



An Essay on Performativity, *Pulaaku*, and the Fulbe Legal Practitioners

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Abstract

This essay explores the symbiotic interaction between performativity, the Fulbe ethical framework of *pulaaku*, and the legal profession. It unravels how *pulaaku* actively informs the identities and actions of Fulbe legal practitioners in Nigeria, who embody the fusion of cultural values and professional roles. The essay highlights the performative nature of cultural values, exemplifying how *pulaaku* actively constructs and reaffirms the Pullo legal practitioner's identity within the Nigerian legal system. It also touches on the Pullo legal practitioner's role as a cultural ambassador, actively bridging cultural gaps and fostering mutual understanding. Further, the essay contemplates the future of *pulaaku* in the legal profession, highlighting the adaptability, education, and advocacy that contribute to the enduring significance of cultural values. These reminiscences offer open windows into symbiotic and transformative relationship between culture and profession, where *pulaaku* is not a passive guide but an actively performed, dynamic force that shapes justice and ethics in the world of legal practice.

Keywords: *Performativity, Pulaaku, Fulbe, Legal Practitioner, Culture and Law, Nigeria.*

Introduction

The diversity of Nigeria's cultural milieu is a source of richness, with each ethnic group contributing its unique heritage to the country's collective identity (Ojie and Ewhrudjakpor, 2009). Among these ethnic groups, the Fulbe stand as a distinct thread in the cultural horizon, preserving a set of values and traditions that have endured for generations (Ndukwe, 1996; Riesman, 1977). The term Fulbe (*singular* = Pullo) is the name of a group of people who are known by various names such as Fulani, Peul, Pular, Fula, Fellaata. In this essay, I used the term Fulbe for the people and Fulfulde for their Language (De Wolf, 1995). The Fulbe around Senegambia axis call themselves Haal-Pulaar'en or Torodbe or Toronkoobe (Nelson, 1983). A sub-group of the Fulbe in Nigeria/Cameroon are known as Mbororo or Bororo or Bororoji (Pelican, 2011) who are predominantly pastoralist and less cultivated in behaviours (Schultz, 1980). There are two categories of the Fulbe in Nigeria: the sedentary Fulbe (known as *Hyyaaji*) and pastoralists (who lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic life). The sedentary Fulbe exerted a huge political and economic impact in West Africa, creating empires (Bâ and Daget, 1955; Johnston, 1967) and spreading Islamic civilisation (Nyamnjoh, 2013; Palmer, 1914). In this essay, the term Fulbe (*singular* = Pullo) is used throughout (Adamu and Kirk-Greene, 1986) denoting both the people and their sense of identity and culture.

At the heart of Fulbe culture lies *pulaaku* (Leger and Mohamad, 2000), a set of value system inculcated in Fulbe, as it were, from cradle to the grave, shaping and educating their whole person for life (Cobern *et al.*, 1984; Mohamadou, 2022). *Pulaaku*, in its essence, represents a complex set of principles that guide personal conduct, relationships, and the preservation of communal harmony (Nyamnjoh, 2013). It encapsulates a comprehensive moral and ethical framework that shapes the identity and actions

of the Fulbe (Riesman, 1977). In this heart of this cultural framework lie the core principles of modesty and reserve (*semteende*), patience and fortitude (*munyal*), care and forethought (*bakkeiilo*), modesty, autonomy, self-control, shyness, dignity, kindness (*en'dam*), leadership (*ardungal*), and a host of other noble values (Breedveld and De Bruijn, 1996; Riesman, 1977). These principles, collectively known as *pulaaku*, are not mere abstractions or historical relics; they are living, breathing elements of the Fulbe way of life. Indeed, the reality that *pulaaku* is an actively performed ethical and moral framework that shapes every facet of a Pullo individual's identity and actions, both within and outside the Fulbe community, makes the concept the very quintessence of performativity (Ndlovu, 2019; Virtanen, 2003).

Thus, the fusion of *pulaaku* with the concept of performativity provides a unique and captivating lens through which to examine the delicate equilibrium between culture and the professional roles of Fulbe legal practitioners (Virtanen, 2003). Performativity, rooted in Butler's (2021) linguistic theory (see: Lloyd, 2007, for highlights on her works), is a concept that emphasises the active and creative role of individuals in shaping and expressing their identity. Indeed, engendered ethnic identities use even theatrical performance in holding onto their heritage however tenuous the leverage may be (Kuptsova and Sazonova, 2022; Thurow, 2020). For performativity posits that our actions, words, and behaviours do not merely mirror our identity but, more significantly, they actively create and reinforce it (Loxley, 2007; Ndlovu, 2019). Performativity as a lens for seeing reality challenges the traditional notions of cultural identity by asserting that cultural identity is not an inherent or fixed phenomenon but is actively constructed through repetitive, socially influenced actions and speech (Virtanen, 2003). In this view, individuals continually perform their identities and, in doing so, reinforce cultural norms and expectations. Performativity thus suggest the livingness and social

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nature of cultural identity, providing a framework for understanding how a people's norms and conventions shape and constrain its members' individual expressions of themselves (Gordon, 2000; Ndlovu, 2019).

With regards to legal practice, performativity challenges traditional conceptions of the law as a fixed and objective system by emphasizing that legal roles and outcomes are actively constructed through the performative acts (Di Donato, 2011), communication, and behaviours of legal practitioners (Bogoch, 2000), thereby revealing the dynamic and evolving nature of the legal field (Claudius, 2012). Indeed, the laws get interpreted, and thus effectively created, based on the collective ascent to shared values among the legal practitioners on the case (Rouland, 1994). It is through such performative windows that the cultural force in the Pullo legal practitioner came to shape and be shaped performatively (Tuori, 2015). Thus, *pulaaku*'s principles, including modesty and reserve, patience and fortitude, care, dignity, and kindness, shape how legal matters are viewed and approached. For instance, the Pullo legal practitioner may interpret cases with an emphasis on patience and fortitude, seeking amicable resolutions and prioritizing mediation (Ayittey, 2006). Dignity and kindness guide his approach to client representation, ensuring that the legal process is not only fair but also respectful and compassionate (Lakoff, 1989). This integration of *pulaaku* constructs into legal interpretation enriches legal practice by infusing it with cultural values and ethical considerations, illustrating the dynamic interaction between cultural ethics and legal principles.

For the intrepid Fulbe legal practitioners, the convergence of *pulaaku* and performativity represents a far-reaching fusion, one that transcends mere superficial integration (Mulcahy, 2017). It signifies the incorporation of cultural values into their professional roles (Ojo, 2007). When they engage with clients, argue cases, or participate in legal proceedings, the principles encapsulated in *pulaaku* are not dormant relics of tradition; they actively guide and influence their interactions (Cobern *et al.*, 1984). The respect, dignity, and fairness enshrined in *pulaaku* become active elements in the performance of their professional duties (Mulcahy, 2020). Every word spoken, every action taken, becomes a manifestation of their cultural identity (Gordon, 2000; Ndlovu, 2019). In these moments, they are not solely lawyers representing their clients; they are Fulbe individuals who uphold *pulaaku*, and this dual role defines their practice. However, this integration is not without its challenges. The Fulbe legal practitioners face the delicate task of balancing their deep-seated cultural values with the onerous demands of the legal profession (Oba, 2004). Legal ethics, the broader framework of ethical conduct, and the professional standards expected of practitioners sometimes present dilemmas (Olowononi and Ikwuanusi, 2019). How do they reconcile *pulaaku*'s emphasis on honour and dignity with the not infrequently adversarial nature of legal practice, which often necessitates aggressive advocacy? How do they adapt to the diverse legal contexts and complex cases while preserving their cultural values (Frantz, 1981)? The Pullo legal practitioner's ability to negotiate these complex scenarios is a testament to their adaptability and their skill in reconciling cultural identity with the imperatives of their profession (Frantz, 1981).

Perhaps one of the most compelling dimensions of this fusion of *pulaaku* and performativity is witnessed in the area of dispute resolution (Higazi, 2022; Nelson, 1983). In other words, the principles of *pulaaku* are not confined to personal conduct alone; they extend to the practitioner's approach to resolving legal disputes. When legal practitioners draw upon these principles in their dispute resolution efforts, they are, in essence, creating perform-

ative acts of justice that align with the cultural values of their clients (Golder, 2018). It is within these moments that the practitioner's role as a legal advocate harmoniously converges with their cultural identity, giving rise to resolutions that honour both the principles of *pulaaku* and the legal imperatives (de Bruijn *et al.*, 2011). At the same time, Fulbe legal practitioners serve as professional and cultural ambassadors to the law (Ojo, 2007). Their role extends beyond advocacy and dispute resolution; they also engage in the vital task of educating their non-Fulbe colleagues and clients about *pulaaku* and its significance (Nyamnjoh, 2013). This educational function, often carried out performatively in the salient actions and reactions of the Fulbe law practitioners, serves to bridge cultural gaps and promote a deeper understanding in the legal community (Courtney, 2019). It is an illustration of how their professional performativity extends to intercultural dialogue and enriches the legal community with a broader appreciation of cultural diversity (Nyamnjoh, 2013; Ricca, 2023). In this regard, the adaptability of the Pullo legal practitioner becomes ever more evident (Frantz, 1981). They understand the importance of preserving their cultural values while adapting to the changing legal contexts (Frantz, 1981). This dynamic interplay between *pulaaku* and performativity enables them to navigate the complexities of this changing world without compromising their cultural identity (Ladinsky, 1963). It is a reflection of the enduring nature of *pulaaku* and its capacity to guide individuals through the transformative processes of time and change.

Thus far, convergence of *pulaaku*, performativity, and the role of the Pullo legal practitioner is an exciting exploration of the interaction between cultural values and professional roles. This fusion defines not only the professional identity of the Pullo legal practitioner but also the essence of justice itself. It serves as a reminder that the pursuit of justice is not a sterile, abstract concept; it is a living, culturally informed performance that enriches the cultural heritage of Nigeria and deepens our appreciation of the multifaceted nature of the legal profession. This essay means to prise open a chink in this age-old leviathan.

***Pulaaku*: The Cultural Bedrock**

Pulaaku represents the cultural bedrock of the Fulbe. It is the quintessence of Fulbehood (Schultz, 1980). To understand the significance and depth of *Pulaaku*, it is essential to pry into the core principles that underpin this way of life and the profound impact it has on the Fulbe community (Spidahl, 2004). *Pulaaku* is a moral code of conduct or way of being proper to the Fulbe (Tergema *et al.*, 2022). It is seen as an all-inclusive moral value that every Pullo is expected to live by. *Pulaaku* involves conscious performance when interacting with culturally defined others. It is considered a fundamental identity marker for the Fulbe community, and any behaviour contrary to the principles of *pulaaku* may result in social sanctions. It is, if you may, the *Fulbeness* per excellence (Ver Eecke, 1988). Indeed, no Pullo is a Pullo "*tob mo wolaa pulaaku*" (Kirk-Greene, 1986); a Pullo considers it an unmitigated condemnation to be accused of lack of *pulaaku* (Nelson, 1983). *Pulaaku* is more than just a set of values; it embodies the very essence of a Pullo's existence. It defines what it means to be a Pullo, shaping not only individual identities but also the collective identity of the Fulbe. Thus, *pulaaku* it is the embodiment of an ethical and moral framework that not only shapes the identity of individuals but also influences their actions, decisions, and the way they navigate life's complexities.

Identifying as Pullo entails performing *Fulbeness*. For, as Bell (1999, p. 3) surmises, “identity is the effect of performance,” and one cannot be said to have identified as Pullo without performing the core elements of that identity. To restate Fortier (2000) in this context, the performativity of belonging to the Fulbe ethnic group necessities living (or, in the words of the anthropologist, citation) the norms that constitute the group’s universal identity (Nakassis, 2012). Fulbe identity norms are best encapsulated in *pulaaku* at the heart of which are a set of guiding principles, each with its distinct role in defining the Fulbe way of life (Mbah, 2017; Oppong, 2017; Regis, 2018). These principles are not isolated concepts but woven into a comprehensive moral value system. They include, among others, *semteende* (modesty and reserve), *mumyal* (patience and fortitude), *hakekiilo* (care and forethought), modesty, autonomy, self-control, shyness, dignity, kindness (*en’dam*), and leadership (*ardungal*) (Baldi and Leger, 2018; Breedveld and De Bruijn, 1996; Kirk-Greene, 1986; Leger and Mohammad, 2000; Spidahl, 2004; Ver Eecke, 1988). These principles represent the core values that guide the lives of the Fulbe.

- 1) *Semteende* (modesty and reserve): *Semteende*, representing honour and dignity, is a foundational principle of *pulaaku*. It is not a mere societal construct; it is deeply ingrained in the Pullo psyche. Fulbe individuals are acutely aware of their personal and familial honour (Iliffe, 2005). This principle dictates their actions and interactions. They actively avoid behaviours that could bring modesty and reserve to themselves or their families, not out of fear but out of a deep-seated commitment to preserving their reputation (Baldi and Leger, 2018). It is an honour code that runs through every aspect of life, from relationships to professional conduct.
- 2) *Mumyal* (patience and fortitude): *Mumyal*, the virtue of patience and fortitude, is integral to Fulbe identity. It signifies the importance of endurance and the capacity to wait for the right moment (Ver Eecke, 1988). Fulbe are taught from a young age to value patience and fortitude (Cobern *et al.*, 1984). This is evident in their conflict resolution methods, where they are willing to invest time and effort to arrive at just and lasting solutions (Nelson, 1983). *Mumyal* is a reminder that haste often leads to undesirable outcomes, and it underpins their approach to various life decisions.
- 3) *Nneddaaku* (dignity): An authentic Pullo is one who maintains his personal dignity in public by correct observance of various *pulaaku* ethos (Schultz, 1980). Fulbe uphold their own dignity and the dignity of others as a vital part of their cultural identity (Gordon, 2000). It ensures that every interaction, whether with family members, friends, or strangers, is characterised by respect for the dignity of all individuals involved (Cortés, 2022). This principle guides not only personal conduct but also the Fulbe approach to dispute resolution and justice.
- 4) *Hakekiilo* (care and forethought): *Hakekiilo* is a principle that underscores the significance of careful consideration and forethought (VerEecke, 1999). Fulbe individuals are encouraged to think ahead and assess the potential consequences of their actions. This principle ensures that their conduct is characterised by a thoughtful and cautious approach (Konare and Hellweg, 2022). It reflects their commitment to making informed decisions that align with their values and the well-being of their community.
- 5) *En’dam* (kindness): The principle of kindness (*en’dam*) encourages the expression of empathy, compassion, and care towards

others (Ver Eecke, 1988). Fulbe individuals are taught to be considerate and kind in their interactions, fostering a sense of community and support (VerEecke, 1986). It reflects their commitment to fairness, compassion, and the well-being of those around them.

- 6) *Ardungal* (leadership): Leadership, as embodied by the principle of *ardungal*, extends beyond formal leadership roles to include the idea of leading by example and serving as a role model in the community (Vedeld, 1997). Various clans have evolved different leadership structure and principles to accommodate the changing nature of their pastoral conditions (Awogbade, 1986). Fulbe individuals, particularly elders, are expected to guide the community with wisdom, integrity, and a deep understanding of *pulaaku* (Hickey and Thompson, 1981). This role as leaders extends beyond mere decision-making; it involves upholding cultural values, preserving tradition, and ensuring that the principles of *pulaaku* are passed down through generations (Gordon, 2000).
- 7) Self-Control: Self-control is essential in managing emotions and actions in challenging situations (Riesman, 1975). The Pullo is encouraged to exercise restraint and ethical conduct, particularly in moments of conflict (Schultz, 1980), and always remains in control of himself in the eyes of others (Riesman, 1977). This entails “controlling [one’s] physical needs, walking slowly, talking softly, being patient and slow to anger, especially with those who break your trust, and not seeking revenge” (Schultz, 1980, p. 144). This principle demonstrates their capacity to maintain composure and uphold their cultural values in even the most demanding circumstances.
- 8) Modesty: While modesty is not explicitly listed, it is implicit in *pulaaku*. It is reflected in the Fulbe’s unassuming and humble demeanour (Chen *et al.*, 2009; Irwin, 2020). Modesty encourages individuals to avoid arrogance, boastfulness, and a sense of superiority (Hansen, 2003). This quality ensures that relationships in communities are built on mutual respect and an absence of pride.
- 9) Autonomy: Autonomy is an important element of *pulaaku*, emphasising personal independence and individual agency (Riesman, 1977). Fulbe respect the autonomy and rights of others (Heiss and Piette, 2015). This principle ensures that relationships within the community are characterised by mutual respect and the preservation of individual freedoms (Loizos, 2019; Riesman, 1975, 1977). It aligns with the Fulbe value of individualism, self-reliance and freedom from controlling impositions (Loftsdóttir, 2008).
- 10) Shyness: While not explicitly mentioned in the list, shyness is a quality that is often associated with modesty in the Fulbe culture (Musa *et al.*, 2018). This trait encourages individuals to avoid confrontational or disrespectful behaviour (Riesman, 1975). It underlines the importance of maintaining decorum in interactions, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and harmony (Hansen, 2003).

Overall, these ten *pulaaku* principles constitute a part of the moral compass that guides the Fulbe in their daily lives. It is worth reiterating that they are not abstract concepts but active, lived values that influence every aspect of Fulbe culture, from family dynamics to professional conduct. *Pulaaku*, as embodied by these principles, forms a comprehensive framework for the preservation of honour, dignity, and ethical conduct within the Fulbe community. Understanding these principles is essential for appreciating the depth and significance of *pulaaku* in the lives of the Fulbe and in their roles as legal practitioners in Nigeria

Performativity in Law

Performativity, a concept that emerged from linguistics and found its way into various fields, provides an interesting vista in efforts geared towards the enactment of unwritten laws and unspoken values. It offers a unique perspective on how actions, words, and behaviours are not mere reflections of identity but active creators and reinforcers of it (Macduff, 2023). In the legal profession, performativity is a lens through which we can examine the transformative power of lawyers and their variegated roles. At the heart of performativity in the legal domain is the recognition that legal practitioners are not passive interpreters of laws, but rather active agents in the construction of justice (Di Donato, 2011; Goodale, 2017). Their actions, arguments, and ethical standards are performative acts, shaping and moulding the very concept of justice itself. This is particularly significant in adversarial legal systems, where legal practitioners are not just advocates for their clients but also contributors to the evolution of legal principles.

One of the primary ways in which performativity manifests in the legal realm is through legal arguments (Claudius, 2012). When lawyers make arguments before a court, they are not merely presenting information; they are actively constructing legal narratives (Di Donato, 2011; Mulcahy, 2020). These narratives draw on existing legal precedents, statutes, and principles, but they are also an artful blend of persuasion, interpretation, and advocacy (Allo, 2013). The outcome of a legal case often hinges on the performance of these narratives, which, in turn, influence the development of legal doctrine. Moreover, legal practitioners play a performative role in their interactions with clients (Bogoch, 2000). When they provide legal counsel, they are not merely offering information; they are shaping the decisions and actions of their clients (Claudius, 2012). This involves not only legal advice but also a performative aspect of guidance and influence. Legal practitioners become actors in their clients' lives, helping them navigate complex legal landscapes and make informed choices.

Performativity also extends to the ethical standards and codes of conduct that guide the performance of legal practitioners (Ojo, 2007). The legal profession is not bound by a rigid set of rules but by principles that are actively upheld and reinforced by legal practitioners (Ochonu, 2011). When lawyers adhere to ethical codes (Ojo, 2007), they are not merely following a set of guidelines; they are actively performing their commitment to justice, fairness, and the rule of law (Claudius, 2012). This performative aspect is integral to maintaining the integrity of the legal profession. Another critical dimension of performativity in the legal realm is the dynamics of the courtroom (Mulcahy, 2020). Legal practitioners are performers on this stage, and their performances can have a profound impact on the administration of justice. The way lawyers present evidence, question witnesses, and argue their cases can sway the outcome of a trial (Cunningham, 1989; Williams, 2022). These performances not only influence the immediate case but can also set legal precedents and shape the evolution of the law.

In addition, the influence of legal practitioners is not confined to the courtroom. They actively participate in legislative processes, legal scholarship, and policy advocacy (Dezalay and Madsen, 2012). Their contributions to these areas are performative acts that influence the development of legal systems and the broader social and political landscape (Podgórecki, 1974). Understanding performativity in the legal realm also highlights the power and responsibility that come with the legal profession. Legal practitioners are not just professionals; they are stewards of justice and equity (Ayer, 1993; McLoughlin, 2011). Their actions and perfor-

mances have far-reaching consequences, shaping the lives of individuals and the very foundations of society.

Thus, performativity in law offers a unique perspective on the active, creative, and transformative role of legal practitioners. They are not passive actors in the legal system but active creators of justice and advocates for the rule of law. Recognising the performative nature of the legal profession underscores the importance of ethical conduct, persuasive advocacy, and the pursuit of justice in shaping the legal landscape. Legal practitioners are not just interpreters of laws; they are performers who actively contribute to the ongoing evolution of justice and the preservation of the rule of law.

The Fusion of *Pulaaku* and Performativity

Pulaaku and performativity come together to create a rich motive force that shapes the lives and actions of Fulbe individuals, particularly in their roles as legal practitioners in Nigeria (Claudius, 2012; Virtanen, 2003). At the heart of this fusion is the recognition that *pulaaku* is not a static set of values but a dynamic and actively performed guide that influences every facet of life. Performativity theory, as popularised by post-structuralist philosophers and theorists (Miller, 2012), posits that identity and social roles are not predetermined but are constructed and reaffirmed through actions and behaviours (Di Donato, 2011). This theory provides a lens through which we can appreciate the performative aspect of cultural values, like *pulaaku*, in shaping individual and collective identities.

The fusion begins by understanding that *Pulaaku* is not a passive set of values but an active code of conduct that informs the actions and decisions of Fulbe individuals. It embodies principles such as *semteende* (modesty and reserve), *munyal* (patience and fortitude), *bakkeiilo* (care and forethought), modesty, autonomy, self-control, shyness, dignity, kindness (*en'dam*), and leadership (*ardungal*) (Leger and Mohammad, 2000; Schultz, 1980; Spidahl, 2004; Ver Eecke, 1988; VerEecke, 1986). These principles are not merely theoretical; they are performed in daily life, shaping interactions, decisions, and relationships. Performativity, on the other hand, acknowledges that identity is not a fixed entity but is constantly shaped and reshaped through the performative acts of individuals (Bell, 1999; Fine, 2016; Golder, 2018; Miller, 2012; Nakassis, 2012). This concept is particularly relevant in understanding how *pulaaku* influences the Fulbe identity. The performance of *pulaaku's* principles, such as showing kindness, exercising patience and fortitude, and upholding dignity, is not a mere reflection of identity but actively constructs and reaffirms it. This performativity is evident in how Fulbe individuals actively enact their cultural values in their roles as legal practitioners in Nigeria.

In view of the foregoing, it is arguable that legal practitioners, while bound by professional ethics and regulations, actively perform their commitment to justice, fairness, and the rule of law, all of which are deeply intertwined with *pulaaku's* principles. When they engage in legal advocacy, they are not simply presenting arguments; they are actively constructing legal narratives that draw on their cultural values (Di Donato, 2011). These narratives cover not only legal precedents and principles but also an artful blend of persuasion, empathy, and ethical conduct. The fusion is also evident in the Pullo legal practitioner's role as a cultural ambassador. In engaging with non-Fulbe colleagues and clients, they actively perform the act of bridging cultural gaps, educating others about *pulaaku* and its significance. This educational role is not just an informative task but an active performance of their commit-

ment to cultural diversity and mutual understanding within the legal community.

Furthermore, the fusion extends to the Pullo legal practitioner's ethical conduct and decision-making (McCaul, 2011). When faced with ethical dilemmas, they perform the act of balancing professional obligations and cultural values. This involves making decisions that respect both sets of values and reflect their adaptability and negotiation skills (Frantz, 1981; Lakoff, 1989). The fusion of *pulaaku* and performativity also underscores the power and responsibility of the legal profession. Legal practitioners are not mere interpreters of laws; they are active performers who construct and shape the very concept of justice itself (Di Donato, 2011). They are not just professionals; they are stewards of justice and equity. Their actions and performances have far-reaching consequences, shaping the lives of individuals and the foundations of society.

In conclusion, the fusion of *pulaaku* and performativity highlights the dynamic and transformative nature of cultural values within the legal profession. It emphasises that *pulaaku* is not a passive set of principles but a dynamic, actively performed guide that shapes the actions and decisions of Fulbe legal practitioners. This fusion enriches the legal landscape by infusing it with a commitment to justice, fairness, and the preservation of cultural identity (Gordon, 2000). It underscores the enduring significance of cultural values in shaping the identities and actions of individuals within the legal profession and the broader society.

Balancing Cultural Values and Professional Roles

The delicate equilibrium between cultural values and professional roles is a challenge faced by individuals across various fields, including legal practitioners (Rhode, 2002). In the context of the Pullo legal practitioner, this balance is particularly intricate, as they must harmonize their deeply rooted cultural values, encapsulated in *pulaaku*, with the rigorous demands of the legal profession in Nigeria (Fine, 2016; Virtanen, 2003). Balancing cultural values and professional roles is a multifaceted journey that speaks to the adaptability, negotiation skills, and ethical considerations of these legal professionals (Frantz, 1981). To understand the challenges and nuances of balancing cultural values and professional roles, it is essential to first appreciate the depth of *pulaaku's* influence on the Fulbe community. *Pulaaku* is not a superficial set of guidelines; it is a comprehensive moral and ethical framework that shapes the identity and actions of the Fulbe. It underlines principles such as *semteende* (modesty and reserve), *munyaal* (patience and fortitude), *bakkiilo* (care and forethought), modesty, autonomy, self-control, shyness, dignity, kindness (*en'dam*), leadership (*ardungal*), and more. These principles are not abstract concepts; they are deeply ingrained in the Fulbe way of life (VerEecke, 1986).

The legal profession, on the other hand, operates within a distinct framework governed by laws, regulations, and ethical standards (Ojo, 2007). Legal practitioners are bound by professional ethics and codes of conduct, which may sometimes come into tension with cultural values. This tension is particularly pronounced in scenarios where legal ethics necessitate confrontational or adversarial approaches (Jones, 2018), which can be at odds with the Fulbe principles of dignity, kindness, and *semteende* (Schultz, 1980), and especially where the legal practitioner is a Pullo woman (Bacik and Drew, 2006; Sáez, 2012; VerEecke, 1989, 1993). The Pullo legal practitioner, in navigating this complex terrain, is required to make ethical and strategic choices that respect both their cultural values and their professional obligations

(Lakoff, 1989). This means making decisions that uphold the honour, dignity, and ethical standards of *pulaaku* while adhering to the legal profession's rules and principles. It is a dynamic and nuanced process that demands constant negotiation and adaptation (Frantz, 1981).

One of the areas where this balance is most evident is in legal advocacy (Lohn and Ball, 1982). Legal practitioners must advocate vigorously for their clients, and this often involves contentious and adversarial strategies. Balancing *pulaaku's* principles with the demands of advocacy requires finesse. The Pullo legal practitioner must find ways to navigate legal disputes and represent their clients effectively without compromising their cultural values. This can involve creative problem-solving, negotiation, and finding alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that align with *pulaaku's* emphasis on fairness and community harmony (Lohn and Ball, 1982; Menkel-Meadow, 1984). Another aspect of this balance is the Pullo legal practitioner's role as a cultural ambassador. They actively engage with non-Fulbe colleagues and clients, educating them about *pulaaku* and its significance. This educational role serves to bridge cultural gaps, promote diversity, and deepen mutual understanding within the legal community (Dahiru *et al.*, 2017). The Pullo legal practitioner becomes a conduit for inter-cultural dialogue and fosters a greater appreciation of cultural diversity within the legal profession (Nyamnjoh, 2013; Ricca, 2023).

Furthermore, this balance extends into the Pullo legal practitioner's ethical conduct and decision-making. When faced with ethical dilemmas, they must weigh the legal and cultural dimensions, striving to find solutions that respect both sets of values (Lakoff, 1989). It reflects their adaptability and negotiation skills, as they navigate complex situations while remaining true to their cultural identity (Frantz, 1981; Gordon, 2000). The future of *pulaaku* in the legal profession lies in the adaptability of Fulbe legal practitioners (Frantz, 1981). They recognise the importance of preserving their cultural values while adapting to changing legal contexts (Frantz, 1981). This adaptability ensures that *pulaaku* remains a dynamic and relevant force in their professional lives.

In conclusion, the delicate balance between cultural values and professional roles faced by Fulbe legal practitioners is a testament to their adaptability, negotiation skills, and commitment to ethical conduct. It reflects their ability to navigate complex scenarios while upholding the principles of *pulaaku*. It also highlights the enduring significance of cultural values in shaping the identities and actions of individuals within the legal profession. Balancing cultural values and professional roles is not a static challenge but a dynamic process that enriches the legal tapestry of Nigeria.

Pulaaku and Dispute Resolution

The Fulbe have long upheld the principles of *pulaaku* as the guiding force in their culture and ethical framework. For a Fulbe legal practitioner, the mantra "winning is not everything" holds resonance with his idea of human dignity (Cortès, 2022; Iliffe, 2005). Aligned with the principles of *pulaaku*, this ethos underscores that, in the pursuit of justice and resolution, it is not solely about emerging victorious in a legal battle but also about upholding dignity, respect, and harmony (Menkel-Meadow, 2000). It reflects a commitment to fairness and equity, even in the face of disagreement (Burch, 2011). Fulbe legal practitioners often embrace the idea that a successful outcome involves not just winning the case but doing so with honour and preserving the dignity of all parties involved (Schultz, 1980). In their practice, they navigate the

legal terrain with a profound understanding that true victory lies in upholding the timeless values of *pulaaku* while seeking just resolutions, fostering a culture of compassion and respect in the pursuit of justice.

Interestingly, there are striking parallels between the ethical underpinnings of *pulaaku* and modern dispute resolution in the field of law. For instance, one of the fundamental principles of *pulaaku* is patience. It emphasises the importance of deliberation and the avoidance of hasty decisions. In modern dispute resolution, the concept of patience resonates in the form of mediation and negotiation. Legal practitioners and mediators encourage parties in conflict to take the time needed for discussions and negotiations (Menkel-Meadow, 2019). This patience is a central element in reaching equitable and amicable solutions, mirroring the Fulbe commitment to avoiding hasty decisions that may exacerbate tensions (Burch, 2011).

Dignity is another core principle of *pulaaku*. It underscores the importance of preserving one's honour and reputation. In modern legal practice, the preservation of the parties' dignity is a fundamental aspect of dispute resolution. Legal professionals strive to maintain respect and civility throughout the process, ensuring that the parties' dignity remains intact (Cortès, 2022; Lakoff, 1989). This is particularly evident in alternative dispute resolution methods, where a respectful and dignified approach is central to reaching agreements (Cortès, 2022; Lakoff, 1989).

Kindness, as enshrined in *pulaaku*, promotes empathy and care towards others. This principle aligns with the concept of compassion in modern dispute resolution. Mediators and legal practitioners advocate for parties to consider the well-being and emotions of all those involved in the dispute. This emphasis on kindness fosters an environment of support and understanding, reflecting the Fulbe value of empathy and care towards others (Burch, 2011).

Leadership, a pivotal element of *pulaaku*, is also reflected in the modern legal field. In dispute resolution, elders and community leaders often serve as mediators and facilitators, guiding the resolution process. Their role extends beyond authority; they embody the principle of leadership, exemplifying how to uphold cultural values and navigate conflicts while preserving honour, dignity, and fairness (Schultz, 1980). In the legal context, experienced mediators and arbitrators often assume leadership roles in facilitating negotiations and guiding the resolution process.

In essence, the parallels between *pulaaku* principles and modern dispute resolution in law are profound (Ayer, 1993; McLoughlin, 2011). The enduring values of patience, dignity, kindness, and leadership that have guided the Fulbe for generations find resonance in the ethical foundations of contemporary legal practice. This connection demonstrates the universality of these principles, illustrating that the values embedded in cultural traditions like *pulaaku* have a place in the emerging contours of the legal profession.

Pullo Legal Practitioners as Fulbe Cultural Ambassadors

Legal practitioners, particularly those from diverse cultural backgrounds like the Fulbe, often find themselves in the role of cultural ambassadors, actively bridging cultural gaps and fostering a greater understanding of their own cultural values within the legal community (Kuptsova and Sazonova, 2022). This role of cultural ambassadorship is particularly pronounced for Fulbe legal practitioners, who bring with them the deeply rooted ethical and moral framework of *pulaaku* into the legal profession, like their fellow

Fulbe in other spheres of life do (Usman, 2010). As they navigate the complex terrain of legal practice in Nigeria, they are not just professionals; they are also emissaries of their cultural heritage (Kuptsova and Sazonova, 2022). Fulbe legal practitioners play a pivotal role in educating their non-Fulbe colleagues and clients about *pulaaku* and its significance. This educational role extends beyond merely explaining their cultural values; it involves actively demonstrating how these values are integrated into their professional conduct and ethical decision-making. In this sense, they perform the role of cultural ambassadors by displaying the practical application of *pulaaku* in the legal context. This cultural ambassadorship is underpinned by the recognition that cultural diversity is a valuable asset in the legal profession (Ndukwe, 1996; Ugbem *et al.*, 2020). The legal community is a mosaic of different cultures, and each contributes to the richness and depth of the profession. Fulbe legal practitioners, through their role as cultural ambassadors, actively contribute to this diversity by promoting a deeper understanding of the cultural values that guide their actions and decisions.

As cultural ambassadors, Fulbe legal practitioners also facilitate intercultural dialogue within the legal community (Nyamnjoh, 2013; Ricca, 2023). They create opportunities for colleagues and clients from various cultural backgrounds to engage in conversations about cultural diversity, ethics, and the intersections of cultural values with legal principles. This dialogue not only fosters mutual understanding but also enriches the legal profession by encouraging open-mindedness and a broader perspective (Fitzpatrick, 2020). Moreover, Fulbe legal practitioners serve as living examples of the fusion of cultural values and professional roles. Their conduct reflects the dynamic interplay between *pulaaku* and the demands of legal practice. This demonstration is a form of cultural ambassadorship that displays the adaptability and negotiation skills required to balance cultural values and professional obligations (Frantz, 1981). In a society like Nigeria, cultural ambassadors actively contribute to promoting cultural diversity, fostering respect for different cultural values, and dispelling stereotypes or biases that may exist within the legal community (Cortès, 2022; McCaul, 2011). Their actions and commitment to cultural values are powerful tools for building bridges between different cultural groups and for promoting harmony within the legal profession.

Future of *Pulaaku* in the Legal Profession

The ethical and moral framework of *pulaaku*, deeply ingrained in the culture of the Fulbe (Mohamadou, 2022), is a timeless guide that has influenced the lives and actions of individuals for generations. Within the legal profession in Nigeria, the future of *pulaaku* holds both challenges and opportunities, as this cultural bedrock continues to shape the identities and roles of Fulbe legal practitioners. The future of *pulaaku* in the legal profession is inherently linked to the adaptability and resilience of the Fulbe legal practitioners themselves (Frantz, 1981). As the legal landscape evolves, they must navigate the tension between their cultural values and the demands of the profession. This adaptability is not a sign of compromise but a testament to the enduring significance of *pulaaku*, which encourages ethical conduct, respect, and justice. One of the challenges lies in balancing *pulaaku's* principles with the rigorous demands of legal advocacy. The legal profession often requires adversarial or confrontational approaches, which can be at odds with *pulaaku's* emphasis on kindness, patience and fortitude, and dignity. The future of *pulaaku* requires Fulbe legal practi-

tioners to continue finding creative and ethical ways to uphold their cultural values while effectively representing their clients.

The future also entails a deeper integration of cultural diversity and inclusivity within the legal profession. *Pulaaku* can play a pivotal role in fostering a greater understanding of cultural values and ethics. Fulbe legal practitioners are well-positioned to educate their non-Fulbe colleagues and clients about *pulaaku*, contributing to a more inclusive legal community that celebrates cultural diversity. Moreover, the future of *pulaaku* in the legal profession calls for the preservation and transmission of these values to the next generation. As older Fulbe legal practitioners retire, it is essential to ensure that the principles of *pulaaku* continue to guide younger generations. This transmission of cultural values is vital for maintaining the integrity of the Fulbe identity within the legal profession.

The future also holds the potential for Fulbe legal practitioners to actively engage in policy advocacy and legal scholarship that draws on the principles of *pulaaku*. This contribution can influence the development of legal systems and ethical standards, not only in Nigeria but also on a broader scale. It underscores the transformative power of cultural values within the legal profession. Furthermore, the future of *pulaaku* in the legal profession is intrinsically tied to the broader societal landscape. As Nigerian society evolves, *pulaaku* remains a constant ethical compass that can guide Fulbe legal practitioners in their roles as advocates, arbitrators, and champions of justice. It continues to foster a commitment to fairness, dignity, and the preservation of cultural values.

In essence, the future of *pulaaku* in the legal profession is a testament to its enduring significance. It is a living example of how cultural values can adapt and thrive within a dynamic and ever-evolving professional context (Frantz, 1981). The Fulbe legal practitioners, as custodians of *pulaaku*, continue to perform the role of cultural ambassadors, enriching the legal landscape and contributing to a more inclusive and diverse legal community. The future of *pulaaku* is not a static concept but a dynamic and evolving force that shapes the legal profession in Nigeria. It stands as a reminder that cultural values, when upheld with integrity and adaptability, can coexist harmoniously with the demands of a modern legal practice (Frantz, 1981). As long as Fulbe legal practitioners remain committed to the principles of *pulaaku*, the future of this cultural bedrock in the legal profession remains bright, resilient, and profoundly significant.

Conclusion

This paper highlighted the relationship between culture and profession, shedding light on the ways in which cultural values shape the identities and roles of individuals in leg. The confluence of culture and profession shapes the actions, decisions, and ethical conduct of Fulbe legal practitioners. We have seen how the ethos of *pulaaku* enriches the professionalism of a Fulbe legal practitioner. In this effort, performativity theory provided the theoretical backdrop, revealing that identity and social roles are actively constructed through performative acts. *Pulaaku*, in this context, is not a passive set of values but an active guide that influences the actions and decisions of Fulbe legal practitioners. It reflects the dynamic interplay between cultural values and professional roles. The Fulbe legal practitioner's role as a cultural ambassador became evident, as they actively bridged cultural gaps, educated non-Fulbe colleagues and clients, and demonstrated the fusion of cultural values with professional roles. The intersection of culture and professional roles unveiled the challenges and opportunities that

Fulbe legal practitioners face. They must balance cultural values with the demands of legal advocacy and ethical conduct. The ability to navigate this complex terrain reflects their adaptability, negotiation skills, and ethical commitment. The future of *pulaaku* in the legal profession is a testament to its adaptability and enduring significance.

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