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I have the honour of introducing the inaugural issue of the *LASU Journal of Multidisciplinary Nigerian Studies (LASUJMNS)*, Volume 1, Number 1 (December 2025). This maiden publication represents a significant step in the commitment of Lagos State University to advancing rigorous, multidisciplinary scholarship focused on Nigerian realities.

LASUJMNS was established to provide a credible academic platform for high-quality research that interrogates the social, economic, political, educational, cultural, and technological frameworks in Nigeria. The journal responds to the growing need for scholarly work that moves beyond single-discipline approaches and offers integrated, evidence-based perspectives capable of informing policy, practice, and public discourse.

As a peer-reviewed, biannual, open-access journal, LASUJMNS is committed to academic excellence, ethical publishing, and accessibility. All submissions undergo a rigorous double-blind peer review process in line with international best practices and the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Only original, methodologically sound, and relevant manuscripts are considered for publication.

The articles featured in this inaugural issue reflect the multidisciplinary scope and scholarly standards of the journal. They address contemporary Nigerian issues across key sectors, which offers insightful analyses, empirical findings, and practical implications that contribute meaningfully to national development discussions.

I sincerely appreciate the dedication of the Editorial and Advisory Boards, the professionalism of our reviewers, and the confidence of the authors who contributed to this first volume. Their collective efforts have laid a strong foundation for the journal. On behalf of the Editorial Board, I invite scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to engage with this issue and to partner with us in building a vibrant platform for multidisciplinary Nigerian studies.

Prof. M. O. B. Mohammed, FNAEAP

Editor-in-Chief

LASU Journal of Multidisciplinary Nigerian Studies (LASUJMNS)

Lagos State University.

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EDUCATION AND THE GRASS-IS-GREEN SYNDROME: COLONIES OF MIND AND THE COURAGE TO CULTIVATE OUR OWN GRASS

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Abstract

All over the educational landscape, learners, lecturers, and leaders glance across the fence and assume the far field is finer, the distant degree is deeper, and the foreign faculty is fairer. The Grass-is-green Syndrome (GIGS) fuses social comparison, status seeking, and structural inequalities into an enticing story that "elsewhere is excellence". The objective of this paper is to unpack GIGS in Nigeria and Africa through sociological cum managerial lenses; interrogate the roles of ranking, media, migration, and money; and sketch strategies to green our own grass through policy, pedagogy and partnership. The method employed is the synthesis of Contemporary Literature (2020-2025) from UNESCO/GEM, World Bank, peer-reviewed journals, and credible reportage; interpretive analysis anchored in social comparison theory, post-colonial critique, and human capital perspective. Results show that GIGS is amplified by: i) symbolic signals (global rankings and glossy social feeds); ii) structural scarcities (funding, facilities and futures), and iii) Status Scripts (Colonial hangovers and epistemic hierarchies). Yet, evidence shows pathways to pride and performance via local leadership, decolonized curricula, indigenous knowledge integration, and tested investment. It is imperative that the country moves from flight to fight-towards reforms, and from envy to agency; so that our grass grows greener where we water it.

Key Words:

self-beliefs, knowledge sovereignty, local ingenuity, creating capacity, grass-is-green syndrome

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Introduction

Modern humanity lives in an age of feeds, and fast-moving fantasies. Students scroll; parents panic; policymakers peer at international league tables. A flicker of campus on Instagram; a glossy brochure; a ranking rung and suddenly the here is "hollow", the home "humble" and the horizon is "holy". According to Adeyemi (2008) social comparison, once local in lecture halls is now limitless in the palm of the hand, with mounting evidence that curated online images, intensify upwards comparisons, dampen well-being and distort-aspirations.

In Nigeria, this syndrome intersects with the Jàpa wave (migration in search of "better" schooling, safety and salaries) reshaping families, faculties and the future of local institutions. Adeyemo (2024) pouts that recent analysis and new models track how brain dynamics have sharpened, with final-year undergraduate increasingly seeing exit as excellence. It is imperative at this juncture to clarify the concepts of this work for better understanding.

Concepts and Constricts of Grass is Green Syndrome

Grass-is-Green Syndrome (GIGS) is the persistent perception that educational value, virtue and visibility reside "Out there" abroad, elsewhere, across the fence. Moustafa (2024) clarifies that GIGS is cognitive (beliefs about quality), symbolic (status meaning) and structural (financing, facilities and futures). Tong (2025) mentions that while Fastinger's classic social comparison idea undergirds the psychology, contemporary studies show how structured online comparison predicts motivation shifts and mental states in digital learning spaces in today's engine of envy. In addition, global rankings are powerful prisons: the privilege publications in certain venues, reward resource-rich ecosystems and penalize publics in the global South saddled with scarcity. A growing body of scholarship critiques methodological biases and regional inequalities embedded in widely used tables, urging caution in policy making. Even the rankers are revising. Times Higher Education announced methodology simplification in 2025 to reduce "noise", tacitly acknowledging how they measure matters and sometimes misleads (THE, 2025). In sum, rankings can inform, but they can also inflate illusion, intensify inferiority and institutionalize inequality; the perfect fertilizer for GIGS. Global rankings are powerful prisms. They are privilege publications in certain venues, reward resource-rich ecosystems, and penalize publics in the Global South saddled with scarcity. A growing body of scholarship critiques methodological biases and regional inequities embedded in widely used tables, urging caution in policy making. Gbenu (2012), punctures the aura of precision – high-profile controversies, data manipulation claims and legal settlements. When reputation is a metric and metrics shape money, gaming becomes tempting. Rankings can inform but they can also inflate illusions, intensify inferiority and institutionalize inequity.

Chen (2022) opines that meta-analyses are reviews during 2020-2024 show that social-media-driven comparison correlates with stress, anxiety and diminished self-concept-especially in youth and students. For education choices, this morphs into "abroad envy". Laboratories are seen without load-shedding, lectures with luminaries, lawns without litters and therefore assume paradise is permanent across the pond. Recent experiments in online learning also document how upward versus downward comparison cue change motivation effort and efficacy. The result? A classroom of doom scrolling doubters who underrated local value and overrate distant visas (Tong, 2025).

Money, Mobility and the Magnetism of "Elsewhere"

Migration data show surging international student mobility worldwide with 6.9 million mobile students by 2022 with sub-Saharan Africa's trajectories rising sharply (Junaid, 2022). Nigeria participates robustly in this mobility marketplace. On the micro side, foreign exchange flows tied to education abroad have been volatile. 2024 Q1 data indicated an 83% drop in forex allocation for overseas for overseas schooling compared with 2023 Q1, reflecting both policy shifts and economic pressures; yet other 2024 reports lacked large outlays over the years, underscoring uneven but significant external spend on education. The macro message is that even when the naira reels, the pull of foreign study persists. Broader reforms also shaped the terrain. In April 2025, the world bank approved for Nigeria. Half of that amount was dedicated

to improving education quality. The action signals recognition that greening the local grass requires capital, coordination and courage. Yet beneath the bustle of imagination and the billions burnt on foreign education lies a deeper dilemma; the colonial chain that still choreographs our choices. The fight for facilities is often fed by philosophies not fully ours, by syllabuses still soaked in subservience, imitation and imported ideals. Thus, beyond the economics of escape rests the epistemic entanglement which is the subtle schooling of the mind that whispers, "foreign is finer". Social media machinery magnifies moments and masks mundane realities (WENR, 2023).

GIGS is not merely financial, it is philosophical. Postcolonial scholarship across 2020 - 2025 calls for decolonizing the curriculum, re- centering indigenous knowledge system (IKS) and rebalancing language policy so learners can think, thrive and theorize in ways rooted in their realities. Empirical studies from Zimbabwe to South Africa to East Africa, document effort, frictions and frameworks for Africanizing curricula without abandoning global standards. Systematic reviews in 2024 – 2025 highlight tangible benefits when IKS is integrated into STEM and social sciences by improving relevance, motivation, and community linkage while identifying teacher capacity as a bottleneck (Ogebo, 2024).

Anatomy of the Syndrome

Standing at the threshold of a subtle yet sweeping structure is the syndrome of educational envy, the longing for greener grass that blinds people to their garden. It is pertinent that the anatomy must be dissected in order to dismantle the myth. These are encapsulated in the spiral of, Spectacle, Storyline, Scarcity, Stress, Shift, Slip and Stigma. Each turn of the spiral pulls students, scholars and systems from self -belief into surrender; each ring reinforces the notion that elsewhere is excellence. In this anatomy, the ailment is not only financial or material, it is psychological, symbolic and structural.

Spectacle: Rankings, reputations, and viral reels

In the first turn of the spiral, the spectacle seduces: the glossy brochures, the global rankings, the Instagram ideal of the foreign campus. The spectacle signals success, silently scripting the story that overseas equals superior. Yet recent scholarship cautions: ranking systems carry inherent biases and reinforce structural inequities rather than genuine educational quality. For instance, meta-analysis shows that while upward comparison may motivate, it also often diminishes self-concept and distorts expectations. Social media research further shows that exposure to upward comparisons via social platforms mediates lower self-esteem among students (UNESCO UIS, 2022). In Nigeria and other African contexts, the allure of ranking-rich foreign institutions often rests on spectacle rather than substance. When the spectacle dominates, people buy into the idea that greener grass is always "over there," thus feeding the syndrome.

The consequence is that the spectacle creates a pressure pyramid where home institutions are measured not on relevance but on whether they mirror the image of elsewhere. Students may undervalue domestic programmes, believing the glitter is elsewhere.

Storyline: Historical hangovers, imported ideals and internalized inferiority

The second spiral turn is the storyline. This is the narrative people inherit about education, status, and the “better place.” In many post-colonial contexts, the storyline is adulterated by colonial legacies: Western curricula, foreign language primacy, imported educational models. Decolonization scholars argue that such scripts perpetuate epistemic dependence and propagate the myth that “they teach best, we learn second.” When the narrative elevates imported ideals and denigrates local potential, the syndrome deepens: the grass looks greener because the story says so.

The consequence is that learners internalize a script of deficiency: “my programme is less, my institution is low, my future is faint unless I go abroad.” The storyline becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Scarcity: Funding, facilities, and futures

The third ring of the spiral is the scarcity of resources. These include, inadequate laboratories, erratic power supply, limited library access, shrinking student-staff ratios. These structural deficits underpin many African educational systems and trigger the flight for foreign alternatives. For example, a 2025 analysis of social comparison in online learning tied scarcity with lowered academic motivation. The syndrome is rooted not only in illusion but in real lack. Remedy requires resource replenishment, not only rhetorical reframing.

The consequence is that scarcity breeds perception of inferiority and propels migration of students and faculty alike. When students believe local education lacks future prospects, GIGS is reinforced.

Stress: Scrolls, self-doubt, and stunted self-concept

The fourth spiral stage is stress, especially psychological stress induced by comparison culture and social media. Empirical studies show that frequent upward social comparison on platforms like Instagram leads to decreased body-esteem and self-esteem. A Nigerian study of online social comparison among undergraduates in Abia State found a moderate to high prevalence of comparison behaviour and linked this to self-concept effects. The syndrome thrives in the stress-zone where and when every scroll invites self-scrutiny, the grass looks greener not because it is, but because people feel watered-down.

The consequence is that learners under this stress may underperform, withdraw, or disengage, not because they are incapable, but because they feel incapable relative to perceived ‘others’.

Shift: Plans change, passports beckon, purposes dilute

Turning into the fifth loop is the shift. This is the moment when intention turns into exit strategy. Students, staff, and entire institutions shift away from local commitment to external hope. Data on international student mobility show sub-Saharan Africa participation growing, reflecting educational migration patterns. The syndrome gains momentum when the shift is seen as the solution. The focus moves from ‘improve here’ to ‘escape there’.

The consequence is that when the shift becomes normative, home systems are drained: brain-drain, resource-drain, confidence-drain. The grass across the fence holds the promise; the home grass loses the people.

Slip: Staff follow, standards sag, capacity collapses

The sixth ring is the slip. As students leave, staff resign, research output dwindle, institutional ambition shrinks. The slip deepens the spiral by creating a vicious circle. Fewer resources, lower rankings, increased exit. Studies on institutional metrics in Nigeria show how resource inadequacies correlate with migration and lowered institutional reputation (Aghenta, 2001). The slip is the silent sustainer of the syndrome: as home grass is neglected, the illusion of greener grass magnifies.

The consequence is that once the slip gains traction, recovery is harder. The institution becomes the ‘less preferred option and suffers identity erosion.

Stigma: Hidden hierarchies, hushed judgments, hollow hope

Finally, the last spiral stage is stigma. This has to do with the shame of being local, the whispered devaluation of local credentials; the belief that returning without a foreign degree is second-best. Social comparison theory supports how individuals internalize deficits when comparing upward and receive structural messages of inferiority. The syndrome is cemented when the home institution is seen as less than and the foreign institution is mythologized. Stigma makes the greener grass notion self-perpetuating.

The consequence is that stigma suppresses pride, inhibits investment, and eradicates the inclination to stay, fight, and fix. Students may hide their domestic credentials; local graduates may downplay their achievements abroad.

Viewed together, the Seven-Spiral anatomy outlines how the Grass-Is-Green Syndrome is not merely about looking elsewhere but about being pulled elsewhere by a powerful combination of spectacle, storyline, scarcity, stress, shift, slip, and stigma. Understanding each ring helps to cut the spiral, climb steady, and cultivate our own grass with courage, confidence, and context. After diagnosing the seven-spiral syndrome, the challenge now is to construct the upward pathway. A path from comparison to conviction, from inferiority to innovation, and from habitual flight to hopeful fixing. Greening the grass is not an abstract metaphor but a practical mandate. It requires deliberate policies that water the soil, pedagogies that warm the spirit, and partnerships that weave strength across systems. This section elevates these three pillars not as parallel strategies but as interlocked levers capable of reversing the spiral and restoring pride in local education.

The Way Forward

Reform begins with policy because policy provides the pulse, power, and pathway through which educational systems breathe. When policy is weak, institutions wobble; when policy is

wise, systems withstand storms. Nigeria's contemporary educational landscape reveals a need for policies that do more than react; policies that reimagine, recalibrate, and reform.

One central requirement is intentional investment. Without resources, reforms remain rhetoric. The World Bank's 2025 approval of a \$1.08 billion development package (half dedicated to improving Nigeria's education quality) signals that global institutions now recognize the urgency of restoring local learning ecosystems (World Bank, 2025). Research from UNESCO's 2023 and 2024/5 Global Education Monitoring Reports confirms that visible facility improvements, better laboratories, updated libraries, reliable electricity, and digital learning spaces; significantly raise student motivation and staff performance. When students see steady infrastructural renewal, their confidence in the system is strengthened. Simply put, grass grows where water flows, and schools thrive where spending is strategic, sustained, and sensibly supervised.

Yet investment alone is barren without measurement that honours relevance. Global rankings paint beauty without context. They privilege publication quantity over societal quality, visibility over value, and wealth over worth. Moustafa (2024) and Al-Fanar Media (2023) argue that Western-dominated rankings misrepresent educational excellence, disadvantaging institutions in developing contexts. Nigerian universities must therefore develop Local Relevance Dashboards that track employability, community impact, indigenous innovation, faculty mentorship density, and contributions to national development. When evaluation shifts from imitation to innovation, institutions stop being spectators in someone else's scoreboard and become authors of their own metrics.

Migration must also be reimagined. Rather than resisting the Japa syndrome, Nigeria must redesign it. Research on academic mobility in sub-Saharan Africa shows that movement can be mutually beneficial when structured intentionally (WENR, 2023). Policies can transform talent exit into talent exchange through:

Co-tutelle doctoral programmes where candidates study abroad yet remain rooted at home; Return Fellowships requiring Nigerian scholars overseas to return for teaching cycles; Diaspora Sabbaticals enabling global experts to re-enter local systems through short-term, high-impact engagements. These models convert outflow into inflow, replacing brain drain with brain drive train ; a cyclical system where knowledge leaves to learn but returns to lift.

Finally, transparency is the tendon that holds these reforms together. The 2025 Columbia University ranking lawsuit (Reuters, 2025) revealed that even prestigious institutions manipulate metrics when integrity collapses. Nigerian institutions must therefore embrace open reporting, audited expenditure, public dashboards, and shared datasets. Trust grows in the sunlight; transformation thrives where transparency triumphs.

If policy provides the architecture, pedagogy supplies the arteries and atmosphere through which learning flows. Education is not only about structures; it is about souls, stories, and skills.

Reversing the syndrome requires a shift from borrowed pedagogies that look outward to birthed pedagogies that grow from within.

The first pedagogical turn must be toward indigenisation and not as isolation, but as intellectual grounding. A growing body of scholarship (Ijatuyi, 2025; Voices of Change Review, 2025) affirms that integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) enhances relevance, cultural confidence, and learner engagement. Nigerian students must encounter themselves, their histories, their contexts, and their communities within the curriculum. STEM programmes can highlight indigenous engineering innovations — from traditional metallurgy to herbal pharmacology. Social sciences can draw from African philosophies, proverbs, conflict-resolution models, and communal ethics. UNESCO's 2024/5 findings on leadership emphasise that culturally responsive pedagogy builds identity, boosts belonging, and nurtures academic resilience.

Second, educators must cultivate comparative courage; the capacity to teach learners how to decode, dissect, and demystify ranking systems. Rather than allowing students to uncritically consume global metrics, lecturers can guide them through ranking methodologies, illuminate biases toward wealthy Western universities, and co-develop local performance indicators. Moustafa (2024) insists that ranking-literacy education protects students from blind admiration and promotes analytical autonomy. Students should not merely inherit global hierarchies; they should interrogate them.

Third, pedagogy must address the psychological stress of relentless comparison, especially online. Studies by Chen (2022), Kundu (2024), and Nigerian undergraduate surveys confirm that upward social comparison reduces self-confidence and academic motivation. Nigerian universities can introduce modules on digital wellbeing, teaching students to critique curated realities, manage emotional triggers, and convert comparison into creativity. A learner who scrolls with sense, surfs with self-belief, and studies without self-sabotage becomes less vulnerable to the inferiority spiral.

Finally, effective pedagogy requires project-and-place-based learning that links knowledge to livelihoods. UNESCO IESALC reports (2022) show that institutions with community-linked teaching models record higher employability rates and stronger student satisfaction. Nigerian students can engage in agricultural innovation projects in rural communities, MSME optimisation programmes in peri-urban markets, or literacy mentorship in underserved schools. When learning touches lives, students see the power of local education — and their pride in the system grows.

The final pillar of reform is partnership which is the power of collective intelligence, the synergy of shared strengths, the unity of diverse institutions working toward a common future. Education dies in isolation but thrives in community. The Quadruple Helix Model — collaboration among government, academia, industry, and the community, offers an ideal blueprint. For Nigeria, this means that universities design programmes with industry partners,

policymakers consult academics before reforms, and communities participate in curriculum planning. When policy meets practice, and when people partner with place, transformation becomes inevitable. Partnerships must also break the boundaries of individual institutions through Regional Research Rings. Share the load, share the lab, share the laurels.

Nigeria's diaspora is another powerful engine. Through Diaspora Design Sprints, virtual labs, visiting-scholar residencies, and co-supervised theses, global Nigerian academics can inject fresh expertise, cutting-edge perspectives, and international networks into local institutions. Adeniji's (2024) brain-drain analysis shows that diaspora engagement does more than reverse loss. It returns leverage.

Policies provide the scaffolding, pedagogies shape the soul, and partnerships supply the strength for Nigeria to green its own educational landscape. When these three work in harmony, the grass grows not because the sun shines brighter elsewhere but because we water our ground with wisdom, work, and will, transforming envy into excellence, imitation into innovation, and comparison into creation.

Conclusion

Dosunmu (2024) pouts that education should be a garden, not a gallery. A gallery displays trophies from elsewhere; a garden grows value right here. The Grass-Is-Green Syndrome tempts us to trade agency for admiration, roots for reputations, rigour for rank. However, the research is plain: rankings can mislead; social media can magnify envy; mobility without reciprocity can thin local capacity. Conversely, leadership, local relevance, and indigenous knowledge integration can tilt trajectories toward dignity, discovery, and development.

Students and parents should choose fit over fame, substance over spectacle, and mentors over metrics. Lecturers and leaders should design courses that solve community problems, not just collect citations. In the same vein, policymakers should finance the fundamentals; audit the optics; cultivate comparative advantage at home.

True transformation begins with self-belief, that quiet courage that births boldness and beckons building brilliance where we belong. It is strengthened by local ingenuity, the creative capacity that lights the lane from longing for elsewhere to loving our own learning landscapes. With knowledge sovereignty, scholars should be steadied, shifting from copying cultures to creating capacity and cultivating confidence. As contextual relevance redirects the gaze, it is important to note that real growth grows from the ground that knows us. When we finally commit to home grown excellence, it will be an affirmation that greatness germinates not by gazing at greener gardens abroad but greening our own grace with grit, grace and generational vision.

Greener grass grows where gardeners gather. Let us be those gardeners watering with wisdom, work, and will, until our meadows are not merely as green as any elsewhere, but greener because they are ours.

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