


## Responsible cyberspace engagement: Towards *Omoluàbí* ethos for Nigerian youth

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Article Info	Abstract
Original article	<p><b>Background:</b> Cyberspace is understood in this paper as a place for possible moral and immoral conducts, just as it is the case with physical societies across the world. However, the Nigerian cyberspace has, in recent times, experienced increase in moral decadence, with young people engaging in acts of vices, including disrespect, fraud, and phishing among other cybercrimes. This set of behaviours negates the values expected of a well-ordered and well-meaning cyberspace, all of which threaten physical societal cohesion and ethical standards.</p> <p><b>Aims:</b> This paper examines <i>Omoluàbí</i> ethos, a traditional embodiment of moral principle of the Yoruba people, as a remedial framework. The <i>Omoluàbí</i> ethos places virtues such as good character, respectful conduct, gentleness, honesty, trust, humanness, among others, as a necessity for building a responsible society, even in the cyberspace.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> Being philosophical research, the paper adopts qualitative method to unpack the relevance of ancient Yoruba proverbs and ethical practices to contemporary online engagement.</p> <p><b>Findings:</b> The paper argues that if the <i>Omoluàbí</i> ethos is imbued into cyberspace culture, through the medium of philosophical counseling in collaboration with the National Orientation Agency, it could help ensure a more suitable online environment where respect, dignity, and virtue are paramount.</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> This paper contributes to scholarship by positioning an indigenous ethical framework for addressing contemporary cyberspace's ethical challenges.</p>
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## 1. Introduction

In the recent decade, the Nigerian cyberspace has evolved into an expansive social arena, reflecting not only the rapid growth of technology but also the moral tensions of a modern society caught between tradition and digital globalization (see, Abokwara, 2021; Aderibigbe et al., 2022; Olubiyi, 2024). This virtual domain, no doubt, comes with several opportunities for information exchange, community building, and skill development (Clark, 2010), but has increasingly exhibited moral decadence among young people, including disrespect toward elders, verbal abuse, dehumanization, frauds, scams, and self-demeaning content, which collectively erode the values that underpin a well-ordered society and shape how youths perceive life, form their identity, and respond to reality (see, Umeogu & Ojiakor, 2014; Chukwu & Chiemeka, 2019; Adediran, 2021; Akeusola, 2023). However, while global discourses on digital ethics often emphasise policy regulation, online safety, and universal human rights, these approaches, though significant, sometimes fail to address the culturally specific moral frameworks that shape the lived experiences of Nigerian youth. Hence, this gap shows the need for an ethical framework built on the shoulders of an indigenous moral principle, specifically the *Omoluàbí* ethos, as a remedial framework. This framework is, however, preferred considering its potential to complement existing digital ethics frameworks and guide ethical engagement online.

The concept of *Omoluàbí* is peculiar and indigenous to the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria. This framework represents a moral code that is more than a mere label for well-behaved individuals. It inherently prioritise certain virtues considered to be drivers towards a stable a morally nurtured society. These virtues include good character, respectful conduct, and communal responsibility, among others (see, Motadegbe & Ibiyemi, 2025), all of which have historically functioned as a moral compass for personal and communal life. In essence, within this purview, the ethos of *Omoluàbí* is an encompassing principle, which, within the context of this study, is a culturally informed mechanism positioned to restore cyber virtue amidst the rampant moral decay (see, Ajàdí & Fáyemí, 2012; Motadegbe & Ibiyemi, 2025).

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to examine the *Omoluàbí* ethos of the Yoruba people as a potential remedial theory for addressing the moral decay evident in Nigerian cyberspace. Since this study recognises the deficiency of certain virtues as the problem, it addresses this issue through a conceptual and hermeneutic analysis of selected Yoruba proverbs and related literature on the ethos of *Omoluàbí*, a representation of virtuous acts. The study aims to draw ethical lessons that can be applied to online interactions, considering that the challenges of cyberspace engagement are not merely technical or legal but also fundamentally moral and cultural. The research contributes to scholarship through its integration of African indigenous moral

philosophy into contemporary digital ethics. It provides an indigenous framework that tends to bridge the gap between traditional virtue ethics and modern cyber ethics. Hence, by doing this, it expands the frontiers of African philosophy and contributes to the global search for culturally inclusive ethical paradigms. The argument advanced here is that if the Yoruba ethos is absorbed into cyberspace culture, through the medium of philosophical counseling, a philosophical therapy that banks on reasonable dialogues and in collaboration with the National Orientation Agency, it could help ensure a more stable online environment where respect, dignity, and virtue are paramount.

## 2. Methodology

This research is a philosophical study and, accordingly, adopts a qualitative method, particularly conceptual analysis, hermeneutical interpretation, and critical analysis. It is divided into four sections. The first section is the conceptual clarification of cyberspace, where this paper defines what constitutes cyberspace and what counts as cyberspace. The second section discusses moral decadence in Nigerian cyberspace, highlighting the anomalies, absurdities, and general disorderliness present in Nigerian cyberspace, which forms the basis of this study. The third section clarifies the theoretical framework of *Omólúàbí*, which is employed here to guide the study. In this section, we explore what *Omólúàbí* means, its defining ethos, its aims, and the necessary conditions for it to flourish to its full potential. The fourth section presents our argument on how the *Omólúàbí* ethos can be employed to curb cyberspace moral decadence. The study then proceeds to conclude and give necessary recommendations for policy formulation and for the advancement of future research. It also highlights possible challenges that might arise. By situating the discourse within both local philosophical traditions and contemporary digital realities, the paper seeks to contribute to the global conversation on how indigenous ethical systems can decolonize and humanize online spaces in Nigeria and beyond.

## 3. Discussion

### 3.1. The concept of cyberspace

The term cyberspace has, over the years, undergone significant semantic evolution since it was first coined by William Gibson in 1982 in his short story *Burning Chrome*, and later popularized in his 1984 novel *Neuromancer* (Fourkas, 2004). Originally a fictional construct, Gibson's cyberspace metaphorically anticipated the digital environment that now shapes human relations and knowledge. By origin, the word cyberspace has its root in the prefix cyber, traced to the Greek *kybernētēs*, meaning "steersman", "pilot", or "governor" (Fourkas, 2004). The same root appears in cybernetics, the interdisciplinary study of control and communication in machines and

living organisms pioneered by Norbert Wiener in the mid-twentieth century (Wiener, 1948).

From the outset, therefore, cyberspace carried connotations of governance, control, and interaction between human consciousness and technological systems, providing both a metaphorical and literal environment for human-machine collaboration. Over the years, the concept of cyberspace has transcended its fictional origins to include other domains of networking. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, cyberspace is “a global domain within the information environment consisting of the interdependent network of information technology infrastructures, including the Internet, telecommunications networks, computer systems, and embedded processors and controllers” (JP 2009, quoted in Ottis & Lorents, 2010: 268). However, while this definition highlights its infrastructural dimension, it neglects the role of humans and social dynamics that define and give it meaning. According to Clark (2010), with the proliferation of the internet and networked computing, cyberspace now permeates virtually all aspects of human society, commerce, governance, education, culture, and relationships, creating an environment distinct from the traditional physical world (see, Bryant, 2001).

In its most basic form, the term “cyberspace” can be described as the interconnected digital environment that consists of computing devices, communication networks, software systems, and the vast stores of electronic information. However, beyond this technical conception, scholars such as Deibert and Rohozinski (2010) conceive of it as that which is continually transformed by technological innovation and human interaction. It is considered as an arena where exchange between people and information, between people and other people mediated by digital systems, and between autonomous systems themselves takes place (Strate, 1999). This explains why Strate observes that cyberspace encompasses “the totality of events involving relationships between humans and computers, between humans through computers, and between computers themselves” (quoted in Ottis & Lorents, 2010: 268). Following the above, cyberspace is therefore not merely a technological construct but an evolving sociotechnical ecosystem whose defining features stem from the relationship between human intentionality and machine capability. This however is captured in the words of Ottis and Lorents (2010: 269) when they noted that:

Cyberspace is an artificial space, created by humans for human purposes. Without human users, cyberspace would stagnate, fall into disrepair, and eventually cease to be.

Hence, in order to fully understand the concept of cyberspace, it requires an approach that goes beyond its technical architecture to encompass its social, cultural, political, and moral dimensions. According to Castells (2000), the term “cyberspace” is understood to

constitute the material foundation of the “network society”. For him, it represents a new social structure identified by the predominance of information flows over traditional territorial boundaries. In this sense, cyberspace is seen beyond geography, considering how it allows individuals to connect, trade, and express themselves without being limited by physical proximity. Hence, situating this conception of cyberspace in the Nigerian context, it could then be referred to as a domain that functions as a hybrid arena that mirrors both the potentials and the ethical challenges of modern digital interaction. It is a domain of immense opportunity that facilitates access to information, education, and innovation, but also one where anonymity and all forms of moral vices such as fraud, misinformation, and cyber exploitation. This ambivalence exposes the need to interrogate cyberspace not only as a technological reality but as a moral space requiring ethical grounding, which this paper later examines through the *Omoluàbí* ethos.

### 3.2. Moral decadence in Nigerian cyberspace

In contemporary Nigeria, cyberspace, which is considered a hybrid environment, has become an indispensable part of daily life. At present, it functions as an alternative public sphere where individuals meet, express opinions, build social connections, and engage in various forms of economic, political, and cultural activity (see, Castells, 2000; Clark, 2010). It has also become a space where communities are formed and human networking is achieved. Lasisi (2024) explored how cyberspace helped many African women, including those in Ghana and Nigeria, to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, they engaged in social media activities, such as selling their goods and services online, among other ventures, to earn income and support themselves during the lockdown. Although she later exposed the shortcomings being faced by the women through abuse and insult as the African cyberspace was considered a patriarchy, following the patriarchal nature of African society (Venditto et al., 2022; Loum, 2022). In exposing the benefit of the cyberspace during the COVID-19 period for women in Nigeria, Lasisi (2024: 173) argued thus:

Many Nigerian women have embraced the digital space positively. The cyberspace has helped many married women who are yet to conceive to subsume their fears because they could share their challenges with women worldwide (on chat apps like FemaleIN on Facebook). Also, violence against females, especially girls, received wide attention on social media.

However, this vibrant virtual environment is rapidly being overshadowed by disturbing patterns of moral decline. Regarding fake news, Akande and Obi (2022) affirmed that the positivity introduced by

the advent of the internet, which is a subset of cyberspace, brought along some evil as immorality prevails through the widespread dissemination of fake news. Lasisi (2024) further argued that many women, including Nigerian women, within the realm of cyberspace, had suffered numerous vices, including cyberbullying, sexual exploitation, blackmail, body shaming, and other inhumane attacks, all of which ended up affecting their mental health.

In essence, what should be a space for the promotion of positivity, such as intellectual engagement, civic participation, and creative enterprise, has, instead, developed to also become an arena where disrespect, deceit, fraud, and dehumanization, among many other anomalies, thrive (Lasisi, 2024; Clark, 2010). The anonymity and perceived distance afforded by digital platforms instilled in many young Nigerians the unthreatened courage to act in ways they would not dare in physical interactions, which, as a result erodes long-standing moral traditions. Instances abound of young people openly insulting elders on social media, dismissing the cultural expectation of respect for age, and ridiculing others based on physical appearance, economic status, or personal tragedy (see, Umeogu & Ojiakor, 2014; Amuzie, 2025). The issue of fraudulent activities such as “Yahoo Yahoo”, phishing scams, and identity theft continues to expand beyond how it all started. Today, fraud activities in all their forms are no longer seen solely as crime but, in some social circles, is even glamorized as a clever survival strategy in a difficult economy (Egodi et al., 2024). This normalization of vice within digital culture not only undermines the ethical fabric of society but also contributes to a widening generational divide, where older moral codes are dismissed as irrelevant in the fast-paced, profit-driven logic of online life (see, Chukwu & Chiemeka, 2019).

The wide decline in moral standards within cyberspace cannot in any way be separated from the broader socio-economic and political context of Nigeria, but it has its distinctive features, which are informed by the unique affordances of digital technology. As earlier established, cyberspace comes with features such as immediacy, global reach, and anonymity, all of which are qualities that can be used for constructive engagement (see, Wood & Smith, 2004; Bernal, 2005; Terras et al., 2015). However, given the outcomes, particularly in the absence of moral restraint, there is a rapid facilitation of ethical breaches (see, Abokwara, 2021; Aderibigbe et al., 2022; Olubiyi, 2024). For context, the proliferation of “call-out culture” and “dragging” that is today rampant on social media platforms has enabled an environment marred with several vices. One in which public shaming replaces constructive dialogue; one in which disagreement quickly descends into vitriol (see, Adebawale & Wewe, 2024). Here, language no longer observes its original ethical rudiment as it is now used in such a way that it loses its civility, and the dignity of persons is sacrificed for fleeting online clout.

One of the complicating issues is that, with the very structure of cyberspace, coupled with its programmed algorithms, it ends up rewarding outrage as well as sensationalism (see, Linden & Dierickx, 2019), and this in itself further fuels the already declining morality, whereby it gives privilege to conflict over consensus and to spectacle over substance. In the Nigerian context, where people navigate such a space without a grounded ethical framework, these patterns embedded in the algorithms of cyberspace can end up re-informing and reorienting their understanding of acceptable conduct. This experience of tying right conduct to online traffic rewards ultimately blurs the line between free expression and harmful speech, as well as between ambition and exploitation (Otubue & Oji, 2024).

One of the most rampant and insidious forms of moral decay in Nigerian cyberspace is the commodification of the self through self-demeaning content. People end up dehumanizing themselves and cyberspace in a bid to maintain their online relevance, go viral, and attract followers. These individuals resort to posting illicit or explicit images, engaging in dangerous challenges, and even fabricating tragic personal stories to gather sympathy and solicit donations (see, Ekhato, 2025; Nwoga et al., 2025). Such actions, no doubt, may appear harmless at first glance, but however, when thoroughly assessed, they have the cumulative effect of reducing the value of personal dignity and diminishing identity to a mere tool for attaining social media engagement metrics (Okpe & Jibrin, 2024), which the Yoruba philosophical worldview of *Omolúàbí*, which prioritises self-respect and the intrinsic worth of the individual (*iyì ènìyàn*), is in opposition to such trends. However, in the digital arena, where the pace of content consumption is relentless, portraying a kind of survival of the fittest principle, the competition for attention hence becomes fierce, and thereby marginalises the relevance and importance of indigenous values. As a result of the above decline in moral appraisal, whereby there is the prevalent cultural dissonance between traditional moral ideals and the unrestrained culture of cyberspace, it further complicates this ethical crisis. The underlying implication is that it disposes many young Nigerians without a coherent moral compass in their online interactions.

Furthermore, fraud and cybercrime represent another critical dimension of moral decadence in Nigerian cyberspace, as it is gradually eroding all forms of legal engagements among the youths (Olubanjó-Olufowobi et al., 2024; Ajuzieogu & Nnamdi, 2025). Immoral situations such as the rise of sophisticated online scams, which are often perpetrated by tech-savvy youth, have been identified to have gained both national and international notoriety. No doubt, there are numerous efforts on the part of law enforcement agencies to curb such activities (Ukpoghome & Nwano, 2017). However, the cultural problem is much deeper than legal enforcement can reach, as the moral agency of these

youths has been affected and altered. In many cases today, there are situations where perpetrators of cyber fraud are celebrated in society as smart individuals, as they are considered to have mastered the art of exploiting foreign ignorance, with the proceeds flaunted as symbols of success (Igbinovia, 2003). This mindset, which promotes fraud due to its economic benefits, reflects a dangerous redefinition of moral values. In its entirety, it negates the traditional ethos that guides African society, whereby cunning and deceit have replaced honesty and diligence, the latter being discarded and the former celebrated as markers of achievement. In other words, in the absence of the cultural forces that ensure virtues such as integrity, hard work, and communal responsibility, such distorted ideals, where vices are celebrated, take root and spread across the corners of our society. This, in the African society at large, including the Yoruba society, goes against the very fabric that holds our communities together. It opposes the ethical conduct that defines what is good and bad, right and wrong, and what is beneficial to the progress, development, and transformation of a responsive society. As Lasisi (2023: 75) rightly notes, "...human beings deserve respect as autonomous beings and their rationality should never be compromised." Thus, the principle of the *Omólúàbí* ethos, with its insistence on *òtítọ́* (truthfulness) and moral uprightness, stands in opposition to these currently promoted and celebrated vices, and such vices would inevitably ruin society. This ethos, which serves as a corrective to this trend, shall be exposed in the next section, for its absence in our cyberspace discourse opens the field to exploiters of the digital space, who use it for the glorification of criminality.

### 3.3. The framework of *Omólúàbí* ethos

The quest for a stable and orderly society has, since time immemorial, been a universal concern across different cultures and periods. Scholars, including political philosophers, social philosophers, and ethicists, have continued to ask essential questions such as: "How should one live?" and "What kind of person ought one to be?" These questions, according to Olanipekun (2017), are universal to all regions and eras, and the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria are not an exception. And as Motadegbe and Ibiyemi (2025) observe, the Yoruba are a people of deep culture, and one of the central cultural and moral concepts that defines the essence of personhood in their cultural practice is the concept of *Omólúàbí*.

In simple terms, the term *Omólúàbí* represents a "well-behaved person", considering the ethical element it embodies (Azenabor, 2022). However, in a more complex and encompassing narrative, it encapsulates a complex web of ontological and ethical ideals that the Yoruba consider peculiar to every responsible human. According to Bewaji (2005), *Omólúàbí* encompasses a wide range of virtues, including *ìwà rere* (good character), *ìwà ìrẹ̀lẹ̀* (humility), and *ìtẹ̀ríba*



(respect). It, however, further includes virtues such as *òtító* (truth), *ìwà títútù* (gentleness), *ìwà pẹ̀lẹ̀* (good mannerism), *ìṣẹ* (hard work), and *ògbon òpìpẹ̀* (intelligence), to name a few. The virtues constituting the *Omólúàbí* moral framework is systematically presented in Table 1, which summarises their Yoruba expression, ethical interpretation, and moral significance.

**Table 1.** Core virtues of the *Omólúàbí* moral framework

Yoruba term	Ethical interpretation	Moral significance
<i>Ìwà rere</i> (good character)	Integrity and uprightness in thought and deed.	It is the foundational quality that defines moral worth in Yoruba ethics.
<i>Ìwà irẹ̀lẹ̀</i> (humility)	Modesty in speech, action, and attitude.	It prevents arrogance and sustains social harmony.
<i>Ìtẹ́ríba</i> (respect)	Deference and courtesy toward elders and others.	It promotes cohesion and upholds communal norms.
<i>Òtító</i> (truth)	Honesty and fidelity to fact in word and action.	It helps in building trust and credibility in relationships and institutions.
<i>Ìwà pẹ̀lẹ̀ / Ìwà títútù</i> (gentleness/ calmness)	Patience, self-control, and temperance.	It helps facilitates peaceful coexistence and tolerance.
<i>Ìṣẹ</i> (hard work)	Diligence, responsibility, and industriousness.	It encourages productivity and discourages moral laxity.
<i>Ògbón pìpe</i> (wisdom)	Practical judgment guided by moral reasoning.	It helps in ensuring ethical decision-making and prudent living.

Note: Adapted from Bewaji (2005), Olanipekun (2017), Azenabor (2022), and Omosulu (2022).

The concept of *Omólúàbí* as contained in Yoruba ethics further reveals a kind of philosophical depth. Tracing the roots of the word, it is derived from the fusion of several words: *Omo ti Olu-iwà bi*. This could be further broken down in this order: *Omo* (child), *ti* (that), *Olu-iwà* (chief of character), and *bi* (born). This translates to mean “a child begotten by the chief of character” (Fabiya, 2021; Olanipekun, 2017; Fayemi, 2009). Hence, this implies that such a child is expected to mirror the character of its origin; loosely interpreted as its “father”. This is reinforced in the Yoruba proverb: *Omo ti ẹ̀ya bá bí, ẹ̀ya ni n jó* (A child born of ẹ̀ya takes after ẹ̀ya). Thus, the *Omólúàbí* is understood as the embodiment and reflection of virtuous qualities, since one begotten by *Olu-iwà* cannot but display good character (Fayemi, 2009).

Over the years, scholars have demonstrated the enduring importance of *Omólúàbí* to Yoruba society as an ethical framework for regulating behaviour and sustaining communal order. Olanipekun (2017) describes *Omólúàbí* as the Yoruba equivalent of normative ethics, encompassing questions of moral responsibility, right action, and the good life. Fabiya (2021) similarly notes that it serves as the evaluative

template for individual character, while Akinyemi (2015) depicts the *Omoluàbí* as a “moral archetype” to which all Yoruba individuals aspire. In Yoruba moral consciousness, the *Omoluàbí* ideal goes beyond outward behaviour to encompass *ẹwà inú* (inner beauty)—the moral integrity that radiates outwardly through action. As Barry Allen (cited in Olanipekun, 2017) affirms, the true richness of *Omoluàbí* lies in its inner moral depth, for good character must begin from within and manifest in conduct, hence the proverb: *Ìwà l’ọba awùré* (Good character is the king of all blessings).

*Omoluàbí* is also embedded in the *Ifá* literary corpus, the sacred Yoruba divination system. As Omosulu (2022) notes, *Ifá emphasises iwà* (character) as the foundation of human flourishing and social harmony. Quoting Oyeku Meji, Oluwole (2015: 64) writes:

Raise it up, pull it down, twist it as you may, the essence does not change. What matters most is *iwà* (good character). You may be wealthy, have many children and build several houses; all come to nothing if you lack good character. A life without moral rectitude is nothing but vanity.

The above verse supports the earlier table of virtues and highlights character as the driver of Yoruba ethics. To the above effect, scholars such as Aremu (2019) and Àjàdí & Fáyemí (2012) argue that these virtues are indispensable to the identity of an *Omoluàbí*. As a result, they concluded that these sets of virtues should be embedded in daily life rather than merely acknowledged with any translational effect.

Beyond individual morality, the principle of *Omoluàbí* extends to communal responsibility and environmental harmony. According to Aliyu (2022), the conduct of an *Omoluàbí* includes maintaining peace with both the community and the natural environment. Supporting this claim, Adebowale and Onayemi (2016) argue that the principle of *Omoluàbí* is not innate to humans; rather, it is acquired through virtuous upbringing, communal discipline, and self-nurture. This explains why, among the Yoruba, the upbringing of a child is a communal affair. This communal consideration in bringing up a child, they believe, helps ensure that *Omoluàbí* virtues are instilled in the younger ones, which would later define their being while growing. Going by this practice, *Omoluàbí* can thus be regarded as being both a cultural construct and a philosophical principle, considering how it represents the highest moral standards of the Yoruba (see, Bewaji, 2005; Fabiyi, 2021; Olanipekun, 2017; Aliyu, 2022; Omosulu, 2022; Motadegbe & Ibiyemi, 2025). In other words, it can be said to be an ethical template for subduing and eradicating all forms of vices.

### 3.4. The *Omoluàbí* ethos and the moral reordering of Nigerian cyberspace

The synchronisation of the *Omoluàbí* ethos to cyberspace becomes imperative when one considers the current status of morality in

Nigerian cyberspaces. As earlier discussions on online vices reveal, cyberspace has become not only an alternative public domain but also a mirror reflecting the ethical contradictions of contemporary Nigerian society (see, Akande & Obi, 2022; Lasisi, 2024). It is to this end that this paper positions the principle of *Omolúàbí* as an indigenous framework to ethically sensitise users. It does this by revealing the fundamental values that sustain societal harmony, which are absent in modern-day cyberspace engagements. This is supported by Olanipekun (2017), who maintains that *Omolúàbí* is not merely a descriptive term but a normative ideal. He maintains that the *Omolúàbí* ethos is a framework that prescribes how one ought to live and engage with others. Its significance in cyberspace, therefore, emerges as a necessity to reaffirm moral principles within digital communities where anonymity and algorithmic bias have fostered the normalisation of vice. To begin with, the Yoruba understanding of *ìwà* (character) as the foundation of all human achievements (see, Makinde, 2007) shows the necessity of building online conduct on a moral compass. However, this is to be considered not just a framework on paper, but that which goes beyond regulatory measures to appeal to the conscience of individuals. In this regard, *Omolúàbí* becomes not only a philosophical corrective but also a cultural compass capable of redirecting cyberspace engagement in Nigeria.

The values outlined in previous sections, some of the salient virtues within the *Omolúàbí* ethos are truth (*òtítọ́*), gentleness (*ìwà pẹ̀lẹ̀*), respect (*ìtẹ́ríba*), and good character (*ìwà rere*). Each of these virtues, when synthesised into the Nigerian cyberspace culture, provides an antidote to specific ethical crises online. For instance, looking beyond the literal meaning of the Yoruba conception of truth (*òtítọ́*), lies virtues such as integrity and reliability in words and actions (Adedayo, 2018). Hence, as a remedy to current fake and distorted facts in cyberspace (see, Akande and Obi, 2022), it demands honesty in communication and resistance to misinformation or deceit. In response to the above lies the Yoruba virtue of *ìtẹ́ríba* (respect), house within the ethos of *Omolúàbí*. This virtue, which has traditionally served as the foundation for Yoruba social relations, encourages civility and discourages all forms of incivility. Its rejection of incivility is synonymous with the growing culture of online insult and mockery prevalent today. In a similar vein, the virtue of *ìwà pẹ̀lẹ̀* (gentleness) provides an ethical response to the outrage culture of relations along tribal lines, religious lines, and ethnic lines; acts that constantly fuel hostility and division in online discussions. Together, these virtues, considering their characteristics, if emulated by Nigerian youths, cyberspace engagement would evolve from its current performative hostility toward genuine dialogue, empathy, and communal solidarity.

Furthermore, the *Omolúàbí* ethos serves as a remedial framework against the commodification of selfhood in Nigerian cyberspace. This

is expressed by Fabiyi (2021) when he notes that the Yoruba conception of *ìyì ènìyàn* (human worth) is not reducible to material display or external validation but is fundamentally tied to *ẹ̀wà inú* (inner beauty). This position challenges the current digital culture's position of online validity as a sign of virtue. Hence, by reasserting the dignity of the person through the lens of prioritising good character, the ethos of *Omólúàbí* provides a corrective lens that critiques digital vanity and performative lifestyles. In support of this claim, Aremu (2019) argues that virtues such as *inú rere* (goodwill) and *otító* (truth) are not only moral ideals but also serve as identifiers of authentic identity in Yoruba thought. Hence, when this is situated within cyberspace, where identity has been marred by all sorts of immorality and social vices, such virtues are capable of restoring integrity and responsible engagement in cyberspace. In other words, just as the Yoruba believe that true worth lies in inner virtue rather than outward spectacle.

In respect to curbing online immoral individualism, *Omólúàbí* ethos advocates for a collective moral consciousness within our communities. And today, cyberspace is considered a community of its own. Going by the position of Omosulu (2022), morality is not an isolated endeavor, but rather, a communal responsibility. Inferring from his position, the actions of one individual inevitably affect others. This is reflected in the Yoruba proverb, which states that *Tí ara ilé bá ń jẹ́ kokoro burúkú tí a kò bá kí ló fún, kurúkéré rẹ́ kì yóó jẹ́ kí a sun lórú*— “If someone in the household is eating a harmful insect (or bad thing) and you do not warn them, the harm will disturb your sleep.” This proverb preaches that when a family member or neighbor is engaging in a harmful or immoral act, and you do not warn them or correct them, you will also suffer the consequences when the time comes. Simply put, with the emphasis of this proverb on communal responsibility. It shows that ignoring wrongdoing around you can harm you, too. Also, the Yoruba in their proverb further states that *Ka fi ọwọ wẹ ọwọ, lẹ wọ fi n mọ*— “one hand washes the other, and both become clean.” When situated within Nigerian cyberspace, this proverb highlights the interdependent nature of existence, of which moral responsibility is not excluded. It thus stresses that harmony emerges only when individuals uphold mutual moral responsibility. It portrays the idea of a culture of collective accountability where communities discourage rather than glorify harmful behaviour is a moral imperative. It positions such accountability as that which sees beyond tribal, political, and personal biases; biases that often override virtues like truth, fairness, and respect. This idea becomes translational to curbing ongoing moral decay, of “cancel culture” and digital mob justice that trivialise accountability.

Furthering the above, the *Omólúàbí* framework also intersects with education and socialisation, both of which are central to shaping online behaviour. According to Akanbi and Jekayinfa (2016), the aim of Yoruba traditional education was to produce individuals whose

qualities aligned with the virtues embedded in *Omólúàbí*, believed within the Yoruba system to be the pinnacle of moral attainment. In the present digital era, this principle could be absorbed into digital literacy programs, for such integration would discourage all kind of unethical cyber practices (see, Egodi et al., 2024). This has to do with teaching young Nigerians that cyberspace is not a lawless domain, but rather an extension of our physical society governed by values of respect, honesty, and integrity. In other words, all moral dispositions expected of one in the physical environment must be reciprocated in the cyber domain. According to Adebowale and Onayemi (2016), the ethos of *Omólúàbí* is not an inborn principle. Rather, it is acquired through intentional nurturing, learning, and active community participation. The above implies that moral decline in the Nigerian digital space, despite its severity and how far it has eroded the sanctity of the space, is reversible through deliberate cultural re-education. Hence, synthesising the principle of *Omólúàbí* into the Nigerian cyberspace, it (the Nigerian cyberspace) can resist the erosion of local moral traditions while simultaneously contributing unique perspectives to global ethical discourse. In other words, the adoption of *Omólúàbí* in cyberspace ethics is not merely a cultural exercise but a philosophical contribution that helps complement global concerns with local traditions. Thus, this principle would serve as a framework that is both contextually relevant and universally resonant.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, having established several instances of moral decadence in the Nigerian cyberspace, this paper identifies that the prevalence of these vices is contradictory to the ethos of *Omólúàbí*. This contradiction underscores the diminishing influence of indigenous moral consciousness in online behaviour. As such, this paper calls for both moral and institutional responses that go beyond regulation toward cultivating ethical consciousness among digital citizens. The study therefore proposes that the *Omólúàbí* ethos be adopted as a moral framework for re-sensitising digital interactions, reaffirming that cyberspace is not detached from the moral obligations that govern physical communities. It recommends the following.

1. The Integration of *Omólúàbí* virtues into digital literacy curricula at both primary and tertiary education levels, which is believed would help ensure that students are not only technically literate. Rather, they would also be morally conscious when engaging with online platforms, as against current practices.
2. Empower the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to lead nationwide campaigns on digital ethics, using indigenous values such as *Omólúàbí* to decolonise the moral consciousness of Nigerian youths and counteract online moral erosion.

3. Collaborate with technology platforms and telecommunications companies to promote cyber-ethical behaviour. This should be implemented by embedding virtues housed within the *Omoluàbí* principle into public awareness campaigns and app usage guidelines.
4. Encourage community-based moral advocacy groups to extend offline ethical mentoring into online spaces. This, if properly implemented, could help ensure peer accountability and digital responsibility built on indigenous moral thought.

The above recommendations aim to integrate ethical consciousness into the evolving structure of Nigerian digital culture. However, it is important to note the possible limitation of this framework, which is its peculiarity to the Yoruba people. This may lead to resistance from other ethnic groups. However, this paper argues that the underlying virtues of *Omoluàbí*, such as honesty, humility, gentleness, respect, empathy, and communal responsibility, are not ethnically exclusive but humanly universal. In essence, looking beyond just origin and focusing on the transformative potential of *Omoluàbí*, Nigeria, and its citizens can build a more stable, responsible, and human-centred digital environment. An environment where good moral conduct defines people's identity.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

### Ethical considerations

The authors have completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc. This article was not authored by artificial intelligence.

### Data availability

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the author on reasonable request.

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