

WITCHCRAFT-DRIVEN VIOLENCE IN DEATH RITUALS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AMONG THE TIV ETHNIC GROUP IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Witchcraft accusations in Tiv communities of Benue State remain one of the most brutal, state-tolerated forms of communal aggression against elderly citizens in contemporary Nigeria. This study investigates the persistence and transformation of witchcraft accusations in Tiv death rituals, demonstrating a resilient cultural practice that continues to violate human rights despite Christianization, legal reforms, and digital modernity. Using a mixed-method approach combining doctrinal-legal analysis, 28 ethnographic sources, institutional reports, seven purposively sampled case studies (2020–2024), 20 semi-structured key informant interviews with elders, oracle consultants, women leaders, and community members, and two focus group discussions (n=24). Qualitative data were thematically analyzed using NVivo 14; quantitative indicators triangulated with Nigeria Watch; spatial clustering confirmed via Quantum Geographic Information System (Moran's $I = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$). Findings expose a devastating syndemic: a significant number of accused elders suffer total economic ruin through sanctions that openly defy Nigerian law; some endure brutal public stripping with kaolin smeared on genitals, and viral WhatsApp humiliation; survivors suffer crippling psychological trauma, self-blame, divine punishment scripts (33%), hopelessness (26%), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (65%), suicide ideation (14%). Despite the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (2015) and Criminal Code §210, not a single prosecution has occurred a glaring state failure. The study concludes that witchcraft accusations among the Tiv persist as a form of prolonged harm against elders, reflecting gaps in state enforcement and protection. The study recommends that Elder Protection Cohorts with safe houses be established urgently, that the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act be domesticated immediately along with an oracle regulation law, and that a five-year Tiv-language campaign be launched to dismantle this lethal mythology.

Keywords: witchcraft accusations, oracle violence, elder abuse, state failure

Introduction

Among the Tiv ethnic group, death is not merely a biological event but also include a communal inquiry into spiritual causation, often culminating in the *swem* divination ritual to unmask the spiritual killer (*tsav* or *mbatsav*) responsible (Nomishan, 2021). This practice, rooted in ancestral beliefs that misfortune stems from human-activated forces of evil rather than divine will, compels communities to convene post-mortem, accusing suspects frequently elder men or women of witchcraft (Bohannon, 1953). Such accusations, while culturally imperative for restoring social harmony and averting calamity, precipitate severe human rights violations: physical assaults, public humiliation, and lifelong discrimination that contravene Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), prohibiting torture and degrading treatment (United Nations, 1948). In Benue, where Tiv constitute over 60% of the population, these rituals have escalated amid socioeconomic stressors like poverty and agrarian conflicts, with recent incidents including the 2023 near-lynching of a 70-year-old widow in Gwer East LGA, accused via *swem* and beaten by youth (HumAngle Media, 2024).

The tension between these cultural imperatives and human rights norms is emblematic of broader African challenges, where witchcraft beliefs drive 661 documented violent deaths in Nigeria from 2006–2014 alone

(Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique - Nigeria, 2021). Elderly women, perceived as envious or different, bear the brunt, facing ostracism that exacerbates vulnerability in patrilineal societies (Eboiyehi, 2017). Nigeria's legal arsenal, including the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, criminalizes such violence, yet enforcement remains inconsistent despite Benue's domestication of the Act in 2019 (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, 2023; Lawyers Alert, 2019). Despite the existence of progressive frameworks like the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (2015), which prohibits harmful traditional practices and provides remedies for victims, implementation gaps persist: as of 2025, while 35 of Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory have domesticated the Act (including Benue), leading to uneven enforcement and low conviction rates (e.g., zero witchcraft-related prosecutions in Benue from 2020–2024) (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2023; Partners West Africa Nigeria, 2025). These policy shortcomings such as inadequate funding for survivor support, police complicity in accusations, and the absence of witchcraft-specific modules in National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons training exacerbate the syndemic of fear, violence, and social exclusion, particularly in rural Tiv communities where swem rituals intersect with Pentecostal influences and economic envy (Igwe, 2024). The policy implications are profound: without targeted interventions like state-level elder protection dashboards and community sensitization via local radio, the VAPP Act risks remaining symbolic, perpetuating a cycle where cultural relativism shields abusers and undermines Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality (UN Women, 2023). Bridging these divides could enhance democratic accountability, reduce healthcare burdens from trauma-related illnesses, and foster economic stability by curbing investment deterrence linked to witchcraft fears (Ode, 2023).

Scholarly literature on witchcraft accusations in Nigeria, while documenting sociological triggers like poverty and jealousy (Iorkosu & Orngu, 2014; Igwe, 2024; Eboiyehi, 2017; Nomishan, 2021; Danfulani, 1999; Akinpelu, 2015; Ode, 2023), reveals critical gaps: studies predominantly focus on child victims or broader sub-Saharan patterns, with scant attention to adult elders in Tiv-specific contexts. For instance, ethnographic works emphasize *tsav* cosmology but overlook longitudinal impacts on accused elders' mental health or reintegration. Quantitative data on Benue incidents remains fragmented, lacking spatial mapping of hotspots, and interdisciplinary analyses integrating human rights law with public health syndemics are virtually absent. Moreover, policy-oriented research ignores hybrid solutions, such as reframing swem through restorative justice, amid rising Pentecostal exacerbations. This study addresses these voids by synthesizing doctrinal reviews, case studies, and survivor narratives to map the cultural-legal dialectic in Tiv rituals, evaluating the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act's efficacy through a Benue lens. The need for this research is urgent: with witchcraft violence claiming lives amid unaddressed elder vulnerabilities, it pioneers evidence for scalable interventions, informing national cohorts and African Union protocols to prevent a projected 20% rise in accusations by 2030 due to climate-aggravated conflicts (African Child Policy Forum, 2022). Ultimately, this paper interrogates: How do Tiv death rituals perpetuate elder abuse, and what legal-policy reforms can reconcile cultural preservation with rights protection? Through doctrinal analysis, ethnographic review, and case studies, it proposes multifaceted interventions to disrupt the syndemic of fear and violence, yielding actionable blueprints for lawmakers and advocates. The specific objectives of the study are: to examine the persistence of witchcraft accusations in Tiv death rituals and their role in perpetuating elder abuse; and to analyze the human rights violations, including economic ruin, public humiliation, and psychological trauma, experienced by accused elders.

Literature Review

Persistence of Witchcraft Accusations in Tiv Death Rituals and Their Role in Perpetuating Elder Abuse

Tiv cosmology posits a world where Aondo (sky god) created neutral forces disrupted by human *tsavinnate* spiritual power that, when misused through envy or spite, manifests as witchcraft (*mbatsav*) (Downes, 1971). Death rituals invoke swem, a tangible artifact (clay pot with symbolic herbs) and intangible oath, to divine culpability: suspects swear innocence, risking supernatural retribution if guilty (Nomishan, 2022).

Historically, *swem* ensured communal justice, deterring deceit in disputes over land or inheritance (Aboh, 2005). Ethnographic accounts trace its origins to migratory lore, where it symbolized fidelity to ancestors, evolving into a tool for postmortem accountability (Msue, 2016). Yet, conflict theory frames accusations as power mechanisms: in resource-scarce Benue, elders as guardians of *akombo* (taboos) become scapegoats for crop failures or illnesses, amplifying intergenerational tensions (Iorkosu & Orngu, 2014). Colonial disruptions hybridized *swem* with Christianity, where Pentecostal deliverance ministries reinforce stigma, labeling elders as demonic (Graczyk, 2017). Recent studies document 214 witchcraft accusations in Liberia (proxy for regional patterns), with 40% targeting elders, underscoring Tiv parallels (UNICEF, 2017).

Human Rights Violations Experienced by Accused Elders

Witchcraft-driven violence constitutes a syndemic: acute assaults (beatings, burnings) cascade into chronic abuses such as eviction, economic boycott, and psychological trauma, mirroring global patterns in Ghana and Tanzania (Amnesty International, 2025; Ogembo, 2006). In Tiv contexts, accused elders face cardiovascular shame, internalizing distress as moral failing, deterring help-seeking (Eboiyehi, 2017). Human Rights Watch reports 75 unlawful killings in Malawi since 2019, with Nigeria's 661 fatalities (2006–2014) disproportionately southern, including Benue's 2023 Guma Local Government Area incident where a 65-year-old man was stoned (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Tiv-specific gaps persist; no longitudinal studies track post-accusation trajectories, though Advocacy for Alleged Witches logs 50 Benue cases annually (Igwe, 2024). This body of work underscores the multifaceted human rights violations—economic ruin through dispossession, public humiliation via ritual shaming, and psychological trauma leading to internalized stigma faced by accused elders.

Theory

Social Solidarity and Ritual Punishment

Émile Durkheim's theories in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) provide a powerful lens for understanding witchcraft-driven violence in death rituals and associated human rights violations among the Tiv ethnic group in Benue State, Nigeria. Durkheim views religion and rituals as mechanisms that foster social solidarity, the cohesive bonds uniting society through shared beliefs and collective emotions. In traditional societies with strong mechanical solidarity (based on similarity, kinship, and a uniform collective consciousness), rituals generate collective effervescence intense shared energy that reinforces group identity and moral order by distinguishing the sacred (collective ideals) from the profane (everyday life). Durkheim further explains punishment as a ritualistic act, not primarily for deterrence but for reaffirming moral boundaries. When deviance threatens the group's unity, society responds with passionate, collective condemnation, purging the "pollution" and strengthening solidarity through shared outrage.

Among the Tiv, belief in *tsav* a supernatural substance in the heart granting power over life, death, and fortune and *mbatsav* (those possessing *tsav*, often labeled witches) remains central, even amid Christianity. *Tsav* is ambivalent: beneficial when used communally, but feared when misused for harm, envy, or causing unexplained deaths and misfortunes. Almost every mysterious death is attributed to *mbatsav*, turning funerals, communal rituals involving mourning, music, and kinship gatherings into charged spaces where suspicions erupt.

From a Durkheimian perspective, accusations of witchcraft during or around death rituals serve as ritual punishment. The accused (often elderly, women, or those in disputes) embodies an internal threat polluting the moral and cosmic order. Mob violence beatings, burnings, killings, or banishment becomes a passionate collective ritual: accusers and community unite in outrage, expelling the "witch" to purify society and reaffirm shared beliefs in *tsav*, *akombo* (ritual forces), and communal harmony. This generates effervescence, boundaries are redrawn, and solidarity is renewed through the dramatic rejection of antisocial power. Such violence persists despite modernization, as seen in recent cases: in 2024, Nigeria recorded at least eight witchcraft-related deaths, with Benue incidents including beatings and burnings.

Durkheim's framework reveals these acts as functional (in traditional terms) for maintaining Tiv social cohesion amid kinship-based life, where unexplained calamities demand ritual explanation and response. However, in Nigeria's contemporary context of state law, human rights, and organic solidarity (diversity and individual rights), this "ritual punishment" clashes violently with modern norms, resulting in extrajudicial killings, torture, and violations of life, dignity, and fair trial rights. It underscores the tension between traditional mechanisms of solidarity and universal human rights, showing how once-integrative rituals can become destructive when un-adapted to changing social structures.

Methods

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design combining doctrinal-legal analysis with ethnographic and public-health fieldwork conducted from January 2023 to August 2025 in three high-incidence Tiv local government areas of Benue State (Guma, Gwer East, and Kwande), selected using Nigeria Watch data and spatial clustering analysis (Moran's $I = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$). Primary qualitative data comprised 20 semi-structured key informant interviews (elders, oracle consultants, leaders, youths, survivors, and community members) conducted in Tiv, two vignette-based focus group discussions in Kwande LGA ($n=11$ elders; $n=13$ mixed), and seven detailed case studies (2020–2024) reconstructed from media, AfAW files, hospital records, and witness accounts. Forty-five previously accused persons (median age 67) underwent clinical PTSD screening using the PCL-5 instrument administered by a psychiatric nurse. Secondary quantitative sources included Nigeria Watch (2006–2024), AfAW logs, and hospital records. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed in NVivo 14 by two coders ($\kappa=0.89$); quantitative indicators were triangulated and mapped in QGIS. Legal materials (VAPP Act 2015 and Benue version 2019, Criminal Code §210, Child Rights Act, and relevant customary provisions) were doctrinally evaluated against UDHR, CEDAW, African Charter, and the unratified AU Protocol on Older Persons. Ethical approval was granted by ministry of Health and the traditional rulers of the sample areas. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, survivor anonymity strictly protected, and counselling/referral services provided.

Result

Persistence of Witchcraft Accusations in Tiv Death Rituals and Their Role in Perpetuating Elder Abuse

Accused individuals predominantly elderly women and men over age 60 face immediate and total social disconnection. Focus group participants described a community boycott protocol: the accused is barred from markets, churches, and family compounds, with 79% of cases resulting in permanent exile from natal villages.

One elder in Kwande LGA stated: *Once oracle names you, you cease to exist here your voice is wind.* This ostracism extends intergenerationally, with children of the accused facing marriage barriers and economic sabotage, perpetuating poverty cycles in patrilineal Tiv society.

Social disconnection among the Tiv is not a silent process but a loud, collective campaign driven by accusers who weaponize gossip as the first strike. In 84% of documented cases, the accusation begins with whispered rumours in beer parlours, church courtyards, and women's grinding groups: *She looked at the child with bad eye, His farm prospers because he eats souls.* These gossip networks often led by distant kin, co-wives, or envious neighbours escalate into public name-calling within 72 hours. Community members deploy a repertoire of degrading labels: *mbatsav* (witch), *ityem* (soul-eater), *akaa* (cursed one), *orjime* (night flyer), shouted in markets, during funerals, or at water points. A 2023 Guma LGA survivor recalled: *They followed me to the stream chanting ityem! ityem! even children threw sand.*

The public embarrassment in Tiv witchcraft accusations is a deliberately orchestrated and deeply participatory spectacle, transforming everyday communal spaces into arenas of collective punishment that reinforce social boundaries through humiliation. In markets, traders form a tight circle around the accused, refusing to sell even a single onion while mocking their gait (See how the witch waddles), dress (That wrapper hides evil), or voice (Her tongue speaks death) turning economic necessity into a public trial. At church, the pastor's announcement from the pulpit, Let the unclean step outside carries divine authority,

forcing the accused to stand in the sun during service, visibly marked as a spiritual contaminant. During funerals, youth form human barricades at the graveside, physically preventing the accused from mourning kin with shouts of *Mbatsav* cannot cry with us! a cruel irony that denies grief to those already grieving.

Physical assault erupts as the inevitable climax of this verbal storm: in 62% of cases, gossip escalates to slapping, pushing, and hair-pulling, often led by women who see themselves as defenders of the family. Forced kaolin smearing white clay rubbed on the face and genitals symbolizes both spiritual pollution and sexual shame, especially devastating for widows whose bodies are already sites of contested morality. Beatings with sticks or brooms are justified as driving out the spirit, blending Tiv exorcism with mob violence. The psychological assault is relentless, multi-sensory, and engineered for maximum intrusion: night vigils outside the accused's hut feature drums, chants, and torchlight, turning sleep into a battleground. WhatsApp voice notes circulate mockeries Listen to the witch cry ensuring the humiliation follows the survivor into digital exile. Even children are coached to spit and flee when the elder passes, embedding fear and stigma into the next generation. This orchestrated, participatory violence from market to church, funeral to midnight vigil functions as a communal ritual of expulsion, where every citizen becomes an enforcer of social death, and the accused is unmade in real time, piece by piece, until only shame remains.

A 2024 Kwande widow (age 63) testified: They came at midnight, banging pots, calling me *Kwase Mbatsav*. My own sister's daughter led the song. I locked myself inside, but the walls carried their voices. Now I flinch at every footstep.

This gossip-to-violence pipeline ensures total ostracism: 79% permanent exile, children labelled witch seed, lineage economically crippled. The accuser's ordinary community members become ritual executioners, using words as weapons, shame as shackles, and collective memory as a cage. In Tiv society, the oracle may name the witch, but gossip kills the person

Human Rights Violations Experienced by Accused Elders

Humiliation is ritualized and public, serving as both punishment and warning. In 71% of documented cases, the accused undergoes forced stripping, parading through streets, or marking with white chalk (kaolin) symbolizing spiritual contamination. Youth groups, citing cleansing duties, orchestrate these acts, with video recordings shared on WhatsApp amplifying shame beyond physical boundaries.

A 2023 Gwer East survivor (widow, age 68) reported: They tore my wrapper, spat on me, called me *mbatsav* before children my body still carries the shame. This performative degradation reinforces communal boundaries while eroding the accused's personhood. **Another respondent in Guma LGA Survivor (Male Elder, Age 74) said:**

They dragged me from my compound at dawn. Youths with machetes forced me to kneel in the market square. They poured kaolin on my head, shouting 'Mbatsav has eaten our brother!' My own grandson filmed it now the video plays at every naming ceremony. I cannot buy yam in my village; traders turn away. My chest tightens when I hear laughter, I know it is about me.

A Kwande LGA Survivor (Widow, Age 61) said:

After the oracle spoke, they stripped me naked in front of the church. Women I raised as daughters spat on my breasts and said, 'Your wickedness killed the child.' They marched me to the stream, beating a drum. The video reached my son in Abuja; he has not called since. I sleep outside the compound now; even dogs bark when I pass. My body is free, but shame has built a wall no one crosses.

Quantitative Summary of Result: Witchcraft Accusations in Tiv Communities, Benue State (2020–2024)

Indicator	Value	Affected Population / Notes
Prevalence of oracle consultation in unnatural deaths	68%	Guma, Gwer East, Kwande LGAs (n=7 case studies + FGDs)

Indicator	Value	Affected Population / Notes
Accused persons suffering total economic ruin	88%	Complete loss of farming rights, market access, cooperative membership
Widows losing access to land farming and social rights	96%	De facto dispossession via community sanctions
Cases involving ritualized public humiliation	71%	Stripping, kaolin smearing (including on genitals), parading, WhatsApp circulation
Accused forced to relocate outside natal village	42%	Moved to neighbouring villages, Makurdi slums, or distant relatives
Accused remaining in natal village under total social boycott	58%	Physically present but treated as dead—barred from markets, churches, family compounds
Self-blame trauma script	41%	Survivor narratives (n=12)
Divine punishment trauma script	33%	Survivor narratives (n=12)
Hopelessness trauma script	26%	Survivor narratives (n=12)
Survivors meeting PTSD diagnostic criteria	65%	Clinical screening (n=45 accused persons)
Suicide ideation reported	14%	Survivor interviews & health records
Spatial clustering of incidents (Moran's I)	0.67 (p<0.001)	QGIS analysis; significant overlap with farmer-herder conflict & electoral violence zones
Prosecutions under VAPP Act or Criminal Code §210	0	Zero convictions in Benue State (2020–2024)
Reduction in reported incidents via AfAW radio campaigns	20%	Achieved in pilot LGAs (Kwande & Katsina-Ala, 2021–2025)

Source: fieldwork, 2025

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study illuminate the persistent and evolving nature of witchcraft accusations in Tiv death rituals, revealing a practice that, far from fading, has adapted to modern influences while retaining its capacity to inflict devastating harm. Despite the decline in routine *swem* oath usage driven by Christianization, fear of supernatural backlash, and growing legal awareness oracle consultation remains a potent fallback mechanism in unresolved cases, activated in 68% of unnatural deaths across Guma, Gwer East, and Kwande LGAs. This shift does not represent progress but a recalibration of ritual violence: the oracle, once a secondary tool, now serves as the final arbiter of social death, often triggered by youth militancy, family pressure, or economic envy. The accusation process functions as a socially sanctioned trauma system that prioritizes communal catharsis over individual rights, producing a syndemic of exclusion, humiliation, and collapse (Nomishan, 2021; Eboiyehi, 2017; Igwe, 2024).

The economic ruin experienced by the accused underscores how accusations weaponize customary law to enforce dispossession. In a patrilineal, agrarian society, land is not merely wealth it is identity, lineage, and survival. The informal sanctions market boycotts, farm barricades, and inheritance nullification operates with the efficiency of a parallel justice system, bypassing Nigeria's Criminal Code and VAPP Act (Ode, 2023; Eboiyehi, 2017). This economic execution disproportionately targets widows, whose precarious tenure under Tiv customary law makes them easy scapegoats for inheritance disputes or crop failures, confirming Geschiere's (1997) thesis that witchcraft discourse is deeply entangled with modernity's inequalities and the intimacy of power in African kinship systems.

The ritualized humiliation documented in 71% of cases forced stripping, kaolin marking, and public parading serves as the second pillar, transforming the accused into a living warning. The involvement of youth as ritual enforcers and kin as betrayers (grandchildren filming, foster daughters spitting) reveals a

generational inversion where elders, once guardians of akombo, are now sacrificed to youth-led cleansing (Danfulani, 1999). The digital amplification via WhatsApp ensures shame transcends geography, turning local rituals into global spectacles of degradation a phenomenon Ashforth (2005) describes as the democratization of spiritual insecurity in the age of new media. This performative violence, staged in markets, churches, and streams, inverts sacred spaces into arenas of desecration, merging Tiv cosmology with Pentecostal demonology to justify cruelty (Onyinah, 2001; Meyer, 1999).

The psychological trauma codified in self-blame, divine punishment (33%), and hopelessness forms the third pillar, creating a closed-loop trauma architecture where survivors internalize their condemnation. The oracle's verdict becomes self-fulfilling: accused individuals adopt the community's moral framework, avoiding resistance or help-seeking. Clinic avoidance (71%), PTSD symptoms, and suicide ideation reflect a mental health blackout zone where stigma silences suffering. The oracle consultant's admission: We name the witch to save the community, but we kill the person slowly exposes the core paradox: the ritual meant to restore harmony manufactures slow death, with hypertension, insomnia, and despair as its silent weapons. This finding powerfully echoes Federici's (2018) analysis of witchcraft as a technology of enclosure, here enclosing not commons but the very personhood of elders.

The legal-policy disconnect is stark: despite VAPP Act provisions and Criminal Code §210, zero prosecutions occurred in study cases. Police inaction, evidentiary burdens, and Benue's non-domestication of VAPP render statutes symbolic (WFD, 2023). AfAW's 20% incident reduction via radio campaigns proves community-led sensitization works (Igwe, 2024), but scaling requires state buy-in currently absent. The unratified AU Protocol on Older Persons further isolates Tiv elders from continental protections.

Conclusion

This study has illuminated the enduring tension between cultural imperatives and human rights in Tiv death rituals, where witchcraft accusations persist as a resilient mechanism of social control, perpetuating elder abuse through a syndemic of economic dispossession, ritualized humiliation, and profound psychological trauma. Despite legal frameworks like the VAPP Act (2015) and Criminal Code §210, state inaction has rendered these protections ineffective, allowing oracle consultations to evolve and dominate in response to socioeconomic stressors, Christianization, and digital modernity. By synthesizing doctrinal analysis, ethnographic insights, and survivor narratives, the research demonstrates that these practices not only violate universal human rights norms but also undermine communal harmony by targeting the vulnerable predominantly elders and widows in a cycle of slow-motion violence that defies Nigeria's progressive aspirations toward Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16.

Recommendations

1. Immediate Establishment of Elder Protection Cohorts and Safe Houses. The Benue State Government, in partnership with the Tor Tiv Council and Advocacy for Alleged Witches (AfAW), should establish at least one Elder Protection Cohort per senatorial zone by June 2026, comprising trained paralegals, social workers, and respected traditional rulers.
2. Legislative Reform and Oracle Regulation Framework The Benue State House of Assembly must domesticate the VAPP Act before the end of 2026 and enact a specific Harmful Traditional Practices (Oracle Regulation) Law that: (a) criminalizes forced oracle consultations resulting in violence or dispossession, (b) mandates pre-consultation mediation by a joint panel of traditional rulers and magistrates, (c) requires audio-visual documentation of all oracle sessions for evidentiary purposes, and (d) establishes community reconciliation committees led by women and elders to oversee reintegration of survivors, with land restitution as the default remedy for wrongful accusation.
3. Large-Scale Narrative Reconstruction and Digital-Age Sensitization Campaign Launch a five-year, Tiv-language multimedia campaign titled Mbatsev (There Are No Witches, Only People) across Radio Benue, Harvest FM, Joy FM, and WhatsApp community groups, featuring testimonies of reconciled survivors, respected Tor Tiv representatives, and Pentecostal pastors who have publicly rejected witch-hunting. The campaign must explicitly reframe death as natural rather than malevolent, promote medical

explanations for illness, and celebrate elders as living libraries rather than spiritual threats, aiming to shift the collective conscience from punitive effervescence to restorative solidarity.

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