

CHIMES OF CHANGE: ANALYZING THE KÜBLER-ROSS MODEL OF GRIEF IN THE CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIAN YOUTH AMIDST SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES

¹FAVOUR C. ORJI

¹Favour Orji, Cultural Operator for the Global South, Nigeria

Favour C. Orji: orjifavourchisom@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: FAVOUR C. ORJI

ABSTRACT

This study explores the adaptation of the Kübler-Ross model of grief to the economic, political, and social upheavals faced by Nigerian youth in 2024. Through the lens of Lagos-based photographer Favour Orji's project Chimes of Change, it examines the emotional stages—Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance—as responses to Nigeria's current challenges. The project documents how young Nigerians navigate a time of significant transformation, marked by high inflation, a weakening currency, and food insecurity, offering insight into their resilience and capacity for adaptation.

KEYWORDS: Kübler-Ross model, Nigerian youth, socioeconomic challenges, photography, resilience, Chimes of Change, inflation, migration, economic depression, cultural adaptation

1. INTRODUCTION

This study examines how the Kübler-Ross model of grief can be applied to the experiences of Nigerian youth grappling with economic and social crises in 2024. Favour Orji, a Lagos-based photographer born in the late '90s, uses his work to explore these experiences through Chimes of Change, a project capturing the profound changes in Nigerian society. Orji, with over eight years of experience documenting life in Nigeria, views photography as a tool to "bear witness to life's truths," and through his work, he seeks to reflect the resilience and complexity of the human condition amidst the nation's turbulence.

Chimes of Change symbolizes Nigeria's evolving reality, where high inflation, a falling currency, and widespread food insecurity pose challenges that push individuals through various emotional stages. By adapting the Kübler-Ross model, this study seeks to analyze how Nigerian youth confront these changes, transitioning through Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. It will also explore how photography can offer a medium for understanding and documenting these experiences.

2. THE STUDY EXAMINES

1. DENIAL

The shock and disbelief felt by many Nigerians as foreign exchange rates plummeted, weakening the naira's value to around 1,700 per US dollar. This stage captures the refusal to accept the depth of economic decline.



Photo: Naira, Why?, 2024

2. ANGER

Youth frustration and anger stem from a system that appears to offer no viable solutions to their struggles. This dissatisfaction is further fueled by the growing disparity between their aspirations and the harsh realities of the current economic environment.

For some, this anger leads to a phase symbolized by the idea of becoming a "Nigerian Prince"—a descent into destructive desperation where scams and other forms of subterfuge become survival strategies. While this path often unleashes remarkable innovation and creativity, it is sadly directed toward negative and harmful purposes.



Photo: Nigerian Prince, 2024

3. BARGAINING

The increase in migration trends, as many young Nigerians leave the country in hopes of finding better opportunities abroad, represents the bargaining phase. This attempt to negotiate a way out of a worsening situation underscores the search for escape routes from economic stagnation.



Photo: Japa, 2024

4. DEPRESSION

For many, the mental toll of Nigeria's crisis leads to a deep sense of hopelessness and questioning the value of honest work. This stage reflects the internal struggle many face as they confront the harshness of their environment.



Photo: Melancholy, 2024

5. ACCEPTANCE

In contrast, the acceptance phase shows the resilience of Nigerian youth who, despite the odds, adapt to their circumstances by taking on multiple jobs or developing innovative solutions to survive. This stage highlights how many have come to terms with their reality and are finding ways to thrive.



Photo: Side Hustler, 2024

Chimes of Change uses these stages to present a visual narrative that encapsulates the varied emotional and practical responses to Nigeria's socio-economic challenges. Each stage is carefully documented through powerful imagery, offering a compelling reflection of the present-day Nigerian youth experience.

3. HISTORY LENDING CREDENCE TO THE BODY OF WORK

Favour Orji's previous works have consistently explored the themes of resilience and adaptation, documenting the struggles and triumphs of Nigerians navigating challenging circumstances. His deep connection to Nigeria and understanding of the human condition allow him to capture the subtle, often unspoken emotions present in the day-to-day lives of ordinary people. As Orji believes, "Photography holds the power to document what was and what is," a philosophy that resonates throughout Chimes of Change.

This body of work also draws from historical trends of economic instability in Nigeria, where the youth have consistently been at the forefront of adapting to systemic changes. By exploring how today's challenges reflect past patterns of social and economic evolution, this study situates Orji's work within a broader historical context, lending further credence to his approach.

4. CONCLUSION

Through Favour Orji's Chimes of Change and the application of the Kübler-Ross model of grief, this study offers a nuanced understanding of the emotional journey experienced by Nigerian youth as they confront significant socio-economic challenges. By documenting these responses through visual storytelling, Orji's work not only provides insight into the complexity of the human condition but also reflects the resilience and adaptability of a generation in transition. The visual exploration of these stages serves as a testament to the power of art to document and influence societal change.

5. REFERENCES

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