

Nightclubbing Cultures in Anambra State, Nigeria

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[0178] Abstract

This study explores the various context-specific nightclubbing cultures with a view to discussing their implications in Anambra State, Nigeria. Using a qualitative phenomenological and social constructivist approach, the research explores the lived experiences of night clubbers, nightclub managers, and staff through 16 in-depth interviews (IDIs), 7 key informant interviews (KIIs), and 3 gender-based focus group discussions (FGDs) involving 16 study participants. Findings show a diverse array of nightclubbing cultures ranging from themed nights such as ladies' nights, and classical popular musical icon nights called felabration nights; economic and networking cultures; dance, music and entertainment cultures; drug misuses, distribution and consumption cultures, hype and performance; nightclub operation and management cultures as well as security and regulations cultures in most nightclub spaces. These nightclubbing cultures has lots of implications which are socioeconomic, health, psychological and safety and security issues in nature. The research concludes that while nightclubbing fosters sociocultural expressions and economic activities, balanced policies are needed to mitigate risks and promote a safer nightlife environment in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Lived Experiences, Nightclubbing Cultures, Nightlife Phenomenology, Social Constructivism,

Introduction

Nightclubbing is common in most urban centres, and as a way of life, it is associated with numerous unique subcultures. These cultures have emerged around nightclubbing spaces, reflecting diverse social activities, identities, and experiences. These practices often intertwine with broader themes of community and expression within urban environments (Thomas, 2003). These nightclubbing cultures not only shape individual identities but also significantly influence urban community dynamics, underscoring the importance of nightlife in contemporary society. The interplay between nightclubbing cultures and urban community dynamics highlights nightlife's critical role in shaping social interactions and fostering a sense of belonging among diverse groups (Alam & O'Connell, 2024). The connection between nightclubbing and a sense of belonging is particularly evident in class-conscious societies, where it is often difficult for the rich or privileged individuals to connect with the poor, or those in power have little or no direct contact with the led. Nightclubbing environments bridge this gap, and nightlife spaces provide opportunities for social networking, cultural affirmation, and social inclusion.

According to Farina (2023), nightclubbing cultures are the vibrant and energetic nightlife scene around clubs, bars, and raves. The roots of nightclubbing can be traced back to the disco era in the 1970s and its emergence as a space for different communities. House music from underground clubs promoted unity and acceptance of people of all races and sexual orientations in Chicago, U.S.A. Over the years, nightclubbing has become a global event that draws people of all ages (Northcote, 2006). It is a world where people come together to escape the mundane routines of daily life, let loose, and express themselves through music, dance, and self-expression (Farina, 2023).

Nightclubbing is associated with a variety of lifestyles. Kalinauskaite et al (2018) argued that from a psychological standpoint, nightclubs offer an atmosphere designed to attract and engage individuals. They buttressed that nightclubs tap into the need for social connection by providing a space where people can enjoy music, dance, and interact. Trevino (2024) stated that for many nightclub-goers, nightclubs offer an

escape from the routine of daily life. These venues allow individuals to celebrate special occasions or unwind with friends. Pedersen et al (2016), however, argued that despite the benefits derived from clubbing, it is also associated with a myriad of negative lifestyles. One of the most common negative aspects of nightclubbing is excessive alcohol consumption. Many individuals engage in heavy drinking while clubbing, which can lead to health issues, impaired judgment, risky behaviour, and even alcohol addiction (Bourdeau et al, 2017). Feltmann et al (2021) revealed that nightclubs are environments where drug use is prevalent. They argued that some individuals may experiment with or regularly use drugs like ecstasy, cocaine, or other substances while clubbing. Quigg et al (2024) stated that the party atmosphere of nightclubs sometimes encourages risky behaviour such as unprotected sex, violence, crime, or reckless actions. This can result in unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, injuries, or conflicts that may have long-lasting consequences (Desmennu et al., 2018). Regularly attending nightclubs can be expensive due to cover charges, drinks, transportation, and other expenses. Nightclubbing cultures raise concerns about safety, substance abuse, and inclusivity. Nightclubs are often associated with incidents of brawls, stabbings, shootings, and other forms of violence (Pedersen et al, 2016). The presence of weapons, drugs, and alcohol can escalate conflicts and pose serious safety risks to patrons. Instances of violence both inside and outside nightclubs have contributed to a sense of insecurity among potential club-goers (Nordfjaern, 2017). Moreover, gang affiliations within the nightclub scene can lead to confrontations, intimidation, and violence. People not part of a gang may still be at risk of being caught up in disputes or facing accusations due to the tense atmosphere created by rival groups.

Nightclubbing has long been an integral social life for young adults seeking entertainment, socialization, and a break from daily routines. Traditionally, nightclubbing involves visiting nightclubs or bars where music, dancing, and social interactions are the main attractions. The experience is often characterized by loud music ranging from pop and hip-hop to electronic dance music and vibrant atmospheres designed to encourage dancing and mingling among patrons (Aborisade, 2021). Moreover, economic factors play a crucial role in shaping contemporary nightlife experiences. With rising living costs affecting disposable income levels among young adults, many are more selective about how they spend their money on entertainment (Tolentino, 2023). This has led to increased alternative social gatherings, such as house parties or smaller local events that provide a sense of community without the financial strain associated with traditional nightclubs. The evolution of nightclubbing also reflects broader cultural changes regarding inclusivity and diversity within nightlife spaces. Modern nightclubs often cater to varied musical tastes beyond mainstream pop or electronic dance music (EDM), embracing genres like techno or hip-hop while creating environments that welcome diverse identities across genders and sexual orientations (Ejrnæs & Scherg, 2022). This shift indicates a move towards more inclusive spaces where individuals can express their identities freely without fear of judgment. Following the above, it is not clear what the current context-specific nightclubbing cultures are, particularly in Anambra State, Southeastern Nigeria. This paper, therefore, explores current context-specific nightclubbing cultures in Anambra State, Nigeria, to ascertain their implications and suggest balanced policies to mitigate risks and promote a safer nightlife environment in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Determinants of Nightclubbing Cultures

The physical space of nightclubs plays a significant role in shaping nightclubbing cultures. Nightclubs are intricately designed environments that play a crucial role in shaping the culture and experiences associated with nightclubbing (Ling et al, 2017). The physical space of a nightclub is not just a backdrop but an active participant in the social dynamics that unfold within it. The layout, lighting, and overall ambience are carefully curated to facilitate social interaction and create an atmosphere of energy and excitement (Martinotti et al, 2020). The layout of a nightclub often includes open dance floors, strategically placed bars, and seating areas that encourage movement and mingling. This design encourages patrons to interact with one another, fostering a sense of community among individuals who share similar interests in music, dance,

and nightlife (Tutenges, 2022). The crowded nature of these venues contributes to an electrifying atmosphere where people can easily meet others. This environment is conducive to spontaneous interactions and connections, central to the nightclubbing experience. Lighting plays a pivotal role in setting the mood within nightclubs. Dynamic lighting systems can transform the space into an immersive environment that enhances the sensory experience of club-goers. Strobe lights, lasers, and coloured lighting create visual stimuli that complement the music and amplify the emotional intensity of the experience. This sensory overload can lead to heightened excitement and euphoria, drawing individuals deeper into the communal experience (Bourdeau et al, 2017).

Brunn et al (2021) argued that the presence of alcohol and other substances is another significant factor in shaping club culture. They opined that these substances often serve as social lubricants, lowering inhibitions and encouraging people to engage more freely with those around them. Alcohol consumption is typically intertwined with nightlife activities, as it can enhance feelings of relaxation and sociability. However, while these substances can facilitate connections by making individuals more open to interaction, they also pose challenges such as substance abuse or risky behaviours (Aborisade, 2021). Moreover, certain substances popular within club scenes, such as ecstasy, are known for their ability to enhance sensory perception and foster feelings of empathy among users. This can lead to profound shared experiences on the dance floor where individuals feel connected not only through music but also through altered states of consciousness (Amirpour et al, 2023).

Cultural capital, a concept introduced by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, refers to the non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means (Philip et al, 2022). In the context of nightclub culture, cultural capital plays a significant role in shaping individual identities and influencing social dynamics within nightlife environments (Quigg et al, 2022a). This form of capital is expressed through various elements such as fashion, music knowledge, and social connections, all of which contribute to one's perceived status and belonging within specific subcultures or music scenes (Torentino, 2023). Fashion is a primary medium through which individuals express their cultural capital within club culture. The choice of clothing and accessories is not merely about personal style; it is a deliberate self-presentation that communicates one's affiliation with particular trends or subcultural groups (Palamar et al, 2022). Beyond fashion, knowledge about music trends, DJ lineups, and popular venues constitutes another critical aspect of cultural capital in nightclub cultures (Voss, 2015). Being well-versed in the latest music releases or knowing the history and significance of certain DJs can enhance one's reputation within nightlife circles. This expertise allows individuals to navigate the complex social landscape of clubs more effectively, gaining entry into exclusive events or forming connections with influential figures in the scene. Such knowledge acts as a currency that facilitates social interactions and reinforces one's position within the hierarchy of club culture (Kalinauskaite et al, 2018).

Social networks are another critical determinant influencing participation in nightclubbing cultures. Relationships formed through shared experiences at clubs can lead to lasting friendships or even romantic connections that extend beyond the dance floor (Kurtz et al, 2009). These networks often operate on principles of reciprocity; individuals may invite friends to events or share information about upcoming parties based on their previous interactions within these spaces (Nordfjaern, 2017). Furthermore, social media has transformed how people engage with nightclub cultures by providing platforms for promoting events and sharing experiences in real time. This digital dimension allows for broader participation across geographical boundaries while also reinforcing existing social hierarchies based on popularity or visibility online (Pedersen et al, 2016). Also, symbolic capital, the recognition and prestige associated with being part of the nightclubbing scene, serves as motivation and reward for participants (Reingle et al, 2009). Being seen at exclusive venues or attending high-profile events can enhance one's reputation within social circles while simultaneously affirming one's identity as part of a vibrant subculture dedicated to music and dance (Smith, 2020).

Phenomenology and Social Constructions of Nightclubbing Cultures

One of the major proponents of phenomenology is Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), a German-Austrian philosopher and the founder of phenomenology, a significant movement in 20th-century philosophy. His work sought to establish philosophy as a rigorous science by focusing on the structures of consciousness and experience. Phenomenology was formally established with Husserl's "Logical Investigations" (1900–1901), though its roots trace back to Franz Brentano's work on intentionality in the late 19th century. Phenomenology is a philosophical movement and method that focuses on the structures of conscious experience, as they are subjectively lived and perceived. It seeks to describe phenomena (objects, events, or meanings) as they appear in consciousness, rather than explaining them through external causes or scientific reductionism (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). In the context of this work, phenomenology can help unpack nightclubbing as a multisensory, intersubjective, and embodied phenomenon. It reveals how nightclubbers construct meaning through their lived experiences, movement, sound, and sociality, offering a deeper understanding of why such spaces hold transformative power for participants. While phenomenology has deeply shaped continental philosophy, existentialism, and hermeneutics, its critics argue that it is either too subjective, insufficiently scientific, or politically naive. Nonetheless, its influence persists in fields like cognitive science (via *neuropsychophenomenology*) and qualitative research.

On the other hand, some major proponents of social constructivism are Peter L. Berger (1929–2017) and Thomas Luckmann (1927–2016) (Dreher & Vera, 2015). They were influential sociologists, best known for their collaborative work on the **social construction of reality**. There are other proponents like Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), Michel Foucault (1926–1984), Kenneth Gergen (1934), and Judith Butler (1956). Social constructivism as a theory was developed over time, with key contributions from several scholars. While it doesn't have a single "year of origin," its foundations were significantly shaped by:

Social constructivism is a theoretical perspective asserting that knowledge, reality, and social phenomena are not inherently fixed but are shaped through human interaction, language, and culture (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 1995). It emphasizes that meaning is socially created and maintained rather than objectively discovered. Applying this lens to the determinants and derivatives of nightclubbing cultures can provide deep insights into how nightlife, music, and social behaviours in nightclubs are co-created by collective norms, power structures, and historical contexts. While social constructivism provides valuable insights into how ideas shape society, its critics highlight its potential relativism, neglect of material factors, and sometimes idealistic assumptions.

Methods

Using a qualitative phenomenological and social constructivist approach, the research explores the lived experiences of night clubbers, nightclub managers, and staff through in-depth interviews (IDIs), key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) involving study participants. The sample size is thirty-nine (39) study participants, distributed as follows: KII involved seven (7) participants, IDI, sixteen (16) participants, and 3 gender-based FGDs. Data collected from the field for this study were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research analytical method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It provides a flexible framework for researchers to interpret various aspects of the dataset, allowing for a rich and detailed understanding of the subject matter. The process typically involves six (6) key steps: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Thematic analysis is important because it allows researchers to go beyond mere description of the data to explore deeper meanings and implications.

Before the thematic data analysis was done, the data collected were cleaned, transcribed, transliterated (to capture the contextual meanings of the sentences and words as used by study participants, and by so doing, contextual meanings are not lost), and translated from source language (Igbo or Pigeon) to target language (English). Next, the researcher embarked on iterative reading and coding of the data.

Next, categorization of codes and generation of relevant themes in line with the study objectives. By focusing on themes that recur across different responses or observations, the researcher uncovered underlying issues and patterns that were immediately apparent at this stage. To ensure the reliability and validity of the themes, intra-coder and inter-coder analyses were conducted. By intra-coder, we mean that the researcher coded the transcribed manuscript twice within specified time intervals, and by inter-coder we mean that another coder also coded the same transcribed manuscript to ensure they are arriving at similar themes (Aziato, et al., 2014; Onwugbuzie and Leech 2007) Finally, the themes were reiteratively reviewed, defined, renamed where necessary and categorized into major and minor themes to enable detailed interpretation, and extrapolations to be made from the narratives and constructions of the experiences of the study participants in line with the study objectives.

Results: Exploring Nightclubbing Cultures

The focus of this study is to explore the various nightclubbing cultures in Anambra State. Major emergent themes and sub-themes from the data collected are captured as follows: **themed nights and events cultures:** (such as gender-specific events, like ladies' night, celebration of classical music icons such as the Late Fela Anikulapo Kuti called *felabration*; **weekend nightclubbing cultures:** (weekend as a social nightclubbing ritual days/times, nightclubbing as a lifestyle); **economic and networking cultures:** (group dynamics in nightclubbing, nightclubs as socializing and networking hubs, economic drug aspects of nightclubbing, spending habits in nightclubs, financial prudence/imprudence in nightclubbing, social mobility through nightclubbing; networking for career opportunities, building social capital, personal growth through nightclubbing exposure to diverse experiences, development of social skills). There are also themes on; **dance cultures:** (dance as a core activity, mentorship in dance); **drinking and relaxation cultures,** (drinking as a social ritual, nightclubs as spaces for unwinding, luxury drinking as a status symbol, spraying money as a cultural practice in nightclubs); **nightclubbing dress code and nightclub etiquette cultures:** (dressing well as a requirement for entry, enforcement of dress codes, Psychological Impact of dress codes, behavioral norms in nightclubs); **music and entertainment cultures;** (live music and performances, exposure to diverse music genres, role of DJs in nightclubs); **security and regulation cultures;** (crime and safety in nightclubs; gang violence in nightclubs, cult-related conflicts; role of bouncers in maintaining order, anti-smoking policies, violence and fights in clubs, protecting customer belongings); **drug cultures in nightclubs;** (underground drug trade, complicity of authorities); **gender dynamics nightclubbing cultures;** (women as joy givers in nightclubs, women as freelancers or pickers, women's role in boosting nightclub revenue) **nightclubbing environment and experience cultures;** (noise and crowd, personal negative experience) **hype and performance nightclubbing cultures;** (role of hype men in nightclubs, hyping as a way to encourage spending, performance and showmanship in nightclubs) **cultural significance of nightclubbing cultures;** (nightclubbing as a reflection of modern lifestyle, nightclubbing as a space for freedom and expression, nightclubbing as a cultural shift from traditional norms) **social hierarchies and class distinctions cultures;** (VIP and VVIP seating, class-based drink pricing, exclusive access for high-spending customers, drink pricing and customer class). The data also captured themes on nightclub timing and operational cultures (peak times for nightclubbing). **Nightclub operations and management cultures:** (nightclub staff hierarchy and responsibilities, staff roles: specialization and division of labour, payment methods in nightclubs, debt and credit in nightclub transactions, handling drunk customers: professionalism and patience, customer loyalty and repeat visits). Each of these major and sub-themes was discussed in detail below, with supporting verbatim quotes from the interviews and discussions with the study participants

Themed nights and events cultures:

These are some nightclub events designed to attract specific demographics, often offering incentives like free entry or drinks for targeted groups. If you want to celebrate their birthday party, you can go to the

nightclub., The nightclub is a place where you can celebrate, too, not just about coming to dance or drink. Some of such events are ladies' night, specific nightclubbing events or traditions targeting women, often with special offers or themes. Another form of themed nights is nightclubs or events that celebrate cultural or musical icons, often tied to broader cultural movements or histories, like *Felabration*, where Fela Anikulapo Kuti is often celebrated in some of these nightclubs in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes:

Yes, when I was in school, we had ladies' night at Showmans Hotel every Wednesday. Even in Fela Fela's holy week, Felabration, we used to be there. (IDI with 41 years 41-year-old study participant at one of the nightclubs in Onitsha, Anambra State).

"We have Wednesdays ladies' night, every Wednesday, we normally go for ladies' night every Wednesday at the nightclub, yeah." (Male FGD session at a nightclub in Oko, Anambra South Senatorial zone).

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Weekend nightclubbing cultures:

The practice of nightclubbing as a weekend activity is often seen as a way to unwind and socialize after a workweek. Within the week, many people do not have the time and opportunity to go for entertainment and enjoy themselves because of their engagements the following day. They turn weekends into a social ritual, when they go out, get entertained, enjoy themselves, and get relieved from the stressful week. There are specific days of the week when nightclubbing activities are most active, reflecting a cultural routine. There is cultural integration of nightclubbing into the lifestyle of individuals, especially extroverts, in these nightclubs in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes on weekend nightclubbing rituals:

"Nightclubs have days, especially during the weekends, we used to go there, we used to be there exactly at specific days." (IDI with 41-year-old night nightclubber at Onitsha, Anambra State) "Nightclubbing thrives on weekends, from Friday to Sunday... especially Saturday and Sunday." (KII with 30 years old nightclub manager at Nnewi Anambra State). "On Wednesdays, we have ladies' night on Wednesdays, while normal nightclubbing is weekends, on Fridays." "Friday, Saturday, and Sundays." (Female FGD session at Awka, Anambra Central Senatorial zone).

People feel so worried, they are people who love nightclubbing, they love hanging out, people who are extroverted, they love hanging out. If you love hanging out, you go to a nightclub, depending on what you like. If you love hanging out, you go to a nightclub, and you have fun. (IDI with 25-year-old Participant at Awka, Anambra State)

Economic and Networking Cultures:

The findings further revealed that the tendency to attend nightclubs in groups, often with friends or colleagues, enhances the social experience and initiates networking cultures. Nightclubs are used as spaces where individuals can meet influential people and build valuable connections. Nightclubs are spaces to meet individuals who can provide job opportunities or professional connections. Nightclubbing helps in forming relationships that enhance one's social standing or opportunities. Nightclubbing is a way to broaden one's horizons and gain life experience. It helps one in learning how to navigate social situations and interact with diverse individuals. The lived narratives of the study participants also show nightclubbing as a way of life.

In the nightclub, you come with your colleague, you come with either a man or a woman, just to enjoy yourself. Yeah, in a nightclub you can meet a millionaire, do you get? In a nightclub, you encounter many types of human beings. Positively, you can have a good contact. (IDI with a 41-year-old study participant at Onitsha, Anambra State).

Networking is made far easier because you're meeting the kind of people you belong to. You discuss business, and you exchange numbers easily there. If you need a challenge, come to the nightclub; if you want to have fun to the fullest, come to the nightclub. Nightclubs are places where people network and form business relationships. (KII with a 35-year-old nightclub manager at Abakaliki street, Awka, Anambra State).

"When you get to the nightclub, you might meet a business partner or a helper, so it has a special impact economically. You might even see an old friend of yours, because people move from one state to another nightclub." (IDI with a 25-year participant at Awka, Anambra State). *"Most of them, the reason is to meet with friends, like some business associates, they do come to the nightclub, with one way or the other, they advertise themselves."* (Bouncers FGD session at a nightclub in Oko, Anambra South Senatorial zone).

There is also the theme of nightclubbing as a status symbol. In nightclubs, wealthy individuals show off their socioeconomic statuses through the purchase of very expensive wines and alcohol, with special bar-attendants (especially beautiful girls) carrying the items with glittering lights, trolleys, and intermittent echoes of the names of the wealthy individuals by the MC or DJs singing their praises. This does not mean that nightclubs attract only wealthy individuals; the poor also go to nightclubs. The expectation of spending money on drinks, entry fees, and other amenities can discourage poor people from nightclubbing. Most people who are not too wealthy manage expenses to avoid overspending while enjoying the nightclubbing experiences in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes:

You see a drink you buy outside for three thousand five hundred, you come to the nightclub, you buy it for twenty thousand, forty thousand. People are just spraying money. Why are they spraying money? Can a normal person just come to the nightclub, while listening to music, and just start spraying money? (KII with a 35-year-old nightclub manager at Abakaliki street in Awka, Anambra State)

"Most times, they always allow these young boys, these upcoming young boys that just got money from where I don't know, anyhow, they always allow them to get into the nightclub easily." (IDI with a 25-year-old participant at Awka, Anambra State)

Nightclubbing Dance Cultures:

The centrality of dancing to the nightclubbing experience often serves as a primary form of expression and interaction. One of the reasons people go to nightclubs is to dance to good music. Most of the people who go to nightclubs neither smoke nor take alcoholic drinks; they go to the nightclubs primarily to dance. Individuals going through tough times go to nightclubs to dance away their sorrows and pains. Experienced dancers teach newcomers, fostering a sense of community and shared learning. When people go to a nightclub, they learn the dance culture, because primarily, people come to the nightclub to dance. if you don't know how to dance, you will be moved to learn it, so that you will belong. So, most people go to the nightclub to learn how to dance in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes:

We use (do) to dance, we will dance, in the nightclub. If you don't know how to dance, you can chance upon someone, and someone will teach you how to dance. I have taught a girl in my nightclub, I danced with her, I told her to follow the way I dance, before you know it, she learns how to dance, and she is a good dancer now. (IDI with a 41-year-old study participant at Onitsha, Anambra State).

"People come to relieve their stress by dancing, they smoke, they also rock themselves." (IDI with a 20-year-old Participant at Awka, Anambra State).

Drinking and Relaxation Cultures:

The act of buying and consuming drinks as a key part of the nightclubbing experience, often shared among groups, prevails. From the findings, there is this cultural perception of nightclubbing as a way to relieve stress and escape daily worries. Nightclubs serve as venues for relaxation and escape from daily stresses. Drinks are more expensive in nightclubs than in ordinary bars. Some people come to the nightclub, they will buy expensive drinks, and they will spray money, like the ballers. Their cultural practice of using nightclubbing to display wealth, social status, and impress others. After the stress from the daily hustles, people choose to go to nightclubs to relax and ease their stress in nightclubs in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes: *"You buy drinks, you buy whatever you want to take, and relax, you enjoy yourself."* (IDI with 41-year-old study participant at Onitsha, Anambra State). *"Maybe like you are stressed, you have a lot of things on your mind, you go to a nightclub, drink away your sorrow. You go to a nightclub, you have fun, listen to good music, and you have a good time."* (IDI with a 25-year-old Participant at Awka, Anambra State).

Dress code and nightclub etiquette cultures:

Nightclubs impose rules on attire to maintain a certain image or atmosphere. The nightclubs enforce a dress code to maintain a respectable atmosphere, with bouncers enforcing the rules. There is an unwritten expectation to wear revealing or skimpy clothing to nightclubs. There are certain ways people are expected to dress while coming to the nightclub; you cannot put on something like sleepers and enter the nightclub. There is an expectation to dress in a specific way to gain access to nightclubs and fit into the nightclubbing culture, with expectations of appropriate behaviour, enforced by bouncers or nightclub staff. Also, people are expected not to behave inappropriately while they are in the nightclub. The bouncers and the nightclub staff are there to make sure that people dress well and that they behave appropriately while they are in the nightclubs in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes: *"You can't dress anyhow, and you can't do anyhow, bouncers will walk you out. Bouncers will limit those negative things, not everybody that will come inside."* (IDI with a 41-year-old study participant at Onitsha, Anambra State). The concept of dressing well is constructed differently in nightclubs, as an individual's dressing must be nightclub-compliant. Dressing well does not mean the same as conceived in contexts outside the nightclub environment. Thus, dressing well in nightclubs is context-specific.

Dressing well is not about dressing buba or wearing a flowing long gown, in wears they have wears for sports, they have wears for church or religious places, they have wears for different occasions. If you don't dress well, the bouncer may bounce you out of the nightclub; that is the essence of the Bouncer. (KII with a 35-year-old nightclub manager at Abakaliki street, Awka, Anambra State)

I always wear something that is, you know, free my body, but very seductive, and sexy, because I am going to a party, I am not going to church. You cannot be coming to a nightclub, wearing an up and down that you know is meant for church. They will be like, what are you looking for here? This is not a church; this is a nightclub (IDI with a 20-year-old Participant at Awka, Anambra State).

Going to the nightclub, your appearance matters; you have to dress fine, because the way you dress is the way people address you. You have to dress like a nightclubber, even if you don't have that money, you have

to meet up to a certain standard of a nightclubber. (IDI with a 25-year-old participant at Awka, Anambra State).

"It is enshrined already... I'm supposed to wear something skimpy, something revealing. People don't wear completely covered like this to nightclubs... you see them wearing skimpy things." (IDI with a 27-year-old participant at Awka, Anambra State) As a man, you don't come inside a nightclub with slippers, you don't come inside a nightclub with nicker, you wear can, you must dress well, can, Jean, wear jean with your stock polo, then as a girl, you must come with hill, with your high hill or you wear can.... (Bouncers FGD session at Oko, Anambra South Senatorial zone)

Music and Entertainment Cultures:

Nightclubs host live music events or performances, often tied to cultural celebrations. Some of these nightclubs host cultural events and celebrations, such as the celebration of a music legend, Fela. Nightclubs as spaces where individuals are exposed to a wide range of musical styles. Due to the free liberty in nightclubs, people tend to do whatever they like to do; by so doing, many individuals are exposed to a wide range of musical styles in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes:

"Even in Fela's holy week, Felabration, we used to be there. There will be nothing that someone will tell you tomorrow that you do not know." (IDI with a 41-year-old study participant at Onitsha, Anambra State). It's all about entertainment. I want to hear music, I want to be loved, I have money, I want to spend it, I just want to hang out. We have the best DJs, the best Hype Men, that's the kind of things you see around. (KII with a 35-year-old nightclub manager at Abakaliki street, Awka, Anambra State).

You can never be in the nightclub, and be angry unnecessarily, because there are things to watch, see people, you see live, see people dancing, even when you want to cry, when you see some funny dance, you laugh. (Male FGD session at a nightclub in Oko, Anambra South Senatorial zone).

Security and regulation cultures:

Bouncers are enforcers of nightclub rules and maintainers of safety. Bouncers are the main people in charge of enforcing the rules, regulations, and norms in nightclubs. Nightclubs are rule-governed spaces. Nightclubs enforce rules against smoking certain substances through the bouncers. They make sure that all the properties that clients or nightclubbers come with are safe. If you don't take care of those things, clients will leave with the impression that the nightclub is not safe, and they might not patronize that nightclub again. Some clients may go as far as to circulate this impression or experiences among their friends. The implication is that the nightclub may begin to lose customers, and its client base will reduce drastically. This is why the bouncers must do their job effectively and efficiently to avoid direct and indirect socioeconomic losses for the nightclubs and clients. There is a risk of violent encounters due to gang activities. Without the nightclub's security, a lot of things (attacks or insecurities) would have been happening in the nightclub. There will always be tensions between rival cult groups spilling over into nightclub spaces in Anambra State. However, this is curtailed by nightclub security staff. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes:

"That is why they have bouncers; they will limit those negative things. They will write no smoking of Indian hemp. If there is no security, you may lose your life in a nightclub because of bad gangs. Some cultists will come and meet each other, and they start exchanging words or this, and that, that is the only bad thing with nightclubbing." (IDI with a 41-year-old study participant at Onitsha, Anambra State).

"A fight will bust out; someone has to bring that sanity to order." "Bouncers maintain order and ensure only well-dressed and well-behaved customers enter the nightclub." (KII with a 35-year-old nightclub

manager at Abakaliki street, Awka, Anambra State). *"The place doesn't have a crowd like that, because people don't enter Big Ballers because of the security, the Bouncers there will not allow you."* (Female FGD session at Awka, Anambra Central Senatorial zone). *"We have Bouncers inside the nightclub, who correct whatever you are doing, they are inside the nightclub... if there is no Bouncer close to him, he will just come, hey you, go outside."* (Male FGD session at Oko Anambra South Senatorial zone).

Drug Cultures in Nightclubs:

The normalization of drug use and distribution within nightclubbing environments, including specific types of drugs consumed. There are secret sales and consumption of illegal substances within nightclubs in Anambra State. In the nightclubs, often, drugs are being sold secretly, and in a coded way. Drugs are sold by individuals who come to the nightclub, often through referrals. Substance abuse, including alcohol and drugs, is prevalent in nightclubbing environments. Law enforcement's involvement in or tolerance of drug-related activities calls for urgent attention. Law enforcement agents most time allow people to smoke these drugs, because they have collected some tips from them, or that they are their people, or that they too do smoke the said drugs in nightclubs. The normalization and cultural acceptance of substance use (e.g., alcohol, drugs) in nightclubs is a worrisome development in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes:

In the nightclub, they are selling Indian hemp, SK, loud, secretly, or colos, but that one is hidden. Police will see you; they will arrest you; he will seize that drug, he will intimidate you, and he will still go back and smoke it. (IDI with a 41-year-old study participant at a nightclub in Onitsha, Anambra State).

But you see, SK, they smoke it very well, but it is not advisable, and it is not allowed in the nightclub. Sometimes you see some girls who will carry them, they will just be useless, because they took the drink, but she's not the one who poured the drink for herself. (KII with a 35-year-old nightclub manager at Abakaliki street, Awka, Anambra State)

When you take a lot of marijuana in one night, surely, you will surely be sick the next day. Some go there to sell drugs, like hard drugs are peddled in the nightclubs. People who sell these drugs are the distributors of the real people who own the drug, so they are just like retailers to the wholesalers. (Female FGD session at Awka, Anambra Central Senatorial zone).

Gender Dynamics Nightclubbing Cultures:

There are cultural expectations and roles of men and women in the nightclub scene. There are gender roles in nightclubbing, with women often dressing provocatively and men displaying wealth. On the men's side, they come to relax, pick a girl with whom they will spend the night. In the aspect of the ladies, they come to pick money, dance, just vibe, get attention, and try to make themselves noticed by the men there. Gender plays a role in nightclubbing experiences, such as ladies' nights and interactions between men and women. Women are one of the major stakeholders in the nightclub business; their presence in the nightclubs makes it bubble. Without them, many men will not spend in the nightclubs, even the nightclub managements encourage them to come to the nightclubs always, by allowing them to pick up money in the nightclubs in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes:

"We can keep girls for you, they will start dancing for you, you can't get it outside here" (36-year-old nightclub staff at a nightclub in Abakiliki street, Awka).

Most times, if I don't see a woman, I don't spend. Freelancers are women who come to the nightclub to dance and pick up money without engaging in sexual activities. Women give that ginger, and they make men spend more, even in the nightclub, and it gives them joy; they are joy givers. If you keep women in the nightclub,

men will start drinking; if there were only men in the nightclub, nobody would want to drink an expensive drink. (KII with a 38-year-old nightclub manager at Abakaliki Street, Awka, Anambra State).

For the feminine gender, they go there to pick money, the money they spray, they go there to pick money. The girls will dance for you, that's nightclubbing for this century. Most nightclubs open on Friday nights, except for people who have special nights for ladies, like ladies' night, maybe on Wednesdays. (IDI with a 27-year study participant at Awka, Anambra State)

Some bad girls do come to the nightclub to follow men, while some girls, whom we have encountered so many of them, will be like Sir, please allow me to enter. I don't have the money to pay for my school fees, and I am the one sponsoring myself. (Male FGD session at a club in Oko, Anambra South Senatorial Zone).

Nightclubbing Environment and Experiences: Noise Culture

Nightclubbing as an enjoyable activity emphasizes dancing, socializing, and escaping reality. The nightclubbing environment is a loud and noisy space, which is seen as a positive aspect of the nightclubbing experience. The environment is busy, always booming, noisy, lively, and bustling with activity. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants: *"The nightclubbing environment is very crowded, not really crowded but very noisy. Very, very, loud."* (Female FGD session at Awka, Anambra Central Senatorial Zone).

It is normally busy, so you can't tell the time when you are there. People do other sorts of business, like selling on the street, also people come out to look around, you know, it's always booming and noisy. Nightclubbing is a fun and enjoyable activity; we have fun, we dance, we drink, and most times we even enjoy ourselves in nightclubs in Anambra State. (Male FGD session at Awka, Anambra Central Senatorial Zone).

It is always crowded and noisy. I think being drunk is a negative experience, because I didn't even know what was happening till the next morning, and the hangover was very strong, my head that I had to sleep for the whole day (IDI with a 20-year-old participant at Awka, Anambra State).

Nightclubs are known to be loud, with loud music, dancing, shouting from many nightclubbers, and so on. Very loud, due to the music, noisy, ehmmm, but is a good thing, because you cannot go to a quiet nightclub, it means that the nightclub is not bubbling. I have experienced a lot of things in nightclubs, like the weird life; in fact, the experience is just overwhelming. (IDI with a 20-year-old participant at Awka, Anambra State).

I know friends that I have kept, I know the impact these friends I got from the nightclub have imparted, even as a Bouncer. I know what I want, I know the properties I have, I know the businesses I have, legit business, and all these ideas come from an opportunity through this nightclubbing. (Bouncers FGD session at Oko, Anambra South Senatorial Zone).

Hype and Performance Nightclubbing Cultures:

Hyping culture prevails in nightclubs, and another very important stakeholder in the nightclub business is the hype men; they are another set of people who make the nightclubs bubble. Most wealthy nightclubbing Igbo men want people to know that they are around and that they are the happening men. So, the hype men will always hype them, calling them names, before you know it, they will start showing off in nightclubs in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants:

They will hype someone until money comes out of their pocket. They will hype you to the highest that you will start spraying money. You see hype man calling your name, you might have problem around, there was a man, I met one day, we're just together, you know, dancing because, every Igbo man, or everybody likes to

be hyped, so that they will know that he is here, let people know that he is happening (KII with a 35- years old nightclub manager at Abakaliki street, Awka, Anambra State).

Nightclub Timing and Operations Cultures:

Nightclubbing is a midnight event, and people attend nightclubs late in the evening into early in the morning. Normally, the nightclub business starts from 11 pm to 5 am the next day, and is usually during the weekends. Nightclubs are most active during weekends, and nightclubbing typically occurs late at night. Nightclubs are most active on specific nights, with Fridays and Sundays being the most popular. The nightclub sometimes starts around 9:30 pm, to whenever you want to go. Though nightclubbing is a night event, most times, they are flexible with their timing. If they have customers who want to use the nightclubbing hall in the daytime, and on ordinary days for any kind of celebration, who are ready to pay, they can open the nightclub for them, to do their celebrations in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants: *"Nightclubs operate from 12 pm to 5 am, and workers resume by 8 pm to prepare"* (KII with a 35-year-old nightclub manager at Abakaliki street, Awka, Anambra State).

Ehhhh, like on Fridays, mostly Friday, and Saturday, and also Sundays, yes Sunday, in fact the weekend is the best time for nightclubs to bubble, like hold any occasion, like the nightclub am working at, sometimes, we do have ladies' night out, sometimes, we have karaoke night, where people will come, sing, enjoy themselves, make merry. (IDI with a 20-year-old participant at Awka, Anambra State).

"Sometimes a kind of group of friends, or a union, might come and tell you we want to close our year stuff, and they want to do it in the nightclub, and they want to do it daytime." (KII with a 32-year-old nightclub operations manager at Onitsha, Anambra State).

Nightclub Operations and Management Cultures:

The nightclub operates structured manner, with clear roles for staff and management. It welcomes a diverse group of patrons, with no restrictions based on gender or background. Staff members have specialized roles, such as bar attendants and waitresses, ensuring smooth operations. Bouncers play a key role in enforcing rules and maintaining order within the nightclub. Staff are trained to handle drunk customers calmly and professionally, attributing rude behavior to the influence of alcohol. The nightclub staff handles potential conflicts by calmly addressing issues and removing disruptive patrons. Staff members are trained to remain calm and composed, even when dealing with difficult customers. Credit facilities for drinks are handled by waitresses and management, with no involvement from the bar attendant. Waitresses collect drinks from the bar and serve customers, handling transactions and accounting. The work of security men is to secure things. If people are having a misunderstanding, they will go and settle the issue, to know who is at fault, to arrange things, and to guard people too. The work of a bouncer is aligned with the work of a security guard, because they do the same work, it is the same network, because they are trying to protect the life and property of people, and at the same time, they want to make the environment a very tranquil one. The nightclub has regular customers who frequent the establishment, and their preferences are accommodated. Once they have this assurance that the place is safe, they will feel relaxed, and they will always come back to patronize you. There are strategies for managing payments, including trust-based transactions with known customers and immediate payments for strangers. they are required to pay for drinks before receiving them, ensuring no financial disputes. Almost 60% of the debt, you don't get them, you don't, by the time they say give everybody here a drink, after calculating their money, in the morning, when he remembers, tell him that he is owing, he will tell you that it is a lie. These are the things that happen in nightclubs in Anambra State. Below are samples of verbatim quotes from some of the study participants illustrating these major and minor themes

We have the owner of the nightclub, the general manager, nightclub managers, supervisors, PROs, champagne girls, waitresses, bar men, bouncers, cleaners, drummers, DJs, hype men, sound engineers, and IT people. Bouncers maintain order and ensure only well-dressed and well-behaved customers enter the nightclub. For some ballers, he might come to the nightclub, he doesn't have money to drink, you (the manager) will tell them to give him a drink, and that he will pay when he has money. Something is making him after he finishes coming, he will come back to your nightclub. (KII with a 35-year nightclub manager at Abakaliki street, Awka, Anambra State).

So, we have to take the orders of the customers, go to them, and tell them what a particular customer needs. They will give it to us, we will make the payment, and take it to the customers. Some will pay in cash, some will pay through POS, while some will pay by doing transfers (IDI with a 20-year-old participant at Awka, Anambra State).

So, you attend to your customers very well, with calmness, even if they are rude or wrong, just be calm with them and attend to them very well. We don't fight. Yes, before service, you pay before we give you anything. You have to treat them well, because it is not them that are talking, it is the drink that is talking. Some people frequent here; those are your main customers (IDI with a 35-year-old Participant at Nnewi, Anambra State).

"Even if they are intoxicated, you still have to treat them well... make sure that all the properties they came with are safe." (KII with a 32-year-old nightclub operations manager at Onitsha, Anambra State).

Discussion: Implications of Nightclubbing Cultures

The identified nightclubbing cultures have a lot of implications in Anambra State, Nigeria. These implications are categorized into two, namely positive and negative implications. The negative implications of nightclubbing: (cultist activities, accidents and drunk driving, nightclubbing and peer pressure, negative experiences in nightclubbing). Another negative implication is economic/financial in nature: (spending money in nightclubs, financial losses, and overcharging). Crimes and violence are also prevalent in nightclubs, such as risk to life, drink spiking and exploitation, fighting and conflict as a negative nightclubbing tradition, and nightclubbing as a platform for illegal transactions. Another is the misuse of drugs in nightclubs: (varying harmful types of drugs sold, drug sellers, common drugs). Studies in southern Nigeria concur with the above negative implications of nightclubbing (Eba, 2025; Dumbili, 2013; Dumbili and Henderson, 2017). All these come with a lot of challenges in the nightclubbing business, such as insecurity and kidnapping, government agencies and taxation, debt management in nightclubs, nightclub renovation and maintenance costs, competition and nightclub longevity, financial disputes with customers, high operational costs, and taxes. There are also external factors affecting nightclubs, such as the role of tourism and expatriates, government policies, and revenue generation.

There are also health and psychological risks, such as nightclubbing as a source of trauma for some individuals, health risks for staff and patrons, and subjective health impacts. Nightclubbing is also socially constructed as a contributor to moral decline; economic losses in nightclubbing; law enforcement challenges of nightclubbing; social stigma resulting from nightclubbing; challenges faced in the work/duty roles by nightclub staff: (dealing with aggressive or uncooperative individuals, threats from nightclubbers, challenges in identifying threats, inter-human relationship conflicts). Positive aspects of nightclubbing include networking opportunities, job opportunities through networking, the importance of relationships, and positive experiences in nightclubbing. This agrees with Fajemirokun, (2025), who highlighted the positive contributions of nightclubbing. Psychological and health benefits of nightclubbing, namely psychological versatility, health benefits through exercise, and nightclubbing as stress relief. Economic benefits of nightclubbing are government revenue derivation from nightclubs, a boost to nightlife and local economy, personal gains from nightclubbing, nightclub owners' gains, government gains, which manifest as high profitability of the nightclubbing business, and social benefits of nightclubbing.

Conclusion

The study concludes that nightclubbing cultures in Anambra State, Nigeria, are diverse and a double-edged sword. Nightclubs are celebrated for their vibrancy and economic potential, yet critiqued for their societal costs. A balanced approach that prioritizes regulation, security, and public education can transform nightclubs into safer, more productive spaces while preserving their cultural and economic value.

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