood Movies among Benin Residents. *SAU Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 6, 24-37.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352056511\\_Perception\\_of\\_the\\_Portrayal\\_of\\_Witchcraft\\_in\\_Nollywood\\_Movies\\_among\\_Benin\\_Residents](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352056511_Perception_of_the_Portrayal_of_Witchcraft_in_Nollywood_Movies_among_Benin_Residents)
- Odili Emmanuel Olisa (2019). *Why Don't Nigerians Believe in Having Cats? [Quora Answer]*. Quora. <https://www.quora.com/Why-do-Nigerians-dislike-cats>
- Odinaka (2017). *Lagos Residents in Shock as Cat Allegedly Turns into an Old Woman With Grey Hair in Surulere (Photos)*. Tori.ng.  
<https://www.tori.ng/news/58033/witchcraft-watch-video-of-alleged-cat-that-turned.html>
- Ojoye, T. (2017). *Nigeria's Large Rat Population Threatens Lassa Fever War*. Punch.  
<https://punchng.com/nigerias-large-rat-population-threatens-lassa-fever-war/>
- Olaiya, A. (2022). *Black Cats: The Body of Witchcrafts, a Wrong Interpretation in Yoruba Society*.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358752139\\_Black\\_Cats\\_The\\_Body\\_Of\\_Witchcrafts\\_A\\_Wrong\\_Interpretation\\_In\\_Yoruba\\_Society](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358752139_Black_Cats_The_Body_Of_Witchcrafts_A_Wrong_Interpretation_In_Yoruba_Society)
- Olasunkanmi, K. (2019). *Why Do Nigerians Believe That Cats Are Witches? [Quora Answer]*. Quora.  
<https://www.quora.com/Why-do-Nigerians-believe-that-cats-are-witches>
- Olufemi Mobolaji, A. (2018). Overview of Animal Welfare and Its Science in Nigeria. *Researchjournal's Journal of Agriculture*, 5, 2-7.
- Olusola, A. G. (2005). Animals in the Traditional Worldview of the Yoruba. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*, 30, 155-172.  
<https://doi.org/10.7592/FEJF2005.30.olusola>
- Orekhie, J. (2023). *Dream about Witchcraft Cats*. Evangelist Joshua Orekhie Ministries.  
<https://evangelistjoshua.com/dream-about-cats/>
- Orjinmo, N. (2022). *The Hunt for Nigerians Who Can Change into Cats*. BBC News.  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60749496>
- Ostien, P. (2012). *Percentages by Religion of the 1952 and 1963 Populations of Nigeria's Present 36 States (NRN Background Paper No. 1)*. Nigeria Research Network (NRN), Oxford Department of International Development.
- Parrinder, E. G. (1970). *Witchcraft: European and African*. Faber & Faber.
- Parrinder, G. (1962). *African Traditional Religion* (2nd ed.). S.P.C.K.
- Pew Research Center (2010). *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*.  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2010/04/15/executive-summary-islam-and-christianity-in-sub-saharan-africa/>
- Randour, M. L. (2004). Including Animal Cruelty as a Factor in Assessing Risk and Designing Interventions. In *Conference Proceedings, Persistently Safe Schools, the National Conference of the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence* (pp. 103-110). Hamilton Fish Institute.  
<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=c1015692a3f884979>

[346cc8ae11fb68f485d88d4](#)

Randour, M. L., & Davidson, H. (2008). *A Common Bond: Maltreated Children and Animals in the Home. Guidelines for Practice and Policy*. The Humane Society of the United States.

Uzoma, K. (2023). *Interview with Uzoma Kenneth [WhatsApp Chat]*. Southern Illinois University.

World Population Review (2023). *Lagos Population 2023*.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/lagos-population>