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## **Influence of Japanese Animation on Indigenous Nigerian Cultures Among Youths in Abuja Municipal Area Council**

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### **Abstract**

*Japanese animation, popularly known as anime, since its introduction through television broadcasts and digital media, has increasingly become a significant cultural influence among youths in Nigeria, particularly within urban centers like Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), fostering a growing community of fans who actively engage with this foreign cultural product. This study was therefore conducted to find out the influence of Japanese Anime on Nigerian indigenous cultures among youths in AMAC. Hinged on Cultural Hybridization Theory, the study was a quantitative study that utilized survey research method, with a sample size of 385 respondents and the instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Findings of the study revealed that Japanese Anime is becoming very popular among Nigerian youths and has the potential to influence its audiences' fashion choices as well as adoption of Japanese language and culture, which inherently poses a danger to the Nigerian indigenous cultures and languages. The study concludes that efforts must be made to preserve the Nigerian cultures which seems to be eroding, particularly among the teeming youth population popularly referred to as Gen-Z. The study therefore recommends that parents promote their indigenous cultures in their homes to encourage the youths to have an interest in their cultures and languages.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Transmission, Indigenous Cultures, Japanese Anime, Nigeria, Youth.

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### **Introduction**

The growing popularity of Japanese animation, commonly known as anime, is significantly impacting on youth culture worldwide and Nigeria is no exception. In recent years, youths in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) of the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria are increasingly embracing anime as a

form of entertainment and cultural expression, reflecting a broader trend observed across Nigerian urban centers (Schulze, 2017). This engagement with Japanese animation not only introduces youths to new storytelling styles and aesthetics but also influences their values, social behaviors, and cultural identities.





A study by Etebu (2021), shows that social media also plays an important role in boosting anime's appeal among Nigerian youths. Facebook groups enable fans to talk about anime episodes, post anime jokes and fan art, and plan meetups. Video sharing on TikTok and Instagram has pushed Nigerian cartoon content makers to gather fans. WhatsApp networks allow anime movie sharing and discussion groups.

Japanese animation, commonly known as anime, is a distinctive audiovisual genre originating from Japan, characterized by its unique artistic style, complex narratives, and cultural specificity. While the term "anime" in Japanese broadly refers to all forms of animation regardless of origin, internationally it specifically denotes Japanese-produced animated works (Animetitude, 2017; Medhat, 2014;). Anime according to Zhiyi (2021) differs from conventional Western animation through its integration of Japanese aesthetics, iconography, social norms, and a strong emphasis on the creative vision of individual directors. This form of animation has evolved as a significant cultural product that both reflects and shapes Japanese identity, blending traditional influences with modern digital techniques and interactive media (Zhiyi, 2021; Kim, 2013).

Historically, Japanese animation dates back to the early 20th century, with its development influenced by both indigenous artistic traditions and foreign animation technologies.

Early Japanese animated films initially imitated Western styles but gradually developed a distinct narrative style that incorporates mature themes, realism, and philosophical depth uncommon in Western animation (Li, 2021; Kim, 2013). Renowned directors like Hayao Miyazaki, Satoshi Kon, and Mamoru Oshii have contributed to anime's global recognition by producing works that challenge conventional animation norms and explore complex social and existential themes (Zhiyi, 2021).

Zhiyi (2021), further states that anime's significance extends beyond entertainment; it represents a novel cinematic form that engages viewers actively, fostering a unique dialogue between creator and audience within digital environments. This dynamic interaction, combined with anime's cultural specificity, positions it as a critical site for examining the intersections of media, culture, and identity in contemporary global contexts.

In addition, Lu (2019) argues that since anime art first emerged, succeeding generations of artists have developed unique life perspectives, creative goals, and ideals, transforming it into a unique kind of modern art. Being a constant in popular culture, Japanese anime not only meets shifting needs for entertainment and culture but also advances Japan's "soft power" overseas.

Similarly, a study by Iwabuchi (2015), indicates that beyond monetary incentives, anime also





works as Japan's cultural ambassador, spreading Japanese cultural norms and worldviews abroad on an unequaled scale. Anime is a crucial component of Japan's global "soft power" strategy, encouraging respect for the inventiveness and innovations of Japanese culture. Furthermore, Lewis (2020) suggests that the deep-rooted cultural beliefs of Japan is manifest especially in anime storytelling formats as seen in the portrayals of spirituality through Japan's indigenous Shinto faith and imported Buddhism which have placed persistent impacts on the nation's creative medium via attention on realism, contemplative themes, cyclical viewpoints of time, and character archetypes taken from folklore and mythology.

The huge popularity of Japanese anime among Nigerian youths indicates a unique cultural synthesis that covers borders. According to a report by Africanews (2023), revealed that Nigeria held its second anime festival, the Èkó Anime Fest in Lagos, gathering roughly 1,000 fans from across the continent. This event offered a forum for fans to honor their common recognition for Japanese animation. Similarly, 'Otaku Connect' held in Abuja in 2022 and 2023 respectively, emphasized the rising popularity of anime culture in Nigeria. However, questions have arisen concerning the probable cultural degeneration coming from the over-consumption of foreign media.

However, the penetration of anime into Nigerian youth culture raises critical questions about its effects on indigenous Nigerian cultures. Events like Èkó Anime Fest and 'Otaku Connect' have raised discussions about the impact of the consumption of foreign content on the traditional Nigerian values. It raises questions on whether the consumption and adoption of Japanese cultural elements could weaken Nigerian cultural identity and contribute to a language shift among Nigerian youths who are inspired by anime, as these portrayals are gradually affecting indigenous cultures, traditions, beliefs and language of many youths who view these Anime films. Moreover, the rise of anime-related activities such as cosplay, festivals, and online communities illustrates a hybrid cultural space where Japanese and Nigerian cultural elements intersect, creating new forms of youth expression and identity (AfricaNews.com, 2023).

This study, using a quantitative research design, therefore set out to investigate the influence of Japanese animation on indigenous Nigerian cultures among youths in AMAC, and to understand how anime consumption shapes youths' cultural values, social behaviors, and perceptions of identity within the context of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage. It was guided by the following objectives to:

1. assess the extent of Japanese Animation engagement among Youths in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC)



2. evaluate the influence of Japanese Animation on Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) youths values and behaviour
3. find out the effects of watching Japanese Anime on the Nigerian Indigenous cultures.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was hinged on the Cultural Hybridization theory which was propounded in the year 1995 and theorized by postcolonial studies academics like Homi Bhabha to dispute conceptions of cultural purity or homogeneity across cultures. Cultural Hybridization Theory is a sociological and anthropological concept that outlines the blending, merging, or mixing of distinct cultural features from two or more independent civilizations. This theory claims that as civilizations come into touch with one another, whether through commerce, migration, colonialism, or globalization, they swap ideas, traditions, beliefs, and behaviors. These encounters can lead to the creation of a new, hybrid culture that incorporates components from the original civilizations while also acquiring distinctive qualities of its own.

Like every theoretical framework, it has strengths and restrictions. Cultural hybridization theory accepts that cultures are not static entities but are dynamic and always growing and presents a framework to evaluate the fluid character of cultural interactions. Another strength is the fact that it reflects

real-world processes that stresses the multidimensional and multidirectional character of cultural connections in modern globalized world. It depicts the interconnectedness and interdependence of civilizations.

However, some problems of the theory include its oversimplification, as critics believe that the notion might oversimplify the complicated processes of cultural exchange. Real-world interactions are substantially more intricate and could contain power imbalances, resistance, and negotiation that may not be properly addressed by the theory. It neglects power dynamics, cultural hybridization theory may not completely address the power dynamics present in cultural relationships. It may also not sufficiently account for cases where one culture controls or abuses another.

However, it is suitable for this study in understanding the dynamics of culture and cultural interactions particularly in the digital age we live in, where information and access to different cultures is readily accessible with the click of a button.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Influence of Japanese Animation on Youths Values and Behaviour**

Japanese animation or anime, has captivated audiences worldwide particularly the youths, transcending cultural barriers and establishing itself as a global phenomenon. In Indonesia, anime enjoys immense popularity, particularly among Generation Z. This fascination



extends beyond passive entertainment, with fans actively engaging with the depicted narratives and emulating the behaviors and values embodied by their favorite characters (Pertiwani & Paramita, 2023, cited in Zafira et al., 2024).

The concept of youth is dynamic, shaped by biological development, social roles, cultural expectations, and political participation. It is a complex and multidimensional construct that has been defined and interpreted differently across cultural, social, and historical contexts. However, the United Nations (2013), defines youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years. However, national definitions may vary depending on socio-cultural, political, and economic factors, for instance, Nigeria's National Youth Policy defines youth as individuals aged 18 to 35 years, recognizing the extended transition to adulthood within the Nigerian socio-economic landscape (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019).

In addition, youth is conceptualized as a socio-political category, often positioned at the center of discourses on empowerment, marginalization, and participation. Scholars argue that youth are not merely passive recipients of adult socialization but active agents capable of driving social, cultural, and political change (Honwana, 2012). This perspective is particularly relevant in contexts such as Nigeria, where youth-led

movements, such as the #EndSARS protest, have demonstrated the capacity of young people to challenge institutional injustices and advocate for reform (Iwilade, 2020).

The influence of anime on youths as observed by Sarinastiti and Merdiana (2022, cited in Zafira et al., 2024), extends beyond casual viewership, fostering passionate fandoms with demonstrably strong emotional connections. They state that the series "Attack on Titan" serves as a prime example, with fans expressing their devotion through cosplay, fervent online discussions, and unwavering defense of the show. This dedication can even translate into a desire to learn about Japanese culture, highlighting the potential for positive cultural exchange.

In addition, Japanese anime has expanded the scope of learning for young people's extracurricular knowledge and cultivated the thinking ability of young people. Through the understanding and viewing of Japanese anime, young people have a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and related knowledge, and their knowledge has been expanded (Sen & Rong, 2019).

Anime, as a distinctive form of expression, serves to guide teenagers in introspecting their emotions, thoughts, and life decisions. Through watching anime, teenagers and young adults may find resonance, motivation, and inspiration, learning positive thinking patterns and problem-solving approaches (Liu, 2019). Concurrently, the myriad of plots



and character depictions in anime can stimulate teenagers' contemplation of their own emotions and inner worlds, aiding them in better self-awareness and understanding of others.

However, Raudha et al. (2024, cited in Zafira et al., 2024) point out that the impact of anime consumption is multifaceted, as according to them, existing research suggests it can exert both positive and negative influences on social interaction and behavior and delving into these complexities is paramount to comprehensively understanding the intricate relationship between Gen Z and anime consumption.

### **Effects of Watching Japanese Anime on the Nigerian Indigenous Cultures**

A study by Zuo (2024) assert that the potential influence of anime on the mental health of teenagers encompasses both positive inspiration and motivation, as well as potential negative ramifications. Certain anime works containing elements of violence, sexual content, and other inappropriate themes may adversely affect the mental well-being of teenagers, eliciting negative emotions or distorting their value systems. Hence, to ensure that anime exerts a positive impact on the mental health of teenagers, it is imperative to guide them in selecting works suitable for their age and psychological developmental stage and to promote the cultivation of proper aesthetic and value perspectives (Zuo, 2024).

On the other hand, Sen and Rong (2019), point out that Japanese anime has the effect of relieving psychological pressure on young people. They argue that as the pace of society continues to accelerate, many young people in modern society are facing increasing pressure and growing and in the case that it is difficult to solve the real pressure, many people only have some way to relieve and release the pressure, including the animation works. Because of its surreal situation, the psychological pressure is relieved, and the audience's mind can be pinned. However, Sen and Rong (2019) observe that despite Japanese anime having rich subject matter, well-made stories and close to the psychological needs of young people making it a great appeal to them, some teenagers indulge in excessive watching of Anime content, spending a lot of time watching animation and this can cause a lot of distraction away from important issues around them.

Furthermore, a study by Abu-Backer (2023), revealed that Anime films present multiple values, but they strongly tend to promote the values of crime and violence and challenge the norms of the local society in favor of negative values that are foreign to it. Moreover, Japanese culture is presented as a model to be followed. Children are influenced by what they watch and mimic the movements, such as flying, disappearing, transforming, and imitating the movements of anime characters and their way of dressing,



which are designed to influence the audience and stir their enthusiasm.

Consequently, there are many bad behaviors in the anime characters in Japanese anime. Some teenagers lack judgment and cognitive ability, blindly recognize or even imitate them. In addition, the development of the Japanese animation derivative industry has also had an impact on the lives of young people (Sen & Rong, 2019).

### **Japanese Animation and Cultural Transmission**

Cultural transmission as defined by Barowski (2023), is the way a person learns about a new culture by engaging and immersing themselves in the culture and people around them. Another term for this according to Barowski is cultural learning. Similarly, prominent researchers such as Henrich (2015) have highlighted how important cultural transmission is, to determining the differences in human culture throughout civilizations. According to Henrich, transmission processes including training, imitation, and traditions enable the production and dissemination of adaptive knowledge and skills. Studies of small-scale cultural activities imply that culture is cumulative rather than being created from the beginning of each generation (Demps et al., 2012). Furthermore, Mesoudi and Whiten (2008), describe cultural transmission as the process by which information is passed from individual to individual via social learning mechanisms such

as imitation, teaching or language. This can be contrasted with the acquisition of information via genetic inheritance from biological parents, and with individual learning, where there is no influence from conspecifics.

Japanese animation as noted by Qin (2016), shows its distinctive culture, aesthetic awareness, and artisan spirit, and has become an important aspect of popular culture owing to its cultural history and diffusion. Similarly, Redmond (2007) outlines the historical backdrop of anime's growth, impacted by both Western and Asian cultures, noting that during Japan's Meiji era, the country underwent a period of fast modernization and Westernization, resulting in the adoption of Western painting techniques and narrative methods. Concurrently, traditional Japanese art genres, such as ukiyo-e prints and Kabuki Theater, also inspired the visual style and narrative framework of early animation. This combination of elements from diverse civilizations resulted in the particular aesthetic and storytelling styles present in anime.

The influence of Japanese animation according to Zhi-qing et al. (2011) goes beyond its boundaries, reaching other nations, notably the Chinese animation industry. Chinese animators understand the need to draw on the benefits of Japanese animation and develop environmental consciousness to effectively compete in the global market. They point out that it is



crucial to remember that Japanese animation is not a unique, homogenous creative form.

In addition, Yurun (2017), assert that Japanese animation has swiftly matured into a prominent global phenomenon, switching from economic objectives to transmitting fundamental cultural values, indicating that Japanese animation, as a cultural phenomenon, influences and expands across numerous cultural landscapes globally, highlighting the increased attention animation has gotten amid the fast expansion of the global economy and society.

### Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design utilizing the survey research method, to collect primary data. The sample frame for the study was youths in Abuja Municipal Area Council between the ages of 16 and 35, who engage regularly with Japanese Anime content. The

population of the study was estimated at 1,693,400 according to City Population (2022), and the sample size for this study was 385, determined using an online sample size calculator from calculator.net, at a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of +/-5%.

Utilizing the purposive sampling technique, a type of non-probability sampling technique that involves the purposeful selection of participants based on attributes or experiences that are directly connected to the research issue (Etikan et al., 2016), participants were selected based on age and interest in Japanese Anime. The instruments for data collection was a structured questionnaire, administered through an online google form, while the data collected was analyzed and presented with the aid of tables, frequencies and simple percentages.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected have been presented in tables, to explain responses of participants and implications for the study.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable (%)	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	261	68
Female	124	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
16-25	338	88
26-35	46	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>





The data collected in Table 1 shows that 68% of the respondents were male while 32% were female, which implies that male youths are more inclined to watch Japanese Anime than female youths. In addition, 88% of respondents were between the ages of 16-25 years, which indicates that the younger generation have more interest in Japanese Animation than the older age category of youths which made up only 12% of the respondents.

**Table 2: Responses on Awareness of Japanese Anime**

Variable	Frequency	
Percentage (%)		
Friends	246	64
Social Media	63	16
Television	68	18
Siblings	8	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>

In order to find out how respondents came to be aware of Japanese Animation, data in Table 2 revealed that 64% of respondents became aware of the genre through friends. This implies that other people's interests have the potential to influence their peers/friends to become interested as well.

**Table 3: Responses on Frequency of Japanese Anime Viewing**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	108	28
Several times a Week	164	42
Once a Week	26	7
Occasionally	87	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>

The study also found out the level of frequency of viewing Japanese Animation by respondents as shown in Table 3 and the data revealed that 42% of the respondents view Japanese Anime content several times a week, while 28% admitted to viewing the content daily. This implies that as youths constantly watch Japanese Animation, it has the potential to influence them to adapt to the messages being passed either positively or negatively.

**Table 4: Primary Source of watching Japanese Anime**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Streaming Platforms	141	37
Cable Television	46	12
DVDs/Blu-Rays	24	6
Online Piracy Websites	174	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>



The data in Table 4 indicates that 45% of respondents access Japanese Animation content through online piracy websites, which implies that in their

quest to satisfy their consumption needs, some youths are willing to break some laws like the anti-piracy law, just to access their favourite content. However, 37% of the respondents indicated that they watch Japanese Anime from streaming platforms, which they have to pay for.

**Table 5: Responses on influence to adapt to Japanese Culture**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, I am influenced to Adapt to Japanese Culture	188	49
I am partially influenced to adapt to Japanese Culture	175	45
No, I have not been influenced to adapt to Japanese culture	22	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>

Data presented in Table 5 indicates that 49% of the respondents are influenced to adapt different aspects of Japanese culture while 45% indicated that they are only partially influenced. This implies that constant interaction with Japanese Anime content has the potential to influence viewers and this can affect different aspects of indigenous cultures of the viewers.

**Table 6: Influence of Japanese Anime on respondents fashion choices and personal style**

Variable (%)	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	191	50
No	194	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in Table 6 reveals that 50% agree to the fact that watching Japanese Anime has influenced them in the aspect of their fashion choices and personal style, while the other 50% indicate that it has had no influence on them in these areas. This implies that the influence is not absolute as some respondents cannot be easily swayed to adopt Japanese culture and way of life in spite of their interest in the contents.

**Table 7: Understanding and adoption of Japanese language as a result of watching Japanese Anime**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very well	242	63
Okay	124	32
Not much	19	05
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>





The data in Table 7 reveals that 63% of respondents have an understanding of the Japanese language and have also began to adopt the language due to their watching of Japanese Anime content. This indicates that with constant interaction with Japanese content and language, the respondents will gradually become fluent in the language.

**Table 8: Negative effects of Japanese Anime on Indigenous Cultures and language**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	40	10
Agree	105	28
Neutral	85	22
Disagree	117	30
Strongly Disagree	38	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in Table 8 shows that 30% of the respondents disagree that Japanese Anime has any negative effect on the Nigerian indigenous cultures and language, while 28% agree and 10% strongly agree that it has the potential to negatively affect the Nigerian indigenous culture. This margin between those that agree and those that disagree is quite small which implies that effects though seemingly minute has the potential to pose a threat to the Nigerian cultures and language.

### Discussion of Findings

In answering the first research objective which was to assess the extent of Japanese Animation engagement among Youths in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), the data collected in Table 3 revealed that 42% of the respondents view Japanese Anime content several times a week and this content is accessed on streaming platforms as indicated by 37% of the

respondents as shown in Table 4. In addition, 64% of the respondents indicated that they were introduced to Japanese Anime by their friends as shown in Table 2. These data all indicate that rise of Japanese Anime has indeed transcended borders, considering the fact that Nigeria's teeming youth population are gradually adapting to the content and these findings agree with the assertions of Yurun (2017), who observed that the transmission of Japanese Animation Culture show that Japanese animation has swiftly matured into a prominent global phenomenon, switching from economic objectives to transmitting fundamental cultural values. Similarly, these findings are in tandem with the assertion of Pertiwan & Paramita (2023), who noted that Japanese animation, or anime, has captivated audiences worldwide, transcending cultural barriers and establishing itself as a global phenomenon.



In addressing the second research objective which was to evaluate the influence of Japanese Animation on Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) youths values and behaviour data in Table 5 indicate that 49% of the respondents are influenced by the Anime content they view. This influence is manifested in their fashion choices and personal style as indicated by 50% of the respondents in Table 6 as well as language adoption, as 63% of the respondents revealed that they have started to pick up on some Japanese languages, which is shown in Table 7. These findings resonates with the assertions of Sarinastiti and Merdiana (2022), who observed that influence of Japanese Anime extends beyond casual viewership, fostering passionate fandoms with demonstrably strong emotional connections. The findings also confirm the assumptions of the Hybirdization theory which states that as civilizations come into touch with one another, whether through commerce, migration, colonialism, or globalization, they swap ideas, traditions, beliefs, and behaviors.

Answering the third research objective which was to find out the effects of watching Japanese Anime on the Nigerian Indigenous cultures, the data in Table 8 indicate that constant viewing of Japanese Anime has the potential to negatively affect the Nigerian indigenous cultures and language, as indicated by 28% of the respondents who agreed and 10% who strongly agreed. This findings

concur with the findings of Abu-Backer (2023), which revealed that Anime films present multiple values, but they strongly tend to promote the values of crime and violence and challenge the norms of the local society in favor of negative values that are foreign to it. However, 30% of the respondents disagreed that Japanese Anime has the capacity to influence negatively the Nigerian indigenous cultures and language. This supports Raudha et al. (2024) who point out that the impact of anime consumption is multifaceted, as it can exert both positive and negative influences on social interaction and behavior of its audience.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study which was to investigate the influence of Japanese Anime on indigenous Nigerian cultures among youths in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), indicates that there is a growing interest of Nigerian youths in Japanese Anime and this has the potential to influence its audience. The influence can be positive as indicated by respondents who have an appreciation for the Japanese culture, which can foster better understanding and appreciation for other cultures, and can also be negative, as adoption of Japanese culture, language and values translated through the Anime content, can adversely affect the Nigerian indigenous cultures, languages and values which is already struggling for survival, particularly among the youths in the country. It therefore, implies that



Nigerian cultures and languages must be preserved at all cost and this can begin by the promotion of a national identity policy, which will encourage Nigerians, particularly the youths to identify first as Nigerians and embrace and appreciate their indigenous cultures and languages, even while they interact with foreign content like Japanese Anime.

### Recommendations

Following the findings of the study, it is recommended therefore that:

1. The Nigerian movie industry should embrace animation genre of storytelling, to appeal to Nigerian youths, that tells the Nigerian story and promotes Nigerian cultures, languages and values, as this can encourage national and international engagement with contents that promote Nigeria's indigenous cultures.

2. Parents should promote their cultures and languages in their homes, through storytelling and visits to ancestral homes as well as attending cultural events, as doing this will help the youths appreciate their indigenous cultures better.

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