

## **THE *onugbé* CLOTHING: A LINGUISTIC METAPHOR OF THE NORTHERN IGBO, SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Onugbé* as a sociological concept constitutes all clothing used in northern Igbo area of the south-east as a linguistic metaphor prior to the advent of *ekwá erù* (English cloth). It was one of the various means of sending and receiving encoded messages. Northern Igbo is well known for their adroit and profuse use of idioms, aphorisms, and proverbs as well as symbols and coded words, with which they make implicit statements and convey encoded messages. This study therefore interrogates *onugbé* clothing as a linguistic medium. The results reveal that northern Igbo use *onugbé* clothing to transmit wordless messages through its symbols, colours, styles, and fashions; and that *onugbé* clothing speaks a universal language and transmits messages that transcend geographic and linguistic boundaries. It has also been established that a fair knowledge of the patterns of life of the people aids comprehension of *onugbé* clothing.

**KEYWORDS:** Northern Igbo, *Onugbé* Clothing, Dress Culture, Linguistic Metaphor, Communication, Unvoiced Language