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DEMOCRACY AND BENEVOLENT DICTATORSHIP GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS: WHICH SHOULD NIGERIA ADOPT?

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Abstract

Democracy has been majorly orchestrated as the best governance system in the world. It has been described as a governance system which ensures freedom, equality and democratic principles. This paper notes the attributes of democracy but doubts its celebrated ability to offer its attributes, especially in Africa and particularly Nigeria. In the logical framework, the paper discusses the source of democratic governance which it ties to the Bible's expose on the struggle for power in Heaven, which led to the sack of Lucifer and angels loyal to him from Heaven to the earth and that they landed in Greece where they began to establish the governance system that they could not establish in Heaven, as they were unable to dethrone God. The paper in its analysis shows that with the political fundamentals of Nigeria, democracy will never lead Nigeria to growth and self-expression as a nation; rather the country will remain in the vicious cycle of democratic mis-governance. The paper suggest strongly that Nigeria should consider adopting the benevolent dictatorship governance system to present the platform that can - in the short run - propel Nigeria to great economic wellness and progress and to be in tune with the governance model in Heaven, as a faith nation.

Keywords: Democracy, Governance, Dictatorship, Governance Systems.

Background

Governance systems define how power is distributed, exercised, and regulated in a society. Two contrasting governance models that interest the researcher are democracy and benevolent dictatorship. Each is known to possess distinct features, advantages, and challenges. Many commentators on Nigeria's development had intentionally identified leadership as the major problem that plagues the country's drive towards high mass development given the country's rich natural resources, population, and exceptional human capital stock. The leadership question had recently been posited around the governance system that Nigeria had implemented over the years. Many researchers and commentators had laid monumental blame on the failure of Nigeria to develop as result of military intervention with its dictatorial tendencies and policies which drove away democratic leadership. They assume that the expected economic transformation of the nation since independence (in 1960) has been interrupted by bouts of military dictatorial governments. However, the reality and confusing trend over time is that since 1999 till date, Nigeria has witnessed an unbroken democratic rule, without any real positive

change in her conditions towards economic transformation as other countries that were her contemporaries (Brazil, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, among others), and commentators on Nigeria are still identifying leadership failure, even in a democracy, as the problem. With the overt description of democracy as a governing system that brings up people-centered leadership, why is Nigeria's democracy still impotent in solving the leadership problem plaguing the country's development process after over 25 years of unbroken democratic governance?

This paper is concerned that if Nigeria cannot get its leadership art right after over 25 years of unbroken democratic governance, there is need to try other governance models. The realities of uncommon economic transformation of China and the oil rich Arabian countries had informed this paper to consider a comparison between democracy and benevolent dictatorship in order to determine a right governing model that will inspire transformational leadership in Nigeria - as in china and the oil rich Arabian countries. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to assess particular traditional governance systems: democracy and benevolent dictatorship, to determine which of the two can be the right model to lead Nigeria's economic transformation. The paper is arranged in sections thus:

Section 1 – Background
Section 2 – Literature Review
Section 3 – Nigeria's Governance System
Section 4 – Comparison of Economic Growth in Democratic and Benevolent Dictatorships economies
Section 5 – Growth and Sustainability Comparative Analytics
Section 6 – Conclusion

Literature Review

Democracy: Democracy is a political system in which government authority is derived from the people, either directly or through elected representatives. It is built upon principles such as free and fair elections, separation of powers, rule of law, and protection of fundamental rights (Dahl, 1998). Democracies are typically classified into direct and representative forms, with most modern democracies following the latter. Democratic governance is associated with increased political participation, transparency, and accountability, making it a widely accepted form of government (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). However, democracy can face challenges such as political instability, slow decision-making, and susceptibility to populism (Diamond, 2008). Also, the word democracy comes from the Greek words "demos", meaning people, and "kratos" meaning power; so democracy can be thought of as "power of the people": a way of governing which depends on the will of the people (*https://www.coe.int*). In the original Greek sense, democracy was a direct rule, where all citizens were participants in decision making. Modern democracy is, however, characterized by elected representatives, who take decisions on behalf of the people in their representative communities. The original Greek promoters of democracy centered the main tissues of a true democracy to include:

i.   Free, fair, and frequent elections
ii.   Freedom of expression
iii. Independent sources of information
iv.   Freedom of association

Dictatorship: A dictatorship is a government or a social situation where one person makes all the rules and decisions without input from anyone else. Dictatorship implies absolute power — one person who takes control — of a political situation, a family, a classroom or even a camping

expedition (*https://www.vocabulary.com*). Linz (2000) describe dictatorship is a form of government in which absolute power is concentrated in the hands of a single ruler or a small group, often without constitutional or legal constraints. He furthers notes that unlike democratic systems, dictatorships typically suppress political opposition, limit civil liberties, and control the media to maintain authority. Dictatorships can take different forms, including military rule, one-party states, and personalist regimes. While some dictatorships claim to promote stability and economic development, they often lack accountability, leading to repression and corruption (Geddes, 1999). Historically, dictatorships have been associated with authoritarianism and the erosion of democratic institutions (Friedrich & Brzezinski, 1956).

Benevolent Dictatorship: Benevolent dictatorship is a theoretical form of government in which an authoritarian leader exercises absolute political power over the state but is seen to do so for the benefit of the population as a whole. A benevolent dictator may allow for some democratic decision-making to exist, such as through public referenda or elected representatives with limited power. It might be seen as a republican form of enlightened despotism/tyranny (Roth, 2007). Cheibub (1998) describes benevolent dictatorship as a form of autocratic rule where a single leader or small group wields absolute power but claims to act in the best interests of the people. That while it lacks democratic processes, a benevolent dictator may implement policies aimed at economic development, social stability, or national progress. He, however, observes the absence of institutional checks and balances makes such systems prone to abuse of power, despite good intentions. Unlike oppressive dictatorships, benevolent dictatorships focus on stability, economic growth, and public welfare. Some historical examples include leaders who implemented rapid modernization or economic reforms in their countries. However, because power is unchecked, even well-intentioned dictatorships can become repressive, undermining civil liberties and leading to corruption (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Benevolent dictatorship is said to have been indicated in leaders such as Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (Turkey), Josip Broz Tito (Yugoslavia), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore), Abdullah II of Jordan, Paul Kagame (Rwanda), Qaboos bin Sain al Said (Oman), and in-fact all the oil-rich Arabian countries.   While democracy promotes inclusiveness and individual freedoms, a benevolent dictatorship can enable swift decision-making and policy implementation. However, the latter remains controversial due to its lack of institutional checks and risks of authoritarian abuse.

Theoretical Literature
The debate on whether Nigeria should adopt democracy or a benevolent dictatorship can be examined through several governance and political theory frameworks. The ones adopted for this paper include:

Democratic Theory: The role of citizen participation, free elections, and institutional checks and balances is the anchor of democratic theory as envisioned by Dahl (1998). The theory argues that democracy fosters accountability, political stability, and economic development in the long run. Nigeria's adoption of democracy aligns with modernization theory, which suggests that democratic institutions are essential for sustainable development and social progress (Lipset, 1959).

Authoritarian Developmentalism: The concept of benevolent dictatorship aligns with the theory of authoritarian developmentalism, which posits that an enlightened ruler can drive economic growth and stability more efficiently than democratic systems (Fukuyama, 2014). This theory argues that in developing nations, strong centralized leadership can overcome bureaucratic

inefficiencies and corruption (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Some scholars cite cases like Lee Kuan Yew's leadership in Singapore as an example of a successful benevolent dictatorship that led to rapid development (Pei, 2006).

Institutional Theory: Institutional theory, as discussed by North (1990), suggests that the success of any governance system depends on the strength of political and economic institutions. Nigeria's democratic struggles, including electoral malpractice and corruption, indicate weak institutional frameworks that hinder democratic consolidation. However, rather than replacing democracy with dictatorship, this theory argues for institutional reforms to enhance governance effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

For the scope of this paper, two prominent models, democracy and benevolent dictatorship, which present contrasting approaches to leadership and governance will be considered and discussed. This literature review explores the characteristics, advantages, and limitations of both systems by analyzing scholarly works and empirical studies.

According to Lipset (1959), democracy is positively correlated with economic development, as democratic institutions promote political stability and economic efficiency. Empirical studies, such as Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), argue that democratic nations tend to foster inclusive economic institutions, enabling broad-based development and innovation. Furthermore, democratic systems are associated with lower levels of corruption due to checks and balances and transparency mechanisms (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). However, some scholars highlight democracy's inefficiencies, particularly in decision-making. Downs (1957) notes that democratic governance often results in slow policymaking due to bureaucratic hurdles and the necessity for consensus. Also, democratic institutions can be vulnerable to populism, which may lead to governance congestion and policy reversals (Mounk, 2018). Benevolent dictatorship is a form of autocracy where an individual or small group holds concentrated power but exercises it for the perceived benefit of the populace (Cheibub, Gandhi, & Vreeland, 2010). This system is characterized by rapid decision-making, centralized control, and an emphasis on economic growth and national stability (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith, 2011).

Scholarly discourse on benevolent dictatorships often references historical examples such as Lee Kuan Yew's leadership in Singapore, where a strong, centralized government facilitated rapid economic growth and infrastructural development (Barr, 2000). Similarly, Przeworski et al. (2000) argue that autocratic regimes can drive economic growth, particularly in early development stages, by eliminating political opposition and streamlining policy implementation. Despite these advantages, benevolent dictatorships pose significant risks. The primary concern is the absence of institutional mechanisms to ensure accountability and protect civil liberties (Levitsky & Way, 2010). Furthermore, benevolent dictatorship is often unsustainable, as leadership transitions can lead to instability or authoritarian entrenchment (Gandhi & Lust-Okar, 2009). Comparative studies suggest that while benevolent dictatorships may offer short-term economic advantages, democracies provide long-term stability and protection of individual freedoms (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006). The success of governance models often depends on contextual factors, including historical legacies, institutional frameworks, and societal structures.

Logical Framework

In Gen. 1:26, God said; Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all

the earth, and over every creeping thing that crept upon the earth. Who were the 'us' that God referred to? Very obviously, the trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The contention in the name is: if there is a Father and a Son, will not the third be the Mother? Philosophically, I strongly see and align to the fact that the Holy Spirit so indicated in the Bible is the Mother. Recall that in ancient civilizations, women were not regarded, they were rather only seen as agents of procreation and not to be taken seriously, so the writers would have thought at the time that calling the third 'person' in the Godhead, Mother, would abhor tradition. The Bible reports that there were other beings and entities in heaven apart from the three in the Godhead, mostly noted, the Angels, the most prominent being Lucifer, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael. Why did God ascribe the absoluteness of power around and about the trinity? This indicates that decision making or governance in Heaven is restricted to the trinity or Godhead. The Godhead can only delegate authority. Can this be the reason why ancient civilization's governance system was authoritarian and directional? All Bible descriptions on the fall or sack of Lucifer from Heaven: Isaiah 14: 12-15, Ezekiel 28: 12-18; Revelation 12:9; Matthew 25:41; Luke 10: 17-18, depicts Lucifer committing a treasonable offence: desiring to share power with the Godhead because of his high spiritual development and attainment. Lucifer desired to introduce democratic governance in heaven and wanted to overthrow the Godhead and entrench representative democracy with the legion of angel beings he had convinced for the revolution. In Gen 6: 1-4, it is reported that the evil activities of the angels that God ejected with Lucifer caused God to reduce the lifespan of man.

Literature is replete with the conclusions that the fallen angels landed and domiciled in Greece (Revelation 2:13 calls the location Pergamos, which is a province of ancient Greek), creating a generation of giants that inhabited Greece. While on earth, after being banished from heaven by God, Lucifer and his gang of fallen angels were hell-bent on establishing their governance model on earth. This made them convince people to accept their form of governance, democracy: with the promise of freedom, equality, and preservation of rights. They preached against the abhorrence of the totalitarian governance they were ruled with in heaven, where only the Godhead directed and governed in every situation. The fallen angels therefore first experimented and started their governance system and brand, democracy in Greece that they landed when they were ejected by the Godhead from Heaven. It can be seen that the government of heaven is not democracy but an 'enlightened Benevolent Leadership', EBL, that is run on the wisdom and leadership of the Most High God. Can this explain why most advanced democracies fine-tunes it to maintain stability; or can this explain why most rapid economic transformation in china and Asia had resulted from benevolent leadership or dictatorships? It is notable that democracy is not the governance system in heaven. If we therefore, want to be truthful to "Our Father, who art in Heaven", is it proper to embrace a governance system that is not accepted in his Kingdom? Recall that Exodus 20: 5-6 records that, "Thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the fourth generation of them that hate me." "But showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. "

Nigeria's Governance System
Nigeria has over the past 25 years implemented a democratic governance structure. The governance structure had been seriously criticized for being ineffective in addressing the core governance and development needs of the country. Institutions that drive serious democratic governance are either non-existent or very inadequate in driving serious democratic governance, even if one may desire to adopt the system as is in Nigeria.

Character of Democratic Institutions in Nigeria

i.   The institutions that drive the democratic processes in Nigeria are very weak and corrupt – electoral body, judiciary, legislature, security, electorates,

ii.   Leaders are not strong, not benevolent, and do not have the strong political will to force positive change. Every decision towards positive change in Nigeria is viewed as punishment by the citizens.

iii. Corruption and nepotism are the catch-phrases of every democratic structure in Nigeria

iv.   Nigeria's democracy has been re-branded as 'my or our time' to chop democracy

v.   Rule of law does not exist – the privileged get what they desire and want, while the underprivileged die in squalor and continuously deprived.

vi.   Fundamental Human rights are only for the privileged.

vii. Citizens are tamed with hunger and poverty to be weak enough for manipulation

viii. Civil and human rights community competes for corruption medal with the corrupt politicians.

ix.   Multi-sectorial division of country by religion, ethnicity, corruption, is so obvious

x.   Citizens are not allowed to participate in deciding the form of democratic governance of their country – as representatives of the people in parliament have nothing to do with their constituents except when the citizens' votes or mandates are needed.

Nigeria's Current Democratic governance setting

i.   Four years of tenured democratic office for President, Governors, and Legislature.

ii.   Elections are arranged to be so expensive that only the super-rich can afford electoral office

iii. Almost all rich Nigerian politicians might have been involved in illicit activities to make money

iv.   Politicians who are not rich but popular and willing to play along are many times conscripted to play roles for their sponsors.

v.   The first 2 years of governance for the ambitious Nigerian politician who either sponsored self or was sponsored by others to get to power will be to jump all hurdles planted on the track by gangsters, sycophants, and corrupt businessmen who had been illegally feeding fat from Nigeria. Such hurdles include: ethnic disputes, religious violence, accusations of nepotism, rising crime rates, sponsored international attacks, among others.

vi.   The ambitious political Leader will use the third year to commence financial settlements of these distractions in order to allow him/her deliver his/her mandate to the people

vii. By that third year, the 'powerful' captors who have now captured the Leader will signal to the Leader that it is time for him/her to start planning for a second term: that it would be done and dusted without him putting any project on ground if their demands (money) were met

viii. The leader now diverts his attention from the citizens and now works with and for the criminals. Monies meant for development, even those borrowed are diverted to private pockets; citizens' rights are abused and trampled on, etc.

ix.   The leader gets a second term. He is immediately encumbered with fictitious bills of how they handle re-election for him; that he must refund the monies that was used. State money is used to make the refunds.

x.   The criminals – including sycophants and gangsters starts blackmailing government with data they have raised for this through some government agencies to threaten the Leader. The Leader loses confidence and gives in to avert damage to personal integrity. This makes the Leader to divert development funds to seal imaginary loopholes through the criminals

xi. In the second year of his second term, while still trying to see how to block loopholes, the criminals place before the leader the critical need to sponsor and bring in a successor who will protect him as he vacates office. This song will appeal to the Leader who now throws every advise to the winds and trample on all fronts to replace himself with a supposed crony who was only introduced to him by the criminals. The crony must be a person with suspicious credentials that the cabal can easily manipulate

xii. This cycle continues ad-infinitum!!!

How Benevolent Dictatorship can salvage Nigeria from the vicious cycle of Democratic Booby-trap

In the Nigerian case, a benevolent dictator may not necessarily be military. Notice that the Nigerian military is even more corrupt than the politicians and have been so enmeshed in the ethnic and faith dichotomy of the country. The past military rules have never had the courage to implement any peoples' future liberation economic policies as the current civilian administrations have. After several support of citizens for military take-overs in Nigeria, citizens have been disappointed for supporting the replacement of corrupt regimes (both civilian and military) with another more pervasive corrupt regime. Nigeria's major problems had always been inequality, corruption, benefits capture, oil and solid mineral theft, lack of power, oil subsidy to feed few criminal elements, using our foreign reserves to defend the value of the naira for the highly corrupt and criminals to find easy money to spend on frivolities, the stoppage of refining our crude oil domestically to meet domestic demand but rather opting to shut down our refineries while importing refined products, destroying our public schools and public hospitals, non or dysfunctional infrastructure. Any government Leader that can look into the eyes of the criminals perpetuating these crimes fits the description of that benevolent dictator and should be encouraged to stay on – like Kagame of Rwanda.

Comparison of Economic Growth in Democratic Countries and Benevolent Dictatorships

Economic growth is a critical measure of a country's progress, reflecting increases in productivity, income, and standards of living. Different political systems influence economic growth in varying ways. This note compares the economic performance of democratic countries and benevolent dictatorships, highlighting their strengths, weaknesses, and the factors influencing growth under each system.

Economic Growth in Democratic Countries: Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

Institutional Stability: Democracies are said to be characterized by rule of law, transparency, and checks and balances. It is therefore contended that these factors foster investor confidence and reduce the risk of corruption. In Nigeria, and in fact many democracies in the world, especially Africa, the reverse is the case. For Nigeria, after subsisting as a democracy since 1999, Democratic institutions in Nigeria remain the most corrupt. It has just been recently reported by NBS (2024) that Judiciary remains the most corrupt institution in Nigeria. Others include the Police, INEC (the chief electoral umpire of the nation). The legislature is also said to be so corrupt, passing Bills without appropriate legislative processes. In Nigeria, the institutional stability, that arguments are rife about establishing democratic strength, is replaced institutional instability.

Accountability: In democracy, it is argued that elected governments are incentivized to pursue policies that benefit the population to secure re-election. This often leads to investments in

infrastructure, education, and healthcare, which are essential for long-term economic growth. In Nigeria elected governments do not worry about spending money to alleviate to lives of citizens, for instance, investing in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, rather they corruptly hold on to those funds, make the people so poor and hungry, and only dash them pittance at the next election cycle as vote-buying fee. The citizens who are so impoverished and hungry cannot afford any action to oust selves from the debacle since they are so weak and are not sure of what the outcome of any action would be; the weaponization of hunger and poverty.

Innovation: In democracy, freedom of speech and protection of intellectual property rights, which is a core value of democratic governance, is said to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, which drive economic progress. In Nigeria, freedom of speech has brought more negatives to the country than positives. The citizens being unaware of what speech is free are severally goaded into making speeches that they do not have the freedom of making.

Diversified Policies: Democracies are more likely to enact policies that benefit a broad segment of society, reducing inequality and ensuring sustained growth.
Nigeria's democracy works to enunciate policies that deepen inequality and slows growth.

Weaknesses
Short-Term Focus: Politicians often prioritize short-term gains over long-term planning to appeal to voters, which can undermine sustainable development. In Nigeria, this is often followed by policy summersaults, where new governments abandon whatever policies and projects the former governments put in place.

Policy Gridlock: The decision-making process in democracies can be slow due to the need for consensus, potentially delaying critical reforms.

Populism: Policies aimed at immediate voter satisfaction can sometimes lead to fiscal irresponsibility or unsustainable welfare programs.

Economic Growth in Benevolent Dictatorships

Strengths
Decisive Policy Implementation: Benevolent dictatorships can enact economic reforms swiftly without facing opposition from legislative bodies, leading to faster execution of large-scale projects.

Long-Term Vision: Leaders with prolonged tenure can focus on long-term economic strategies without the pressure of electoral cycles.
Stability: The absence of political competition reduces the likelihood of abrupt policy changes, which can create a stable environment for investors.

Targeted Reforms: Benevolent dictatorships can focus resources on specific sectors to drive rapid growth, such as technology, manufacturing, or infrastructure.

Weaknesses
Lack of Accountability: Without democratic oversight, leaders may pursue policies that benefit a select few rather than the broader population.

Dependence on Leadership Quality: Economic success is highly dependent on the competence and intentions of the leader. Poor governance can result in stagnation or collapse.

Limited Innovation: Restricted freedoms and lack of open discourse can stifle creativity and entrepreneurship, essential drivers of modern economic growth.

Corruption Risks: Concentrated power increases the risk of corruption, which can drain public resources and deter investment. The laws in most benevolent dictatorship governments' keeps corruption so low, as marginal cost of corruption far outweighs marginal benefits of corruption – see death sentences for corruption in China and death sentences for hard drug in the benevolent dictatorship governed Arabic countries.

Growth and Sustainability Comparative Analytics

Growth: Benevolent dictatorships often achieve higher short-term growth rates due to their ability to implement sweeping reforms. However, democracies tend to sustain growth over the long term by balancing development with social and economic inclusivity. If Nigeria can attain desired sustainable growth in the short term with benevolent dictatorship, it will be more rewarding and a base to use for further long term development, instead of staying a democratic government with no sustainable growth in sight.

Sustainability: Democracies are more likely to adopt sustainable growth policies due to public pressure and institutional checks. Benevolent dictatorships may prioritize immediate results, sometimes at the cost of environmental or social sustainability. The problem with democracy in Nigeria is that the public is so poor and hungry that any rent could be paid to keep them in check from pressurizing the government, while the institutions are so weak, corrupt, and tools of the government who can never see anything wrong with the government maleficence.

Conclusion: According to Plato, the best form of government is described therein to be one made of Philosopher King. The philosopher king is described as a hypothetical ruler who combines political skill with philosophical knowledge.   This government which is depicted by benevolent dictatorship is considered to be the best form of government. Plato sees the philosophers as being free from vices that tempt others to abuse power, and that they are uniquely able to apply their knowledge for the good of the state. Plato indicated the characteristics of the philosopher kings to include:
i.   passionate about truth and wisdom.
ii.   educated in a variety of fields, including military command.
iii. chosen based on merit, not lineage or popular election
iv.   having absolute or near-absolute power.

Socrates furthers his argument that a state can only be in harmony with the universe when led by superior rulers. A superior ruler by definition would not rule for self-interest and therefore would not be a tyrant. Everyone in the republic simply follows the leadership of the best people because only the Philosopher Kings have the ability to see the universe and how the State, and its citizens, can be at harmony with it. Put into English - the best leaders would be the best and most capable, with enough philosophical insight to bring the best out of any state and its citizens and not screw it up with self-interested lobbying and other bull. Socrates, in his prediction of the fall of democracy submitted thus, "Democracy must fall because it will try to tailor to everyone… The poor will want the wealth of the rich, and democracy will give it to them. Young people will

want to be respected as elderly, and democracy will give it to them. Women will want to be like men, and democracy will give it to them. Foreigners will want the rights of the natives and democracy will give it to them. Thieves and fraudsters will want important government functions, and democracy will give it to them. And at that time, when thieves and fraudsters finally, and democratically take authority; because criminals and evil doers want power, there will be worse dictatorship than in the time of any monarchy or oligarchy" (Socrates, 470-399BC) (*https://www.thecollector.com*).

It is worth noting that Athenian democrats executed Socrates not long after the speech above, 2.400 years ago, by making him drink Cicuta poison (i.e. poison hemlock), on the premise that he is spoiling Athenian youth (forums.obsidian.net). As faith based people, how do we reconcile our deviation from the leadership and ruling structure in God's Kingdom (Heaven) and harkening to a governance system presumably introduced by power seeking Lucifer and his angels that were exited from Heaven? Are we therefore playing double standards with the Almighty God? I strongly therefore recommend a return to benevolent dictatorship leadership in Nigeria.

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CREATIVITY AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE COSTUME OF *AKAKUM* PERFORMANCE OF NTO USOH PEOPLE IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract
The controversy over indigenous creativity and the context of spirituality in indigenous masquerades has led to many people, especially the young ones, who should draw from the ancient ingenuity to constantly look at the craft with disdain. This, in a way, encourages extreme detour from fidelity to common codes for social order that laid the foundations of the society as revived in these performances. Using descriptive method premised on symbolic interactionism, this study interrogates the creative and supernatural in the costume design of *Akakum* Performance of Nto Usoh people in Ika with the intent to investigate the extent to which the ingenuity of the costume designer establishes innovation that authenticates the myth of spirituality surrounding the performance. Findings show that *Akakum* history is conflicting in terms of origin but the purpose of the performance and supernatural essence are alike. It is the costume designer that shapes the design patterns in colours and shapes to mystify or secularise the performance, and that the introduction of new costumes and adaptable outfit shows creativity, while the presence of the *iwuo-afum* (head of the wind) as *iso-mkpo* (shrine/altar), *afuud* (supernatural talisman), the red tunic and *ajei* (palm frond)as the main costume of *Akakum* retain the supernatural in the masquerade. The study concludes that human imagination which is properly directed can benefit humanity and stimulate innovative impulse for newness that can promote the society, thus the seculalisation of *Akakum* may encourage a wider audience participation and cultural promotion in the contemporary society.

Keywords: *Akakum*-Performance, Costume, Creativity, Secularisation, Supernatural.

Introduction

Creativity in the traditional African society may contribute to certain myths that authenticate the supra-mundane in the society. This is significant because, in a performance,"costume is a signifier which directs viewers' mind to the concept of cultural reality" (Akpan, Udofia and Edem, 633); and in Akwa Ibom State, performance is a unique cultural practice that develops as the people develop. Remarkably, masquerading, that is covering an actor's face with a mask during performance is quite prominent in the state.Nonetheless, through theatre and performance practices, innovativeness that leaves a remarkable imprint which transcends generations surface.

Beyond performance, there is the maker of what a performance is before the audience. This draws the attention of this study to the imaginative powers of the costume designer in his ingenuity of imputing what Effiong Johnson calls "the total effect results in an aesthetic experience (146), a term Stephen Kenechukwu describes as the "ultimate appeal that attracts virtually everyone in the same way" (83). This gives the impression of creativity elevated to a collective appeal. On the other hand, the ability to push the creative consciousness to establish the supernatural presence that commands some mythical assumptions and facts of a dual cosmic reality in the performance, also marks the costume designer as one that can stretch his mind further to establish aesthetics from his imagination. To this effect, a performance becomes an instrument to code deep cultural information. According to Stephen Umoh, such creativity "denotes ideas away from their appearance" (278).   Such is the case in the *Akakum* performance of the people of Nto Usoh of Ika Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State.

On the same note, *Akakum* is a rare masquerade in Nigeria. Other masquerades such as *Ekpo, Ekpe, Ekoong, Atamma* etc are found in other states; but may bear a different name based on the dialect of those people. *Ekpo*, for instance, is the same thing as *Egungun* of the Yoruba people; it is the same masquerade as *Mmuo* of the Kalabari and Ikwerre people; it is the same thing as what Ossie Enekwe identifies as "*Nwaotam* of the Opobo people... and the one in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Nsukka in Anambra State called*Odo*" (157). The masquerades command exceptional awe that elevates the supernatural than mere aesthetics. As Onuora Nzekwu observes, "It is the traditional carver who has found a strong source of patronage in masquerading (that) has contributed towards the accentuation of these qualities" (135). As all these same but differently named masquerades are, so is *Akakum* different and the tale of its existence also narrowed down to a small village of Nto Usoh in Odoro Clan of Ika Local Government Area. However, it is observed that many other villages in Ika have imitated the weaving of Akakum and have been able to introduce innovation into the performance design. To this effect, the secularisation of the original *Akakum* Nto Usoh may shape the notion of the supernatural redefining the costume designer as one of the creators of the object of beliefs from design appeal, hence the focus of this paper

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is symbolic interactionism. According to Eddiefloy Igbo:

> Symbolic interactionism theory is founded in the pioneering thought of George Herbert Mead (1963-1931) and developed by Herbert Blumer, John Dewey, and William Thomas. This theory is based on a view of man as both the creator of, and the product of his environment i.e. as both determining and determined. Symbolic interactionism theory acknowledges... the influence of social conditions in the causation of human behavior and emphasizes the active role of individual in meaningfully responding to, interpreting, and interacting with his surrounding social environment (339).

The theory throws more light on the use of traditional components such as cloth, grass, wood, root, ropes, fowl feathers, mat, animal skins etc. to weave a masquerade, and how these components used as the accessories in the body of the masquerade denote ideas that are understandable across the various strata of the society. Another idea of the theory is that all activities in the society are carried out as a social recycling of understandable signs, and the past application is rehashed to meet up with the present conception which allows each generation to interact easily from the social contract set by the contributive code manufactured culturally to aid the interaction of citizens with each other in the society. This means, "Interactionists focus

on what makes meaning from the point of view of the society as a collective code" (Onogu and Ukama 179), and in Chinua Achebe, quoted in Asigbo, symbolic interaction narrows down to the specificity of symbols, "Speaks of a particular place, evolved out of the necessities of history, past and present, and the aspiration and destiny of a people shared as a social contract" (103). The shared social contract suggests "the need to turn the energies of literariness to environmental factors" (Umoh 100). This shared idea can be seen in beliefs, legal, economic, cultural and political undertone of a people. Meanwhile, Michael Haralambos, Martin Holborn and Robin Heald see it as "a product of long-established art forms... They include opera, painting, critically acclaimed literature and folk culture... often taken to arise from the grassroot, (which) is self-created and autonomous and directly reflects the lives and experiences of the people (664). The connection between *Akakum* masquerade and symbolic interactionism is that *Akakum* is a subculture originally fashioned by the people of Nto Usoh basically from their folk culture as a means of entertainment, interaction and information. From the attempt to express the creative, a more sublime essence has also evolved making the ordinary mortal masquerade to become a spiritual force in the society as made to be from the cultural symbols the people have been interacting from.

Akakum Performance

Akakum is a traditional performance of the Nto Usoh people of Ika Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The performance is also called *Afum,* which means, the wind. It is a belligerent masquerade. However, the chronicle of its origin is conflicting. Facts are gathered based on the nature, occurrences and the state of the masquerade. In a live interview with Ime Idungafa, who happens to be the son of the Late Clan Head of Odoro 1 of Ika, a native and Village Head of Nto Usoh Village mentions that calling it *Asakum* and *Akakum* are both correct that the performance dates back to 1472 and that it was formed as an entertainment to end the farming season. (cited in Akpan and Udofia 15). At this level, *Akakum* is not actually a spiritual masquerade. On the contrary, a more in-depth analysis of *Akakum* Nto Usoh is drawn from Nsikan Ekwa cited in Akpan and Udofia thus:

> *Akakum* is performed in worship of the *nnem ilung* for guidance over a peaceful planting and bountiful harvesting period in the land.... Any would-be performer will be confined in the shrine (the custodian's house) to confirm his sanctity before he carries the head (mask). If the person has polluted himself, the mask will bend his neck of which he will propitiate for a release... The head which is the mask is protected by the chief priest (18).

By way of evaluating Ekwa's position, *Akakum* is a spiritual enactment performed as a social masquerade and it is fraught with the potency of the supernatural. The performance of *Akakum* is in two ways, marking two ideas. According to Akpan and Udofia,

> When it is a command-ritual, the costume will be red. It will wield *afuud* and *ajei* in both hands. The head has both a man and a woman's visage: one at either side of the wooden pole. On a day like this, the male face will turn to the front. *Ajei* will be tied on the head. A special rattle will be tied on the hands and feet, and on the completion of the construct, the *Akakum* runs to *Iso-ikpa isong* (the village shrine) and thuds the head. Sometimes it prostrates completely. When it lifts the head, it hurries to *Akpo-ikut*... and embraces for invocation... The chief priest will emerge with *akai-kai*... guzzles a generous quantity and spews on the head before he begins incantation. He will invoke the spirit of dead people who were custodians and initiates of the deity to

fortify the actor… At this level, *Akakum* is engulfed with the desire to shed blood (18).

On the day of this kind of performance, virtually all victims, if there will be any, appease the head with two corks. "When *Akakum* hits someone, it is said *Akakum ateed agwo*. Another expression is *Afum adia agwo…* A hit from it will make the victim to experience heaviness.Another occasion *Akakum* performs is the ordinary entertainment which is the showcasing of human creativity. On a day like this, *Akakum* Nto Usoh will be costumed in white. The performance of *Akakum* thickens Ika air with delight and enthusiasm because the audience themselves understand the performance as a masquerade that is violent and energetic enough to chase them about the open theatre. Every performance has its unit of appeal. *Akakum* does not dance to appeal; it does not sing to attract; but it chases to hit-possibly to kill for appeal. Nonetheless, the masquerade is an embodiment of creativity as well as awe from its supernatural essence.

Creativity in the Costume Design of *Akakum*
Creativity denotes bringing new ideas to reality through imagination. It suggests innovativeness through thought. This has practically surfaced in Performing Arts practice in the various units of expertise. In the area of costume, creativity is the improvement and creation of bodily gears to enhance production. According to Bruce Ardin, "there are various techniques in dress making which is (*sic)* affecting other body accessories currently, a proof that costume design is a deliberate act intuit from in-depth imagination" (67-68). For whatever purpose especially in performance, costume production is an aspect of art. Art is a creative task primarily borne from clear thinking and application of imagination in body accessories design. That is, "the creative costume designer embarks on constant research to satisfy her curiosity… This, she does to add flesh to the bones of his creative imaginations" (Dan 17). When the body accessories are given their proper shape and colour to heighten the required mood, the costume maker is appraised for application of intelligence, hence, the stimulation of aesthetics. According to Effiong Johnson, "the aesthetic-giving costume is the costume which establishes character relationships… When this happens, a painstaking approach to the use of costume would have been the case, and the success in its equilibrate (*sic)* to the aesthetic success" (159).

The use of costume to stimulate fear, awe and even the imagination of horror is also an aspect of creativity. For instance, *Ekpo*, is considered to be a ghost who reincarnates in a human form, or as Inih Ebong puts, "a replica of a person who died in this world and passed transit into the underworld with all masks, tattoos, deformities, diseases, beauty and neutral qualities it carried to the grave. The replica at this stage acquires super-human force" (45) brought to bear by the body accessories. Though it is human beings that act these personality, there is a very strong conviction that based on what is found on the bodies of the actors, a certain level of transformation has occurred. According to Itoro Etim,"costumes are one of the components of the people's culture and they are understood as signifiers in a community" (112). That means, through what an actor puts on to perform, he is automatically seen and believed to be transformed into a spirit. This is the height of creativity in costume design. The ability to immortalize human beings and give them a different personality that specifically comes with the actual spiritual manifestation through body accessories has made creativity in costume design to be synonymous to life re-creation.

The most outstanding part of *Akakum* masquerade is the accessories. Each accessory is a component of human facility brought to bear in a specific craft. The numerous crafts reflect the human mind and the powers of imagination in which the ingenuity of thinking is brought to bear

in what makes anything in life to be. To this effect, what makes *Akakum* a unique and outstanding performance is the costume design elevated to the limelight of intoning a spiritual persona to the masquerade. These pieces of creativity are presented in subheadings below.

Establishment of Conventional Motif

Fig 2: Symbol of Peace (Idungafa)

The *Akakum* is a violent masquerade. Its normal costume is red, and the redness is acknowledged because it goes for blood. The introduction of "white" in the middle of the costume is a creative concept which successfully bends the masquerade to a traditional theatre practice instead of an agent of death. White symbolizes purity and peace. This brings the idea of Essien to focus "if *Akakum* wants to hit anybody, he can easily do that by pursuing the person to where he likes. It will point *afuud* at the person to tangle the feet, and that is all" (Akpan and Udofia 22). This shows that even as *Akakum* is principally controlled by a potent force, the force itself has the mind to entertain and bring people together over the desire to spill blood. This makes the masquerade to go for years without killing anyone. The peace decorated across the red tunic is a creative concept. It makes the performance to obey the colour connotation of the Western order- peace be still!

Indigenous Craftsmanship Showcased

Fig 3: Indigenous Craft (Idungafa)

Akakum is portrayed as an imagination made manifest in the design of the costume. The careful carving of the trunk to give it the varying human visage is an aspect of creativity. This showcases Performing Arts as a discipline with numerous potentials that are yet to be explored. Beyond this, the aura of the supernatural is properly situated in the mood which the mask designer makes to come prominent in the faces carved. This indicates that the costume designer can stimulate any manner of thought including the making of spirits to exist through body accessories.

Fertility god Conferral

Fig 4: Akakum, Portrayed as Fertility God (Idungafa)

There is the newness in the contemporary *Akakum* which makes the performance more and more adaptable to circular yearnings for globalization. *Akakum* knows death and life, and these are clearly decorated on the costume which are red and white. However, the performance is argued to be formed to celebrate successful farming among the folks. The introduction of Green with red as the cross conveys the aura of the fertility gods on the masquerade. Besides, the costume does not look like the normal belligerent tunics for pursing the audience, rather it looks like an "Athenian tunic" which is both glamourous, cool and slow, depicting a flourishing god of fertility in display.

Occasion/Society Conferral

Fig 5: *Akakum* in Social Colour and a Female (Idungafa)

Akakum is costume currently to portray the motifs of the occasion, it is hired or deployed to grace. In occasion of National Interest, the national colour is now costumed on the masquerade. This makes the masquerade more of a social, national and artistic factor that can grace any occasion to entertain as an indigenous theatre practice.

De-ritualization through Aesthetics
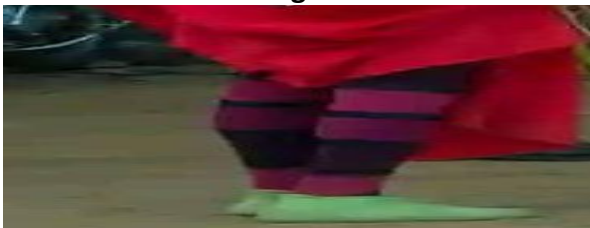
Fig 6: Modern *Akakum*with Leggings (Idungafa)

Akakum, culturally belongs to *Ekpo* configuration in the native or traditional dialect. This is because it covers the face with a mask. The mask is ritualized and invoked with supernatural powers, making the actor half-human and half-spirit. Anyone who covers such mask on the face is a spirit or is controlled by spirits. He does not put on shoes, and the accessories on the body are mainly the costume, which are usually in the custody of the chief who foresees their purification and sanctification. However, the contemporary *Akakum* as seen above puts on leggings and canvass to perform. This outlook is more of creativity than the normal accoutrement of *Akakum* in red tunic for that matter.

Woven Visage/Mask
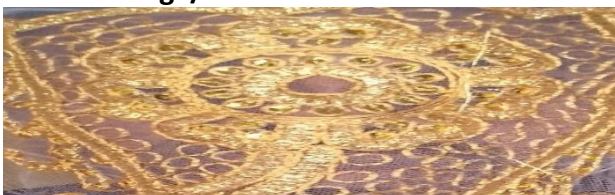
Fig 7: Woven Face for Air and Beauty (Idungafa)

The use of decorated lace on the face of *Akakum* shows creativity. This allows the masquerade to breath freely and there is sufficient in-let of fresh air. This makes the performer to enjoy his arts instead of suffering the suffocation as if the gods wish their acolytes to always go through travails to please them. Besides, the masquerade appears more beautiful and neat to behold. This act of re-designing the visage with a lace material is an aspect of creativity.

The Supernatural in the Costume Design of *Akakum* Nto Usoh

The supernatural as used in this study is spirituality. According to Uwemedimo Atakpo and Anietie Udofia, it refers to "powers that are beyond human" (54). As Yemi Ogunbiyi puts, its "primitive root…(is) sought in the numerous religious rituals" (4). In a performance such as *Akakum,* the idea of the supernatural is the presence of the mysterious or the unexplainable, which is caused by a spiritual factor. This is found in the body accessories. As the indicator of the supernatural, in the traditional African performance, costume can code some spiritual essence in a performance. According to Alex Asigbo, "the characteristics of power of a specific masquerade is most often embedded in its costume… Costume transforms masquerades from mere clothes combination to spirits to make them conform to themes and other utilitarian considerations. (10-11). As Etim puts, "with the application of costumes and appropriate rituals, he automatically is believed to be transformed into a spiritual being and is possessed by the spirit of the ancestors" (112). This is typical of the mask; and as John Esema put, "the mask is an altar, a meeting point of the mortal and the immortal, (and that) … it functions also as a shrine" (77). This supernatural presence is identifiable in *Akakum* costume. Although the adapted *Akakums* are de-ritualised, there are some bodily gears on the body of *Akakum* especially that of Nto Usoh that are purported to contain the supernatural aura currently. Some of them are discussed as subheadings below:

***Iwuo-Afum (mask)* and the*Iso-Mkpo* (shrine)Phenomenon**

Fig 8: The Mask is a Shrine (Idungafa)

The *Iwuo-Afum* (head) is the original head carved in 1472. History keeps that even when termites devour everything around the trunk (head), the *Iwuo-Afum* is always safe. The head is more like a shrine in that it has been preserved in some shrines to avoid people with evil intention using it for danger. The nail on the head is dangerous. If it scratches the human skin, the spot may rot and get infested with maggots except when an intensive ritual is performed to vindicate the victim. Like any other ancient mask:

> There is only one thing that is believed to be inside the mask, that one thing is forces, a vital force, a force external to man and foreign to his ego-a spirit. There is the spirit of the dead generally and the ancestors in particular. The Ibibio makes no difference between masks and shrines for each is believed to be this spirit force (Ukpaide 55).

However, *Iso-mkpo* denotes 'the face of a thing', which suggests: the altar of a deity. An altar in this sense can be invoked to operate negatively. An accused even the accursed person can be compelled to justify his or her innocence by swearing to *iso-mkpo* (shrine) Culturally, *Iwuo-afum* is *iso-mkpo* (face of the gods/shrine). It could be invoked to act with full potency.

Afuud (A Piece of talisman enclosed in the right hand)

Fig 9: *Afuud,* the secret of *Akakum* force (Idungafa)

The *afuud* is acknowledged as the force behind *Akakum's* raving, race, dance and all forms of display on stage. It is the *afuud* that makes it run; it is the *afuud* that makes it pursue, maybe, a specific person even to hitting the person to death. Significantly, "when *Akakum* is excited, it might turn the head and target a coconut tree with a monstrous top. It will use the *afuud* to touch the head and hit. Everything the tree had on top will scatter on the floor… The audience members will then rush for the fruits. (Essien cited in Akpan and Udofia 24).The *afuud* is the force behind the *Akakum*. It is the supernatural factor that regulates the spirituality of the masquerade. *Afuud* is an accessory.

The Concentrated Head

Fig 10: *Akakum* head wrapped with *ajei* is a force (Idungafa)

Tying the *Akakum* trunk with an open palm frond is an indication of spirituality or a spiritual rite on course for a specific purpose which has not been fully utilised. The mask may be very dangerous until the palm frond is taken down. The palm frond makes the mask to become a direct shrine taken about the open space.

Danger Tunic + Palm Frond

Fig11: Red Tunic and Ajei become an altar (Idungafa)

The use of red tunic is itself a danger prone signal during *Akakum* performance. The *ajei* (palm frond) is not always linked to the tunic. Whenever it is merged together, as Ekwa mentions, "*Akakum adia agwo*" meaning *Akakum* has sopped on someone. Therefore, "*Akakum* has claimed the victim's skull (Akpan and Udofia 23). This case is usually seen when *Akakum* has hit a

person and, maybe, split the skull or the person fails to appease and end up dying. At this juncture, the red tunic (cloak of death) and the *ajei* (palm frond) are symbols of spiritual alertness or concentration.

Conclusion

The study of *Akakum* accessories has indicated that man is the creator of his social outlook. The *Akakum* masquerade is believed to be formed by the people and preserved to be enacted yearly or once in seven years to celebrate each successful planting season. As time unfolds, the masquerade turns both a creative and supernatural indicators of the costume designers' arts. That notwithstanding, the dreaded *Akakum* Nto Usoh is still about the most enticing and real masquerade that commands the mammoth crowd because of its spiritual and satisfying ability which is the desire of the audience. To suit the contemporary temperament, *Akakum* is practically de-ritualized for the actor to put on leggings and canvass; the red tunic is used along with contemporary tunics that evoke aesthetic instead of intimidating the contemporary audience (who are usually born-again) as a piece of profanity. Observing the potency of the hybrid forms of *Akakum* performance in the gradual re-creation of its accessories to carry everyone along, imagination is the power of creation and the designer can influence human beliefs. However, there is much space for the costume designer in the contemporary performance world.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that costume and makeup in, especially the traditional theatre, should be designed to reflect the system that sets the performance's philosophy. It also recommends that more creative opportunities should be encouraged among local craft makers to regenerate and promote indigenous crafts.

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TRANSCENDENTAL NATURALISM IS SUPERNATURALISM IN DISGUISE: A RESPONSE TO COLIN MCGINN

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Abstract
In this paper, an attempt shall be made to outline some arguments that render Colin McGinn's transcendental naturalism as a solution to the problem of consciousness untenable. McGinn argues that naturalism of consciousness is possible – it is in virtue of some natural property (of the brain) that organisms are conscious. On the contrary, he admits that whatever it is, it is forever unknowable. He argues that it is in the strength of its unknowability that naturalism is admissibly possible. He rejects any "supernatural" solution and argues that consciousness is largely a natural phenomenon. This is not only contradictory but also conflationary. It is this conflation evident in his insistence that we have to naturalize consciousness and his consequent admittance that we cannot come up with a natural solution to the consciousness problem because it contains a hidden structure that tends to support the argument of the paper: transcendental naturalism is supernaturalism in disguise. In this paper, it is shown that if we hold unto the hidden as the explanatory property for the emergence of consciousness, then McGinn fails in his quest for naturalism of consciousness. It is the position of this paper that McGinn's position is an offshoot of supernaturalism, or supernaturalism in disguise. To sustain McGinn's naturalistic position, the study proposes a rejection of the postulation of the *hidden* and exploration of the prospects of science of consciousness.

Keywords: Consciousness, Naturalism, Supernaturalism, Brain, Hidden Structure/Property, Science.

Introduction
Until the emergence of Colin McGinn's theory of transcendental naturalism (TN), the solution to the problem of consciousness has vacillated between two dominant camps: dualism and materialism. Every other theory of consciousness is a fellow-up or an offshoot of these two camps. Dualism is the assertion that there are two substances that are ontologically different. It claims that "mental states and processes are not merely states and processes of a purely physical system, but constitute a distinct kind of phenomenon that is essentially nonphysical in nature" (Churchland, 1984, p. 3). As to whether they interact or not or how they interact is dependent on the version of dualism one subscribes to. For instance, the Cartesian dualism holds that the mind and body interact through the operation of a pineal gland located in the brain, and is called interactionism. The pre-established harmony of Leibniz invokes the role of a

supernatural agent as the explanatory power of any possible interaction. The occasionalists such as Malebranche hold that mind and body do not interact as such. When one is hit by a hammer, one experiences painful sensation. This is an indication that there is an interaction between the physical and mental processes. But for the occasionalists it is not the case, rather, the sensation was caused not by the harmer and nerves but by God – a supernatural agent who uses the "occasion" of environmental occurrences to generate appropriate experiences. Whichever version of dualism one professes, the claims of the dualists are: 1. There is a mental realm. [2] The mental realm is fundamental. [3] There is a physical realm. [4] The physical realm is fundamental. [5] The two realms are ontologically separate (Foster, 1991, p. 1).

On the other hand, materialism is the acknowledgement that the mind is reducible to matter or "the view that one can fully account for mental phenomena in purely physical terms, such as behaviour or brain processes" (Jarocki, 2013, no p.). For Churchland (1984, p.3), "materialist theories of mind claim that what we call mental states and processes are merely sophisticated states and processes of a complex physical system: the brain." What we call consciousness or mental phenomena are nothing but the operation of the brain. Remove brain, consciousness ceases to be. It is in this regard that it is not mistaken to refer to materialism as either physicalism or naturalism. Granted that there might be some variance among these three 'isms', in this study, they are treated as making one commitment. Colin McGinn aptly identifies himself as a naturalist. He holds the thesis that every property of mind can be explained in broadly physical terms (McGinn, 1991; McGinn, 2002). According to Klooger (2017), naturalism's starting point is that nothing exists outside nature. It is an idea that nature exhausts reality. Nature is all that exists; and there is only one type of being, namely, the natural being. This being obeys and is ruled by one set of laws wherein natural science is equipped to discover the nature of this being and the precise laws that govern it. Supernaturalism, then, is a misguided approach to reality. Proponents of naturalism of consciousness such as Colin McGinn, Daniel Dennet, Owen Flanagan and Paul Churchland, affirm that the full picture of consciousness and all that we can know about it is presented through the brain. Not every naturalist makes the same commitment with respect to the possibility of the brain being fully capable of instantiating consciousness. Those who believe that we can specify the property of the brain as the basis of consciousness are called constructive naturalists (see Flanagan, 1992). Anti-constructive naturalists hold that, though naturalism is true, it is not the case that we can know everything about consciousness by making reference to the brain (McGinn, 1991). McGinn is an anti-constructive naturalist. He believes that humans cannot solve the problem of consciousness because they are 'cognitively closed'. Anti-constructive naturalists are as well called mysterianists, believing that consciousness is a mystery.

The aim of this paper is to interrogate some arguments of McGinn's transcendental naturalism – a theory of consciousness which insists on naturalism is possible and again what makes it possible is unknowable or transcendental. These arguments are the following: 1.) consciousness contains a hidden property inaccessible to the human mind; 2) the human mind is cognitively closed to consciousness, even when it is assisted; 3.) consciousness is an area of inquiry where we can legitimately ask questions without being able to proffer or grasp the answers; and so, 4.) naturalism is impossible, though it must be true. In this study, it shall be demonstrated that these sorts arguments render McGinn's quest for naturalism untenable. It shall also articulate ways to overcome this.

Transcendental naturalism (TN) and acceptance of the hidden structure of consciousness

To overcome the glaring deficiencies of the traditional solutions of consciousness which are dualism and materialism, McGinn advanced the theory of transcendental naturalism (TN). TN is the thesis that consciousness, though a natural phenomenon, is unknowable especially how it interacts with the brain. McGinn held that there are two faculties involved in consciousness studies: perception and introspection. Perception is the process by which we become aware of the material world by means of the senses. According to him, the purpose of perception is to gain information about the external world (McGinn, 2020). On consciousness problem, perception gives credible knowledge about the brain, its nature, and properties. Therefore, perception enables us to encounter the brain and all its properties, including the property that is to account for the interaction mind and body. However, McGinn (1991) argued that perception weak because it is confined within the study of brain alone and cannot know anything about consciousness. He further argued that there is no way you will get to know that I am in pain or afraid or seeing the colour red just by perceiving the brain. When you perceive the brain, you confront nothing more than tissues and other materials such as nerve cells, which are similar to other parts of the body, and which other animals too possess. What then is so special about the human brain that it can embody consciousness? For McGinn we are "perceptually closed" with respect to the nature of consciousness.

Introspection is the second cognitive faculty. Through it we come to possess full knowledge of the mind/consciousness. It is "the name of the faculty through which we catch consciousness in all its vivid nakedness" (McGinn, 1991, p. 8). By possessing this cognitive faculty, we ascribe to ourselves concepts of consciousness such as having pain, being aware of the colour red, willing, thinking, and so on. Introspection, therefore, provides to us a kind of our immediate access to the properties of consciousness (Churchland, 1984; Njoku, 2010). One problem with introspection is that it does not reveal what consciousness is. But rather, it is only the properties of consciousness—say, having pain, having visual experience, and so on, —that it reveals. Another problem is that it does not tell us anything about the brain. McGinn then insisted that the property which should account for the interaction between the mind and the body is also closed to introspection. The two faculties of perception and introspection are inadequate because they are field-specific. This implies that they take different kinds of objects of apprehension – perception is confined to brain, while introspection is confined to consciousness (McGinn, 1991). They are used to detect different regions of reality. Perception detects that which is material and spatial, whereas introspection detects that which is immaterial and non-spatial. McGinn observed that:

> The faculty through which we apprehend one term of the relation is necessarily distinct from the faculty through which we apprehend the other. And it is not possible to use one of faculties of perception and introspection to apprehend the psychophysical nexus. No single faculty will enable us ever apprehend the fact that consciousness depends upon the brain.... Neither perception alone nor introspection alone will ever enable us to witness the dependence" (McGinn, 1991, p. 14).

These faculties are unable to reveal to us every property of the brain and of consciousness. There is a particular property which they are unable to reveal, in their specific fields: it is the same property that must solve our mind-body or consciousness problem. McGinn calls it the property *P*. Since this *P* is not known, McGinn refers to it as the "Hidden Structure" [of consciousness] (McGinn, 1991, p. 59). It is on the basis of the above cognitive limitation humans

suffer that McGinn advances TN. It is the view that everything about consciousness is natural but we do not know how it relates to the brain. McGinn believed that due to the flaws of perception and introspection, there must be some property of brain and/or consciousness which is beyond our cognition. This is just the property that solve the problem of mind-body relationship. Though, this hidden property is as natural as every property of the brain or mind, it *transcends* our cognitive powers. There is some property of the brain, said McGinn, call it C* which explains how consciousness emerges from neural tissues. But we do not know C* inasmuch as we assume it has to be there (McGinn, 1999). How can this property be identified? Of course, it cannot be by introspection since introspection is confined to consciousness, neither can it be by perception since its target is the brain alone. In other words, TN is the view that we cannot solve the consciousness problem because what we are introspecting contains no material substrate in the brain. McGinn wrote that:

> The solution, I suggest, is to recognize that conscious states possess a hidden natural (not logical) structure which mediates between their surface properties and the physical facts on which they constitutively depend. The surface properties are not enough on their own to link conscious states intelligibly to the physical world, so we need to postulate some deep properties to supply the necessary linkage. Some properties *must* exist to link consciousness intelligibly to the brain… my suggestion is that these properties belong to the hidden nature of consciousness (McGinn, 1991, p. 100).

The postulation of the hidden structure of consciousness, according to McGinn, is what is expected to solve the problem of mind-body relationship naturalistically. To accept the hidden is to accept something noumenal about the mind. Since our knowledge of mind and body is exhausted by the faculties of perception and introspection, it is this hidden that makes it possible for the mind to interact with the body. But the problem here is that we do not know the faculty with which to apprehend this hidden structure of consciousness. And we do not know how the interaction takes place through this hidden structure. To this, McGinn held that it is better to accept that there is something noumenal or transcendental about the mind and how it relates with the body than leaning on supernaturalism. For him, "noumenalism is preferable to denying the undeniable or wallowing in the supernatural" (McGinn, 1991, p. 122).

There are three distinct properties that TN possesses with respect to consciousness: (i) reality, (ii) naturalness, and (iii) epistemic inaccessibility (McGinn, 1991). The first one says that consciousness is real; it is not an illusion. The second has it that it does not refer to entities or properties that are intrinsically non-natural or supernatural. The third property implies that the nature of consciousness is beyond our cognitive capacity. Our inability to know how consciousness interacts with the brain does not make it unnatural. Rather, it reveals that we are not omniscient. Besides, it is a general characteristic ontological feature of evolved creatures to display features of "cognitive weaknesses or incapacity" which is a natural consequence of their biological constitution. (McGinn, 1993, p. 5).

McGinn insisted that why consciousness is unknowable is because there is a hidden property that has to account for the relation. The question one may ask is: is this hidden structure the property of the brain or that of consciousness? The simple answer is that part of what makes it a hidden property is that we cannot tell whether it is hidden in the brain or consciousness. Perception and introspection failed at the spot in which they were to reveal to us this property *P* - to show us the link between brain and consciousness. McGinn suggested that it is in consciousness that the structure is embedded. His reason is that it is consciousness that

refuses to be accounted for naturalistically. This is why McGinn used the expression "the hidden structure of consciousness," instead of the "hidden structure of the brain." After all there is nothing in the brain which can be hidden from perception and more so now that science of consciousness is gaining some prospect (Mogi 2024).

According to McGinn, the reason for locating *P* in consciousness and not in the brain is because it is consciousness that cries out for naturalistic explanation (McGinn, 1991). Consciousness is the anomalous thing; it is what threatens to import immaterial substances, occult forces, weird properties, that cannot be instantiated by physical objects. He thought that this occult importation should be shunned because there is something in consciousness that makes it possible to be located in the material world. Moreover, the brain too might harbour something that is hidden. After all, it is the same (hidden) property that is to account for the interaction between brain and mind. McGinn argued that this hidden property of consciousness must also be an aspect of the brain and hence "of a certain agglomeration of matter", otherwise, how will it be able to link consciousness and brain together if it does not possess some material property (McGinn, 1991, p. 69)? McGinn opined that it is simply because there is something hidden in consciousness that it is why it is not "miraculous". For him, naturalism in philosophy of mind requires that we own up to the hidden. But this seems contradictory how something which is natural can be hidden and why belief in the hidden, for McGinn, removes the sense of miracle about consciousness. Worthy of note is that this hidden cannot be revealed in any near future, rather, it is perpetually closed.

How can the properties of this hidden property be characterized? To this, McGinn argued that we do not have the properties that constitute the hidden structure or we do not know the characterization of such properties. It is on account of our ignorance of this hidden property that McGinn held that we could never solve the consciousness-brain problem – we could not naturalise consciousness. McGinn did not think that it does not exist. The property that links consciousness to brain is such a kind that is as natural as anything. But it is not given to us to understand the nature of its naturalness (McGinn, 1991). Inquiry into the nature of consciousness and how it interacts with the brain, McGinn submited, is such that we are imbued to ask questions, but we cannot grasp the solution (McGinn, 1991; Kriegel, 2003; Perez, 2005).

Understanding a Problem and Not Knowing the Solution

The second argument advanced by McGinn in support of his TN is that consciousness is such a phenomenon that one might be able to appreciate a problem without being able to formulate (in principle) the solution to that problem (McGinn, 1991; Kriegel, 2003; Perez, 2005). In other words, we know how to ask the question of how the brain is the basis of conscious experience but we are not imbued with the cognitive capacity to arrive at the answer. Even when the answer to the problem of mind-body relationship is presented to us in a *plate*, McGinn would say that we cannot know it (McGinn, 1991; Gluck, 2007). It would strike us as astonishingly incredible how such a *thing* should be the basis of the interaction. He was of the opinion that it is in principle impossible for us to comprehend *P*. Kriegel (2003) faulted this line of thinking. For him, there is a strong connection between understanding a question and knowing its answer. As a matter of fact, it is wrong for one to think that there is a problem one can formulate, the answer of which one does not understand. This claim is in line with Lommel's (2007) position that some scientists do not believe in question that cannot be answered. Certainly, there is a universal acknowledgement that the human knowing faculty cannot be immune from every form of limitation. However, Kriegel (2003) resisted McGinn's idea of extreme "cognitive closure" or "information closure" of Froese (2024) by which human mind is eternally closed to the

solution of the consciousness problem. McGinn's insistence is that, for instance, if it is undeniable that rats' minds do not understand trigonometry, then it should be accepted that human mind cannot understand every (natural) phenomenon. Kriegel replied that trigonometric problems do not, in the first place, pose themselves to rats. That rats' minds do not understand trigonometry is precisely why it does not pose itself to rats. For rats to be posed with trigonometric problems means that rats' minds could understand a good deal of trigonometry. Again, a person cannot understand the question, "Does John love Mary?" without being able to understand its possible answers – namely, "John loves Mary" or "John does not love Mary." One cannot understand the question "What is John's weight?" if one does not understand the meaning of "John weighs 150 pounds." If this is true, it means that the thesis that there is a problem we can formulate without being able to grasp its solution is hereby flawed. We might not be cognitively closed as McGinn argued because "there is a conceptual connection between understanding a question and understanding its possible answers" (Kriegel, 2003, p. 184). One may be inclined to hold that there might be nothing too mysterious in consciousness that eludes our understanding; if we are given the *P* we could know it. Therefore, Kriegel established that when it comes to matters of consciousness, we can understand the solution if it were available.

Melanie Rosen (2009) did not agree with Kriegel. Rather she agreed with McGinn by insisting that it is possible to formulate and pose a question without being able to understand the solution. Rosen believed that TN is coherent. Her emphasis is that "Kriegel's examples are not wide ranging enough to be convincing" (Rosen, 2009, p. 7). Using the instance of weight, she showed that Kriegel's use of weight can be understood in different ways. One may not understand any measurement system but it is possible that one may use simpler, unsophisticated measurement system. What if one's answer is simply that "John is too heavy or light enough to carry"? She then concluded that given these varied ways of conceiving an answer we can admit that to understand a question may not be as simple as Kriegel assumed.

Again, Rosen noted that Kriegel did not take into cognizance that not every question is reducible to 'yes' or 'no' answer. His analysis does not take into consideration all types of questions. This is because for the 'how' and 'why' questions, answers can be far more complex and indeterminate. For instance, consider the question, "what is it like to see the colour ultra violet?" One is sure to understand the question, but one could not list all the possible answers to it. This is a more accurate portrayal of the question, "how does consciousness emerge from the brain?" Even if the answer is within our ability to comprehend (which McGinn did not think so), there may be such a wide range of possible answers that we may never be able to imagine all of them (Rosen, 2009). As forceful as Rosen's arguments might be in faulting Kriegel, one may insist that we are not radically cognitively closed to the solution of the consciousness problem. The paper argues that if property *P* is revealed to us, we could know it. The argument is not as simplistic as it appears. It is on the basis that humans know what it means for two things to interact. And they know the role that *P* should play in that interaction. McGinn failed to recognize that the human knowing faculty is as limited as he presupposed. There is no area of inquiry that humans can genuinely ask the question without being able to grasp the answer if it were available. Thus, it seems that by arguing that consciousness is an area of inquiry where we can ask question but cannot know the answer, McGinn is laying a good foundation for supernaturalism.

Supernaturalism as the basis of the unknown
The word supernaturalism is a coinage of two words: "super" and "naturalism." "Super" is literally translated as 'above', 'transcending', or 'beyond.' Naturalism is the philosophical

doctrine which holds that only the physical, tangible, perceptible phenomena exist. It proposes that reality and our knowledge of it is reducible only to the perceptible, empirical, physical and natural. It is problematic to determine what constitutes the natural. According to Drown (2011) our understanding of the supernatural is dependent on what nature is. He observed that the word "nature" is ambiguous because it can mean the created world or the totality of all existence or the physical universe or essence and character of something. Is the natural the entire universe, or all that exists whether they are (immediately) perceptible or not? Or is the natural that which is explainable by natural and behavioural sciences? Or that which is as God made it? Taking the first two questions into perspective, the answer is no. It is not correct that it is only that which is known and could pass through the scientific explanation that is natural. At least, within the field of astrophysics, there are what they call dark matters. These are phenomena which constitute about 70% of the universe that are unknown, or yet to be known (See Bhathe et al., 2021; Berezhiani, 2018; Ramanujan, 2018).

According to Bhathe et al (2021), there is a lot we do not know about the universe. Dark matter is one of them. They described dark matter as a mysterious substance which proves challenging for scientists to understand. Dark matter makes up approximately 80% of the total mass of galaxies, which is to say that there is four times more dark matter compared to regular matter. Yet they are unknown because we do not see them. For Berezhiani (2018, p.2), "the identity of dark matter is yet unknown." Again, Ramanujan et al., (2018) observed that it is the expansion of the universe that leads to the conjecture that there must exist a kind of energy that is pushing galaxies away from each other despite the Newtonian attraction between them. Since the source of what is responsible for the expansion is still unknown, it is called Dark Energy. What can be deduced from this astronomical evidence is that nature is not cognitively exhaustive. That something is not perceptible or visible does not translate that it does not exist.

Drown (2011) believed that the same ambiguity characterizes supernaturalism. The supernatural may mean that which is above the created order of things. "It may mean the spiritual as distinct from the physical. It may mean the miraculous, considered as an event outside the course of nature, produced by divine action" (Drown, 2011, p. 144). According to Ashdown (2017, p. 87) supernaturalism is used to mean "the human assumption of an otherworldly reality that exists outside the observable universe and humanly appears to transcend the laws of nature." Two key expressions could be highlighted from Ashdown about the character of supernaturalism, namely, "outside the observable universe" and "transcend (the laws of) nature." This is in tandem with Dewey's (2013, p. 49) observation that supernaturalism makes reference to "something beyond nature" and in adopting supernaturalist account man's control over nature is but minimal. Petrus and Bogopa (2007, p. 2) defined supernaturalism as "all that is not natural, that which is regarded as extraordinary world, mysterious or unexplainable in ordinary terms." Supernaturalism is often used interchangeably with the spiritual, or more technically the religious (Lohmann, 2003; Hunter, 2012; Dewey, 2013). Lohmann (2003, p. 75) was of the opinion that "the supernaturalistic cosmologies are at the heart of virtually all religions". By holding this claim, Lohman advances a distinction between supernaturalism and naturalism. For him, the core of human existence lies in the former because it "depicts conscious will or volition as the ultimate cause of phenomena…It is an imagined dimension where volition can exist without brains, and control the physical world." Many "idioms" have been offered to distinguish supernaturalism from naturalism: transcendent vs. tangible, illusory vs. real, sacred vs. profane, lifeless vs. living, ethereal vs. material, hidden vs. exposed, inside vs. outside, respectively (Lohmann, 2003).

It is in the nature of man to seek an explanation for the existence of certain phenomena in the universe because of his curiosity. Aristotle once observed in his Metaphysics Book I that "all men by nature desire to know." The myths about existence, whether written or oral, are mere attempts by man to offer reasons why things exist or happen. McGinn (2002) ruled out the proof of God's existence because the idea of universal causality would push one to ask who caused God – and this would lead to infinite regress. It is not in the nature of man to accept anything as a given; there must be a cause for every effect. That is why at the stage he runs empty of explanation he resorts to supernaturalism. For Ghiloni (2019, p. 76) "the supernatural is a sort of explanation for the unknown." The supernatural world is a "hidden realm existing inside the material world" (Lohman 2003, p. 176). But it makes a claim to something real. Supernaturalism somehow is part of lived reality of some people.

According to Petrus and Bogopa (2007, p. 2), "the interaction between witchcraft and traditional healing...and the natural world...is an interaction between the 'supernatural' and the natural." Ugwu (2022) hints that people tend to turn to supernaturalism when they are face to face with unbearable social conditions. Within the African traditional setting, and even in different societies across the globe people are wont to take recourse in the supernatural when faced with disempowering existential challenges. Dan Jordan Smith's (2007) ethnographic report as cited by (Ugwu, 2022) on southeastern Nigeria in the mid- to late 1990s tells the story of how the citizens increasingly turn to "money ritual" which was accompanied by scary rumours of child kidnapping and thefts of body parts. It is not only in money ritual that people turn to supernatural powers. They seek supernatural interventions in almost all their life problems. And when you ask questions, say about the source of their wealth, they will answer "you won't understand". One would wonder what is so unintelligible about what they do. Is it actually the case that it is beyond human knowledge or that what they do must be held esoteric and kept from the public? This paper argues that it is actually the latter. But it is worthy of highlighting that in making reference to something beyond nature, it is possible that supernaturalism must admit inexplicability.

What then does supernaturalism say about consciousness?

Supernaturalism is the view that consciousness is a mysterious phenomenon. In advancing this claim, it offers a religious account of consciousness by holding that it is a product of miracle how consciousness came to be infused in a material universe. Like the occasionalists or the proponents of preestablished harmony, this theory admits that the only thing that makesconsciousness intelligible is our acceptance of the role of a divine agent. How consciousness interacts with the brain is as astonishing as anything else that defiles human cognition. The central tenet of supernaturalism is that consciousness contains a property that is far and above *nature*, which is *hidden* and upon which the nature of consciousness is anchored. This property is a product of a divine agent. Therefore, supernaturalism offers a religious account of consciousness as a handiwork of God, because supernaturalistic explanations are at the heart of almost all religions (Lohmann, 2003; Hunter, 2012). In offering this sort of explanation, with respect to consciousness, the supernaturalists, like the (religious) dualists, make the following commitments that: a) the brain is not sufficient to account for consciousness; b) there is something hidden in consciousness that makes it impossible to give natural account of it; c) science has no say in matters of phenomenal consciousness; and so, d) giving up in the quest to naturalize consciousness is a legitimate display of intellectual humility.

As Ghiloni (2019) has observed, supernaturalism is a kind of explanation for the unknown. The mental states that characterize human beings such as pain, fear, will, and so on, are not the

kind of phenomena that the brain can guarantee. In this case, it is not known how the consciousness and brain interact. If conscious states are wholly given by the brain, as the naturalists would have us believe, why is it that human beings do not behave alike like programmed machines? Why do they enjoy the same mental states differently? To this Flanagan (1992) replied that there is evidence which shows that differences obtain in brain activity in persons who are in phenomenologically distinct mental activities. What this implies is that differences in brain activities may mean differences in conscious life which in turn establishes the fact that physical states can account for subjective states. However pungent Flanagan's claim is, it is still perplexing how the material substrates of the brain could generate subjective experiences.

By rendering the brain incapable of accounting for *qualia*, a supernaturalist makes a claim that is akin to McGinn's. One of the main claims of McGinn is that naturalism is impossible because it is not convincing how the material content of the brain – soggy grey matter – could give account of subjectivity (McGinn, 1991). How can the brain be the basis of volition, will, freedom, trauma, fear, and other subjective qualities? When one severs the brain, one only observes fibrous tissues, nerves, synapses, and so on. These materials, claimed McGinn, are the sorts that cannot generate consciousness. Then how is consciousness possible in the material world? As it is evident from the "idioms" the difference between the supernatural and the natural has become clearer. It is worthy of highlighting that to say that something is hidden does not mean readily that it is invisible, ethereal or non-empirical. A hidden thing can be revealed later on occasions. However, the hidden property of consciousness is the one that is forever hidden. For McGinn, why consciousness must remain terminally unknown is that the hidden property is terminally hidden. This section does not claim to show whether the supernatural is real or unreal, rather it is to point out that the supernatural makes references to the hidden and the transcendent. Epistemologically, the realms of the hidden and the transcendent are unknown. McGinn seemed to be offering a somewhat supernatural explanation of consciousness when he identified it with the hidden, the transcendent. His insistence that we have to shun the supernatural and look towards naturalism appears to be unfounded.

Transcendental naturalism: supernaturalism in disguise

It is worthy of highlighting at this point why most philosophers of mind discredit supernatural, religious account of consciousness. In the view of Churchland (1984), it is because religion being dogmatic had led humanity into an era of unprecedented falsehood, and even committed some social ills just to preserve these falsehoods. According to Churchland (1984, pp. 23-24):

> That the stars are other suns, that the Earth is not the unmoving center of the universe, that the Earth is billions of years old, that life is a physico-chemical phenomenon; all of these crucial insights were strongly and sometimes viciously resisted because the dominant religion of the time happened to think otherwise. Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake for teaching the first view; Galileo was forced by threat of torture in the Vatican's basement to recant the second view; the firm belief that disease was a punishment visited by demonic spirits permitted public health practices that brought chronic and deadly plagues to most of the cities of Europe.... For all these reasons, professional scientists and philosophers concerned with the nature of mind (or with any other topic) do their best to keep religious appeals out of the discussion entirely.

This corroborates the report of Warnes (2005) that in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita,* disbelief in the supernatural is punished with beheading, teleportation into exile or madness. John Dewey was a well-known antagonist of supernaturalism. His problem with it was that it severed us from legitimate human relations. This is because what supernaturalism makes reference to, such as miracles, ghosts and mystical encounters, are sorts of things that are alien to nature. As a naturalist, Dewey observed that supernaturalism "stands in the way of effective realization of the sweep and depth of implications of natural human relations" and so, he advocated we turn towards a scientific explanation of events (Ghiloni, 2019, p. 71). Thus, supernaturalism has its enormous undoing. It is on account of this that McGinn, Churchland, Dennet, Flanagan and other naturalists insisted we seek a naturalistic account of consciousness. Therefore, McGinn did not believe that we need to import the idea of a divine element in order to solve the problem of mind-brain relationship. He ruled out the possibility of freewill because of his belief that all human actions are determined by the laws of nature. For him, it is the brain that determines the operations of the mind. And brain's actions are fixed by antecedent causes and laws and that human behavior is determined by a mixture of heredity and environment (McGinn 2002).

At the heart of McGinn's theory of consciousness is the immanent, unknowable, transcendent property of the mind located in a place that science cannot access. This is the same property identified as *P* which is to account for the interaction between mind and body. If we have made some success in naturalizing or understanding some phenomena such as "the movements of the planets," "the origin of life," "reproduction," "the weather," and so on, in naturalistic terms without importing the idea of supernaturalism, why can't we understand consciousness in naturalistic terms? But even if we cannot naturalize consciousness, it does not make it a non-natural phenomenon. It is better to acknowledge that there are shades of reality that we cannot understand instead of invoking the idea of the supernatural. It is a form of idealism, according to him, to insist that we are capable of naturalizing every phenomenon. To escape this idealism, McGinn introduced the hidden. One may argue that by accepting that consciousness is unnaturalizable because it harbours something that is hidden, McGinn is advancing a supernatural account. This is so because supernaturalism emphasis the transcendence and blocks off further inquiry into any phenomenon. TN of McGinn by insisting that consciousness harbours a proper that is permanently closed, is a herald of supernaturalistic account of consciousness.

Here one can see that this is a purely idealistic attempt to account for the *real*. But McGinn is not the first to postulate the hidden in order to account for the real. Plato did exactly this with his postulation of "world of forms." Kant did it too with his postulation of the "noumenal world." By these postulations, these philosophers earned for themselves the reputation of idealists. It is doubtful that McGinn would acknowledge himself as an idealist since he believed that the *P* must be a real thing. Hegel had dislodged Kant's unknowable things-in-themselves arguing that the real is knowable and the knowable is real. If something is identified as real because it is always known, otherwise it is not real, why does McGinn think that the real property that connects the mind and body is unknowable? The postulation of the unknowable property of consciousness by McGinn leaves his solution to lie at a metaphysical level. But the solution to naturalism of consciousness problem does not need a metaphysical approach. Even at that, how can we know this hidden, noumenal, property since it is assumed that a finite being can only produce a finite idea, not a transcendental one? (Agbakoba, 2001; Gentile, 1922). This study argues in line with Hegel that the real should be knowable otherwise it is not real. In the

same vein, McGinn's postulation of the hidden property does not offer a naturalistic account of consciousness. But rather it places his solution supernatural level.

The aim of importing the idea of the hidden, in McGinn's view, is simply to prove that everything about consciousness is natural. The question that was asked is: how hidden is this property; and how successful was McGinn in holding unto this *hidden* phenomenon? Why should the consciousness problem be spoken of as purely a natural problem if it habours something that is forever undiscoverable? What are the characteristics of this hidden structure? In the words of Joad as cited by Aja (2004, p. 90), "things have no characteristics when they are not known…." Even the dark matter has what they call candidates which are avenues through which it somehow manifests itself. These candidates include weakly interactive massive particles (WIMP), supersymmetric particles or geons, primordial black holes, galaxy rotation curve, and so on. Dark matter though unknown possesses some characteristics through which it manifests itself. Here we retain the claim which Hegel espoused: the real is knowable and vice versa. The fundamental reason McGinn has to postulate this hidden property, *P*, is to demonstrate that we cannot in principle solve the problem of consciousness. To stretch it more, why we cannot solve the problem is because we cannot know *P*. Thus, perhaps the hidden becomes the *un*hidden anytime it is proved that consciousness problem is solvable. But McGinn and the mysterianists think that such time would never come because the mystery is a terminal one (Flanagan, 1992). If the hidden it is a real, natural thing, as McGinn held, then it will yield itself to science of consciousness with the passage of time. But if it is the case that that time would not come, then this is a supernaturalism at work and we have to admit it.

To answer the question about how *hidden* is the hidden structure, one is inclined to argue that it is not hidden the way McGinn presupposed. According to Flanagan (1997, p. 97), "part of the hidden structure of conscious mental states involves their neural realization".   By this Flanagan wants to show that the hidden is nothing other than anything that enables the mental state tobe realized in the brain, or the process through which brain activity that brings about some mental states. In either way, it is within the domain of science of consciousness to unravel this 'mystery'. If science of consciousness gains prospect, McGinn might be wrong to think there is something terminally lurking in consciousness. To prove McGinn wrong, one will point out that McGinn located the hidden in the wrong place. If it is consciousness that has a non-spatial character, then *P* (the hidden property) must also be a non-spatial character in order to make the psychophysical link possible. And if *P* has a non-spatial character, then there is no naturalist solution to the mind-body relationship (Işikgil, 2017).

It can be argued that the hidden cannot be the property of consciousness, inasmuch as it is consciousness that is proving tough to be explained in naturalistic terms. As it has been pointed out, the property which is to account for consciousness-brain relationship is to be an objective property of the brain not a subjective property of consciousness. If we are to identify the hidden with consciousness, we can never have an objective solution to the problem because consciousness is subjective. This is because if the property that should link brain and consciousness together should be the intersubjective, then we are likely to have different *P*'s since each psychophysical link is peculiar to the subject. We are looking for an objective answer to our problem but we do not have an objective access to conscious states. If so, why did McGinn think that our answer should lie there – in the hidden? Why should the hidden be a property of consciousness? The answer is that there is nothing that is hidden as such. At most, the hidden is but a postulation not a solution. And if there is anything hidden, one may argue that it is hidden in the brain not in the consciousness.

It is undeniable that there are some phenomena we can never get to know. For instance, I do not know anything that happened to the 20th generation of my forefathers or how they looked like. Events of the past would always be a good case in which we admit some degree of cognitive closure. But unlike transcendental naturalism, it can be argued that we are cognitively structured in such a way that if you tell me anything about my forebears, I would know it. The argument of this paper is that it is misguided for McGinn to claim that we cannot know the answer to the question we can pose. It is a mark of supernaturalism if a phenomenon is designed in such a manner that no human mind can know it.

Conclusion

Naturalising consciousness remains one of the difficult issues challenging philosophy of mind. Among most phenomena that were hitherto held to be mysterious, consciousness is the very last one that is proving difficult to be explained in naturalistic terms. Unarguably, it is difficult to offer a natural solution to the problem of consciousness. But unlike McGinn that is pessimistic, this study offers two optimistic solutions. First, we need some degree of intellectual humility in approaching some daunting philosophical problem. There is nothing in TN that satisfies the curious mind and stops it from worrying about the consciousness problem. It is not enough to tell someone that a problem is forever insoluble. Intellectual humility can offer us that satisfaction by insisting that with the passage of time what we think is insoluble will later cease to be. The second solution is akin to Flanagan's naturalistic method that is interdisciplinary. Flanagan faults McGinn in thinking that there is a need to explore what he calls the "methodological requirement," which presupposes the imagination of combining the two field-specific faculties – introspection and perception. TN upholds the view that no method is promising. But Flanagan offers the "natural method" that draws on three main approaches:phenomenology (and/or introspection), empirical psychology, empirical neuroscience (Flanagan 1992; Gulick 2017). In his later work Flanagan buttresses his natural method as follows:

> Start by treating three different lines of analysis with equal respect. Give phenomenology its due. Listen carefully to what individuals have to say about how things seem. Also let the psychologists and cognitive scientists have their say. Listen carefully to their descriptions about how mental life works, and what jobs, if any, consciousness has in its overall economy. … finally listen carefully to what the neuroscientist say [sic] about how conscious mental events of different sorts are realized, and examine the fit between their stories and the phenomenological and psychological stories (Flanagan 1997, p. 100).

It is not only one method that should be employed in solving the problem of consciousness but different methods drawn from various disciplines—philosophy, cognitive psychology, neurology, cognitive science, evolutionary biology, and so on. In his opinion, Flanagan says that any "source worth paying attention" would count in formulating a theory of naturalism of consciousness (Flanagan 1997). This is the basis of science of consciousness which most naturalists believe is the last place to look for in the quest to understand consciousness. Metzinger (2024) thinks that guided by science of consciousness, we can solve the old problem in new ways. After all, "consciousness science has made great progress during the last three decades. We have a lot of data and a much better understanding of the physical correlates of conscious experience" (Metzinger, 2024, p. xiv).

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Article   **Open Access**

RADIO AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR CREATING AWARENESS ON CYBERSECURITY AND CRIME PREVENTION AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS

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Abstract

Cybersecurity threats are a growing concern in Nigeria, particularly among the youth, who are the most active users of digital technology. Radio, as a powerful and widely accessible medium, plays a critical role in raising awareness and educating the public on cybersecurity's best practices and crime prevention among the youth in Nigeria. These functions lean on the theory of social responsibility. This study examines the role of radio in promoting cybersecurity awareness among Nigerian youths, with a focus on Kapital FM (Radio Nigeria), Abuja. It highlights the current state of radio stations in supporting awareness, and its impact is fostering a culture of online morals and safety.   Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through a literature review and interviews with media officers at the radio station. The findings reveal that while radio is a powerful tool for public awareness, there is inadequate cybersecurity-related content on KFM Abuja, limiting its effectiveness in educating youths on cyber threats and preventive measures. This gap suggests a need for deliberate efforts to integrate cybersecurity programmes into radio broadcasts. The study recommended strategies for improving the effects of radio, which include, development of targeted content that addresses the growing challenges of cybercrime among Nigerian youths, and enhanced collaboration between radio stations, security agencies, cybersecurity experts, policymakers and educational institutions. By leveraging radio's reach and influence, the youths can be empowered to mitigate cybersecurity risks and reduce criminal activities in the digital space and by so doing, contribute to a safer online environment in Nigeria.

Keywords: Crime, Cybersecurity, Cyber threats, Radio, Youths.

Introduction

In today's world, the rapid growth of digital technologies has transformed how people work, live, and interact. However, this connectivity has also exposed individuals, especially youth, to various cyber threats and activities. Criminal activities such as cybercrime, online harassment, identity theft, credit card fraud, hacking, cyberbullying, cyberterrorism, and phishing are becoming increasingly prevalent, compromising the safety and security of Nigerian youth online.

Technology's rapid advancement has also transformed how information is disseminated, with every medium playing a focal role in shaping public awareness. In Nigeria, where access to the Internet may be a double-edged sword among the youth, radio remains a vital source of information for bridging the digital divide and fostering communication. This article delves into the important role of radio in enhancing cybersecurity awareness among Nigerian youths, who are increasingly vulnerable to cyber threats and also perpetrators of these crimes. By examining the effectiveness of radio programs in disseminating critical information about online safety, considering its wide reach, the study highlights the potential of this traditional medium to educate and empower a generation that traverses both digital and real-world challenges.

Makeri (2017) noted that cybercrimes have evoked mixed feelings of admiration and fear among people, especially the young ones, with a growing unease about cyber and personal security. Makeri asserted that Nigeria, among other countries, has acquired notoriety in internet-related criminal activities. For example, *The Punch* (2025) reported that the Police Special Fraud Unit, Lagos, arrested 14 persons, including four National Youth Service Corps members and eight students from Gateway Polytechnic, Sapaade, aged 18-28 years, for alleged involvement in Internet fraud across Lagos and Ogun states. Arum (2021) examined the role of the telecommunication sector in curbing hacking and cybersecurity, which affect a nation's lives, economy, and international reputation. Similarly, Ottah and Okpoko (2019) examined the collaboration of policymakers and the media to address national security. The Nigerian government has recently implemented various initiatives to promote cybersecurity awareness. However, these efforts have been largely focused on the formal education sector, leaving a significant gap in awareness among out-of-school youth and those in rural areas. There is a gap in the literature on exploring the role of radio in enhancing cybersecurity and crime prevention awareness among youths who are not exposed to education. To fill this gap, the study, therefore, conducted a review, relying on secondary data and interviews of a few officers in a media organisation – Kapital FM (Radio Nigeria), Abuja.

The study's objectives examine the current state of radio-based cybersecurity awareness initiatives, their impact, and potential strategies for improvement. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on cybersecurity awareness and radio-based awareness initiatives. Its findings may also provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and non-governmental organisations, practitioners seeking to promote cybersecurity awareness among Nigerian youth.

Conceptualising Cybersecurity

Nwachukwu (2021) defines cybersecurity as the collection of policies,   security concepts, tools, security safeguards, risk management approaches, guidelines, actions, best practices, training, assurance, and technologies that can be used to protect the cyber environment, organisation, and users' assets. Organisation and user assets include connected computing devices, personnel, applications, infrastructure, services, telecommunications systems, and the totality of transmitted and/or stored information in the cyber environment.   According to Hang & Coppel (2020), cybersecurity is the practice of protecting systems, networks, devices, and data for digital data from digital attacks, theft, damage, and unauthourised access. It involves implementing technologies, processes, and controls to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information in the data space. Due to the nation's security, the issue of cybersecurity has recently caught the attention of some scholars.

In the article Hacking and Cybersecurity in Nigeria Telecommunication Industry: Implication for Teaching and Learning (Arum, 2021), the Internet was defined as a global system

of interconnected computer networks that use the standard Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP) to serve billions of users worldwide. It is a network of networks consisting of millions of private, public, academic, business, and government networks, of local to global scope, that is linked by a broad set of computer memory units, arranged in lines across electronic, wireless and optical networking technologies. The Internet carries a vast range of information resources and services, such as the interlinked hypertext documents of the World Wide Web (WWW) and the infrastructure to support electronic mail.

Youths are digital natives, growing up with the internet and mobile devices, making them more likely to be online and vulnerable to cyber threats. The youth has been defined in varying ways. The United Nations Population Fund defined youth as a period of transition from dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. According to Uzoma, Bello and Falade (2016), the Nigeria Policy on Youth Development of 2009 considers youth to be persons between 18 and 35 years. The youths are individuals in the period of experimenting with roles and identities without the burden of social norms and responsibility. (Uzoma, *et al,* 2016). The youths spend a significant amount of time online, which makes them more susceptible to cyberbullying, online harassment, and other cyber threats. On the other hand, these youths are increasingly involved in cybercrimes, driven by greed, laziness, the quest for fast money, unemployment, and socio-economic challenges. Young individuals often exploit the anonymity of the internet to commit various offences like fraud and hacking (Ebelogu, Ojo, Andeh & Agu, 2019).

Cybercrime

Cybercrime is a series of organised crimes aimed at attacking cyberspace and cybersecurity. As computers became more widespread in the 1960s and 1970s, the first instances of computer hacking began to emerge. Baase (2013) notes that in 1971, a programmer named John Draper discovered a way to make free phone calls using a whistle that emitted a tone at the same frequency as a phone operator's dialling signal. The arrest of a German spy by West Germany's police in 1968 was acknowledged as the first case of cyber espionage (Warner, 2012). By the 1980s, cybercrime began to take a more malicious tone, with the emergence of computer viruses, worms and other forms of malware (Kizza, 2019). At the same time, individual criminals actively hacked data, targeting critical national infrastructures and financial organisations to steal money and sabotage (Mordi, 2019; Kshetri, 2019).

In the 1990s, Nigeria joined other countries that faced cyber threats, and by 2003, former President Olusegun Obasanjo instituted the National Cyber Security Initiative to address the menace. The Nigeria Cybercrime Act was passed into law in 2015 to prohibit and prevent cybercrime in Nigeria. The act aims to provide an effective and unified legal framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution, and punishment of crimes in cyberspace in Nigeria (Nigeria Cybercrime Act, 2015). The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) are some of the organisations that prevent, detect and punish crimes in Nigeria. In 2024, the NCC reported over 219 million active mobile lines with about 134.27 million active mobile internet subscriptions. This shows the number of persons exposed to cyber threats. Cybercrime is complex and committed mostly from remote locations, making it difficult for the police to catch. Internet crimes occur daily, with victims showing naivety and gullibility when interacting with these fraudsters. Some of the risks young people face in cyberspace or engage in against their victims include:

Advanced Fee Fraud (419 or Yahoo-Yahoo): This is the most common type of cybercrime committed by youths in Nigeria. It involves tricking victims into paying upfront for non-existent services or goods, often facilitated through social media platforms like email, Facebook, WhatsApp (Udelue & Bentina, 2019).

Phishing: The National Cyber Security Centre (2020) described phishing as when a criminal attempts to trick people into doing the wrong thing, like clicking a link to a dodgy website. Phishing can be conducted through text messages, social media, or phone, but the term 'phishing' is mainly used to describe attacks that arrive by email. Some phishing emails may contain viruses disguised as harmless that become activated when opened.

Malware: Malware, according to Oyeyemi (2021), is a contraction of malicious software designed to destroy or exploit computer systems and programs. It has many forms such as viruses, worms, Trojans and spyware.

Identity Theft: This involves theft of an individual's personal information, such as a name, address and social security number, intending to use it for fraudulent activities like opening bank accounts, taking out loans or making purchases (Udelue & Bentina, 2019).

Hacking: This is an unauthorised access to computer systems or networks to steal data, disrupt operation or cause damage. According to Obinagwa, Ngoka, Uwaechia, Ezugwu, Okpala and Ayadiuno (2023), hacking is the process of attempting to gain or successfully gaining unauthorised access to computer resources. A hacker is a person who finds and exploits weaknesses in computer systems to gain access. They are classified into ethical hackers, crackers, and grey hats.

Cyberstalking: Oyeyemi (2021) views cyberstalking as involving the use of the internet or other electronic communication tools to harass, intimidate or threaten an individual. Though cyberstalking is a broad term for online harassment, it can include defamation, false accusations, teasing, and even extreme threats.

Cyberbullying: This involves the use of the internet or other electronic communication tools to bully, harass or humiliate an individual (Obinagwa *et al*., 2023).

Online Fraud: Obinagwa *et al* (2023) see online fraud to include various types of fraud carried out online. They could be investment scams, lottery scams, romance scams, etc.

Cyberterrorism: Cyberterrorism is a convergence of cyberspace and terrorism. It refers to unlawful attacks and threats of attacks against computers and networks, and the information stored in them, to intimidate or coerce a government and its people into a political or social objective. Oyeyemi (2021) includes cyberterrorism as a type of cybercrime that occurs in Nigeria and involves the use of technology to carry out terrorist activities or spread terror and fear among people.

Causes and Effects of Cybercrime: Sheer curiosity, mischief, greed, laziness, corruption, poverty, internet porosity, unemployment, and ineffective laws on cybercrime can be seen as factors that motivate people to commit crime-related activities. The speed and power of modern information technology complicate the detection and investigation of computer crimes. For example, communications networks now span the globe, and a small personal computer can easily connect to sites located in different hemispheres or continents. Unfortunately,

cybercrimes expose the vulnerability of information and communication technology, reduce productivity, and cause loss of funds, loss of national reputation, terrorism, and threats to national security (Ebelogu *et al*., 2019).

Cybersecurity Awareness

According to Blackwood-Brown (2018), cybersecurity awareness is educating internet users about cybersecurity issues, benefits, threats and attacks that can jeopardise their activities on the web, mitigate against the attack and prevent unauthorised users. In other words, cybersecurity awareness refers to the knowledge and understanding of potential cyber threats and the best practices to mitigate them. Aliede (2015) found out that students' use of information and communication technologies in their studies also comes with inadequate digital literacy and negative application by unscrupulous users.   The necessity of cybersecurity awareness among Nigerian youths has become increasingly important due to the proliferation of online activities and the corresponding rise in cyber threats. As digital technologies transform communication and commerce, they also expose users to various cybercrimes, such as fraud, theft, and harassment, thereby necessitating robust education on cybersecurity (Ray, 2014). In Nigeria, the growing engagement of the youth on social media platforms and electronic commerce sites amplifies the role of awareness in safeguarding their digital lives. Makeri (2017) and Bouraff & Hui (2024) assert that these risks not only challenge individuals but also jeopardise broader societal structures through the malicious misuse of information communication technologies. However, the youths may not be fully aware of the potential cyber threats and the measures to prevent them. Youths may engage in risk-taking behaviour online, such as sharing sensitive information or clicking on suspicious links. They may also be more vulnerable to social engineering tactics like phishing or online scams.

It is therefore pertinent to empower young individuals to navigate these threats through fostering a culture of cybersecurity awareness. This educational initiative can be achieved through radio, which can reach and promote essential strategies for digital safety among the youth. The awareness can help individuals protect their sensitive data from being breached or compromised. It can also prevent financial fraud and protect sensitive financial information. Cybersecurity awareness is essential for national security as it helps prevent cyberattacks that can compromise critical infrastructure, development and economy (Erondu & Erondu, 2023).

The History and Evolution of Radio as a Medium of Communication in Nigeria

The media is generally regarded as the fourth estate of the realm, with the executive, the legislature and the judiciary as the three other estates (Ibrahim & Jamri, 2022). Radio is a traditional medium that uses electromagnetic waves to transmit audio content to listeners. Radio was invented in the late 19th century by Guglielmo Marconi, and by the 1920s, it became a staple of modern life, with millions of people tuning in to listen to news, music, and dramas. Radio's influence extended beyond entertainment, as it played a critical role in disseminating news and information during war and crisis. All through the 20th century, radio continued to evolve and adapt to changing technological and societal trends. The rise of FM radio in the 1960s and 1970s brought better sound quality and more diverse programming, and in the 1980s and 1990s, an era of interactive and opinion-driven content was enabled. Radio, as a mass medium, is saddled with the responsibility of protecting public interest, creating public awareness, and serving as the intermediary between the government and the people. In essence, radio has an all-embracing role of possibly senitising people against possible injustice, oppression and misdeeds in society (Chirunga & Mbwirire, 2020). Radio is regarded as the most powerful mass medium due to its penetrative, propagative, persuasive and socialising nature.

The evolution of radio in Nigeria is intricately linked to the socio-political landscape of the nation, serving as both a communication tool and a cultural artefact. According to Adeeko (2023), radio broadcasting in Nigeria began in the 1930s, profoundly influencing the dissemination of information and shaping public opinion. This medium became particularly significant during the struggle for independence, as it provided a platform for national discourse and unity. As the digital age emerged, the radio landscape transformed, adapting to contemporary issues such as cybersecurity. This evolution is crucial in understanding how radio can enhance cybersecurity awareness among Nigerian youths, who are increasingly vulnerable to online threats.

How, then, do radio stations function in cybersecurity awareness? Education and media are considered to be more structural and feasible actions for cybersecurity awareness, far better and easier to manage than other complex agents of information. Montasari (2024) notes that the educational goals of radio and information literacy in responding to cyberspace unfold in a three-pronged process: information, analysis and action. Information seeks to raise awareness about cybersecurity and its consequences, convey and disseminate information about it and communicate the relevant legal frameworks to deal with it. Analysis entails identifying and assessing cybersecurity, analysing common causes and underlying assumptions, recognising tricks and reporting and exposing cybercrimes. Action capacitates the individual to respond to cybersecurity, change the discourse on crimes, and monitor the radio on cybersecurity awareness. Radio stations have the potential to educate the public by focusing on their reach and accessibility (Heywood, 2020).

Radio's pervasive influence as a medium of disseminating information cannot be overemphasised, especially in the context of enhancing cybersecurity awareness among Nigerian youths. Despite the growth in new communication media, such as social media platforms, radio remains the most important communication tool to reach large segments of the population in Nigeria (Aondover, Okuneye & Onyejelem, 2024). Given the high penetration of radio, this platform can effectively reach diverse demographics, educating them about the complexities of cyber threats and preventive measures. For example, radio programmes that incorporate discussions on current trends in cybercrimes can significantly demystify the behaviours and motivations of offenders. Moreover, the interactive nature of radio allows the audience to engage with experts and provide feedback, thereby fostering a participatory environment for knowledge sharing. As demonstrated via various initiatives, radio broadcasts that focus on cybersecurity issues can bridge the gap in technological literacy, equipping youth with the skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape safely and responsibly (Upadhyaya, 2024). Furthermore, by employing engaging narratives and expert commentary, these programs can demystify complex cybersecurity concepts and promote best practices among young listeners. The interactive nature of radio facilitates community engagement, fostering discussions that reinforce learning and collective responsibility in cybersecurity. Ultimately, the strategic use of radio can catalyse a broader cultural shift towards proactive cybersecurity practices.

The study of communication and mass media has led to the formulation of many theoretical frameworks and methodologies. McQuail (2005) notes that Social Responsibility Theory is one of the normative theories of the media, which was postulated by F.S. Siebert, T.B. Peterson and W. Schramm in 1956. The theory goes beyond "objective" reporting to interpretive reporting; and calls for responsibility more than freedom on the part of the media. In following the principles of social responsibility, radio broadcasting has a public mandate to inform, educate, and entertain, which aligns with the principles of social responsibility.

Case Study of Kapital FM (Radio Nigeria), Abuja

Radio Nigeria, officially called Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) is a government-owned broadcast institution that is headquartered in Abuja, and has a network of 36 FM stations across the nation, with six Zonal Stations in Kaduna, Enugu, Ibadan, Bauchi (North-East Zone), Port-Harcourt (South-South Zone) and Lafia (North-Central Zone) as well as two Operations in Lagos and Abuja. Radio was owned, controlled, and fully government-funded until the deregulation and commercialisation of broadcast media in Nigeria in 1996. The various stations of Radio Nigeria have a format of radio programme production that provides information, education, and entertainment to their audience. Radio Nigeria, as a public service organisation has the mandate to provide impartial radio broadcasting services within Nigeria to inform, educate, and entertain the public through up-to-date and well-researched news and programmes. Its key mandate by the law setting is to ensure that the services it provides, when considered as a whole, shall reflect the unity of Nigeria as a federation, and at the same time, give adequate expression to the culture, characteristics, affairs, and opinions of each part of the federation. Thus, its slogan, "Uplifting the People and Uniting the Nation".   Radio Nigeria strives to balance divergent opinions. This means that in a given discourse, it is expected that every individual concerned is given space to air their opinions (www.radionigeria.gov.ng). Considering that the study cannot cover all the FM stations of Radio Nigeria within the given period, Kapital FM Abuja is chosen as a case study. KFM was established as an urban-based FM station in 2002 to cater for the upward residents of the Federal Capital Territory. KFM became the second station of the Radio Nigeria family, streaming on a frequency of 92.9.

Current State of Cybersecurity and Crime Prevention Awareness on Radio

In an interview with one of the Presenters of KFM, Participant 1 said:

> We have a 30-minute programme called City Watch that discusses matters of security, any kind of security, be it land, sea, internet, and so on. It is broadcast in English every Thursday at 6:30 pm. There is no particular time scheduled for cybersecurity because various topics around security are discussed depending on the availability of experts. Our stations in the zones have similar programmes across the country.

Going by the participant's response, there is no regular or scheduled topic on cybersecurity awareness. The lack of regular cybersecurity awareness discussions on the radio program may indicate a limited focus on this critical issue. The response provides insight into the current state of radio-based programmes on cybersecurity and crime prevention, specifically highlighting the inconsistent coverage of cybersecurity awareness, contributing to a lack of public awareness and education on the issue. (Kur, Melladu, Agodosy & Orhewere, 2013) asserted that community radio projects can foster engagement and promote discussions around security issues, which in turn empower youths to navigate the digital landscape safely. This multifaceted approach is vital for building a resilient cyber-conscious generation in Nigeria.

Radio's Challenges of Delivering Education on Cybersecurity and Crime Prevention

In another conversation with a Producer, Participant 2 revealed that:

> City Watch is a security awareness programme that educates and informs our listeners how to be security conscious and be well informed about what is going on in the security space in our country. Cybersecurity is very important, but not discussed too often on City Watch. It crops up at any time security is

discussed, but going forward, its broadness will be looked at. Knowing that the youths need to be educated to prevent getting engaged in cybercrimes and being hacked, there will be more awareness, starting from every quarter. The fear is that there may not be enough materials to run cybersecurity as a programme, which can lead to repetition of topics. Sponsorship is needed to support a programme like this.

Radio seems not to be effective in discussing cybersecurity due to various challenges. The literature by Hawkridge and Robinson (2023) suggested that radio has inadequate funding to produce consistent and high-quality educational content, which corroborated with the response of Participant 2. The response highlighted a significant challenge in radio broadcasting for promoting cybersecurity awareness: perceived lack of content. Sustaining a programme with adequate content exposes a broader issue in the radio broadcasting industry, where stations struggle to create engaging and informative content on cybersecurity awareness. This challenge, therefore limits their ability to effectively promote awareness.

Implications of a Lack of Radio's Awareness on Cybersecurity
In an interaction with a good number of students for Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in the News Room, a 300-level student of Mass Communication at Nasarawa University, Keffi (Participant 3) observes that:

> Since I have been on Industrial Attachment for about two months. I have not
> heard of any programme on cybersecurity. That does not mean that I do not
> know anything about Internet activities. I know my mates who do yahoo-yahoo.
> And I know it is wrong. I can tell when someone wants to swindle me because
> I read about other people's ordeals through social media. So, by God's grace,
> I will not commit or be a victim of cybercrime.

The student's response shows a lack of awareness of cybersecurity and crime prevention through radio, indicating a lack of exposure to the issue among Nigerian youths, leading to reliance on alternatives such as social media integrations or peer-led discussions. The student's statement reveals a knowledge gap in cybersecurity awareness, which is not being addressed through traditional radio broadcasting. This highlights the potential consequences of radio stations' lack of engagement in this area, such as youths may not be fully aware of the potential cyber threats and the measures to prevent them. This gap affects even more those youths in the rural areas who do not have access to the Internet or those who are out of school.

The Way Forward
The literature underscores the critical role of radio in creating awareness about cybersecurity and crime prevention among youths. However, findings from interviews with media officers at KFM (Radio Nigeria), Abuja, revealed a gap in cybersecurity-related content. This suggests a disconnect between the potential of radio as highlighted in the literature and its actual implementation. This aligns with previous studies indicating that while radio is a powerful tool for information dissemination, limited specialised programming on cybersecurity hinders its effectiveness in raising awareness. The lack of adequate content at KFM Abuja reflects broader challenges identified in the literature, such as insufficient media prioritisation of cybersecurity issues and a lack of targeted programming for young audiences. The study, therefore, proposes the following recommendations as potential strategies for improvement:

Creation of dedicated cybersecurity radio shows/jingles: Radio stations should understand the importance of improving education on cybersecurity to enable them to develop a program to address it. Radio stations could benefit from exploring innovative formats, sponsorship and collaborations with relevant organisations to enhance their cybersecurity awareness initiatives. A dedicated program to be aired once a week could be created, and with time, could become participatory where young ones share their idea on cyber issues.

Full engagement of young people: The youth represent the next generation, and therefore need credible and up-to-date information on cybersecurity. Duchi and Orebiyi (2024) agreed that the lack of educational access to the growing number of young people presents a crisis, calling for effective and efficient actions. Radio should therefore incorporate social media elements such as live tweets and Instagram stories, to extend the reach and youth's engagement in cybersecurity awareness. Host interactive programmes, such as call-in shows, quizzes, or games, should be initiated to educate and engage the youths and other diverse listeners. This will go a long way in raising awareness and promoting safe online behaviours.

Training: Radio stations should provide training and workshops for radio staff and presenters on cybersecurity awareness to ensure they can effectively communicate complex information.

Conclusion

The few lessons arising from the engagement with radio's role in cybersecurity awareness and crime prevention are significant and instructive. The discussion acknowledges that radio, with its wide range, can help to educate a large audience, particularly Nigerian youths, on issues concerning cybersecurity. Youths can benefit from cybersecurity education and awareness programs that teach them about online safety and security best practices. However, the study shows a limited awareness of cybersecurity awareness among youths due to a lack and limited of content in the programme, and a lack of sponsorship and staff training. The convergence of evidence underscores the relevance and validity of the research objectives within the context of the study. Documenting the findings and recommendations of the study serves as a possible model for radio stations and relevant stakeholders like the NCC, EFCC, the NPF, Non-profits, and educational institutions, to create a call-in segment to enhance cybersecurity education.

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Article   **Open Access**

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN ADDRESSING NIGERIA'S SECURITY CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The media functions as a channel for public dialogue, where different voices can express their opinions on state matters. However, the efficiency of this role is frequently stalled by issues such as media proprietorship, restriction/censorship, and the influence of political and economic leaders This study attempted to evaluate media effectiveness in the face of security challenges. The study objectives were: identify roles the media play in addressing security challenges in Nigeria, examine the causes of frictions between the media and security agencies in Nigeria, and evaluate the challenges of media in addressing security challenges in Nigeria. Qualitative research method was adopted to explore the existing literature in the area under study. This was done by engaging a scoping review of peer reviewed articles on security challenges in Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that while it was observed that the media has largely followed through on ethical practices as mandated by regulations, some journalists function according to the whims and caprices of unscrupulous politicians, also, that the media has consistently provided public benefits to the society in the area of information dissemination. The study concluded by stating that the media's role in nurturing awareness, distributing information, and encouraging responsibility is central for state security. Nevertheless, political and economic pressure, misinformation, coercion, and resource limitations pose substantial challenges.

Keywords: Media, Security, Report, Challenges, Safety.

Background of the Study

Communication is the elementary conveyor belt of social, economic, and political interactions which are capable of inhibiting and decreasing insecurity as well as stimulating peace and tranquility in the society. The media are unquestionably the means for enlightening the citizens on security issues and making security agents to be proactive instead of being reactive in providing protection for the state from the threats posed by the criminals operating within a defined territory. Also, for any country to be really protected in the 21st century, which is sometimes called the information or jet age, it must look further than the conservative security strategy. An in-depth consideration of technological development and security dynamics exposes that there has been far-reaching shift in the conceptualization and application of

communication and security relationship as communication has developed to the point it currently determines the operations in practically all aspects of human interactions (Okeke and Oji, 2014). The media play an essential role in determining public opinion, swaying policy, and nurturing the democratic process. The media functions as a channel for public dialogue, where different voices can express their opinions on state matters. However, the efficiency of this role is frequently stalled by issues such as media proprietorship, restriction/censorship, and the influence of political and economic leaders (Okafor, 2020). These challenges advance questions about the real freedom of the Nigerian media and their ability to function as a genuine public estate. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw's agenda setting theory postulates that the media do not inform people what to think but rather what to think about. By choosing which issues to highlight, the media stimulates public opinion and prioritizes certain topics over the others. This theory emphasizes the media's power in shaping societal concerns and directing public consideration (McCombs & Shaw, 2021).

The ombudsman role of the media is one of their most distinguished occupations, accentuating their obligation to monitor and hold those in authority accountable. Researchers debate that the media function as a check on government activities, revealing corruption, ineffectiveness, and abuses of authority. This function is essential for preserving transparency and nurturing good governance (Bennett, 2020). Nigerian academics also identify the watchdog part of the media. For example, Ogbu (2022) states that investigative journalism in Nigeria has been contributory in revealing various indignities and holding public officials accountable. However, the efficiency of this function is frequently compromised by intimidations towards journalists, inadequate resources, and political interfering, which can discourage vigorous investigative efforts (Ogbu, 2022). Public support is essential in the construction and execution of state policies, and the media plays a critical role in scrutinizing, informing, and broadcasting individuals, activities, and practices that jeopardize national security (Dairo, 2021). Journalists, performing as doorkeepers, nuture public discernment of contemporary political happenings and characters through their reportage and analysis. They direct public awareness of political subjects and the national political programs. The mass media's reputation in achieving societal goals whether social, health, structure, politics, education, or security advancement cannot be over-emphasized. The mass media as significant institutions for socialization are responsible for disseminating information in the society (Pate, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

However, as discussed by Peresin (2007), criminals sometimes strive to influence and exploit the media for their own purposes by distributing messages of violence and thus achieving the masses sympathy. According to Peresin (2007), the majority of professionals reasonably call the present-day radicalism mass media-oriented terrorism. This is because, when analyzing criminal activities, one may observe that in the majority of circumstances they are executed specifically in order to attract the attention of universal media. Also, Sharifi (2015) posits that criminals have recognized that the media is a fast paced industry which encourages them to insistently carryout dreadful assaults in order to maintain their media presence, and in citizens discuss. The researchers recommend that criminals are like any other social group; they are continuously modernizing their approaches, generating new styles, keeping the citizens interested in their activities, emphasizing that this has modeled serious challenges for security agencies and policymakers.

Walter (1978) mentioned in Biernatzki (2002) states that criminals recognize that their preeminent course to citizens' acknowledgement is through appealing to traditional news values:

spectacle, conflict and misfortune, as driven by rivalry among the media. In Nigeria, research has shown that the media have not advanced well in this respect. Okpara (2010) quoted in Hamid and Baba (2014) discerns that the Nigerian media are yet to excellently execute the investigative function of the media in their reporting of criminals. He states that this has led to the persistent criminal activities in Nigeria. The Nigerian media have performed well in executing their investigative function.

Research Questions

This study sought to discover the following questions:

i.   What roles do the media play in addressing security challenges in Nigeria?
ii. What are the causes of frictions between the media and security agencies in Nigeria?
iii. What are the challenges of media in addressing security challenges in Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

On a general scale, this study is an attempt at appraising the media as a tool for addressing security challenges. Specifically, the study seeks to:

i.   Identify roles the media play in addressing security challenges in Nigeria.
ii. Examine the causes of frictions between the media and security agencies in Nigeria.
iii. Evaluate the challenges of media in addressing security challenges in Nigeria.

Conceptual Analysis

The Media: The media play an essential role in determining public opinion, influencing strategy, and nurturing the democratic process. The media functions as a canal for public conversation, where dissimilar voices can discuss their outlooks on national concerns. However, the efficiency of this role is repeatedly stalled by concerns such as media proprietorship, censorship, and the sway of political and economic gladiators (Okafor, 2020). Stuart Hall's (2023) encoding/decoding prototype accentuates the media's role in building and facilitating cultural connotations. According to Hall, media messages are encoded with precise information that the audiences decode based on their cultural perspectives. This procedure highlights the media's role in influencing cultural perspectives and distinctiveness (Hall, 2020). In a culturally diverse state like Nigeria, the media's role as a cultural moderator is principally important. The media echoes and profiles cultural standards, ethics, and characters by presenting diverse cultural perspectives. Conversely, the representation of numerous ethnic and cultural groups in the media is frequently imbalanced, leading to stereotypes and distortions (Ndolo, 2023). Addressing these concerns necessitates a more all-encompassing and well-adjusted media approach that precisely mirrors Nigeria's cultural variety.

Security: Various researchers across the world have hypothesized diverse view points on the conception of security and insecurity. The word 'security' comes from the Latin word 'se-curus'. 'Se' means 'without' and 'Curus' means' uneasiness' (Oghuvbu, 2021). This suggests that "security initially meant liberty from state of discomfort and peaceful state of affairs without any dangers or threats" (Oghuvbu, 2021, p.3925). Therefore, security has a broader meaning such as to feel safe, to be protected from all forms of injury and it is used to label a situation without any risks or apprehensions (UNDP, 2002 Mentioned in Oghuvbu, 2021). Security is generally regarded as "liberty from threat or dangers to individuals or a state. It is the capacity to safeguard and preserve oneself, legitimate interests and the improvement of welfare" (Mijah, (2007) sighted Eugina 2013).

The Role of the Media in State Security Strategy

The media play a critical role in state security policy by nurturing public awareness, broadcasting critical information, and promoting a culture of alertness and resilience. One of the crucial functions of the media in state security is to enlighten citizens about possible dangers and how to respond to them. This role is necessary in Nigeria, where dangers such as terrorism, abductions, and ethnic conflicts are widespread. For example, during the height of the Boko Haram insurgency, Nigerian media outlets played a noteworthy role in updating the public about the group's actions, government responses, and safety measures to be undertaken. Mainstream media outlets such as Channels TV, AIT and the Premium Times delivered regular updates and comprehensive analyses, serving to keep the public conversant and vigilant (Oso, 2021). The media also play a dynamic role in distributing vital information during crises. Precise and appropriate information help to alleviate anxiety, direct public responses, and support harmonized feedbacks from security agencies and the public. For instance, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerian media disseminated essential information about health strategies, lockdown procedures, and immunization operations, thereby contributing to public safety and health security (Uwalaka and Watkins, 2020). Nevertheless, the efficiency of this role is subject to the reliability and trustworthiness of the information provided. Misinformation and unconfirmed information can destabilize public trust and aggravate crises. Therefore, it is fundamental for media organizations to abide by ethical broadcasting principles and confirm information before distribution.

By regularly reporting on security concerns and inspiring public involvement in security efforts, the media nurtures a philosophy of awareness and resilience. This includes enlightening the public on the significance of security awareness and inspiring proactive measures to improve community security. Operations and campaigns intended at encouraging community policing, for example, have been expedited by media reporting and backing. Nigerian media have been contributory in encouraging initiatives like the "See Something, say something" campaign, which inspires citizens to report suspicious activities to security agencies. Such initiatives help create a resilient society capable of weathering and recuperating from security challenges (Okon, 2021). Investigative journalism is an influential tool for encouraging responsibility and transparency within and among different security agencies. By revealing security gaps, corruption, and human rights abuses, investigative journalists hold security officers responsible and drive for reforms. In Nigeria, prominent examples include investigative reports by Sahara Reporters and Premium Times that have uncovered numerous occurrences of corruption and misbehavior within the security sector. For instance, investigative reports on the mismanagement of funds assigned for counter-terrorism efforts have led to public uproar and successful government actions to address these concerns (Ogbondah, 2020). Such journalism not only encourages responsibility but also builds public trust in security institutions by showing that they are subject to inspection and reform. Deliberate communication initiatives led by the media are necessary in countering radical narratives and de-radicalizing susceptible people. Through targeted messaging, the media can challenge the ideologies broadcasted by radical groups and provide substitute narratives that encourage peace and tolerance.

Challenges with the Media

Despite its constructive roles, the media can also pose challenges to state security. Sensationalist reporting, distribution of misinformation, and unsubstantiated news can damage public trust in security establishments, stimulate anxiety, and aggravate tensions. For example, embellished

reports about terrorism or ethnic conflicts can lead to widespread anxiety and suspicion, thwarting the efforts of security agencies to maintain law and order (Uko, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Social Responsibility Theory (SRT) which proposes that the media has a responsibility to act in the overall interests of the public, going beyond simple information dissemination to address societal issues and promote ethical practices. The theory developed from a need to balance media freedom with commitments to society, recognizing the significant influence of the media on public opinion and behavior. There is a plethora of key principles that further accentuates the reason for adopting this theory which includes: ethical practices, public benefits, accountability, community engagement, freedom, and responsibility.

Methodology

Qualitative research method was adopted to explore the existing literature in the area under study. This was done by engaging a scoping review of peer reviewed articles on security challenges in Nigeria. A scoping review methodology was considered the best way to examine state of the art literature that covers a wide range of security challenges in Nigeria and beyond. Although a scoping review has its own limits such as the narrow opportunity to provide specifics for practice, it has an awe-inspiring advantage of providing concrete examples of how terrorism and criminalities are tackled in countries with security challenges.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study reveals that citizens depend so much on the media for precise and appropriate information about the activities in the society. This suggests that the customary roles of the media in any society which are to enlighten, inform and entertain are so fundamental that societies can scarcely advance meaningfully without these conduits of mass communication. It was also observed that though the media are faced with a lot of challenges in the fight against insecurity, they have substantial influence in combating the nuisance, as they helped in keeping the people well-informed of the security situations in the country. This observation is in line with the position of Tejumaiye (2011) who postulates that although, journalism in Nigeria has been faced with challenges; these challenges have not stopped them from impacting on the state in different ways. According to him, the mass media shape culture, impact politics, play imperative role in business and influence the daily lives of millions of people, including people's outlooks, behaviors and essential ethical values. The researcher also establish that the media have not been completely utilized in addressing security issues in Nigeria. Accordingly, it was discovered that the extraordinary level of insecurity in Nigeria can be controlled if the media can be appropriately utilized, since communication-based approach through the media has been considered better than application of force in the management of security situations in the country. This is in agreement with the suggestion of Ogu and Oyerinde (2014), who postulate that effective communication process, cultured communication facilities and adaptive participating communication method are needed for the security design of the state to be adequately recognized, esteemed and exploited. This can find consolation in the fact that communication is the rudimentary driver of social interaction which can help to avert and control animosity as well as encourage peace and tranquility in the society, as rightly captured by Okeke and Oji (2014) who advance that for any state to be truly safe, it must look outside the conservative security forces.

A critical investigation of technological development and security dynamics reveals that there has been a radical alteration in the conceptualization and presentation of communication-

security relationship as communication has developed to determine operations in most aspects of social life. On a related note, Al-Rfouh (2015), supports that the battle ground has moved from being a geographical position to a cybernetic environment. In this case, its apparatuses or tools for victory are not only weapons and arsenals but consist of every form of technology that has the prospect to affect the physical, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of individuals. Findings are further summarized as follows:

i.   While it was observed that the media has largely followed through on ethical practices as mandated by regulations, some journalists function according to the whims and caprices of unscrupulous politicians.

ii. The media has consistently provided public benefits to the society in the area of information dissemination.

iii. The media is actively involved in community engagement activities as neither the society nor the media can do without the other.

iv. The media has really asserted itself as the true vanguard of freedom by enlightening their audience about the rights as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The findings from this study point toward the vital role of the media in a state's security strategy, the substantial impact of challenges encountered by the media, and the efficiency of various approaches to improve the media's involvement. The media's role in nurturing awareness, distributing information, and encouraging responsibility is central for state security. Nevertheless, political and economic pressure, misinformation, coercion, and resource limitations pose substantial challenges. Effective approaches such as training, partnerships, objectivity, fact-checking, and investigative journalism can improve the media's role in encouraging nationwide security. These findings show the need for sustained support and development of the media sector to guarantee it can efficiently contribute to state security. Policymakers, media establishments, and security agencies must work together to address the challenges and execute the strategies identified in this study to reinforce the media's role in public security.

Recommendations

Founded on the findings and discussions, the following recommendations are suggested to improve the role of the media in state security strategy:

1. There is need to implement all-inclusive training programs for journalists focused on security reportage and concerns related to state security. This is because enhanced understanding and knowledge of security matters will empower journalists to report more precisely and responsibly, contributing to a more knowledgeable public and effective state security policy.

2. While it was observed that the media has largely followed through on ethical practices as mandated by regulations, some journalists function according to the whims and caprices of unscrupulous politicians.

3. The media has consistently provided public benefits to the society in the area of information dissemination.

4. The media is actively involved in community engagement activities as neither the society nor the media can do without the other.

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Article   Open Access

IMMANUEL KANT ON GOODWILL AND THE MORAL CRISIS IN NIGERIA: A CRITIQUE

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Abstract
This study critically examines Immanuel Kant's notion of goodwill and its relevance to the pervasive moral crisis in Nigeria. Kant defines goodwill as the only moral quality that is intrinsically good without qualification, regardless of its consequences. Amid widespread corruption and governance failures in Nigeria, this study explores the applicability of Kant's ethical principle of duty-bound action motivated by goodwill. The objective is to assess how Kant's idea of duty driven by moral law can guide ethical reform in Nigeria. Using a qualitative analytical method, the study examines how Kantian goodwill can inform moral reform in Nigeria's ethical, political, and legal structures. It evaluates institutional shortcomings in the judiciary, law enforcement, and public service, arguing that the erosion of moral duty contributes to Nigeria's ethical crisis.   The study shows that promoting moral actions based on reason and duty can foster ethical leadership and accountability. Findings suggest Kantian goodwill is a viable moral compass capable of redirecting Nigeria from ethical decline toward a just and responsible society by encouraging honest leadership and stronger institutions. It argues that actions guided by reason and duty, not personal interest, are essential for rebuilding integrity in leadership and public service. The study concludes that Kantian moral philosophy be integrated into civic education, leadership development, and public sector training to promote ethical responsibility. It recommends Kant's concept of goodwill as a foundation for moral and institutional transformation.

Keywords: Immanuel Kant, Goodwill, Categorical Imperative, Moral crisis, Corruption, Ethical Reform, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria today faces an escalating moral crisis that threatens the very fabric of its national identity and development. This crisis is evident in widespread corruption, dishonesty, self-centeredness, and a blatant disregard for moral responsibility across political, social, and educational institutions. Despite various reforms and campaigns, the erosion of ethical values continues to weaken national cohesion and trust in public institutions. In response to this moral decay, it becomes imperative to explore philosophical frameworks that offer foundational principles for ethical renewal. One such framework is found in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, particularly his concept of goodwill. Kant's ethical thought centres on the idea that morality must be grounded in rational principles that apply universally to all rational beings.

His notion of the Categorical Imperative, a principle that requires individuals to act only according to maxims they can will to become universal laws, offers a rigorous standard for moral conduct. At the core of this system is the concept of goodwill, which Kant identifies as the only thing good without qualification. Kant asserts that, "it is impossible to think of anything in the world, or indeed even outside it, that can be taken to be good without qualification, except a goodwill" (Kant, 2019, p. 393). For Kant, goodwill is not defined by the outcomes it produces but by the moral intention behind actions acting from duty, not personal interest.

This study critically appraises the relevance of Kant's conception of goodwill in addressing Nigeria's ethical challenges by emphasizing duty-driving actions that promote integrity, accountability, and moral responsibility in leadership and public service. By applying his framework of duty, moral autonomy, and universal moral law, the study seeks to underscore the importance of principled leadership, integrity, and rational moral choices in rebuilding Nigeria's moral compass. As Inoka (2006) notes, "Nigeria is sick and hence its susceptibility to collapse, because it is bereft of unshakable principles held from conviction" (p. 2). Through Kant's lens, this work explores how a return to moral duty and goodwill can serve as a catalyst for ethical transformation and national renewal in Nigeria.

Background to Kant's Thought

Immanuel Kant, one of the 18th century's most influential German philosophers who lived between 22nd April, 1724 to 12th February, 1804, is notable in moral literature for his deontological orientation to morality (Ekpoudom & Ekpoudom, 2020, p. 149). A central figure in modern Western philosophy, Kant was born in Konigsberg, East Prussia. His contributions to ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics were shaped by the Enlightenment, a period defined by the emphasis on reason, autonomy, and moral self-governance. According to Allison (1990), Kant's ethical theory emerged from this intellectual context, particularly as a response to the dominant empiricist and rationalist traditions of his time (pp. 3–5). Kant was educated at the University of Konigsberg, where he engaged with the rationalist thought of Leibniz and Wolff. However, it was David Hume's skeptical philosophy that deeply challenged Kant's assumptions about causality and moral knowledge. According to Lawhead (2002), "Although Kant was immersed in this system of philosophy, when he was in the middle of his career, he read David Hume's empiricist argument. This revelatory experience, in Kant's words, awakened him from his dogmatic slumber (p. 326)," leading him to reevaluate the foundations of reason and morality. This critical awakening became the foundation for his later works on practical reason and ethics. In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Kant sets out to establish a supreme principle of morality. According to Kant (2019), "the only thing that is good without qualification is the good will, not talents or virtues, but the inner moral disposition to act from duty (p. 393). Kant, believes that actions have moral worth only when they are motivated by duty rather than by inclination or pursuit of personal gain. This reflects his belief that the moral law must arise from pure reason. Kant's ethical philosophy, therefore, reflects the Enlightenment ideal of rational self-legislation. It offers not merely a theory of right action but a moral vision rooted in human reason, freedom, and responsibility. In this light, his work provides a useful framework for assessing contemporary moral crises, such as those present in Nigeria's political and institutional life, where ethical failures often stem from a lack of principled leadership and commitment to duty.

Kant on the Categorical Imperative (The Concept of Goodwill)

Kant argues that reason defines morality, making his moral philosophy non-empirical. He asserts that the morality of an action depends not on its consequences but on the motivation behind it.

This perspective aligns with deontologism, which judges moral actions based on duty rather than outcomes. In *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant states that "it is impossible to think of anything in the world, or indeed even outside it, that can be taken to be good without qualification, except a good will" (Kant, 2019, p. 393). He sets out to prove that goodwill is the only thing unconditionally good. Qualities like intelligence, courage, and wealth may be desirable, but they can become harmful if the will behind them is not good. Even virtues such as self-control and moderation can serve immoral ends if not guided by goodwill.   For Kant, goodwill is good not because of what it achieves but because it is an end in itself. He emphasizes that "the good will is not good because of what it brings about or accomplishes, rather, it is good through its willing, and therefore good in itself" (Kant, 2019, p. 394). Even if a goodwill fails to accomplish its goal due to external circumstances, it retains its moral worth. Kant (2019) gives the following characterization of the good will as something that is good irrespective of effects thus:

> A goodwill is good not because of what it affects or accomplishes, because of its fitness for attaining some proposed end: it is good through its willing alone, that is, good in itself. It is good without qualification. It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will (p. 393).

This idea is illustrated through historical examples, such as Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent resistance. Despite facing violence, Gandhi maintained his commitment to non-violence, acting from moral duty rather than personal gain. Kant would view this as an example of goodwill "shining like a jewel" (Kant, 2019, p. 394). Unlike happiness, pleasure, or even virtues, which can sometimes enable immoral actions, goodwill remains the only thing that is always unconditionally good. Kant insists that goodwill is sought not as a means to an end but as an end in itself. While other qualities may contribute to a good life, they require the guidance of goodwill to be truly moral. Although goodwill is central to Kant's ethics, he does not provide a precise definition of it. Nevertheless, his claim that goodwill is the only thing good without qualification is foundational to his moral philosophy, shaping his ethical framework around duty and moral law rather than consequences.

The Categorical Imperative and Moral Rectitude

Kant (2019) posits that there is only one categorical imperative: "Act only on a maxim that you can also will to become a universal law" (p. 422). This imperative evaluates moral worth not by consequences but by the intention behind actions, guided solely by duty and reason (Kant, 2019, p. 414). Unlike hypothetical imperatives which are conditional and depend on achieving specific outcomes, the categorical imperative applies unconditionally to all rational beings, irrespective of desires or ends. It prescribes what ought to be done simply because it is morally right, independent of personal interests or cultural context (Ebels-Duggan, 2011, p. 182). Kant's notion of goodwill is intrinsically tied to this moral law. Goodwill, for Kant, is the only thing that is good without qualification. It acts in accordance with the moral law out of a sense of duty, not for reward or recognition. In the context of Nigeria's moral crisis, marked by corruption, impunity, and institutional decay, the categorical imperative becomes especially relevant. The failure of public office holders to act from goodwill choosing instead self-serving maxims underscores the moral deficit at the heart of the Nigerian crisis. A Kantian appraisal demands a return to duty-bound leadership and citizenry where actions are morally justified by their ability to be universalized.

The first formulation of the categorical imperative, known as the formula of universal law, asks whether a maxim can be willed as a universal law. Here, Kant believes that if everyone before carrying out any action wills that his intended action should be regarded as a universal law for everyone to follow, no one would say that theft, lying, or breaking promises could be morally justified. If the universalization of an action leads to contradiction or undermines societal cohesion, then it is morally impermissible. This principle can be applied to many of Nigeria's pressing ethical issues. For example, the widespread practice of bribery and nepotism in public institutions violates the principle of universalizability. If everyone acted on the maxim "I may give or receive bribes to achieve my goals," trust in public systems would collapse. This mirrors Kant's example of false promising, where universalizing the act of lying renders the concept of promise meaningless (Kant, 2019, p. 423). Kant also provides the example of a person considering suicide due to despair. While this action might seem justified by personal suffering, Kant argues that the maxim contradicts the principle of self-love, which is meant to preserve life, not destroy it (Kant, 2019, p. 422). Similarly, in Nigeria, where suicides linked to economic hardship and hopelessness are on the rise, Kantian ethics would urge individuals and society to act from goodwill that seeks to preserve and uplift human dignity rather than succumb to despair. Another of Kant's examples addresses the neglect of one's talents. In Nigeria, where brain drain and underutilization of human potential persist due to systemic failures and poor leadership, Kant's imperative suggests that every rational being has a duty to develop their capacities not only for personal fulfillment but also for societal progress (Kant, 2019, p. 425). Neglecting talents undermines societal development and reflects a failure to act from goodwill.

Kant further illustrates his principle through the example of a wealthy individual who refuses to help those in need. While survival may not depend on mutual aid, Kant insists that no rational being would will a world in which they are denied help in times of distress (Kant, 2019, p. 424). In Nigeria, where poverty coexists with extreme wealth and public resources are often hoarded or misused, the absence of goodwill in interpersonal and institutional relations perpetuates inequality and suffering. A moral society, guided by Kant's categorical imperative, would promote empathy, solidarity, and justice. The relevance of the categorical imperative to Nigeria's moral situation lies in its call for actions rooted in universal moral law, rather than individual or group preferences. Chukwujekwu (2017) emphasizes that "in Kant's ethics, moral worth is determined by intention rather than consequences" (p. 31). This ethical lens exposes the superficiality of reforms that prioritize appearances or political expediency over genuine moral transformation. As Lacewing (2017) notes, morality and rationality share a universal nature, reason dictates the same duties to all rational beings (p. 182). Thus, the application of Kant's categorical imperative offers a robust evaluative tool for Nigeria's moral and institutional behaviour. It provides a concrete moral framework to assess and correct the ethical lapses in Nigeria's public and private spheres. By demanding that individuals act only on principles that can be universally adopted, Kant's theory challenges the status quo of moral relativism and selective justice. The principle of goodwill, grounded in duty and rationality, becomes a moral compass capable of guiding Nigeria out of ethical decay toward a society anchored in integrity, accountability, and respect for human dignity.

Nigeria's Societal Crisis and Moral Decay

Nigeria continues to struggle with entrenched moral failures that cut across governance, education, religion, and everyday social life. These crises, while often discussed as political or structural issues, are at their core ethical and philosophical in nature, rooted in a deviation from values such as justice, honesty, dignity, and responsibility. The nation's contemporary challenges

reveal a breakdown in both public virtue and private conscience. One of the most pervasive manifestations of this moral decay is corruption, which remains a major impediment to national development. Corruption in Nigeria is not merely episodic but systemic, embedded in institutions, and reinforced by political culture (Oji, 2024, pp. 71–83). This aligns with Akinpelu's assertion that corruption has become normalized in Nigerian public life, where leaders often exploit power for personal enrichment (Akinpelu, 2005, p. 117). The regularity with which funds are embezzled, elections rigged, and contracts inflated reflects a society where ethical boundaries are routinely ignored. The educational system, which ideally serves as the moral and intellectual foundation of society, has also witnessed a significant erosion of ethical standards.

Akinsanya et al. (2023) argue that Nigerian youths are increasingly desensitized to ethical concerns due to the systemic failures in education, including exam malpractice, sexual harassment, and cultism (pp. 190–194). Similarly, Omoregbe (1993) laments the collapse of moral authority in Nigerian schools, noting that integrity is often sacrificed in pursuit of certificates and social validation (pp. 142–143). This has created a generation inclined more toward results than values, a dangerous orientation for any nation's future. In the religious sector, the paradox of Nigeria's high religiosity coexisting with widespread moral collapse is particularly striking. According to Atoi, Sadiku, and Kume (2020), "religious institutions, instead of being moral anchors, are now increasingly driven by materialism and influence, promoting prosperity over piety" (pp. 115–122). Ehusani (2003) echoes this concern, noting that the moral authority of religious leaders has been weakened by their complicity in political corruption and their prioritization of wealth over truth (pp. 89–91). The result is a populace that is religious but not necessarily moral, where spirituality is no longer synonymous with ethical transformation. The public service and political leadership landscape in Nigeria also illustrates a deep moral void. Sunday, Eleojo, and Idu (2021) observe that codes of conduct in the civil service are frequently ignored, with bribery and dereliction of duty being commonplace (pp. 112–118). Onigbinde (2007) adds that public office is often perceived as a reward rather than a responsibility, and governance as a platform for accumulation rather than service (p. 67). This absence of moral responsibility in leadership undermines both state legitimacy and citizen confidence. Beyond institutions, there is an alarming decline in respect for human life and dignity. Ritual killings, kidnapping, and extrajudicial violence have become disturbingly frequent. Ogundowole (2004) argues that the prioritization of tribal, religious, or economic interests over shared humanity results in social fragmentation and devaluation of life (p. 101). These societal issues to deepening poverty, inequality, and moral confusion, noting that the survivalist mentality fosters utilitarian ethics where the end justifies the means (Ziprebo & Obi (2024, pp. 45–58). Nigeria's moral crisis is shaped by a pragmatic, self-serving view of ethics where actions are judged not by their moral worth but by their benefit to the actor (Oke & Esikot 2012, pp. 98–99). This utilitarian mindset is incompatible with the Kantian ethical vision, where the value of an action lies in its motive, not merely in its outcome. Taken together, these examples illustrate a society in urgent need of moral reawakening. The challenges Nigeria faces, namely, corruption, weak leadership, moral relativism, and social injustice, require more than political reforms; they demand a revival of moral conscience. This sets the stage for a deeper philosophical engagement with Immanuel Kant's idea of goodwill and moral duty, as a possible remedy for the ethical drift that defines contemporary Nigerian society.

Youth mentorship and religious reorientation, emphasizing Kantian goodwill, are crucial for moral rectitude in Nigeria. The nation's corruption stifles progress, and fundamental character-building principles have been abandoned from childhood to adulthood, creating a critical mass detrimental to society (Uno et al. 2018, p. 1). According to Cantrell et al.,

"mentoring refers to a dyadic relationship in which a mentor, a person senior in age or experience, provides guidance and support to a less experienced or younger person, the protégé" (DuBois & Karcher, 2005 cited in Cantrell et al). Psychosocially, a mentor can promote acceptance, role modeling, confirmation, friendship, and counseling (Smith-Jentsch, Scielzo, Yarborough, & Rosopa, 2008). Mentors act as a resource for socialization and academic management. For vulnerable youths and a country like Nigeria with high youth restiveness, unemployment, and crime, a caring mentor serves as a coping resource. Lindsay et al. states that "mentorship relationships entail the provision of ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement to promote competence. Mentoring reflects a unique relationship between individuals and is considered a learning partnership" (Lindsay, 2015, p. 2).

Nigeria's youth face threats as critical institutions, family, places of worship, and schools have neglected their core roles, necessitating mentorship. Challenges persist: what values should be instilled in the youth? How can a sense of duty and patriotism be cultivated? How can religious institutions address the problem of degeneracy and misplacement of values? These questions align with Kant's notion of goodwill. The need for values reorientation through family, culture, schools, leadership, and religious institutions is significant. Furthermore, attitudinal change via mentorship and religious institutions is essential for national development and is a key strategy for addressing moral degeneration. Uno (2018) asserts that:

> The critical mass of Nigerian society is the youth in the primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions across the nation. They are neglected and abandoned to their fate, but any society that neglects this group makes a dangerous decision with grave consequences for the present and future. The society requires this group for generational succession as the older generation retires. Therefore, older generations must bequeath values that build rather than destroy what has been painstakingly established over the years. Achebe (1984) contends that the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely leadership, that there is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character but the unwillingness of the leaders to rise to their responsibility and to the challenge of personal examples which are the hallmarks of true leadership (p. 2).

Leadership extends beyond politics or state institutions to mentorship, which is integral to leadership itself. Value reorientation and diligence to duty should be pursued not for nepotistic, tribal, or other consequentialist motives but for national development. DuBois (2021) highlights that mentorship programs prevent negative outcomes and promote strong moral fiber and resilience among youths. "Although diverse in their design and implementation, mentoring programs share a common aim of providing young people with structured support from older or more experienced people, such as adult volunteers or students at higher grade levels" (DuBois, 2021, p. 1). A mentor-mentee relationship rooted in Kantian goodwill fosters empathy, authenticity, and respect through consistent engagement. Studies indicate that such mentorship "supports a wide variety of behavioral, socioemotional, and academic gains. And those close, enduring bonds with a young person can ripple far beyond individual outcomes" (Perry, 2019, p. 1). Mentorship guided by ethical principles is essential for the development of both individuals and the Nigerian nation.

Goodwill, family, and cultural reorientation are crucial in addressing moral decadence in Nigerian society through Kantian goodwill. The family, as the nucleus of society, plays a fundamental role in shaping moral values. Many sociologists and anthropologists argue that societal issues such as juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, corruption,

and religious bigotry stem from the socialization process within the family and society. Solutions to these moral problems must consider foundational institutions like the family and culture, particularly its immaterial aspects (Igwe 2021, p. 1). Culture, as shared values, norms, and ways of life learned from parents, family, peers, and schools, requires scrutiny. Cultural reorientation involves shifting away from dysfunctional practices and aligning with ethical values beneficial to the common good. It entails determining the current moral situation and guiding society in the right direction in line with duty rather than selfish interests. This involves reconsidering relationships and redirecting from ineffective cultural practices to more beneficial ones. The Kantian ethical framework, which emphasizes duty for duty's sake, is essential in achieving this. The failure of Nigerian citizens to carry out their duties has resulted in a dysfunctional society, making Kantian goodwill, family, and cultural reorientation necessary for addressing moral issues (Igwe, 2021, p. 2).

Application of Kant's Concept of Goodwill to Institutional Ethics and Reforms in Nigeria

Immanuel Kant's concept of goodwill is a cornerstone of his moral philosophy, encapsulating the idea that actions possess moral worth only when they are motivated by duty rather than by inclination or self-interest. In his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant insists that "nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good, without qualification, except Goodwill" (p. 393). Goodwill, for Kant, therefore, is the internal disposition to act according to moral law, irrespective of the consequences or personal gain. This conception, when applied to Nigeria's moral and institutional crises, presents a compelling framework for evaluating governance, law enforcement, and institutional ethics in a country deeply affected by corruption, inefficiency, and moral decadence. Nigeria's legal system, a mosaic of English common law, Islamic law, and customary traditions, is plagued by systemic corruption and weak enforcement mechanisms (Akinwale, 2017, p. 45). These challenges are not merely structural but moral in nature, revealing a lack of ethical commitment and public-spiritedness. According to Wood (2008), "the essence of goodwill is acting from duty without regard to self-interest" (p. 12). The widespread corruption in Nigeria's judiciary and law enforcement reveals a crisis of goodwill. Judges who accept bribes or allow political interests to sway their rulings betray the Kantian idea of moral duty. The manipulation of justice for personal or political gain is antithetical to Kant's deontological ethics, which insists that moral actions must stem from a sense of duty and universalizable maxims.

In this light, Nigeria's political and legal institutions reflect a deep moral crisis, a detachment from duty-bound action and a pervasive culture of utilitarian reasoning, where ends often justify means. The judiciary, the legislature, and law enforcement agencies often act not out of goodwill or duty to the constitution and citizens, but to serve the interests of a powerful few. As Ibeanu (2016) notes, judicial corruption has led to delayed justice and public distrust (p. 125). In Kantian terms, this undermines the very principle of justice as a categorical imperative, justice that applies universally and without exception. One of the most glaring signs of moral collapse in governance is the selective enforcement of laws by institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Although established to combat corruption, the EFCC has been criticized for targeting political opponents while ignoring infractions by allies of those in power (Akinyemi, 2019, p. 89). Kantian ethics denounces such partiality, as it violates the imperative to treat individuals as ends in themselves and not merely as means to an end. True goodwill would require institutions to apply justice impartially, without consideration of political affiliation.

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF), critical to law and order, suffers from low morale, poor training, and endemic corruption. Officers often prioritize personal enrichment over public service, demanding bribes and engaging in extrajudicial practices (Akinlolu, 2017, p. 63). Kant's ethical framework demands respect for human dignity and autonomy, values grossly violated when officers abuse power. Agboola (2019) advocates incorporating Kantian ethics into police training to instill accountability and reinforce duty-based conduct (p. 126). This moral education could recalibrate the values of officers, steering them toward service rather than exploitation. Institutional ethics also suffer from political interference and lack of autonomy, as seen in agencies like the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON). These agencies are vital for public health and safety, yet bureaucratic inefficiencies and corrupt practices hinder their effectiveness (Onuoha, 2018, p. 45; Oyebanji, 2016, p. 33). For Kant, institutions must be guided by principles of rational autonomy and duty to the public. Political appointments based on loyalty rather than competence undermine this ethic and reinforce the moral crisis.

Furthermore, Nigeria's oil and gas sector, especially the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), embodies the moral decay of public institutions. Financial mismanagement and the prioritization of personal gain over national interest have persisted for decades. Nwachukwu (2018) criticizes the lack of independent audits and transparency (p. 63), a violation of Kant's insistence on truthfulness and accountability as universal duties. The failure of the NNPC to act with goodwill has led to environmental degradation and socio-economic hardship, particularly in the Niger Delta, reflecting the consequences of abandoning ethical responsibility. The way forward lies in a moral reorientation rooted in Kant's concept of goodwill. Governance must be restructured around the principle that laws and policies should reflect moral duty, not expedience or patronage. Akinyemi (2017) suggests that prioritizing duty over personal gain would significantly improve governance outcomes (p. 48). Similarly, Oke (2020) emphasizes that ethical governance restores public confidence and promotes law-abiding behavior (p. 103). For reforms to succeed, they must cultivate a culture where leaders and citizens act from a sense of moral obligation to the common good. Kant's notion of goodwill offers a profound ethical lens through which Nigeria's institutional and moral crises can be critically assessed. The failures in governance, law enforcement, and public administration are not merely technical, they stem from a deep erosion of moral consciousness. Restoring goodwill at all levels of public life, as Kant envisions, is essential for rebuilding institutions, restoring trust, and achieving genuine reform. Only when duty and moral law replace corruption and personal interest can Nigeria begin to emerge from its current moral quagmire.

Summary and Conclusion

This study examined Immanuel Kant's concept of goodwill in relation to Nigeria's ongoing moral crisis. It focused on Kant's belief that the moral worth of an action lies not in its consequences, but in the intention behind it. According to Kant, goodwill is the only thing that is good without qualification, regardless of circumstances. This idea underpins his categorical imperative, which requires individuals to act only on principles that can be consistently universalized. By applying Kant's framework to Nigeria's context, the article explored how the country's moral decline, expressed through corruption, institutional decay, and social injustice, reflects a deeper ethical failure, not merely structural dysfunction. In sectors such as governance, education, and religion, the lack of goodwill and commitment to moral duty has disrupted societal cohesion and hindered national development. The analysis demonstrated that Kantian moral philosophy could offer useful ethical guidance, encouraging a return to integrity, responsibility, and principled

leadership. In practical terms, the article identified mentorship, religious renewal, and cultural education as pathways for nurturing moral consciousness among young Nigerians. Within institutions, Kant's emphasis on justice, dignity, and duty presents a philosophical foundation for ethical reform. Ultimately, Kant's ideas were shown to provide both a critique of Nigeria's current moral challenges and a vision for building a more responsible and virtuous society.

In conclusion, Kant's ethical theory, particularly his conception of goodwill and the categorical imperative, offers essential insights into the kind of moral transformation Nigeria urgently needs. Hence, it should be integrated into civic education, leadership development, and public sector training to promote public responsibility. In a society where, personal gain often eclipses public responsibility, Kant's focus on motive and moral universality serves as a powerful corrective. The nation's ongoing crises ranging from corruption and poor governance to youth disillusionment signal a broader moral collapse. Addressing this crisis requires more than institutional reform; it demands a cultural and moral reawakening. Families, schools, religious institutions, and public leaders must recommit to building character, responsibility, and civic virtue. By internalizing Kant's ethical ideals, Nigerians can begin to act not out of fear or self-interest, but from a genuine commitment to moral duty. In this way, goodwill ceases to be an abstract ideal and becomes a necessary principle for national renewal, anchoring justice, accountability, and collective dignity.

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Article   **Open Access**

EFFECTIVENESS OF ANNUAL PUBLIC SERVICE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Bureaucracy is characterized with rigidity and stable ordered rules, while the job conditions and work environment that determine employees' job satisfaction and performance keep changing. Thus; it is imperative to assess periodically, how appraisal tool reflects the vagaries. Hence; the paper examined the effectiveness of annual public service performance appraisal on the three (3) core variables: performance management, career development and accountability at the local government level in Lagos State. The paper adopted survey design; population of study was the local government employees of Lagos State, while the sample was 200 respondents selected through simple random technique in 6 local governments of the state. The state is divided into three senatorial zones and two local governments were randomly selected from each. The respondents were purposely selected among the senior employees because of their experiences on the job. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire and the data analysis tools include: mean for descriptive statistics and chi-square for inferential statistics. The findings from test of hypotheses validated the three alternative hypotheses, that the performance appraisal has effect on the three variables but not significant. The identified reasons for this include, lack of objectivity, bias, inadequate information, and lack of transparency among others. The implication of this to policy makers includes, the need to link appraisals with development, designing how to improve accountability mechanisms, formulating the policy on the regular review of appraisal systems. Therefore, the paper recommended standardizing appraisal processes, linking appraisals to professional development, enhancing accountability mechanisms, and regular monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: Accountability, Career Development, Civil Service, Employees'

Introduction

Local governments play a pivotal role in rural development, facilitating inclusive governance, and serving as the bedrock for economic growth at the local level (Aderogba, 2023). Ensuring that local government workers operate under satisfactory conditions is crucial to achieving the

indicators outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which focuses on promoting inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all by the year 2030. Performance appraisal is a critical tool used to evaluate the extent to which employees meet their assigned duties and contribute towards the organizational goals within a specified time frame. The Nigeria's federal system provides a decentralized approach to performance appraisal across public institutions. In Lagos State, the Public Service Rules (2015) outline the procedures and guidelines for staff performance evaluation. Hence; there is the need to review periodically, the effectiveness of the framework, particularly at the local government level. In 2018, the Lagos State Government decides not to promote its civil servants based on career progression any more, in order to enhance better service delivery in the state. Rather, the performance of all government officials would be assessed against their clearly-defined job schedules as a means to addressing the 'fixed mindset' of civil servants and ensure a 'growth mindset' that would institutionalize the optimization of service delivery in Lagos State (Nigerian Tribune, 2018). This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of performance appraisals in achieving its core objectives within Lagos State's local governments.

Despite the established guidelines for performance appraisals within Lagos State's public service, questions persist about their effectiveness in achieving the intended outcomes. Specifically, there is the concern that performance appraisals may not be contributing adequately to performance management, career development, and accountability among local government employees. Given the critical role that local governments play in economic development and service delivery, ineffective appraisals could have far-reaching consequences for the efficiency and productivity of the public sector. Therefore, the research questions for the study are: how effective is the public service appraisal on local government organizational performance management in Lagos State, how effective is public service appraisal on local government employees' career development in Lagos State, and how effective is public service appraisal on holding local government employees' accountable for their official duties in Lagos State. Thus; the objectives are: to examine the effectiveness of the public service appraisal on local government organizational performance management in Lagos State, to investigate the effectiveness of the public service appraisal on local government employees' career development in Lagos State, and to determine how effective is the public service appraisal on holding local government employees' accountable for their official duties in Lagos State. The remaining sections of the paper are: conceptual review, theoretical review, methodology, results, discussion, implications for the findings, recommendations, and conclusion.

Conceptual Review
Public service refers to the services and facilities the government or its agencies provide. It may be to the individuals, groups, a community or a country. It is a fundamental of democracy and serves as a vehicle to facilitate the general welfare and prosperity of a nation (Brown & Milne, 2019). Public service specifically involves providing basic services, which include health care, education, housing, maintaining infrastructure and public facilities and protection of lives and properties, by strengthening the law enforcement and the justice system. Public service ethics guide the conduct of such services and assigned officials have a moral obligation to act in the best interest of the public. The ethics depend on four basic principles of trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, and fairness (Thompson, 1985).The concept of public service is closely related to the idea of social responsibility and the common good, which are critical to the socio-economic development of a country (Olowu, 2002). The colonial experiences influence the establishment and operation of the public services after Nigeria's independence. The British

established a centralized colonial administrative system with various departments, such as the police, judiciary, health, education, and agriculture. Nigeria adoption of federation, necessitated the creation of three tiers of government: federal, state, and local, with federal and state public services (Thompson, 2015).The federal government is responsible for providing national-level services on items in the exclusive legislative list such as defense, foreign affairs, and monetary policy, while jointly with the states provide public services on items in the concurrent legislative list, such as chieftaincy affairs and land matters, however, the local government is responsible for providing basic services, such as water supply, sanitation, and waste management (Aderogba, 2023). The public service is the instrument by which the government, implement policies, delivering services, and ensuring good governance (Olaopa, 2013).

It is important to note that the public service in Nigeria is structured into three categories: the civil service, the paramilitary service, and the military service, but the civil service is the largest category, implementing policies, delivering services, and managing government programs (Public Service Institute of Nigeria, n.d.). The federal civil service is headed by the Head of Service of the Federation, who is the most senior civil servant in Nigeria. The state civil service is headed by the Head of Service of the State, while the local government civil service is headed by the Director of Local Government Administration (DLGA). The paramilitary service comprises agencies, such as the police, immigration, customs, prison service, and civil defense maintaining law and order, border control, and national security. On the other hand, the military service comprises the Army, Navy, and Air Force that are responsible for national defense and security (Public Service Institute of Nigeria, n.d). Public service appraisal is a critical tool in evaluating the performance of public servants on assigned services to the public. It is a systematic and objective assessment of the performance of public servants based on set criteria and standards. Public service appraisal is a critical component of public administration identifying the strengths and weaknesses of public servants and providing feedback on their performance. It also, identifies training and development needs and setting performance goals (Kernagan, 2015).   It reveals the areas where public servants need improvement and guides in achieving quality results (Bartle, 2018). More importantly, it promotes accountability and transparency in the public service, thus; public servants are responsible and answerable to the public. The main objectives of public service appraisal are to improve the performance of public servants, enhance their skills and knowledge, and ensure that they are accountable to the public (Ugwuanyi, 2018).

Performance management in the public sector ensures public servants are accountable for their performance in their official duties. Performance appraisal helps in evaluating an employee's performance goals, identifying key performance indicators, and measuring, monitoring and improving an employee's performance and impact on organizational goals (Guzzo & Noonan, 2016). Career development is another reason for engaging in public service appraisal. It identifies where employees can improve their skills and gain further knowledge and experience and how they can access necessary resources and information to enhance their professional development and setting realistic expectations for each employee's career path, providing employees a sense of direction, clarity of purpose, and relating their work to organizational goals (Lloyd, 2015). Effectiveness of public service appraisal also requires accountability of the employees on their duties as a response to the desire of the public for government accountability. Hence, performance appraisal ensures transparency and accountability of the civil servants to the public.
It enhances detecting of corruption and irregularities within the public sector, identifying weaknesses in public service systems, alerting on potential problems, and encouraging

corrective measures to gain public confidence (Hutchinson, 2020). There are different methods, approaches and criteria for public service appraisal but each have strengths and weaknesses, hence, the specific needs of different organization determine the choice that is appropriate. The models of public service appraisal include the traditional trait-based model, the behavior-based model, and the results-based model (Behn, 2002). The trait-based model focuses on evaluating an individual's personal traits, such as knowledge, skills, and abilities. The behavior-based model emphasizes measuring an individual's observable behaviors, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. The results-based model assesses an individual's contribution to achieving organizational objectives, such as meeting targets and delivering high-quality services (Behn, 2002).

In the same vein, there are several techniques used in public service appraisal, and the choice of any government depends on expectation and outcomes. Also, each has its own strength and weaknesses. They include; 360-degree feedback, ranking, forced distribution, and graphic rating scales, among others (Noel et al., 2017). 360-Degree Feedback technique according to Maurer and Tarulli (2014) is common in public organizations due to its multi-source approach. The 360-degree feedback technique depends on feedback from multiple sources about an employee's performance thereby providing diverse perspectives to the appraisal process for a holistic assessment of the employee's behavior, skills, and performance. The feedback sources include peers, supervisors, clients, and self-assessment. Ranking appraisal technique involves identifying the high and low performing employees in a set or group, through forced choice or paired comparisons, to identify potential employees for promotion or leadership in the organization. Though, it is more comprehensive, it is time-consuming and requires significant resources. The Forced choice ranks depend on specific set of criteria, while paired comparisons depends on performances in a particular area in matching or comparing employees (Ingraham and Eaton, 2016). Furthermore, Forced Distribution as a technique ranks employees' performance based on a bell curve. It involves creating a performance scale and thereafter rates employees on the basis of their performance's percentile rank. It is deficient for disregarding individual differences and the possibility of discouraging low performers. The Graphic Rating Scale is also a rating technique usually used to evaluate performance in public organizations. It relates to performance rating based on specific criteria such as teamwork, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities, which may be either numerical or descriptive to provide an overview of the employee's performance level (Ingraham and Eaton, 2016). On the contrary, the critical incident technique emphasizes appraising and resolving employee's specific performance situations which may be exemplary or below performance. It requires keeping a record of specific incidents during the appraisal period and engages the employee to reinforce or improve the performance. It identifies the employee's strengths and weaknesses for purpose of determining future performance target (Noe et al., 2017).

Although, there is no single fix-all-technique, but mixed techniques can reveal a diverse insight into the employee's performance, for improved organizational performance. Though, it is more comprehensive, it is time-consuming and requires significant resources. Performance appraisal is a widely studied tool in both public and private sectors, often linked to organizational performance, employee development, and accountability. According to Aguinis (2013) effective performance appraisals are critical for aligning individual employee goals with organizational objectives, providing feedback, and identifying areas for development. In the public sector, performance appraisals are also seen as instruments for ensuring accountability and transparency (Boyne, 2003). However, challenges such as bias, lack of training for appraisers, and inadequate follow-up on appraisal outcomes have been noted as factors that undermine the

effectiveness of appraisals (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). In Nigeria, studies have shown mixed results regarding the effectiveness of performance appraisals in the public sector. Some studies highlight the positive impact of appraisals on employee motivation and performance (Akinyele, 2010), while others point to systemic issues such as corruption, lack of transparency, and the politicization of appraisal outcomes (Adamu, 2014). The decentralization of the appraisal process in Nigeria, as provided by the federal system, adds another layer of complexity, with variations in how appraisals are conducted across different states and local government areas. Some of these strains corroborate observed challenges of public policy as an instrument of governance in Nigeria (Aderogba, 2022).

Methodology

The study employed a survey research design to gather data from senior staff members of selected local governments in Lagos State. This design was chosen for its effectiveness in capturing the perceptions and experiences of respondents regarding the effectiveness of performance appraisals. The population of the study consisted of senior staff members across the 20 local governments in Lagos State. A purposive sampling technique was used by selecting senior staff members due to their extensive experience and familiarity with the appraisal process. The sample was 210 senior staff from six local governments, randomly selected from the three senatorial zones: Lagos Central (Lagos Island and Eti-Osa), Lagos East (Ikorodu and Ikorodu North), and Lagos West (Agege and Oshodi-Isolo). Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire designed in a Likert format, ranging from "strongly agree" (5) to "strongly disagree" (1). The questionnaire was divided into three sections; each with 5 variables corresponding to the three main objectives and hypotheses of the study; performance management, career development, and accountability. The reviewed literatures provided relevant secondary data and validated the questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for exploratory data analysis, chi-square for inferential statistical tests to assess the relationships between the variables, chart for illustration, and SPSS for analyses.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of measured variables

Items	SD	D	U	A	SA	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Performance Management								
It ensures that public servants are accountable for their performance in their respective roles.	-	-	-	93	117	957	4.56	.498
It adequately measures the achievements of key performance indicators.	-	-	5	165	40	875	4.17	.433
Improves an employee's performance.	-	10	15	85	100	905	4.31	.803
It ensures that the public servants achieve their objectives.	-	10	15	85	100	905	4.31	.803
It ensures that public servants contribute to organizational goals.	5	-	5	96	104	924	4.40	.759
Career Development								
It guides in identifying areas where employees can improve their skills and gain further knowledge and experience.	-	-	5	47	158	993	4.73	.497
It provides feedback on coaching, training, and development programs for public servants.	11	-	10	149	40	837	3.99	

It ensures that employees have access to the necessary resources and information to enhance their professional development.	5	-	10	125	70	875	4.17	.845
It helps set realistic expectations for each employee's career progression.	5	15	20	90	80	855	4.07	.988
It provides employees a sense of direction, clarity of purpose, and knowledge about how their work relates to organizational goals.	-	-	5	96	109	944	4.50	.547
Accountability								
It ensures that employees are held accountable for their performance.	-	-	-	93	117	957	4.56	.498
Public servants remain transparent and accountable to the public they serve.	-	-	5	165	40	875	4.17	.433
It provides a basis for detecting corruption and irregularities within the public sector.	-	10	15	85	100	905	4.31	.803
It identifies weaknesses in public service systems, and alerting management teams to potential problems	-	10	15	85	100	905	4.31	.803
It helps instilling public confidence in the public sector.	5	-	5	96	104	924	4.40	.759

Finding: The descriptive statistics reveal that respondents generally perceive performance appraisals as effective across the three objectives. High mean scores indicate strong agreement that appraisals contribute to performance management (mean = 4.56), career development (mean = 4.73), and accountability (mean = 4.56).

Inferential Statistical Analyses

Hypotheses Testing:

H_{o1}: Public service appraisal is not effective on local government organizational performance management in Lagos State.

H_1: Public service appraisal is effective on local government organizational performance management in Lagos State.

Table 2: Appraisal for Performance * Performance Management Crosstabulation

		Performance Management			Total
		Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Appraisal for Performance	Undecided	0	8	16	24
	Agree	5	18	63	86
	Strongly Agree	0	23	77	100
Total		5	49	156	210

Table 3: Chi-square of Appraisal for Performance * Performance Management

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.754[a]	4	.068
Likelihood Ratio	10.364	4	.035
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.667	1	.197
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .57.
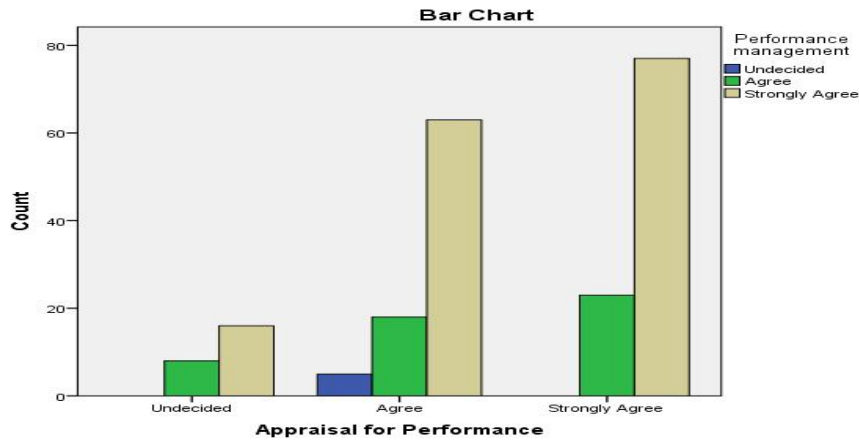
Figure 1: Cluster Bar Chart of Appraisal for Performance Management

H_{o2}: Public service appraisal is not effective on local government employees' career development in Lagos State.

H_2: Public service appraisal is effective on local government employees' career development in Lagos State.

Table 4: **Appraisal for Development * Career Development Cross Tabulation**

		Career Development		
		Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Appraisal for Development	Disagree	0	2	2
	Undecided	6	20	26
	Agree	18	129	147
	Strongly Agree	4	31	35
Total		28	182	210

Table5: Chi-Square **Appraisal for Development * Career Development**

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.704[a]	3	.439
Likelihood Ratio	2.654	3	.448
Linear-by-Linear Association	.889	1	.346
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 4 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .27.
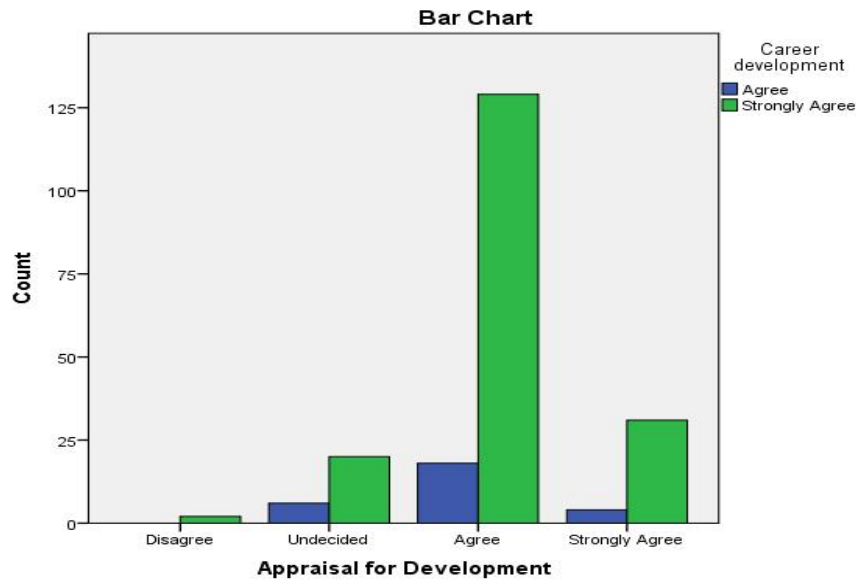
Figure 2: Cluster Bar Chart **Appraisal for Career Development**

H_{o3}:   Public service appraisal is not effective on holding local government employees' accountable for their official duties in Lagos State.

H_3:   Public service appraisal is effective on holding local government employees' accountable for their official duties in Lagos State.

Table 6: **Appraisal for Employees Accountability* Accountability Cross Tabulation**

		Employees accountability			
		Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Appraisal for Accountability	Undecided	0	8	16	24
	Agree	5	18	63	86
	Strongly Agree	0	23	77	100
Total		5	49	156	210

Table 7: Chi-Square Appraisal for Accountability * Employees Accountability

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.754[a]	4	.068
Likelihood Ratio	10.364	4	.035
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.667	1	.197
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .57.
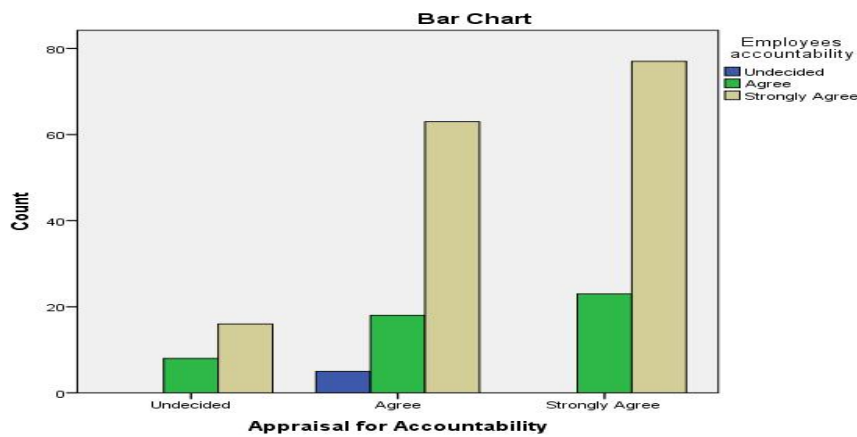
Figure3: Appraisal for Accountability * Employees Accountability

Findings: The chi-square test for the relationship between performance appraisals and performance management shows a Pearson Chi-Square value of 8.754 with a p-value of 0.068, suggesting a borderline association. For career development, the chi-square test yields a Pearson Chi-Square value of 2.704 with a p-value of 0.439, indicating no significant association. The chi-square test for the relationship between appraisals and accountability results in a Pearson Chi-Square value that is not statistically significant.

Discussion

The results suggest that while performance appraisals are generally perceived as effective by senior staff in Lagos State local governments, the statistical analysis indicates that the strength of these relationships varies. The effectiveness of appraisals in performance management is evident, although the association is not strongly statistically significant. The lack of significant relationships for career development and accountability may point to issues in how appraisals are implemented or followed up within these areas.

Although Nigerian public service has a long history of performance appraisal, however, the finding aligns with similar findings on the appraisal system for being ineffective and lacking objectivity. According to Okorie et al (2019), the Nigerian public service appraisal system is characterized by subjectivity, bias, inadequate information, and lack of transparency. The authors argue that the appraisal system is often influenced by personal relationships, political affiliations, and ethnic considerations. This interference may be intentional or unintentional and may be due to personal biases or external pressures. In some cases, political leaders may influence the public managers to give favorable evaluations to employees who are loyal to their administrations (Brown, 2015). Also, subjectivity may be due to personal bias or favoritism, instead of objective criteria such as goals, objectives, and outputs (Koppell, 2000). Finding by Calvert and Martin (2002) shows that subjective evaluations can lead to inconsistent rating, and also, undermining the credibility of the appraisal processes. Appraisal Methodology used in the public service can have a significant impact on the outcome of the appraisal process; however, some of these methods may be unsuitable for the public service, leading to poor appraisals and low employee morale (Noe et al, 2017). The use of unreliable or invalid methods may lead to inaccurate results and lack of credibility in the appraisal process (Bartle, 2018). Findings of Arua and Obot (2020) reveal that the Nigerian public service appraisal system is characterized by low levels of trust, poor communication, limited resources, and inadequate training of appraisers.

However, the findings of the study further showed that civil servants generally have a positive attitude towards performance appraisal.

Adeyemo and Adelabu (2017) examined the perceptions of civil servants in Nigeria towards performance appraisal. The findings of the study showed that civil servants generally supported performance appraisal, though there are concerns about a number of challenges affecting the appraisal system such as inadequate training, poor communication, and a lack of clarity around performance expectations. There are other findings from recent studies on public service appraisal in Nigeria. For example, lack of training and development can lead to inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and lack of credibility in the appraisal process (Wong & Cummings, 2009). A study by Adebayo and Ogunlana (2021) reveals that the Nigerian public service appraisal system is characterized by low levels of motivation, inadequate training, and lack of feedback. Lack of transparency in the performance appraisal process can lead to distrust among employees and the public, resulting in decrease in morale and employee motivation (Jin, 2015). Despite the challenges facing public service appraisal in Nigeria, some efforts have been made to improve the system. For example, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced a Performance Management System (PMS), which adopts a combination of technologies and methodologies to improve the appraisal system in the public service (Akinyemi, 2022). The PMS is designed to align employees' performance with organizational goals and objectives; thus, improving transparency, objectivity, and fairness in the appraisal process.

Policy Implications

The implications of the findings from the study for public policy decisions and effective service delivery include:

i.   Enhancing the appraisal process**:** Given the positive perceptions of performance appraisals, it is essential to strengthen the appraisal process to ensure consistency and objectivity.

ii. Linking appraisals with development**:** Lack of statistical significance in the relationship between appraisals and career development suggests the need for a more direct linkage between performance reviews and professional development opportunities by providing clear pathways for career advancement.

iii. Improving accountability mechanisms**:** Although appraisals are seen as tools for accountability, their effectiveness can be enhanced by integrating them with broader accountability frameworks within the local government.

iv. Regular review of appraisal systems **t**o maintain the relevance and effectiveness of performance appraisals and updating the appraisal systems.

Conclusion

The study finds that performance appraisals in the Lagos State local government are generally perceived as effective in managing performance, supporting career development, and ensuring accountability. While respondents overwhelmingly agreed on the positive impacts of appraisals, the statistical analysis shows that the impacts were not significant. This suggests that while appraisals are valued, their effectiveness may vary depending on implementation and other contextual factors within the local government system. Generally, public service appraisal is an important aspect of human resource management in the Nigerian public service. However, there are appraisal challenges, such as subjectivity and lack of transparency, which may have negative impacts on the quality and efficiency of the public service appraisal. Empirical data and recent studies provided insights into the state of the appraisal system in Nigeria and can be used to inform policy decisions aimed at improving the system to ensure objectivity, fairness, and effectiveness. Future research to assist in new policy options may require comparative studies

across states to examine the effectiveness of performance appraisals across different states in Nigeria, identifying best practices and areas for improvement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations will enhance the appraisal:

i. Standardization of Appraisal Processes**:** To enhance the effectiveness of appraisals, it is recommended that Lagos State local governments standardize the appraisal process across all local government areas. This should include comprehensive training for appraisers to ensure consistency and objectivity.

ii. Linking Appraisals to Professional Development: There should be a stronger emphasis on linking performance appraisals with career development opportunities, ensuring that appraisals lead to actionable outcomes such as training and promotions.

iii. Enhancing Accountability Mechanisms: Local governments should integrate performance appraisals with broader accountability frameworks, including measures to address corruption and promote transparency.

iv. Regular Monitoring and Evaluation: Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the appraisal process is essential in ensuring regular alignment of the organizational goals to the needs of employees.

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ANALYSIS OF ROSI BRAIDOTTI'S POSTHUMAN FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY AND HOW IT CHALLENGES ANTHROPOCENTRIC TRADITIONS IN FEMINIST DISCOURSE

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Abstract
This study examines the philosophical contributions of Rosi Braidotti within the framework of contemporary feminist theory and posthumanist discourse. The research problem centres on the limitations of humanist frameworks in addressing the complexities of identity, subjectivity, and agency in an era characterized by technological advancements and global interconnectedness. The primary aim of this study is to critically assess Braidotti's theoretical interventions; particularly her engagement with posthumanism and its implications for feminist thought. The research employs a qualitative methodology, drawing on textual analysis of Braidotti's key works and secondary literature. Through this approach, the study explores how her concept of the posthuman challenges traditional notions of autonomy and selfhood while offering an alternative vision of ethics and political subjectivity. The findings suggest that Braidotti's posthumanist perspective provides valuable insights for rethinking contemporary feminist strategies, emphasizing relationality, embodied subjectivity, and affirmative ethics. The study recommends further exploration of posthumanist ethics in policy-making and gender studies, encouraging interdisciplinary engagement with Braidotti's work. In conclusion, the research underscores the transformative potential of posthumanism in addressing contemporary socio-political issues, advocating for a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of subjectivity beyond humanist constraints.

Keywords: Posthuman feminism, Anthropocentrism, Gender norms, Binary constructs, Inclusion.

Introduction

Posthumanist feminist philosophy is a radical rethinking of human identity, ethics, and agency in an era shaped by technological and ecological transformations and moves beyond traditional feminism's focus on social constructs to examine how gender, power, and identity are co-constituted by material and technological realities. Braidotti's posthuman feminist philosophy critically challenges anthropocentric assumptions that have long dominated feminist discourse, advocating for a reconceptualization of human identity within the context of technological advancements and ecological crises. The concept of "posthuman convergence" emphasizes the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman entities, urging a reevaluation of traditional human-centric narratives and essentialist views of gender (Braidotti, 2013). Her approach seeks

to dismantle binary hierarchies, positioning subjects as fluid and adaptable within complex socio-technical networks, and encourages a more inclusive understanding of identity that transcends rigid categorizations (Aecardiff, 2025; Carrigan & Porpora, 2022).

This work interrogates the ethical implications of non-anthropocentrism, proposing a model of care that recognises the intrinsic value of all living beings, aiming to contribute to promoting broader ecological justice. By challenging prevailing humanist epistemologies, this paper seeks to align Braidotti's work with contemporary discussions in posthumanist literature, which emphasize the need for new theoretical paradigms that reflect our increasingly interconnected realities. This stance opens pathways for feminist theory to engage with a diverse array of experiences, particularly those of marginalized voices, while addressing issues of sustainability and social equity (Herbrechter, 2024; Braidotti, 2017, 2013; Apata, 2021). The notable controversies surrounding Braidotti's work include debates on the viability of a posthuman feminist framework that adequately addresses the complexities of identity and power dynamics without reverting to anthropocentric tendencies. Critics have raised concerns regarding the potential erasure of specific historical contexts and struggles inherent in feminist movements, questioning whether her expansive model can genuinely encompass the diverse realities of women and other marginalized groups (Minozzo, 2022). Nonetheless, Braidotti's contributions continue to foster rich dialogues within feminist theory, prompting scholars and activists alike to reconsider the implications of a posthumanist approach to gender, identity, and ethical responsibility in the contemporary world (Brown, ed., 2021). It is against this backdrop that this work assesses how Rosi Braidotti's posthuman feminist philosophy challenges anthropocentric assumptions in feminist discourse

Theoretical Foundations

Posthumanist feminist philosophy is a theoretical framework that critiques traditional humanist notions of subjectivity, agency, and identity while incorporating insights from feminist thought, science studies, and new materialisms. It challenges anthropocentrism, the privileging of human exceptionalism, and the rigid binaries that have historically shaped Western philosophy, particularly those of man/woman, nature/culture, and subject/object. Rosi Braidotti's posthuman feminist philosophy emerges from a critical examination of anthropocentric assumptions entrenched in traditional feminist discourse. At the core of her approach is the concept of a "posthuman convergence," which highlights the intersections of the digital, technological, and social realms, particularly in the context of deepening social divisions and environmental degradation (Aecardiff, 2025). This convergence challenges established norms of what constitutes the 'unit of reference' for humanity, urging a reevaluation of human agency in an age of intelligent machines (Carrigan & Porpora, 2022).

Posthumanist feminists challenge classical humanism, which has often projected a white, male, Eurocentric perspective as the universal model of the human. Thinkers like Rosi Braidotti argue that humanism's emphasis on rational, autonomous subjects has marginalized women, non-Western peoples, animals, and nonhuman entities. Unlike traditional feminist approaches that focus on gender as a social construct, posthumanist feminism explores how bodies, technologies, and environments co-produce subjectivity. Karen Barad's (2007) framework, Agential Realism suggests that agency is not located in individuals but emerges through material-discursive interactions between humans and nonhumans. Posthumanist feminists engage with cybernetics, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and other technological advancements to rethink identity. Donna Haraway's seminal essay, Cyborg Manifesto (1991) introduced the idea of the cyborg as a metaphor for breaking down dualisms like male/female

and human/machine, arguing for hybrid identities beyond essentialist categories. The framework extends ethical concerns beyond the human species, engaging with environmental philosophy and multispecies justice. Figures like Braidotti and Haraway advocate for ethics that recognize the entanglement of human and nonhuman life forms, urging for care and responsibility beyond anthropocentric frameworks. It critiques the Western epistemological tradition that prioritizes human cognition and mastery over nature. Instead, it promotes relational ways of knowing, where knowledge emerges through dynamic entanglements of human and nonhuman forces.

Braidotti emphasizes the importance of empirical grounding in philosophical inquiry, critiquing overly abstract theorizing that lacks specificity regarding real-world implications (Carrigan & Porpora, 2022). She positions herself as a "technophilic" thinker who advocates for the liberatory potential of technological innovations, contrasting her perspective with conservative interpretations that prioritize individualism and profit over collective human experience (Carrigan & Porpora, 2022). This commitment to the transformative capacities of technology suggests that posthumanism can offer new pathways for understanding human identity and agency beyond traditional frameworks. Furthermore, the notion of "figurative" thinking is also central to Braidotti's work, where she draws on Donna Haraway's concept of the cyborg to propose a broader, less anthropocentric horizon for feminist thought (Herbrechter, 2024). Braidotti's idea of figurations serves as a living map of identity, emphasizing processes of transition and hybridization that defy established theoretical representations (Herbrechter, 2024). By reconceptualizing human subjects as nomadic entities shaped by ongoing interactions with technology and the environment, Braidotti invites a rethinking of the feminist subject that embraces complexity and fluidity.

Finally, Braidotti's philosophy poses critical questions regarding the essence of humanity and the limitations of previous discourses. She interrogates whether attempts to define a new essence of humanity merely reproduce old anthropocentric limitations, thereby opening pathways for a more inclusive and expansive understanding of subjectivity in the posthuman age (Herbrechter, 2024). This interrogation aligns with broader discussions in posthumanist literature, which contend that the decentering of the human within socio-technical networks necessitates new theoretical paradigms and modes of thought that reflect contemporary realities (Carrigan & Porpora, 2022).

Critique of Anthropocentrism

Rosi Braidotti's posthuman feminist philosophy presents a significant challenge to anthropocentric assumptions that have traditionally dominated feminist discourse. By engaging with concepts of posthumanism and post-anthropocentrism, Braidotti questions the prevailing humanist epistemologies that uphold a binary hierarchical opposition between humans and non-human entities, as well as between genders (Braidotti, 2013). Traditional humanist frameworks often position the human subject as the centre of knowledge and agency, relegating non-human life forms, technologies, and material entities to the periphery. This hierarchy reinforces a system in which non-human entities, including animals, ecosystems, and artificial intelligence, are perceived as subordinate or merely instrumental to human interests. Braidotti's critique extends to the essentialist views of gender that have characterized mainstream feminism since Simone de Beauvoir, which often devalues motherhood and reinforces patriarchal structures (Braidotti, 2017). She argues that the persistent focus on human exceptionalism within feminist discourse has inadvertently sustained exclusionary practices that marginalize other forms of life and subjectivity. By challenging these anthropocentric

perspectives, Braidotti paves the way for a more inclusive feminist ethics that recognizes the agency of non-human beings and the interconnectedness of life forms.

Furthermore, in her posthumanism-turned-feminism, Braidotti argues for a transformative shift away from the anthropocentric perspectives that have long influenced feminist theory. Her work highlights the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of recognizing non-human entities within feminist discourse (Braidotti, 2013; Apata, 2021). The human experience is framed within a broader ecological and technological context, advocating for a more inclusive understanding of subjectivity that transcends traditional human-centred narratives. This approach aligns with her concept of "transversal subjects," who can navigate and resist the power dynamics historically embedded in humanist thought (Carrigan & Porpora, 2022). The posthuman turn in feminism dismantles the rigid dualisms that have shaped feminist discourse, such as nature/culture, human/machine, and male/female. Instead, it promotes a fluid, relational approach to subjectivity that acknowledges the material and technological entanglements shaping contemporary existence. This perspective is particularly relevant in the age of biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and environmental crises, where the boundaries between human and non-human entities are increasingly blurred. By embracing a posthumanist framework, feminism can address pressing global challenges, such as climate change and technological ethics, through a more expansive and interconnected lens.

Central to Braidotti's critique is the rejection of essentialist notions of gender that are predicated on biological determinism. This perspective not only reinforces a two-gender system but also perpetuates the idea of male superiority within humanism (Braidotti, 2017; Braidotti, 2013). Traditional feminist thought has often relied on fixed categorizations of gender, which, while useful in challenging patriarchal oppression, have also imposed limitations on identity formation and agency. Braidotti challenges these views by proposing a post-gender framework that recognizes the fluidity and multiplicity of subjectivity beyond binary classifications. By dismantling essentialist constructions of gender, Braidotti aligns with broader posthumanist critiques of identity politics, which argue that subjectivity is co-constituted by material, technological, and ecological forces. This approach allows for a more dynamic understanding of identity that acknowledges the influence of non-human entities, such as biotechnologies and artificial intelligence, in shaping human experience. Thus, based on the posthumanist feminist perspective, gender can be reimagined as an evolving and relational construct rather than a fixed biological or social category.

The emphasis on non-anthropocentric ethics of care has profound implications for feminist theory. In advocating for care ethics that include non-human beings, the scholar proposes a model of care that transcends species boundaries, urging recognition of the ethical obligations humans have towards all forms of life (Braidotti, 2017). Traditional feminist ethics has often focused on care as a relational practice within human communities, emphasizing empathy, interdependence, and mutual responsibility. However, Braidotti extends this ethical framework to include animals, ecosystems, and technological entities, arguing for a more expansive and inclusive approach to care. This shift not only challenges anthropocentrism but also invites a re-evaluation of how feminist movements can advocate for broader ecological justice (Braidotti, 2013; Apata, 2021). Integrating ecological and technological considerations into feminist ethics, posthumanist feminism can address the pressing ethical dilemmas of the 21st century, such as environmental degradation, animal rights, and the ethical development of artificial intelligence. Braidotti's vision of posthuman ethics of care emphasizes interconnectedness, mutual flourishing, and responsibility beyond human-centred concerns, ultimately reconfiguring feminist thought for a rapidly changing world.

Practical Implications of Posthuman Feminism

The discourses on how Rosi Braidotti's posthuman feminist philosophy challenges anthropocentric assumptions in feminist discourse have several applications. Among others include the theoretical framework, redefining human identity, gender methodology, implications for feminist activism, reception and impact, academic engagement, methodological innovations, and cultural influence respectively.

Theoretical Framework

Rosi Braidotti's posthuman feminist philosophy redefines the intersections of feminism and posthumanism by challenging traditional anthropocentric assumptions that have historically dominated feminist discourse. At the core of her work lies the concept of the "Nomad," which serves as a subjective figuration that enables a departure from rigid identity structures established during previous feminist waves. This framework emphasizes fluidity, adaptability, and a conscious engagement with the Other, thereby allowing for a more dynamic understanding of subjectivity and resistance in contemporary feminist theory (Minozzo, 2022). Her theoretical approach incorporates insights from cybernetics, environmental ethics, and material feminism to construct an inclusive perspective on subjectivity that accounts for technological, biological, and ecological entanglements. Positioning identity as a dynamic, co-constituted process rather than a fixed category, Braidotti's framework opens new avenues for feminist inquiry that move beyond anthropocentric and essentialist discourses. The theoretical grounding of posthuman feminism thus addresses not only gender-related issues but also broader concerns related to sustainability, bioethics, and technological transformations.

Redefining Human Identity

Braidotti's examination of the posthuman condition illustrates the need to reconceptualize human identity in light of advancements in technology and environmental crises. In arguing against the notion of the human as a separate and superior entity, her work suggests a more interconnected understanding of existence that includes non-human life forms (Minozzo, 2022). This perspective advocates for sustainability practices that are inclusive and holistic, recognizing the intrinsic value of all beings and the ecosystems they inhabit (Minozzo, 2022). The redefinition of human identity within the posthumanist framework involves a shift away from individualistic and hierarchical understandings of the self, moving towards relational and networked identities that acknowledge interdependence with other species, artificial intelligence, and planetary ecosystems. Braidotti's approach provides a crucial intervention in contemporary debates on bioethics, climate change, and digital identity by proposing a fluid, adaptive notion of selfhood that reflects the realities of an increasingly interconnected world.

Gender Methodology

In her exploration of gender methodology, Braidotti critiques the limitations of traditional feminist frameworks, particularly those that reinforce binary notions of gender and identity. She proposes a methodology rooted in nomadic subjectivity, which encourages an understanding of gender as fluid and context-dependent (Brown, 2021). This approach not only highlights the diversity of feminine experiences but also advocates for the inclusion of marginalized voices, particularly from Indigenous and Black perspectives, thereby enriching the discourse around both feminism and posthumanism (Sellberg, 2002; Minozzo, 2022). Her methodological innovations incorporate interdisciplinary strategies that bridge feminist theory with science studies, environmental humanities, and digital culture, allowing for a more nuanced analysis of gender beyond rigid biological or cultural categories. In emphasizing process-oriented and

relational methods of inquiry, Braidotti's gender methodology challenges the traditional epistemologies of feminist research and calls for a more expansive, inclusive, and adaptable feminist praxis.

Implications for Feminist Activism

The implications of Braidotti's posthuman feminism extend to feminist activism by providing a framework that encourages flexibility and responsiveness to evolving social dynamics. The notion of a networked, fluid subjectivity allows activists to navigate and challenge normative structures that can often be rigid and exclusionary (Minozzo, 2022; Sellberg, 2002). Through emphasizing mobility and openness, Braidotti's philosophy encourages collective action that is adaptable and inclusive, which is essential in addressing the complexities of contemporary social movements and the multiplicity of identities within them (Minozzo, 2022). This perspective provides feminist activism with a broader toolkit to address systemic inequalities beyond gender, incorporating ecological justice, digital rights, and non-human agency into activist practices. Further, in embracing the relational ethics proposed in posthuman feminism, contemporary feminist movements can reimagine advocacy strategies that emphasize collaboration, intersectionality, and non-hierarchical organization.

Reception and Impact

Rosi Braidotti's posthuman feminist philosophy has garnered significant attention within academic circles, particularly for its critical examination of anthropocentric assumptions that dominate traditional feminist discourse. Her work challenges the centrality of the human subject, promoting a shift towards more inclusive and integrative approaches to existence, as emphasized by her assertion that "we are in this together" (Apata, 2021). This ethical formulation not only critiques individualism but also seeks to dismantle the superiority of Western and white perspectives, thereby fostering a more holistic understanding of intersectionality in feminist thought (Aecardiff, 2025). However, her work has also faced criticism for its perceived detachment from material struggles, with some scholars questioning whether posthumanism sufficiently addresses the historical and socio-political realities of marginalized communities. Despite these debates, Braidotti's influence continues to expand, prompting discussions on how feminist theory can evolve in response to technological and ecological shifts.

Academic Engagement

Braidotti's theories have been widely discussed in various scholarly texts, illustrating the complexities of posthumanist thought. Contributors to the discourse often explore the implications of her ideas on social change, particularly how they relate to emerging socio-technical realities (Carrigan & Porpora, 2022). This engagement has led to a growing body of literature that seeks to navigate the intricate relationship between posthumanism and feminist studies, questioning the historical contexts that inform contemporary gender politics (Sellberg, 2002). Posthumanist feminism has found relevance in fields such as media studies, environmental humanities, and artificial intelligence ethics, influencing interdisciplinary research approaches that integrate feminist critiques with technological and ecological concerns. Through academic conferences, journal publications, and interdisciplinary collaborations, Braidotti's work continues to shape discussions on the evolving nature of feminist theory.

Methodological Innovations

Braidotti's methodological approach, which she describes as "response-ability," emphasizes accountability concerning other entities, matter, and movement (Sellberg, 2002). This has

spurred innovative research methodologies that aim to bridge gaps between theory and practice, especially in exploring non-anthropocentric relations. Scholars have begun employing her concept of diffraction as a means to examine the interactions between humans and nonhumans, thus contributing to a redefined understanding of agency and relationality within feminist frameworks (Sellberg, 2002; Apata, 2021). These methodological innovations facilitate the incorporation of diverse epistemologies, including Indigenous knowledge systems and ecological perspectives, which challenge dominant Western frameworks of knowledge production. While foregrounding the ethical and political stakes of research methodologies, posthumanist feminism offers a transformative approach to feminist inquiry that is attentive to material, technological, and ecological entanglements.

Cultural Influence

Beyond the academia, Braidotti's ideas have permeated cultural discourses, influencing artistic practices and public intellectual discussions around issues of identity, representation, and ethics in the context of globalization and migration (Sellberg, 2002). Her emphasis on the interconnectedness of beings in a posthuman era resonates with various movements advocating for social justice, environmental sustainability, and collective well-being. Posthumanist feminist philosophy has been explored in contemporary art, literature, and film, offering new ways to represent hybrid and fluid identities that challenge traditional notions of the self. Additionally, Braidotti's engagement with digital cultures has influenced discussions on online identity politics, algorithmic bias, and the ethical implications of artificial intelligence. In intersecting with popular cultural narratives, posthumanist feminism continues to shape broader public debates on subjectivity, ethics, and social justice in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Conclusion

Rosi Braidotti's posthuman feminist philosophy offers a profound re-evaluation of identity, subjectivity, and ethics by challenging the anthropocentric paradigms that have historically dominated feminist thought. Through her concept of posthuman convergence, Braidotti proposes an inclusive and fluid understanding of human identity, one that recognizes the interdependence of human and non-human entities. Her critique of essentialist gender norms dismantles rigid binary constructs, paving the way for a more expansive and intersectional approach to feminism. Braidotti's emphasis on ethical responsibility, particularly with ecological justice and technological advancements, underscores the transformative potential of posthuman feminism. By advocating for care ethics that transcend species boundaries, she provides a compelling framework for addressing contemporary socio-political challenges. However, her work is not without limitations. Some critics argue that posthumanism, in its quest to move beyond humanist frameworks, risks neglecting the specific historical and material struggles of marginalized groups. The challenge remains in ensuring that posthuman feminist theory does not inadvertently erase the very issues it seeks to address. Despite these critiques, Braidotti's contributions remain invaluable to feminist discourse. Her call for a re-imagined subjectivity that embraces hybridity, adaptability, and ethical engagement provides a roadmap for navigating the complexities of identity in a rapidly evolving world. By integrating posthumanism with feminist theory, Braidotti not only expands the boundaries of contemporary thought but also offers a vision for a more inclusive and just future.

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Article　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Open Access**

ALAJOBI (KINSMAN) AND *ALALE* (TOWN FOUNDING DEITIES): A BASIS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN YORUBA TRADITION

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Abstract
Yoruba culture, originating from southwestern Nigeria, is one of the richest and most influential African cultures. Yoruba philosophy, as part of the culture, emphasizes the interconnectedness of human existence, community and the divine. The paper explores the interconnected concepts of *Alajobi* (kinsman) and *Alale* (town founding deities). It investigates their roles in shaping community development. There is limited understanding of Yoruba concepts in community development. The cold shoulder given to indigenous perspectives in development initiatives is a contributing factor to the problem of values bedeviling our modern society. This inadequacy is what the exploration of *Alajobi* and *Alale's* interconnection tackles. The paper analyses their roles in community development, examines their implication for sustainable development initiatives. Through the hermeneutic approach of analyzing and interpreting Yoruba texts and oral traditions, the work finds out that *Alajobi* influences community member's roles and responsibilities. *Alale* shapes community values and social norms. Interconnection between *Alajobi* and *Alale* is essential for community cohesion. For us to have steady community development initiatives, we must consider indigenous perspectives. The work therefore contributes in illuminating indigenous Yoruba perspectives on community development, By so doing, the paper challenges western dominated development discourses. Finally, the work informs policy and practices in community development initiatives.

Keywords: Yoruba tradition, community development*, Alale*, *Alajobi*, indigenous perspectives.

Introduction

Yoruba people, occupying the southwestern region of Nigeria are endowed with a rich cultural heritage. Among many concepts that guide their moral living, two stand out as pillars of community development and social justice. They are the concepts of *Alajobi* (kinsmen) and *Alale* (town founding deities). They are two principles that are deeply rooted in Yoruba tradition and philosophy, they offer a unique framework for building stronger, more equitable communities. Community development can take place if there is equitable society. A lot of Yoruba values and principles like *omoluwabi, iwa, bibire* and even motive behind *ajo* (money contribution) or its bigger dimension, *esusu* emphasizes the importance of being a responsible and respectable

member of the society. These values and principles enable individuals in the community to contribute to the well-being of their communities.

The exploration of these two concepts in this work, delves into the significance of *Alajobi* and *Alale* as two cardinal pillars that community development and social justice are built upon. The work examines their roles in community development and social justice. The work first conceptualize *Alajobi* and *Alale,* understanding their meanings and implications, then goes to how they serve as the pillars to foster community development, promote social justice and address inequalities, encourage community engagement and participation. Finally, the work explains how they can inform effective social policy. By examining these concepts, we can gain valuable insights into the Yoruba perspective on community development and social justice and explore how these principles can be applied to create positive change in our communities globally.

Conceptualizing *Alajobi and its Connection to Iwa (Character).*

Alajobi remains the integral component that makes up the stable human societies. There is no way the potential of any member of a society can blossom without each component of the society playing their role. In Yoruba traditional society, *Alajobi* and *Alale* play crucial roles in making sure that inhabitants adhere to all the rules that uphold fairness and social equality. *Alajobi,* which can be translated as kinsman in English language refers to a relative or family member in the Yoruba tradition (ijaya 2020, p.34). *Alajobi* emphasizes shared ancestry, familial ties, communal responsibilities, mutual support and cooperation, collective identity and belonging. By shared ancestry, *Alajobi* means lineage *(ibi)*. It emphasizes common descent from a founding ancestor, a shared heritage and cultural identity. A form of ancestral reverence and veneration. *Alajobi* represents identity formation, kinship bonds and community building. Social ancestry reinforces social cohesion and communal responsibility. It allows the continuity with the past that flows to the future. (Oyebade 2014, p.3) Ijaiya (2020) opines that *Alajobi* (kinsman) refers to the mutual support and cooperation among the family members. A feeling of solidarity within the Yoruba kinship system. The support can be in different dimensions, for example, it comes sometimes in form of emotional backing, comfort and counseling. It can also come in form of financial support, kinsmen assist one another financially by sharing resources. *Alajobi* also offers social backing, the kinsmen rally round their member that is celebrating one occasion. They even offer material support such as food, shelter, etc. (Ijaiya 2020, p.8). There is a song composed for this kind of social support in Yoruba: *Eniyan laso mi/2ce, bimo poju weyin ti mo reniyan mi, inu mi a dun, ara, mi a ya gaga, eniyan laso mi*

English translation: "People are my clothes/2ce, whenever I look back and I see my people, I'm happy and excited, people are my clothes".

The song shows the level of mutual reliance among family members. The support is always reciprocal, it fosters unity and collective identity, a kind of we-feeling that engender sense of belonging. According to Olupona (2017), *Alajobi* connotes biological relationships, an extended family structure, it carries cultural transmission and heritage. Ademola (2019) says, it is a medium for conflict resolution and mediation. Concept of *Alajobi* aligns with African communitarianism. African communitarianism refers to a philosophical framework emphasizing community and collective well-being in African cultures. A feeling of togetherness. It highlights interdependence among community members, which enables them to prioritize collective interest over individualism. (Gyekeye 1997, p.23). *Alajobi* in Yoruba culture also has a spiritual dimension. There is a belief that concept of *Alajobi* reinforces family bond. Yoruba culture, emphasizing respect, honour, and communion with the dead ancestors. These venerated

ancestors through common blood linkage in the family induced moral laws that must be adhered to by the family members. According to Awolalu (2017), *Alajob*i is linked to the collective destiny of the family and community. Family relationships are considered sacred, reflecting divine order. *Alajobi* is even used to pray for the family members*. Alajobi a gbewa o* meaning, we are going to be favored by being members of this family. There are other popular sayings in Yoruba to buttress this point;

1. *Eke ni pa eru, epe ni pa ole*
   Ile dida ni pa ore,
   Alajobi ni pa iyekan eni tii se bi sini

   Translating to English, it means:
   Deception kills slave,
   curses kill thief,
   betrayal kills friend,
   being born in the same family *(Alajobi)* kills family
   member that hurt another family member.

2. *O dale bale ku*
   Eni ba dale a bale lo
   Translation in English:
   Whosoever betrays others
   will disappear on the land.

Alajobi has a correlation with the concept of *Omoluwabi. Omoluwabi* is a concept that connotes being referred to as a person of good character, integrity and moral excellence. The term is derived from the Yoruba language, *omo* means 'child' and *luwabi means '*born with good character' or 'endowed with good habits'. In Yoruba culture, being referred to as *Omoluwabi* is considered as honour and it encompasses various virtues like integrity, which connotes being truthful, honest and transparent in one's words and actions, also showing respect to elders, tradition and authority. It also enables individuals to take responsibility for one's actions and their impact on others. It enables empathy and kindness towards others.. There is no way one will possess these virtues and one will not be self-disciplined; that is, having self-control, self-awareness and self-improvement (Ademakinwa 2020, p. 5).

An *Omoluwabi* represents holistic approach to personal development. There must be personal development before there can be a community development. That is why character like integrity and moral excellence in achieving a balanced and fulfilling life cannot be overemphasized. Since *Alajobi* fosters reciprocity and responsibility within relationships, there is no way it will not reinforce Omoluwabi that also promotes a sense of accountability and mutual respect, the two cornerstones essential for building trust and cooperation within a stronger and more equitable society. The combination of alajobi and omoluwabi promote social cohesion, ensuring that individual and groups work together to achieve common goals and social harmony. Both *Alajobi* and *Omoluwabi* emphasize the importance of community orientation. By being a responsible and respectable member of society (*Omoluwabi*), individuals will become agents of community development because, they will be able to contribute to the well-being of their community. At the epicenter of both *Alajobi* and *Omoluwabi* is *Iwa* (character). Iwa in Yoruba tradition refers to character, behavior or conduct. It connotes individual's moral fiber, values and principles that guide their actions with others. According to Ademakinwa (2020), the components of *Iwa* (character) are two, *Iwa rere* (good character), it is characterized by kindness,

empathy and compassion. *Iwa buburu* (bad character) depicts dishonesty, cruelty, immorality. Yoruba tradition encourages individuals in their communities to embrace *Iwa rere* and desist from *Iwa buburu*

Yoruba proverbs and sayings often emphasize the importance of *Iwa*, such as, *Iwa l'ewa* (character is beauty). Yoruba will say, *iwa rere l'eso eniyan* (good character is the beauty therapy of man). They will admonish people by saying *toju iwa e* (take good care of your behavior), *iwa ika kope* (wicked character has no value). These admonitions come because without good behavior, there is no way individuals in the community can contribute meaningfully to the development of his community. Ademakinwa (2020) in his work, "*Iwa:* Yoruba Concept of Character and Behaviour" explores the significance of *Iwa* in Yoruba Philosophy and Culture. The work highlights how *Iwa* is intricately linked with other Yoruba concepts, such as *Omoluwabi* (the ideal person) and *Alajobi* (mutual support and cooperation inherent in kinsman). The work emphasizes that *Iwa* is not just a personal trait but also has social implications, it influences how individuals interact with others and their community. By examining the concept of *Iwa*, Ademakinwa's work provides valuable insights into Yoruba philosophy and culture, highlighting the importance of character and behavior in achieving a balanced and fulfilling life. Oyebade (2018), corroborates the work of Ademakinwa (2020), by highlighting the fact that Yoruba concept of *iwa rere* is closely tied to the idea of *Omoluwabi*. *Iwa rere* is essential for building strong relationships, fostering community cohesion and promoting social justice. (Oyebade 2018, p. 20).

The personhood of individuals which *Alajobi* in Yoruba philosophy and culture explore has a lot to do with *Iwa*. According to Adeoye (2017), *Iwa* is the cornerstone of Yoruba personhood. A person's character and their essence and existence. *Iwa* influences an individual's relationships, social interaction and overall well-being. This is what is inherent in *Alajobi. Alajobi* weaves moral agency to support common interests. The individual makes choices that reflect on their good character, in line with social norms, prioritizing the well-being of others and their community. *Iwa rere* influencing personhood will surely culminate into or facilitate self-actualization, enabling individuals to realize their potentials and fulfil their purpose in life. (Adeoye 2017, p. 6) In conclusion, the above works on *Iwa* and *Omoluwabi* therefore have telling effect on *Alajobi in* order to maintain balance and harmony within family and community at large. It ensures continuity with the past and ancestral heritage. There is trust and reliability, essential for building strong relationships, cooperation, social cohesion and communal well-being with communal well-being in place, there will be community development, because it will always help in the reinforcement of moral values and social norms.

Conceptualizing *Alale* (Deified Town Founders): A Basis for Communal Harmony and Balance in Yoruba Tradition

Alale (town founding Deities) are revered figures in Yoruba culture, associated with the founding and protection of towns and communities. They are credited with establishing and safeguarding their communities. *Alale* are mythical and historical figures. There are lots of stories being told about their legendary acts among their descendants. They surely have divine status, possessing supernatural powers.

The belief of Yoruba people is tha*t Alale* watch over their lands to safeguard it, ensuring prosperity and harmony. They are often represented through shrines or sacred objects. They foster community identity and cohesion. They play the role of creating pathway to spiritual guidance and divine interventions. Whenever there is problem in any town in Yoruba land, divination and consultation with *Alale* is the next thing that always come to the mind of the

people. Certain rituals for town purification and protection will be used to solve the problem. (Olupona 2003, p.13,; Fakeye 2018. p. 25.; Ademola 2018. p. 27).

Afolayan (2020) opines that ancestral reverence reinforces community unity and social cohesion. It does this because it promotes moral values, social norms and social order. Unfortunately, modernization and Christianity have altered ancestral reverence practices. He submits that community development should incorporate ancestral reverence. By honoring their ancestors, the Yoruba people acknowledge the significance of their heritage and the role of their forebears in shaping their identity. For example, *egungun* masquerade serves as a medium for ancestral Communication and guidance. *Egungun* masking culture ensures continuation of Yoruba tradition. (Fakeye 2020, p. 25). According to Sophie Oluwole (1997), Yoruba ethical thinking sees God as a necessary theoretical being to provide a rational solution to problem of sanctioning, due to the limitation of man in enforcing moral rules. Therefore, man in Yoruba traditional thought is not only in relation with other men but with town founding deities (*Alale),* spirits *(Ebora*), gods (*orisa)* and God (*Olodumare*).

To live a good ethical life in Yoruba tradition, like many other African traditions, man must maintain an ontological balance with dead ancestors (Alale), gods (orisa), spirit (ebora) and God (olodumare). This is so because, reality is holistic in Yoruba tradition. The implication of this is that for man to be in peace, he must live in harmony with other men and supernatural beings. In case there is a disharmony, he inquires to know through the medium of cause and effect. In Yoruba tradition, man does not rely only on naked observation. He also consults supernatural beings, too. Yoruba will say *"bonitiri ola lee mari be, nii mu babalawo difa ororun"* (as today is, tomorrow may not be like that makes diviner consults oracle every five days). (Oladele K, 2019, p. 39)

The concept of personhood in Yoruba tradition is interwoven with ethical life. *Eniyan* is more than biological man. If a Yoruba man says, somebody is a man (*eniyan ni*) or (*o se eniyan),* it means he is a good man. A biological man without being morally good, is referred to as 'eranko' or '*eniyan yepere', that is, an* ordinary man instead of *Omoluab*i (a good man). A man that is not responsible, who cannot provide for his family is referred to as '*eranko lasanlasan ekeji aja'* (animal, second to dog). Individuals are valued in themselves as a potential contributors to human communal survivor. There is no force on individuals in Yoruba traditional setting to accept being a communal being, the socialization that the individual passes through, enables them to experience love and concern, as well as internal virtues of community. That is, the virtue of considering their actions concerning others. The concept of *Alale* reflects this narrative about Yoruba concept of personhood because everybody is conscious of pleasing *Alale*. (Segun Gbadegesin 1998, p. 252).

In Yoruba Philosophy, Alale is intricately intertwined with communal balance and harmony that exist within the universe and human society. It encompasses the idea of maintaining societal equilibrium and stability in all aspect of community life. According to Lawal (2019), communal balance and harmony refer to the state of equilibrium and harmony within community. This balance is achieved when the individuals and social groups or institutions within the community work together in harmony with the rules or social norms of the community, respecting each other's rights and responsibilities .Alale are powerful spiritual being, they can connotes the dead ancestors and gods. Their actions affect the balance and harmony of the community. To maintain this equilibrium, Alale enforces moral order. Individual and groups adhere to moral principles and values. Communal balance and harmony require a shared moral order where individuals and group respect and uphold common values. The basis for peace in the community is, there should be a striking balance between social order and moral order.

Moral order refers to the set of principles, values and norms that govern human behavior and guide individual actions. It encompasses the moral fabric of a society, influencing how individuals interact with each other and their environment. The key components of moral order are moral principle, moral norms and moral values. Moral principles entail fundamental principles and beliefs that guide behavior. Moral norms are shared expectations and standards that guide human behavior. Moral values entail beliefs about what is right, wrong, good or bad. Moral order can be underpinned by virtue ethics, deontologism and consequentialism. Virtue ethics emphasizes the development of moral character and virtues, deontologism focuses on moral rules and duties, consequentialism is all about moral actions based on the consequences. (Taylor C 2011, pp 23-24)

Social order, on the other hand, according to Giddens (2020), refers to the organized pattern of social relationships, institutions and structures that shape a society. The key components of social order are, social norms, power dynamics, institutions, and social stratification. As it has been said above, social norms entail shared expectations and standards that guide human standards.   Power dynamics, is all about the distribution of authority within society: institutions encompasses established organizations and structures, such as family, education and government: social stratification is all about hierarchical arrangements of individuals and groups based on factors like wealth, status and power.

Alale, plays a crucial role in striking a balance between moral order and social order by emphasizing the importance of maintaining equilibrium and stability in all aspects of life, including the moral and social spheres. By embracing Alale, individuals and societies can achieve a harmonious balance, essential for social cohesion, justice and ultimately, human well-being. Moral and social order are interconnected and interdependent. The bridging factor between them is Alale. Making sure both work for the common good.

Alale and *Alajobi* as Veritable Tools in Yoruba Community Development

The concept of *Alale* and *Alajobi* through the ethical values that the two concepts project, are the basis for the concept of personhood in Yoruba tradition, it also has serious implication on the community development. Community development involves collective efforts to improve quality of life, social welfare and economic prosperity. Community development is a process of empowering communities to control their own lives, make informed decisions and improve their social, economic and environmental conditions. (IFDC 2020). In founding the community, there are ethical principles the town founding deities established, which they believe their descendants or the sojourners in the land must adhere to. The ethical principles are encapsulated in the taboos and these taboos informed the concept of personhood in Yoruba community. *Alale* play crucial roles in community development. The fact is, *Alale* can be made angry. They can be made angry if there is violation of their rules. The punishment can be personal or even affect the whole community. In most cases, the violator will bear the consequence of his/her action alone, which can be discovered through ifa oracle when consulted. The *Alale* always strike to serve as a deterrence to others. What *Alale* do on a larger scale to the whole community is what the *Alajobi* does with the family. *Alajobi* in Yoruba tradition has a mystical dimension, which points to the power in the blood of the family lineage. There is a belief that *Alajobi* can either reward or punish any family member who do good or evil to other family members. This also informed the basis of personhood in Yoruba tradition. Yoruba people see Alale as necessary enforcers of what is right.

The altruistic exploits of legends in Yoruba history like *Kurunmi Owa Obokun, Moremi* etc, can be traced to the confidence they had then that the *Alale* will back them to succeed in the

tasks they performed for their towns. These heroes have good understanding of the knowledge of *Alale*. In Yoruba land, no war can be prosecuted without seeking for the help of *Alale*. Rituals are performed to appease and fortified warriors before going to war. It is common to hear something like '*Awon Alele ile yi a si o lo* ' (The town founding deities will follow you), Likewise, concerning *Alajobi*, when you see family member rally round the other family members in the time of trouble or celebration; or performing a certain task on behalf of the family, it is as a result of this understanding. One may hear something like '*Alajobi agbe o'* (The family bondline favour you), this is if somebody has done something good, if it is otherwise, it will be' *Alajobi a da'* (The bloodline will judge you). Every member of the family will prefer the first saying than the later saying. *Alajobi also* engenders cooperative economic empowerment e.g, farming and crafts within the family are made possible through the belief in it. It is a kinship based social support network; it also energizes family reunification and reconciliation initiatives, because it enhances conflict resolution mechanism due to the fact that it emphasizes kinship ties. It is common to hear the Yoruba saying, '*nitori Alajobi mo dari ji o'* (Because of *alajobi* I forgive you). More so, there is no way we can discuss knowledge transfer initiatives or socialization without talking about *Alajobi*. *Alajobi* has big correlation on community development because of the roles it plays in the family set up. *Alale* and *Alajobi* promote shared ancestral heritage and in turn has serious implication on social cohesion, which serve as tool for unity and cooperation within community. Together, *Alale* and *Alajobi* encourage community engagement, participation and ownership. This feeling of we-ness is very important for community development. The ancestral heritage it connotes informs sustainable development practices like environmental and cultural stewardship. The shared heritage-based initiatives can drive cultural tourism, like cultural festivals and events to showcase the ancestral heritage.

We need these elements discussed above, especially in this contemporary period where we are battling with the problem of cultural erosion, urbanization and modernization have made us to lose these elements mentioned above. To make the matter worse, there is problem of limited documentation of ancestral heritage, coupled with the fact that there is conflict and division within our community. There is a need to harness the power of cultural identity and collective responsibility to drive sustainable development in our community. A question that can arise concerning this work here is the relationship between *Alale* and *Alajobi. Is it a* complementary or a conflicting one? Suffice to say the relationship between the two concepts in Yoruba culture is complex. It can be complementary and conflicting. The complementary and conflicting aspects have implications on community development and its social justice. The relationship can be complementary when they engender social solidarity to enable collective interest of the community to be realized. For example, it can enable the people of the society to confront social ills endangering the whole community. It can be conflicting when members of one or two families want to use the Alajobi to impose their family interests on the whole community. That is where leadership ability comes into play to neutralize this conflicting impact.

Alale and *Alajobi* because of the shared ancestral heritage in most cases reinforces each other in the sense that both emphasize common roots that highlight their interconnectedness. They both pass down cultural values, traditions and practices that underpin their principles. This enables community identity possible in the form of collective responsibility *(Alajobi)* and ancestral reverence (*Alale*). This interconnectedness showcases flowering of individuals and families inside a community. Finally, it provides a form of shared history that is predicated on understanding between individuals and group.   (Afolayan 2020, p.30). The complementary aspect of both *Alale* and *Alajobi* in Yoruba culture has implication on community development because it fosters social cohesion and unity within communities. Likewise, it enable cultural

preservation and continuity to take place. In many instances, it has translated into community engagement, participation, which produces sense of belonging in the people. There is no way this kind of complementarity cannot be explored for conflict resolution. The complementarity has been a driven force for economic empowerment among the members of a family or community as the case may be in Yoruba culture. It gives sense to the Yoruba proverb, *a jo je ko dun benikan ko yo* (eating together is not sweet if one person is not satisfied). However, the authority versus kinship aspects that characterize both concepts in their relationship must be well managed or else, it can culminate into a big tension. *Alale* represents divine authority, while *Alajobi* emphasizes kinship ties. occasionally, it will result to a clash between individuality and collectivity. Individual achievements and collective well-being will surely clash at one point in time. (Fakeye 2018, p. 25)

Another potential bedrock for tension between the two concepts is their adaptability nature. Alale represents traditional practices, while Alajobi has adapted to modern societal changes. There is occasional tension that can ensue between tradition and modernity that the two represent. (Ogunnaike 2017, p. 5). For example, in the olden days, alajobi is mostly characterized by alajogbe (neighborliness) but due to the industrial age we are presently, alajogbe is replacing alajobi..although in many families, to still maintain good communication, despite distance among family members, social media platform is employed. In many communities, ancestral reverence of *Alale* is having challenges, it has even resulted into big clash in many communities, e.g, clash between *oro* cult members and Hausa community in Sagamu that occurred in 1999. Some roles of Alajobi can be played by alajogbe but the role of Alale cannot be played by anybody. In conclusion, the concepts of *Alajobi* and *Alale* form the basis of personhood in Yoruba traditional society. The two concepts also have Implications on Yoruba traditional community development. These two concepts, has ethical foundation that is very integrative and holistic in nature. The two concepts form the basis for the interactive nature of man, dead ancestors, gods and God in Yoruba traditional setting.

Implications of *Alale and Alajobi* for Social Justice

Social justice refers to the equitable distribution of resources, benefits, privileges within society. Spreading equal rights and dignity for every member of a society, irrespective of age, class, disability, religion etc. In social justice, there are key points that must be there for us to say that there is social justice. They are; equity, equality, human rights, participation and empowerment. Equity means fairness to people, it also means impartiality, having undeniable access to community resources, opportunities and services. Equity means that individuals and groups have equal chances to succeed. There is impartiality, redistribution of resources when necessary. *Alale* and *Alajobi* facilitate restorative justice in traditional Yoruba community. According to Zehr (2018), restorative justice focuses on repairing harm, promoting healing and reestablishing relationships between victims, offenders and communities. Concept of *Alale* and *Alajobi* align with Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM). Victim Offender Mediation is a process where victims and offenders meet with a trained mediator. In Yoruba community, elders used concept of *Alale* and *Alajobi* to mediate in crisis. They used it to work towards a resolution and healing, until it yields reconciliation. In most cases it has led to community healing.

Ijaiya (2020) explores the intersection of Indigenous knowledge System (IKS) and social justice through the Alajobi perspective in Yoruba culture. He defines indigenous Knowledge System as local knowledge developed to manage their environment, social and cultural practices. Ijaiya argues further that *Alajobi* promotes social justice by emphasizing shared humanity and

interrelatedness. It acknowledges cultural identity, inclusive decision making. Yoruba communal land management can be used to illustrate this fact. (Ijaiya 2020, p.37)

Alale and *Alajobi* have serious implications on the pursuit of truth, justice and reconciliation in Yoruba tradition. *Alale* helps in uncovering the truth in the situation of conflict and injustice. This helps in addressing past wrongs and understanding the root causes of conflicts. It encourages individuals to accept responsibility for their actions, acknowledging their role in perpetuating harm of injustice. *Alale* promotes transparency in all aspects of life, including governance, institutions and personal relationships, in brevity it fosters culture of accountability. (Oyewumi 2020, p. 29). *Alajobi* helps in the area of reconciliation because it focuses on the healing and restoration in order to rebuild relationships. It preaches forgiveness and mercy in the reconciliation process, which will enable who has been offended to let go the grievances, thereby enhance a more harmonious future in the family. More importantly, it helps in rebuilding trust by bringing to the consciousness of the family members the value of togetherness, empathy and understanding, we-feeling, which are principal ingredients of social justice. In brevity, by embracing *Alale* and *Alajobi,* individuals and communities can work towards a more just, equitable and harmonious society where truth, accountability and genuine reconciliation are valued and pursued.

Alale, Alajobi, Community Engagement and Participation

Community engagement and participation play important role in community development. Community engagement and participation are essential concepts that involve working in conjunction with members of the community to achieve sustainable outcomes, equitable decision making processes and deepest relationships and trust between government, organizations and communities Armstein (2020, p.24).It is based on the idea that everyone affected by an issue should have a say in the decision making process. It highlights the fact that through the intentional interactions between leaders and community, members can influence policy. *Alale* and *Alajobi* represent traditional engagement that involves the ancestors, the leaders and members of communities. Yoruba ethical thinking sees God as a necessary theoretical being to provide a rational solution to problem of sanctioning due to the limitation of man in enforcing moral rules. Therefore, man in Yoruba thought is not only in relation with other men but with dead ancestor*s (Alale), spirits (Ebora)* gods (*orisa*) and God (*Olodumare*). To live a good ethical life in African tradition, man must maintain an ontological balance with dead ancestor spirits, gods, God *(olodumare)*.   Reality is holistic in Yoruba thought. The implication of this is that for man to be at peace with himself, he must live in harmony with other men and supernatural beings. In case there is disharmony, he goes to i*fa* diviners to make enquiry to know the cause and effect. African man does not rely only on naked observation. He consults too supernatural beings through ifa.. Yoruba will say "*bonitiri Ola lee mari be, nii mu babalawo difa ororun*" (as today is, tomorrow may not be like that makes diviner consults oracle every five days). (Oluwole 1991, p.34).

In yoruba traditional community, Alale create a sort of fear factor that makes people to be conscious of their conducts in the society, it also enables individual involvement in community engagement and participation to be done with the mindset that Alale are watching them, therefore, it elicits accountability on the part of community leaders, which enable them to make quality decisions,. This engenders strengthening in relationships between community leaders, social institutions and individual members living in the community. It creates the atmosphere of inclusiveness and sustainable development.

How Nigerian Social Policy can Benefit from the Concept of Alale and Alale

Social policy refers to the actions and decisions made by the government to address social needs and issues such as employment, education, healthcare, housing and sustenance. There are two ways to understand social policy, it can be seen as any government action aimed at addressing social needs. Secondly, as an academic discipline, social policy examines how societies distribute resources to meet individual and social needs. Effective social policies aim to reduce inequalities in access to services and support between social groups defined by socio-economic status, race ethnicity, migration status, gender, sexual orientation and age. (UNDP 2020, p. 23). The interconnectedness of *Alale* and *Alajobi* is crucial for effective public policy implementation to address challenges of governance in Nigeria. Alale emphasizes upholding of truth and *Alajobi* focuses on reconciliation. Truth and reconciliation are very important elements of decision making process to address problem of injustices. There is a Yoruba concept of Alale and Alajobi can help in fostering social justice. Both concept promote inclusive governance, incorporating what these two concepts represent in Yoruba tradition to formulate policies will allow protection of minority rights .After all, effective social policies in his true sense should prioritize restorative justice by focusing on repairing harm and promoting healing, rather than punishment.   More so, both concepts stress the need for accountability and transparency in governance, they will engender evidence based responsive community needs. Effective social policy should be culturally sensitive and responsive. Predicating social policy on *Alale* and *Alajob*i will engender inclusivity because it will align to the cultural milieu that the policy will be implemented, thereby fostering social cohesion.

Recommendation and Conclusion

This research has explored the concepts of *Alajobi* and *Alale* in Yoruba tradition, examining their significance in providing a robust framework for community development and social justice. The findings of this study highlight the importance of these concepts in fostering social cohesion, justice and community development. The research demonstrates that the interconnectedness of *Alajobi* (kinsman*)* and *Alale (*town founding deities*)* in Yoruba tradition enable individuals and communities to foster the culture of truth-telling, accountability and reconciliation. We to dig deep into our tradition in this modern to improve what is on ground, in order to promote more inclusive and equitable community development, where the needs and right of all members are respected and addressed. By incorporating concept of Alajobi and Alale, we can build stronger, more just communities that thrive on the values of truth, reconciliation and social justice. Therefore, we recommend that community development initiatives should incorporate the principles of Alale and Alajobi in Yoruba culture. Emphasis of our modern society should be on collective responsibility and cooperation. Efforts should be made to revitalize and promote Yoruba cultural heritage, including alajobi and alale. Educational programs and awareness campaigns should be implemented to promote the understanding and appreciation of Alale and Alajobi and their significance in promoting community development and social justice. We recommend that our policy makers should consider incorporating the principles of Alajobi and Alajobi into policy development, particularly in areas pertaining to community development and social justice.

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Article   **Open Access**

MILL'S FEMINISM AND THE POLITICAL ADVANCEMENT OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper entitled: "Mill's Feminism and the Political Advancement of Nigeria" is an attempt to analyze and use John Stuart Mill's concept of feminism for the advancement of politics in Nigeria. This study, therefore, proceeds from the understanding that for many decades now, studies on feminism and gender mainstreaming, have been conducted and significant progress has been made. However, certain issues surrounding dimensions of gender equality are still hazy. It is the intention of this paper to examine issues concerning women in relation to political developments which are very problematic in Nigeria. This work interrogates the unhealthy discrepancies between the locations of men and women in society in every facet of life. These issues seem to place particular emphasis on the oppression and marginalization of women at all levels. Utilising on Mill's feminism as it's theoretical framework, this paper explores the subsisting marginalization of women within the context of Nigeria's political space that previous researchers focused on. The paper aims at showing the possible linkage between gender identity, gender representation, gender mainstreaming and political developments in Nigeria, from the perspective of Mill. Hence, it employs the analytic method in investigating the significance of Mill's feminism within the ambience of the Nigerian political developments. This study reveals that women in Nigeria are not only marginalized, but highly subdued and oppressed from all fronts. Thus, this paper concludes that Mill's notion of feminism will certainly engender equality, effective mainstreaming, social cohesion among the sexes, and also serve as instrument for social and political engineering in an attempt to reinvent a new Nigeria.

Keywords: Feminism, Development, Political Advancement, Mill's Feminism, Nigeria.

Introduction

Feminism, as a socio-political movement and ideology, seeks to address and rectify the historical and ongoing inequalities between genders, advocating for the rights, opportunities, and equality of the sexes. This diverse movement has evolved over centuries, covering various waves and schools of thought, each contributing to a broader understanding of gender dynamics and oppression. All over the world, today, the quest by most stakeholders, governments,

policymakers, women organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) etc has been for gender mainstreaming in sensitive policies such that would guarantee equal representation of men and women in government and administration in society. Nigeria, like many other countries, faces persistent gender inequalities and struggles with establishing an inclusive political space. Despite notable progress, women in Nigeria are underrepresented in political leadership positions, and the value of a gender-sensitive perspective on political issues cannot be over-emphasized. The problem extends from local government councils to the national level, where the percentage of women in decision-making roles remains significantly lower than that of their male counterparts.

While there have been policy initiatives and legal frameworks designed to promote gender equality in Nigeria, the effective implementation of these policies remains a challenge. The gap between policy formulation and actual implementation hampers progress in achieving tangible advancements for women in politics and broader society. To this end, most countries including Nigeria have become signatories to many international agreements which are intended to boost the status of women and empower them in all spheres of life just like their male counterparts. Traditionally, gender roles and expectations often limit women's participation in political processes and reinforce a patriarchal structure that may be at odds with the principles of gender equality. It is the subsisting marginalization of women in Nigerian politics that this paper undertakes to investigate at the instance of John Stuart Mill's arguments for feminism and gender inclusion. Addressing these issues is a *conditio sine qua non* for fostering a more inclusive and equitable political environment that aligns with the principles of gender equality advocated by Mill.

Conceptual Clarification

Feminism: There is no consensus on the definition of what feminism is, but it is widely known to be the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of equality of the sexes. Hooks argues that there are negative implications of the lack of a unified definition. He states that "A central problem within feminist discourse has been our inability to either arrive at a consensus of opinion about what feminism is or accept definitions that could serve as a point of unification. It indicates a growing disinterest in feminism as a radical political movement" (Hooks, 1984: pxi). At its core, feminism is the belief in full social, economic and political equality for women. Feminism largely arose in response to Western traditions that restricted the rights of women, but feminist thought has global manifestations and variations.

Political Advancement: This refers to the developments in the institutions, attitude, and value that form the political power system of a society. Development as a word is all embracing; it affects the totality of life. Farzana sees it as ''an extremely vague and all-encompassing term, which appeals to various groups who often see it in various ways'' (Farzana, 2000: p65). However, political development enhances a nation's capacity to mobilize and allocate resources, to process policy inputs into implementable output.

J. S. Mill on Feminism

John Stuart Mill, a prominent 19th-century philosopher, political economist, and advocate of individual liberties, played a pivotal role in shaping political thought during his time. While he is renowned for his contributions to political philosophy, Mill's significance in feminist discourse became particularly pronounced with the publication of *The Subjection of Women* in 1869. In this seminal work, Mill fervently argues for the political, social, and economic equality of women. He holds that the subjugation of women was a hindrance to societal progress, and the

emancipation of women was not only a moral imperative but also essential for the betterment of society as a whole.

In *The Subjection of Women*, Mill considers the principle of equality to be a moral imperative. Thus, Mill submits: "The principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes, the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other" (Mill, 1869: p112).

The salient points to note in Mill's equality of men and women does not involve the legal aspects of society, which he unambiguously describes as that the law which compels women to undertake domestic roles and be excluded from decision making parts of society, such as politics and business. Mill's understanding is that the central reason for the oppression of women comes from the male's physical strength. Men are physically stronger than women, and it was common to think at that time that the man's brain was larger than that of a woman. Charles Sowerwine made the observation when he declares that "Since women are generally smaller than men, their brains are also smaller" (Sowerwine, 2003: p295).

Sowerwine's position on women's brain was subsequently debunked by Mill as a myth. Accordingly, Mill maintains: "Any of the mental differences supposed to exist between women and men are but the natural effect of the differences in their education and circumstances and indicate no radical difference, far less radical inferiority, of nature" (Mill, 1869: p94). Mill conveniently assumes that the more influence reason has in society, the less importance physical strength will have. For Szapuová, Mill declares: "In this state, women will no longer be disadvantaged, as physical strength becomes less important as civilisation advances" (Szapuová, 2006: p182). By declaring that the subordination of women is one of the "chief hindrances to human improvement", Mill goes ahead to state that the oppression of women poses negative consequences not only on the lives of women, but of men as well. Hence, it prevents society from progressing.

Mill also critically examines the status of women in society, delving into what he terms "The Gender Question." This is rooted in the assertion that women's rights are human rights. He rejects the notion that women should be confined to a domestic sphere and argues for the recognition of women as individuals with inherent rights to autonomy and self-determination. Mill contends that the denial of women's rights is not only unjust but also detrimental to the flourishing of a just and progressive society. He says that we simply don't know what women are capable of, because we don't let them try, one cannot make an authoritative statement without evidence. We can't stop women from trying things because they might not be able to do them (Mill, 1869: p133). An argument based on speculative physiology is just that, speculation. The anxiety of mankind to intervene on behalf of nature is an altogether unnecessary solitude. What women by nature cannot do, it is quite superfluous to forbid them from doing.

From the above, Mill suggests that men are admitting that women are capable of doing a thing, but that men do not want them to do so. Whether women can do these things or not must be found out in practice. Mill extends his analysis to the realm of politics, advocating for women's political rights and representation. He argues for women's suffrage as a fundamental right, stating that political representation is necessary for the protection of women's interests and the advancement of society as a whole. In book three, Mill turns to the bias exhibited against women in terms of entry into specific vocations. According to him, the reasons given for barring women from certain professions was 'interest of society' which for him simply meant the interest of men (Mill, 1869: p524).

However, many women have proved that they are capable of performing certain functions hitherto reserved for men. The number of such women is relatively small compared to men in those fields but this can also be explained by the historical subjection which has put hindrances in the advancement of women's cause. However, Mill makes a very curious claim that "the things which women are not allowed to do are the very ones for which they are peculiarly qualified" (Mill, 1869: p529). Throughout his discussion of ''The Gender Question'', Mill often employs utilitarian principles. He argues that the subjection of women is not only morally wrong but also economically and socially inefficient. Emancipating women, according to Mill, would contribute to the overall happiness and prosperity of society.

Mill also scrutinizes the legal inequalities that defined the status of women in the 19th century. He considered the principle of equality to be a moral imperative. He opens the essay with: "The principles which regulate the existing social relations between the two sexes the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement" (Mill, 1869: p2). Here, he bases the inequality of men and women on the legal aspects of society, maintaining that societal norms confine women to undertake domestic roles and exclude them from decision making parts of society, such as politics (Mill, 1869: p77). Mill understands that the central reason for this oppression comes from the male's physical strength. Men are physically bigger and stronger than women, and it was common to think at the time that the man's brain was larger than that of the woman. A central aspect of the status of women, as per Mill's analysis, is the limited access to education. He argues that the denial of educational opportunities to women not only hampers their intellectual development but also reinforces their subordinate status. Mill advocates for equal educational opportunities, believing that education is crucial for the empowerment of women and their full participation in society.

As regards women and marriage, Mill begins by critiquing the legal inequalities embedded in marriage laws during his time. He highlights how marriage often places women in a position of legal subordination to their husbands. Laws concerning property ownership, inheritance, and the custody of children favour men, leaving women with limited legal rights within the marriage. He emphasized the need for the end of marital slavery and to establish a friendship within marriage, and states: "The equality of married persons before the law, is not only the sole mode in which that particular relation can be made consistent with justice to both sides, and made conducive to the happiness of both, but it is the only means of rendering the daily life of mankind, in any high sense, a school or moral cultivation" (Mill, 1869: p70). Through his relationship with his wife Harriet, Mill explores the situations in which intelligent women were confined by patriarchal institutions and customs that deny their individuality. He describes the way in which the woman is a slave within marriage by saying a wife is "the actual bondservant of her husband: no less so, as far as legal obligation goes, than slaves commonly so called" (Mill, 1869: p76). He observes that the intrinsic reason why women are treated as slaves in marriage is systemic discrimination in society. He states that women are not free to marry and are not free within marriage.

Mill therefore outlines a vision of marital friendship of cooperation which would seep into public life. He understands that the equality of a marital relationship would change views on equality on society as a whole. He ultimately states that equality before the law will lead to justice in all spheres of social and political life. He goes on to say that since humans are equal, the fact that someone is born a women should not determine her position in society and customs should not "ordain that to be born a girl instead of a boy, any more to be born Black instead of White, or a commoner instead of a nobleman, shall decide the person's position through all life" (Mill, 1869: p79).

Mill emphasizes the importance of preserving individuality within the marital relationship. He argues that women, like men, should have the freedom to pursue their own interests, aspirations, and personal development. Marriage should not suppress individuality but provide a supportive environment for both partners to flourish. Societal expectations surrounding marriage, according to Mill, impose rigid roles on women. These expectations often hinder women's ability to exercise their free will and pursue their own paths. Mill advocates for the dismantling of societal norms that restrict women to predefined roles within the marital relationship.

Implications for Nigeria

While Mill's feminism, as articulated in *The Subjection of Women*, has a large role in defining the nature of marital relationships, offering valuable insights into the struggle for gender equality, its application to the context of political advancement in Nigeria poses several challenges. However, it is difficult to quantify the impact of Mill's feminism in society. One measure to be considered is the number of domestic abuses and homicides in Nigeria, United States of America, etc. From 1885-1970, it is seen that 50% of all gender based violence, homicides and abuses were domestically related; and they include: a husband killing a wife, and from that less than 2% were committed by women. From 1972-1982, 25% of homicides were domestically related, and of that 25%, less than 4% were committed by women (HO, 1989:94).

The plight of Nigerian women, like those of their counterparts in other parts of developed countries, have been characterized by lack of adequate representation, lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for women's leadership in general, undue dominance of men in the socio-political scheme of things, poverty or lack of money or resources, lopsided political appointments and the general imbalances associated with very unjust treatment of the female citizens in its entirety. Generally speaking, we can agree that there is need to harness women's potentials towards achieving a sustainable political development in Nigeria. One of the major issues that stand out is that of emancipation and empowerment of the female gender. One contribution to the empowerment debated that can serve as a useful tool of reference is the model provided by Mullender and Ward (1991). These scholars' mode of empowerment is based "explicitly on an anti-oppressive perspective and suggests three simple questions to be addressed by those concerned that participatory approaches achieve their empowerment potential" (Crawley, 1998: p30).

The questions are as follow: What are the problems to be tackled? Why do the problems exist? How can we bring about change? These questions are vital, and those concerned with policies to redress the present imbalance in the status of women in Nigeria do not seem to be guided by them given the little achievement in this regard. Highlights of women's problems in Nigeria which have been fairly identified by government and non-government agencies are age, education, occupation, caste, economics, religion, cultural beliefs, virility deficiency syndrome, non-implementation of Affirmative Action, and lack of finance and other resources.

Occasionally it has been argued that women have accepted their position in society voluntarily, a position that is dismissed by Mill. He argues that a great number of women do not accept it as shown by their protests, writings and admissions into professions hitherto the preserve of men. Conventions and agitations for women's rights for purposes of getting political franchise also show women's discontent with their situation. There could be many women who cherish such emancipatory ideals silently but are encouraged to shelve them as not being proper for their sex. He notes that no enslaved class ever asked for complete liberty at once and so is

the case with women. Their emancipation shall come albeit gradually. This seems true if we consider the amount of resistance faced by women in their struggle. This claim is valid if we consider that in history, women have been trained not to voice their thought openly or even show any defiance to men. The few that have attempted have often found great resistance.

Mill raises the question why it is apparently difficult for women to launch a collective rebellion. For him, social and natural factors account for this. In the first place, men not only want women's obedience, they want also their sentiments. Secondly, a woman is not a forced slave but a willing one and finally she is not just a slave but a favourite one (Mill, 1869: p490). Therefore, men try everything to enslave the minds of women and use avenues such as education to make this possible. Women are taught that their ideal character is the very opposite of men and that they must learn submission in order to fit as given the natural attraction between the sexes, a wife's dependence on the husband and the fact that all aims or social ambitions can only be got through men, women have to be taught to be attractive to men. The aspect of women being willing slaves is debatable given that elsewhere Mill has argued that society leaves the woman no option but marriage. However, the willingness may be construed to mean the consent the women give when they say 'I do' at the marriage vows.   The issue of wives being favourite slaves seems to make sense if the kind of protection (physical and otherwise) that they get from their husbands is anything to go by. Scholars have continued to lament about the dismal result attained by the various efforts at gender inclusion in Nigeria. Mill has since provided an explanation that "custom; grounded either in a prejudice, or in the present constitution of society, which, making almost every woman, socially speaking, an appendage of some man, enables men to take systematically the lion's share of what belongs to both" (Mill, 1869: p500). Re-echoing the view of Mill, Gardiner (1997) notes that the "legal subordination of women with marriage was the basis of women's subjection in the political and economic spheres" (Gardiner, 1997: p30).

Addressing the problems squarely will no doubt amount to liberating women from their relegation to the background and mainstreaming them into key decision-making spheres of society. Lenin (1972) cited in Madunagu (2007) notes that the task of liberating women from their oppressed status is an arduous one which cannot be accomplished by mere exhortation. Commenting further on this, Lenin observes that the struggle to uplift the status of women through their liberation will be a long one, and it demands radical reconstruction both of the social technique and of morals. The traditional perspective of women's subjugation to domestic's activities, while men occupy super ordinate status because they earn a living working outside the home, has been used by functionalist theories to explain women's low status in society and persistence of gender-role socialization. Thus, rather than serving to uplift the status of women in the contemporary times, the increasing globalization and advancement in technology and information have continued to widen the yawning gap of inequality between men and women as the men control key economic and social resources while the women continue to be hemmed and chained at home by patriarchy. Commenting on this negative attitude of male-dominance against women, Montagu observes: "Contemporary men are, for the most part, still living in a Victorian world of their own. That world is out of harmony with that in which women live and most men have not yet awakened to that fact. To live by the nineteenth-century standards in a twentieth- century world is an anachronism" (Montagu, 1982: p72).

Men who institute the oppression of women in society will want to perpetuate it as long as it functions in their favour. Thus, efforts at improving women's status to that of equality with men will have not yielded any meaningful result. Concerning this issue, Mill observes "I

believe that their disabilities elsewhere are only clung to in order to maintain their subordination in domestic life, because the generality of the male sex cannot yet tolerate the idea of living with an equal" (Mill, 1970: p300). Hence, the traditional and functionalist perspectives make it clear that while the problems of women are obvious, the forces of patriarchal society which perpetuate them, make it difficult, if not impossible, to empower women to the tune of elevating their social status to that of equality with men. Mill's arguments for feminism and gender inclusion substantiate and make a case for equality of the sexes.

Despite all this, Mill argues that there is hope for the women with the changing circumstances of the modern world. Human beings are no longer born into their places in life for example social class, country, wealth or poverty. People are now free to follow their pursuits or desires. We are left to our own discretions except when there is need to protect the right of others. It is wrong to fix beforehand that on some general presumption certain persons are not fit to do certain things. Where unfitness is real, ordinary motives of human conduct are enough to prevent the incompetent person from persisting. The bottom line here is that for Mill, opportunities should be left equally open to all and let those who fail do so genuinely. To be born a boy or a girl does not ordain what we shall be. The social subordination of women stands out an isolated fact, a relic of an old world (Mill, 1970: p493). The implications are that if these arguments are practicalized, they will in no small measure contribute to the political advancement of Nigeria.

At present, the impact of Mill's notion of feminism is clearly felt by most women. His impact on changing the legal status of women is significant as it has restructured society in a way that would not just benefit men, but society as a whole. Women do not proportionately make up the decision making parts of society – to which Mill argues for it aggressively. For example, he holds that 51% of the European and African population are women and only 29% of them take part in policy making decision. This may account for the reason some women opt for a domestic career, or more likely, some women not being able to have the same opportunities as men due to discrimination. So, does Mill actually go far enough in moving away from a patriarchal society?

It can be argued, however, that Mill has profoundly affected the revolution of changing the concept of marriage which in turn can revolutionise society and establish equality in today's society. He has succeeded in changing the way husbands think of their wives in marriage – they have the potential to be equal. Mill's influence has changed the way husbands think about their wives, from slaves to equals. It defines a new way of affection towards one's spouse. He has ultimately shaped the relationships of today and through that, created a more equal society. Although Mill has a limited role in shaping the legal aspects of society which hinder and cage women to inequality his influence cannot be discounted. Thus, Mill ultimately endorses the debate of equality within the political sphere and has commenced a campaign which can lead to universal suffrage and gender equality. He has a much larger role in creating a 'new' relationship in marriage by creating 'marital friendships'. He transforms the way men think about women and from that understands that Mill is a revolutionary in bringing about gender equality.

Evaluation

The right of women in the socio-political space of Nigeria concerning her democratic agenda has been a matter of the public debate and hence attracts serious concerns by individuals and the wider international community as a whole. The plight of Nigerian women, like their counter parts in other parts of developed countries has been characterized by lack of adequate representation, lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for women's

political participation, undue dominance of men in the socio-political scheme of things, poverty or lack of money and resources, lopsided political appointments and the general imbalances associated with very just treatment of the female folk in its entirety. There is no doubt that this trend negates the collective interest of human fundamental rights and the right of equality, freedom and personal dignity of women in society. This tradition also poses very serious threats on Nigeria's part to democratic consolidation and sustainable development in the country.

It is interesting to note that the principle and the practice of the Affirmative Action is a universal phenomenon. Several countries of the world have history, one way or the other, showing that the right of women is to be respected and sustained. It is therefore of crucial importance for Nigerian to take a cue from best international practices in order to allow a pride of place for women. From the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing, China in 1995, women in other parts of the world have reached a considerable height in political positions in their respective countries, either as Presidents, Heads of State or Heads of Governments. Examples of such countries are Chile; Brazil, Germany, Liberia, Bangladesh, Finland, New Zealand and so on. Also in many countries judicial arm, national and regional parliaments, women have achieved and have even surpassed the 35% Affirmative Action's plan for women in Government (Hordosch, 2-4).

Nigeria has similar or even better political environment as compared to some of these countries, but perhaps the government and people of these countries are more gender sensitive than Nigeria, because they have identified the potential in women, thus giving them the opportunity to hold one political office or the other and the results are excellent. No doubt, Nigeria has abundance of women. What is needed is a change of mindset and attitude towards the issue of gender and politics. The earlier Nigeria adopts an all-inclusive complementary approach in politics, the better for it, as it will help it to navigate the process of development in all segments of the country.

Conclusion

In order to address gender inequality in all sincerity, there is a need to challenge patriarchy in all its manifestations. This research work is of the view that any programme(s) introduced or any actions taken to transform gender relations, should be carefully conceptualized in an innovative, creative and radical manner aimed at eliminating all forms of patriarchy. If this is done, then Nigeria will be on the right path to overcoming the subordination and oppression of women and bring about human centered development which can contribute to the political advancement of Nigeria.

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Article   **Open Access**

CLIMATE CHANGE, HERDERS AND LAND CULTIVATORS' CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
Conflict between herders and land cultivators' in Nigeria has become a major problem with catastrophic death toll. Millions of property have been destroyed and displacement of people particularly in the Middle Belt is becoming a daily occurrence. More often than not this conflict is climate change induced, motivated by competition over scarce resources like land, water, among others. The ugly situation consequently impact on national development negatively as it interrupts communities and displaced people. The paper employed secondary methods of data collection, sourced from text books, journals, internet for analysis. The objectives of the paper were to examine the linkages between climate change, herders and land cultivators conflict and displacement of victims and how their effects in turn impact on national development in Nigeria. Environmental Scarcity and Frustration-Aggression theories were used as the theoretical framework of the study. The findings revealed that climate change induces migration, unhealthy competition for scarce resources, conflict between herders and farmers resulting from frustration, exacerbates and hindering victims' inability to positively engage in agricultural activities, earn income, buy goods and invest in the socioeconomic development. The paper concludes that there is a link between climate change, migration, herders and farmers' competition for scarce resources, conflict and displacement of victims. The paper recommended grazing reserves and farmland protection which should be established through land use reforms and the security agencies need to be overhauled to control arms proliferation to curb the increasing accessibility of arms by unscrupulous elements.

Keywords: Climate Change, Conflict, Development, Displacement, Herder-farmer, National.

Introduction

Climate change is associated with the rise in average global temperatures coupled with ecological and human impacts. It is a grievous threat as it induces drought, flooding, erosion and

desertification. The northern regions of Nigeria are faced with desertification problem that affects the livelihoods of many people (Aisedion, 2022). The intensity of desertification and the drying up of the Chad Basin in the North, have forced herders to move elsewhere to the south for water and grasses for their herds (Aisedion, Oboh, & Agazuma, 2024). The migrations of herders has in turn generates farmers' displacement due to conflict generated from land use changes, population growth, leading to unhealthy increased and competition for natural resources (Adisa & Adenkunle, 2010). Climate change's effect has caused less utilization of land for farming and grazing purposes because of desertification and drought. These situations have eventually led to conflict. Several Nigerian states are highly susceptible to conflicts between herders and farmers; in certain cases, entire community is razed with fire, and members are displaced and rendered homeless mainly in Benue and Plateau states as well as in many southern states thereby threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria (Adisa & Adenkunle, 2010). The overall objective of this paper therefore, is to examine how climate change leads to herders and farmers' conflict and displacement of people in Nigeria. The specific objectives examined climate change and induced herder movement, conflicts with crops farmers and displacement of people, and effect on national development.

Literature Review

Climate Change: The unprecedented deteriorating environmental conditions, desertification and soil degradation have pushed herdsmen from Northern Nigeria to change their transhumance routes. Access to pasture land and watering points in the Middle Belt became essential for herdsmen travelling from the North to struggle for limited resources which consistently generate violent conflict (Ignatius, Nwankwo & Famous, 2020). The figure 1 below shows movement of herders across countries in West Africa but made worst by desertification and drought resulting in resource scarcity. Arisen from the environmental scarcity, conflict inadvertently dominates where scarcity of resources are predominantly present (Bond, 2014; Bottom, 2016; Krätli and Toulmin, 2020).

Source: Luis Tato/AFP   Published On 19 Apr 2025

Government's Responses

According to Onyedika (2025) the implementation of the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) and anti-open grazing laws introduced by the government as solutions has met with brick walls. This is because not all states embraced the policies with equal keenness as some states in the northern region, had doubts and actively opposed the measures. Their reservation to the idea can be adduced to poor information and intelligence-sharing (Onyedika (2025).   In spite of the fact that the human toll of these attacks is overwhelming, the Nigerian government has been unwilling to address the causes of the conflict. The accessibility to arms by both herders and farmers has fiercely led to vicious cycles of bloody dispute among them (Blench, 2010). Since 2012, there have been government's intentions to create transhumance corridors through the Middle Belt, which was supported mostly by Northern lawmakers but opposed by their Southern counterparts (The Punch 2012). In 2019, former President Muhammadu Buhari tried to create Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements. His proposal was criticized ferociously by some northern governors. On the contrary, the 17 Southern governors in Nigeria, on 17 May 2021, issued the Asaba Declaration, by calling for national dialogue, a ban on open grazing and the movement of cattle by foot within and into southern region to curb herder–farmer conflicts in Nigeria (Idowu, 2021)

Climate Change Induced Conflict

Nigeria is vulnerable to a wide range of climate hazards and is highly exposed to herders invasion. Nigeria exemplifies an African country faced with increasing climate risk and intensifying competition over natural resources (Uchenna, Oluwabunmi, & Jiyoung, 2025). The struggle between herders and farmers in Nigeria over farmland and pasture is a serious and escalating conflict registering huge casualties and raising tensions particularly in the country's Middle Belt. More worrisome are the vulnerable groups such as old men and women, children and youths internally displaced (United Nation Trust Fund for Human Security 2022). The conflicts have been especially prominent in the Middle Belt (North Central) since the return of democracy in 1999. More recently, despite the conflict fundamentally being a land-use conflict between farmers and herders across the Nigeria's Middle Belt, it has taken on government's failure to take firm decision, dangerous religious and ethnic dimensions (International Crisis Group 2020)

Displacement

Siegfried (2024) examined the connection or meeting point between climate change, conflict and forced displacement. Meanwhile, extreme weather events such as floods and drought are compounding the threats faced by people already displaced by conflict and violence. Over the past decade conflict between communities has claimed countless lives in the Middle Belt region and displaced an estimated half a million people in Benue State alone. It is also disrupting traditional livelihoods and intensifying competition for dwindling supplies of water and productive land (Jaiyesimi, 2025). Over 2.2 million Nigerians in middle belt states have been rendered homeless in the space of seven years on violent farmers and herders' clashes. These violent clashes have caused farmers and herders heavy losses on farmers' productivity, food production and the overall increased in food prices (Jaiyesimi, 2025). On the part of the displaced people Achem and Aderinto (2023) highlighted that food insecurity, inadequate healthcare, poor living conditions, high number of out-of-school children, emotional difficulties, lack of employment opportunities, water and sanitation problems are the challenges faced by the displaced people. Therefore, the presence of the above conditions in any society makes national development difficult to achieve.

National Development

Development policies are required to meet the needs and yearnings of the people without mounting protest to get them. Therefore, national development can be seen as the ability of a county to improve the living standard of its citizens such as the provision of quality education, potable water supply, safe and efficient transportation, adequate road infrastructure, reduction of inequality, medical care, employment, availability of food and the safety of lives and property (Aisedion & Omoregie, 2021b). Unfortunately, most children are out of schools roaming the streets, unemployment biting hard on Nigerian graduates, inability to access health services, hunger ravaging everywhere, diseases spreading like never before among others inciting migration and conflict in Nigeria (Aisedion & Omoregie, 2021b). According to Imobighe (1998), development must be relevant to the basic needs of the people, which make the life of the individual better, freer and more fulfilling. But a development that promotes elitist divisiveness, economic disparities and lack of political will to put an end to herders and farmers conflict cannot promote national development.

Theoretical Framework

The Environmental Scarcity Theory and Frustration-Aggression Theory are used to analyze the link between climate change, conflict, and displacement in this study. The primary advocate of the Environmental Scarcity Theory is Thomas Homer-Dixon (1994). The environmental scarcity theory posits that climate change exacerbates resource scarcity (like water, land, and arable land), leading to competition, elsewhere for resources which generate conflict, and displacement. Climate change impacts like droughts, floods, and sea-level rise or reduction affect the availability of crucial natural resources, leading to dwindling resources scarcity and thereby triggering conflict, between herders and farmers in Nigeria. He revealed that there is a connection between environment, migration, scarcity, conflict and displacement of people. He explores how resource scarcity in connection with other factors like migration and unequal access to resources contribute to conflict and instability leading to displacement of people (Madu & Nwankwo; 2021; Olumba, 2024; Olumba, Nwosu, Okpaleke & Okoli, 2022).

Furtherance of the above analysis, John Dollard and his associate developed frustration-aggression theory in 1939 and expanded by Berkowitz (1962) and Yates (1962), who gave an explanation for violent behaviour stemming from inability to fulfill desired needs. For instance, climate change with its effects of protracted drought and desertification reduces the availability of grazing land and water. Consequently creates frustration among herders and farmers due to competition and resource scarcity. Herders require large areas of land and water for their herds and farmers essentially need water and pasture for farming and resource scarcity often exacerbate frustration and aggression leading to conflict between them. From the turn of events, frustration is both experienced by both herders and farmers, but more on the side of farmers as cattle are often deployed by herders to graze their crops. At the sometime, aggressive behavior is often unleashed on farmers by herders as suggested by AK47 riffles they carry about to mayhem leading to displacement of farmers. In this regard, the dimension and intensification of pastoralists and farmers, conflicts in Nigeria have posed unbearable threat to national development, given the fact that thousands of farmers have been killed; communities rendered desolate, property destroyed, among others as a result of herders' aggression. For example, aggression ventilated by herders on farmers in Benue and Plateau states has taken the lives of 56 people (Algazeera, 2025).

In the light of the foregoing, the disproportionate accumulations of frustration occasioned by climate change have resulted in herders' aggression leading to wanton

destruction of lives and property. Conflict of this nature has taken the lives of 542 civilians across the country since 2019, while no less than 2 million have been displaced by it (Olayide, 2025). For instance, Daily Post (2022) reported that herdsmen had killed twenty-three (23) people with several others sustaining gunshot injuries during separate attacks in some villages in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State. The same report noted the attack of nine (9) villages in the same LGA where fifty (50) people, mostly farmers were killed, many were displaced and property worth millions of Naira lost. This is the height of frustration and aggression as most people were killed, property destroyed and many displaced in separate attacks. These attacks were driven by unhealthy competition for resources for grazing and crops farming.

Gap in Existing Knowledge

The farmer-herder crisis in Nigeria has recently being in the front burner, and enough researches and literature are comprehensively developed in this area. Most of the research work ever conducted took investigative perspectives, leaving only a few to establish a correlation between the different variables in the body of knowledge. Some studies have spoken about addressing the underlying grievances while also promoting innovative solutions such as sustainable cattle-rearing practices and collaborative land-use policies. According to Ruqayyah and Baderinwa (2019) empirical studies carried out by various authorities across Nigeria point to the fact that the destruction of crops is the major igniter of the conflict among the farmers and herders. However, others for example drew divergent positions; for example, Ojeifo (2020) explained the climate change dimension as the cause of herdsmen and farmers' conflicts in Nigeria, while canvassing strict border surveillance by security agencies. Aisedion and Omoregie (2024) analyzed the connection between environmental security and sustainable development, by recommending the promotion of healthy environment for future generations. Finally, Aisedion, Oboh, and Agazuma (2024) explored climate change and migration in Sahel region as the cause of food insecurity in Nigeria, by advancing alternative adaptation measures by migrants. Nevertheless, none of these authorities pursued the frontal of knowledge to advance the linkage between climate change; herders and farmers' conflict and displacement and examine how their impact national development in Nigeria. It is this area the paper contributes to the body of knowledge.

Material and Methods

This study employed secondary of data collection sourced from various outlets, such as research agencies, policy papers, newspapers, books, Internet. This forms the data historically analyzed in the paper.

Data Analysis

The Implication of Climate Change, Conflict and Displacement for National Development: According to Abah (2025) 23 persons were reportedly killed in several attacks in Guma, Logo, Ukum and Kwande LGAs in Benue state. The attacks of almost daily occurrences have forced many to flee their communities. As of May 10, 2025, the killing of 23 people in fresh attacks across the four LGAs brought the total number of people killed recently in the state by armed attackers to 159, within 40 days. In the words of Onyedika (2025), saying the escalating crisis of pastoral violence in Nigeria, have led for over 2.2 million Nigerians forcibly displaced in the last six years due to conflict. Out of this number, more than 300,000 people have been forced into improvised camps in Benue State alone. Such massive internal displacement resulted in a severe humanitarian and economic downturn. The situation has spiraled out of control as frustration and aggression combined to fuel violence, food shortages, and widespread insecurity.

One of the most alarming consequences of the ongoing violence is its impact on Nigeria's agricultural sector, and hence food security. The persistent conflict has drastically reduced agricultural output, leading to inflation in food prices and worsening Nigeria's economic struggles.

The figure 2 of an armed herder with AKA 47 riffle shows the readiness to unleash violence with the slightest provocation. This is not an isolated case of what is happening in Nigeria. It is a threat to national development. This is what Nigerians are experiencing on a daily basis as a clear explanation of what the conflict is about.

Source: Olayide, S, (2025   March   30). 542 killed, 2 million displaced in farmer-herder conflicts – Report. The Guardian

Onyedika (2025) observed that Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba, and parts of Kaduna, has borne the brunt of violent conflict in Nigeria.   According to him,   the conflict have graduated from cattle rustling and kidnapping to killing residents, destroying homes, and setting farmland ablaze. The humanitarian impact of this crisis has been catastrophic as displaced persons in Benue, Nasarawa, and Taraba are   living in squalid conditions in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, where food, water, and medical supplies are scarce. The overwhelmed camps are struggling to provide even basic necessities, leading to malnutrition, disease outbreaks, and severe psychological trauma among the displaced population. It is estimated that over   10,000 people have been killed over the past decade (Kwaja; Ademola & Adelehin, 2018; Ilo, 2019). To underscore the lethality of the herders, it is reported that the death toll resulting from conflicts between herders and farmers in 2016 alone was about 2,500 persons and that between 2011 and 2015 fatalities averaged have risen to 2,000 deaths (International Crisis Group, 2017). The data from the Nigeria Security Tracker document cited by Akpensuen and Foreman (ND) shows most fatalities from herders-farmers conflicts in 2017 and 2018 were 1,041 and 2,037 deaths, respectively.

Since human beings are agent of development, the death of a person is a colossal loss to national development as manpower or labour force of the country is depleted. This is because the importance of human resources in the management of material resources is indispensable since machines cannot be operated without human manipulations. Baran (1978) opined that actual economic surplus and potential economic surplus are indices of development. This implies that violent conflict affect the actual and potential economic surplus of a country. This is

because violent conflict affects the generating capacity of the people as the ultimate basis of wealth of a nation revolves around the abundance of its sound and useful human resources.

Displacement has diverse implications for society and individuals affected. It is more serious particularly with regards to the threats posed to the forcibly displaced facing insecurity and denial of other basic conditions of existence. This is more worrisome due to the loss of convenience and rights to shelter, lands and jobs as a result of being forced from their homes. Displacement also affects girls, women and men in different ways in terms of protection and their rights (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 1998) Displacement affects people's safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; housing, land and property; access to documentation in civic activities; family unification; participation in public affairs; and access to justice with collective impact on development at local and national levels (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2010). The flight of capital and human resources including lands, support networks, businesses, among others emanating from displacement destabilizes development. It is a difficult task to quantify changes in population distribution due to internal displacement. This of course, poses a challenge for development planning that is based on population and demography. Finally, internal displacement may accelerate other processes of social change such as urbanization, shift in gender values, inter-ethnic mixing among others that can shape long term development (Harild,2016).The ongoing pastoral conflict in Nigeria has had devastating consequences, affecting lives, the economy, security, and social cohesion. The crisis is threatening Nigeria's unity, food security, and democratic foundation. The findings of this paper point that climate change induced conflict particularly herders and farmers crisis, displacement of people and scarcity of crops-land leading to inability to engage in agricultural activities to advance economic development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Farmer-herder conflict is one of the Nigeria's gravest challenges in recent years. At the core of the conflict is an unhealthy claim over land and water resources and other related issues such as: obstruction of traditional migration routes and crop damage (Adeniyi, 2025). The foundation of this conflict lies in environmental pressures in Nigeria's northern regions, where progressive desertification and shrinking grazing reserves caused by climate change have forced pastoralists to move their cattle southward into the fertile Middle Belt. This migration brought them into inevitable conflict with farming communities, especially in states like Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa (Addeh, 2025). Therefore, mitigating the impacts of climate change must be of utmost importance, requiring collective commitment to address its dreadful implications. Greenhouse gas emissions that result from the extraction and burning of fossil fuels are major contributors to both climate change and air pollution. Coordination and consistency in policy approaches have been missing in combating conflict in the Middle Belt region. Many states and the federal government are yet to agree on the right approach to issues like open grazing and ranching.

The ongoing conflict has led to reduced agricultural production, supply chain disruption, food inflation and a higher risk of food insecurity across the country. Despite government efforts, gaps in policing and law enforcement have contributed to the nerve of the attackers. Government interventions, like the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) and anti-open grazing laws in several states, appear not to be sustainable solution. The displacement of people has kept food insecurity worsened, with the geographical spread of attacks now reaching southern states, like Edo and Ondo for demonstrating the conflict's relentless expansion. Unless decisive action is taken, more communities will be lost, and millions more will be forced to flee

their homes turning Nigeria into a land of refugees within its own borders. Addressing this crisis requires coordinated, multi-faceted approaches such as:

i.   The National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) must be fully enforced, ensuring the transition to ranching-based livestock farming for effective implementation of anti-open grazing laws.

ii.   The establishment of clear guidelines for grazing reserves and farmland protection by Land use reforms.

iii.   The security sectors should be overhauled to control arms proliferation

iv.   Herders should adopt other climate adaptation programmes for alternative livelihoods to reduce resource competition

v.   Genuine political will must be garnered by the government to address root causes of crisis including ethnic divisions and governance failures.

vi.   Military patrols should be intensified and the disarmament of armed herders and criminal groups must be prioritized,

vii.   Adequate resources such as food, shelter, healthcare, and security should be allocated to displaced persons.

viii. Intelligence gathering and border security should be improved to prevent the influx of illegal weapons exacerbating violence.

ix.   There should be sincere peace resolution community engagement between farmers and pastoralist groups to foster peaceful coexistence.

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Article   **Open Access**

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AS A SOLUTION FOR CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGES: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF JAMES FISHKIN'S APPROACH

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Abstract

Man is a political being who resides within the boundaries of a sovereign state. Individuals consistently seek a governing framework that is more convenient and aligns better with their lifestyle. Consequently, numerous states and governments have embraced and implemented a variety of political ideologies and systems, including monarchy, socialism, communism, democracy and others. Democracy stands out as one of the most preferred and practised forms of government due to its foundation on being a government that represents the people. Nevertheless, democracy is not devoid of shortcomings and constraints like absence of inclusiveness and lack of informed deliberation. Therefore to solve these problems, there is the need to embrace James Fishkin's theory of deliberative democracy. James Fishkin defines deliberative democracy as "efforts, in both theory and practice, to reconcile the value of deliberation with other core democratic principles, such as political equality and the avoidance of the tyranny of the majority". The aim of this essay is to conduct a critical evaluation of James Fishkin's concept of deliberative democracy as a solution for contemporary democracy by harmonizing the significance of deliberation with essential democratic principles. The analytical method of research was be implored. This paper asserts that increased deliberation and inclusiveness has the potential to enhance the quality of our democracy by emphasizing its primary features and elements, thereby advocating for it as the most optimal form of democratic practice.

Keywords: Deliberation, Democracy, Government, Inclusiveness, State, System, Thoughtfulness.

Introduction

Man, existing within society, must coordinate and manage his interactions with others. In order to coexist peacefully, individuals establish a system of governance to regulate all aspects of life, resulting in a social contract between ruler and subjects. This contractual arrangement leads to the formation of a governmental structure that governs the populace within a state. Aristotle asserts that humans are inherently political beings, inherently involved in matters of governance (Aristotle. Trans by H. Rackham, 1944). This inclination prompts individuals to come together to create a cooperative society in pursuit of mutual benefits. Furthermore, the necessity for a leader to oversee communal issues arose to solidify this collective existence. Government

functions as an institution responsible for managing the affairs of the society. Democracy is one of the various government systems that have been adopted by mankind and has gained popularity among states. It has evolved from its crude form of direct democracy to representative democracy and liberal democracy, as exemplified by the some Scandinarian and European countries. However, there appears to be a disconnection between the government and the governed in all these forms of democracy. This gap arises from the failure to engage in consultations with the governed through deliberations to ascertain their needs at any given moment. In African political context, particularly in Nigeria, a significant portion of the population is disengaged from government affairs, partly due to this factor. There is a noticeable disconnect between the people and the government within a democratic system, resulting from insufficient deliberations prior to decisions being made by elected officials and the citizenry who empowered them through their votes. Political philosophy asserts that internal sovereignty is vested in the hands and will of the citizens, resulting in the government having an obligation towards its citizenry (Azelama, 2016, 145). In Nigeria, representative democracy has yet to adequately address grassroots deliberations with citizens regarding state issues before they are discussed in the legislative body. Consequently, when a communication gap exists between the government and its citizens due to insufficient deliberation, the efficacy of the state is compromised. It is against this backdrop that our research is framed to underscore the importance of deliberative democracy. This paper aims to advocate for engaging with the electorate who initially empowered the government in a democratically elected system, and who hold the true sovereignty.

The Concept "Democracy"

The term "democracy" has been in use in the tradition of western political thought since ancient times. It is derived from the Greek root 'demos' which means 'the people'; 'kratia' stands for 'the rule' or 'government'. Thus, literally, democracy signifies "the rule of the people". Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy is very close to its literal meaning. It reads: "democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people". In short, democracy as a form of government implies that the ultimate authority of government is vested in the common people so that public policy is made to conform to the will of the people and to serve the interests of the people (Gauba, 2007, 421).

Furthermore, from the etymological stand point, democracy means the rule of the people. It denotes the system of government in which people preside or determine the way of their governance as opposed to any form of arbitrary rule. According to Pericles:

> "Our constitution is called democracy because power is in the hands not of minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes everyone is equal before the law, when it is a question of putting one person before another in position of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class but the actual ability which a man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity, we are free and tolerant in our private lives but in public affairs we keep to the law, this is because it commands our deep respect" (Thucydides translated by Rex Warner, 1963, 3-4).

Edward Craig asserts that democracy means rule by the people. It is a form of decision making or government whose meaning is quite precise by contrast with rival forms such as dictatorship, oligarchy or monarchy. In these rival forms a single person or a select group rules. With democracy this is not so. The people themselves rule and they rule themselves. The same body

is both ruler and ruled (Craig, 1998, 867). The classical concept of democracy was articulated by some of the modern thinkers, particularly of England, such as James Bryce and A.V Dicey. We shall therefore discuss their view in a summary.

According to Dicey, it would be unwise in a democracy to enforce laws not approved by the people. He attempted to demonstrate elaborately the relation of legislation to the prevailing public opinion. However, he also pointed out that particular laws are the product of a particular historical setting. Since public opinions under democracy are not a uniform phenomenon, it has not produced uniform laws (Gauba, 2007, 422). James Bryce is one of the greatest champions of democracy and its most sympathetic critic. In his two monumental works, the American Commonwealth (1893) and Modern Democracies (1921) he chiefly treated democracy as a form of government. He defined democracy as 'the rule of the people expressing their sovereign will through the votes'. Ultimately he reduced it to 'the rule of the majority'. Bryce has enumerated six outstanding evils of the existing form of democracy.

i.   the power of money interests to pervert administration or legislation;
ii.   the tendency to allow politics to become a trade, entered for gain and not for service;
iii. extravagance;
iv.   the failure to evaluate properly the skilled man, and to abuse the doctrine of equality;
v.   party politics, and
vi.   the tendency of politicians to pay for votes.

Bryce asserts that the major problems of democracy include self-interest and irresponsibility of power. Democracy has two powerful weapons to fight these evils; law and opinion.

The term "democracy" is used to describe a system of government in which the powers of government are divided amongst different institutions such that some institutions are responsible for making laws, while others are responsible for executing the laws and yet a third institution may be responsible for mediating or adjudicating in disputes between different individual or groups who violate the laws of the land.

Base on the above, for democracy to actualize it set goals, there are some conditionalities that it must be respected or kept namely;

i.   **Free Discussion:** For a democratic system to be sustainable in a society, people living within the confines of such a society are free to speak without constraint. The citizens must be free to discuss issues that concern their government without punishment; not the kind of democracy practice in some societies like Nigeria, where people get punished for discussing the bad deals of the government in power.   In pseudo-democratic societies of that kind, one must adequately take to consideration where to discuss, when to discuss, how to discuss and who to discuss with as not to interfere with other people's freedoms.

ii.   **Freedom of Association:** This is a critical element for a successful democratic system. For a democracy to work, citizens must possess the liberty to associate and disassociate, to be friendly and unfriendly, to form alliance and not to form alliance at anytime that is suitable for him without being punished by anybody or by law.

iii. **Periodic Elections:** For democracy to be successful, workable, sustainable for the interest of the citizens, elections to leadership position at all levels must be periodically conducted, so that citizens might have the opportunity to vote in and vote out their political leaders.

The Concept of Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy is a school of thought in political philosophy that claims that political decisions should be the product of fair and reasonable discussion and debate among citizens. In deliberation, citizens exchange arguments and consider different claims that are designed to

secure the public good. Through this conversation, citizens can come to an agreement about what procedure, action, or policy will best produce the public good. Deliberation is the necessary precondition for the legitimacy of democratic political decision. Rather than thinking of political decisions as the aggregate of citizens' preferences, deliberative democracy claims that citizens should arrive at political decisions through reason and the collection of competing arguments and viewpoints. The concept of deliberative democracy was early on influenced by two philosophers namely; John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas. Rawls advocated the use of reason in securing the framework for a just political society. For Rawls, reasons curtails self - interest to justify the structure of a political society that is fair for all participants in that society and secures equal rights for all members of that society.

Democracy encompasses different models which have been in practice in the modern-day, there is always a representation, but these representations are not enough or all embracing. This would be inferred from Alfred Smith's statement when he says, "the only cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy" (Iain, 2009, 112).   The fundamental question here will be: What then could be more democratic? We have noted already that representation did not solve this issue. This difficulty has led many defenders of democracy to search for new solutions to the question posed, and this is where the idea of deliberative democracy arose. Deliberative democracy solves the issue of democracy by placing a huge emphasis on deliberation. "Deliberation in this context refers to a process, or more often processes, of rational argumentation… democracy will only be sustained by people participating in debate and discussion, intending to reach a reasonable consensus on the contested political issues (Iain, 2009, 114). Deliberative democracy ensures that people make decisions after they have considered the opinions of other delegates that are involved in the process of deliberation. John Bohman beautifully elucidates the definition of deliberative democracy when he describes it as "any of a family of views according to which the public deliberation of free and equal citizens is the core of legitimate political decision-making and self - government" (Bohman, 2006, 177).

Life and Times of James Fishkin

James Fishkin, born in 1948, is an esteemed American political scientist and communications scholar. He currently holds the Janet M. Peck Chair in International Communication in the Department of Communication at Stanford University, where he serves as a Professor of Communication and, courtesy, Political Science. Additionally, Fishkin acts as the Director of Stanford's Deliberative Democracy lab (Fishkin, 2025). Widely recognized for his research on deliberative democracy, Fishkin's introduction of deliberative polling in 1988 has been particularly influential. His academic achievements include a Bachelor's degree from Yale University and Ph.D and in Political Science from Yale and Philosophy from Cambridge University. Fishkin's work primarily focuses on deliberative and participatory democracy, and he, along with Robert Luskin, has developed the concept of deliberative polling, which entails surveying a representative sample of citizens after engaging in deliberative discussions. The deliberative poll method has been utilized in more than one hundred (100) polls in twenty-eight (28) countries, aiding governments and policymakers in making crucial decisions in various nations such as the USA, China, Mongolia, Japan, Macau, South Korea, Bulgaria, Brazil, and Uganda, among others. Over his career, Fishkin has been the recipient of several prestigious fellowships, including a Guggenheim fellowship and a fellowship at the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. Additionally, he has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Fishkin has authored multiple books, notably "Democracy and Deliberation: New Directions for Democratic Reform" (1991), "When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy

and Public Consultation" (2009), as well as "Democratic Aspirations: Participation, Deliberation, and Power; and many others. His work has been widely recognized, and he continues to be a prominent voice in the field of deliberative democracy.

James Fishkin's Concept of Deliberative Democracy

James Fishkin defines deliberative democracy as "efforts, in both theory and practice, to reconcile the value of deliberation with other core democratic principles, such as political equality and the avoidance of tyranny of the majority" (Fishkin, 2002, 221). We realize that democracy has some shortcomings due to political inequality and the tyranny of the majority in contemporary models of democracy. Deliberative democracy aims at deliberation by the citizens to bring about political equality. For Fishkin, the concern is whether deliberation is achievable despite the conflicting values of citizens. Deliberation is aimed at reconciling these differences (Gregory, 2023, 688). For Fishkin, "Modern debate about deliberative democracy can be thought of as an exploration into the compatibility of three principles; deliberation, political equality, and non-tyranny" (Fishkin, 2009, 221). Deliberative democracy in Fishkin's idea entails deliberation by a representative microcosm of the citizenry. The opinion of the citizens can be achieved from a well-informed organized deliberation. Hence, political equality is attained as the voice of the masses is considered. Tyranny of the majority citizens representing various interests is a tendency inherent in deliberation (Gregory, 2023, 688). There is an important aspect in James Fishkin concept of deliberative democracy, which he refers to as deliberative opinion poll. This is a concept proposed by Fishkin, involves gathering a representative random sample of people to deliberate on a specific issue. Participants are provided with briefing materials, carefully designed to represent all viewpoints in a balanced matter.

Primarily, a deliberative democratic theory seeks to propound principles that can establish fair terms of political cooperation in a democratic society (Fishkin, 2002, 221). This is what Fishkin's deliberative democracy seeks to achieve by bringing together the deliberative microcosm to deliberate on issues and policies that concern them in their society. The fundamental basis of Fishkin's deliberative democracy is how democracy can be more inclusive, and thoughtful (Fishkin, 2009, 95). It is inclusive in the sense that, it seeks to bring in the various microcosms of the society to deliberate on policies. Inclusiveness in the deliberative process entails that there is no form of domination by organized interests who hijack the process (Fishkin, 2009, 99). Deliberative democracy is thoughtful because it seeks to give careful and due consideration to issues and policies to be discussed from the various perspectives of a well-informed deliberation. Some required conditions to aid thoughtfulness that improve the quality of deliberation include: information, conscientious participation, substantive balance, diversity of viewpoints represented, and the merits of ideas presented (Fishkin, 2009, 99). Deliberative democracy in Fishkin's thought is supposed to produce a positive effect. Therefore, to achieve inclusiveness, thoughtfulness, and effective deliberation, a necessary factor that ought to be considered and present are the right, and proper conditions for deliberation to occur. There must be some form of mutual justification during deliberation, "mutual justification means not merely offering reasons to other people, or even offering reasons that they happen to accept (for example, because they are in a weak bargaining position). It means providing reasons that constitute a justification for imposing binding laws to them (Gutmann and Thompson, 2002, 156), Fishkin notes that these conditions must take into cognizance the fundamental principles that they share, issues bothering communication and language, an avenue for mutual trust and respect which must be created, and none the least, a conducive and serene environment to

ensure that deliberation goes on smoothly. These factors must be duly considered when proposing a deliberative democracy in different conditions (Gregory, 2023, 690).

The Effectiveness of Deliberative Democracy: A Practical Perspective
Deliberative democracy is considered effective and practicable due to the availability of deliberative polling which ensures a judgment – free environment, and it creates the opportunity for people to listen and learn about competing viewpoints. This is also used in various countries to inform policy decisions. Secondly, citizen juries, which is employed to address complex issues, such as healthcare and education. Thirdly, participatory budgeting which is implemented in cities worldwide to involve citizens in budget decision. Fourthly, deliberative democracy enhances civic engagement and education. Furthermore, deliberative democracy also have some effective outcomes on contemporary democracy as follows; improved decision making, deliberative democracy leads informed decisions, it encourages active participation and civic involvement. And also it fosters legitimacy and trust in institutions, it ensures representative participation and reduces inequality. Deliberative democracy practical applications and consequential outcomes demonstrate its potential to revitalize democratic systems, promote citizen engagement and improve decision- making processes. Deliberative democracy makes democracy practicable through public consultation and dispute resolution. According to James Fishkin, deliberative democracy is s form of alternative dispute resolution. Consulting the public in a thoughtful and representative way can lead to consequential public policy outcomes that might otherwise have been difficult to achieve (Peck, 2010, 611).

The Relevance of James Fishkin's Deliberative Democracy as Solution to Contemporary Democracy
It is pertinent to evaluate the relevance of Fishkin's deliberative democracy to Nigeria. Although it is not surprising that the system of government practised in Nigeria cannot be termed a democracy in the real sense. According to Godfrey Onah, modern democracy is an illusion; what we practise in Nigeria as democracy is contrary to Lincoln's definition of democracy as a government of the people, by the parties, for the powerful; or a exploitation of the people, by the powerful, through the parties (Onah, 2004, 281). These implicitly show the failures of democracy in Nigeria, whereby those in office politically and economically exploit the citizenry for their selfish gains. There is no form of deliberation in the real sense with the citizens to determine which policy needs to be adopted. Thus, it becomes pertinent to adopt Fishkin's theory of deliberative democracy. James Fishkin's deliberative democracy is realistic, accordingly, Nicole Curato states that "skeptics have questioned the practical viability of deliberative democracy. Its ideal have been criticized as utopian, and its forums have been dismissed as mere experiments, with no hope of being institutionalized effectively (Curato, 2017, 29). Contrary to this claim, Fishkin's deliberative democracy has proven to be both a theory and practice which has been implemented in various countries on a national level e.g. the United Kingdom, Australia and Denmark, and in difficult conditions like China's that is not open to democratic practices (Gregory,   2023, 692).

Fishkin's deliberative democracy is all-inclusive; it seeks to include all persons irrespective of gender, race, colour, social and economic stratification, and the powerful. Thus, more than ever, there is need to adopt Fishkin's idea of deliberative democracy to imbibe its principles where a microcosm represents the citizens to make well-informed decisions for the country. Deliberative democracy gives voice to the people. Chris Osegenwune notes therefore that democracy in African is faced with weak structure, institutions, and high cost of organization. This has created a system whereby the political class is favoured. Thus, the

underprivileged are unable to participate in the political process of the country (Osegenwune, 2017, 60). Like the democratic practice in Nigeria where a few influential minorities dominate the political scene to the detriment of the citizens, deliberative democracy creates an avenue that gives political sovereignty to the citizens. Hence, instead of decisions and policies being adopted by these few individuals, deliberative democracy allows a public consultation and deliberation for a wider and more informed microcosm to take these decisions. Thus, it becomes expedient to adopt Fishkin's deliberative democracy.

Deliberative democracy is instrumental in achieving sustainable development in a country. Underdevelopment has made Africa in general, and Nigeria, in particular, to be unfavourable and difficult. Thus, most African countries are referred to as third- world countries. Gregory Ogbenika hinged the reason for this underpins to the problem of leadership (Ogbenika, 2020, 101). Nigeria's present system of governance has been filled with corruption and self-interests. Hence, the crisis is that the intended development plan of the government is quite different from that of the people. The argument is that long term development will be more sustainable in an open and secure society (Fishkin, 2017, 141). It is important to know that before any country's developmental plan is proposed and implemented, there is a need for public consultation, which will usher in a diversity of ideas on which way the country can be better developed, and how they can be implemented. Elitism is been criticized by deliberative democracy because it does not give space for inclusiveness whereas Fishkin's theory of deliberative democracy seeks inclusiveness for all citizenry who have already been politically alienated and leaves no avenue for political alienation. Thus, there is more political participation. One importance of Fishkin's deliberative democracy is that it combines political participation and deliberation. According to Carole Pateman, "Deliberative democrats have shown little interest in the last thirty years of participatory promotion, but focus on Mimi-publics or new deliberative bodies (Pateman, 2012, 8). Fishkin was able to tackle this long issue by making deliberative democracy more inclusive.

Fishkin's deliberative democracy is centered on public deliberation; this public deliberation has an educative power. Hence, "the benefits of participation in public affairs are primarily personal. Participation improves the moral, practical or intellectual qualities of those who participate" (Cooke, 2000, 948.). This makes them not just better citizens, but also better individuals.

Conclusion

This research work has postulated a suitable and practicable model of democracy that will strengthen democracy as a system of government as practiced. We have observed that democracy is more acceptable to people due to the freedom, rights, and protection they enjoy from the leaders in positions of authority. Over the years various systems of democracy have sprung up, but they are not free from various shortcomings. Even the most acclaimed and popular systems now being practiced, (liberal and representative democracies) also face their challenges (Gregory, 2023, 695). Thus, the research recommend that James Fishkin's model of democracy which is deliberative democracy be adopted and practiced as the tenable model of democracy in which deliberative microcosms deliberate on issues and policies in a thoughtful manner and inclusiveness. Inclusiveness in Fishkin's idea is aimed toward reducing the cries of marginalization of various minorities, groups, and facets of society. Thoughtfulness further reduces the incompetence of current models of democracy that are not well informed on policies, since most decisions are taken based on how it will be favourable to them and not the citizenry whom they represent. This can occur where there is mutual trust and justification.

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Article   **Open Access**

ARISTOTLE'S GOLDEN MEAN: ANCIENT WISDOM FOR CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Abstract

This work was intended to answer a simple question, "Is the Aristotelian golden mean still relevant today?" The question is based on the fact that today's society seems totally different from what was obtained when this classical theory was propounded over 5000 years ago. Again, interest in the question was derived from a desire to join forces with other pro-Aristotle scholars to conduct further tests on his notion of the golden mean. With that purpose in mind, the study examines Aristotle's golden mean in the light of contemporary ethical issues. It has been found capable of providing ethical guidance in several aspects of modern-day life. These include (but not limited to) such areas as artificial intelligence, environmental ethics, work-place ethics, politics, warfare, and psychotherapy. The paper concludes that the golden mean is still relevant, even in today's societal sophistication and complexities.

Keywords: Aristotle, Golden Mean, Applicability, Virtue Ethics, Applied Ethics.

Introduction

Just like its precursor, the 21st century has witnessed tremendous growth and development in diverse aspects of man's endeavours. Clearly, the contemporary era is in several ways different from the times of yore when Aristotle proposed his doctrine of the mean, which provided guidance on how to live a life of virtue and achieve *eudaimonia* (happiness, flourishing, and general wellbeing). The question making the rounds in scholarly circles these days is, "Are antique theories of morality still relevant today?" This question has led to several and various proposals of so-called modern-day theories of ethics; most of which have in turn been found wanting for sheer lack of depth   and convincing guidance. Thus, a return to the theories of old has become inevitable. Scholars are going back to the roots to see whether ancient wisdom can still be relevant today. That is the motivation for this paper. It is founded on the thesis that Aristotelian virtue ethics still holds enough to provide mankind with a guide to virtuous life.

The first section of this paper contains the introduction. In the second section, attention has been focused on clarifying the concept of virtue ethics. Section three forms a background to the discussion by providing a brief biography of Aristotle, as well as factors which possibly influenced his thought. The fourth part deals with an exposition of the doctrine of the golden. This section is closely followed by the various criticisms levelled against the golden mean as well as the defences of the doctrine from renowned scholars. Finally, the applicability of the golden mean in contemporary times is presented; and a conclusion drawn at the end.

The Concept of Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics is considered as one of the three major aspects of normative ethics. It emphasizes the importance of character in the evaluation or judgment of human conduct (morality). Generally, the primary aim of virtue ethics is the cultivation of a balanced moral life which would guarantee happiness and personal wellbeing. Questions like: *What is the good life?*, *What are virtues?*, *How can we become virtuous?* and *How should we act?*, are central to virtue ethics. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* notes that virtue ethics underscores the moral character of the moral agent whose action is under scrutiny; this attitude is quite unlike the one in deontological ethics (which stresses duties, rules, or responsibilities) and that of consequentialism (which focuses on results, effects, or the amount of pleasure derived therefrom) (Hursthouse and Pettigrove n.p.). The underlying argument of virtue ethics is that a virtuous person will effortlessly take moral decisions and exhibit proper behaviour because he possesses good character traits, or virtues (Hursthouse and Pettigrove n.p.). Similarly, a virtuous society is the one where citizens exhibit virtuous behaviour, uphold justice; and work harmoniously towards the common good (Vendemiati 111).

Virtue ethics has a long history that stretches back to the ancient times. In the East, Confucius, via his *Analects,* outlined a system of ethics that was based on five virtues: *Ren* (benevolence), *Vi* (righteousness), *Li* (ritual), *Zhi* (wisdom), and Xin (trustworthiness) (Santiago 24). At about the same time in the West, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle exhibited various thought on virtue ethics with a central emphasis on "overall character development, what one could think of as a global approach to morality" (Santiago 24). Like Confucius, the ancient Greeks listed virtues as: benevolence, compassion, courage, diligence, honesty, and justice (*inter alia*). Their polar opposites were considered as vices, respectively: meanness, heartlessness, cowardice, negligence, dishonesty, and injustice (*et cetera*).

In summary, virtue ethics is person-based rather than action-based. It is the perspective of ethics by which the virtue or moral character of the moral agent is in focus; rather than his ethical duties, rules, or the outcomes of specific actions. Thus, Santiago observes, "the *moral worth of persons* takes precedence over the *rightness* of *actions*" (Santiago 25). The point is in *being,* rather than *doing.* Virtue ethics upholds character and virtue, above all else, as the yardsticks for individual and corporate conduct.

Aristotle's Life and Times

Generally, the facts of Aristotle's life are not that well-known. The biographies written in primeval times are often notional and historiographers only agree on a limited salient points (Shields 3–16). The following are gleanings from the few agreeable historical facts about Aristotle's life. It is on record that Aristotle (also known as Aristoteles) was born in 384 B.C. at Stagira, Chalcidice, Greece. The *Suda*, a 10th century encyclopaedia, records that his father was a court physician known as "Nicomachus, son of Machaon, son of Asclepius" (*Suda*, "Nicomachus: The Father of Aristotle", web). At age 17, he went to Athens and enrolled to study at Plato's Academy; where he became a student for the next twenty years.

After Plato's death (*circa* 343 B.C.), Aristotle, at about 37 years old, left the Academy to honour of an invitation by King Philip of Macedo; where he became a teacher to the latter's son, 13 year old Alexander. The boy would later become King Alexander the Great. Aristotle eventually founded his own school at the Lyceum, a temple in Athens dedicated to Apollo Lyceus; where he lectured there and carried out extensive scientific researches. He wrote many books on a wide variety of subjects (logic, physics, metaphysics, ethics, politics, psychology, biology, aesthetics,

and rhetoric). His famous works on ethics are *Nichomachaen Ethics, Eudemian Ethics,* and *Magna Moralia* (Kenny and Amadio, *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*).

Influences on Aristotle's Thought: In spite of its abstract nature, every philosopher is influenced by his society and *vice versa*. The same can be said of Aristotle's virtue ethics. Hence, import of this section is to enhance the understanding of Aristotle's virtue ethics by outlining the key factors that influenced him. Aristotle's virtue ethics emerged during the classical period in Ancient Greece, a time of intellectual and cultural flourishing; a period characterized by a strong focus on public life and civic engagement. Debates on political, social, and cultural issues were common. Also, the pursuit of wisdom was highly valued. Malik notes that the reliance on reason rather than mythology or religion was the new paradigm introduced by the philosophers, especially beginning with Socrates (14). Thus, the intellectual climate of the time was a possible influence on Aristotle.

Another possible influence was Aristotle's father, Nicomachus, a Physician to King Amyntas III of Macedon. It is often inferred that that Nicomachus may have exposed his son to scientific methods of investigation from an early age, sparking his interest in natural philosophy and the empiricist style of investigation. Of course, Aristotle later pursued studies in fields like biology, zoology, and anatomy (Barnes 3 & 9). Further, Greek thinkers, including Aristotle's forerunners, Socrates, and Plato, wanted to understand and define the nature of the good life, frequently questioning traditional values, and beliefs. Socrates promoted a life of moral inquiry and self-scrutiny, stressing his point with the slogan, "the unexamined life is not worth living" (Plato, "Apology," in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, §. 38a). Socrate's pupil and friend, Plato, furthered these ideas, among other things, rehashing the importance of a harmonious soul and an orderly society for a good life (Malik 27–28). In turn, Plato's approach to philosophy influenced Aristotle –though the latter took the opposite direction.

Aristotle built on Plato's concepts. But instead of following the latter's 'other-worldly' approach to issues,   the Aristotle focused his energy on creating a comprehensive ethical system that would be grounded in practical wisdom (*phronesis*), virtue (aretē), and *eudaimonia* ('happiness' or 'human flourishing') (Malik 34–35). His theory was centred on the idea that attaining virtue, or excellence of character, was the path to a good life (Barnes 9; Hutchinson 7–8).   The next section provides details of his interesting thoughts.

The Golden Mean
Aristotle believed ethics to be a practical rather than theoretical study, one aimed at becoming good and doing good rather than knowing good for its own sake. Thus, his approach was markedly different from the moral philosophy of his time, which primarily focused on actions and consequences. Instead, he stressed the importance of character and moral dispositions; arguing that virtues are character traits which can be acquired through practice and habituation. He wrote several treatises on ethics, the most notable being the *Nicomachean Ethics* (from the Greek *Êthika Nicomacheia* (hereinafter referred to as *NE*) (Kraut, "Aristotle's Ethics", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, web). The *NE* comprises of ten sections, referred to as books and is closely linked to Aristotle's other work, *Eudemian Ethics*; it is also is crucial for the understanding of Aristotle's virtue ethics –often called the 'golden mean'.

Eudaimonia: The term eudaimonia is of Greek origin, usually translated as: (i) happiness or (ii) human flourishing, a state of wellbeing. In the *NE*, Aristotle dedicates Book I to explaining eudaimonia and its links to the golden mean. He argues that all human action is geared towards some form of good. Some actions are ends in themselves, others are means to other ends; and

still others merely contribute to a greater good. In the hierarchy of goods, Aristotle identifies that highest or greater good as eudaimonia (Aristotle 1094a22-1094b7). Eudaimonia may be described as a state of   human flourishing, "happiness, contentment, and fulfilment; it's [sic] the name of the best kind of life, which is an end in itself and means to live and fare well" (Athanassoulis, "Virtue Ethics", *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Aristotle does not directly say that eudaimonia is a component of the golden mean, he suggests that the golden mean is a crucial aspect of achieving eudaimonia, particularly in the sense of moral virtue. He holds that by exercising practical wisdom (*phronesis*) in order to find the appropriate mean in our daily actions, we cultivate virtue (good character traits) and thereby contribute to our overall eudaimonia. Hence, the achievement of eudaimonia involves the "activity of the soul in accordance with complete virtue" (Aristotle 1102a5-6).

Identifying Virtue and Vice: Aristotle's doctrine of the golden mean holds that a virtuous act or character trait lies in a "mean" between two extremes, which are vices. This viewpoint is introduced in Book II (and runs all through) the *NE*, "Virtue, then, is a state that decides, consisting in a mean, the mean relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason, that is to say, to the reason by reference to which the prudent person would define it" (Aristotle 1106b36-1107a2). Thus, by the 'mean' Aristotle is not referring to some precise mathematical average. Rather, it is the mid-way between two extremes. Aristotle maintains that virtue is concerned with making the right choices and determining an appropriate balance, or mean, between two vices, which represent an excess or deficiency of a particular character trait. For instance, courage could be the virtue that lies between the vices of cowardice (a deficiency of courage) and recklessness (an excess of courage).

The Mean as Contextual: The mean is specific to each person and each situation. It is contextual, and not the same for everyone, as Aristotle explains,   "the mean is not in the object but [is rather] relative to us" (Aristotle 1109b1-2). In other words, what may be the mean in one person's situation might not be in another person. For instance, let us consider the vice of gluttony. Supposing three people eat the same quantity of rice at the same occasion, one of them could be guilty of gluttony (the excess of eating); a second one may be guilty of self-starvation (the extreme of eating too little); and yet a third may be commended for eating in moderation (for neither eating too little nor too much). Furthermore, even for the same individual, the mean is not a fixed point but depends on the situation. For instance, the same person might be courageous in one situation and cowardly in another.   Indeed, the mean is a slippery slope to glide on! And Aristotle himself does not deny that, he states:

> It is difficult to attain the mean; for instance, not everyone, but only one who knows, finds the midpoint in a circle. So also getting angry, or giving and spending money, is easy and everyone can do it; but doing it to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, with the right aim in view, and in the right way —that is no longer easy, nor can everyone do it. Hence doing these things well is rare, praiseworthy, and fine (Aristotle, *NE* II, 9, 1109a24-29).

Indubitably, the citation above lays bare the contextual nature of this intriguing ethos. This leads us to the question of, "How do we determine the mean in everyday situations?"

The Role of Reason: Aristotle's answer to how we can ascertain the mean is simple, he says we must apply what he calls practical wisdom, *phronesis.* It emphasizes the use of our rationality to ascertain what is the appropriate course of action at any given time:

> […] practical wisdom is concerned with action and deliberation (for it is the mark of a practically wise man to deliberate well), while one's understanding of the truth is not for the sake of action or deliberation, but rather the origin of every action lies in some sort of deliberation—[for] what is to be done and what is to be avoided are not evident except to someone who deliberates well. Hence practical wisdom is the excellence of the deliberating part of the soul (Aristotle, *NE* VI, 7, 1141b-15).

The above statement narrates a kind of relativism by which every situation determines its morality or otherwise. We shall return to this when considering the criticism of the golden mean. For now, we must move to the question of how we can master the art of virtuous living via the mean.

Practice Brings Perfection: Aristotle categorized virtue into two: "that of the intellectual [*êthikê*] and that of character [*êthos*]" (Aristotle, *NE* II, 11103a14-15). Intellectual virtue is acquired mainly by education and takes a lot of experience and time. The virtue of character, he avers, is imbibed as a result of habituation (that is, practice). As we practice the mean, we get to know more (Aristotle, *NE* II, 1103a14-18). None of the two virtues comes to us by nature. Aristotle holds that virtues are best acquired by habituation; that is by consistently making choices and taking actions that flow in tandem with the golden mean. This implies that individuals can develop character, not by simply knowing what is right, but by doing it.

Handling Moral Dilemmas: A moral dilemma occurs when a moral agent is confronted with a difficult choice between two bad courses of action; where each choice will contravene or transgress a moral principle. "Thus,   the individual will violate at least one important moral concern, regardless of the decision" (Kvalnes 11). Even though Aristotle did not specifically set out to discuss moral dilemmas, his elucidation of the golden mean contains an insight into what to do in such situations:

> For the lesser of two evils is in a way a good; so even if both are bad, one is still more choiceworthy. Hence the one will be called simply bad, but the other will be bad relative to the good, since it is less choiceworthy than certain other things; and the one which is bad in this way will be called more choiceworthy than the one which is bad simply (Aristotle, *NE,* 1110a4-10).

In the light of this passage, it is clear that Aristotle admonishes us to take the path leading to the lesser evil when confronted with moral dilemmas. For instance, if a car driver is face with situation where he has to choose between hitting a single person or killing three others; such a driver should choose the lesser evil. This amounts practical wisdom in the light of Aristotle's thought.

Balancing Virtue and the Emotions: While Aristotle's concept of the golden mean primarily focuses on finding the balance between two extremes in actions and character traits, he also acknowledges the role of emotions in decision-making. Aristotle discusses the importance of having the right emotional dispositions for achieving virtue. He argues that virtues are concerned, not only with actions, but also with feelings, "Virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, in which excess and deficiency constitute misses off the mark [of the mean]…" (Aristotle,

NE, 1106b16-17). Aristotle believes that a virtuous person should be capable of exercising emotions "at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way" (Aristotle, *NE*, 1106b20-23). This shows that a virtuous person's emotions are seamlessly aligned with their rational judgement, thereby enabling them to achieve the golden mean. Hence, Aristotle expresses the possibility of striking a balance between one's emotions, guided by practical wisdom, to achieve virtue and a life of well-being (*eudaimonia*).

Criticism of the Golden Mean: Aristotle's doctrine of the golden mean has attracted a lot of criticisms over the ages. But here we shall consider a few major ones, both from those who defend his viewpoint and those who oppose it. In summary, Aristotle's golden mean has been criticised for being: (i) ambiguous and lacking clear guidelines on how to act; (ii) relativist and dependent on individual or subjectivist viewpoints; (iii) inconsistent and subject to various interpretations; (iv) full of grounds for exceptions (for instance there is no middle-way in justice, honesty, charity, etc); and (v) inapplicable because it is too abstract and theoretical.
Additionally, even Rosalind Hursthouse, a prominent contemporary virtue ethicist, has described the golden mean as "not merely false but extremely silly" (60). Similarly, Bernard Williams is disdainful of the doctrine. He writes:

> [...] the most celebrated and least useful parts of his system, the doctrine of the Mean [...] oscillates between an unhelpful analytical model (which Aristotle does not consistently follow) and a substantively depressing doctrine in favor [sic] of moderation. The doctrine of the Mean is better forgotten (Williams 36).

On the contrary, Fisher disagrees with this criticism of the golden mean. He thinks the mean has been misunderstood due to misinterpretation and misrepresentation in academic circles over time. He notes that most prevalent interpretations of the mean rely on parameters that, in themselves, constitute an "implausible interpretation of Aristotle" (54). He maintains that Aristotle's "virtues are mean-states only in the sense that they are states that dispose one to aim at and achieve the mean in passion and action; virtues do not themselves lie at the mean in some continuum" (Fisher 54). In agreement, Curzer argues that there has been a deliberate twist in interpreting Aristotle. To him, translators and commentators have chosen to portray Aristotle as speaking metaphorically, while in fact, the ancient philosopher has been clearly quantitative all along (Curzer 129). He suggests that scholars should rather stick to J.O. Urmson's quantitative interpretation of Aristotle in which the latter argues that the doctrine is plausible when correctly interpreted (223). All the pro-Aristotelian scholars mentioned above have produced elaborate and robust defences of the doctrine. However, those issues are not within the ambit of this paper. As such, they have been merely highlighted for the purpose of argument. That is, to show that in spite of perceived defects in Aristotle's golden mean, there are still those who believe that it holds useful applications in our everyday lives. And that is has been demonstrated in the next section.

Modern-Day Applicability of the Golden Mean
Rapp has observed that current interest in Aristotelian ethics is hinged on its outstanding qualities which make it:

> Attractive for modern ethical theory: his [Aristotle's] account of virtue does not seem to carry the burden of Socratic intellectualism; it seems to be less dependent on metaphysical background theories than, e. g., Plato's ethics; it

does not display the same hostile attitude towards emotions as the Stoic account of virtue; and it seems to be closer to some important common-sense convictions, e.g., that the good life must be a pleasant one and that not even virtue immunizes us against the effects of great misfortunes (102).

In the light of the above, let us examine the different areas in which the golden mean could be of help in our daily lives in contemporary times. It is noteworthy that there is hardly any area of human endeavour where Aristotle's golden mean may not be found applicable. In any case, only a few areas have been highlighted here for the purpose of demonstration. These areas are, (i) applied philosophy, (ii) politics, (iii) warfare, and (iv) psychotherapy.

Applied Philosophy
Aristotle's golden mean may provide guidance in aspects of applied philosophy like the ethics of artificial intelligence, environmental ethics, and work-place ethics.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Artificial intelligence (AI) has advanced to a stage where humans are beginning to feel threatened by its power. But Mchia has demonstrated that Aristotle's golden mean could be useful in answering crucial ethical questions bordering on the use of AI and its ancillary products. Particularly he argues that the moderation component of the golden mean can be useful in handling issues like safety, human dignity, the question of personhood, fairness and justice, privacy, copyright protection, and human rights (331–32).

Environmental Ethics: In the area of environmental ethics, Foster has also shown that in spite of earlier misgivings about the suitability of the golden mean in tackling environmental issues, it still holds sway if examined carefully. She begins by identifying three of such arguments against the golden mean:

> First, Aristotelian virtue theory is ratiocentric. Later philosophers have objected that Aristotle's preference for reason creates a distorted picture of the human good. Overvaluing reason might well bias virtue theory against the value of non-rational beings. Second, virtue theory is egocentric. Hence, it is suited to developing a conception of the good life, but it is not suited to considering obligations to others. Third, virtue theory is notoriously bad at providing rules and procedures for resolving ethical questions about particular circumstances. But environmentalists need procedures for determining which of several conflicting values is most important. Virtue theory is not action guiding (409).

Then she proceeds to debunk the arguments one by one, arriving at the conclusion that the theory is "uniquely suited to answering ethical questions about nonhuman animals and the environment" (409).

Biomedical Ethics: The field of bioethics is generally concerned with the ethical, legal, and social ramifications of problems that emerge in the life sciences, medicine, healthcare, technology, and associated policies. It aims at defining the values at play, comprehend the opportunities and challenges brought about by advancements in these fields, and provides rules, suggestions, and regulations to deal with moral conundrums (Shannon and Kockler 10). One issue of growing ethical concern is cosmetic surgery. While a cursory glance might present the practice as amoral, a deeper reflection using Jean Baudrillard's thought exposes the ethical concern. In his *Simulacra and Simulation,* Baudrillard employs the concepts of the simulacrum (the copy without an

original) and simulation, crucial to an understanding of postmodern life as a replacement of the real with signs and symbols (Baudrillard 6). While recognizing the person's right to autonomy of their body (which is also debatable), there is a growing culture where: the distinction between the real and the artificial is blurred out; the authenticity and individuality are exchanged in conformity to ideals of superficiality; the natural body and its natural changes are rejected in favour of an infinite pursuit of artificial and even unreachable perfection. All these smack of the modern society's obsession with hyper-reality as described by Baudrillard. Further, cosmetic surgery has become a symptom of a society that is obsessed with hyper-reality, in which people are living in a simulation where idealized images of the body lead to the shaming of others and a detachment from genuine self-acceptance. Its glorification of body modification by social media often leads to psychological and mental health issues (such as low self-esteem, depression, and shame) by those who are considered to have fallen below the 'acceptable' standards of beauty. Shelia Jeffreys argues that "western beauty practices from makeup to labiaplasty" fit the UN definition of harmful cultural practices and should be prohibited   (3).

Yet others consider cosmetic surgery as an amoral act that should be accepted, provided the patient gives their consent on the procedure. Without necessarily dabbling into the controversial ethics of cosmetic surgery, we would argue that while it might be justifiable to employ it as a fix to deformed bodies; it could be condemnable if engaged mainly to satisfy vanity and or pursue the modern-day "simulacra" (Baudrillard 12).
The solution to this extreme use of cosmetic surgery would naturally fall on the golden mean. Moderation in this case, refers to the use of cosmetic surgery to handle health issues such as birth defects, deformities occasioned by physical injuries, and the restoration of functionality to hitherto dysfunctional parts of the body.

Work-Place Ethics: Today's work-place has become highly sophisticated and at the same time morally complicated. With new kinds of companies and modes of labour, ethical issues such as moral dilemmas, privacy, confidentiality, safety, wage (in)security and equity, human relations, work ethics (codes of conduct), are a few of the challenges that require urgent ethical intervention. On the issue of moral dilemmas particularly, Aristotle provides a way out by stating clearly that one should choose "the lesser evil" when confronted with such situations (Aristotle, *NE*, 1106b16-17).   Again, moderation, as suggested by Aristotle could be useful in handling most work-place-related conflicts or challenges. For instance, a boss who is extreme in his/her criticism of junior colleagues will need to tone down and tell the truth without the use of harsh language. That would produce better results than a bossy attitude. When people feel valued, they are more productive, but when they feel treated as *means to an end,* they may lose morale.

Politics
One notable personality who has applied Aristotle's golden mean specifically in the context of political ethics is Alasdair MacIntyre, a moral and political philosopher of Scottish origin. In his *After Virtue*, MacIntyre draws on Aristotle's virtue ethics and the concept of the golden mean to critique modern liberal politics and suggest an alternative, approach which is essentially communitarian. He argues that modern politics has neglected the importance of virtue and the common good by over amplifying issues of individual rights and procedural justice (MacIntye 191). In the light of the above, MacIntyre's proposal is plausible in the sense that liberal politics seems to have gone to the very extreme which it accuses the conservatives. Back home in Nigeria, it is no longer news that our so-called democratic rule has fallen short on all principles of democracy. For instance, the principles of inclusive suffrage (inclusive participation) and that of free and fair elections have been violated over and over with impunity. Through blatant

violations, the will of the people at the ballot has been mortgaged to satisfy the whims and caprices of a select few (Anyam and Inja 183–85). These things happen in the country because the political elite (and even the citizenry) has abandoned virtue and upheld selfishness, greediness, corruption, and callousness. Hence, once again, the golden mean could come in to the rescue by directing all parties to discard the garb of excess and toll the line of moderation – which is virtue.

Warfare

War and civil strife have become an increasing problem in today's society. Particularly, the ethical conduct of belligerent parties before, during, and even after combat, leaves a lot to be desired these days. War crimes and violations of human rights seem to have become the norm. To solve this problem, ethicists have fallen back on the Just War theory, and most importantly, Aristotle's doctrine of the mean. One scholar who has notably applied Aristotle's golden mean to the problem of war in modern times is Michael Walzer, an American political philosopher. In his work *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, Walzer employs Aristotelian concepts, including the golden mean, to discuss the ethics of war. Walzer explores the concept of the "moral mean" in the context of warfare, advocating for a balanced approach between the extremes of pacifism and bellicism. He argues that while war may sometimes be necessary, it must be regulated by ethical considerations. In particular, Walzer discusses the concept of "proportionality" in war, which can be seen as an application of moderation as contained in the golden mean. He argues that military actions must be proportional to the ends they are intended to achieve, neither excessive nor deficient (129). Again, the modern relevance of the golden mean is self-evident.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy (also referred to as talk therapy) is a variety of treatments that are meant to help a person identify and change troubling emotions, thoughts, and behaviours ("What Is Psychotherapy?", web). Several psychotherapists and mental health professionals have relied on Aristotle's concept of the golden mean in their work. One example is Aaron Beck, a prominent figure in the field of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). Vasconcelles reports that Becks approach to CBT, emphasizes the importance of balance in thoughts and behaviours, which can be seen as an application of the golden mean. Becks believes that cognitive distortions (extreme and unbalanced thoughts) often contribute to mental health issues, and that finding a middle ground between these distortions and more balanced thoughts can help improve psychological well-being (227). While Beck does not reference Aristotle's golden mean directly, his emphasis on balance and moderation in thoughts and behaviours reflects the spirit of Aristotelian virtue ethics. Beyond Beck's work, it may be inferred that the golden mean could serve a good purpose in behavioural modification via psychotherapy. For example, in the prevention of alcohol dependency syndrome, patients may be advised to quit excessive drinking and take to moderate intake habits.

Conclusion

The above exercise was concerned with finding how Aristotle's golden mean could be applied in contemporary society. In the course of the discussion, the concept of virtue ethics was clarified. Also, a background to the discussion was initiated by providing a brief biography of Aristotle, as well as factors which influenced his thought pattern. Further, details of the doctrine of the golden mean were outlined. This was followed by the various criticisms levelled against Aristotle's theory of   the golden mean as well as the defences of the doctrine from renowned

scholars. Finally, the applicability of the golden mean in contemporary times was demonstrated. In the light of the above, it may be concluded that in spite of its so-called shortcomings, the golden mean still holds enough to provide guidance to us in the current era.

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Article   **Open Access**

GENDER-RESPONSIVE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION POLICIES AND RURAL WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined gender-responsive agricultural extension policies and rural women's empowerment in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Despite global and national commitments to inclusive agricultural development, empirical evidence on the operationalisation and effectiveness of gender-focused extension policies at the sub-national level remains limited. This study addresses that gap by assessing the awareness and implementation status of key policies, evaluating women's empowerment using selected indicators from the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), and analysing the relationship between policy dimensions and empowerment outcomes. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 240 rural women and 30 extension agents across six agricultural zones. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed with descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. Findings reveal moderate to low levels of awareness and weak implementation of gender-responsive policies, constrained by inadequate funding, limited training, and socio-cultural barriers. Empowerment scores varied, with the highest mean recorded in production decision-making (0.74) and the lowest in group membership (0.43). Regression analysis showed that access to training, participation in decision-making, resource support, policy awareness, and perceived fairness significantly influenced empowerment ($R^2 = 0.482$, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes that while gender-responsive extension policies hold transformative potential, their impact is hindered by institutional and contextual challenges. It recommends strengthening policy communication, institutionalising gender capacity-building, increasing funding, promoting women's participation in groups, and integrating gender-disaggregated monitoring tools. These interventions are essential to realise the empowerment goals embedded in agricultural extension policies.

Keywords: Gender-responsive policies, Agricultural extension, Women's empowerment, WEAI, Rural development, Nigeria.

Introduction

Agricultural extension services play a pivotal role in facilitating the dissemination of knowledge, technologies, and practices critical to sustainable agricultural development, particularly among rural populations. Globally, the transformation of agricultural systems has increasingly recognised the importance of integrating gender-responsive approaches within extension

frameworks to promote inclusivity and equity (Abhijeet et al., 2023; Farnworth and Colverson, 2016). Gender-responsive agricultural extension policies are designed to tailor services, resources, and capacity-building opportunities to the distinct needs of women farmers, who, despite their substantial contributions to food production, often face disproportionate barriers in accessing extension services, credit, inputs, and markets (Ragasa et al., 2013; Bryan et al., 2024). Integrating gender responsiveness into agricultural extension not only addresses systemic inequalities but also enhances the effectiveness, reach, and sustainability of development efforts. Empirical evidence shows that policies and programmes which recognise and tackle gender-specific constraints can improve agricultural productivity, foster resilience, and empower rural women (Cook, Satizábal, and Curnow 2021; Maulu et al., 2021; Eriksen et al., 2021). A gender-transformative extension model, in particular, fosters women's agency by challenging socio-cultural norms and creating enabling environments for their active participation in decision-making and leadership roles within agricultural value chains (Farnworth and Colverson, 2016).

Empowerment in agriculture includes dimensions such as access to productive resources, participation in leadership, control over income, and decision-making autonomy, core components of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (Mataka, Kaitibie, and Ratna, 2023). Agricultural extension services aligned with these indicators significantly influence empowerment outcomes. However, the operationalisation of gender-responsive agricultural extension policies remains inconsistent in many contexts, constrained by limited political will, weak institutional capacity, and ineffective monitoring mechanisms (Antwi-Agyei and Stringer, 2021; Caaisho, 2024). Increasingly, scholars advocate a more human-centred approach to extension, one that foregrounds social and cultural dimensions, particularly gender dynamics, to make agricultural development more inclusive and impactful (Cook et al., 2021). Despite the growing emphasis on gender-responsive agricultural extension, there remains a lack of empirical studies assessing the level of awareness, implementation status, and empowerment outcomes of such policies, particularly at the sub-national level in Nigeria. Understanding these dynamics is critical for designing inclusive and effective agricultural development policies that can catalyse rural transformation and social equity (Ongachi and Belinder, 2025; Mapiye et al., 2021).

In Akwa Ibom State, where women represent a significant portion of the agricultural labour force, persistent gender disparities in access to extension services have been documented. Udo, Udoms, and Atakpa (2024) observed that, although rural women are actively engaged in farming, structural barriers, such as gender-biased extension systems, low representation in cooperatives, and limited capacity-building opportunities, continue to hinder their productivity and empowerment. Jimmy and Olsson (2023) similarly noted that rural women in the state often lack decision-making power in both household and agricultural matters, despite their crucial roles in food production and community well-being. These findings reveal a gap between policy intent and practical outcomes. The inadequacy of gender-responsive extension policy implementation in Akwa Ibom reflects broader institutional and policy inertia. While both national and state agricultural policies emphasise gender mainstreaming, their actual deployment at the grassroots level remains limited. As noted by Akaninyene, Rachael, and Ngozi (2022), although women are active in agriculture in Akwa Ibom, the extension services provided are rarely tailored to their specific roles or needs, thereby falling short of achieving transformative empowerment. This raises significant concerns regarding the efficacy of current extension models in addressing the lived realities of rural women.

Furthermore, the absence of localised research that links the awareness and implementation of gender-responsive extension policies to measurable empowerment

outcomes has resulted in a knowledge and policy gap. While some studies have focused on gendered access to extension services (Ragasa et al., 2013) or the broader role of women in agriculture (Udo et al., 2024), few have examined how policy implementation affects women's empowerment outcomes. There is thus an urgent need for empirical research to assess the extent to which these policies are known, implemented, and capable of transforming rural women's lives in Akwa Ibom State. Failure to address these issues may perpetuate gender-based marginalisation, lower agricultural productivity, and hinder the attainment of equitable rural development. In light of these challenges, the present study seeks to address this critical gap by examining gender-responsive agricultural extension policies and rural women's empowerment in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims:

i.   To examine the awareness and implementation status of gender-responsive agricultural extension policies in Akwa Ibom State;

ii.   To measure the level of rural women's empowerment in agriculture using selected WEAI indicators;

iii.   To analyse the relationship between gender-responsive extension policies and women's empowerment outcomes in Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, situated in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The state is bordered by Cross River State to the east, Abia State to the north, Rivers State to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Covering a land area of approximately 7,081 square kilometres, the state is predominantly rural, with a large proportion of the population engaged in agricultural activities. This context makes it an appropriate setting for investigating gender-responsive agricultural extension policies and rural women's empowerment. The study population comprised rural women farmers and agricultural extension agents operating within the six agricultural zones under the Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Programme (AKADEP). A total of 270 respondents participated in the study, comprising 240 rural women and 30 extension agents. The sample size was selected to ensure adequate representation across the zones and to capture perspectives from both beneficiaries and implementers of agricultural extension policies. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. In the first stage, all six agricultural zones (Abak, Etinan, Eket, Ikot Ekpene, Oron, and Uyo) were purposively selected to ensure comprehensive geographical coverage. In the second stage, four communities were randomly selected from each zone. In the third stage, ten women farmers were randomly selected from each community, resulting in a total of 240 rural women respondents. Additionally, five extension agents were purposively selected from each zone based on their active involvement in gender-responsive programmes, yielding 30 extension officers.

Data were collected using a well-structured questionnaire designed to elicit relevant information from both groups of respondents. The questionnaire covered areas such as the level of awareness and implementation status of gender-responsive extension policies, dimensions of women's empowerment based on selected indicators from the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), and perceptions of policy outcomes. The questionnaire instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts in agricultural extension and rural sociology to ensure its appropriateness and alignment with the study objectives. A pre-test was conducted among 20 respondents outside the selected zones to enhance clarity and reliability. The internal consistency of scale items was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with coefficients above 0.70 considered acceptable. The data collected were analysed using the Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise levels of policy awareness and implementation, as well as the status of women's empowerment. Inferential statistics, particularly multiple linear regression analysis, were employed to examine the relationship between components of gender-responsive extension policies and women's empowerment outcomes.

The regression model used is expressed as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Women's Empowerment Score (5DE)

X_1 = Access to extension training

X_2 = Involvement in decision-making processes

X_3 = Resource allocation support

X_4 = Awareness of gender policies

X_5 = Perceived fairness of extension service delivery

β_0 = Constant term

β_1 to β_5 = Regression coefficients

ε = Error term

Results and Discussion

Implementation Status of Gender-Responsive Agricultural Extension Policies: The findings of this study reveal a moderate to low level of awareness and implementation of gender-responsive agricultural extension policies among rural women and extension agents in Akwa Ibom State. As presented in Table 1, the Women in Agriculture (WIA) programme recorded the highest awareness levels, 66.3% among rural women and 85.2% among extension agents. In contrast, other policies such as the Gender in Agricultural Extension Framework (GAEF) had considerably lower awareness rates (34.6% and 68.4%, respectively). This uneven pattern of awareness may be attributed to weak communication strategies and inadequate institutional mainstreaming of gender-responsive policies. These findings are consistent with the observations of Diaz and Najjar (2019), who emphasised that gender-focused extension is often inadequately institutionalised, despite the existence of formal policies. Similarly, the limited awareness of the National Gender Policy in Agriculture (NGPA) and the Agricultural Gender Mainstreaming Strategy among rural women supports Farnworth and Colverson's (2016) view that gender-transformative extension efforts frequently suffer from poor dissemination and limited grassroots reach. Perceptions of the actual implementation of key gender-responsive extension components, as shown in Table 2, further illustrate these challenges. Gender-sensitive training delivery recorded a mean score of 2.94, which is interpreted as moderately implemented. However, other essential components such as female participation in extension planning (x = 2.51), disaggregated data collection by sex and age (x = 2.45), and gender-specific monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (x = 2.38) were rated as low. This pattern highlights systemic shortcomings in the practical operationalisation of gender policies, suggesting that many interventions remain rhetorical rather than actionable.

These findings resonate with Morgan et al. (2024), who noted that gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation frameworks are often poorly implemented in both health and extension systems, thereby undermining the impact of gender-sensitive interventions. Similarly, the low implementation score for disaggregated data collection reinforces the concern raised by Bryan et al. (2024), who argued that the absence of gender-disaggregated data hampers the

design and monitoring of equitable agricultural programmes. Constraints to effective implementation, as identified by extension agents and summarised in Table 3, further illuminate the structural and institutional barriers confronting gender-responsive extension delivery. Inadequate funding for gender-targeted programmes ranked highest (76.7%), followed by lack of gender-specific training for staff (63.3%) and cultural resistance to the inclusion of women (60.0%). These findings are consistent with Abenga et al. (2022), who reported that limited training and prevailing cultural norms continue to impede effective communication between extension agents and female farmers in Nigeria.

The persistence of cultural resistance also aligns with the findings of Odurukwe, Matthews-Njoku, and Ejiogu-Okereke (2006) in Imo State, who observed that socio-cultural barriers significantly limit rural women's participation in agricultural programmes, even when initiatives like WIA are in place. Furthermore, the results support Cook et al.'s (2021) argument that, without a human-centred and inclusive approach, agricultural extension systems often reproduce existing gender disparities. The limited representation of women in extension staffing, cited by 46.7% of respondents, mirrors Lingam, Bhushan, and Kumar's (2024) assertion that female representation in the delivery system is essential for the success of gender-responsive interventions. Kosec and Wantchekon (2020) also underscored the role of effective communication and awareness creation in improving rural governance outcomes. This insight helps explain why low awareness of policies among rural women remains a persistent challenge, despite the existence of various programmes.

Table 1: Awareness of Gender-Responsive Agricultural Extension Policies among Respondents (n = 270)

Policy/Program	Rural Women Aware (%)	Extension Agents Aware (%)
National Gender Policy in Agriculture (NGPA)	42.5	76.7
Agricultural Gender Mainstreaming Strategy	39.2	71.3
State Agricultural Transformation Agenda (SATA)	51.7	80.0
Gender in Agricultural Extension Framework (GAEF)	34.6	68.4
Women in Agriculture (WIA) Program	66.3	85.2

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who answered "Yes" to being aware of the specified policy/program.
Source: Survey 2024

Table 2: Perceived Implementation of Gender-Responsive Agricultural Extension Components (n = 270)

Policy Component	Mean Score (1–5)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Gender-sensitive training delivery	2.94	0.87	Moderately Implemented
Female farmer participation in extension planning	2.51	1.02	Low Implementation
Provision of inputs targeted at women	3.32	0.76	Fairly Implemented
Disaggregated data collection (by sex and age)	2.45	1.09	Low Implementation
Monitoring and evaluation of gender inclusion strategies	2.38	0.93	Low Implementation

Note: Scale: 1 = Not Implemented, 5 = Fully Implemented.

Source: Survey 2024

Table 3: Constraints to Effective Implementation of Gender-Responsive Policies (Extension Agents, n = 30)

Constraint	Frequency (%)	Rank
Inadequate funding for gender-targeted programs	76.7	1
Lack of gender-specific training for staff	63.3	2
Cultural resistance to women's inclusion	60.0	3
Poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	53.3	4
Limited female staff in extension service	46.7	5

Note: Multiple responses allowed. Percentages reflect frequency of mentions.
Source: Survey 2024

Level of Rural Women's Empowerment in Agriculture (WEAI Indicators)
The findings presented in Table 4 reveal varying levels of empowerment among rural women across five indicators of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI). The highest mean score was recorded in decision-making regarding agricultural production (x = 0.74), followed by time allocation (x = 0.68), and access to and control over productive resources (x = 0.62). The lowest mean scores were observed in control over the use of income (x = 0.59) and group membership (x = 0.43). These results highlight the uneven distribution of empowerment across key agricultural domains.

Notably, the low score in group membership suggests that rural women have limited participation in cooperatives and women's groups, critical platforms for collective action, access to information, and resource mobilisation. This aligns with the findings of Ik-Ugwoezuonu and Obodoechi (2023), who observed that cooperative societies remain underutilised for promoting socio-economic inclusion among rural women in Nigeria, largely due to limited institutional support and awareness. As shown in Table 5, 59.2% of the surveyed women were classified as empowered, having achieved at least 80% adequacy across the five empowerment domains. Conversely, 40.8% of respondents remained not empowered. Although the empowerment rate is moderately high, it also indicates that a significant proportion of rural women still lack sufficient control and agency in agricultural contexts. This result corroborates the findings of Ashagidigbi et al. (2022), who reported similar empowerment disparities among Nigerian women, linking them to broader socio-cultural and institutional constraints. It also reflects the conclusions of Malapit et al. (2017), who emphasised that empowerment is multidimensional and often impeded by entrenched gender norms and limited access to enabling resources.

Disaggregated analysis by agricultural zones, presented in Table 6, reveals noticeable variations in empowerment outcomes. The Uyo zone recorded the highest mean 5DE score (x = 0.75) and the highest empowerment rate (66.0%), while Oron zone reported the lowest mean score (x = 0.67) and the lowest empowerment rate (52.5%). These disparities may be attributed to differences in the effectiveness of gender-responsive policy implementation, availability of infrastructure, and support services across the zones. For instance, Ataide, Nwogbo, and Mende (2024) noted that community-based organisations and public service delivery vary significantly across rural areas in Akwa Ibom State, influencing development outcomes. Similarly, Ahmed, Chase, and Wagnild. (2022) argued that inequitable access to frontline services, such as agricultural extension, has a direct impact on rural women's empowerment and overall wellbeing. These findings also align with Bonis-Profumo, Stacey, and Brimblecombe (2021), who observed that in Timor-Leste, empowerment was highest in domains related to production decisions and time use but weakest in group membership and control over income. This

consistency suggests a recurring pattern where women may exhibit relative autonomy in household-level domains but face structural and social barriers in areas that require collective engagement or financial authority. The low score in control over income, for example, mirrors findings by Gupta et al. (2019), who reported that in India, cultural norms often restrict women's financial decision-making power, even when they play active roles in farm production.

The moderately high overall empowerment rate observed in this study could be partly attributed to the partial implementation of gender-responsive extension policies that promote inclusivity in access to training, input support, and decision-making forums. This is supported by Dione et al. (2024), who emphasised that targeted policy measures aligned with WEAI indicators are essential for achieving meaningful improvements in women's empowerment. However, the persistence of disempowerment in specific domains and zones may also reflect inconsistencies in policy delivery and challenges in extension communication effectiveness. As noted by Abenga et al. (2022), systemic communication gaps and logistical constraints often limit extension agents' ability to effectively engage female farmers. The results suggest that while strides have been made in empowering rural women through policy interventions in Akwa Ibom State, substantial gaps remain, particularly in fostering institutional inclusion through cooperatives and economic autonomy via income control. These observations support Diaz and Najjar's (2019) argument that gender-responsive extension policies are most effective when supported by culturally sensitive implementation strategies and sustained community engagement. Furthermore, variations across agricultural zones may be influenced by differential support from local governance structures and development actors, which, as Sarker et al. (2024) noted in the Bangladeshi context, are instrumental in translating empowerment strategies into tangible grassroots outcomes. In summary, the findings reflect both progress and persisting limitations in gender-focused agricultural extension. They underscore the need for strengthened institutional frameworks, better policy communication, and deeper engagement with underperforming regions and empowerment domains to ensure that rural women benefit equitably and fully from gender-responsive agricultural extension policies.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Selected WEAI Indicator Scores among Rural Women (n = 240)

WEAI Indicator	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Decision-making in agricultural production	0.74	0.21	0.20	1.00
Access to and control over productive resources	0.62	0.26	0.10	1.00
Control over use of income	0.59	0.28	0.15	1.00
Group membership (e.g., cooperatives, women's groups)	0.43	0.30	0.00	1.00
Time allocation (productive and leisure balance)	0.68	0.23	0.20	1.00

Note: Indicator scores range from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate greater empowerment in the respective domain.
Source: Survey 2024

Table 5: Empowerment Status of Rural Women Based on 5DE Score (n = 240)

Empowerment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Empowered (≥ 80% adequacy)	142	59.2
Not Empowered (< 80%)	98	40.8

Note: Empowerment is defined using the 5DE (Five Domains of Empowerment) component of WEAI with ≥80% adequacy threshold.

Source: Survey 2024

Table 6: Distribution of Mean 5DE Scores and Empowerment Levels by Agricultural Zone (n = 240)

AKADEP Agricultural Zone	Sample Size (n)	Mean 5DE Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	% Empowered (≥80% Adequacy)
Abak	40	0.73	0.12	60.0
Etinan	40	0.71	0.14	57.5
Eket	40	0.68	0.15	55.0
Ikot Ekpene	40	0.70	0.13	58.0
Oron	40	0.67	0.16	52.5
Uyo	40	0.75	0.11	66.0

Note: The 5DE score reflects the average adequacy across five WEAI indicators. Empowerment status calculated per zone.
Source: Survey 2024

Relationship Between Gender-Responsive Extension Policies and Women's Empowerment

The multiple linear regression analysis presented in Table 7 reveals that dimensions of gender-responsive agricultural extension policies significantly influence rural women's empowerment outcomes in Akwa Ibom State, as measured by the Women's Empowerment Score (5DE). The model explains approximately 48.2% of the variance in women's empowerment, indicating strong explanatory power of the selected policy components. Among the predictors, access to extension training emerged as the most influential factor ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < 0.001$), followed by involvement in decision-making processes ($\beta = 0.241$, $p < 0.001$), resource allocation support ($\beta = 0.217$, $p = 0.001$), awareness of gender policies ($\beta = 0.183$, $p = 0.001$), and perceived fairness in service delivery ($\beta = 0.149$, $p = 0.010$). These findings suggest that when rural women have access to training, participate in decision-making, are aware of relevant policies, and perceive services as fair and equitable, their empowerment levels significantly improve.

These results are consistent with the findings of Malapit et al. (2019), who emphasised that empowerment in agriculture is strongly linked to access to productive resources, relevant information, and inclusion in institutional processes. Similarly, Crookston et al. (2021) reported that women's empowerment in Burkina Faso improved substantially when women were actively engaged in decision-making and had access to agricultural knowledge, patterns mirrored in the current study.

The positive influence of resource allocation support corroborates the findings of Ashagidigbi et al. (2022), who noted that access to resources plays a crucial role in shaping household food security and women's empowerment outcomes in Nigeria. Furthermore, the significance of awareness of gender policies aligns with Dione et al. (2024), who argued that when women are well-informed about institutional frameworks and policy provisions, they are more empowered to assert their rights and entitlements. The role of perceived fairness in extension service delivery also resonates with Lwamba et al. (2022), who highlighted the importance of equitable systems in advancing women's empowerment, particularly in fragile and rural contexts. When extension agents are seen as fair, respectful, and inclusive, women are more likely to engage with programmes and benefit from them. Moreover, the prominent influence of training access and inclusion in decision-making supports the argument of Gupta et al. (2019), who stressed the need for locally relevant and context-sensitive strategies to enhance women's empowerment. The effectiveness of these components in Akwa Ibom suggests that certain aspects of gender-responsive policy are being implemented with a degree of success. However, variability in the standardised coefficients may reflect differences in delivery, shaped

by local socio-cultural norms or institutional inconsistencies. Interestingly, although perceived fairness had the lowest beta coefficient among the predictors, its statistical significance suggests that relational and procedural aspects of service delivery, such as how fairly women are treated, can have meaningful impacts on empowerment. This observation aligns with Schaaf et al. (2020), who posited that perceptions of equity among service users significantly influence trust and engagement, particularly among marginalised groups.

Overall, the empirical evidence from this study reinforces international frameworks such as the pro-WEAI and supports the conclusion of Widiastuti et al. (2024) that strategic and context-specific solutions, focusing on access, equity, and participation, are essential for dismantling structural barriers to women's empowerment. The observed relationships underscore that gender-responsive extension policies, when well designed and effectively implemented across key dimensions, can serve as transformative tools for advancing the empowerment of rural women in agriculture. Thus, the findings affirm that policy interventions should prioritise inclusivity, equitable resource distribution, continuous awareness creation, and meaningful engagement to generate sustained empowerment outcomes among rural women.

Table 7: Multiple Linear Regression Showing the Influence of Gender-Responsive Extension Policy Dimensions on Women's Empowerment Outcomes (n = 240)

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error (SE)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-value	p-value
Constant (Intercept)	0.412	0.083	—	4.96	0.000***
Access to extension training	0.136	0.027	0.298	5.04	0.000***
Involvement in decision-making processes	0.112	0.031	0.241	3.61	0.000***
Resource allocation support	0.097	0.029	0.217	3.34	0.001**
Awareness of gender policies	0.084	0.026	0.183	3.23	0.001**
Perceived fairness of extension service delivery	0.065	0.025	0.149	2.60	0.010*

Model Summary: R^2 = 0.482; Adjusted R^2 = 0.471; $F(5, 234)$ = 42.67; $p < 0.001$

Note:
• Dependent Variable: Women's Empowerment Score (5DE)
• *Significance levels: $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$
• All predictors entered simultaneously (Enter method)
Source: SPSS Version 25 Computer Printout

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined gender-responsive agricultural extension policies and rural women's empowerment in Akwa Ibom State. The findings indicate that awareness and implementation of key gender policies, such as the Women in Agriculture (WIA) programme, the National Gender Policy in Agriculture (NGPA), and the Gender in Agricultural Extension Framework (GAEF), remain moderate to low among both rural women and extension agents. Critical components of these policies, including gender-specific planning, gender-disaggregated data collection, and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation, were found to be weakly implemented. This suggests a significant disconnect between policy formulation and practical delivery at the grassroots level. Although some progress has been achieved, particularly in training delivery and provision of agricultural inputs, systemic challenges persist. These include inadequate funding, limited staff training on gender-specific approaches, and cultural resistance to women's inclusion. The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) scores revealed that while a majority of women are empowered, considerable gaps remain in specific domains such as group

membership and control over income. These gaps highlight enduring structural and socio-cultural barriers.

Disparities in empowerment levels across agricultural zones further underscore the uneven implementation of gender-responsive policies and their variable impact on women's empowerment outcomes. Overall, the study concludes that while gender-responsive extension policies have strong potential to enhance rural women's empowerment, their effectiveness is constrained by institutional weaknesses, cultural norms, and inconsistent execution at the community level. To address these challenges and fully realise the empowerment objectives embedded in gender-responsive agricultural extension policies, the following recommendations are made:

i. Strengthen Policy Awareness and Communication Strategies: The study revealed that rural women's awareness of key gender-responsive agricultural policies is low. It is therefore recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with development partners, design and implement targeted communication strategies. These should utilise local languages and culturally appropriate platforms such as community-based radio programmes, local drama troupes, and women-centred outreach sessions. Engagement with women leaders and farmer groups should be prioritised to improve policy visibility and public understanding.

ii. Institutionalise Gender-Specific Capacity Building: A major constraint identified in this study was the limited training of extension staff on gender-sensitive approaches. Agricultural extension services should institutionalise regular capacity-building workshops and refresher courses that focus on gender equity, participatory planning, and monitoring. Strategic partnerships with universities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) specialising in gender and rural development can support the delivery of technical training to both male and female extension workers.

iii. Increase Funding for Gender-Targeted Extension Programmes: Inadequate funding was highlighted as a key barrier to policy implementation. Governments at both the state and local levels should increase budgetary allocations for gender-responsive agricultural extension. In addition, development partners should consider dedicated grants or co-funding arrangements to support initiatives such as WIA, targeted input distribution, and training for rural women. The introduction of gender-sensitive budgeting frameworks within extension departments would ensure consistent and sustainable financial support.

iv. Promote Rural Women's Access to Cooperatives and Group Platforms: Low scores in group membership point to limited participation by women in cooperatives and associations. Deliberate efforts are needed to mobilise and support women's involvement in agricultural cooperatives, self-help groups, and farmer associations. The Ministry of Women Affairs, alongside NGOs, should facilitate the formation of inclusive groups, build their capacity, and connect them to extension services, markets, and credit schemes. Peer mentorship and experiential learning within these platforms can further enhance women's agency.

v. Integrate Gender-Disaggregated Data and Monitoring Tools into Extension Services: The study found weak implementation of gender-specific monitoring and evaluation systems. To close this gap, extension departments should adopt gender-disaggregated data collection tools as part of routine operations. Digital technologies such as mobile data platforms and interactive dashboards can be used to track women's participation. In addition, training extension personnel on gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation frameworks will support evidence-based decision-making and enhance accountability in delivering equitable services.

These interventions are essential for translating gender-responsive agricultural extension policies into meaningful empowerment outcomes. By addressing institutional gaps, enhancing awareness, and prioritising inclusivity, Akwa Ibom State can strengthen the effectiveness of its agricultural extension services and promote sustainable empowerment of rural women.

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Article   **Open Access**

RECTA RATIO AGIBILUM AS IMPERATIVE FOR ADVANCING HUMAN GOOD IN TECH AGE

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Abstract
Recta Ratio Agibilum (Right reason in action or right way of doing things) is a concept in Thomistic philosophy. It is an imperative for Advancing Human Good in Tech Age as it is clearly associated with the virtue of prudence and virtue ethics. It can therefore enhance an attempt to rationalize the deployment of technology in the pursuit of human good especially in this tech age. The pursuit of human good is a desideratum for the philosopher who must at all times engage his philosophical arsenal in defining, analyzing and redefining various human engagements and practices that affect the good of man. science and technology are in the forefront of affecting the destiny of man positively or negatively. In this tech age, emerging technologies are defining and redefining human life and its destiny in no small measure most times with a seeming unavoidable mixed feelings. Extant literatures have considered this problematic and have offered far reaching philosophical recommendations towards a solution by offering the principle of *recta ratio agibilum*. However, these literatures have missed the foundation that should ground the right and effective application of this principle which is the right conception of man. without the right conception of man, right production and consumption of technological goods will have no place – right conception leads to right action. Deploying the analytical and critical methods of philosophical investigation, I analyzed key concepts and critically engaged with certain arguments in relation to emerging technologies and their promises to deliver human goods. Thereafter, I argued and consequently recommended that right conception is part and parcel and in fact the foundation of the principle of *Recta Ratio Agibilum* that must effectively be engaged to pursue and secure human good in the tech age.

Keywords: Technology, Human Person, Human Dignity, Human Good, Rationality.

Introduction

As a meaning -making and meaning-giving being, man is constantly preoccupied with understanding his life, his environment, and nature so as to control it and advance his good. The first law of nature is self- preservation and man is living up to this calling. The business of understanding nature so as to subdue and control it for his good is after-all not a self-imposed project but a divine mandate. The book of Genesis chapter 1 verses 27-28 captures this mandate.

It says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth". However, for man to subdue and have unfettered dominion, he has to understand nature. So, through science which is the systematic study of nature, man understands nature on one hand. On the other hand, through technology which is the application of science (or the knowledge of nature gained through science), man subdues and controls nature. Be that as it may, science and its application technology, as a human activity, has become both a blessing and a curse to man. Can man stop his curiosity to know? The answer may be a No. It is in the nature of man to want to know what he does not know. Pursuit of knowledge therefore is natural with man. But can and should man control the application of what he knows? The answer is Yes. But this is not always easy. His curiosity to know is also always extended to a curiosity to see the practical effect of his knowledge. Here, theory and praxis coalesce.

Man's good is a natural project that requires his uncompromised attention. Embedded in technology is the capacity to unleash both the physical and spiritual faculties of man for his integrated wellness. But man must see this inherent and intrinsic capacity and cautiously guide himself in the effort to harness it for his good. This is the ontic-ontological nexus in the techno culture. The good of man is the aim of technology. This good is both material and spiritual and not material alone. Attempt to define man's good from a material perspective alone perpetuates a truncated vision of man's good and does disservice to his dignity. Thus, the rationality of technology is the service of man's good both material and spiritual. Herein lies the good of technology. Thus, the good of technology is measured in and by the good of man. However, to what extent has emerging technologies conduced themselves to this rationality and destiny of man? No doubt, technology has made human life different in various ways and in many respects. It has genuinely transformed human life by giving us easy access to a world of possibilities, a wealth of "how-to" and "do-it-yourself" information in almost anything (O'Brien 33). We can therefore say that technology is a partner in progress in the project of humanizing. However, how successful is technology in this regard? The transformation it has given human life is both positive and negative. Advanced technology has the ontological potential to alter the definition of what it means to be a human life. In fact, there is no end to this as more advances in technology further brings about the definition and understanding of the human person that is farther distinct from the relatively stable conception of humanity that has held sway for many years. Consequently, the understanding of human dignity is also affected.

The good of technology must be appraised based on how it is both efficient and humanizing on one hand, and how it is effective and dignifying on the other hand (UNESCO 197-209). Man must be the focus of this appraisal, being both the producer and consumer of technology. To achieve the good of man in these respects, I engage with the principle of *Recta Ratio Agibilium*. *Recta ratio agibilium* is a Latin phrase that translates roughly to "the proper reason or principle of things that can be done" or "the correct principle of the things that are possible to be done". It is the correct or rational way to approach a task or to execute something. It is the rational or moral principle governing what is permissible or feasible to be carried out. I argue that this principle will only be effective in guiding the right production and consummation of technology if founded on or grounded by the right and adequate conception and understanding of the human person.

Understanding Technology

Technology is as old as the human race. It has been with us since life began for people have had needs and always have devised means of meeting their needs. In the Stone Age, people made tools out of stone, wood, bone etc. In the Bronze Age, bronze was made by man out of copper and tin. While in the Iron Age, man -made mine and used iron. These helped people to farm the land and provided food for themselves. So, technology is not to be understood only in terms of modern technology i.e the age of computers, complex machines, space shuttles, AI and Automation. Technology is the way people use resources to meet their wants and needs. For example people have invented beds to meet their need for comfortable sleep. They have invented refrigerators and stoves to meet their needs for storing and cooking food. They have invented cars, buses, trains and Air Planes to meet their need to move from one place to another (Fales et al 20).

If science is an attempt by man to understand the physical world, technology then, is an attempt by him to control the world (Obioha, *Ethics of Science and Technology* 62). T.M Smith conceives technology as "embracing a variety of practical activities that provide goods and services for man's use, enjoyment and welfare. Manufacturing, transportation, communication, the raising and processing of foods and the conversion of energy into usable forms are typical 20th century technological activities especially as they involve the application of scientific understanding of natural phenomena and are complex, highly skilled and technical in operation (967). If culture is the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment, technology therefore, is an integral part of the contents of the culture of people for we cannot talk of technology without making mention of culture. To this end, Fadahunsi adumbrates that technology derives from the non -material content and is built up as a people put together their knowledge, compare it and profit from one another's experience and interpretation (19). In the same vein, Walter Brugger defines technology as "the methodical utilization resources and forces to take care of man's needs" (411). Brugger is not alone in this, Kranzberg maintains that technology refers to all the ways man uses his inventions and discoveries to satisfy his needs and desires (58). The above definitions show that the knowledge acquired from science and technology is directed at solving human problem. However, George McLlean asserts that:

> The blossom of modern technology has generated with its habitual reaction of contrasting the spiritual with the material , technology then assumes the place of applied materialism but although, technology appears representative of the purely material, there is a general recognition of the fact that it is man who through his spiritual and intellectual power creates technology (McLean 11).

Be that as it may, technology does not and should not stand aloof of man. it should not be the judge of its own. Its rationality is inclusive and not exclusive of man's well-being and progress (Obioha, *Ethics of Science and Technology* 62). This goes to confirm Nwoko's argument that "technology has rationality, which is not only of its meaning but also is the goal of its progress. The rationality must have its basis on the rationality which defines man himself and the rationality which defines the mode of his action or activity" (Nwoko 107).

Understanding the Human Person

Is human person a being with intrinsic dignity or a mere machine? Yes, the human person is a being with intrinsic dignity. He is an individual with a unique sense of self, feelings and experiences, and who is considered a moral subject. The human person emphasizes the individual's inherent value and dignity. The human dignity tradition believes that humans, by

their very nature, are valuable in ways that are both quantitatively and qualitatively different from other creatures (O'Brien 34; Johnson 23-37). This conception of the human person is the basis for the idea of fundamental human rights principles, social justice and all other democratic principles and structures to the effect that all humans share a dignity that is equal and inviolable. A recognition of this intrinsic worth of man saves him from a life that is solitary, brutish, nasty, short and poor. Western conception of human dignity has its theological root in the creation stories of Genesis. Account of creation in Genesis presents man as the climax of God's creative activities. Genesis affirms that man is created to resemble God. Genesis 1:26-28 has it thus: "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping things that creeps upon the earth; so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said unto them, be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it ; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth".

The potential for dominion inherent in man's being is also manifested in man's power to make choice. The power to make choice comes with the potential for evil. With man, evil enters the world and he stands the danger of being gravely punished. Giving the dignity of man and how important he is to God, Jesus Christ was sent by God to redeem man from eternal damnation. Furthermore, the dignity of man is reflected in Mathew 6:25-34 in which Jesus reminds his followers that every hair on their heads is counted and known by God and that God cares for humans more than he cares for other creatures. O'Brien captures this line of thought when he stated that "Jesus reinforces the notion of human dignity by taking a special interest in the poor and explicitly choosing to live, preach and minister to the poor rather than associate with social peers and the upper class". According to O'Brien, "Jesus' preferential association with the poor highlights the truth that it is human nature and not wealth or social status that gives humans value in the eyes of God" (35). Apart from theological rendition of human dignity, philosophers across ages and traditions, have conceived man as having inherent dignity and worth. Gabriel Marcel alludes to this in his existential thought on "being and Having" that our being is much more important than what we have because we first exist before we have. He therefore, advises that man should be treated for who he is than for what he has (233). Immanuel Kant in his "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" advanced a theory of human dignity. This is expressed in his categorical imperatives. For Kant, the ethical foundation of all actions lies in whether such action could be tolerated by other rational creatures in all other conceivable settings. This is the principle of universalizability as a yardstick for judging an action moral or not. In his second formulation of the categorical imperative, known as the formula of Humanity, he advised: Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means", Kant advances the intrinsic worth/dignity of the human person and counsels that people should be respected for their own sake, not just what they can provide. For Kant, it is wrong to use people solely for personal gain without considering their autonomy and dignity. Kant's message is that every human person has an inherent worth from the very fact that they are rational creatures.

African humanism locates the dignity of the human person in the fact that the human soul is a spark of the divine. African humanism constitutes all human beings into one universal family of humankind having the same father God. This idea is expressed by an Akan maxim: "All human beings are children of God; no one is a child of the earth" (Gyekye 155). This claim is based on the belief   that there must be something intrinsically valuable in God: the human being considered a child of God, presumably by reason of having been created by God and

having in his or her nature some aspect of God, ought also to be held as of intrinsic value, worthy of dignity and respect (Obioha & Okaneme 46). However, this is not all there is in the understanding of the human person. Other conceptions contrary to the above sentiments have been made especially by science. Science provides a different account of the human person. Fortunately, the scientific method of viewing-in-detatchment has been acclaimed as the antidote to entrenched prejudice and myopia – the only way to "see things as they really are" (Mackay 19) neally all the views offered by the scientific mirror seem to lose sight of the human person as it ignores or is completely oblivious of the inherent dignity definitive of the human person. At one level of analysis, we see only a mass of molecules in wild confusion. At another, we are shown a tangle of self-regulating biochemical mechanisms, controlling such things as the levels of sugar or oxygen in the blood stream. At yet another, we catch glimpses of a community of millions of microcomputers, each constructed of a network of nerve cells and the whole more complex in its structure than the total pattern of communication links between all the people alive on the earth. From a biological angle, what we see is an organism built on very similar lines to others, using similar components and showing signs of similar ancestry. From an ethological angle, we observe an animal whose social behaviour pattern show many resemblances to those of apes, hunting dogs, or humble farmyard fowls. Even in psychological terms, the picture we have is festooned with causal links between entities bearing such outlandish labels as "drives" or "contingencies of reinforcement", living little or nothing recognizable at first glance as characteristically human. Finally, in the cosmological mirror even the earth itself dwindles to an invincible speck in the chillinhg vastness of intergalactic space (Mackay 79 quoted in Obioha, *The Dignity of the Human Person* 144).

On the constituents of the human person, Akintona writes that, "human beings are super complex beings different from all other species of being, particularly, if we have to consider their power of intellection and creativity. But, break human anatomy down to the minutest particles what we have is nothing but bundles of non-living properties like that of electrons and electromagnetic waves" (201). Be that as it may, is this scientific account of the human person true when it renders invisible the things we know most surely and value most dearly about ourselves as human beings? This presentation of the human person is deeply materialistic and physicalistic and consequently holds dangerous implications to the dignity of the human person. Any conception of the human person that does not recognize the "inner aspects" of man is grossly inadequate and by implication dehumanizing. This is what emerging technologies have done with attendant consequences on the dignity of the human person and his holistic good.

Emerging Technologies and the Question of Human Dignity
Futurists who have utmost faith in technology believe in "technological utopianism". The world of technology is an eldorado of goodness with no pain at all. Is this true of technology? Is technology full of prospects and promises without pain? Certainly technologies have humanizing capacities but this is not the whole truth. There are emerging technologies that are like two-edged sword – they can defend and as well kill the defended. These technologies affect the dignity of the human person. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation has greatly enhanced human well-being. But at the same time has brought bias, discrimination, job loss and attendant dehumanization. The use of AI can reinforce racial, gender or economic biases that make people feel unfairly treated. For instance, Jeffrey Dastin reported that Amazon developed an AI- hiring tool that has been found to discriminate against women by favoring male candidates for tech jobs. This is unfair treatment based on gender bias as it deprives qualified candidates opportunity to be employed (https://www.reuters.com/art). Today, it is common

knowledge that there is massive job loss in Automated and AI driven organizations. For instance, as reported by BBC News on 25th May, 2016, companies such as Tesla and Foxconn have replaced thousands of human workers with robots. As a result of job loss, many low-skilled workers today are struggling to find dignity in work.

Some Surveillance technologies (such as Social Credit System – SCS) are known to be affecting human dignity. These technologies bring about loss of privacy of individuals in that governments and corporations use facial recognition, biometric tacking and data collection to monitor people without their consent. In fact, in extreme cases, Surveillance technologies are used to control people, limit freedom and suppress dissent. For instance, Chinese government, through the use of Social Credit System (SCS) monitors citizens by using facial recognition and AI to track behaviours. People with low scores (for criticizing the government) lose access to jobs, schools and travel. Governments have used Pegasus Spyware to secretly hack into journalists' and activists' phones, monitoring their conversations. This violates human dignity by stripping away privacy and silencing dissents. This has dehumanizing effects on individuals by reducing them to mere data points rather than respecting their freedom and dignity. The individuality and autonomy of the human person must at all times be respected and protected. Boethius' definition of the human person as an individual substance of a rational nature and Kant's recognition of autonomy as an ontological characteristics of the human person have become ethical foundation for advancing human good.

It is no gainsaying the fact that recent breakthroughs in Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering have been a blessing to humanity. Today, hitherto barren couples can have children of their own. Recent trends in Biotechnology boasts of the capacity to alter quality of life through genetic manipulations and to create new life forms (McDougall 259). Be that as it may, grave concerns have been raised on the impact of these technologies on human dignity. These technological trajectories confront ethicists and question their hitherto conception and understanding of human nature. In this way, applying human dignity theory to the latest Biotechnological advances becomes problematic. The paradigms of our traditional understanding of human nature and human dignity is shifting but unfortunately at the expense of human dignity. Corroborating this, Ann Pederson states that, "At both the beginning and end of life, new technologies are changing the way we define life and death (801). For Frida Simonstein, artificial womb technologies, among many other advances in neonatal care, preserve the lives of children who, not so long ago, would have certainly died or become disabled due to premature birth (365). Even though the preservation of life seems morally unproblematic, the application of these technologies has raised many unanticipated issues. For instance, although these technologies have helped to save the life of a child born to a drug addicted mother, who subsequently abandons the child, the rationale of the application of the technology becomes questionable (O'Brien 42; Simostein 365).

Although In Vitro technologies have helped barren women to overcome their childlessness. However, the dilemma created by the excess embryos produced when infertile couples use this technology creates another problem.   Even though there is a promise of life to a hitherto barren woman, embryos produced by this method is most likely stored in freezer until they become unviable. Benagiano and Mori (162-168) have questioned the status of these lives and the moral value of a procedure that produces so much of this kind of waste. For O'Brien, if the end result is death after a decade in the deep freezer, then is it ethically acceptable to use these embryos in scientific experiments or to harvest stem cells from these otherwise doomed embryos? Emphatically, O'Brien decried that these cases present an affront to human dignity no

matter what course of action is taken, whether it consists of indefinite storage, destruction, or experimentation (O'Brien 43).

The issue of designer babies, a product of recent breakthroughs in Biotechnology, raises serious ethical concerns today. A scientist named, He Jiankul, genetically modified twin babies in order to resist HIV. This raised a concern of inequality and class division since it is only the rich that can afford this kind of genetic enhancement. Creating superhumans through genetic engineering could reduce the dignity of others in that they feel inferior towards the "superhumans". In the same vein, developing countries do witness cases of desperate individuals selling their kidneys illegally to rich buyers. This is a clear case of treating one's body as a commodity. Recent breakthroughs in AI and robotics hold grave consequences for humanity. Military robots are deployed in war to kill. Example Russia's Uran-9 Robot Tank. This Robot can identify and attack targets without human input. Should machines decide who lives or dies? Human moral judgment is required to execute just wars. Some human enhancements in robotic technologies hold grave implications for human dignity. Cyborg employees in Sweden have their hands implanted with microchips for ease of access into their offices. Although this may appear convenient, it however reduces people to machines giving employers undue influence over their workers' bodies (en.wikipedia.org).

In the face of technological advancements, what should be our attitude towards technological breakthrough? To what extent does technology humanize so as to attract all time applause and untampered patronage? Bill Joy in his article, "Why the Future Doesn't Need us" doubted the humanizing possibility of emerging technologies. According to him, "emerging technologies present humankind with a pandora's box brimming with temptations that could lead to dire consequences in spite of the   best intentions". Joy advanced an ethic of relinquishment which for him, must be adopted by technologists and businesses that produce cutting-edge products. The ethic of relinquishment suggests and advises that certain line of inquiry that has the potential to inflict enormous harm on humanity should not be pursued. Joy's "new luddite" is itself a critique of futurists who imagine only utopian results from ongoing breakthroughs of certain powerful technologies. Rather, these technologies are capable of leading to a dystopian or even disastrous future (Joy 2000).

However, Joy's relinquishment ethic has been criticized for going against man's natural drive of curiosity – that is, human nature compels man to be curious to seek for knowledge and investigate reality. Therefore, any moral or philosophical perspective that attempts to repress this impulse is a flawed ethic or philosophy and must be sidestepped. For the critics, the idea of relinquishment must not be allowed in that it casts serious doubt on the responsibility of human agency in the project of bettering the world. Be that as it may, Joy's thesis must be seriously considered. Indeed, there are dangerous technologies that have the potential to destroy and even obliterate the world. Some technologies have the tendency to eclipse existing notions of the uniqueness of man and his dignity even when they do no physical harm to man. For instance, the moment man is equated with the machine, in all respects, man loses his uniqueness and the place of pride as the measure of all things. Man is a meaning-giving being; he is value-laden and thus value-determining being. The moment these truisms are obliterated from the being of man, his uniqueness and dignity are gone and he becomes an endangered species.

Although man is naturally wired to be curious such that curiosity is a natural drive in man, however, drives can be controlled if not they can lead to man's destruction. For instance, the drive for food is natural with man, but there are times man is advised to let go of food for health and or spiritual reasons. Sleep is a natural drive in man but needs be controlled in certain circumstances (e.g when a man is on the wheels) for man's safety. Sex is a natural drive in man

but needs be controlled if not a man can be jailed for life for rape (which occurs as a result of man's irresponsibility or inability or refusal to control his libido. Therefore, man's curiosity must be a guided curiosity, guided by the vision of man's good – which is beyond the fleeting satisfaction of wealth and blissful life promised by technology. The good life consists in a happy life found in a life well lived which often have more to do with establishing and nurturing right relationships than access to wealth or technology (O'Brien 41). Technology no doubt has an important role to play but not a solitary, or singularly deterministic one in the way human society shapes its future.

Concerning the question of human agency and the possibility of the destruction of his world, man is responsible both for the prosperity and destruction of his world environment. Joy's advocacy for the ethic of relinquishment suggests that humans cannot be trusted at all times to behave in ways that will lead to human flourishing. Is Joy wrong and alone in this pessimism? This is a rational and reasonable pessimism. Hobbes earlier alluded to the possibility of the extinction of life in the state of nature brought about by man's inhumanity to man which made life solitary, brutish, nasty, poor and short. The first and second World Wars is a testament of man's insensitivity and ability to orchestrate even his own destruction. Therefore, Joy is not wrong. There are clearly certain technological inquiries that are not worth pursuing for the sake of humanity. If technological curiosity and inquiry is a calling that must be answered, the pursuit of human good – the Summum Bonnum, is a higher calling that supersedes that of technological curiosity. The onus is on the scientist cum technologist to guide his curiosity and inquiry for the good of humanity. The good of humanity is the rationality of technology.

The Rationality of Technology

The rationality of a reality is the judgment of the meaning of that reality with respect to the good of man (Obioha, *Controlling Technology* 45). The rationality of a reality involves the determination of the reason for its being, herein lies its meaning. Whatever be the reason of being of that reality, it must conduce to the good of man. the question however, is does technology have any reason for its being? If it does, is its rationality being achieved in its progress today? Yes, technology has rationality and its rationality is not only of its meaning but also is the goal of its progress. Nevertheless, in its progress today, this rationality is not being achieved. Technology should aim at the achievement of man's good. Technology cannot achieve this on its own, rather man should in choosing and deploying technology. Technology is a product of human activity. This is where the idea of *Recta Ratio Agibilum* comes to the fore. It bespeaks of prudence in dealing with technology. While Matthew Nwoko in his celebrated work, "Philosophy of Technology and Nigeria" advocated for *recta ratio agibilum* is dealing with technology on two prongs – in production and in consummation, I argue that these two as important as they are, must be seen to stand on a foundation for its meaningfulness and workability, otherwise production and consummation of technological products can be open ended. I will return to this proposition.

In other to achieve the rationality of technology, there is need for the adoption of right appetite for technology as a viable option. This cuts across every user of technology both directly and indirectly. Man's active involvement in the contemporary technological culture makes him either a producer or and a consumer. What he produces or and what he consumes is a product of his appetite. However, the problem of man's life as a consumer of technological product in relationship to his destiny as a person is the question of the ethics of right appetite which is linked with right reason of man. Right appetite is the conformity of man's desires to his rational nature. The genuineness of human choice is judged based on its conformity with right

appetite (Nwoko 112; Obioha, *Controlling Technology* 52). Reason should therefore legislate and guide human appetite to make it conduce to human well-being. The role of reason is to rule over the passions and guide the lower appetite to achieve right end. In other to achieve his rational end, man must cultivate the right appetite for technological products. He must be selective, guided by reason, of what he consumes in the techno culture.

But right appetite is not limited to what he consumes as a technological product, but also extends to what he produces as a technological producer. Although the vocation of the scientist is to lay bare the richness of nature, the curiosity of the scientist should be a guided curiosity, as I have stated above in corroboration to Joy's sentiment, tempered with the advancement of man's good. The scientist or the technologist should not be a "mere robot" of researches and experiments irresistibly tearing nature open out of curiosity without a plan of employing it to the good of man. In fact, where the good of man and the interest of the technologist clashes, the later should give way to the former. This is to say, there is an important ethical dimension in scientific inquiry grounded on humanism. A genuine scientist and technologist is the one who starts his pursuit as a humanist. He must at all times, before and after, challenge his research and experiments to an imperative of universal rationality and morality. To cultivate the right appetite in production and consummation, our scientist cum technologist need be guided by the ideal of *recta ratio agibilum*. Carl Grindel calls it, "the virtue that assures that man will easily select the right means in order to perform acts that will lead to his end as man" (64).

Within the context of this work, *Recta Ratio Agibilum* is used to describe the rational foundation for the utilization or deployment of technology in the service of man. In relation to technology, man will be doing himself a lot of good if he employs this principle (*Recta Ratio Agibilium*) to control his desire for technological goods and services in accordance with right reason and order the satisfaction of needs to conduce to his rational end. Matthew Nwoko had earlier rationalized this principle in relation to man's technological culture. However, Nwoko limited the application of this principle only to the kind of technology that man produces and consumes. As much as Nwoko is right in arguing for the need for man to apply prudence (right reason) in what he produces and consumes, I argue that Nwoko misses the foundation that makes the cultivation and application of prudence effective. That foundation is the right conception (adequate understanding) which leads to right action. There is a connection between understanding and action. Right understanding leads to right action. On the other hand, wrong conception or understanding leads to bad action.

I therefore add the foundation which I consider the first that grounds the other two. That foundation is (right) conception – the right and adequate conception/understanding of the human person. In the whole idea of technology, man is the subject – the producer and consumer of technology. If man is understood as a machine- as matter pure and simple, just as the scientific understanding of man which we presented above, then what he produces and consumes will be tailored to meet his needs as a material being or entity. The dehumanization of the human person is taken for granted with a materialistic conception of man. The moment the "inner aspects" of man are denied; at all times when the autonomy and the moral status of the human person are sacrificed on the alter of materialism, then the dehumanization of his personality is inevitable. A pure materialistic understanding and description of the human person (which is reductionistic as if that is all there is about him) makes possible technological production and consumption that is antithetical to his all-round wellbeing as a material cum spiritual entity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Emerging technologies are products of man's curiosity to understand nature and manipulate nature in the production of artifacts for man's good. However, as much as curiosity is a natural drive in man as a homo sapient, curiosity needs to be a guided curiosity otherwise it will lead to the destruction of her good. Consequently, the right production and consumption of technology is a testament of a guided curiosity made possible by the right/adequate conception or understanding of the human person as a material/immaterial, physical/spiritual being with inherent dignity that must be seen, acknowledged and protected at all times for the realization of her all-round wellbeing.

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Article   **Open Access**

WHAT *REALLY* IS COMMON SENSE? A DEFENSE IN THE LIGHT OF G. E MOORE'S EPISTEMOLOGY

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Abstract
This work explores the question regarding the 'common sense' view of the world as postulated in G. E. Moore's analytic philosophy. It part ways with the views of scholars, philosophers who have engaged in the dominative historical problem of knowledge and who have as well attempted to either prove that something exists or that material substance do not exist. Originating from this is the idealism of Hegel. For him, neither material entities nor space and time exist. This thought found its extremity in the views of the neo-Hegelians such as Francis Bradley and McTaggert who equally denied the existence of the material world, space and time. The above epistemic impasse prompted G.E. Moore to defend the existence of the material world, space and time through what he called the common sense view of the world and the prove of the external world. Some of the objectives set to guide this study are; to examine the post Hegelians - Bradley and McTaggart on reality; and to determine through Moore's view of proposition and truism of common sense how necessary and possible that reality exists. This study adopts the method of *content analysis.* This involves textual analysis, conceptual analysis, contextual analysis and evaluation. Thus, this research demonstrates that G. E. Moore's 'common sense' picture of the world is absolutely true because its propositions are commonly understood by everyone who speaks the language and it consists of evidently true propositions which are obvious and indubitable. The study recommends, amongst others, that scientists must look into philosophical findings for the possibility of discoveries that can occasion a paradigm shift.

Keywords: Common Sense, Epistemology, Reality, Idealism.

Introduction

The philosophy of ordinary language preceded idealistic philosophy because Hegel's idealism was prevalent in British territories towards the end of the nineteenth century. As such, those who made an effort to popularize his thoughts were Francis Bradley and James McTaggart, among others. These philosophers are referred to as neo-Hegelians. One central thought or belief of the neo-Hegelians is the assumption that 'time' and 'space' are not real. These views actually do contradict our common sense perception of the world.   This idea of the neo-Hegelians is what prompted the criticism and rejection of idealism in Britain and the birth of the analytic movement that was led by G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein. As popularly held by most authors, Moore was the leading figure who started the revolt on idealism

in Britain, it was him who brought about the downfall of idealism and gave early twentieth century thought its thrust towards realism. One critical point of this attack was to establish the fact that "things and facts about things are dependent for their existence and their nature upon the operation of a mind" (White 174). Thus, this work is confronted with some questions viz; what then or *really* is common sense? How can we prove common sense propositions to be true or false? And finally, can common sense communicate any valid knowledge to us?

The Post-Hegelians on Reality

After Hegel's death in 1831, those who were his adherents and followers broke into two major groups known as the Hegelian left wing and the Hegelian right wing. From these groups, the Hegelian system spread to the twentieth century. "A group of British and American thinkers, whose philosophy of idealism and adoption of Hegelian dialectics gave them a common bond, became known as neo-Hegelians" (Sahakian 203). The growing trend of the neo-Hegelians was to revive Hegel's idea that; the universe as we know it to be is the manifestation of the absolute spirit and that, things cannot be known separately from each other. Among the notable neo-Hegelians were James McTaggart and Herbert Bradley.

John McTaggart

John McTaggart as a neo-Hegelian was concerned with the problem of being and existence. His method of analysis is unique and different from other Hegelians. This is evident in his thesis that, "Hegel's philosophy is the question of the relation between the succession of the categories in the dialectic and the succession of events in time" (McTaggart 490). But that, whatever that exist can be known through the individual experience for they are substance. In his book, *Nature of Existence* volume 1, Uduma O. Uduma notes that McTaggart argues that things actually do exist; but that they are related to each other and this relationship of substance does not take away their infinite nature. Substance in his view has parts and, in this regard, they are considered as being personal. McTaggart in this respect can be considered as a Personalist: this which has to do with his view on metaphysical pluralism as distinct from Hegelian metaphysical monism. In this way he rejects the idea of a God. For him, the idea of an absolute is only possible when we begin to look at things as a unity of the selves. As each substance possesses its separate parts and is distinct, its parts however should not be seen as possessing a personality. Sahakian posits that, "the Absolute is related to its parts in the same way that a college is related to its members ... the college and its members are spiritual entities but only the individual members may properly be considered persons" (278).

However, in the second volume of the *Nature of Existence,* Uduma records that, McTaggart equally denies the existence of material things. "He applied these results to the empirical world and argues that matter is unreal, since its parts cannot be determined by determining correspondence" (19). It is from this that McTaggart rejected the idea of 'time', in his work titled *Time and the Hegelian Dialectics* of which he tried to interpret the Hegelian theses concerning the universe of which from Hegel, "the Absolute is the whole ... the Absolute is not something that transcends existence; it is the whole of existence itself understood as a system in which each part is organically and inseparably related to every other" (Magee 19-20). In this process, reality unfolds and becomes rational and reality is equally what is known in Hegel's view as Pure Being. This idea or process is what Hegel refers to as dialectics, which forms part of his major works on logic. It is the unfolding stages of Absolute idea that McTaggart sees as that which is finite and not infinite. However, in *"Time and the Hegelian Dialectic,* McTaggart puts up some propositions to discard any idea as to the existence of time. This is because, it cannot be used as an explanation of the absolute idea, due to its finite nature and any attempt

to postulate infinite time would lead to what he refers to as, "false infinite ..., of endless aggregation" (McTaggart 491).

The development of this Hegelian thought leads one to question the scientific believes of cause and effect, because it is commonly held that every event has a cause which requires the existence of time. The idea of cause and effect implies the non-existence state of affair, event of a phenomenon must require the existence of time and time in Hegelian dialectics is a contradiction to the idea of Pure Being or Absolute. For this reason, McTaggart posits that:

> Time, as Hegel expresses it, is that which is outside itself. It has no principle of unity or coherence. It can only be limited by something outside itself... thus no event in time could be accepted as an ultimate beginning (492).

To think of the absolute idea in time became unacceptable, though, some philosophers may want to argue that events are explained in the same way as the manifestation of the absolute idea. And this implies for them that; the existence of anything at the beginning is the Pure Being. On the other hand, the Hegelian dialectic conceives of reality as a whole. That, which makes any existence in time, to be impossible, because in reality, the universe must correspond to the Absolute idea. Following from this Hegelian thesis, the Absolute idea or dialectics is not one which occurs in time but one which is eternal. With this also, we can only arrive at Hegel's dictum that, the rational is real and the real is rational.

Francis Herbert Bradley

Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924) was born in London and attended the University of Oxford. Despite his not being able to attain success academically, he is however one of British greatest philosophers, through his most celebrated work titled *Appearance and Reality.* His work influenced the likes of Bertrand Russell and George Edward Moore who later reacted to his idealism. Bradley as a neo-Hegelian supported Hegel's monistic approach to reality that; reality is a process and it is equally known as the absolute. That, the absolute, is not one, to be conceived as different from the world. Apart from his work, *Appearance and Reality,* he wrote other works such as *The Presuppositions of Critical History, Ethical Studies and the Principles of Logic.*

Bradley's famous work is his *Appearance and Reality* published in 1893. The work is divided into two significant parts and both are highly metaphysical in nature because they contain issues about the conception of reality. It must be noted that Bradley is among the many neo-Hegelians who try to expound the metaphysical works of Hegel. For him, "metaphysics is an attempt to go beyond the appearance and get to the reality which then reveals itself as a coherent totality, an un-fragmented whole" (Omoregbe 3). Through metaphysics, one finds inadequate - some common sense, scientific, popular religious theses about reality. These cannot be used to ascertain what constitute the nature of the absolute, because as deduced from the Hegelian thesis that, the absolute is the totality of the whole and not any separate part. In line with this, Walsh notes that:

> Among the notions which Bradley examines in this part of his work are these. First, the view, common enough philosophically minded students of natural science, that we can get at the truth of things by distinguishing two sorts of qualities in them, primary and secondary, the first of which indubitably characterize while the second are derivative and subjective. Secondly, the common sense idea that the familiar categories of thing, quality, every day notions of space and time suffice for a full and adequate description of the world (429).

This is because since these views are held by men and they are parts of nature and the absolute, they cannot comprehend it as it truly is. In this sense, all relation of a thing and its ideas are contradictory to what constitute the absolute reality since it must be a complete whole. "Using the infinite regress argument … according to which ... if one posits the existence of two or more things, then there must be relations of some sort or other between them, and then ... conclude that there must be further relations between these relations ad infinitum" (Uduma 15). This is what is impossible: to define the nature of the absolute; the extreme of his arguments has to do with the contradiction of human thought because they are deduced from mere appearances, which are arrived at through experience. He equally argues that none of the attributes of substance, qualities and its relations are a part of the true nature of reality. This leads to the argument that: the absolute is not many and there is no independent reality. Hence, metaphysics or "man as a metaphysical animal who cannot help but philosophize as he tries to reconcile the contradictions in the appearance of things" (Sahakian 281). It is the nature of the Absolute to harmonize all these contradictions.

What *Really* is Common Sense in the Light of Moore's Epistemology?

Having noted the positions of the idealist philosophers such as Francis Herbert Bradley and John McTaggart on reality, George Edward Moore found it necessary to come to the aid of Common Sense. In 1925 Moore published his work titled *A Defense of Common Sense* in which he listed a number of common sense propositions that he argues to know with certainty. For him, the common sense picture of the world is absolutely true, because, its propositions are commonly understood by everyone who speaks the language and "it consists of evidently true propositions, which are obvious and indubitable. For otherwise, our language and actions would be unintelligible" (Coliva 19). But then, what is common sense in Moore's conception?

Moore, it must be noted never actually gave a definition of what common sense is in his philosophy. Whatever that is sensed as his idea of common sense is implicit in his description of the concept as posited in his work titled, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* where he states the common sense view as:

> There are, it seems to me, certain views about the nature of the universe,
> which are held, nowadays, by almost everybody. They are so universally held
> that they may, I think, fairly be called the views of common senses (Moore 2).

Since it is the case that we can deduce Moore's conception of a common kind of inquiry that is neither too narrow nor naive, an investigation that charts a course between dogmatism and looking at both views of idealism, dogmatism and distinct worlds, and common sense in Moore's philosophy is a systematic way of rejecting both conceptions of reality. This is because, for the idealist, it reacts to any proposition that claims that it has *a priori* knowledge of the essential nature of phenomena and on the other hand, it rejects the unreasonable skeptical statements which is directed as a reaction against dogmatism which is of the view that we can have no knowledge of phenomena. Furthermore, Moore intends common sense to be a starting point for both philosophy and science because common sense "believes that there are in the universe, at least, two different kinds of things ... material objects —and also a very great number of mental acts or acts of consciousness" (Moore 4). Common sense establishes a relationship between both. Though overtime some commonly held believe may change, this cannot take away the fact that there are material objects in the world. It is in this regard that we think Moore intended the defense of common sense.

Proposition and Truism of Common sense

Here we will attempt to show how Moore defended the truth of common sense by stating some propositions which he believes to know with certainty to be true. He notes that these propositions are of two classes the second of which is a single truism. Thus, he observes:

> I now come to the single truism which, as will be seen, could not be stated except by reference to the whole list of truisms also (in my own opinion) I know, with certainty to be true (Moore *Philosophical Papers* 34).

In what follows, we shall quote Moore's defense of common sense as much as we dim necessary. Moore writes:

> There exists at present a living human body, which is my body.
> This body was born at a certain time in the past, and has existed continuously ever since, though not without undergoing changes; it was, for instance, much smaller when it was born, and for some time afterwards, than it is now. Ever since it was born, it has been either in contact with or not far from the surface of the earth. Among the things which have, in this sense, formed part of its environment there have, at every moment since its birth, been large numbers of other living human bodies, each of which has, like it, (a) at some time been born, (b) continued to exist from sometime after birth. (c) Been at every moment of its life after birth, either in contact with or not far from the surface of the earth; and many of these bodies have already died and ceased to exist.... Finally (to come to a different class of propositions), I am a human being, and I have, at different time since my body was born had many different experiences, of each, of many different kinds: E.g. (sic) I have often perceived both my own body and other things which formed part of its environment including other human bodies (Moore *Philosophical Papers* 33).

He goes on to state:

> I now come to the single truism which, as will be seen, could not be stated except by reference to the whole list of truisms, just given in (1). This truism also (in my own opinion) I know, with certainty to be true; and it is as follows: In the case of very many (I do not say   all of the human beings belonging to the class (which includes myself) defined in the following way, i.e. as human beings who have had human bodies, that were born and lived for some time upon the earth ... it is true that each has frequently, during the life of his body, known, with regard to himself or his body, and with regard to sometime earlier than any of the times at which I wrote down the propositions in (1), In other words what (2) asserts is only (what seems an obvious enough truism) that each of us has frequently known, with regard to himself or his body and the time at which he knew it (Moore *Philosophical papers* 34).

Following from these two propositions, Moore presents two defenses for common sense; this will be our next course of concern. However, for the present, (3) follows from (I) and (2): Just as Moore claims to know that some sort of propositions that are about himself are true - (1) -. There exists at present a living human body, which is my body; similarly, everyone else knows that about each of them. But since (2) which assert that each of us has frequently known, time at which he knew it in its turn, is a common sense truism that Moore claim to know, then not only Moore, but also every one of us knows that another person knows that the propositions in

(1) are true when they are about himself or herself. In order to make clear in what sense Moore was using the word true as pertaining to propositions which may appear ambiguous. He argues that he is using the term in its ordinary usage and when a statement is partially false it follows that it is not true. This, Moore intended should be applicable to his lines of proposition as in (1) and (2) respectively and not in the sense in which some philosophers want to make us understand the philosophical usage of the form true and false as follows:

> Philosophers seem to have thought it legitimate to use the word 'true' in such a sense that a proposition which is partially false may never the less also be true; and some of these, therefore, would perhaps say that propositions like those enumerated in (1) are, in their view, true, when all the time they believe that every such proposition is partially false (Moore *Philosophical Papers* 35).

It is in Moore's view that a skeptic who denies that one can know that there are material objects, such as cars, tables, chairs, beds, and people (both the skeptic and other philosophers alike), maintain a self-contradictory position which cannot be held consistently. However, he recommends considering the existence of material objects and of all other proposition as beliefs which is different from knowledge *per se,* which makes up the common sense picture of the world. In other case, "some would even say that we know them to be highly probable; but they deny that we ever know them, for certain, to be true ..." (Moore *Philosophical Papers* 42). And some skeptics in denying common sense propositions would likewise maintain that: No human being has ever had knowledge of the existence of other human beings; which is not just about the skeptic himself, but also about all other human beings, whose existence he is calling into doubt. To put it otherwise, when a skeptic says, 'no human being has ever had knowledge of the existence of other human beings' he is thereby saying according to Moore, "there have been many human beings, myself included, and none of them has ever had knowledge of other human beings" (Coliva 20). In doing this Moore considered all such propositions to be self-contradictory because it entails two mutually incompatible propositions, since the skeptic makes and assert a proposition concerning human knowledge in general.

Moore goes on to counter the skeptic to have labeled his view a common sense belief, and seems too had failed to accept the fact that they are true because, if they are, the belief that there are material objects and other people is a belief of common sense, but it does not amount to knowledge. This would equally lead to claiming that; there have been many more human beings beyond myself who have shared these beliefs, but neither I nor anyone else who share in this belief has ever known them to be true. In Moore's demonstration every such proposition are self-contradictory, since they assume the existence of common sense beliefs and hence in particular of other objects and humans, but only to deny that it is known that they exist. Deducing from this, Hume posits: "they seem to me constantly to betray the fact that they regard the proposition that those beliefs are beliefs of common sense, or the proposition that they themselves are not the only members of the human race, as not mere true, but certainly true (Moore *Philosophical Papers* 43).

Hence, Moore notes in his defense of common sense against the skeptics; he proceeded to take a position in his defense of common sense.   He claims that "nevertheless, my position that I know, with certainty, to be true all of the propositions in (1), is certainly not a position, the denial of which entails both of two incompatible propositions" (43). In demonstrating this view, for him, the claim to know that propositions stated in (1) to be true, it follows that I think, it is however certain that other human beings also have known the corresponding propositions in (2) to be true therefore (2) is true. And I know such propositions to be true, but are there no

possibility or high probability that these statements are mere belief and not true? To this, Moore responded with certainty "... I only know them because, in them I have known to be true other propositions which were evidence for them" (43).

> To admit that selves and time are real, in the sense required. Other philosophers, on the other hand, have used the expression, time is not real, to express some view that they held ... think, meant by this expression something which is incompatible with the truth of any of the propositions in (1) ... (Moore *Philosophical Papers* 39).

For Moore, though such expressions or propositions as 'space is not real' may be ambiguous, their ordinary usage is all together incompatible with the single truisms of (2). As such, the idealist thesis is false. This is because, the denial of or any attempt to accept the idealist thesis that material objects are not real, will imply that no philosopher has ever existed. This in other words call into question the very spatio-temporal existence of the idealist hence, prohibits him from denying the reality of space, time and selves. That is to say, those philosophers are human beings, who have had experience over time both in the past and present corresponding to Moore's list of truisms. On another note, Moore gave four demonstrations to prove the idealist thesis against material objects, time and space to be false. The first demonstration is that, "(a) If none of the propositions in (2) is true, then no philosopher has ever existed, and thus none can have held that none of the propositions in that class is true" (Moore Philosophical Papers 40).

The prior existence of at least one philosopher in the classes shows that the proposition that humans exist is true and the proposition which denies it, if at all, it is denied is certainly false. In this respect, a 'philosopher' in Moore's view would "mean, of course (as we all do), exclusively philosophers who have been human beings, with human bodies that have lived upon the earth, and who have at different times had many different experiences" (40). From the above, this demonstrates the fact that; if there have been philosophers (the idealist inclusive) and there have been human beings in this class, then all what is asserted in proposition (1) is certainly true. And any view that is incompatible with proposition (1) is also in fact mistaken and wrong. The second demonstration is an appeal to the inconsistency inherent in the thesis of the idealist. According to Moore:

> (b) ... no philosopher has ever been able to hold such views consistently. One way in which they betrayed this inconsistency is by alluding to the existence of other philosophers. Another way is by alluding to the existence of the human race, and in particular by using 'we'.... Any philosopher who asserts that 'we' sometimes believe propositions that are not true," is asserting not only that he himself had done the thing in question, but that very *many* other human beings, who have had bodies and lived upon the earth ... (40).

This postulation, to Moore, is a self-refuting argument, because if philosophers are human beings and are in the class of (1) and they have knowledge of experiences corresponding to (2) then, held views that are inconsistent with propositions which they themselves had believed in are self-contradictory. In the third demonstration, Moore took time out to respond to most of his critics that his list of truisms is not wholly true or that they contained both of two incompatible propositions. Moore proceeded to demonstrate logically his propositions of the list of truisms thus: (c) All of the propositions in (1) are true; no true proposition entails both of two incompatible propositions; therefore, none of the propositions in (1) entails both of two incompatible propositions (Moore *Philosophical Papers* 41). This implies that any of such

arguments put forward against some of the propositions in (1) cannot be true, since according to Moore; the class of (1) is certainly true. The fourth demonstration is to be true:

> (d) Although, as I have urged, no philosopher who has held with regard to any of these types of propositions that no propositions of that type are true, has failed to hold also other view inconsistent with his view in this respect, yet I do not think that the view, with regard to any or all of these types, that no proposition belonging to them is true, is in itself self-contradictory views, i.e. entails both of two incompatible propositions. On the contrary, it seems to me quite clear that it might have been the case that time was not real, material things not real, space not real. Am in favor of my view that none of these things which might have been the case, is in fact the case, I have, I think, no better argument than simply this. Namely, that all the propositions in (1) are, in fact, true (Moore *Philosophical Papers* 42).

Deducing from all these demonstrations it became crystal clear to common sense that; there is an external world. Hence, Moore asserts about his list of truisms that any negation of the propositions entailed by his truisms are not only self-contradictory but certainly false, since his list of truism cannot but be true because: if we know that they are features in the 'common sense view of the world', it follows that they are true: it is self-contradictory to maintain that we know them to be features in the common sense view, and that yet they are not true; since to say that we know this, is to say that they are true (44). Therefore, common sense propositions are the kinds that we need to further prove or evidence for their existence such as his demonstration in his work titled *Proof of an External World*.

Evaluation

A critical assessment of Moore's defense of common sense, certainly could reveal many shortcomings. But we should not take it for granted that his defense of common sense is relevant, because of its role as a foundation to both science and philosophy. This is after he noted the many attacks by philosophers before him and during his time such as George Berkeley, Francis Bradley and John McTaggart and the skeptics on the possibility of common sense to communicate the true nature of reality to us. Hence, in the defense of common sense Moore begins with a list of common sense beliefs which he holds to be as fundamental, so clear as to be not worth mentioning, if it were not for the fact that some philosophers like the idealists and skeptics have said things that appear to be contrary to the propositions of common sense. Thus, his main objective was not solely to refute skepticism and idealism, rather the refutation of skepticism and idealism was a step towards his primary task of defending common sense. For according to Keith DeRose in "Four Forms of Skepticism", Moore considers a skeptical argument of Bertrand Russell's to the conclusion that he does not know, that this, is a pencil or that you are conscious. He demonstrates it thus:

> What I can't help asking myself is this: is it, in fact, as certain that all four of these assumptions are true, as that I do know that this is a pencil or that you are conscious? I cannot help answering: it seems to me more certain that I do know that this is a pencil and that you are conscious, that any single one of these four assumptions are true, let alone all four (3).

Moore's defense of common sense as exposed in this work is conceived to be a starting point to philosophy and, as such, is not the sorts of claims that can be overturned by philosophical arguments. Part of his reason for specifying these propositions in such a careful way, was to

make clear that he was not including among them every proposition that has commonly been believed at one or another time in history. For instance, the proposition that God exist and the inherent goodness or badness of human beings is not included in what Moore means by the truisms of his common sense, no matter how many people may believe them. Suffice to say that Moore's common sense is an appeal to ordinary language; Annalisa Coliva meant this when she argues thus:

> …his truisms are not only known with certainty by (almost) everyone but they are also perfectly well understandable to any competent speaker or English. However, ... such a claim clarifies how, for Moore, there is, on the one hand, an ordinary meaning of words and sentences, and, on the other, a legitimate philosophical activity of analysis of that meaning (16).

For Moore there is an ordinary usage of language and a professional usage of language, such as the use of the term *Time* and *Reality.* To the idealist, the concept of time and reality has a special usage in their philosophy. This is not to say all philosophical problems are pseudo problems. What Moore intends to say is that, the reason why philosophical problems are often so difficult to answer is that sometimes it is not clear in the first place precisely what is being asked?

The first reaction to Moore's common sense philosophy was from Ludwig Wittgenstein, a fellow analytic philosopher from the ordinary language tradition. Both philosophers felt that, the problem in philosophy has to do with the correct usage of language and when once this is solved then everything can be resolved. Hence, ordinary language for them is the correct language. Wittgenstein's criticism is on Moore's use of the phrase 'I know' and 'I am certain'. This can be found in his work titled, *On Certainty.* In this work, Wittgenstein is more concerned on how the meaning of a word can be arrived at. This can also be seen in his other works *the Blue Book* and the *Philosophical Investigations.* "...he contends that in order to understand the exact meaning of a word or phrase or sentence, we have to put it in a context or situation in which it is used (Dutta 5). This reflects his arguments in the language game theory, but that, to get at an appropriate meaning of a word we should go beyond the language game to look at the world-picture. In the world-picture we can know the various ways in which a particular word is used, in it; we can observe the entire framework of propositions, concepts, beliefs and practices. This also represents what Wittgenstein refers to as 'form of life' which is an agreement in conceptual framework, beliefs, practices, social surrounding, and cultural way of life. Furthermore, Wittgenstein posits what is meant by the term world-picture. By world-picture he means something that is shared, which makes communication possible. However, the world-picture of one proposition may be different from that of another proposition of the same proposition at different times, which also shows the differences in their logical status. Thus, for Wittgenstein, Moore took it for granted that language also function in context. No wonder he notes, "Moore failed to note these facts he takes an unchangeable, unique, universally accepted framework of common sense into consideration and thus, failed to study the use of the phrases 'I know' and 'I am certain'" (Dutta 6).

What Wittgenstein is driving at is that taken in isolation, apart from the context in which a word is used or proposition as for instance, "I have two hands", this phrase cannot be said to belong to any particular world-picture, hence it has no use in that sense. Its meaning will depend on the circumstance or context in which it is used and, on the world-picture which it belongs to:

> If... someone says "I don't know if there's a hand here" he might be told "look closer". This possibility of satisfying oneself is part of the language-game is one

of its essential features… if anatomy were under discussion I should say: "I know that twelve pairs of nerves lead from the brain. "I have never seen these nerves, and even a specialist will only have observed them in a few specimens... this just is how the word "know" is correctly used here (Dutta 7).

In Wittgenstein's view, Moore misconceives the phrase in question and the role they play in a particular speech community. Hence, his uses are incorrect. Thus, his defense of common sense is also inappropriate and therefore fails. In 1949, Norman Malcolm raised a similar objection to Moore's defense of common sense. This he focuses on the verb to know in his list of truisms. For Malcolm, the appropriate use of the expression 'I know' with certainty requires that; there be an open question and a doubt to be removed. And the person who makes the assertion be able to produce reasons in favor of his claim to knowledge. Also, it be possible to take an enquiry that could determine what the case is in Malcolm's view, none of these features is respected by Moore in the use of the verb 'to know' in his defense of common sense. "An objection that Malcolm takes into account is that Moore is here responding to a philosophical kind of doubt..., skeptical question is, 'How do you know that there is a hand here"? (Coliva 34). Thus, for Malcolm, there is no enquiry that could determine that reality is a hand, a body, etc.; the more touching and observing only goes to show that Moore misunderstood the nature of skeptical doubts, which cannot be put off by ordinary empirical propositions. Another line of objection to Moore's defense of common sense is Wai-Hung Wong's 'conceptualist idea'. For him, this conceptualist idea marks the difference between our everyday use of language and our philosophical usage. Thus, his aim is to "... show that the skeptic does not really have contradictory beliefs" (Wong 11).   In his view, the theory has two lines of thought and the first of which is referred to as 'the temporal objection' and the second is 'the semantic objection'. According to Wong, the first line of thought states that, "... the difference between the everyday and the philosophical contexts implies temporal exclusion, that is, one cannot be in both contexts at the same time" (Wong 11). To make it clear what he meant by the temporal objection is that; though the skeptic's knowledge-beliefs may contradict his skeptical belief, he does not have a contradictory belief. This is because, "... he has those beliefs in two different contexts, which implies that he has them at two different times" (Wong 13). Thus, the skeptic is only having those doubts when he is in a skeptical frame of mind, which is brought about only by a philosophical thinking. On the other hand, when the skeptic is relieved of his philosophical mode of operation, he picks up his knowledge-beliefs which are necessary for his everyday life and put behind him, his skeptical belief. Thus, words should be given their contextual meaning.

G. E. Moore's renowned argument for the existence of the external world, famously illustrated by his declaration 'Here is one hand', has been subjected to continuous scrutiny by modern epistemologists. Although Moore's argument appears logically valid and straightforward, many recent philosophers argue that it is epistemically inadequate or inherently circular in its reasoning. Crispin Wright, in his work, *Warrant for Nothing and Foundations for Free*, contends that Moore's reasoning fails to effectively transfer epistemic justification from its premises to its conclusion. Wright maintains that, "once one seriously considers skeptical scenarios, such as the possibility of being deceived or dreaming, perceptual experiences can no longer serve as reliable grounds for belief in the external world". He goes on to emphasize that, "one's experience would lose all tendency to corroborate the particular propositions about the material world which I normally take to be certain" (Wright 337). Wright further clarifies that the justification for Moore's claim 'I have hands' cannot be extended to justify the broader claim 'there is an external world', precisely because the very connection between perception and the external

world is what skepticism fundamentally calls into question" (Wright 178). Michael Williams offers a broader and more critical perspective, conceding that Moore may successfully block specific skeptical claims. However, Williams argues that Moore's approach fails to address the deeper structural motivations behind skepticism. He suggests that Moore's defense does little to explain why skeptical arguments are flawed and contributes nothing towards the construction of a more robust epistemological theory. As Williams states, "Moore's strategy does not show what is wrong with skeptical arguments … and contributes nothing to a broader understanding of epistemic justification" (93).

Another philosopher James Pryor, in his essay, *What's Wrong with Moore's Argument?* offers a related but distinct critique, acknowledging that Moore's argument might provide justification for someone who already accepts its conclusion. However, Pryor argues that the argument lacks persuasive power in a philosophical debate because it does not directly engage with the skeptic's underlying premises or reasoning. He describes Moore's approach as 'odd' since it merely reiterates the conclusion without effectively undermining the skeptic's challenge (Pryor 350). Consequently, Moore's argument is considered dialectically weak, capable of reassuring a believer but offering no compelling reason for a skeptic to change their mind. Building on these concerns, Nicholas Silins and Aidan McGlynn utilize Thomas Bayes' reasoning to expose further weaknesses in Moore's position. Silins argues that if skeptical scenarios are assigned even a small degree of initial credibility, the likelihood of Moore's conclusion being true based on sensory evidence significantly diminishes, causing Moore's perceptual beliefs to lose justificatory strength under conditions of doubt (Silins 76-78). McGlynn adds that Moore's confidence in common sense relies on epistemic conservatism -the idea that one is justified in maintaining beliefs in the absence of defeaters -but this conservatism becomes unstable when the entire belief system is under scrutiny (McGlynn 185-187).

G. E. Moore's defense of common sense, also encountered substantial criticism from contemporary philosophers, particularly his assertion that everyday beliefs like, "I have hands are more certain than skeptical hypotheses" (Moore 273). A primary objection is that Moore's argument is 'epistemically circular'. Critics like Barry Stroud, Ernest Sosa, etc., say he presupposes the reliability of sense perception to establish the existence of external objects, which is precisely the point skepticism challenges. For Stroud, "one cannot legitimately claim to know that an external world exists by depending on experiences whose trustworthiness is the very subject of the skeptic's doubt (Stroud 88). Sosa similarly argues that, "Moore's method fails to confront the skeptic on their own terms and does not provide the rigorous, reflective justification that philosophical inquiry demands" (Sosa 147). Critics Further highlight that Moore offers no clear, principled criteria for determining why certain beliefs should be considered undeniably true. This lack of criteria leaves his defense open to accusations of arbitrariness, especially considering historical precedents where widely accepted common sense beliefs, such as the geocentric model of the universe or phrenology, have later been disproven. This critical stance is further supported by naturalistic and cognitive scientific perspectives, which demonstrate that perception and intuition are frequently prone to bias and error (Churchland 308). Another significant line of criticism originates from contextualist epistemologists like David Lewis and Stewart Cohen, who argue that the validity of knowledge claims is highly dependent on their context. They contend that what qualifies as 'knowing' something can vary significantly based on the specific conversational or philosophical setting. Lewis articulates this by, "stating that while individuals might 'know many things, in the ordinary sense', in philosophical contexts where skeptical possibilities are prominent, their knowledge is considerably diminished" (Lewis 550). Cohen similarly asserts that, "in situations where skeptical scenarios are raised, 'the

standards for knowledge rise', thereby weakening the persuasive force of Moore's assertions" (91). Additionally, critics have pointed to the phenomenon of 'Moorean inversion', where a skeptic can reverse Moore's argument. This allows the skeptic to propose, for instance, "If I don't know that I'm not a brain in a vat, then I don't know I have hands" (Stroud 92). This reversal suggests that Moore's strategy does not genuinely refute skepticism but rather relies on a clash of differing intuitions, leaving the epistemological dispute unresolved and without a definitive conclusion (Stroud 92).

What we have observed above from Wittgenstein, Malcolm, Wong, Wright, Williams, Pryor, Silins, McGlynn, Stroud, Sosa and others is their objection to Moore's use of the phrase 'I have hands' which is tagged 'epistemically circular' and 'I know'. Hence, on another note, we wish to point at something different in Moore's thesis in his *A Defense of Common Sense* and *Some Main Problems in Philosophy.* This has to do with the dichotomy between belief and knowledge, which for Moore, in his work, can be used interchangeably. But in our opinion both words cannot be used in that sense. In his work, titled, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy,* Moore implicitly used the phrase 'common sense believes' to mean knowledge of an object when he stated that, "... common sense believes that there are in the universe, at least two different kinds of things. There are... materials objects... and... mental acts (4), whereas he uses the phrase 'I know' in his *A Defense of Common Sense",* they are, in fact, a set of propositions, every one of which ... I know, with certainty..." (Moore *Philosophical Papers* 33). This is one of the inconsistencies that is inherent in his postulation. To this extent, the claim we have of the existence of an object does not mean that the object exists in the true nature of the term; one can hold a belief claim of something without really having knowledge of it. If as stated by Moore that, "the most important... thing which philosophers have tried to do is no less than…, to give a general description of the whole of the universe..." (1), then this description cannot be based on their beliefs but on truth that is objective. Since many of the things we commonly believe in has changed with time, as for instance, it was generally believed that 'the earth is at the center of the universe' of course this notion has changed with the modern and contemporary view as follows, that, the sun is at the center of the universe and that, neither the earth nor the sun is at the center of the universe.

Summary and Conclusion

From the foregoing, we saw that G.E. Moore's defense of common sense is primarily as a counter to Hegelian idealism. Neo-Hegelians like Francis Bradley and James McTaggart argued that 'time', 'space', and material reality are not truly existent, positing instead a monistic 'absolute' and denying material existence. This contradiction with everyday experience prompted Moore to champion common sense view theory. Moore contended that the common sense view of the world is 'absolutely true' and 'universally held' by nearly everyone. He proposed it as a fundamental starting point for both philosophy and science. To prove its veracity, Moore presented what he calls 'truisms', -propositions he claimed to know with certainty, such as the continuous existence of his body, the environment, and the presence of other human bodies and their experiences. He clarified that 'true' implied entirely true, not partially false. Moore argued that skeptics and idealists' denial of these common sense propositions are 'self-contradictory', as they implicitly assume the existence of what they deny. He offered four demonstrations against the idealist thesis, highlighting logical inconsistencies and asserting that his truisms are, in fact, true, hence invalidating arguments against them. Despite its foundational role, Moore's defense faced significant criticisms. Ludwig Wittgenstein and Norman Malcolm questioned Moore's use of 'I know'. Wittgenstein emphasized that language's meaning is

context-dependent, operating within a 'world-picture' or 'form of life', which Moore failed to consider. Malcolm argued that 'I know' with certainty requires an open question, doubt, and reasons, which Moore did not provide against philosophical skepticism. Wong introduced the 'temporal exclusion' idea, suggesting that skeptical beliefs occur in different contexts or times, thus not constituting inherent contradictions. This study also noted an inconsistency in Moore's interchangeable use of 'belief' and knowledge', considering that common beliefs can undergo disproof over time. Since many of the things we commonly believe in has changed with time, as for instance, it was generally believed that, 'the earth is at the center of the universe' of course this notion has changed with the modern and contemporary view as follows, that, the sun is at the center of the universe and that, neither the earth nor the sun is at the center of the universe. On another note, modern and contemporary epistemologists like Wright, Williams, Pryor, Silins, McGlynn, Stroud, Sosa and others hold primarily the objection that Moore's argument is 'epistemically circular' which is seen in Moore's use of the phrase 'I have hands'; they say he presupposes the reliability of sense perception to establish the existence of external objects, which is precisely the point skepticism challenges.

Ultimately, Moore's primary goal was to defend common sense as a foundational concept, using the refutation of skepticism and idealism as a means to that end. His methodology relied heavily on the analysis and clarification of ordinary language. This essay underscores the enduring philosophical challenge of defining knowledge and the role of doubt. Which is why Philosophy, according to Aristotle, began when human's curiosity and wonder caused them to enquire about the nature of things. Thus, the question of truth is one of the most important questions of our life which no man can do without in his concrete existence. This work from the onset was confronted with the question of what *really* is common sense? How can we prove common sense propositions to be true or false? And how can common sense communicate any valid knowledge to us? Hence, when we try to describe how we know something, we discover that we do not really have a clear idea of what it means to know. In Bertrand Russell's view, the theory of knowledge is a product of doubt. He holds that when we ask ourselves whether we really know anything at all, we are led into an examination of knowing, in the hope of being able to distinguish trustworthy beliefs from such as are untrustworthy. No wonder the history of science and thought is replete with theories that have been thoroughly believed by the wisest men and were then thoroughly discredited. Repeatedly people have attempted to impose their beliefs on others and punish those who rejected them. There have been many 'martyrs' whose 'crimes' were that they challenged the 'infallible wisdom' of the rulers of their society. If so much, of what had been taken as certain, could prove to be false or doubtful, then how can we ever be certain of anything, which is why in our critical evaluation we were of the view that the common sense concept of Moore should not be taken for granted that his defense of common sense is relevant, because of its role as a foundation to both science and philosophy.

Moore's aim was not just to refute skepticism and idealism, but, the refutation of skepticism and idealism was an attempt towards his main task of defending common sense, of course, using the tool of ordinary language. Hence, while common sense view is his theory, ordinary language is his method. That is why, for Moore, philosophy is the analysis and description of the world as a whole. It is of common sense statements of ordinary language; which the task of philosophy is to analyze and clarify them. With this Moore could also be termed as a leading proponent of the ordinary language philosophy.

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Article   **Open Access**

PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

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Abstract
The study of communication and media has undergone profound transformations with the ascent of digital technologies, necessitating renewed philosophical inquiry. This paper critically appraises contemporary communication and media studies through philosophical lenses, focusing on epistemological, ethical, and ontological concerns. It integrates Luciano Floridi's concept of the infosphere, highlighting the evolving informational environment shaped by digital media. Utilizing a multidisciplinary method, the analysis draws on hermeneutics, phenomenology, and critical theory to examine the implications of media technologies on human understanding, social relations, and identity construction. Results reveal a tension between media as tools of empowerment and manipulation, raising questions about authenticity, agency, and the role of information ethics. The paper concludes by advocating a philosophically informed media literacy that embraces the complexities of the infosphere and promotes critical engagement. By integrating classical philosophical insights with contemporary media theory and digital ethics, this study provides a distinctive and forward-looking framework for advancing interdisciplinary scholarship.

Keywords: Epistemology, Ontology, Digital Ethics, Hermeneutics, Information Society.

Introduction

In the last century, the disciplines of communication and media studies have evolved rapidly alongside technological progress. As communication channels proliferated from print and broadcast to the vast digital landscapes of the 21st century, the foundational theories of how we exchange meaning, knowledge, and identity have come under increasing scrutiny. What was once conceptualized through models of sender, message, and receiver has now been eclipsed by dynamic, decentralized networks embedded within what Luciano Floridi calls the "infosphere," an environment in which digital, social, and informational systems converge and redefine human existence (Floridi 6). In this complex terrain, philosophical inquiry becomes not only relevant but indispensable. Yet, philosophy has always interrogated the structures of meaning, truth, and reality. It provides the tools to ask not just how communication works, but what it is, what it does, and how it should be practised ethically. From ancient rhetoric to modern semiotics, philosophy has informed our understanding of signs, discourse, agency, and interpretation. Today's information ecology, driven by algorithmic media, surveillance capitalism, and artificial

intelligence, brings new urgency to these age-old questions. Philosophers such as Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, and Floridi offer distinct frameworks for analyzing the social, technological, and ethical dimensions of mediated communication.

This paper offers a critical appraisal of communication and media studies through a philosophical lens. It explores the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying media systems, critically assesses hermeneutic approaches to meaning and interpretation, and evaluates the ethical demands of communication in the digital age. Particular attention is paid to the philosophical implications of the infosphere, as it reshapes notions of agency, presence, and identity. By drawing from both classical and contemporary traditions, this paper aims to highlight the indispensable role of philosophy in cultivating a deeper understanding of communication in our media-saturated world. Far from being peripheral or abstract, philosophical engagement with communication offers essential insights into how humans construct reality, build communities, and make sense of the world. In doing so, it reclaims the normative dimension of media theory, reminding us that how we communicate not only reflects but also shapes what we value, who we are, and how we live together. Hence, we see the ontology of communication and media succinctly.

Ontology of Communication and Media

Ontology, the philosophical study of being, provides a foundational lens for analyzing communication and media. When we ask what communication is or what it means to "be" in a mediated world, we invoke ontological questions. The ontology of communication addresses not just the mechanics of message transmission, but the nature of the realities it constructs and sustains. In this light, media are not neutral conduits of information; they are ontologically active, shaping and reshaping our conceptions of space, time, presence, and selfhood. Classical ontological discussions of communication can be traced to thinkers like Aristotle, who framed rhetoric as a techne - an art of shaping belief. However, the rise of digital media has demanded deeper ontological reflection. Martin Heidegger's conception of *Being-in-the-world* is particularly instructive. In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger argues that technology is not just a tool but a mode of revealing - a way the world shows up to us (Heidegger 12). Media technologies, then, do not simply mediate; they disclose realities. The smartphone, the television, and the algorithmic feed are not merely devices; they are ontological environments in which beings encounter one another and the world.

This ontological dimension becomes even more pronounced in Luciano Floridi's theory of the *infosphere*. Floridi reconceptualizes our digital environment as an all-encompassing informational habitat, wherein human and non-human agents - data, code, networks - interact ontologically (Floridi 9). In the infosphere, existence is informational. We do not merely use information; we are constituted by it. Profiles, posts, search histories, biometric data - these digital artifacts co-constitute our identities in ways that blur the lines between physical and virtual being. Moreover, the ontology of media includes questions of presence and absence. In mediated communication, the "other" is often not physically co-present, yet their mediated presence exerts ontological force. Philosopher Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance* is relevant here: meaning and presence are always deferred through systems of signs. Media amplify this deferral, producing presence in absence and vice versa. A voice note or livestream, for example, is a being-there of the other, even as the other is not actually there.

These ontological structures are not uniform. Media ontologies are plural and context-dependent. Oral cultures, for instance, embody communication in temporally immediate and corporeally situated ways, while digital cultures abstract and archive. In oral contexts, meaning

resides in performance and memory. In digital contexts, it resides in code and algorithm. Each medium, following Marshall McLuhan, is a form of extension - of our senses, bodies, and consciousness (McLuhan 7). As extensions, media also delimit what kinds of beings can emerge and what kinds of relations can be sustained. The ontological implications are profound. If being is now shaped by information systems, then media theorists must grapple with questions such as: What does it mean to exist in a mediated form? What forms of agency are possible within algorithmic environments? What kinds of beings are being created, commodified, or erased by media systems? These are no longer speculative questions; they are existential.

In summary, the ontology of communication and media requires moving beyond content and representation to consider how media shape being itself. Heidegger's insights into technology as revealing, Floridi's concept of the infosphere, and Derrida's play of presence and absence all converge to show that media are not just vessels of meaning - they are conditions of possibility for our being-in-the-world. However, the subsequent subheadings will unveil better.

Epistemology and Knowledge Formation in Media

Epistemology, the philosophical study of knowledge: its nature, sources, limits, and justification, is central to understanding the function of communication and media. In a world saturated with information, discerning truth from falsehood, knowledge from opinion, and evidence from manipulation is increasingly challenging. Media are not passive conduits of knowledge but active agents in epistemic formation. They influence what is known, how it is known, and who is authorized to know. The epistemic function of media, therefore, necessitates philosophical scrutiny, particularly in the age of the infosphere. Traditionally, knowledge was bound to direct experience or authoritative institutions such as religion, science, or academia. Media radically altered this structure. With the printing press, mass literacy and the democratization of knowledge emerged. Radio and television centralized narrative control, while the internet fragmented it. Each transition has been epistemically consequential. In contemporary digital environments, epistemology is increasingly shaped by algorithms, virality, and network effects. Truth is not always determined by verifiability but by shareability. As philosopher Harry Frankfurt warned, the age of *bullshit* - statements made without concern for truth - has flourished in digital media (Frankfurt 33).

Epistemology in media studies must grapple with the "attention economy," where media platforms commodify cognitive engagement. Here, knowledge is not only a product but also a process influenced by design. Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok prioritize content that is emotionally resonant or controversial, often at the expense of factual reliability. These platforms algorithmically shape epistemic environments that reinforce confirmation bias and filter bubbles. Philosopher Miranda Fricker's concept of *epistemic injustice* becomes relevant: marginalized voices are often silenced or discredited within dominant media narratives, perpetuating structural inequities (Fricker 1). Floridi's contribution to epistemology through information ethics is particularly noteworthy. He challenges classical epistemology's anthropocentric bias by recognizing the agency of non-human informational entities. In the infosphere, knowledge emerges not only from human subjects but also from data systems, artificial intelligence, and automated processes (Floridi 11). The epistemic authority of search engines, recommendation algorithms, and large language models suggests that knowledge production has become distributed, decentralized, and post-human. In this context, the philosopher's task is not only to evaluate claims but to interrogate the architecture of epistemic environments.

One key concern is *credibility*. Philosopher Alvin Goldman's theory of social epistemology insists on the importance of reliable processes and expert testimony in knowledge formation. Yet, in online environments, traditional markers of credibility - peer review, institutional affiliation, expertise - are often devalued or replaced by social signals such as likes, shares, and followers. This shift complicates the epistemic landscape, enabling misinformation and disinformation to flourish. The epistemological implications are serious: when virality trumps validity, the democratic potential of media is undermined. The collapse of epistemic hierarchies also raises questions about *knowledge pluralism*. On the one hand, digital media enable subaltern and counter-hegemonic voices to emerge, disrupting monopolies on truth. On the other hand, this pluralism can lead to relativism, where all claims are treated as equally valid, regardless of their epistemic grounding. Philosophers must therefore balance the ethical imperative of inclusivity with the epistemic demand for justification.

Hermeneutic philosophers like Hans-Georg Gadamer emphasize the role of *dialogue* and *fusion of horizons* in understanding. Digital media offer unprecedented opportunities for intercultural dialogue but also create echo chambers that isolate perspectives. This dialectic challenges the Enlightenment ideal of the public sphere, theorized by Habermas, where rational discourse leads to consensus. Today's fragmented digital public spheres often hinder deliberation, as rhetorical spectacle replaces reasoned argument. In response, a reformed epistemology of media must consider *procedural ethics* and *technological design*. Media literacy must move beyond individual critical thinking to include systemic awareness of how media infrastructures shape knowledge. Philosophy can offer conceptual clarity, normative criteria, and dialogical models to evaluate the epistemic integrity of media systems. In conclusion, epistemology and media studies intersect profoundly in the digital age. From the credibility of sources to the architecture of information flows, the philosophical study of knowledge must account for the mediating role of technology. By integrating classical theories with contemporary challenges, philosophers can contribute to a more just and robust epistemic environment in the infosphere.

Hermeneutics and Media Interpretation

Hermeneutics, the philosophical study of interpretation, offers vital insights into how meaning is produced, negotiated, and contested in communication and media. Originally concerned with interpreting sacred texts and legal documents, hermeneutics has evolved into a broader theory of understanding. In a media-saturated world, where texts range from tweets and memes to films and deepfakes, the question of how meaning is interpreted - by whom, in what context, and to what end - has gained fresh urgency. At the heart of hermeneutics is the recognition that meaning is not intrinsic to texts but emerges in the interplay between text and interpreter. Hans-Georg Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, emphasizes the dialogical nature of interpretation. He introduces the concept of the *fusion of horizons*, where the historical and cultural contexts of both the text and the reader merge to create understanding (Gadamer 305). In media studies, this suggests that interpretation is never neutral or objective. Every viewer, listener, or reader brings to the media encounter a set of presuppositions shaped by language, culture, ideology, and experience.

This insight is especially relevant in the digital age, where texts are often multimodal, interactive, and rapidly disseminated. The hermeneutic circle - the process by which understanding emerges through the back-and-forth between parts and whole - becomes even more complex when the "text" is a fragmentary meme, an edited video, or an AI-generated article. Interpretation now must account for polysemy (multiple meanings), intertextuality, and

remix culture. Media scholars influenced by hermeneutics argue that media texts do not transmit fixed meanings; rather, they invite multiple, often competing, readings. Paul Ricoeur builds on Gadamer but shifts the emphasis toward narrative and metaphor. For Ricoeur, interpretation is always a process of appropriation: we integrate the meaning of texts into our own self-understanding. In *Time and Narrative*, he argues that narratives mediate our temporal experience and structure our perception of reality (Ricoeur 52). This has profound implications for media, especially journalism and cinema, where narrative frames can shape public memory, political discourse, and personal identity. However, hermeneutics does not merely affirm pluralism in interpretation. It also carries a critical dimension. It asks: Who controls the narrative? Whose interpretations dominate? How are certain meanings privileged while others are marginalized? These questions lead to a convergence with critical theory and ideological critique, which examine how power operates through interpretation.

In digital media, interpretation is further complicated by algorithmic curation. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram do not simply offer content neutrally - they shape what users see through opaque recommendation systems. This mediates not only access to information but also the interpretive horizon of users. What one understands is increasingly pre-structured by platform logics, creating what Eli Pariser calls the "filter bubble" (Pariser 9). In such contexts, hermeneutic philosophy must be extended to include the material and technological conditions of interpretation. Furthermore, hermeneutics in media must address the problem of misinformation and manipulated texts. The advent of AI-generated content challenges traditional assumptions about authorship, intention, and authenticity. Philosophers must now confront the ontological instability of the digital text. How does one interpret a video whose origin is uncertain or a post whose "author" is an algorithm? Here, hermeneutics intersects with epistemology, ethics, and ontology - highlighting the interconnectedness of philosophical inquiry in media studies. Ultimately, hermeneutics offers a framework for responsible media consumption and critical engagement. It invites viewers and readers to approach texts with humility, reflexivity, and openness to dialogue. In doing so, it counters both naive realism (that meanings are obvious) and cynical relativism (that anything goes). In our hyper-mediated world, where interpretation often fuels polarization, a hermeneutic orientation can cultivate more thoughtful, dialogical, and pluralistic understandings of the media we create and consume.

Ethics and the Digital Age: Floridi's Infosphere

In the evolving landscape of communication and media, ethical questions are not peripheral they are central. Who is responsible for the information shared? What values govern digital interactions? How do we navigate the balance between privacy and transparency, freedom of expression and harm, accessibility and manipulation? To approach these questions philosophically, one must engage not only with traditional ethical frameworks but also with contemporary theories attuned to the informational condition of our time. This is where Luciano Floridi's concept of the *infosphere* becomes foundational. Floridi, a philosopher of information and one of the foremost thinkers in information ethics, defines the infosphere as the entire informational environment constituted by all informational entities, their properties, interactions, processes, and mutual relations (Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information* 60). In the digital age, where distinctions between online and offline, virtual and real, are increasingly blurred, the infosphere encompasses both digital and analogue worlds. Media are no longer mere tools of communication - they are ontological layers of our lived reality. To inhabit the infosphere is to live through and within information. Ethics in the infosphere, according to Floridi, must be *ontocentric* rather than *anthropocentric*. Traditional ethics often places humans at the

center, assessing actions based on their impact on human beings. However, Floridi argues that digital environments demand an ethics that includes all informational entities - data structures, digital agents, systems - as part of the moral community (Floridi, *Information: A Very Short Introduction* 81). This shift is not merely theoretical; it has practical implications for how we design, use, and regulate media technologies.

Take, for example, the issue of algorithmic bias. Recommendation systems on platforms like YouTube or Facebook can perpetuate stereotypes, misinformation, and social division - not because they are malicious, but because they optimize for engagement without ethical discernment. Floridi's *information ethics* posits that informational entities - like these algorithms - deserve ethical consideration not because they are sentient but because they affect the integrity of the infosphere. Ensuring that digital systems do not pollute the infosphere becomes a moral imperative. Moreover, Floridi's ethics emphasizes *distributed agency*. In traditional moral philosophy, agency is often individualized - a person makes a decision and is held accountable. But in media ecosystems, agency is diffuse. A tweet goes viral not because of one user but because of a network; a false story spreads not only because someone wrote it but because algorithms amplified it and others shared it. Ethics in this context must adapt to account for collective responsibility and systemic dynamics. Another critical area is the question of *privacy*. In the infosphere, data is both the currency and the infrastructure. Media platforms collect, process, and monetize vast amounts of personal information. Floridi's approach reframes privacy not simply as control over personal data but as a condition for personal identity and autonomy in informational environments. He argues that violations of privacy are ontological harms - they affect who we are by disrupting the informational coherence of our selves (Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* 118). Therefore, privacy is not merely a right; it is a necessary precondition for moral agency in the infosphere. Floridi also contributes to the *ethics of design*. Ethical media systems must be intentionally constructed to support human flourishing and informational integrity. This involves designing platforms that promote truthfulness, inclusivity, and accountability. For instance, interface designs that reduce polarization, algorithms that de-prioritize harmful content, and transparency mechanisms that allow users to understand how information is filtered are all part of what Floridi calls "infraethics" - the ethical infrastructure underlying information systems.

Furthermore, Floridi's work intersects with classical ethical theories. From a utilitarian perspective, ethical media systems should maximize informational well-being - providing reliable, diverse, and empowering content. From a Kantian view, they must respect users as ends, not merely as means for data extraction or behavioral manipulation. Virtue ethics, meanwhile, emphasizes the cultivation of digital virtues such as discernment, humility, responsibility, and care in media interactions. Floridi does not reject these traditions but integrates them into an informational paradigm suited for the complexities of the digital age. Importantly, Floridi does not advocate for a technophobic or alarmist stance. He recognizes the profound potential of digital media for enhancing education, participation, and global solidarity. But he insists that such potential can only be realized if guided by a robust ethical framework. In his later works, including *The Logic of Information*, he proposes an "ethics of care for the infosphere," where technological development is balanced with informational ecology and human dignity. In communication and media studies, Floridi's philosophy invites scholars to go beyond content analysis or audience metrics. It urges a deep interrogation of the structural, ontological, and moral dimensions of media. What kind of infosphere are we building? Are our media practices enhancing or degrading the informational environment? Who is included, and who is left out? These are not only ethical questions but existential ones. They concern the very possibility of

truth, democracy, and community in the age of mediated life. In conclusion, Floridi's concept of the infosphere revolutionizes the ethical terrain of media studies. It challenges us to see media not as external tools but as constitutive of our reality and moral relations. In a world where information shapes identity, agency, and power, an ethics of the infosphere is indispensable. Philosophers and media scholars alike must collaborate to ensure that our digital environments reflect not only technical sophistication but moral clarity.

Critical Theory and the Political Economy of Media

Critical Theory, particularly as developed by the Frankfurt School, provides a robust framework for analyzing the interplay between media, ideology, and power. Scholars such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and later Jürgen Habermas argued that modern media are not neutral transmitters of information or culture but powerful instruments of social control. Their concerns, though emerging from the context of early 20th-century industrial capitalism, resonate deeply in today's digital and globalized media landscape. Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* famously critiques the "culture industry" - a term they coined to describe how mass media commodifies culture and manipulates consciousness. In their analysis, media under capitalism become a tool of pacification, enforcing conformity and consumerism through standardization and repetition (Horkheimer and Adorno 94). The media consumer is lulled into passive acceptance, mistaking entertainment for freedom and choice. This critique is particularly prescient in the age of Netflix algorithms, TikTok loops, and YouTube rabbit holes, where personalization masks uniformity, and attention becomes a currency traded by corporate platforms. Their insights suggest that media are not merely cultural or technological artifacts but part of the broader political economy. Ownership, production structures, and economic interests shape what gets produced, distributed, and consumed. The increasing concentration of media ownership, especially in digital platforms like Meta (Facebook), Alphabet (Google), and Amazon, poses significant threats to democratic communication. These platforms dominate the digital public sphere, control access to information, and collect unprecedented amounts of data, often without meaningful transparency or accountability.

Besides, Jürgen Habermas extends critical theory by foregrounding the normative ideal of the public sphere. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, he describes how early modern societies developed arenas for rational-critical debate outside of state and market control - coffee houses, salons, literary journals. These spaces allowed citizens to form public opinion through discourse (Habermas 83). However, Habermas laments that in late capitalism, the public sphere is colonized by commercial interests and mass media, reducing discourse to spectacle and consumption. In contemporary media studies, Habermas's concept is both foundational and contested. On one hand, digital media seem to democratize the public sphere: anyone with a smartphone can broadcast an opinion, start a movement, or challenge elites. On the other hand, these same platforms often amplify disinformation, hate speech, and surveillance. Algorithms optimize for engagement, not truth; the most provocative content is often rewarded. Thus, while digital media have expanded participation, they have also fragmented and polarized the public sphere. Echo chambers and filter bubbles undermine the possibility of shared discourse and rational deliberation.

The hypercritical theorists such as Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib have revised and expanded Habermas's framework to include considerations of gender, race, and global inequality. Fraser argues for a concept of "subaltern counterpublics" - alternative discursive spaces where marginalized groups can articulate their perspectives and challenge dominant narratives (Fraser

123). Media, then, become a battleground not only over meaning but over visibility, voice, and power. Moreover, contemporary critical theory is increasingly concerned with the commodification of attention. Jonathan Beller, in *The Cinematic Mode of Production*, argues that with digital media, the act of looking becomes a form of labor. Attention is harnessed, quantified, and monetized, turning users into unpaid workers in the digital economy (Beller 68). Shoshana Zuboff's *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* similarly exposes how companies commodify personal data and behavior to predict and manipulate future actions, often without users' awareness or consent (Zuboff 94).

These critiques echo the Frankfurt School's original concern: media systems under capitalism do not merely entertain or inform - they shape desires, normalize inequality, and constrain imagination. Yet, critical theory also leaves room for resistance. Media can be sites of counter-hegemony, where alternative narratives, subversive aesthetics, and radical discourses emerge. Social media campaigns like **#BlackLivesMatter** or **#MeToo** and **#EndSars** illustrate how digital platforms can be used to disrupt dominant ideologies and mobilize collective action. However, critical theorists caution against overestimating the emancipatory potential of digital media. The same platforms that enable dissent can co-opt it. Radical messages are often commodified, stripped of their transformative edge, and reintegrated into consumer culture. In modern sociopolitical contexts, activism is frequently commodified into a brand identity, and protest is reduced to performative expression rather than substantive engagement. This paradox highlights the importance of media literacy, critical pedagogy, and structural reform - not only individual empowerment but institutional change. In integrating critical theory into media studies, philosophers must maintain a dual focus: diagnosing the structural forces that shape media systems and imagining normative frameworks for just, inclusive, and democratic communication. This includes advocating for policy changes; such as antitrust regulation, data protection laws, public service media, and platform accountability and fostering ethical media cultures that prioritize truth, dignity, and solidarity.

Ultimately, critical theory invites a philosophical orientation that is not only analytical but emancipatory. It insists that media cannot be understood apart from the material and ideological conditions of their production and reception. It challenges us to ask: Whose voices are heard? Whose interests are served? What kind of world do our media create, and what kind of world do we want them to help build? These would be addressed in the aesthetics of communication.

The Aesthetics of Communication: Medium, Form, and Perception
Beyond its ethical and political dimensions, communication is also an aesthetic experience. The way messages are shaped, the mediums through which they travel, and the forms they assume all influence not only what is communicated, but how it is perceived, interpreted, and felt. Aesthetic considerations in communication and media studies invite us to reflect on style, form, beauty, affect, and sensibility - not merely as superficial aspects of media, but as constitutive dimensions of meaning-making. Marshall McLuhan's famous axiom, "The medium is the message," underscores this insight. For McLuhan, media are not neutral channels that transmit content unchanged; they shape and structure our experiences in profound ways. A printed book facilitates a linear, sustained mode of thought, whereas a television broadcast promotes a fragmented and transient cognitive engagement. A tweet does not merely convey information - it compresses, fragments, and often sensationalizes. The aesthetic properties of a medium - the temporality, linearity, spatiality, and sensory mode - form part of the message itself (McLuhan 7). Thus, understanding communication philosophically requires a sensitivity to media form and

sensorial engagement. McLuhan's insights prefigure contemporary discussions of *media aesthetics*, which explore how different media forms shape our aesthetic experience and cultural consciousness. For instance, the cinematic frame invites a certain kind of immersive, narrative attention, while the digital scroll fosters speed, multitasking, and distraction. Social media platforms employ design choices - colors, notifications, layouts - that exploit psychological triggers and aesthetic preferences, cultivating habits of swiping, liking, and reacting. These are not merely technical details; they are aesthetic structures with epistemic and ethical implications.

The aesthetics of communication also touch on *affect theory*, which explores how emotions are produced and circulated in media environments. Scholars like Brian Massumi and Sara Ahmed emphasize that affect is not just an internal feeling but a social and embodied phenomenon. Media aesthetics play a central role in this: music swells in a documentary to evoke empathy; a sharp cut in a political ad triggers urgency or fear; a meme's visual repetition generates humor or cynicism. Affective aesthetics are central to how media persuade, connect, and polarize. They are the emotional currents beneath the informational surface. From a philosophical perspective, this invites reflection on the relationship between form and content, between sensation and understanding. Plato, in *The Republic*, was wary of poetry and drama because they appealed to the emotions rather than reason. He feared that aesthetic forms could deceive, inflame, or mislead. Yet Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, defended tragedy as a means of catharsis and moral insight. These classical debates remain relevant in the age of digital media: are aestheticized forms of communication enhancing our understanding, or manipulating our perceptions? Are emotionally powerful images and soundbites deepening civic engagement, or reducing complex issues to spectacles? In aesthetic philosophy, thinkers like Kant and Schiller emphasized the autonomy and disinterestedness of aesthetic judgment. But media aesthetics complicate this ideal. In communication, aesthetics are rarely disinterested - they are tied to persuasion, branding, ideology, and identity. A news broadcast is carefully choreographed: its visuals, music, and voiceovers are designed to convey authority and credibility. A protest movement's aesthetics - its colors, slogans, symbols - become part of its strategy and impact. Aesthetic choices are thus political acts, shaping what is visible, sayable, and feelable.

Contemporary philosophers like Jacques Rancière advance this political understanding of aesthetics. In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière argues that aesthetics is about the "distribution of the sensible" - about what can be seen, heard, and known in a given order of perception (Rancière 12). Communication, in this light, is a constant negotiation over who gets to appear, who is rendered invisible, what counts as art, truth, or noise. Media aesthetics can either reinforce dominant regimes of visibility or disrupt them by revealing alternative realities and voices. This perspective aligns with the insights of visual culture studies and media art theory, which explore how marginalized communities use aesthetic media practices to assert identity, critique power, and imagine alternatives. From feminist zines to indigenous filmmaking, from queer Instagram activism to Afrofuturist music videos, aesthetics become tools of resistance and reimagination. The philosopher's task, then, is not only to critique dominant aesthetic forms but to support and theorize emancipatory ones. In the context of AI and algorithmic media, aesthetic questions take on new urgency. AI-generated images, deepfakes, and synthetic media raise profound concerns about authenticity, representation, and manipulation. When machines generate aesthetic forms, what happens to human creativity and judgment? Is there a difference between a symphony composed by an AI and one by a human? How do we assign value or meaning to algorithmic aesthetics? These questions call for a reevaluation of traditional aesthetic categories like originality, expression, and genius.

Moreover, algorithmic aesthetics are not neutral. As scholars like Safiya Noble and Joy Buolamwini have shown, the aesthetics of search engines and facial recognition systems are shaped by racial, gendered, and cultural biases (Noble 34). These systems reflect and reproduce dominant aesthetic norms, often invisibilizing marginalized features or preferences. Thus, even machine-mediated aesthetics are ideological terrains, where cultural hierarchies are inscribed and contested. In sum, the aesthetics of communication are not peripheral - they are central to how media shape thought, emotion, and community. Philosophical reflection on media aesthetics must grapple with classical concerns - beauty, form, judgment - as well as contemporary ones - affect, technology, ideology. It must interrogate both the pleasures and dangers of aestheticized communication, recognizing that how something is said or shown is inseparable from what it means and does. As communication becomes increasingly visual, algorithmic, and immersive, aesthetic literacy becomes essential. To understand the power of media, we must understand the aesthetics of its forms, the sensibility of its messages, and the politics of its perception. Only then can we hope to engage media critically, ethically, and creatively in our shared infosphere.

Conclusion: Toward a Philosophy of Responsible Mediation

Philosophical reflections on communication and media studies reveal the complex interplay between information, ethics, aesthetics, identity, and power. As we have explored throughout this paper, communication is not merely the exchange of data or the passive reception of messages. It is a constitutive act of world-building, sense-making, and ethical engagement. Media, in their various forms and affordances, mediate not only content but experience, identity, and perception. They are not transparent conduits, but active participants in the shaping of reality. The integration of thinkers like Jürgen Habermas, Marshall McLuhan, Michel Foucault, Luciano Floridi, and Jacques Rancière allows for a nuanced critique of the multifaceted role media play in society. From Habermas's normative vision of communicative rationality to Floridi's conception of the infosphere, philosophical inquiry unveils the stakes involved in media practices. These stakes are epistemic as knowledge is produced and disseminated; ethical values are encoded, contested, or suppressed; and political power is structured and resisted.

Contemporary media technologies, particularly digital and algorithmic systems, challenge traditional frameworks. The rise of AI, big data, and algorithmic governance demands a rethinking of concepts like agency, subjectivity, and authenticity. The "infosphere" is not a neutral space but a field of normative significance, where the boundaries between information and misinformation, reality and simulation, are constantly blurred. In such a world, communication ethics must not only concern intention and transparency but also design, access, and accountability. Furthermore, the aesthetic dimension of communication highlights how media do not merely transmit messages but form experiences. The use of images, sounds, rhythms, and interfaces plays a central role in shaping emotional responses, identities, and cultural sensibilities. As algorithmic systems increasingly personalize and manipulate aesthetic environments, aesthetic literacy becomes a moral and political necessity.

A comprehensive philosophical framework for communication and media studies must thus be interdisciplinary, combining insights from ethics, ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, and political theory. It must be critically attuned to the histories and hierarchies embedded in media systems while remaining open to the possibilities for resistance, reimagination, and emancipation. Ultimately, the task of media philosophy is not only to understand how communication works but to ask what communication ought to be. What kind of world do we want our media to make possible? What forms of expression, visibility, and connection are

necessary for a just and flourishing society? In an age marked by polarization, surveillance, disinformation, and digital colonization, these questions are more urgent than ever. Philosophy offers no easy answers, but it does offer the tools to ask more engaging questions - questions that cut through technical jargon, ideological distortion, and aesthetic manipulation. By returning to the fundamental concerns of meaning, truth, justice, and beauty, philosophy reminds us that communication is, at its heart, a shared human endeavor. And in that shared space of dialogue, critique, and creation, we may yet rediscover the possibility of collective understanding and ethical transformation.

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Article   **Open Access**

SECULARISM, RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AND LAND GRABBING FRIGHTS

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Abstract
Nigeria is a secular state, in spite of multiple threats and disparaging questions regarding the country's secularism. However, while the label of secularism on Nigeria's constitution creates the impression of accommodation, tolerance and liberty of religious groups and sects, the reality of recurring interreligious acrimonies ridicules the claim. Religious extremism and land grabbing frights are among the numerous challenges undermining the image of Nigeria's secularism. Recent reports reveal that fears of land grabbing which are linked to the operations of killer-herdsmen have increased. Nigerians have witnessed high level violent conflicts, destruction of property and wanton loss of lives. Non-pastoral communities in southern and north-central states of Nigeria where Christianity is dominant and migrant cattle herding is uncommon believe that quests for religious dominance and fears associated with land grabbing are responsible for the frequent invasion of their communities. This study interrogates ways in which longstanding perceptions of religious extremism and land grabbing frights fuel crises of secularism in Nigeria. It argues that acts of estrangement against the principles of secularism by any religious sect in a heterogenous society is a harbinger for protracted intergroup hostility and violent conflicts. The paper interrogates the worsening security challenges plaguing migrant herders as they traverse non-pastoral communities of southern and north-central states of Nigeria where Christianity is popular. It relies on secondary data as well as thematic content analysis. The study also draws attention to ways in which unguarded government policies and development projects which are, directly or indirectly, susceptible to diverse religious (re)interpretations pose huge threats to secularism.

Keywords: Land Grabbing, Migrant Herding, Southern and North-Central States, Non-Pastoral Christian Communities, Religious Fundamentalism

Introduction
Secularism does not favour the promotion of transcendental ideas, primordial beliefs, ethnic jingoism or religious fervour over the public interest of the state and its institutions. On the contrary, when a society purges itself from the negative influences of mysticism and primeval folklores, it begins to achieve a level of emancipation necessary for the take-off of modernization (Pérez and Vallières, 2019). Rather than promote ethnic supremacy, secularism canvasses for the equality and liberty of all in the interest of nationalism and peace. In a secular

state, national wealth, public institutions and governmental laws are not subordinated to patrimonial patronage whereby resource allocation is pigeonholed to favour one particular group of people over others. As a philosophical ideology of progress and modernization, secularism provides a guiding principle and framework for the development of a state, especially in societies where the population is heterogenous. Rationally, pluralism is 'one of the most important factors leading to secularization, since it undermined the plausibility of religion and eroded norms prescribing religion' (Stolz, 2020: 13). Secularism reinforces socialization, civil liberty and cordial intergroup relations especially in heterogenous nations where the probability that individuals will come in contact with others who belong to different ethnic religions or those who express no faith in any religion at all is certain.

In Nigeria, religion and ethnic bigotry are a major factor affecting development plans, processes of resource allocation and nation-building (Akingbe, 2022). As a secular and heterogenous society, Nigerian citizens move and reside freely in states of their choice, whether in the southern or northern regions where Christianity and Islam (respectively) are dominant. Consequently, whenever attempts are made by any of the religious sects or federating units to impose religious ideas, tension and security crises of national proportion are ignited. When Sharia laws were promulgated in some states in northern Nigeria between 2000 and 2003 (Nwankpa, 2021), Christians residing in the region reacted and contentious questions about the nature and character of the Nigerian secularism were raised. In northern Nigeria, the Boko Haram sect espouses the 'rejection of secularism, democracy, Western education and Westernization. … The rejection of secularism and the pursuit of its replacement by Sharia is a current in radical Islam …' (Mohammed, 2014: 8). Boko Haram regards Christians and churches as enemies and rightful targets of attack. There have been moments of anxiety bordering on fears and speculations of attempts to register Nigeria in the Organization of Islamic Conference and adopt Islam in the country's constitution (Binuomoyo, 2018). In Nigeria, southerners and many communities in north-central region always react negatively to perceived tendencies towards religious domination. The rapid formation of regional vigilante outfits such as the *Amotekun* by Nigerian south-western governors as well as the Indigenous People of Biafra's Eastern Security Network by south-easterners were partly in response to eventualities of religious imposition on southern Nigeria (Nwankpa, 2021).

Constitutionally, Nigeria is a secular state. However, since its creation in 1914, the country's secularism has faced a lot of challenges. Extant literature has documented diverse ways in which religious fundamentalism and violent conflicts threaten the image and justification of Nigeria as a secular state. In addition, this study delves into problems associated with religion-induced (re)interpretation of suspicious government development policies, tendencies towards land grabbing, religious tension bordering on the religious identity of migrant herders who traverse non-pastoral Christian dominated communities especially in southern and north-central regions of Nigeria.

Conceptual Review on Secularism

Over the years, the concept of secularism has evolved to assume more notions about the neutrality of the state on religious matters. The concept has largely been redefined to connote the separation of the earthly from the transcendental, partitioning of terrestrial activities away from the celestial or detachment of temporal matters from the spiritual. It is held that secularism introduces a sphere of life in which there is a rejection of beliefs conditioned on the idea that that which is divine and supreme determines and controls that which is obtained in the material world and where modern societies no longer hold on to the concept that the law of the

gods shape the foundations of human government, laws and activities (Ertit, 2018). Nevertheless, it is instructive to note that the concept of secularism is multidimensional and has a range of meanings. Secularism goes beyond the popular notion and quest for separation between activities considered as belonging to the realm of the 'Divine' and other activities classified as belonging to the 'Humans'. It has much to do with the declining influence of religion or the reduction of the impacts and power of religious authorities on the activities of the state, government and society. As I argued elsewhere (Onwutuebe, 2020), the entrenchment of secularism in any given society does not imply that religion will fade away or disappear from the realms of the state, but it fosters a noticeable reduction in the impact of organized religion in public affairs as well as other primeval chauvinisms such as the elevation of ethnic nationalism over allegiance to the state.

Humans are moral beings whose thought processes and private decisions often allow space for religious influences that may or may not be acknowledged. In reality, religion does not go into extinction but may be regulated by public institutions in order to pursue and achieve general or societal goals. Nevertheless, when the undercurrents of religion are subjugated and brought under the effective control of the state (and not vice versa), processes of nation-building are reinforced. Similarly, when primordial ethnic loyalties which reduce state nationalism are reversed in ways that accord supremacy to national concerns, public institutions are empowered and promoted to drive national developmental initiatives. Secularism clears the pathway for a society to deactivate the excesses of religious pressure and to turn-off the red flags of ethnic loyalties that impede state patriotism. The fear of religious and ethnic domination is usually the basis for the constitutional promulgation and practice of secularism. In the early decades of the American independence, there were heightened religious fears of probable domination against religious minorities by the powerful Catholic Church. To avert anxieties over imminent religious tyranny under the Roman Catholic Church, massive campaign for secularism was made, hence the constitutional endorsement of secularism in the US (Ryan, 2017; Onwutuebe, 2020).

Migrant Herding in Non-pastoral Christian Communities

In Benue and Plateau states, land grabbing frights regularly accompany accounts of horrendous invasions and attacks by migrant pastoralists. Bloodletting violence in these states usually result to massive population displacement of indigenous peoples whose lands are sometimes evacuated and left unoccupied, depending on the agenda of the invaders. In response, migrant herders are profiled as criminals, murderers and targeted for attacks especially among non-pastoral Christian populations (Saminu, et. Al., 2022; Akingbe, 2022). Most of them experience widespread discrimination, especially in the southern and north-central regions where land policies seem not favour their beliefs, preferences and traditional livestock practices (Nwankpa, 2021). Many states in southern and north-central regions have passed bills prohibiting unrestrained open grazing into laws and also established local security outfits to enforce laws against transhumance pastoralism. A recent report from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom reveal that migrant herders are experiencing problems of attacks and human rights abuses on a wide scale (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2023). The report alleged that there are government-backed hostilities against them. There are tales of economic marginalization and forced displacement against migrant herders as they are imaged as aliens or foreigners. Recent anti-open grazing laws passed by many states in both southern and north-central regions of Nigeria have been described as

targeting migrant herders since the core of their livelihood is tied around transhumance pastoralism.

Migrant herding as a form of occupational practice and daily business is not common in southern and north-central regions of Nigeria. It is however prevalent in northwestern and northeastern Nigeria where, beyond its cultural and religious significations, it is a source wealth creation. As an occupational group whose religion is mainly Islam, migrant herders often encounter religious tension especially among non-pastoral Christian dominated communities. Religious division and threats of religious fundamentalism constitute a key factor hampering probabilities for peaceful intergroup relations with migrant herders in Nigeria. In Christian-dominated regions of southern and north-central Nigeria, indigenes are encouraged to be vigilant in order to protect themselves and defend their lands against extraneous groups particularly migrant herders (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2023). There is a high level of trust deficit and suspicion that undermine prospects of a healthy intergroup cooperation with migrant herders traversing Nigerian lands (Nwankpa, 2021). In Benue and Plateau states where hundreds of thousands of lives have been wasted with impunity, extraordinary interventions, including prolonged prayer and fasting, will be required to re-establish sustainable trust and cordial relations with migrant herders.

Buhari's National Livestock Transformation Plan and the Frights of Land Grabbing
Throughout his civilian administration as Nigerian president, Buhari was consistently committed to improving the country's livestock industry. He defied several oppositions against his government's agenda on national livestock development. Buhari made frantic effort to resuscitate the 1965 northern Nigeria regional law which canvassed for the establishment and development of grazing reserves and cattle corridors (Akingbe, 2022). During his civilian government (2015 to 2023), Buhari's major goal was to extend grazing reserves and cattle routes beyond the northern region, spreading it across all states of the Nigerian federation, in spite of stiff resistance from non-pastoral Christian communities in southern and north-central regions of the country. As ingenious as the Buhari livestock plan was and the multiple promises of national wealth that would accrue to the Nigerian federation, longstanding suspicion of religious expansion through land grabbing surged in most communities of southern and north-central Nigeria. The logic was that Buhari sought to utilize his endearing proposal of national livestock development as a pretext to acquire vast areas of land across all states of the federation for purposes of religious expansion. The fury and fear engendered by such suspicions of land grabbing was fierce. Non-pastoral populations in southern and north-central regions feared that Buhari was going to use his presidential might to lobby and influence state governors to submit to his federal livestock program (Nwabueze, 2018).

Incidentally, Buhari's devotion, zeal, and relentless efforts to upgrade the livestock industry across the length and breadth of the Nigerian society became a burden of mistrust in itself. There was the Cattle Colony proposal. The Buhari government pledged that the Cattle Colony proposal was the panacea to problems of hostilities and violent conflicts plaguing farmers and migrant herders in Nigeria (Amusan, Abegunde & Akinyemi, 2017). Each state within the federation was expected to set aside large hectares of land for the project. The sound of this initiative ballooned existing fears of land grabbing across the federation (Obahopo, 2018; Nwabueze, 2018). Sensing the barrage of negative sentiments and resistance against the Cattle Colony proposal, Buhari bowed out and later came up with another livestock development initiative known as the Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA). The RUGA settlement initiative also failed to scale through as similar suspicions of land grabbing trailed its arrival. In another quick succession,

Buhari introduced the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) in June 2019 and almost immediately commenced its implementation among seven states that indicated interest to participate in the program (This Day, 2019).

Beyond fears and suspicions of religious expansion against Buhari's uninterrupted livestock initiatives, there were allegations of nepotism in favour of migrant herders. Continuous rebranding and renaming of the same livestock project in quick successions heightened suspicions that the Buhari government was desperate to solidarize with pastoral groups by using federal executive powers to acquire land for them. States and groups that opposed Buhari's new livestock initiative argued that the NLTP was *Ruga-disguised* (PulseNg, 2019). Buhari's livestock visions appeared to have been driven by the same zeal and eagerness to procure lands in all the states of the federation in support of cattle farming (The Guardian, 2019). On the other hand, fears and resistance against Buhari's livestock projects were driven largely by land grabbing frights and suspicions of religious expansionism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Secularism is a universal concept which encourages principles of liberty, fairness and equality of all social groups. It encourages interfaith coexistence and the equality of all religious groups Secularism advocates neutrality and detachment of government, state and public institutions from all forms of religious influences. On the other hand, lack of faith in secularism breeds mistrust and suspicions mainly among religious communities that perceive it to be a Western political thought seeking to degrade the cultural, social and religio-political systems of other nations and peoples. Though Nigeria is constitutionally labelled a secular state, awful attempts to categorize secularism as a Western ideology has been used to disorient a large number of Nigerians to make them feel that secularism is amoral, malevolent and against indigenous values. More often than not, the act of demonizing secularism is the handiwork of religious fundamentalists and selfish politicians attempting to elevate their narrow religious beliefs and political objectives up and above others. In Nigeria, Jihadists are averse to descriptions of the Nigerian constitution as secular and ready to undermine adherence to it.

Religious division between southern and northern regions of Nigeria has adverse consequences for transhumance pastoralism. Migrant pastoralists from northern Nigeria where Islam is widespread encounter religious tension and discrimination especially when traversing non-pastoral Christian dominated communities in southern and north-central states. In Benue and Plateau states (in north-central Nigeria), notions of quest for religious domination and land grabbing frights are commonly distilled in stories of invasion and attacks by migrant herders. In addition to land grabbing, attacks led by or involving migrant herders in these states are sometimes interpreted as preliminary actions meant to pave way for religious expansionism. The outcome of religious contraptions pitching migrant herders against their host communities is that migrant pastoral groups experience all manner of suspicion, discrimination, social anomie and, in extreme situations, counterattacks especially from non-pastoral Christian populations in southern and north-central states. To address multiple threats confronting Nigerian secularism, the study recommends increased awareness and wider exposition on the actual meaning and characterizations of secularism. All avenues of information dissemination should be deployed to ensure regular or periodic sensitization on the principles and relevance of secularism. Families, schools, mass media and social media spaces should be used. More importantly, religious leaders who regularly teach and indoctrinate their adherents should be made to uphold the principles of secularism as an essential component of peace and development. Religious leaders and elites who are agenda setters and opinion leaders in churches, mosques, shrines and other

sacred places should consider secularism a core doctrine for peace and social harmony. Religious interpretations which image secularism as being antithetical to Jihadism must be jettisoned to halt rising trends of religious extremism.

In Nigeria, Pastors and Imams must be involved in the struggle to use secularism as a tool for national integration. Christianity and Islam are major religions often implicated in interfaith conflicts in Nigeria. Consequently, religious ideas which radicalize people especially vulnerable youths must be expunged from their sermons and sacred texts. Again, the overbearing influence of religious sentiments in the way and manner private and public institutions are set up and governed must be redressed. Public institutions and state operations should be disentangled and emancipated from religious strongholds which pervert civic duties. Soft power mechanisms especially those of social and cultural diplomacy could also be used in targeting rustic communities and social groups like migrant herders whose economic activities require cross-border and intra-country movements and expose them to communities and peoples whose religion are antithetical to theirs. Social activities and cultural programs which appeal to migrant herders could be organized to draw them close, while seeking to teach and aid them to unlearn erroneous ideas of secularism. Rustic workshops could be organized to teach and help migrant herders embrace the values of secularism. Enlightenment campaigns can also help in deradicalizing and reorienting social groups whose worldviews are parochial and averse to secularism.

Governments and political leadership in fragile religion-overwhelmed countries like Nigeria must exercise high level caution when enacting policies or administering projects which are delicately susceptible to diverse religious translations. Many Nigerians are actively involved in religion and highly sensitive or amenable to faith-based ideologies. They tend to coopt religious beliefs and laws while attempting to read, understand and interpret government policies, programs and projects. High religious tension gripped the Nigerian religio-political landscape during the civilian administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari. Buhari's efforts to promote the country's livestock sector was, rightly or wrongly, translated as an attempt to exploit state power to acquire lands throughout the Nigerian federation for reasons other than livestock development. Frights of land grabbing generated by Buhari's livestock policies elicited massive resistance especially among southern and north-central states where non-pastoral Christian populations are widespread.

Nigeria's secular status must be cautiously guarded especially by those in public institutions and political leadership. Although individuals in public authority might be inherently religious, their performances as public functionaries must be neutral and void of religious emotions and dictates. Presidential gestures and permutations with semblance of religious favouritism will always raise widespread suspicion and increase trust deficits against political leadership. This was the political situation which hampered former President Buhari's ability to mobilize nationwide support to execute his livestock initiatives.

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CONTEMPORARY PARENTING STYLES: ITS IMPACT ON CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN CHILD

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Abstract
The parents are without doubt the most important force behind any child's development, and that is why parents are the role models and first teachers of their child or children. They are responsible for shaping up their children's behaviour and impacting positive value in them because children listen, observe and imitate their parents. As a father or mother, a parent has to practise what he/she preaches to expect the child follow it. Parenting is one of the most difficult and demanding tasks in the world; it therefore requires continuous teaching and sacrifices to be a good parent. However, there are indications that all is not well with the family sector in today's world. That is why in our country Nigeria, it can be seen that the rate of social, moral and religious upbringing of children is depreciating. Hence, one can say or claim that some parents are already tired and are fed up of taking responsibility as parents. But could we then say or ask that, are there no responsible parents left in Nigeria or are some parents not putting effort to be responsible? Using the analytic method, the paper focuses on the parenting styles practiced by parents in Nigeria and finding out its impact on contemporary Nigerian child. The paper further recommends the parenting style best suited for contemporary Nigerian child so as to avoid juvenile delinquent behaviour during adolescent stage in the future.

Keywords: Parents, Parenting Style, Nigeria, Nigerian Child and Juvenile Delinquency.

Introduction

The term "parenting" has been defined as the state of being a parent which includes nourishing, protecting and guiding a child through the course of development (Baumrind, 1966). Parents nurture their children in different ways, that is why nobody has ever known the best way to parent or train a child or children. Even if you have four to six children; you are still learning. The questions now are: what is the best thing you can do, what standards are you going to set for your family, what atmosphere are you going to create in your home, and what kind of character/behaviour are you exhibiting for your children to emulate? Good parenting constitutes a challenge to different parents in this contemporary era. That is why many scholars have

deliberated and are still deliberating on the overall effects of parenting styles on children. Parents are very important in a child's existence, especially in their early years until they can support themselves. Discipline and control imposed by parents help in developing a healthy personality in a child. Thus, the behavioural, emotional, educational, and social characteristics of children are more significantly impacted by parenting styles. Parents play an important role in molding and building the behaviour of their children and unawareness in their parenting can lead them towards undesirable damaging (Baumrind,1991). One can then say that parenting styles are the attitude that parents exhibit to their kids, and any parenting style can be affected by both the parents' and children's temperaments which can be mostly based on the impact of one's own parents and culture. This paper, therefore, analyses the influence of parenting on children's behaviour, especially on the contemporary Nigerian child.

History of Parenting and its Evolution

With changing times, lifestyles and needs, the way parents now choose to raise their child or children has undergone a sea change. However, a parent will always be a parent be it "then" or be it "now". Parenting is an art (Hattangadi, 2022). It is an art because it depends a lot on a parent's creative response to different challenges. These challenges include: the challenge of disciplining, the challenge of bonding which fits their child or children's personality, the challenge of making the children eat proper food, challenge of educating the child or children on sexual matter, keeping an eye on the child or children's friends, and so on. Thus, one can say that parenting is an art because it is finding new ways of inculcating positive values into the child's life. However, with change being the essence of life, nothing remains the same for long; and parenting has also evolved with time. Having more than three children among our fore-father's generations was the norm. But in current times, from having second thoughts before planning for the second child, to not having kids at all, what comes to the fore is the fact that with progress and open-mindedness, priorities are shifting too. With the use of modern day contraceptives, most contemporary parents play safe if they are not physically and psychologically ready for parenthood. Today, parenting is a joint venture with more fathers taking an active part in their child/children's upbringing (Cherry, 2015). As a result, taking care of a child is no longer considered a feminine responsibility. Instead of behaving in an autocratic manner, many new-age parents steer their children in the right direction, while giving them the freedom to learn from their mistakes. Thus, the notion of "spare the rod and spoil the child" is *passe* (not fashionable or out of date). Nowadays, parents realize that corporal punishment and criticism would not only heighten their children's aggression but also, damage their self-esteem. This makes parents to understand the fact that only children who feel loved actually learn to reciprocate the feeling.

Moreover, the advent of different kinds of social medias like Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, etc., and the technological boom; have given rise to a situation where tech-savvy children appear more knowledgeable than their elders. At the same time, with rapid digitalization; parents are also trying to keep a check on their children's online presence, lest they fall prey to something undesirable (Patil & Vaishnav, 2021). However, while the digital revolution has proved to be a boom for children, it has also opened up new vistas for parents and broadened their perspectives. Today, several parents no longer crib over marks obtained in exams; instead they believe in the holistic development of their children. They no longer confine their children solely to academics (which was mainly seen in the nineties among some Nigerian parents) but motivate them to pursue their passions and to innovate and think beyond the periphery of the curriculum. Parents are therefore, willing to go to any extent to help their child realize their true

potential and calling. Thanks to the media, parents have become more sensitive to the physical and psychological risks faced by children from pedophiles or bullies, or others indulging in child abuse. Thus, parents are willing to provide their children access to counseling and sex education, as well as let them learn self-defense skills.

With the above evolution of parenting, one can say that parent-child relationship is more intimate and egalitarian than before. This is so because parents continue to remain supportive even after their children have attained adulthood. They have come to believe in the fact that, "To be in your children's memories tomorrow, you have to be in their lives today". However, despite being swept by the wave of progressiveness and modernity (that is, a force aimed to liberate humankind from ignorance and irrationality), parents still face the dilemma of whether to be lenient or pushy, indulgent or laid back, to prioritize academics over other accomplishments or give their children other choices. It is on this note that parents choose and practice the style of parenting that will help to model and build up their children's character and personality.

The Concept of Parenting Styles and its Roles

In a book titled *Parenting Style As Context: An Integrative Model*, Darling Nancy and Steinberg Lawrence (1993) defined parenting as a constellation of parents' attitudes and behaviours toward their child or children and an emotional climate in which the parents' behaviours are expressed. The style of parenting supports every step of a child's life because a good or positive parenting helps in encouraging and motivating a child to learn as well as cooperates a child to be mentally healthy. The proverb that an apple does not fall far from the tree can well describe the effects of parenting styles on child's growth and development. Nowadays, parents are quicker to acknowledge that they do not always have the answers or that they may not want to raise their children as they were raised. However, one can claim that the root of most mental health problems of children especially adolescents is related with parenting styles adopted in their families. It is on this note that Sharma Dinesh (2003) in her book titled *Childhood, Family and Sociological Changes in India* posited that parents should be more proactive on the different parenting styles they adopt in their different homes and the impacts on their child's development.

It is a well-known fact that good parenting prepares children to meet the demands of the specific culture in which they live. Thus, parenting styles are effective in preparing a child to live in the society and the world at large. One can therefore say that parenting style is a determinant factor in child's development and it affects psychological and social functioning of a child. In relation to this, some scholars and philosophers gave their different views on the concepts of parenting styles and their effects on children.

Literature Review on Parenting Styles

Parenting style, according to Shailaja Patil and Dr. Rajashri Vaishnav (2021), is a concept related to the rearing of children by their parents. This implies that parents have an essential role in a person's life, especially at childhood up to the time they are fully grown. Thus, parental control and discipline are essential for building the healthy personality of a child. It then gives the parents the responsibility to try and understand their children's personality and also, try their best to change the unwanted behavioural aspects of their child in a polite manner. Hence, the parental style that parents practise while taking care of their children include the warmth and control they provide to their children such that the responsiveness and demandingness of their children are curbed to a desired level. Therefore, parents' responsiveness and demandingness

will depend upon how strict the parents are and what conditions they impose or do not impose. That is why many parents are exhibiting different parenting styles.

Baumrind Diana (1966) in her book titled *Effects of Authoritative Parental Control on Child Behaviour*, identified primarily three basic parenting styles based on parents' control and education background which include: authoritarian parenting style, authoritative parenting style and permissive parenting style. With advanced research, however, another parenting style known as uninvolved parenting style is added to the list making it four. The classification of four parenting styles is based on behaviour, values, and standards transmitted from parents to their children. Parenting style in the life and time of Baumrind was defined as a reflection of two underlying process which are – the number and type of demands made by the parents' demandingness and the contingency of the parenting reinforcements that is responsiveness. One may ask, what does Baumrind mean by parent's demandingness and responsiveness? The term demandingness refers to claims in which parents are supposed to be integrated into community and family by their maturity expectations, disciplinary efforts, supervision and willingness to confront a disruptive child (Baumrind 1966). In the same way, in a book titled *Families, Delinquency and Crime: Linking Society's Most Basic Institution to Antisocial Behaviour* written by Simons et al., (2004); argued that demandingness parenting can be judged through the level of well-defined monitoring techniques, involving direct confrontation and discipline patterns utilized by parents in their different homes. Therefore, it would be justified to state that parents with higher level of discipline patterns, confrontation and monitoring are demanding, whereas parents with lower level of confrontation, inconsistent discipline and monitoring are characterized as not demanding. Also, the term responsiveness is defined by Baumrind (1966) as the ratio of fostering self-assertion and individuality by parents being attuned, acquiescent and supportive to the demands and needs of their children. In addition, she argues that the level of responsiveness can be measured through the level of communication, reciprocity and warmth displayed by parents while dealing with adolescents. From this perspective, parents emphasizing on higher level of reciprocal behaviour, warmth and communication are considered to be highly responsive, whereas low levels of delineated factors represent low responsiveness. Maccoby & Martin (1983) argued that higher level of responsiveness can be found in permissive and/or authoritative parenting style. On the other hand, Simons et al., (2004) maintained that low level of responsiveness is reflected through neglecting and/or authoritarian parenting style.

Dwelling on the types of parenting styles adopted by parents in their various homes, Baumrind posits that authoritative parents are supportive and show interest in their children's activities but are not overbearing and allow their children to make constructive mistakes. Children whose parents use the authoritative style are generally happy, capable and successful. However, some African parents, especially Nigerian parents, do confuse themselves using authoritarian approach, thinking that they are using authoritative approach. In order to correct or solve this confusion some Nigerian parents have, Baumrind postulated that parents using the authoritarian parenting style expect and demand obedience because they are in charge and they do not provide any explanations for their orders. Children raised in such environments are more likely to be obedient and proficient, but score lower in happiness, social competence and self-esteem.

Coming over to permissive parenting style, parents using this approach are lenient and do not expect their children to adhere to boundaries or rules, and avoid confrontation. One may say or claim that children reared with permissive approach score low in happiness and self-regulation, and they are more likely to exhibit disobedient attitudes or character because they have problems with authority. In the relation to the parenting styles postulated by Baumrind,

Maccoby & Martin (1983) formulated the fourth parenting approach known as uninvolved parenting style. This fourth approach is oftentimes rare to notice or observe in the world. That is why it seems like the uninvolved parenting style is sometimes dropped out when parenting styles are being discussed either in seminars, workshops and other related academic training. Going further, parents using the uninvolved parenting approach are neglectful or rejecting of their children and do not provide most, if any, necessary parenting responsibilities. Children brought up with uninvolved parenting approach tend to rank lowest across all life domains because they lack self-control, have low self-esteem and are less competent than their peers.

Hoskins (2014), stressed that the environment in the family provides the basic ecology that manifests a child's behaviour and prepares the child for independent life in adulthood. He therefore, discusses the influence of parental behaviour on children's behavioural and emotional outcomes. For him, the parental influence slowly reduces by the time adolescence approaches, and peers and friends mold a child's behaviour. Findings of the study revealed that girls do have positive interactions with their peers more than boys do, and the boys (though not all) have negative interactions with their peers more than the girls do. However, the scores of negative interactions with peers of the children depends on the parenting style adopted by their parents in their various homes. This means that the social life of children starts from the family. Hence, parents and other family members influence the behaviour of children through several experiences.

Parenting Styles in Nigerian Homes and its Effects on Contemporary Nigerian Child

Living a good desired life and having a fulfilled marital life can be seen as a difficult task in our contemporary Nigeria. Things are not as it was before. Bad government, poor economy, hatred, greediness, and so on; have deprived many parents the opportunity of living good desired life and long lasting fulfilled marital life. As a result of these challenges, many parents were unable to carry out their effective roles and duties (responsibilities); both within the family and in the society. With these challenges however, many conscientious Nigerian parents have started feeling more concern towards giving moral and ethical formation to their child or children.

To overcome these challenges, Nigerian parents are now adopting some parental approaches or styles at their various homes with the aim of inculcating positive and moral values in their children. One might ask, what are the parenting styles used in different Nigerian homes and what impact does it make in a contemporary Nigerian child?

The parenting styles or approaches used in different Nigerian homes include: authoritarian parenting style, authoritative parenting style, uninvolved parenting style and permissive parenting style.

Authoritarian Parenting Styles

"You will do whatever we tell you due to the fact that we are your parents, and we have gotten to this world before you and therefore; we have more experience than you". This is an example of the tone that fall under this category. The authoritarian parents attempt to evaluate, shape and control the attitudes as well as behaviour of their children in line with set standards and conduct, known as absolute standard. In the light of this absolute standard, children are supposed to follow very strict rules defined by their parents. In case the children fail to comply with such rules, they are punished. This style of parenting is mostly found in Nigeria. Authoritarian parents are cold and rejecting towards their children, and they do make their children follow certain principles with force and not reasons. Becoming over-protective, they tend to take all decisions for their children. They often over-burden their children with high expectations thereby leading to formation of negative aspect of their children's personality (like

depression, indecisiveness, anti-socialism, and so on.) when they grow. Also, authoritarian parents impose everything on their children and their children's opinion does not count. Longevity is the only factor that determines who is wiser. At times, the parents no doubt know better, but their children tend to be rebellious because of the fact that they are living according to the principles which may be boring on them. There is a popular saying that goes, "people will forget what you said, they will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel". Thus, many Nigerian parents make their children feel less of their dream and therefore, put little zeal in those things they are forced to do. This is so because parents under this category provide well-ordered and structured environments with clearly stated rules.

Using Nigeria as a case study, authoritarian parenting style seems helpful in promoting the academic life of a Nigerian child. This is so because, some Nigerian parents are not happy when their child or children performed poorly in school. Thus, instead of making excuses or defending why their child or children performed poorly in school; many Nigerian parents who are using authoritarian parenting style do draft a study time table for their child or children which they follow strictly. This will make a child to study outside school hours with the intention that it will help him or her perform well in school. Adults who are trained with this parenting style towards improving their knowledge and academic capabilities are grateful for the way their parents handled them. They say so with the reason that, when they were of school age, they did not know that it will help them to know how to read and make good grades in the future. On the contrary, children who are trained with authoritarian parenting style, do excel in academics but their character and behaviour is not good or appealing. That is why is we do notice or observe some Nigerian children who are brilliant or intelligent but their character is awkward in their association with people.

Authoritative Parenting Styles

Baumrind (1966) first introduced the concept of authoritative parenting style. For Baumrind, the authoritative parents provide guidance to their children on oriented issue and rational manner. Here, since the level of demandingness is higher, parents usually welcome effective communication as well as effective relationship between their children, (Piko & Balazs, 2012). Hoskins (2014) pointed out that authoritative parents display more demandingness and responsiveness by being more supportive towards dialogue behaviour. With the use power and reasoning, these category of parents do encourage verbal give-and-take and also, express reasoning behind the rules adopted in the house. This is to say that this style of parenting is more associated with positive adolescent outcomes. As a result, it is found as most beneficial and effective style of parenting among most of Nigerian families. In other words, authoritative parenting style fosters positive well-being of adolescents.

This approach is somehow common in some Nigerian homes. Here, parents make their intentions known to their child or children, and their children are also given the chance to reason and give their opinion on the subject matter. The child or children can object but with a reliable reason(s). The fact that the children have say in their life decision at times is enough for the children to take responsibility for their action and the zeal to succeed are always high. Thus, authoritative parents exchange thoughts and ideas with their children, grant them freedom and also make sure to be strict when required. Parents under this category are both demanding and responsive because they monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. Their disciplinary methods are supportive rather than punitive. They are assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive. This is so because they want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative. Parents who use this parenting style

guide their children in a positive manner and they do so by justifying to their children why they should adopt the taught principles in their life. Children under such parents are usually matured and manage a well-organized life. Nijhof & Engels (2007) have a firm belief that authoritative parenting style plays an influential role in the development of healthy adolescent psychologically and socially. This is particularly so because authoritative parenting style help their children to develop higher level of self-reliance, self-esteem and ability to employ effective coping strategies, while developing positive self-image. (Parker & Benson 2004).

However, authoritative parenting style does not seem helpful in promoting the academic life of a child. Also, using Nigeria as a case study some Nigerian parents under this category do not blame or criticize their child or children when they perform poorly in school. That is why some Nigerian parents using this parenting style try to understand their children by claiming that they are not intelligent like their fellow kids, that is why their children perform poorly in school. They might try to employ the use of study time table for their children which they will follow with less strictness. This will go a long way in making their children not to take their academic career serious. Children who are trained with this parenting style towards improving their knowledge and academic careers, sometimes engaged in examination malpractice which could lead to expulsion from the school. Impressively, findings of the study revealed that some children who are trained with authoritative parenting style, do not perform well in academics but their character and behaviour are good and worthy of emulation. That is why we do notice and observed that some Nigerian children who are not brilliant but their character and behaviour are cherished in the society in which they live in.

Uninvolved or I Don't Care Parenting Styles

Uninvolved parents really do not care about what their children do with their life. The only thing they owe to their children is to give birth to them and the children are left to live their life the way they want. This set of parents are of the claim that, "God who created a child, knows how the child will grow".   Most children in this category find it difficult to cope with life challenges due to the fact that they have not learned the required skills that will shape their reasoning which will guide them through life. Thus, the decision on what a child will become rests solely in the hands of the child. Children in this category are prone to make mistakes. I don't care or uninvolved parents are usually so overpowered with their life's stress, that they find it difficult to spend time with their children. They think their children are capable enough to take care of themselves. Children raised with this parental guidance, tend to suffer from insecurity and poor self-confidence.

Permissive Parenting Style

Permissive parents are warm and agreeable, who hardly restrict the freedom of their children. Parents under this category are more responsive than they are demanding. Baumrind (1991), maintained that permissive parents are nontraditional and lenient, do not require mature behaviour, allow considerable self-regulation and avoid confrontation. This type of parenting usually leads to over-demanding, disobedient and indisciplined children. For Baumrind (1966), permissive parents attempt to behave in acceptance, affirmative and non-punitive manner towards their children's impulses, actions and desires. Considering the definition proposed by Baumrind that this parenting style tends to have a higher level of responsiveness, implies that a responsive parent is not more likely to define and determine rules associated with family, while encouraging the adolescents to consider it as a resource (Johnson & Kelly, 2011). According to Hoskins (2014), permissive parents can be characterized as exhibiting low level of demandingness and high level of responsiveness. This is so because they behave in a manner

that is more affirmative towards the impulses, actions and desires of adolescent while consulting with them about family decisions. In addition, they tend to avoid engaging in behavioural control; do not set rules and set a small number of behavioural control, do not set rules and set a small number of behavioural expectations for their adolescents. From this perspective, one can say that permissive parents actually allow the adolescents to actively participate without being concerned about their actions.

This kind of parenting style is often seen among the rich parents in Nigeria. Reason for this claim is, due to their business schedules and activities, some rich parents in Nigeria do not have time for their kids because their life style is all about going from one place to another attending to the demands of their businesses. They are good in sending money to their child or children whenever they want and they do lavish money on parties such as: birthday party or graduation party of any of their children. Children growing up with this parenting style do have the things they need at their beck and call, and are sometimes arrogant, insultive and intolerant. Nonetheless, the academic life style of children under this parenting style is not good and favourable. This shows that their parents are wasting their money in the name that their children are going to school. However, using Nigeria as a case study, some Nigerian parents under this category do change their children schools from time to time with the intention that they are doing the right thing for them. The idea of changing schools here, do make some Nigerian children under this category to loose interest in going to school, and as a result, do not care if they pass their examinations. Parents under this category do not bother to confront their children on their failures in school, thereby making their child or children not to feel ashamed that they failed their examinations. Unfortunately, some children that grew with this parenting style do have lots of carry-overs during their studies in the tertiary institutions with the pre-intention that they will sort out their carry-overs with their parents' money.

Having seen the various parenting styles being used by many parents in Nigeria, one can say that parenting styles in the Nigerian context involve a blend of authoritarian, authoritative, and to a lesser extent, permissive approaches. This can be seen in the emphasis on respect for elders, discipline, and the teaching of cultural values, with a focus on developing responsible and well-rounded individuals. It then involves a blend of traditional cultural values, religious beliefs and modern perspectives. Thus, with physical discipline, parents often prioritize instilling discipline, responsibility and a strong sense of self-control in their children.

The Idea of Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency is one of the emerging concerns across the entire world. It is directly linked to the behaviour of parents which they adopt to treat their children (Coste, 2015). Parents play an influential role in molding and shaping the behaviour of adolescents. Howeve, et al., (2009) point out that parents especially young parents are more frequently blamed for the criminal or delinquent behaviour displayed by their children. It is on this note that some of the law courts even penalize parents for the inconsiderate or antisocial conduct of their children. Juvenile is a time in which the youth look for self-identity and autonomy. Some of them engage in activities that are illicit in nature, and thus their parents become worried about their well-being. This paper takes into account the relationship between the delineated parenting styles and delinquent behaviour. One might ask, how does parenting styles lead children to be juvenile delinquent?

Delinquent behaviour is one of the most distressful problems during the period when people are considered adolescent, that is, between the ages of 13 and 18. Griffin et al., (2000) and Elliot et al., (2012), identified the list of delinquent activities as follows: refusal to adhere to

the parental demands, alcohol use and drug addiction, stealing, property destruction, theft and rape. It is a fact that opinion regarding the causes of delinquent behaviour vary. Generally, it is agreed that delinquent behaviour in adolescent years is more common than in the group of people of other ages. Furthermore, it is also argued that males are more likely to commit offences than females (Griffin et al, 2000). Nonetheless, Moitra & Mukherjee (2012) argue that there is a noteworthy role of parents in shaping the delinquent behaviour of adolescents. They pointed out that home is the place where a normal and healthy development of any child starts and the family constitutes the backbone of an individual. From this perspective, one can say that the family is considered to be a basic ecology in which the behaviour of children is manifested in their childhood by way of positive or negative reinforcement. Talib et al., (2011) argued that the family is a socio-cultural-economic arrangement that has a significant influence on not only the behaviour of the children, but also on the development of their characters. Therefore, ignorance in their parenting can lead them towards unwanted damaging effects that ultimately create behavioural problems in children.

Baumrind (1966) believes that parenting is a compound activity of many particular behaviours working individually or together that affects on the behaviour of children. It would not be wrong to state that adolescent delinquency is more concerned with parenting styles. With this in mind, the term "juvenile delinquency" can be defined as a law-breaking act committed by a minor, below the age of 18. This law-breaking act can result in incarceration in detention centers, rather than prisons or correctional centers (Berger, 2000). Tompsett and Toro (2010) point out that the risk of adolescent's development of delinquent behaviour is often influenced by parenting style. Authoritarian parental style particularly plays an influential role in developing the delinquent behaviour among adolescents that eventually results in negative outcomes (Kerr et al., 2012). It can be deduced that parents do not want their children to be involved in criminal activities. However, one of the aims of authoritarian parenting style is to mold and shape the behaviour of children. But when done without love and care, it makes children to exhibit delinquent behaviours both in the family and society at large. Thus, if a child does something wrong and his/her parent shows a very strong reaction, this behaviour of parent can lead the child to be rebellious and he or she may become delinquent. Therefore, it is accurate to state that authoritarian parenting style negatively affects the children in terms of psychological and behavioural context. Hence, Hoskins (2014) finds that authoritarian parenting has deep connection with more negative behavioural outcomes.

Nevertheless, it is widely believed that the delinquent behviour in most of the juveniles is the result of parenting styles. For example, Poduthase (2012) argues that adolescents can be led towards delinquent behaviour when they are exposed to lack of intimacy, lack of guidance, lack of parental involvement, lack of parental attachment, anger and blaming. It would therefore not be wrong to state that there is a significant link between parental styles and individual's tendency to engage in delinquent or violent behaviour. In other words, lack of parental involvement and interaction results in increased risk of violence, primarily in make juveniles (Brook et al, 2014).

Evaluation

Human character and behaviour (whether good or bad) are one of the basic things that make people to associate and socialize with any individual person. That is to say, man is judged based on his actions, character and behaviour. It is through this character and behaviour that an individual is considered as a good or bad person. One may ask, what are the basic factors that help to shape the human character and behaviour? In responding to this question, one of the

basic factors is the parents, because they help in inculcating moral and ethical values in an individual person. Through the parents, an individual nurtures some certain bad or unethical values or behaviours. This individual in question is regarded as a child. However, for parents to carry out this parental role or responsibility, they must establish a family. This is why Aristotle claimed that families are the fundamental social units of the society because they have a transformative effect on individuals and on the larger body politic. A major reason for this, he (Aristotle) explained, was that families teach "responsibility" – a virtue necessary for a just and good society. This falls in line with the Igbo adage that states – *"ana esi n'ulo amaru mma wee puta ezi"*. This literally means that – "one should be good at home before coming to the public" or, "one's beauty starts from his or her home before coming to the public". Thus, the beauty here is not mainly the facial beauty or body complexion, but the character or behaviour of an individual which the family as a community helps to shape and develop. However, from Aristotelian perspective, one can say that the family is a moral institution where the fundamental matters of rights or wrong, responsibility and human virtues are addressed and put to practice. This cannot be achieved without adopting or using a good parenting style.

Having expanded the parenting styles used by parents in their various homes, one can claim that the authoritarian parenting style causes the adolescents to be delinquent, as the extraordinary strictness displayed by their parents makes them rebellious. Authoritarian parents tend to control and exercise more than enough power for the future development of their children, but juveniles perceive it negatively as their actions are restricted. From this perspective, the good parenting style is authoritative in which parents keep an eye on their children and try to understand the mindset of their children. Authoritative parents provide guidance to their children in issue oriented and rational manner. This is so because, since the level of demandingness is higher in this parenting style, parents usually welcome effective communication as well as effective relationship between them. It is clear that authoritative is the right type of parenting, yet it seems that fathers are more authoritarian in nature. This style of fathers' parenting has forced some fathers to rethink and change their attitude due to the negative consequences and reaction of their children. Even though this parenting style encourages open-minded personality, parents can use power and exert firm control on the child without any hesitation. In other words, the exertion of control and use of power is to set standards for the child's future behaviour and to assure that the child would not rely on delinquent behaviour.

Conclusion

What is most important in helping a child grow maturely, is the ability to help the child grow in freedom, maturity and overall discipline. Only in these ways will a child come to possess the means needed to look after his or her self and act intelligently and prudently when faced with challenges in the future. This cannot be achieved without proper guidance by the parents who act as a force responsible for shaping and molding the characters and personalities of their children. Parents carry out these responsibilities by adopting parenting styles in their various homes with the aim of giving moral and ethical formations to their children. Using Nigeria as a case study, the paper highlighted authoritative parenting style as the best parenting approach to be adopted or used in Nigerian homes. This is so because it creates an atmosphere where the voice or opinion of a child is heard but must be guided with love and parental authority.

Recommendations

The paper therefore recommends that parents should opt for authoritative parenting style rather than authoritarian parenting style. Parents should also spend more time with their

children because it can reduce the probability of developing delinquent behaviour. Given to what is being experienced in the world, this study recommends that, there ought to be a radical sensitization of the public on parenting styles through seminars, workshops and the media. This will help free the minds of people especially couples from ignorance and make them live a healthy and responsible lives. It is in relation to this that every parents should consider their child or children as a gift, and children are multiple gifts that need to be taken care of with utmost carefulness and love. When this gift is neglected or is not being fancied, it becomes worthless. This claim follows from the fact that the owners of this gift or gifts (which are the parents precisely) should carry and look after their children with utmost caution and diligence. But when this gift is tampered or destroyed, the parents have it as a responsibility not to discard this gift, but to bring the pieces and put it back together with care and love. However, the biblical passage (Proverbs 13:24) which states - "those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent in disciplining them", should not be neglected. That is to say, irrespective of raising a child or children with care and love, parental authority and restrictions should also be involved. This gives a child the idea that for every action, there are consequences and one should be responsible for any action.

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Article   **Open Access**

COLONIALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT: EXAMINING COLONIAL LEGACIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS IN AFRICA

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Abstract
This article explores the relationship between coloniality and environmental sustainability in Africa, focusing on how colonial structures of resource extraction and colonial governance system have shaped present-day environmental concerns. The researcher argues that colonial legacies have entrenched unsustainable practices and institutional frameworks that prioritize resource exploitation over environmental conservation leading to all manner of injustice. Using an analytical approach, the research highlights the enduring colonial legacies of extractive economies, violence and land dispossession that disenfranchise local populations in Africa. It also examines how these colonial structures continue to frustrate sustainable development efforts in post-colonial Africa, perpetuating cycles of environmental issues that further breeds social injustice. The research ultimately aims to contribute to the discourse on decolonial approaches to environmental governance by advocating for a re-imagination of policies and practices to reflect local needs and environmental justice.

Keywords: Coloniality, Environment, Sustainability, Africa, Resource Exploitation.

Introduction

Coloniality and environmental sustainability are inextricably linked through historical practices that continue to shape contemporary ecological challenges in Africa. Colonial legacies have not only reshaped landscapes but also established regimes of resource management and extraction that prioritize profit over ecological balance and social justice. As Sultana (2023) explains, the concept of climate coloniality illustrates how historical and modern colonial policies exacerbate climate crises, and more precisely, their effects on marginalized populations in the Global South. This perspective is crucial to an understanding of how colonial pasts inform environmental governance and sustainability agendas today. Environmental colonialism, experienced with the thrusting of Western environmentalism upon indigenous communities and peoples, has had damaging impacts upon the native environment. Historically, ecological destruction is commonly associated with extractive activities. This is evident in Sub-Saharan Africa where years of colonial incursions disrupted and even decimated in some instances the indigenous ways of responding to environment. The introduction of foreign and invasive species in agricultural practices through colonialism is an example of this incursion as it continues to have a persistent impact upon biodiversity and ecosystem stability and resilience (Crosby, 2004).

Recent scholarship places the imperative for decolonial practices in environmental management at the forefront of environmental debates. For instance, one decolonial model of environmental management is the call to stop considering indigenous societies as passive victims in the search for solutions to climate change, but rather to combine scientific principles with Indigenous knowledge/governance systems that can help deal with ecological crises and social injustice (Berkes and Armitage, 2010). The prevailing conservation discourses with a propensity to silence the historical oppressions of indigenous groups is challenged by this model, urging a paradigmatic turn to sustainable ecological relationships that are considerate of both humans and the environment as evident in indigenous knowledge systems (Young, 2021). The interplay between environmental sustainability and coloniality warrants a critical and nuanced analysis of the ways that power dynamics in the social and political sphere determines ecological outcomes. Banerjee (2003) posits that sustainable development discourses tend to reinforce colonial logics that favor economic expansion at the cost of environmental integrity and human rights. He calls for the need to confront the embedded structural inequities within existing environmental policies.

Understanding the intersection of environmental sustainability and coloniality is crucial to develop practicable solutions to current ecological problems. By critically examining the relationship between these two, academics, particularly in African studies can develop insightful, culturally sensitive approaches to enhance sustainability within postcolonial societies while protecting Indigenous knowledge systems. It is within ambit of this reasoning that the purpose of this paper is laid bare. The paper examines the interaction between environmental sustainability and coloniality within the African continent. It does this with specific reference to the ways that current ecological problems have been shaped by the patterns of exploitative extraction and the institution of colonial governance structures. It is argued that colonial legacies have deepened unsustainable practices that privilege resource extraction over ecological stewardship and social justice. By this, the author aims to contribute to discourses on decoloniality, environmental sustainability, and social justice.

Understanding Coloniality

Coloniality is a concept that acknowledges the endurance of colonial practices beyond the historical period of colonialism, entrenching itself in the social, economic, and political structures of former colonies. Coloniality is the patterns of inequity and power relation that were established at the time of colonialism that continue to shape contemporary societies. Walter Mignolo defines coloniality as the underlying structure of power that emerged from the colonial experience and persists in various forms today, influencing global relations and local governance (Mignolo, 2007). Coloniality perpetuates its evil through the coloniality of being, knowledge and culture of the people it encounters. By this, it initiates an ontological categorisation and hierarchisation of people into inferior and superior beings, determining the nature and status of their social, epistemological and cultural systems. Through coloniality of being, a social and anthropological hierarchy that castigates humans as inferior or superior based on their racial constitution is created. This social hierarchies established during colonial rule persist today, affecting race relations and social interactions in the global arena. The classification of people based on racial hierarchies initiated during colonization continues to influence social dynamics, resulting in systemic inequalities that are deeply embedded in societal structures. Those hierarchies often decide political representation, education access, and resource access, thus further entrenching inequality in marginalized populations.

The other key aspect of the coloniality is its influence on knowledge systems. It imposes a Eurocentric knowledge perspective that relegates indigenous epistemologies to the periphery. According to De Sousa Santos (2014), coloniality is about the power to define what counts as knowledge and who gets to produce it, leading to the exclusion of non-Western perspectives in academia and policy-making. This proceeds from the believe of the anthropological inferiority of the group being excluded, as from the reasoning of anthropological inferiority, it is easy to arrive at the view of inferior rationality; hence, inferior knowledge that should be disregarded, or at the very least, should not be prioritized. By this view, Western knowledge is prioritised over and above non-Western forms of knowing (Quijano, 2000). The dominance of Western epistemologies over indigenous knowledge systems results in a narrow understanding of global issues such as environmental sustainability and social justice. This exclusion limits the effectiveness of policies aimed at addressing these challenges because they often do not incorporate local knowledge or practices. From coloniality of being and the epistemological arguments derived therein, the cultural dimension of coloniality that justifies cultural erasure and to imperialism is derived. Cultural imperialism is the continuation of a state of affairs by which dominant societies impose their practice and value upon oppressed communities, often causing the erasure of indigenous traditions and identities. For Quijano (2000), "coloniality is the root of modern types of cultural domination," something that still shapes current cultural practices and policies globally. Imposing patterns of behavior of Western culture results in the loss of much of the culture of many indigenous societies. It is not merely the identities of the individuals that are lost due to this kind of cultural imperialism, but also the sense of communal belonging with traditional practice that sustains it (De Sousa Santos, 2014).

Imposing Western values and cultures was and still is the cornerstone of the colonial practices that calls for Western political and economic institutions for the rest of the world. Coloniality is manifested in political and economic structures that enrich ex-colonial powers while promoting dependency in the formerly colonized nations. As posited by Bernards (2022), colonial legacies have instituted financial systems that entrench existing inequalities, whereby postcolonial economies are struggling with structures that were designed for exploitation rather than equitable development. To this, the majority of post-colonial states have inherited political systems that reflect colonial models of governance, which in most instances are characterized by authoritarianism or weak democratic institutions. These hinder good governance and citizens' participation, as is evident in most African countries where political authority is still held by elites that emulate colonial behaviors (Mignolo, 2007). This colonial behavior also serves to entrench a position where economic structures created during colonization that favored resource extraction for the colonizers, continues to impact former colonies today. The majority of countries remain integrated into global markets in ways that reproduce their positions as suppliers of raw materials rather than centers of industrialization. Coloniality has a profound influence on environmental sustainability in Africa today because the previous trajectories of exploitation and extraction of natural resources established during colonial times continue to influence socio-political and economic structures.

Understanding Environmental Sustainability
The importance of sustainability of the environment becomes even more critical with the looming environmental crisis of climate change, extinction of species, and pollution. Sustainability measures have to be applied in order to overcome the crisis the world currently faces. Human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests, have resulted in unprecedented levels of concentrated greenhouse gases which have significantly

exposed the planet to high level of global warming and severe climatic events (IPCC, 2021). This crisis endangers the planet's ecosystem, food systems, and the well-being of humans by causing loss of not only biodiversity but also pollution. The World Wildlife Fund's Living Planet Report estimates the loss of about 68% of wildlife species since 1970 due to the loss of habitats, climate change events and pollution (WWF, 2020). The loss of biodiversity is also shown to compromise the strength of the ecosystem, impairing naturally occurring key functions like pollination of plants and the filtering of water. In addition to this loss of biodiversity, pollution is also another major issue that results from unsustainable living. It is estimated that pollution of the atmosphere causes about 7 million deaths per year (UNEP, 2019). Plastic pollution of the oceans also endangers marine animals and humans alike.

In light of the above, concerted effort at environmental sustainability becomes a no brainer as it is essential to our ability to satisfy our current needs without compromising the ability of coming generations to do the same. The Brundtland Commission defines sustainable development as a reconciliation of economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection by striking a balance between the three (WCED, 1987). Here, sustainable approach to life ensures ecological integrity which will in turn guarantee viability in the long-run. Sustainability is also argued to come with significant economic gains. For example, businesses that pursue sustainable practices have been shown to achieve efficiency and waste reduction, improving their financial performance while reducing their environmental impact. Environmental sustainability also ensures social justice by addressing the inequities that are triggered by environmental degradation. Environmental crises tend to significantly impact vulnerable groups, posing severe threats to their health, welfare and means of sustenance. Sustainable practice can empower vulnerable groups by way of equitable environmental management and participatory environmental governance. Sustainable practices also increase the resilience of communities to environmental shock like economic crises or natural disasters. For example, the inclusion of green infrastructure into urban planning can abate the threat of floods while it "sustain air and water resources and contribute to the health and quality of life for. . .communities and people" (Benedict and McMahon 2006:12). Such approaches not only conserve the ecosystem, they also conserve human lives.

Exploring Environmental Sustainability Strategies and Practices in Africa

Contemporary environmentally sustainable interventions within Africa are increasingly resorting to innovative participatory strategies to deal with pressing environmental challenges. Of notable reference is the adoption of sustainable farming practices among smallholder farmers. For example, farmers within Kenya's Makueni County have introduced climate smart farming strategies that harmoniously combine traditional with modern strategies such as crop diversification and water conservation, improving food security and building resilience against the impact of climate change (Nyale, E. H., China, S. S and Nabiswa, F., 2019). In Ethiopia, similar sustainable land and water management projects have been ventured to improve the soil conservation and conservation of water strategies, resulting in increased farming output with less soil erosion (Tasew Tadesse, 2023). Another vital initiative is that of reforestation and conservation of biodiversity by the communities. In Uganda and a host of other sub-Saharan African countries, the "Trees for the Future" programme is initiated in communities to reclaim degraded lands by planting more valuable trees which have yielded fertile soils and greater biodiversity (UNEP, 2024). In Kenya, the Green Belt Movement also engages the local communities, especially women, to plant more trees and advocate for sustainable management of the lands. This has improved support for reforestation and have also benefited the

communities economically as they are able to sustainably harvest forest products (Obi, C. I., 2005). In Nigeria, government, Non-Governmental and individual effort, spearheads reforestation and nature-based solutions. The Great Green Wall initiative is a flagship project that aims to combat desertification in Northern Nigeria. It has established a 1,359 km shelterbelt, produced 7.6 million seedlings, reforested 2,801 hectares, and created multipurpose gardens, jobs, and training opportunities (Oyema-Aziken, 2024). There is also the Plastic Recycling Programme in Southern Nigeria, implemented by Technoserve and sponsored by The Coca-cola Foundation. This initiative is meant to strengthen the plastic recycling value chain in Nigeria, while significantly involved in rural and community level environmental awareness to help combat plastic waste and empower indigent members of the community.

The adoption of clean energy technologies like solar power is revolutionising access to energy in the rural parts of Africa, although it is still comparatively expensive. In South Africa, the Independent Power Producer Procurement Program of the government successfully incorporated the supply of renewable energy into the national grid, largely reducing the consumption of fossil fuels (Sultana, 2024). In off-grid communities, projects like Solar Sister is empowering women by giving them access to solutions of solar energy that enhance access to electricity at the household level while encouraging entrepreneurship (Solar Sisters, N.D.). Another sustainability practice in Africa is the collaborative governance model with the locals that have successfully aided implementation of sustainable management of land in some countries. In Tanzania, community-based forest conservation initiatives are implemented, giving the locals a means of sustenance while also protecting the land. To-date, Tanzania has one of the most advanced community forestry jurisdictions in Africa as reflected in policy, law and practice (Wily, 2000, MNRT, 2020: 20). In the case of Namibia, the program of the Community-Based Natural Resource Management has successfully granted the locals the means to manage the wildlife resources to conserve them while also providing economic gain through eco-tourism (Boudreaux, 2007).

Regional cooperation frameworks like the African Agenda 2063 that prioritize sustainable development and environmental protection are also helping to shape the efforts of the continent towards being sustainable. Agenda 2063 outlines strategies to develop climate resilience and sustainable management of resources among member states (African Union, 2015). All these efforts could be insignificant considering the magnitude of the environmental threats that the continent faces, but they signal a growing recognition of the imperative of taking a comprehensive participatory approach to environmental sustainability in Africa. Hopefully, with necessary understanding and resistance, this effort will be protected from the sullying and morally bankrupt effect of coloniality and economic hitmen who has no regards for neither the environment nor the vulnerable members of the society that bear the social, political and economic brunt of environmental degradation.

Pattern of Colonial Practices and their Implications for Sustainability Strategies within Africa
Colonialism had a long-term impact on the environment and the people it encountered, significantly changing the people of these societies, their relationship with themselves and their relationship with their environment. Here, the analysis explores how colonial practices led to the extensive exploitation of natural resources and indigenous lands, drawing on various scholarly sources to show the enduring consequences of these actions. Even though colonial powers disguised their plunder of the colonized as a civilizing mission, they viewed newly acquired territories primarily as sources of raw materials and wealth, leading to systematic environmental degradation. According to Voskoboynik (2018: 38), colonialism facilitated large-scale exploitation

of resources, with cash crops replacing subsistence agriculture and monoculture practices dominating landscapes that once supported diverse ecosystems. This change not only disrupted local food system but also contributed to tremendous ecological imbalance. The mining of minerals and timber extraction caused more havoc to the environment than the others. For instance, intensive mining of silver in the Andes resulted in irremediable loss to indigenous ecosystems, while forest clearance for the expansion of cultivation in regions like India led to soil erosion and the destruction of flora and fauna (Nishtha, 2023). The British colonial government's removal of forests in India's Malabar Coast is a classic case of this state of affairs, wherein vast areas were cleared of natural cover to provide for the export of resources (Ponting, 2007:189). In Africa, the colonial powers saw a land of unlimited resources to be exploited, with the resultant huge extraction of minerals, forests, and agricultural products. Europeans seized lands to undertake mining activities for resources like copper, diamond, and gold at the expense of the indigenous inhabitants and their traditional ecosystem and livelihood (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012: 49). Compulsory labor was introduced to provide a guaranteed workforce to the mines with coercive practices like the payment of the head tax, which forced the indigenous people to toil for the colonial enterprises.

The colonial era saw a dramatic decline in wildlife populations due to overhunting and habitat destruction. For instance, the ivory trade led to the slaughter of up to 12,000 elephants annually during the late 19th century (Bercovitch, 2015). The creation of game reserves usually kept out indigenous people from their ancestral lands but opened it up for European settlers to hunt at will. This reinforced a narrative of blaming Africans for environmental degradation without accounting for colonial exploitation that led to it. Export of cash crops like rubber, cotton, and cocoa saw extensive decimation of forests as millions of hectares was cut down within Sub-Saharan Africa to serve European industrial appetite during the colonial times. Not only was biodiversity disrupted by this activity, the indigenous ecosystem was also disrupted to the point of being exposed to erosion and degradation. Traditional sustainable farming was severely undermined by the introduction of monoculture farming by the colonialist to enhance their need for resource extraction (Kameri-Mbote and Cullet, 1997: 23). The intensive farming methods introduced by the colonizers also led to soil nutrient depletion and destabilized local ecosystems. Cash crops required heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides, which further worsened the quality of the soil in the long term. For example, French colonizers in Africa forcibly introduced the cultivation of cash crops at the expense of traditional subsistence farming, leading to desertification and soil infertility (Anuradha Varanasi, 2022). Not only did these actions harm local ecosystems, but they also destabilized social organizations that were reliant on these sustainable systems.

It was not just the environment that suffered from colonial policies and practices. Colonial policies had a tendency to displace persons from their lands, resulting in social fragmentation. The imposition of new legal frameworks that safeguarded European settlers had the effect of alienating the locals from their resources and way of life (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012: 49). This disruption has contributed towards the longstanding land and resource disputes in most African countries today. In addition, the economic structures established under colonialism have persisted following independence, perpetuating disparities between African countries and former colonial powers. The extractive approach has persisted into modern times, with multinational corporations regularly exploiting African resources with limited benefits to the host indigenous communities. This has exacerbated poverty and environmental degradation and fostered dependence on foreign economies.

The legacy of colonialism is also felt in contemporary environmental challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) acknowledges that the current environmental challenges have their roots in the colonialism that intensified the patterns of exploiting the environment. For instance, the destruction of the forests through the logging practices of the colonial era produced the carbon emissions and loss of habitats that are still experienced today. More so, the majority of African nations are still facing economic systems that are directed to immediate economic profits at the expense of ecological conservation. Current mining operations in Africa are still driven by global markets that benefit from historical patterns of extraction and economic exchange established during colonial times (Bhandikeri, 2020). This ongoing demand for minerals and resources from former colonies exacerbates existing inequalities and deepens the patterns of environmental destruction and poverty.

These colonial legacies persist in destabilising efforts towards environmental sustainability in the continent, propelling a string of exploitative activities that ultimately result in environmental and social crises. In Côte d'Ivoire, colonial practice had entrenched a cash crop economy based on cocoa and coffee cultivation. This monoculture of cash crops has resulted in massive deforestation to provide arable land. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2022) estimates that the country lost around 4 million hectares of forestland between 2015 and 2020, resulting in biodiversity loss and climate change impact. Also, the colonial-era historical practice of land appropriation that has been a source of persistent tension between the indigenous communities and agribusiness companies, frequently causing violence and the displacement of indigenous communities still persists and is carried on by the government. This can also be seen in Kenya where the colonial wildlife conservation policies that benefited Europeans at the cost of the native people is still being upheld. Only that this time, the practice is being upheld by the government and the country's elites who have the intention of forcefully acquiring these indigenous lands to develop the country's national parks without regards for the people whose life have depended on these lands for years. For example, the Maasai are to date being driven away from their grazing lands for conservation efforts that are seen as necessary for tourism revenue, at the cost of the indigenous community's traditional way of life (Goldman, 2011). In the process, this has not only diminished the Maasai's traditional livelihoods but also contributed to the decline of wildlife populations due to habitat loss and increased human-wildlife conflict.

Also, the looting of the Democratic Republic of Congo by the colonialists is continuing to shape its current environmental policy. The extraction of minerals like coltan and cobalt is followed by the deployment of forced labor with the locals being intimidated by the use of violence and coercion by mining groups. This leads to serious ecological devastation and social tension as the communities rebuff the occupation of their lands and the use of their labor (USDL, 2023). Similar experience in South Africa has been tagged 'green colonialism'. Reflected in current energy policies, it is the extraction of green energy resources without regard for the needs and the rights of the indigenous communities. The push for renewable energy projects often overlooks historical injustices related to land ownership and environmental management, resulting in conflicts over land use and resource allocation that echo colonial-era dispossessions. This situation perpetuates inequalities while failing to achieve true sustainability (Blanc, 2022). These enduring impact of colonialism in Africa which manifests through exploitative practices hinder environmental sustainability efforts across the continent. These legacies not only exacerbate ecological degradation but also contribute to social injustices that affect local communities disproportionately. The interplay between colonial legacies and contemporary

environmental challenges reveals the urgent need for policies that address historical injustices while promoting sustainable development across Africa.

Conclusion

This paper reflects on the intricate nature of the relationship between environmental sustainability and coloniality in Africa. This relationship is one that reveals that while there have been pockets of efforts aimed at mitigating the effects of environmental challenges, major practices and policies are still limited by entrenching colonial thinking and practices, often exacerbating the situation. The colonial past of resource exploitation without regard for sustainability are not specters of a distant period; they remain embedded in contemporary structures, shaping how individuals interact with their environment and with each other. This state of affairs has not only determined bases of environmental sustainability policies and practices in the continent, but has also determined the outcome, leaving behind a situation of dispossession of not just the environment, but also indigenous peoples and knowledge. This notwithstanding, the indigenous peoples and young people have shown grit in fighting for alternative that can ensure a just and sustainable future, often advocating for a blend of technology and indigenous knowledge systems that have long prioritized balance and stewardship. That such alternative modes are increasingly being acknowledged, within both policy communities and social movements, suggests a gradual shift toward decoloniality. While a sustained transcendence of the hold of coloniality over the African environment has become more than necessary, it will require more than policy reform or technological solution. It calls for a basic reboot of relationships between humans and land, between knowledge systems, and between violent past and promising future. Only by centering justice and plurality in our responses can the continent envisage an environmental future that honors both its sustainable indigenous/traditional legacy and the rights of generations yet to come.

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