



# CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN RESIDENTS' ADAPTATION TO LIFE IN MINING COMMUNITIES OF OSUN STATE

<sup>1</sup>A. A. Adesigbin and <sup>2</sup>B. O. Omitola

<sup>1</sup>Global Affairs and Sustainable Development Institute (GASDI)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science and International Relations,  
Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria

## Abstract

Mining operations within Osun State, Nigeria, have instigated significant alterations in communal existence, thereby modifying socio-economic frameworks, cultural traditions, and environmental interactions. Nevertheless, despite the observable changes, notable aspects of continuity endure, indicative of the resilience and adaptability of local inhabitants. This research investigates the relationship between continuity and changes in how residents adapt to conditions within Osun State's mining communities. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, the study leverages archival documents, policy analyses, and oral testimonies to analyze how individuals navigate the disruptions brought about by mining while upholding customary lifestyles. The results indicate that continuity is articulated through familial connections, collective labour traditions, indigenous knowledge practices, and dependency on traditional governance structures. Concurrently, change is evident in the diversification of livelihoods, shifts in gender roles within households, patterns of migration, and adaptive responses related to health and the environment. This analysis posits that the adaptation strategies of residents are not exclusively conservative or transformative but rather reflect a dynamic negotiation that balances the preservation of identity with the necessity to address socio-economic challenges. By contextualizing Osun State within broader discussions surrounding resilience and communities reliant on natural resources, this article underscores the criticality of comprehending adaptation as a process influenced by both cultural sustainability and external influences. The findings provide valuable contributions to policy debates concerning mining regulation, sustainable economic practices, and community resilience, presenting nuanced insights for academics, policymakers, and development professionals.

**Keywords:** Continuity; Change; Adaptation; Mining Communities; Osun State; Resilience

## Introduction

Mining has, historically, played a significant role in shaping the socio-economic and cultural dynamics among Nigerian people, with Osun State being one significant site of artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Identification and exploitation of the mineral resource base in the state have induced changes in the livelihoods, environmental conditions, and social relationships that have significant effects on the people. For people who live in the mining areas of Osun, the experience of adjusting to the opportunities and challenges posed by mining has not been straightforward. Instead, the article is a description of the multi-faceted

relationship between continuity and change, with the persistence of the traditional structures co-existing with the introduction of new economic, social, and environmental conditions. In this article, we explore the ways that people who live in the mining villages in Osun State experience these co-existing phenomena, underlining the process by which people conserve some aspects of their identity as they adapt to contemporary challenges.

Adaptation, in this context, refers to the methods utilized by people and societies to cope with, resist, or take advantage of changes in their environments. It includes resilience, defined as the capacity to buffer disturbances without losing key functions, and

transformation, referring to significant reorganization of practices and institutions (Folke, 2016). Mining societies provide a particularly interesting focus for the exploration of adaptation because these often sit at the nexus between globally integrated resource markets, local cultural traditions, and risky ecological environments (Hilson, 2017). In Osun State, these points of intersection are particularly significant in the countryside where local gold mining provides cash income but, at the same time, exposes people to environmental pollution, health risks, and economic uncertainty.

The value of the current work manifests in the efforts to harmonize the accounts of continuity and change, frequently dealt with separately. There is a reasonable volume of literature on resource-based societies that stresses disruption, highlighting the tendency that mining development displaces traditional livelihoods, alters gender relationships, or breaks social solidity (Hilson & Hu, 2022). Despite the importance of these transformations, they never happen in a vacuum; the members of the community carry cultural traditions, kinship ties, as well as native political institutions that ensure continuity and stability at the same time. Omitting the continuity aspect is at risk of describing the members of the community as passive reactors towards the exterior changes instead of active agents shaping their own futures (Natarajan et al., 2022; Tabares et al., 2022).

Osun State serves as a significant case study due to its growing artisanal and small-scale mining endeavors, particularly within Ilesa and its neighboring areas. In recent years, these communities have experienced a gradual influx of migrant miners, the emergence of informal gold markets, and intensified state regulation (Adeoye, 2016). Such developments have created new avenues for livelihood while simultaneously exacerbating vulnerabilities, including land disputes, environmental degradation, and social fragmentation. Analyzing how residents adapt to these pressures necessitates an exploration of both the changes that have occurred, such as the diversification of income sources and the reconfiguration of household labour, as well as the aspects that have persisted, including reliance on extended family systems and communal rituals.

## Conceptual Foundation

The work is conceptually situated in the literature on resilience and adaptation in human geography and development studies. Researchers assert that the communities that are subject to socio-ecological disturbances tend to apply hybrid strategies that synthesize customary practices with new practices, thus allowing continuity and survival (Kurikka & Grillitsch, 2021). In Osun State, hybridization manifests in the way that households synthesize subsistence agriculture with artisanal mining, as well as the way that customary leaders handle conflicts in the presence of settings becoming ever more shaped by external forces. In positioning continuity next to change, the work underscores the adaptive process' dialectical nature as opposed to conceptualizing the same as a unilinear process.

The investigation is structured around three principal inquiries. Initially, what aspects of continuity define the residents' responses to disruptions caused by mining activities in Osun State? Subsequently, how have the livelihoods, social interactions, and cultural practices of the residents evolved because of mining? Finally, in what manner do continuity and transformation converge to influence the larger adaptive framework of these communities? Responding to these inquiries enhances scholarly discussions regarding adaptation rooted in resource management and offers valuable perspectives for policymakers aiming to formulate strategies that reinforce local resilience while confronting systemic vulnerabilities.

The broader relevance of this work lies in its bearing on governance and development. Mining governance in Nigeria often assumes a technocratic bent, stressing regulation, environmental compliance, and revenue production (Omotehinse & Ako, 2019). While these approaches are valuable, they risk overlooking the everyday realities of the people whose lives are forced into adaptation on account of the social and ecological effects from the mining practices. In holding both stasis and change, this work indicates the resilience of local people and underscores the need for policies that respect customary practices even as they foster adaptive sustainability. Therefore, this article posits that the adaptation within mining communities in Osun State is most accurately conceptualized as an evolving

negotiation between the preservation of tradition and the acceptance of change. Continuities, including kinship-oriented labour practices, cultural rituals, and indigenous governance structures, remain integral, offering a sense of stability and identity. Concurrently, emerging pressures from economic transformations, environmental hazards, and demographic changes compel the adoption of innovative coping mechanisms and redefined roles. This duality provides significant insights into the resilience of mining communities and underscores the need for policy frameworks that recognize adaptation as both a cultural and developmental phenomenon.

### **Mining and Local Adaptation in Africa**

Sub-Saharan mining societies have traditionally attracted wide academic attention because the economic opportunities they represent coexist with the socio-cultural disturbances the areas experience. Much work on this topic points out how resource extraction creates possibilities for development and ecological and social hazards, often characterized as the 'resource curse' (Amini, 2018). In such areas, the people live under the impression of significant change, although new scholarly production cautions against overlooking the elements of continuity that affect adaptive practices.

Studies on African mining societies highlight critical changes in livelihoods, gender relationships, and social organizations. For instance, Ghanaian artisanal gold mining has been associated with transformations from agricultural-based economies to mineral-based economies, often disrupting household labour practices and accelerating rural-to-urban migration (Andrews, 2018). Similar results in Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo underscore that mining creates new income opportunities while at the same time increasing exposure to risks such as environmental degradation and social conflict (Bryceson & Geenen, 2016). Overall, these studies demonstrate that the changes brought about by mining are wide-ranging and complex.

Nonetheless, researchers also observe that mining communities do not merely accept changes passively. Rather, they utilize adaptive strategies that maintain social unity and cultural consistency. In the context of Ghana, for instance, traditional leaders persist in

mediating conflicts concerning mining rights, while women uphold indigenous economic practices in conjunction with their involvement in mining-related endeavors (Basu et al., 2015). These ongoing practices underscore the significance of local institutions in preserving community stability during periods of disruption.

### **Continuity and Change as Analytical Frames**

The concepts of continuity and change provide an important framework for the exploration of adaptation in resource-dependent societies. Continuity refers to the continuation of cultural norms, kinship arrangements, and customary modes of governance, while change indicates changes in livelihoods, relationships with the environment, and social roles. Researchers argue that these dynamics are not necessarily antithetical; instead, they overlap in the formation of hybrid adaptive strategies (Natarajan et al., 2022; Tabares et al., 2022). For instance, households may be involved in mining work with subsistence agriculture or cash economies with reliance on reciprocity networks that are kinship-based.

The resilience literature reinforces this dualism further. Resilience theory stresses that stressed socio-ecological systems frequently utilize innovation and tradition in tandem, establishing adaptive pathways that are plastic as well as culturally embedded (Folke, 2016). In mining situations, stability and identity are guaranteed through continuity, and adaptability is afforded through change, such as the response to new challenges like market fluctuations or environmental degradation. It is vital in recognizing the way in which the communities bargain on a long-term basis.

### **Nigerian Context and Osun State**

Studies on mining host communities in Nigeria have largely been on environmental degradation, health risks, and conflict arising from resource exploitation (Omotehinse & Ako, 2019). While such studies have valuable insights into the disturbing effects of mining, relatively little attention has been paid to the continuities that underpin resilience. In Osun State, small-scale gold mining has grown exponentially since the early 2000s, bringing economic hopes as well as socio-environmental problems (Adeoye, 2016). However, despite these changes, the

communities still maintain kinship-based labour practices, customary forms of authority, and cultural practices as the building blocks of adaptation. This discrepancy points towards the need for studies that meticulously consider continuity and change as connected dimensions of adaptation. By focusing on Osun State, the present work contributes towards filling this lacuna, presenting a meticulous understanding of how mining societies uphold their identity and cohesiveness amidst contemporary challenges.

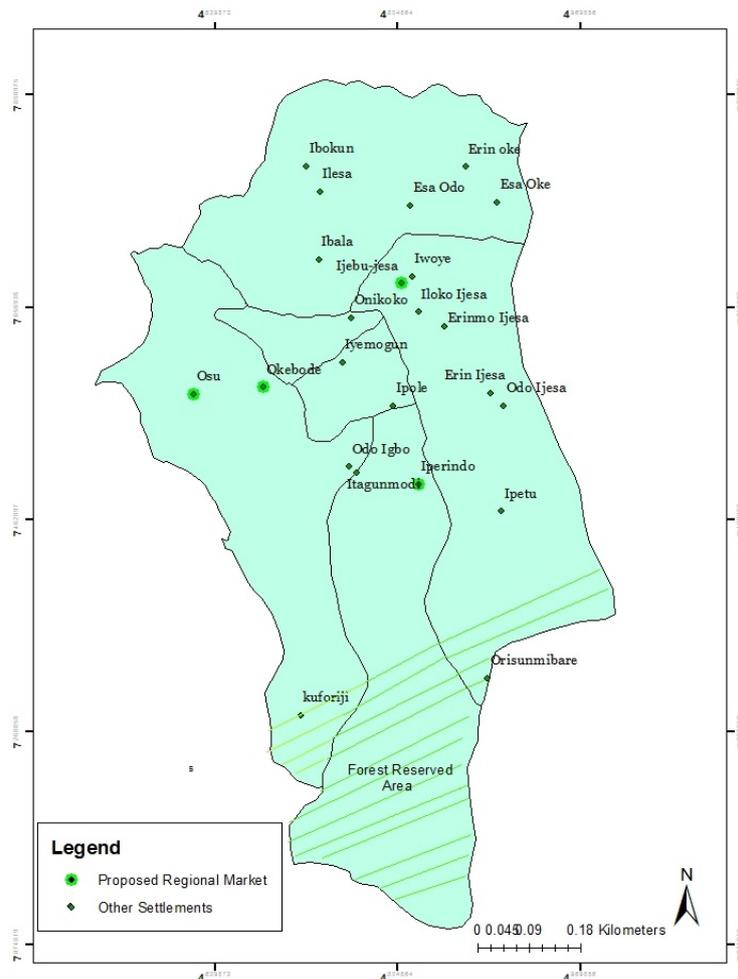
**Methodology**

This study utilized a qualitative methodological approach to examining the connection between continuities and changes in residents' adjustment to life in mining localities in Osun State. The use of the qualitative approach was derived from the need to capture everyday experiences, cultural practices, and social relationships that cannot be captured

adequately with the use of quantitative indicators. In highlighting personal accounts and historical archives, the present work conceptualizes adaptation as a process shaped by historical forces as well as contemporary realities, determined largely by human agency and ecological forces.

**Study Area:** The study concentrated on communities engaged in artisanal and small-scale gold mining within Osun State, specifically in the locales surrounding Ilesa, Atakunmosa, and Ifewara. These regions are distinguished by their historical involvement in mining practices and the socio-economic changes that ensue. Inhabitants of these communities rely on a mix of artisanal mining, subsistence agriculture, and informal commerce, rendering them particularly suitable for the examination of adaptive strategies.

**Data Sources and Collection:** Data was gathered via two major channels: archival studies and qualitative studies conducted in the field. Archival documents



comprised government policy documents, mining policies, history, and news reports. They afforded rich details on the official histories on mining and the adaptive modifications that people experienced over time. Data collected in the field were obtained via focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. A purposive sampling design was adhered to in the selection of participants, who were 45 in number and included miners, elders, women, youths, and local leaders. It ensured reasonable coverage across gender, age, and occupational levels. The interviews covered perceptions on continuity, livelihood changes, cultural practices, and coping strategies.

**Data Analysis:** Data was interpreted thematically. Thematic coding allowed the researcher to extract enduring patterns that showed continuity (e.g., cultural practices, kinship work) and change (e.g., diversification of occupations, adaptation to the environment). Archival data was triangulated with the outcomes of interviews to enhance the validity and the temporal depth.

**Ethical Considerations:** Anonymity was employed to keep the participants' information confidential. Considering that mining conflicts and environmental degradation are highly sensitive, caution was exercised not to put participants at risk through possible disclosures.

## Findings

The results from the field study are clustered into two overarching themes: the continuities that endure amidst the changes brought about by mining activity, and the changes that signify the effect of mining on modes of life, cultural practices, and social relationships. They indicate the intricate modes through which the individuals in the mining societies of Osun State adapt to continuity and change as part of their adaptive practices.

### Continuities in Adaptation

*Kinship and family patterns:* One significant continuity found is the longstanding importance of kinship networks as a core part of community life. Families invariably rely on wide-ranging ties for labour, economic support, and moral resilience. Mining activity is often carried on alongside agriculture in

many households, with labour distribution following the settled family framework. It serves to emphasize that, even as mining presents new possibilities, these don't exclude the significance of kinship. A community elder in Atakunmosa explained: *'Mining has come, but we still depend on our families. A man cannot go to the site without his brothers, sons, or cousins helping him. It has always been like this, whether on the farm or in mining, family remains our strength'*

This continuity reflects what Andrews (2018) describes as the persistence of social institutions as anchors of resilience. Even as economic activities diversify, the kinship system remains a vital adaptive resource.

*Communal labour and mutual aid:* Aside from kinship, the residents have habits of communal labour (usually called *aro*), wherein groups of neighbors or kin would labour on fields or mining areas. Even as mining commercialized labour, informal work parties are still a method of pooling one's resources and ensuring productivity. Women, as examples, explained that they still get together to cook as a group during mining seasons, echoing the traditional practices back in the fields. As one woman in Ifewara noted: *'Even now, when our men go to mine, we women support each other, we cook together, sell food together. We know the old ways of working in groups; mining has not taken that from us.'*

This continuity underscores the durability of social cooperation in sustaining adaptation despite new pressures.

*Traditional governance and authority:* The importance of chiefs and traditional rulers is still salient, even as government supervision increases over the mining process. Multiple disputes over the use of land, environmental degradation, or the rights to access sites of mining are still resolved through customary institutions. Elders underlined that the local legitimacy comes from these chiefs rather than any other authorities. As one traditional leader in Ilesa remarked: *'Government comes and goes, but the people bring their issues to the palace. When two families fight over land for mining, we call them and settle it here. That has not changed.'*

This reflects continuity in the authority of indigenous governance structures, reinforcing their role as stabilizing agents in times of social transformation (Basu *et al.*, 2015).

## Changes in Adaptation

*Livelihood diversification and economic shifts:* The most notable transformation noticed was the diversification of occupations. Inhabitants are no longer reliant on agriculture alone but have found new combinations between agriculture and small-scale mining, petty trade, and services that revolve around mining work. Mining has brought cash economies that have disrupted customary subsistence activities. Mining is favored the most by the youth as it will yield fast money as opposed to farming. A young miner in Ilesa commented: *'Why will I farm when the money from gold is faster? Farming is slow, and the rain may fail you. Here, one strike with the digger can change your life.'*

This exemplifies the appeal of mining as an economic pursuit, notwithstanding its inherent volatility. These changes in livelihood correspond with research conducted in Ghana and Tanzania, where artisanal mining has transformed household economies (Andrews, 2018; Bryceson & Geenen, 2016).

*Gender roles and household responsibilities:* Mining has also modified the gender dynamic. While women were previously limited to farming and housekeeping, women today trade minerals, sell food at the mine camps, and in certain instances, small-scale panning. Even though men still dominate excavating, women engagement in auxiliary mining activity has expanded economic spaces. A woman that is trading in Atakunmosa reflected: *'Before, we waited for our husbands to bring food from the farm. Now, we sell food to the miners, we buy and sell small gold. It gives us more freedom, but it also means more work.'*

This shift brings empowerment and new responsibilities for women. While increased new access to streams of income deepens their agency, the need to balance trade related to mining with home care widens gendered workloads.

*Migration and demographic transitions:* The mining activity has introduced fresh demographic dynamics into the rural agglomerations in Osun. Miners who migrate from the northern part of Nigeria and other neighboring West African nations have relocated into Osun State, establishing multicultural mining camps. Migration has brought new languages, religion, and even resource conflicts. Both opportunities and tensions relating to migration were observed by the residents. As one local farmer explained: *'we now live*

*with strangers from far places. Some are good, they buy our food. But sometimes, fights happen over land or women. Our town is not the same again.'*

They note the porosity of the boundaries of the community and the complexity of coexistence management.

*Health and environmental adaptation:* The mining activity has brought with it environmental risks like deforestation, pollution of rivers, and degradation of the land. Villagers noted rising cases of asthma, malaria from the still pools left by mining, and safety hazards at the mines. In response, families have had new ways of coping, including the use of traditional medicine, steering away from polluted rivers, and community cleansing. A youth leader in Ifewara noted: *'We know the rivers are no longer safe. Some people boil the water; others buy sachet water. But when people fall sick from mining dust, they still use our local herbs. We combine old and new ways.'*

This illustrates adaptive hybridization, in which customary health knowledge coexists with new reactions towards mining-related hazards (Folke, 2016).

*Converging continuities and transformation:* The results indicate that continuity and change are not separate entities; rather, they intersect in intricate manners. For instance, the diversification of livelihoods signifies change; however, it is fundamentally rooted in kinship-based collaboration, which exemplifies continuity. Likewise, although the roles of women are evolving, their engagement in communal labour illustrates persistent traditions of collective labour.

This confluence underpins the thesis that adaptation in mining towns is a fluid negotiation between stasis and change. Cultural practices are not abandoned, rather, they are reset to suit new conditions. This is congruent with Kurikka & Grillitsch (2021) and Kelly & Kelly, (2017) concept of resilience as agency, wherein societies make a choice in determining adaptive trajectories.

*Comparative perspectives:* The Osun case is typical of the general African cases, but distinct as well. Just like the Ghanaian mining small towns, the Osun people intersperse farming with mining employment, but customary governance and kinship remain sturdier continuities compared to the cases where the intervention of the state is stronger (Hilson, 2017). Communal work still prevails in the

Osun case, demonstrating cultural resistance that buffers the disruptive impacts of the mining.

### Discussion

The results underscore that resilience among the people in Osun State is a dynamic and complex process, mediated by the interaction between enduring traditions and variable socio-economies. Resilience is not a unilineal process from the past to the present way of life; instead, resilience is a negotiated process that involves the differential maintenance and modification of cultural practices, economic activities, and political arrangements. This process is compatible with Folke's (2016) twin definition of resilience as including persistence and transformation, through which societies maintain key values and develop new methods as a response to socio-ecological challenges. Data on Osun State suggests that continuity and change are not rival forces, but, rather, complementary factors that coexist and combine to underpin adaptive capacity.

Continuity, as seen in kinship networks, communal labour, and customary authority, provides the cultural and institutional basis for adaptability. They provide social capital, stability, and feelings of membership during uncertainty and risk fostered by mining. Their persistent presence is testimony to experiences in other African mining contexts, such as Ghana and Tanzania, in which social networks have been solidified to contain economic fluctuation as well as labour, credit, and information access (Bryceson & Geenen, 2016; Basu et al., 2015). In Osun State, these continuities are part of resilience through the maintenance of group identity and readiness for collective response to environmental and livelihood crises. The persistent salience of customary rulers similarly supports legitimacy and conflict mediation in the community, testifying that adaptability is derived from local social institutions rather than imposed by external paradigms.

Nevertheless, the introduction of new economic and social forces points to significant adaptive modifications. Diversification of lives, migration patterns, and shifting gender dynamics indicate that the community members are actively reconfiguring relationships with the environment as well as the economic system. Such transformations refer to a broader pattern noted among artisanal mining groups in Africa, as the attractiveness of instant

economic gains, as well as the collapse of agriculture-based sectors, propels people, especially the youth, towards mineral-based livelihoods (Hilson & Hu, 2022; Andrews, 2018). This economic shift presents both possible gains and losses: as mining presents instant income and employment, the same time, however, makes households vulnerable to market changes, environmental hazards, and social breakdown.

Gender modifications represent one key adaptive change. Increased participation by women in trade, food hawking, and small-scale mining reorders entrenched gendered rankings as well as increases their economic empowerment. Yet, such empowerment is complex given that women experience increased workloads as well as health hazards. Similar dynamics have been observed in Ghana as well as the Democratic Republic of Congo, women's involvement in the mining value chain rearranges the public and the domestic spaces without necessarily decreasing the underlying structural inequities (Bryceson & Geenen, 2016). In Osun State, women's adaptive strategies, the combination of informal work as well as communal collaborations, show that adaptation is concomitant with continuity, arriving at what Natarajan et al. (2022) refer to as 'hybrid livelihood systems.'

Migration is a powerful transformation force, reshaping the social fabric of mining societies. Influxes of in-migrants from northern Nigeria and neighboring countries introduce cultural variety, but at the same time, they create land and resource competition. In response, innovative coexistence and negotiation mechanisms have been developed through traditional government arrangements. This induced social hybridity is a testimony to the local institutions' flexibility in encompassing diversity, maintaining order, and aligns with the model of 'resilience through agency' proposed by Kurikka and Grillitsch (2021) that suggests that, as opposed to the adaptive response toward exterior burdens, societies actively shape adaptive outcomes.

Environmental and health responses similarly emphasize the integration of innovation and tradition. They utilize both contemporary preventive methods and native herbal medicine in response to mining-related health issues. Such syntheses imply that adaptation does not necessarily leave the old behind but rebalancing the former to meet new

challenges. Coexistence between traditional and contemporary health methods indicates the presence of what Kelly and Kelly (2017) refer to as 'resilient pluralism,' in which the latter borrow from diverse bodies of knowledge to maintain wellbeing. The above discourse indicates that hybrid adaptive practices in Osun State's mining areas bear the imprint of a continuity-in-change process, a dialectical process through which persistence and transformation act jointly towards the creation of resilience. People are not stuck with immutable traditions nor are they unthinkingly embracing the new; instead, they actively maneuver and bargain towards a middle way between the two. Such hybridization ensures the preservation of cultural identity as people deal with new economic and environmental challenges. Policy interventions should, therefore, go beyond binary constructs that oppose tradition versus development. Instead, sustainable mining governance should harness these hybrid adaptive systems, recognizing that time-honored cultural practices are not impediments to progress, but salutary ingredients in resilient and appropriately contextual adaptation.

## Conclusion

This research investigates the simultaneous processes of continuity and transformation in the adaptation of residents within the mining communities of Osun State. The results indicate that the process of adaptation in these settings is not entirely conservative or exclusively transformative; rather, it embodies a negotiated equilibrium between the preservation of tradition and the acceptance of innovation. Elements of continuity, including kinship networks, communal labour practices, and traditional governance systems, contribute to stability and a sense of identity, ensuring that these communities retain their foundations despite the disruptive impacts associated with mining activities. Concurrently, changes are observable in the diversification of livelihoods, evolving gender roles, demographic shifts prompted by migration, and the emergence of novel strategies to address health and environmental challenges.

The research indicates that change and continuity don't represent distinct paths, but co-existing dynamics that define adaptive strategies. Resident views indicate convergence, as adaptation is represented as intentional action and individual

decision. For instance, the continuation in communal work coexists with the cash economies that are the outcomes of the mining activity, as the increasing economic participation among women coincides with enduring cooperative functions. This integration among strategies illustrates resilience, as societies maintain cultural values and integrate external challenges.

Conceptually, the results lean towards resilience frameworks that point towards adaptation as encompassing persistence and transformation (Kurikka & Grillitsch, 2021; Folke, 2016). Empirically, the Osun State case work fills a niche in the African mining literature through making the cultural politics of adaptation, frequently obscured through economic disruption or environmental degradation narrative, the center.

## Recommendations

The validation of local institutions by policymakers is critical, as government bodies and development institutions should officially ratify the role of customary leaders and kinship networks in conflict resolution and social cohesion. Strengthening these institutions would ensure that adaptation strategies build on existing cultural foundations instead of eroding them.

*Harmonization of livelihoods:* Diversification of the livelihoods that synchronises the small-scale mining with agriculture and small-scale businesses should be promoted. It would reduce dependency on unstable mining revenues and enhance food security.

*Gender-sensitive programmes:* Programmes should take into cognisance, the double burden that women experience, through the integration of homework and new economic functions caused by the mining activity. Training, provision of credit, and subsidising women's health services in the mining regions would enhance equity as well as resilience.

*Environmental and health interventions:* Specific interventions should reduce mining-related environmental risks through community cleaning efforts, access to cleaner water, and health education. They should accompany, not substitute, local indigenous health practices.

Ultimately, mining societies in Osun State represent the adaptability of societies that experience the

conflicting forces between continuity and change. By recognizing the dual character of adaptation, researchers and policymakers may develop interventions that are compatible with cultural

persistence as well as facilitate innovative adaptations to the challenges of the contemporary era.

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