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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN AND WESTERN CONCEPTS OF TIME

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Abstract

Time, though by some philosophers is not real has been discovered to be a fundamental reality. One of the major reasons for Africa's underdevelopment has been the nonchalant attitude to time. Usually, Africans think of time in connection with astronomical events which results in the natural division of time into day and night. Africans reckon Time in the Relative (Natural) manner while the Europeans consider theirs to be Absolute (Artificial). The Relative Time is flexible while the Absolute Time is straight-forward, but full of lapses in view of the major but silent errors inherent in the present Western calender in use. Hence, the reaction of St. Augustine of Hippo which represents the first ever attempt to correct the European idea of time as being Absolute. Oral traditional method was used to collect data which was corroborated with other sources for final conclusion. That paved way for inter-disciplinary approach to historical reconstruction. The paper argues that African historians should tilt towards Relative Time because it is error free and makes provision for inter-disciplinary approach to historical reconstruction.

Keywords: Time, Comparative Study, African Concept, Western Concept.

Introduction

One of the main reasons for the continued underdevelopment of Africa is the nonchalant attitude to time and the need for punctuality in all aspects of lie. The problem of punctuality has become so endemic that lateness to any function is accepted and explained off for African time. It was Plato who first made a systematic attempt to describe time philosophically. His definition of time is bound up with and springs from his entire metaphysics, which is idealism.[1] Time in this platonic idealism is then defined as "the moving of eternity'". This means that time has nothing to do with the realities of this universe except at the level of image, copy, representation. To define time as time, one must get to eternity. Eternity is totally outside the

universe. It is totally another world.[2] Time is a backdrop reality that calculates the unfolding of being, and is made present by the human mind in the human experience of reality-in-community. "Time is a backdrop reality". By this, I mean that time is fundamental reality. It is not just an empty imagination or creation of the human mind, nor is it a non-reality as some philosophers have argued. For McTagart, time is not a reality. There is nothing like time because we cannot hold it or sit on it as we sit on space. That time is a reality cannot be demonstrated in various ways. For instance, the Time now or present time is the time of my reading this text, or of my listing or discussing with somebody. That I am reading is real. The reality of my reading proves the reality of time because every event is an event in time. Thus, the moment of my reading, an event per se, is reality-in-time. To deny the fact of my reaching in time, let us say 5pm, is to deny the reality of my act of reading at all. It would be self-contradictory to say that I am reading and at the same time say that I am not reading at anytime. For to do anything at all is to do it in time.[3] Clear is one thing: time is reality.[4] At this point, this paper intends to consider the African concept of time (Relative Time) as well as that of the western world (Absolute Time). It will attempt to analyze and appraise the above African and European concepts of time, and then try to philosophize on time using St. Augustine's approach.

Concept of Time: Relative and Absolute Time

Europeans are of the opinion that the Africans had no concept of time and so could not date their events. When time is considered, it should be noted that it is always in connection with astronomical events. It is this movement that results in the natural division of time into day and night.[5] Time in Africa is a perceived cultural tendency. This is sometimes used in a pejorative sense, about tardiness in appointments, meeting and events. This also includes the more leisurely relaxed and less rigorously - scheduled lifestyle found in African countries, as opposed to the more clock-bound pace of daily life in western countries.[6] However, cultural materials or art facts of the kind that we have been dealing with, do not give any time sequence. They give one the impression of timelessness and unchangeability. Where a sense of time is given, this, more often than not, presents a relative time.[7] Moreso, traditional people, especially Africans in the villages, have not been interested in the exact measurement of time. If anything, their concept of time is cyclical, as opposed to linear. Within this concept, the past, present and future are lumped together.[8] Relative time as perceived by Africans can be seen in the following ways: As people who are close to nature, Africans know time through the behavior of animals. For instance, the cock crowing at dawn suggests the morning. Time could also be known through the movement of rivers, floods and rainfall.[9] In terms of human activities and chronology, Africans used social events, such events include planting and harvesting seasons, festival periods like coronation of chiefs, birth, death and burial of prominent persons etc, war times, famine and epidemic periods. I re-call an old illiterate man who tried to re-call the time of his birth saying, "I was born when lbesikpo fought war with the Europeans. That was why my father named me Udo Ekong." Putting it succinctly, Africans used social events to reckon time. Apart from the above various ways, Africans do have some other simple Ways of reckoning with time. For instance, an old woman walking a long distance to her farm could know the time to return from the farm using the sundial method i.e, the position of the sun in the sky. From the shadow of an object cast on the ground which could be long or short, the old woman will use that to determine the time of the day.[10]

On the other hand, Africans who live by the creeks or riverside, know the time of the day through the water tides. This could be seen as the volume of water increases in the

morning while in the afternoon it decreases only to increase again in the evening.[11] Africans also know time using the homing birds (birds that have a place to live amongst men). This could be seen as they live their resting places only to return in the evening. Some other people Use what is called the water glass. Here, water was put in a container with a small hole at the bottom. Inside the base of the container was put some white sand from the river to cover the hole at the base. On top of the white sand was placed some gravel before the container was filled with water. The water was expected to drip from the hole at the base. If the container was filled in the morning, water was expected to finish dripping from the container at 6.00 pm. Therefore, from the level of water in the container, one could know the time of the day. Some special flowers can be used to determine time in Africa. This can be seen as some flowers open their leaves in the morning and close again in the evening.[12]

In a nutshell, time in Africa can be measured by two realities using human activities and environment. The human reality comprises moments of birth, naming, puberty and adulthood. This, Iroegbu call egocentric time. In another dimension, time can be measured environmentally, in respect of the economy involving ecology, rituals, socio-political and techno-developmental life.[13] On the other hand, the Europeans use Astro-physics to determine absolute time. The instrument used in this absolute method is called chronometer. By using chronometer, time was reduced to seconds, minutes and hours which invariably was transmitted to govern day and night.[14] Some scholars, especially in contemporary philosophy of science, understand absolute time differently. They define it as the general or common time that is the same for all everywhere, to be absolute means to be the same for all. For example, eight o'clock is eight o'clock for all human beings or even for all the inhabitants of a particular time zone or region. Based on scientific discoveries, Europeans reject the concept of absolute time so defined. It is preposterous and unreal. They prefer to follow the insights of the modern theory of relativity. There, the observation and measurement of time is purely relative. It is therefore to a greater extent depending on where one is at the point of measurement or calculation. [15]

It should be noted that most things about relative time are natural things, while that of absolute time are mostly arbitrary and artificial things. There exists no human society that did not have their own way of reckoning time be it absolute or relative. [16] Moreso, when we think about absolute chronology with regards to western calendar and dating, it should be noted that, the very first society that brought about calendar dating was Egypt. It was the priests in ancient Egypt that kept these records. At the pyramids, dead bodies were preserved and food stuff were also stored. The priests developed a kind of diary which was used for recording items stored in the pyramids, the time of their removal and next visit of the owners. The ancient Egyptians developed the calendar, which spread to other civilizations. It was copied by the Greeks and perfected by the Romans. It reached Roman Empire when Julius Caesar was the Roman Emperor and dictator. He was the man who set the bases of the present day calendar in 45BC. The calendar was called the Julian calendar. The Julian calendar specified that each year was allotted 365 days while every fourth year was given 366 days. Eight days was allotted to a week. There were lots of errors in that calendar. So when Julius Caesar died and was succeeded by Augustus Caesar, more researches were done to correct the errors in the previous calendar while also synchronizing the seasons of the year with the rotation of the earth. The month of July was named after Julius Caesar while the month of August was named after Augustus Caesar.[17]

Pope Gregory XIII was the one who brought about more innovation to the Julian calendar. For this reason, the present calendar is called Gregorian calendar. As knowledge of

astronomy improved, people discovered that in every 400 years, 3 days stood out undated in the Julian calendar. Immediately, Pope Gregory discovered this, he brought the scientists together to work on it but he did not live to see the result. Even after the adjustment has been made, it is still obvious that in every 3,323 years, one day still stand out undated.[18] Apart from the fact that astro-physics is artificial, it only helps one reckon time accordingly in the part of the world the person is. Astro- physics does not allow Europeans to reckon time uniformly because of the movement of the earth. According to Isaac Newton, absolute time exists independently of any perceiver and progresses at a consistent pace throughout the universe. Unlike relative time, Newton believed absolute time was imperceptible and could only be understood mathematically.[19] According to Newton, humans are only capable of perceiving relative time, which is a measurement of perceivable objects in motion like the or earth . From these movements, the would witnesses the passage of time.[20]

Appraisal of the African and Western Concepts of Time
The history of the philosophy of time shows the constant expression of the difficulty inherent in the definition of time. Aristotle found it hard to define time.[21] St. Augustine called it a human perplexity,[22] while George Berkeley could only see the intelligibility of time when it is associated with human acitivities.[23] On its own, time is unintelligible. Isaac Newton was able to classify various types of time such as relative, apparent, common and absolute. Yet this great physicist was unable to give any precise definition of time. Exploring the Yoruba situation could help to explain more of the African concept of time. What is the nature of time in Yoruba perspective? Ayoade has answered this by pointing out that in western thought, there are some definitions or better description of time. In African thought, on the contrary, there are no individual definitions. This is because the African system of thought is totally communal in origin.[24] It would be needful to inquire from Ayoade, on how the Yoruba understand time? What is the nature of time for them? This fundamental question is left unanswered by Ayoade.[25] J. S. Mbiti at least gave a description of time as a setting for his discussion and analysis of the various components and roles of time in East African culture. Here, Ayoade could have done better. Perhaps he could reply that since time in general is hard to define, his people could not come out with any definition. Neither could he, being part of his people.[26] For them the concept was implicit in their life and it was futile to seek any definition. Rather since everybody knew what time was, both implicitly and in practice, it was better to go straight to consider how time was measured.[27]

Time is the most influential factor in this world as it is abstract. Everything in this world is commanded and decided by time. It is time which gives everybody the opportunity to make use of it. Those who make best use of time and avail those opportunities grow and rise in life. "A stitch in time save nine" is a popular maxim.[28] It highlights the importance of time in life. It means an act done in time saves one from inconveniences and troubles.[29] Europeans have a theoretical, mechanical and utilitarian concept and deployment of space and time. They conceptualize time and space such that these are items for scramble. Indeed, they have Scrambled not only in their own nations, but more horribly in other continents. This is the push behind colonialism, imperialism and to a certain extent, Muslim and Christian evangelization as done in African. Asia and Latin America. These phrases which are on daily use in the western world indicate the reality:
i.   Time is money
ii. Punctuality is the soul of business
iii. Hit or miss at your time. For opportunity comes but once.[30]

On the contrary, Africans have a more relative, natural, humane and existential perception of time. They have close ties to the land as life means and ancestral contact locus. They eat not because it is time to eat but because they are hungry. One's past and one's future re-existential linked at times to be curious level of predestination and mediocrity. Traditional Africans are more tied to the myths of nature surrounding the sun, moon and stars, rising in the morning with a fairly, regular harmonious fashion and setting in the evening.[31] For Mbiti, time is not a theme of its own, rather he sees it only as a tool and a means. He calls it a key to the understanding of the main themes of African thought and life. With their conception of time clarified one can then understand the religious and philosophical concepts like God, nature, ethnicity, good and evil etc.[32] In reference to the western conception and the African conception of time, Mbiti maintains the following: The western concept of time is linear (straight forward). It consists of three phases which are past, present and future. To Africans, time conception is dyadic i.e. two - dimensional, past and present. In African time perception, there is no future per se (what an insult!!!) because the concept of a future in Africa is on a short term basis (about two or three years).[34] Hence, the western conception of time is foreign to the Africans. The major reason Mbiti gives is that "the future is virtually absent from the African minds because events which have not taken place or occurred, cannot be a part of time.[35]

Movement of Time in the Western and African Context

Mbiti says, in the western concept of time, there is movement from the past to the future. This in fact explains the linear nature of time in the west. Hence, there is a progressive mental movement of 'an awareness of the past, a sense of present experience and 'a purposeful vision of the future' in the western mindset. In the African concept, time moves from present (Sasa) to past (Zamani). Sasa implies "he period of immediate concern for the people', Hence, Sasa (present) stretches into the short future. It swallows up what westerners call future. Mbiti calls Sasa (present) and Zamani (past). In other words, the past and present overlap as the present gets swallowed up in the past (the graveyard of time). The present exists to serve the past which stands as a period of myth, and which gives sense of direction and purpose to the present. This explains why, within the African mindset, there is the dire need for present generation to become like antiquity (olden days) in all ramifications. In the west, there is the outlook to brighter future and a change of lifestyle and mentality.

Time in Western and African Context

Mbiti maintains that time availability is more crucial in the west, as they are more like slaves to time. This follows as, the westerners perceive time as a commodity which must be utilized, sold and bought. This explains the reasons for the pragmatic and technological environment. The fear of wasting time is of high ranking in the west.[36] However, in traditional African societies, time has to be created or can be produced, as there are no strict laid down result of how a man's life should proceed. For example, one finds men of 40 years or thereabout still living comfortably within the communal setting of his household. He is not even thinking of having an independent life, raising his own kids the personal way or even building his own empire. In African mindset, man is not a slave to time, as he does things at his own pace.[37] Man can make as much time as he wants, or as Mbiti puts it African people do not waste time, but rather wait for time or produce time.[38]

St. Augustine's Appraisal of Time

Saint Augustine of Hippo (324 - 430 AD) is well respected as a Christian (catholic) philosopher. He was well educated, wrote many books with the most popular being "The City of God", His philosophy of time was contained in his book titled "The Confession".[39] In his philosophy of time, He contended that "it is very difficult to pin down time' to know the exact time because time itself is ever changing. Time occupies no space and cannot be 'penned down". On the other hand, St. Augustine argued that if one thinks about the future, one can only think about it as the future does not exist. Similarly, thinking about the past, one can only think about it as the past is no longer in existence. It can only be remembered. 'The past exist only in the mind of men'. Time therefore is a thing that can be synthesised by the mind.[40] St. Augustine's analysis of time can be categorize d into two broad stages. In the first stage, his focus was on the realities of past time, present time and future time. These components are called 'Time Triad'. He plausibly argued that the time triads are realities in the mind: the present is a fleeting attention; our acquaintance with the past is through present recollection of it: and our acquaintance with the future is through expectation.[41]

In the second stage, St. Augustine's focus was on the nature of time and how it is measured. He wrote: "I want to know the essence and nature of time, whereby we measure the movement of bodies and say, for instance, hat one movement lasts twice as long as another".[42] He rejected the assertion that time is the motion of celestial bodies. He believed that time will still exist even if celestial bodies were not in motion and that the movements of celestial bodies are makers of fime.[43] His perplexity notwithstanding, Augustine was certain of one thing: that if nothing passed, there would be not past time, and if nothing were now, there would be no present time.[44] By this Augustine seems to argue for the necessary relationship of time to events and things.[45] St. Augustine suggested that maybe time is measured in the mind. It is not an event itself that is measured but instead the impression that it leaves on the mind. The mind expects the future which becomes the present which the mind attends to an then becomes the past which the mind remembers.[46] When it comes to the measurement of time, Augustine argues that some sort of extension is demanded. There must be extensions or spaces of time. Following Aristotle, he turns to the heavenly bodies in their circular movements. Day for instance is measured by the Sun's position above the earth (distinguishing day from night). Augustine, like other members of his epoch, believed that the sun and other planets rotated around the earth, and that the earth was standing still.[47]

St. Augustine concluded that the only means by which human beings can know time fully is through God who is ever present and ever stable. Time is "distentio amini'". He finally submitted that the human mind can understand the present, the future and past but cannot understand eternity. This he said can only be understood by God.[48] This therefore, translates to the fact that time is flexible and that the African concept of time should be upheld. Considering the lapses found in the western or absolute chronology of time, time should therefore be reckoned according to the individual community's standpoint and should also be respected. In a nutshell, Augustine concluded that, both the relative and absolute chronologies are very useful to the historian for the reconstruction of history. In a way, this can help the historian not to be fixed but rather flexible with his sources of information and presentation of facts for the reconstruction of history. It also goes a long way to debunk European views and perspectives bout African history. Therefore, African historians should be flexible while writing and should be opened to consult other related disciplines in what is generally regarded as the inter-disciplinary approach to historical reconstruction.

Conclusion

The African concept of time which over the years have been used wrongly to judge the Africans as having had no idea of time can no longer hold. A consideration of the Africans Use Relative time which is more natural while the Europeans used Absolute time which is artificial, exposes the flexibility of the Relative method which is quite good for the African historians. This work has conceptualized time as a backdrop reality that calculates the unfolding of human beings. This definition is meant to show more clearly the deeper reality that time represents. Time is not just a measure of motion as Aristotle defined it. The measure of motion is only one of its tributary functions.[49] Looking at it in a much more serious manner, time can be said to be deeply involved in the unfolding of reality. In fact, time is at the source and centre of reality and reveals reality so.[50] St. Augustine of Hippo defending the African concept of time (Relative Time) submitted that time is "distentio amini". That is to say that the past, present and future can only be known through eternity, God. Hence, he enjoined Africans to be proud of their relative time. To the historians, they should look at time flexibly.

Endnotes

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DIGITAL BANKING AND BANKING SECTOR DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study empirically examined the impact of digital banking on banking sector development in Nigeria for the period 2009 to 2023. The specific objectives of the study ware to ascertain whether automated teller machine (ATM), point of sales terminal (POS), internet banking (INTB) and mobile money transfer (MMT) transactions impact on banking sector development (BSD) in Nigeria. The autoregressive distributed lags (ARDL) technique was utilized for the analysis of data and the results demonstrated that, automated teller machine (ATM) has significant negative effect on banking sector development in Nigeria in the short-run; but in the long-run, it failed the 5 percent significant level. Point of sales terminal (POS) transaction has significant positive impact on banking sector development (BSD) in Nigeria in the short-run but does not in the long-run. Internet banking (INTB) transaction has significant negative impact on banking sector development in Nigeria both in the short-run and in the long-run. Mobile money transfer (MMT) transaction is seen not to be significantly related to banking sector development in Nigeria in the short-run as well as in the long-run. The study therefore recommends that, management of banks should continue to ensure that more ATM stands or points where customers can easily withdraw money are provided especially for those who are in hard-to-reach areas. Regular and routine servicing and monitoring of these ATM machines must also be carried out.

Keywords: Digital Banking, Banking Sector Development, Automated Teller Machine, Point of Sales

JEL Classification: G21, Q55.

Introduction

Globally, the banking sector has played a vital role in both financial stability and economic growth. In the past, banks have played vital role in promoting savings, lending and investments

- all of which are essential for stability and economic growth (Nguyen, 2022). However, the way that banking services are provided to customers has changed dramatically in the last few decades due to technological improvements, especially in the areas of the internet and mobile technologies. When digital technologies are incorporated into banking services, banks are able to provide online and mobile banking platforms for a variety of financial services, ranging from loans and investment management to payments and money transfers (Shkurdoda & Puczyk, 2025; Lavanya & Dunstan, 2024). This change is commonly referred to as digital banking.

With the advent of the internet in the late 20th century, customers were able to access banking services outside of conventional branch locations, which led to the emergence of digital banking. Banks started using digital channels to provide for the increasing need for convenience and round-the-clock access to financial services as internet usage increased globally, especially in industrialized countries (Ranjan, 2024). Users can now effectively manage their accounts without having to visit a branch owing to digital banking systems like mobile banking applications and online banking websites (Ranjan, 2024). Digital banking usage is also in line with the growing trend of banking automation, which uses machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) to improve customer service and streamline banking processes. Banks can save operating costs, provide immediate customer service, and customize the banking experience with AI-powered chatbots (Oyeniyi, Ugochukwu, & Mhlongo, 2024; Oyetunji, 2024). Furthermore, blockchain technology has become well-known in digital banking because it provides a safe, decentralized way to record transactions, lowering the possibility of fraud and increasing transparency (Ahmed, 2025; Rahman, Yii, Masli, & Voon, 2024). Additionally, digital banking has shown itself to be an efficient tool for financial inclusion in developing countries, offering banking services in places where traditional brick-and-mortar branches are either nonexistent or very limited (Nnaomah et al., 2024). With financial technology (FinTech) firms developing alternative financial products like peer-to-peer lending and blockchain-based services, digital banking has further paved the way for innovation in the banking sector and is revolutionizing the financial sector (Barroso & Laborda, 2022; Feyen et al., 2021). Numerous benefits, like increased convenience, reduced transaction costs, and improved access to financial services, have come with the growth of digital banking, but there are also unexpected challenges. The need for strong regulatory frameworks to regulate the digital banking environment, data privacy concerns, and the increasing danger of cyber-security attacks are among the main worries (Alzoubi et al., 2022). The banking industry must strike a balance between innovation and security, compliance, and customer protection as digital banking continues to grow internationally.

Studying how digital banking affects the larger banking industry, especially how it propels sectoral development, is imperative given this dynamic and quickly changing environment. Furthermore, there is currently no empirical investigation, to the best of our knowledge, on the overall effect of digital banking on the banking sector in developing countries like Nigeria, despite the fact that it has the potential to increase financial inclusion, efficiency, and innovation. There are still a number of unresolved issues about how digital banking affects the growth of the banking industry. Moreover, despite a great deal of study on digital banking and its effects on different components of banking sector development, there are still a number significant gaps that need to be filled. The majority of the literature now in publication concentrates on financial inclusion, the adoption of digital banking, bank profitability, and cashless policies; nevertheless, the long-run impacts of digital banking on banking sector development in Nigeria still need empirical research. Longitudinal studies evaluating the long-run impacts of digital banking on banking sector development are also lacking. This study therefore seeks to investigate digital banking and its impact on banking

sector development in Nigeria. The subsequent sections present the literature review, methodology, results and discussions and conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Digital Banking: According to Shkurdoda and Puczyk (2025), digital banking is the incorporation of digital technologies into banking services, which allows financial institutions to provide seamless electronic transactions across a range of digital platforms. Internet banking, contactless payments, mobile banking, point-of-sale (POS) transactions, automated teller machines (ATMs), and blockchain-based financial operations are just a few of the many services it includes. Rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs), rising smartphone adoption, the accessibility of high-speed internet and the rising need for quick and easy banking services have all contributed to the growth of digital banking. Numerous technological advancements that redefine conventional banking paradigms are included in digital banking (Ranjan, 2024). Internet banking (online banking), point-of-sale (POS), mobile banking, and automated teller machines (ATMs), FinTech developments (digital wallets, peer-to-peer lending, blockchain technology), and automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are the main elements of digital banking. Its impact has been felt in the areas of operational efficiency and cost reduction, enhanced financial inclusion and access, financial product development and innovation, bolstering financial security and preventing fraud, and regulations and policies (Bueno et al., 2024; Shikha & Singh, 2024).

Banking Sector Development: Banking sector development describes the increase in the capacity of the banking sector to carry out it functions efficiently (Aluko & Ajayi, 2018). The evolution, modernization, and growth of financial institutions with the goal of enhancing financial intermediation, efficiency, accessibility, and economic stability constitute banking sector development. Cihák, Demirgüç-Kunt, Feyen, and Levine (2013) distinguish four aspects of banking sector development: stability, depth, efficiency, and access. They observe that while these dimensions may not fully capture the features of the financial sector, they do, for the most part, mirror the areas of concentration of the majority of empirical research. Numerous banking sector development metrics, which emphasize advancements in financial access, service quality, profitability, and regulatory compliance, are used to evaluate the effects of digital banking. These metrics include regulatory and security compliance, client accessibility and satisfaction, bank profitability and efficiency, and financial inclusion.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical review offers the fundamental theories that clarify the connection between digital banking and banking sector development. Understanding the adoption, diffusion and economic implications of digital banking technologies is made easier by a number of theories. Three major theories are examined in this section: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory, as well as the Financial Intermediation Theory (FIT).

Technology Acceptance Model

Davis (1989) developed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to depict how people embrace and utilize innovative technology. It describes the elements affecting the adoption of online banking. Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), or how much an individual believes that utilizing a method will be effortless, and Perceived Usefulness (PU), or how much an individual believes

that a method will enhance their daily activities or job routine, are the two main factors that determine whether or not people adopt a particular technology, according to the model. TAM aids in explaining how consumers behave when utilizing online and mobile banking platforms in the context of digital banking. Customers are more inclined to stick with digital banking if they believe it to be helpful, which increases adoption rates and customer retention (Davis et al., 1989). Banks may use ATM to pinpoint adoption hurdles and put plans in place to promote more use of digital banking, which will ultimately support banking sector development.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Rogers (1962) propounded the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory which depicts how novel concepts, innovations, and goods gradually penetrate a society. It explains how various user groups adopt digital banking. Innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards are the five user categories identified by the theory as influencing the rate of acceptance of an innovation (Rogers, 2003). DOI theory is crucial to comprehending how digital banking expands throughout various socioeconomic and demographic groups. Banks can better plan their marketing campaigns and create regulations that encourage the quick uptake of digital banking services by using DOI theory.

Financial Intermediation Theory

The crucial function that banks play as middlemen between savers and borrowers is explained by Schumpeter's 1934 proposal of the Financial Intermediation Theory (FIT). It emphasizes how banks contribute to economic development and how digital banking strengthens this role. Effective financial intermediation fosters economic growth by guaranteeing that capital is distributed where it is most needed, and that banks mobilize savings and channel them toward profitable investments. By improving credit availability, lowering transaction costs, and growing financial services, digital banking has revolutionized financial intermediation. Through innovations like online loan applications, computerized credit scoring, and peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platforms, digital banking platforms have increased credit accessibility. Digital banking improves economic activity, fosters sustainable banking sector development, and increases financial efficiency by reinforcing financial intermediation. To sum up, the TAM, DOI, and FIT theories offer a strong theoretical framework for comprehending how digital banking contributes to banking sector development. TAM describes how ease of use and perceived usefulness determines its adoption. While the FIT emphasizes how digital banking improves financial accessibility and economic growth, the DOI theory emphasizes how digital banking spreads among various user groups. All of these theories lend credence to the claim that banking sector development depends on digital banking.

Empirical Literature

The impact of digital banking on banking sector development has been a subject of empirical inquiry. Enueshike, Oluchukwu, and Ajidani (2025) investigated the effect of cashless policy on financial sector development in Nigeria utilizing annual time series data for the period 2012 to 2022. Mobile banking, POS and ATM served as the independent variables. The study employed VAR method along with the Philips-Perron test (PPT) to evaluate the stationarity properties of the variables. Ordinary least square (OLS) procedure was used to verify the robustness of the model while error correction model (ECM) was used to establish the speed of adjustment. Results show that there is positive connection between ATM and financial sector development. The result also shows that POS and mobile banking exerted an inverse and significant effect on financial sector development. Setiawan and Prakoso (2024) investigated the correlation between digital banking adoption and the bank performance (proxied by return on assets and

operational efficiency ratio) in Indonesia with a moderating variable of bank size. The results of the study, which used panel data regression, demonstrate that the adoption of digital banking significantly improves the operational efficiency ratio while having a considerable negative influence on return on assets. Both the beneficial effects of digital banking adoption on the operational efficiency ratio and the negative effects on return on assets were weakened by bank size.

Ubah, Adigwe, Okaro and John (2023) investigated the impacted of digital banking on financial inclusion in Nigeria utilizing data within the timeframe of 2010 to 2021. Financial deepening proxied for financial inclusion while POS, web banking and USSD were the independent variables. The study data was evaluated utilizing the ordinary least square (OLS) technique. Results reveal that POS and USSD banking exerted a significant impact on financial inclusion whereas there was no significant connection between web banking and financial inclusion. Udobi-Owoloja et al. (2020) examined the impact of digital banking channels on banks' profitability in Nigeria utilizing data collected from ten (10) deposit money banks. The findings indicate that the profit margins of banks were impacted by ATM, mobile banking, online and internet banking, Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) and POS channels. The profitability of banks was positively and significantly impacted by digital banking as well. Anarfo, Abor, Osei, and Gyeke-Dako (2019) used a panel vector autoregressive framework to examine the link between financial sector development and financial inclusion in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The findings indicate that financial sector development (FSD) and financial inclusion are inversely causally related in both the overall sample and the sample of countries in SSA. From the study's findings, FSD is influenced by financial inclusion and vice versa.

Methodology

Model Specification: The model of analysis follows a linear combination of explanatory time series variables and the dependent variable, which is ratio of credit to the private sector divided by Gross Domestic product (GDP), was used as a proxy for banking sector development (BSD) in Nigeria. To estimate the effect of digital banking on banking sector development (BSD), we hypothesized four (4) digital banking variables that could capture the impact of the various transmission channels. These variables include automated teller machine (ATM), point of sales (POS), internet banking (INTB) and mobile money transfer (MMT) transactions. Thus, the structural model to estimate this relationship is stated as follows:

$BSD = f(ATM, POS, INTB, MMT)$………………………………………….……………….(3.1)

Hence, the econometric form of the model is as follow:

$BSD_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ATM_t + \beta_2 POS_t + \beta_3 INTB_t + \beta_4 MMT_t + U_t$…………………………………….(3.2)

Where: BSD_t = Banking Sector Development (BSD) (measured as ratio of credit to the private sector to GDP); ATM_t = Total value of automated teller machines (ATM) transactions; POS_t = total value of point of sales (POS) transactions; $INTB_t$ = Total value of internet banking (INTB) transactions; MMT_t = total value of mobile money transfer (MMT) transactions; β_0 = Constant; U_t = Stochastic error term.

The a priori expectation of the explanatory variables is $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4 > 0$

Variable Description and Measurement

The variables that were employed are listed in Table 1 along with the a priori expectation and the prior researchers that utilised the variable in their study.

Table 1: Variable Measurements

SN	Variables	Types of Variables	Variable Measurements	Previous Researchers that utilized the Variables	A priori Expectation
1	Banking Sector Development (BSD	Dependent	Measured as ratio of credit to the private sector to GDP	Iyoha 2015	
2	Automated Teller Machine (ATM)	Independent	Measured as the total value of ATM transactions in Nigeria	Ibekwe, Ibekwe and Morah (2023)	(+)
3	Point of Sales (POS)	Independent	Measured as the total value of POS transactions in Nigeria	Adeleye (2022)	(+)
4	Internet Banking (INTB)	Independent	Measured by the total value of INTB transactions in Nigeria	Ajibola, Alalade and Akinrin (2024)	(+)
5	Mobile Money Transfer (MMT)	Independent	Measured as the total value of MMT transactions in Nigeria	Abiola (2022)	(+)

Source: Authors' Compilations (2025)

Data Sources

The population of this investigation which also constitutes the sample size is all the quoted deposit money banks (DMBs) in Nigeria. As at December 31, 2023, a total of 14 banks were quoted on the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX). The convenience sampling method was adopted in the selection of samples for this study. Hence, a total of 14 listed banks were used in this study for the period 2009 to 2023. This study used quarterly data sourced from the NGX and the Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin (2023). The reason for the choice of this period is based on the fact that it is the period in which electronics banking actually began in Nigeria. Thus, this will enable us to have a more realistic evaluation of the hypothesized impact of digital on banking sector development in Nigeria.

Method of Analysis

The data in this study was analyzed using the Autoregressive Distributed Lags (ARDL) and the unit root test. The unit roots are examined, and the stationarity characteristics of the data are assessed, using the Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF) test. The Autoregressive Distributed Lags (ARDL) technique is used in the study to model integration interactions. This method's main benefit is that it may be applied regardless of how stationary the variables in the sample are, and it allows for conclusions about long-run estimations that are not possible with other cointegration techniques. The parsimonious ECM is used because it can combine short-run and long-run properties to produce an efficient estimate; thereby providing room for much flexibility. Finally, post regression test of Breusch-Godfrey serial correlation test was used to ensure the absence of serial correlation in the model.

Results and Discussion

Unit Root Analysis: The unit roots are examined using the Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF) test. Table 2 displays the results in levels and first difference. Each variable's ADF test statistic is displayed in the second and fifth columns of the result, while the third and sixth columns, respectively, display the 95 percent critical ADF value. The result reveals that all the variables are not stationary at level, except BSD that was stationary. However, after the first difference

was taken, all the variables were now stationary. This suggests that the variables achieve stationarity after their first differences, indicating that they are in fact difference-stationary. Therefore, the hypothesis that the variables have unit roots would be accepted. In fact, the variables are integrated of order one (i.e., I[1]).

Table 2: Unit Root Tests

| Variables | At Levels | | | First | Difference | |
	ADF Test Statistic	95% Critical ADF Value	Remark	ADF Test Statistic	95% Critical ADF Value	Remark
BSD	-3.845095	-3.119910	Stationary	-3.685898	-3.119910	Stationary
ATM	-1.451111	-3.098896	Non-Stationary	-5.374236	-3.144920	Stationary
POS	-1.915275	-3.098896	Non-Stationary	-3.565122	-3.119910	Stationary
INTB	-1.959136	-3.098896	Non-stationary	-3.305412	-3.144920	Stationary
MMT	-1.907025	-3.098896	Non-Stationary	-4.430041	-3.119910	Stationary

Source: Authors' Computation (2025)

Bound Test for Cointegration

To determine whether there is a long-run link between the variables, the results of the bounds test (for cointegration) are shown in Table 3. Therefore, the null hypothesis in this bounds test is that there is no link between levels. Thus, we can conclude that there is cointegration (i.e., a long-run relationship) if the computed F-statistic is higher than the critical value for the upper bound I(1); if it is lower than the lower bound I(0), there is no cointegration. Accordingly, Table 3's results demonstrate that, at the 5% significance level, the F-statistic value of 24.30564 is more than the upper bound I(1) value of 3.49. We therefore draw the conclusion that there is a long-run relationship between the model's hypothesized variables.

Table 3: Bounds Test for Cointegration Result

Test Statistic	Value	Significant	I(0)	I(1)
F-statistic	24.30564	10%	2.2	3.09
K	4	5%	2.56	3.49
		2.5%	2.88	3.87
		1%	3.29	4.37

Source: Authors' Compilations (2025)

The ARDL Error Correction Regression Result (Short-Run Result)

The short-run dynamics of the impact of digital banking on banking sector development in Nigeria is captured within an error correction model (ECM). For the ECM, the Autoregressive Distributed Lags (ARDL) method is employed. The parsimonious equation was chosen using the R-Bar squared criterion. Table 4 displays the outcome of the estimated error correction representation. The findings demonstrate a strong diagnostic outcome; the R-squared value of 0.97 is extremely high and shows that short-run changes in the explanatory variables, such as the ECM, account for more than 97% of the systematic variation in Nigeria's banking sector development (BSD) over the short-term. Even the 0.96 R-Bar squared value is extremely high.

Table 4: ARDL ECM Results

ECM Regression			
Case 2: Restricted Constant and No Trend			
Variables	Coefficient	T-Ratio	Prob.
D(ATM)	-0.002590	-13.29212	0.0002**

D(POS)	0.005984	13.61926	0.0002**
D(INTB)	-0.018483	-16.16423	0.0001**
D(MMT)	-0.001428	-1.607134	0.1833
CointEq(-1)*	-1.007524	-18.11425	0.0001**
R^2 = 0.97	$\bar{R}^2$ = 0.96		D.W.= 2.42

Source: Authors' Compilations (2025) Note: ** sig at 1% level; *sig at 5% level.

The automated teller machine (ATM) coefficient has a significant negative short-term impact on the banking sector development (BSD) in Nigeria, based on an analysis of the individual coefficients of the variables in terms of their significance and impact; the variable passed the 1 percent significance level. This indicates that the general performance of DMBs has been considerably impacted by the total value of money taken out via ATMs. In fact, it is seen that throughout the short-term, a unit increase in ATM usage lowers banking sector development (BSD) by roughly -0.26 percent. This further implies that there is need for management of banks to rethink and re-strategize on the effective way to best utilize ATM such that it has positive effect on banking sector development (BSD). Even the previous value of automated teller machine (D(ATM(-1)) is also negatively signed and passes 5 percent level of significance, suggesting that previous value of ATM is also effectual in determining the development of banking sector in Nigeria in the short-run.

In a similar vein, coefficient of point of sales (POS) transaction has considerable positive effect on banking sector development (BSD) in the short-run. Indeed, it is seen that as value of POS rises, banking sector development (BSD) also rises with about 0.005984 percent. This means that POS usage in Nigeria is a major factor for banking sector development. On the other hand, those of internet banking (INTB) has significant negative impact on banking sector development, suggesting that a unit increase in the usage of internet banking (INTB) in Nigeria reduces banking sector development by approximately -1.85 percent. Also, mobile money transfer (MMT) is seen not to be significantly related to banking sector development in Nigeria in the short-term, as it failed the 5 percent level of significance. In Table 4, the coefficient of the ECM term (shown by CointEq(-1)*) has the appropriate negative sign and is statistically significant at the 1 percent level. This demonstrates that any short-term departure from equilibrium of the predicted financial technology variables can be corrected over time. The error correction term's low value of -1.007524 indicates that there will be little long-term adjustment to equilibrium. According to the ECM term, the first year accounts for around 1% of the long-term adjustment to equilibrium. The model does not have an autocorrelation issue, as indicated by the DW statistic value of 2.42.

ARDL Long-Run Results
The long-run results as presented in Table 5 indicate that internet banking (INTB) transactions is the only digital banking variables significantly affecting banking sector development (BSD) in the long-run. The variable exert significant adverse effect on banking sector development, as it was considerable at the 5 percent levels; suggesting that as these variables rise, banking sector development (BSD) reduces by approximately -0.023742 approximately. Hence, in the determination of the level of banking sector development in the long-run, internet banking (INTB) is a crucial factor that should not be ignored.

The other hypothesized variables in the model such as ATM, POS and MMT transactions failed at the 5 percent significance level. The implication is that these variables do not play any significant role in banking sector development in the long-run.

Table 5: ARDL Long Run Results

Levels Equation
Case 2: Restricted Constant and No Trend

Variables	Coefficient	T-Ratio	Prob.
ATM	0.000690	2.109818	0.1025
POS	0.000197	0.131793	0.9015
INTB	-0.023742	-3.115191	0.0357*
MMT	0.004335	1.425457	0.2272
Constant	19.09952	50.89714	0.0000

Source: Authors' Compilations (2025). Note: *sig at 5% level.

Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test

As shown in Table 6 below, we employed the Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test to determine whether the model's residuals are serially correlated in the estimation. In fact, based on the results, we will not be able to reject the null hypothesis because the F-Statistic p-value of 0.6306 shows that the residuals are serially uncorrelated. The residuals are serially uncorrelated as a result.

Table 6: Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test

F-statistic	0.284836	Prob. F(1,3)	0.6306
Obs*R-squared	1.213972	Prob. Chi-Square(1)	0.2705

Source: Authors' Compilation (2025)

Normality Test

We used the histogram normality test (HNT) to check for normality. The alternative hypothesis, as per this test, is that the residuals are not normally distributed, while the null hypothesis is that they are. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis that the residuals are normally distributed if the probability value of the Jarque-Bera statistics is greater than 0.05 (5%); on the other hand, we reject the null hypothesis that the residuals are not normally distributed if the probability value of the Jarque-Bera statistics is less than 0.05 (5%). Consequently, we deduce that the data set is normally distributed since the probability value (0.242501) of the Jarque-Bera statistics in Figure 1 is higher than 0.05 (5%).

Figure 1: Histogram Normality Test

Series: Residuals	
Sample 2010 2023	
Observations 14	
Mean	-3.29e-15
Median	0.002712
Maximum	0.589674
Minimum	-0.766326
Std. Dev.	0.301268
Skewness	-0.577992
Kurtosis	4.876466
Jarque-Bera	2.833496
Probability	0.242501

Source: Authors' Computation from Eview 10 output (2025)

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The study empirically examined the effect of digital banking on banking sector development in Nigeria from 2009 to 2023. The justification for this study was due to the fact that digital banking significantly affected banking sector development across the globe. Therefore, in order to find out this submission in Nigeria, this study was carried out utilizing the autoregressive distributed lags (ARDL) procedure. The results from the analysis signify that the automated teller machine (ATM) transaction has significant negive on banking sector development in Nigeria in the short-run; but in the long run, it failed the 5 percent significant level. Point of

sales terminal (POS) transaction has significant positive impact on banking sector development (BSD) in the short-run. But in the long-run, it does not exert any considerable effect banking sector development in Nigeria. Internet banking (INTB) transaction has significant negative impact on banking sector development in whether at in the short-run or in the long-run. Mobile money transfer (MMT) transaction is seen not to be significantly related to banking sector development in the short-run as well as in the long-run. The variable failed the 5 percent significant level. It is therefore the conclusion of this study that in the determining banking sector development in Nigeria, automated teller machine (ATM), point of sales terminal (POS) and internet banking (INTB) transactions are the only variables to be considered in this regard. Given the study's conclusions, three explicit policy recommendations are made:

i.   The use of automated teller machine has demonstrated to be an effectual tool for determining deposit money banks performance in Nigeria. Thus, management of banks should continue to ensure that more ATM stands or points where customers can easily withdraw money should be provided especially for those who are in hard-to-reach areas. Regular and routine servicing and monitoring of these ATM machines must be carried out.

ii. In order to sustain this current positive development, there is need to either sustain or expand the existing policy framework for ATM and POS by monetary authority (CBN) to increase the current number of ATM and POS in all nukes and craning of Nigeria, including the hard to reach areas in rural communities across the 36 states in Nigeria. This will help to ensure that these two financial technology factors continue to have the needed positive impact on the performance of DMBs in Nigeria**.**

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE ONTOLOGY OF MAN IN IBIBIO COSMOLOGY

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Abstract

Although the Greek philosopher Protagoras declared in antiquity that man is the measure of all things, the controversy as to the nature of man continues to evolve. This paper reviews some theories on the nature of man and applies them as appropriate to the concept of man by Ibibio people of Southern Nigeria. The paper submits that man (as a generic term to cover both genders of human beings) in traditional Ibibio society is regarded as multi-layered. Ibibio concept of the nature of man admits of neither monism nor dualism but a kind of polymorphism although the conceptualizations are gradually losing punch and relevance as Christian thought and philosophy dominate modern life and thought. A need however exists for greater understanding of the nature of man for relevance in the contemporary world given that some persons continue, at differing intensities, to hold on to the multilayered orientation. This paper uses desk research method along with a priori approach and concludes that lower emphasis should continue to be focused on the multilayered system in a scientific world. This being the case, thought and praxis should focus on positivism and pragmatism.

Keywords: Man, Ontology, Dualism, Monism, Polymorphism, Positivism, Pragmatism

Introduction

The Ibibio man in antiquity must have been as bewildered as the early Greeks about the nature of man and the nature of the universe. This bewilderment in Greece in particular can be read through the different views of the nature of man and the nature of the universe by early philosophers (Okoh, 2003). Thales is reputed to have said that all things in the universe are full of gods! And what were gods other than unexplainable beings or phenomena which man claimed to have powers over the lives and affairs of men? O'Grady (2004) did note that Thales repudiated the role of the supernatural in the universe and was the first person to systematize astronomy and the study of nature leading to his founding of the Milesian School of Natural Philosophy. Nevertheless, the prevalence of deities was a characteristic of Greece, a City state which operated a polytheistic system. Ibibio people operated and continue to operate polytheism although to a lesser extent at present.

On the nature of man, Protagoras of Abdera (ca. 490- ca.420 BC) is famous for his claim that "Of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not" (DK 80 B1) usually rendered simply as "Man is the measure of all things." This, Mark (2012) holds, presaged the existential relativism of writers such as Luigi Pirandello ("It is so if you think so") by some two thousand years. To differentiate man from other living things, Aristotle declared in his *Metaphysics* that man is a rational animal although Bertrand Russell (2009) disagreed by stating, "It has been said that man is a rational animal. All my life I have been searching for evidence which could support this." The nature of man continues to elude a definitive position by philosophers. Different philosophers, religionists, and mystics over the millennia have attempted to explain the nature of man and his essence. Yet, no standard position has been adopted on a universal basis to date. This paper reviews some of the popular theories and adapts them to the situation in Nigeria's Akwa Ibom State. It submits that the Ibibio believe in a multi-layered nature of man, that is, man as a composite, multi-layered being beyond the popular dual nature of body and soul. The new generation of Ibibio the paper submits, should move away from polytheism, embrace monism, and focus on the philosophies of pragmatism and positivism.

What is Man?

Man, used in this context to represent the two main human genders, has been a subject of wonder and study by man himself, schools of philosophy, and religions. Man's place in a virtually limitless universe has also engaged thought. An exciting quote from Marcus Aurelius Antonius, Emperor of Rome is instructive on the nature of man in relation to the universe (Libquotes, n.d; Holliday and Hanselman, 2016).

> He who does not know what the world is does not know where he is. And he who does not know for what purpose the world exists, does not know who he is nor what the world is. But he who has failed in any one of these things could not even say for what purpose he exists himself (Meditations, Book VIII. 161-180BC).

The quote summarizes the need to determine the ontology of man by man himself because the average human being passes through the world without knowledge of self, the essence of self, and the rationale for man's presence as part of the cosmos at a point in time. Some perspectives on the nature of man are discussed hereunder.

Platonism: In the first instance, Howie (1968) submits that "everyone who thinks is by nature a Platonist or an Aristotelian" (p.10). The writer must have referred to thinking in the academic sense of reasoning. People reason either on the idealist platform (Platonian) or the realist platform (Aristotelian). Omoregbe (2005) states that in the Platonian concept of Forms, the soul existed before it became united with the body of which the latter is a form of prison for the former. On dissolution of the material man (the body), the soul becomes independent and can undergo reincarnations till it achieves its purest form and reunites with the Source. In essence, Plato believed in the concept of duality as a primary nature of human beings but the soul he divided further. The soul in Plato's opinion is made up of the rational part, the spirited part, and the appetitive part. The rational part forms the major dividing line between man and other forms, controls the other aspects of man, is indestructible and immortal, and is the highest aspect of man. The spirited part has to do with man's higher emotions while the appetitive part concerns the lower emotions and the sensuous nature of man. The last two are apparently interred with the bones of man at cessation of life while the rational part continues an independent and indestructible existence. Plato's concept of man and in particular his

dualism has influenced thinkers for millennia. The material aspect of man did not attract controversy while the immaterial which Plato broke down into three natures continues to be a source of controversy. He used the analogy of a chariot and charioteer both of them ancient concepts but the conceptualization of the soul remains abstract and mired in controversy.

Aristotelianism – Aristotle, Plato's pupil, wrote extensively on several subjects, devoting a volume titled *On the Soul* to the nature of man with a detailed exposition on the concept of soul. Although he was a principal exponent of realism Aristotle also believed in the dual nature of man. In *Metaphysics* Aristotle recorded the famous dictum that "man is a rational animal." This is tied to his conception of soul as the moving force in every living thing which converts 'potentiality' to action. Aristotle canvassed the indivisibility of the soul, reason it can control the functioning of the body. He used the example of some types of animals such as earthworm which when cut into pieces continue to perform all bodily functions in each of the pieces. This argument can be extended to trees which continue to live although a part or parts has or have been cut off. And at a higher level, some parts of the human body can be cut off yet the individual continues to live. Although the soul is indivisible, it operates in levels. These Aristotle christened at the lowest level, the 'nutritive soul' found primarily in plants given they are not capable of motion and sense perception. The 'sensitive soul,' the second, can be found in lower animals (animals other than man) with the characteristics of dominance of nutrition or lower forms of mental performance. Locomotion and sense perception including capacity to feel pleasure, pain, imagination, memory, and desire exist in this second category. The 'rational soul' incorporates the nutritive, sensitive, as well as the faculty of reasoning or intellect. The three levels do not represent a division of soul but a differentiation among the different levels of creation. Put another way, the three levels highlight the differences among categories rather than differences within categories. Man performs at the three levels but a typical plant stops functioning at the first level. However, 'animals' below man can be said to exhibit rational behaviour reason pigs are classified as demonstrating intelligence and dogs and dolphins do demonstrate remarkable activities which go beyond instinct.

Cartesian Dualism and Post-Cartesian Thoughts: René Descartes canvassed ontological dualism of two finite substances – mind (spirit or soul) and matter. Man, he held, has two independent but coextensive parts which function together. The body is a temporary structure extended in space and having no consciousness while the soul is a 'substance' with consciousness which can exist independent of the body, can be disembodied, and is indestructible. The idea of substance in the opinion of Descartes, is "a thing which so exists that it needs no other thing in order to exist" (p.116). Descartes must have been influenced by Christian theology and wrote along that line. However, he had a problem driving the point home as to the possibility and levels of interaction between the soul and the body. Cartesian dualism extends to materialism and 'mental states' and has made an enduring impact on modern philosophy. René Descartes is regarded as the father of modern Western philosophy because he moved thought away from religion to the anthropocentric variety. Okorafor (2023) sees man from three dimensions or natures – the spirit, soul, and body. The spirit, Okorafor holds, connects to the animating soul of the universe known as God and to the rational soul where the soul is regarded as the mind. The body is mortal and houses the spirit and the soul. It is the soul which makes man relevant to the world. This view reminds one of the dualism of Descartes as well as the argument of Ryle (1949) in Tanney (2021) termed "ghost in the machine" which rejected Cartesian dualism. Gilbert Rule's conceptualization of a ghost (soul) in a machine (body) has retained its fascination till modern times. Brady (1995) holds that Cartesian dualism continues to be relevant at least for interrogational purposes. In all, the

nature of man will continue to be a subject of debate because cosmology beyond the physical discounts scientific analysis and interpretation with the precision they offer. But it is germane to note that the effort to understand the nature of man has found usefulness in other fields and in particular neuroscience and psychology.

Judaism: One approach towards establishing thought on the nature of man is religious philosophy. The psalmist, David, King of Israel in antiquity asked the question, apparently to Almighty God the Creator, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8.4, THB). The psalmist was without doubt awed by the magnificence and munificence of the omnipotent God who nevertheless endowed mortal man with glory and power as listed in verses 5 to 8 of the chapter. Man is even said to have been made "a little lower than the angels" (verse 5). Given the conception that angels are heavenly beings who see and interact with God, man is indeed, or at least potentially, a near perfect being with immanent spirituality. Man in Judaism is a being with two aspects – the corporeal and the incorporeal, that is, the physical and the spiritual, the natural and the preternatural. The physical aspect is fairly easy to describe and explain, as in a person being either a man or a woman, tall or short, white or black, young or old, beautiful or ugly. The incorporeal is harder to describe and explain, reason the realists or pragmatists are not excited about the transcendental.

Theosophy: An interesting departure from the dualist theories can be found in Theosophy. The religious organization known as the Theosophical Society is composed of proponents of Buddhist and Brahmanic theories who propagate the concept of theosophy. Founded in New York in 1875, some of the principal teachings included reincarnation and karma both of which are found in traditional religions and beliefs in Nigeria. With respect to the nature of man, the society holds that man has a "septenary nature," that is, seven natures - the physical body, the life or vital principle, the astral body, the animal body, mind or intelligence (soul), spiritual soul, and spirit. The first four (lower quaternary) can be discarded and are perishable while the last three are the "upper imperishable triad." The seven aspects (see Brahmeshananda, n.d) are:
i.   The physical body (*rupa* or *Sthula-Sarira*).
ii.   Life or vital principle (*prana*).
iii.   Astral body (*linga sharira*) – also called the phantom body which can be accessed by spiritualists after cessation of life.
iv.   Animal soul (*kama rupa*) – the temporary personality associated with a single incarnation which implies theosophy believes in reincarnation. This is sometimes referred to as "false personality."
v.   Mind or intelligence, the human soul (*manas*) – the permanent reincarnating ego.
vi.   Spiritual soul (*buddhi*) - the divine ego or the "vehicle of pure universal spirit."
vii.   Spirit (*atma*) - is the highest essence of God. It is the part of man which unites with the Divine or Brahma.

Hinduism: Hinduism apparently subscribes to the multi-layered nature of man. There is a major division of man into two – the 'real' man and the 'apparent' man. The real man is the 'atman' which is conscious, always free, blissful, and immortal. The apparent man consists of five sheaths which cover the soul or atman. These are: (1) the physical body or the physical sheath, (2) the vital sheath or the sheath life-force, (3) the mental sheath, (4) the ego sheath, and (5) the blissful sheath. Hindus also believe in the real man or the conscious soul or *atman* with three levels - the gross physical body, the subtle mental body, and the causal body. On cessation of life, the physical body disintegrates while the subtle mental body and the causal

body remain and together with the conscious soul or real man, transmigrate to another physical body to be born by way of reincarnation. While an individual is awake, the gross physical body is said to be active. During sleep and in the dream state, the physical body is inactive but the mental body is active. During deep sleep without dreams, the mental body is not active and only the causal body in the form of ignorance remains and covers the pure soul or Atman.

Awoism - Chief Obafemi Awolowo was better known in Nigeria and abroad as a Nigerian politician and elder statesman than as a philosopher. Awoism refers to an exposé of the philosophical thoughts of the sage. Chief Awolowo wrote extensively on issues of national, anthropological, and philosophical importance although his political positions caught more attention given he was more in public life than in academics. Chief Awolowo appears to have been undecided on the nature of man as an objective reality. In two books published in the same year (1981) he stated that "man is dual in nature, he has a body and a mind;" (in *Voice of Wisdom*, 1981) and "Man is a manifestation of three phenomena" which he held to be the soul, the subjective mind, and the objective mind (*Path to Nigerian Greatness*, 1981). Specifically, he states in *Path to Nigerian Greatness* (1981):

> Man is a manifestation of three phenomena. The first is the soul which is the indwelling God. The second is the subjective mind which is the seat of man's reasoning faculty. The third is the objective mind which can see, hear, smell, and touch …that is the body of man (p.129).

Three issues of note from this position, first, Awolowo in his second book saw man as a unity, with the soul as the reality composed of three levels or aspects – pure spirit or the God in man; rationality which can be aligned with Descartes' soul or 'human soul' in theosophy or the rational part in Plato's dualism; and the physical body which Awolowo thought is not of a material nature given it has consciousness.

Secondly, the division of 'mind' into two can tax understanding. The concept of 'objective mind' as posited by Chief Awolowo raises questions. It is unlikely that the concept of *mind* can, by any stretch of the imagination be associated with the physical body except if the brain is drafted into the conceptualization as part of the body. Even if Chief Awolowo wanted to make a contribution to knowledge by differing from extant theories on the nature of man, use of the word *mind* as a substitute or representative of the body is problematic because one is material, the other regarded as incorporeal. Thirdly, appropriating the abilities associated with the five senses to the body appears to be opposed to Cartesian dualism which sees the body as having no consciousness. Chief Awolowo was regarded as a proponent of the idealist school in which the actions of man are but reflections of the mind (Plato's theory of Forms). The body can thus not be associated with consciousness of the kind that permits seeing, feeling, touching, tasting, and smelling as purely physical activities deriving directly from it. Perhaps if the sage had linked his thoughts to the rich cosmology of the Yoruba race, he might have made himself more comprehensible.

The Church and the Nature of Man - The Catholic Encyclopaedia (2009) takes a controversial position on Cartesian dualism by stating that the effort to separate the body and the soul may not be useful and in fact is "illogical." It submits:

> It has been said that man's animality is distinct in nature from his rationality, though they are inseparably joined, during life, in one common *personality.* "Animality" is an abstraction as is "rationality". As such, neither has any

substantial existence of its own. To be exact we should have to write: "Man's animality is rational"; for his "rationality" is certainly not something superadded to his "animality". Man is one in essence.

The concept of "church" particularly in intellectual circles refers to the Roman Catholic doctrines over millennia including the positions of the Church Fathers. The summary in above quote, "man is one in essence" can be regarded as the position of the church. Above position does in no way indicate that dualism is not conceivable. It rather provides a resolution to the conflict or difficulty experienced by Descartes and his followers as to the nature of interaction between the assumed two parts of man – the body and the soul. Descartes' position was that the two aspects are distinctly different and do not interact although he proposed a 'spiritual' essence for a 'material' object in the human body – the pineal gland in the brain.

Outside the Roman Catholic doctrine, the Holy Bible favours a tripartite-nature man. The tripartite-nature man is typified in the Book of 1 Thessalonians, 5.23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Again, the concept of body is simple – it is a material cloak which 'houses' the immaterial properties. What, then, is the difference between the soul and the spirit? The first shot is fired in Genesis 2. 7, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a *living soul*." The act of forming man the material by use of material (earth) led to an inanimate being until some energizing force was pumped into the prone figure. The force can be interpreted to mean the soul expected to predate man the material, independent of man the material, indestructible, and with the capacity to return to the source at dissolution of the earth or cloak of clay. The difference between spirit and soul is at the end of the day difficult to establish. Etymologically, the word spirit comes from *spiritus*, a Latin word for 'breath' which is reminiscent of the quote above from the biblical story of creation. This might account for the use of the terms spirit and soul interchangeably. In essence, Christian theology has not taken a clear-cut position on the nature of man. It sees man as dual in nature and the terms *soul* and *spirit* are used interchangeably. In review of the Christian position, it is important to bear in mind the foundational milieu - Judaism.

The Ibibio Concept of Man

Based on above formalized and documented positions on the nature of man, the one which appears to approximate the Ibibio conceptualization of man is the multi-layered variety and specifically, the one put forward by the Theosophical Society. The Ibibio regard man as a complex being, purposeful, and part of a complex web of beings and phenomena in a complex universe. In Ibibio world view, man is composed of the following:

i. **The Physical Body:** This is an objective reality open to the senses and factual. The body is the vehicle through which the inner man functions in the world in various capacities – as a being of itself, as a being which relates with fellow human beings, and as a being which relates with transcendental powers for designated purposes. Although the five senses are well known, the Ibibio do not link them to Plato's Forms or to Awolowo's 'mind.' The physical body disintegrates after the individual passes on although the calcified parts – the bones - may exist in perpetuity. The relationship between the body and the inner being is known. The inner being is rational and is the seat of thought (*ekikere*). It is the thought process which determines individual action and the thought process is a product of nature (*obot*) and, or, nurture (*ukpeb* or training) although the abstract term *obot* has subsidiary meaning. A violent person could have been so created but the nature can be tampered by upbringing, peer pressure, as well as societal norms and practices including sanctions.

ii. **Life or Vital Force –** The near equivalent of this theosophical concept in Ibibio is with reference to particular persons who can manifest lower forms of vertebrate life under certain circumstances. The Ibibio believe that all human beings have within them a lower form of animal life (*ukpong*) but few persons manifest this and do so under certain uncommon circumstances. For instance, under severe trauma (as in losing a very dear person or when the body is physically assaulted by other human beings), an individual – male or female – can display certain traits associated with animals known to man. Common cases include some characteristics of snakes (the person crawls and dangles the tongue like a snake); lion (excessive physical prowess not known to be exhibited by the same person under normal circumstances); and monkey (agility by jumping deftly from tree to tree or rapidly consuming banana fruits while under distress). It must be stressed that this aspect of the individual is seen as latent in majority of people. Few persons are ever able to project their *ukpong* when in trauma. In a world of science where concepts of sample, population, and replicability dominate to generate certainty, the concept of vital force in Ibibio world view cannot be useful for thought. At the time they probably existed, they were more of legends than reality. This writer recalls a case in the 1960s in which a man, confronted by tax authorities, could not be subdued by four men. But such manifestation could have been due other causes such as excessive flow of adrenaline which generated unusual and uncanny strength. In any case, no such prowess in the subject could be recalled, nor did he reenact such action thereafter. Replicability is perhaps the strongest reason many of the phenomena in Ibibio land have found difficulty in attaining the status of knowledge which is regarded as certified true belief (Okoh, 2003). In the contemporary world, manifestations associated with vital force appears to be non-existent and therefore of minimum relevance.

iii. **The Soul:** This is not a definite concept in Ibibio understanding of the nature of man. The 'soul' is contemporary and specifically linked to Christianity with respect to the teleology of man.

The Astral Body

In theosophy, this is the 'phantom body' which can be accessed by spiritualists after cessation of life of a specific person. The Ibibio believe in astral manifestations as discussed hereunder.

i.   The manifestation of the inner person while alive – an individual can project self and go for astral travel to distant places while the physical body stays prone at a particular location. If the body faces disturbance, the inner man returns in an instant and resumes normal functioning on the earth plane. This understanding can be linked to the world of dreams but the Ibibio believe that some persons do go on astral travel as a conscious activity. Such persons are few and 'developed' metaphysically of which witches and wizards are regarded as clinical cases. But this idea tasks credibility because persons said to be witches and wizards are not known to confess to such metaphysical status. Nor do they discuss their activities - astral travel included - with any non-member. Astral travel therefore remains in the realm of speculation and something more so it induces dread. The relevance of this nature of man should be seen as suspect and of little relevance until subjected to scientific analyses.

ii. The manifestation of the inner person on disintegration of the physical body - following cessation of normal body functions the inner person exits and can be seen by few close persons or those who have the metaphysical capacity to do so. Those with the 'third eye' described as *asiak anyen owo,* (someone whose eyes have been 'opened') are assumed to have the capacity to see paranormal things. The phantom body, usually described as 'ghost,' *can* be 'called out' of the resting place and sent on errands either for good or for

evil but commonly, for the latter. Again, given the problem of statistical significance and being a phenomenon not subject to scientific study, the concept of ghost in the contemporary world should be considered irrelevant.

iii. The idea of phantom body is strong in Ibibio tradition. This form is actually expected to last for a period and then fade away, its next destination being another physical body by way of reincarnation. Phantom bodies can be accessed even by 'undeveloped' relations in a condition of severe distress of a living relative. For instance, if a widow is ill-treated by an in-law or some other person, the widow can sit on the late husband's resting place and weep. There have been cases in the past of departed persons who appeared in physical form to execute actions of a physical nature. Believe in phantom occurrences have dramatically reduced with modernization and deeper involvement in Christianity. Besides, which Christian woman would today want to extinguish life when alternatives exit? Every community in Ibibio land today has judicial capacities and approaches to handle cases of aggrieved persons of any gender or age group.

The Animal Soul: Based on the theosophical understanding of soul on single incarnation, the Ibibio believe that a person not well adjusted to life is on the first incarnation. There are persons who are described as imbeciles, are simpletons, and are untrainable (*akpa ndihe obot*, which means first tour on the earth plane). These are by current scientific understanding autistic children who display abnormal mental states. This means to conceive of an animal soul in the context of persons with abnormal mental and psychomotor capabilities should be discarded. Sadly though, ignorant parents as well as lack of medical capacity has left the burden of management of autistic children to parents.

The Human Soul: The Theosophical Society believes man is capable of reincarnating several times and it is the 'human' soul that does this as against the 'animal' soul. This belief was common in Ibibio communities where multiple reincarnations were known. Reincarnated persons were known to return to the direct families they were during an earlier life or they joined the families of close relatives. The problem associated with alternative explanation of a child with peculiar birthmarks or deformities linked to a known departed person or children who mentioned certain issues connected with a departed person with uncanny clarity and correctness led to this believe. As in earlier cases, the occurrence has dwindled to the level of making it irrelevant in the contemporary world.

The Spiritual Soul: It does not appear traditional Ibibio cosmology has a concept of the spirit as a pure form of the Supreme Being. This may have arisen from the limited understanding of the concept of nature of the Supreme Being in Ibibio world view. More is written on this on the sub-heading "transcendentalism" below.

The Spirit: The Ibibio as briefly discussed hereunder, belief in the existence of a Supreme Being called Almighty God (*Abasi Ibom*) or God of the Sky (*Abasi Enyong*). The Ibibio however made little attempt to understand the Almighty God in pre-christian times and immediate post-christian era. This was because the Supreme Deity did not manifest in any mundane form to facilitate appreciation. Almighty God was inscrutable and mysterious and so the Ibibio simply gave honour by placing Him first when the deities were being called upon under whatever circumstance. When they said and continue to say, "*Abasi enyong, abasi isong*) they implied and imply order of importance.

It can be seen from above that the Ibibio ontology accepts a multi-layered nature of man as a material being and a metaphysical (incorporeal) entity. Some of the layers canvassed by the Theosophical Society are similar to the Ibibio understanding of the nature of man. Two

important differences are that the term 'spirit' does not appear to have equivalence in traditional Ibibio philosophy where, courtesy of Christian doctrines, spirit means something other than ghost. The second aspect is the possibility of migration of beings such that man can exhibit the traits of lower vertebrates. Probably this can be seen as authenticating Darwin's theory of evolution.

Transcendentalism

Ibibio people were and are awed by the vastness and complexity of the universe particularly forces beyond human comprehension and therefore beyond human control. However, few persons go the extra mile to attain understanding of the universe and in particular transcendental beings which they either revere or make effort to subdue. Basically, the Ibibio believe in a Supreme Being, existence and potency of gods, goddesses, and ancestors, and little or no involvement in veneration of immaterial things such as grooves and trees. The system of worship can therefore be regarded as pantheistic. Pantheism involves believe in an all-pervading and all-powerful deity or believe in many deities. The Ibibio believe in a sky-dwelling deity which is supreme and above all deities, man, and all other creations. *Abasi enyọñ* means the God of the sky, the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God. *Abasi isọñ* refers to god or goddess of the earth, in this case, a number of them, which makes the Ibibio man a polytheist. As a matter of fact, each sub-group or Clan in the Ibibio world has a deity identified with it in geographical space. Names such as Anyaang Nsit, Atakpo ndem Uruan, Etefia Ikono are widely known. (Udo, 1983). This means that unlike the Greeks with deities representing different activities or aspects of life, the Ibibio have a deity for a sub-group or group of communities with identical historical and cultural affinities (generally described as Clans). Udo (1983) lists twenty deities in the Ibibio communities and those closely affiliated to the Ibibio.

Relevance and Impact of New Direction on Educational Thought and Practice

The deemphasis on the metaphysical understanding of the ontology of man in contemporary Ibibio world arises because it appears to enhance limitations for progress. If a white-necked crow flies by it continues to generate discomfort in the older generation although no one would return home for the day if a snake crossed the path from the left to the right as the person embarks on a journey. Shadows at night likely remind the older generation of the possibilities of a ghost on duty. And because juju priests continue to be in active service, it means polytheism continues. There are persons in the older and younger generations who pander to the appetites of gods, goddesses, and ancestors. Meanwhile both old and young hear stories of the things some politicians, priests, and individuals do at the transcendental realm. But educational planners and executors should face the situation through the curricula which should focus on science for the young generation. Pragmatism as the dominant philosophy of education took the United States to her present status from the days of C. S. Pierce and John Dewey. The nature of man was not allowed to overshadow reality to keep people and the society captives of the transcendental. Some universities which preclude students in the humanities from taking arts and humanities aspects of General Studies should review their thinking and approach. The Universities of Uyo and Port Harcourt made effort to get all students irrespective of course of study to be entrepreneurship-minded at a time. Such model can be used to incorporate the philosophies of pragmatism and positivism in General Studies for all students whether in the humanities or the sciences.

Summary and Conclusion

The nature of man will continue to attract controversy based on the limited knowledge of the nature and essence of man. There are several schools of thought on the nature of man but

thought has been dominated by dualism started by Plato and made more detailed by Réne Descartes. The Ibibio people of Southern Nigeria hold a multi-layered view of the nature of man which approximates in some respects, the concept of man canvassed by the Theosophical Society. Man, Ibibio people hold, is a complex being operating in a complex world of which the effort to understand the complexities should best be left to adepts. The multilayered attitude has dramatically reduced due to the influence of Christian thought and practice as well as science and education. Contemporary thinking and action should see man as a unit with immanent elements based on function rather than two distinct but interrelated entities. A new thinking should focus on science and philosophies which enhance societal growth and development and positivism and pragmatism would best serve the country.

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Article   **Open Access**

R. M. HARE'S PRESCRIPTIVISM AND ITS RELEVANCE TO HUMAN EVERYDAYNESS

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Abstract

Scholars have frequently misinterpreted R. M. Hare's remarks on moral universalism as suggesting objectivity, implying the existence of an absolute moral truth and a singular pattern or universal norm of action recognised as good or just by all and applicable universally. Nonetheless, Hare does not adhere to moral absolutism, save via implication. Hare accurately asserts that, instead of conveying propositions, ethical statements operate akin to imperatives that are universalizable; thus, anyone who asserts a moral judgement such as "stealing is wrong" is obligated to uphold the same judgement in any context where the pertinent facts are consistent. This study examined Hare's Prescriptivism. The research employed the expository and analytic methodologies. The expository approach was employed to elucidate Hare's prescriptivism while the analytic method was employed to scrutinise Hare's prescriptivism. The investigation demonstrated that Hare's ethical prescriptivism is flawed since it overlooks the impossibility of applying a moral principle to individuals to whom it does not pertain, and that not all moral principles are even theoretically applicable to the individuals rendering the judgements. In his view, value judgements or moral statements are fundamentally prescriptive, as they inherently provide guidance for one's actions. Consequently, the study concludes that moral agents should act in a way that is consistent with their moral claims, not in a way that goes against them. This manner, we could help create a more peaceful society that values good behaviour.

Keywords: Prescriptivism, Universalism, Moral Judegment, Hare, Everydayness.

Introduction

The motivation to research on this subject stems from our experiences as moral agents, particularly having observed numerous ethical decisions. We have frequently observed individuals proclaiming that "bribery and corruption are detrimental," yet they fail to align their actions with these assertions. Concerned about addressing these and numerous other

moral paradoxes, we considered R.M. Hare's Ethical Prescriptivism to be the most appropriate theory for debate. Undoubtedly, no society or individual exists devoid of a moral compass. Every community possesses values it upholds and behaviours it detests, ensuring that all individuals conform to acceptable norms. Therefore, the significance of ethics in human existence cannot be overstated. Philosophical ethics is thus dedicated to examining the standards of human conduct to ensure adherence to these norms (Anyam 4). In the realm of ethics and morality, we confront issues and engage in diverse theoretical approaches to address them. For instance, we face dilemmas like as: 'Should I genuinely disclose the truth if it will merely cause him distress?' What types of behaviours and behaviours are deemed virtuous and mandatory? What actions am I undertaking when I render a moral judgement? While results reached at one level may influence those at other levels, it is beneficial to differentiate the issues and tiers of theorisation. Richard Hare's Ethical Prescriptivism constitutes a non-cognitivist theory. Hare contends that moral statements possess a prescriptive nature; they dictate behaviour and direct our activities. Moral declarations serve to direct decisions, both our own and those of others. When I assert that abortion is morally objectionable, I intend to advocate for a specific attitude and conduct. I desire you to adopt my perspective and emulate my behaviour. Hare espouses a Universalist perspective on ethics. He contends that reason influences moral assertions, so endowing them with a universal quality. Hare contends that moral utterances include a universal characteristic, and it is advantageous for us to offer guidance to others, as we would like similar counsel for ourselves. To act otherwise would be incongruous (Bowie and Robert 82-83). Despite the prominent role of moral objectivity in prescriptivism, a comprehensive assessment has not been conducted in the existing literature; therefore, this study aims to address this knowledge deficiency and further advance its relevance to human everydayness.

Clarification of the Key Concept

Prescriptivism: R. M. Hare, in his two works, *The Language of Morals* and *Freedom and Reason*, formulated the meta-ethical theory termed prescriptivism. He asserts that "value judgements or moral statements are fundamentally prescriptive, meaning that these statements encompass an element of significance that serves to prescribe or guide action" (112). Moral statements are designed to direct behaviour or human actions. Commending or condemning anything serves as a means of influencing or directing our decisions.

Foundations of R. M. Hare's Moral Philosophy

The main revelation of this century is that the issues of philosophy are intrinsically linguistic in nature. This is undoubtedly applicable to ethical dilemmas as well. The issues of ethics are multifaceted. Nonetheless, they can be distilled into a fundamental inquiry concerning the relationship between fact and value. An examination of the history of Western ethics reveals that diverse responses have been provided to this fundamental question. For some, value is inherently distinct from reality; for others, there is no fundamental division between fact and value, to the extent that value can be diminished to fact. The crux of the matter is that the dilemmas of ethical philosophy are fundamentally linguistic in nature. Ethical philosophers aim to clarify the language nature of ethical judgements. Their responses to ethical dilemmas are exclusively framed from a language perspective. Certain philosophers do an explicit language investigation of ethical terminology and propositions. Stevenson and Hare are significant ethical philosophers who focused on the language of morality. The texts, *Ethics and The Language* by Stevenson and *Language and Morals* by Hare, would corroborate the aforementioned statement. Ayer's examination of ethical propositions is presented in his work

Language, Truth and Logic, which specifically focuses on linguistic analysis (Mukhopadhyay 1-2). So, is morality an objective reality or a subjective construct of the human intellect? Do ethical statements convey beliefs on reality or emotional responses to a world lacking objective value? Does the evolution of human nature contradict or reinforce the notion of universal moral principles? Assuming ethical facts exist, can they be uncovered using procedures akin to scientific approaches, or does moral knowledge necessitate a distinct sort of intuition or insight? What is the relationship between perceiving an action as morally correct and the motivation to undertake it? What criteria must an ethical assertion meet to be considered true? (Chrisman 3).

R. M. Hare, in his book *The Language of Morals,* regards ethics as the logical examination of moral language. Ethical principles help to direct human behaviour, and the most effective method to ascertain the moral principle influencing an individual is to monitor their actions. According to him, ethical language constitutes a prescription for responsibility. The issue of meaning is mostly related to the issue of language. The nature of language one perceives delineates the limits of their understanding of meaning. If he disregards that border, his thoughts may be either inconsistent or arbitrary. Contemporary Western philosophers predominantly regard language as either a reference or a representation of meaning, where meaning is understood as the referent or the entities represented. Non-factual descriptive uses lack a reference or representation in the empirical realm, hence accommodating variations in language corresponding to different uses - factual, non-factual, and further non-factual categories such as religious, moral, functional, and fictitious. They ascribe just emotional significance to ethical terminology. Undoubtedly, R. M. Hare is highly important in relation to his prescriptive theory of meaning. Ethical statements have prescriptive significance just to the degree that the actor has the authority to adhere to or disregard the prescription (Tiwari 79). At this point, it is evident that Hare's moral philosophy possesses a metaethical foundation and serves as a metaethical theory aimed at elucidating the semantic function of moral discourse.

R. M. Hare's Concept of Moral Prescriptivism

In their work "R.M. Hare's Prescriptivism and the Question of Good Governance in Nigeria," Anyam and Gbagir reference the British philosopher R. M. Hare, in his two works, *The Language of Morals* and *Freedom and Reason*, formulated the meta-ethical theory termed Prescriptivism (155). Hare asserts that value judgements or moral judgements are predominantly prescriptive, meaning they involve an aspect of significance that directs or prescribes conduct (Anyam 33). Moral statements are designed to direct behaviour or human actions. The fundamental comprehension is that whether we praise or criticise anything, it invariably serves as a means of influencing our decisions. Hare posits that moral judgements affect the actions we undertake and the behaviours we endorse. This implies that if an individual endorses a moral judgement, they must adhere to it; one cannot accept a moral assertion and simultaneously contravene it. R. M. Hare asserts that moral statements are directly connected to human behaviour, as making a moral statement entails a commitment to its content. For instance, if I assert that honesty is virtuous, I thereby indicate my obligation to be honest and pledge to uphold this principle. Conversely, if I declare that embezzling public funds is immoral, I imply that I must abstain from such actions and commit to avoiding them. Moral judgements invariably influence our behavior (143), as we cannot fully embrace them without adhering to their dictates. If we issue a moral declaration without the willingness to uphold it, Hare contends that we lack sincerity. Moral judgements necessitate personal commitment. Condemning an action as morally reprehensible entails a commitment to abstaining from it (Anyam and Gbagir 156).

This theory posits that ethical concepts such as "good" and "bad" are prescriptive in nature. This indicates that they are employed to delineate a cause of action. According to this hypothesis, asserting that something is good indirectly advises an individual to select it. To declare something as terrible implicitly advises an individual to abstain from it, or in other words, to avoid engaging in it. Moral statements entail imperatives, yet they differ from mere imperatives. According to Hare, the primary distinction between moral statements and imperatives is that moral statements are universal, whereas imperatives are not (Omoregbe 3). This indicates that the urge inherent in a moral statement is universal, directed towards all of humanity. For instance, stating that "abortion is evil" constitutes a moral assertion, but declaring "do not perform abortion" represents an imperative command. The moral assertion "abortion is evil" implies that no individual globally should engage in the act of abortion. Therefore, it might be asserted that a moral statement constitutes a universal imperative; nevertheless, the directive "do not perform abortion" is not universal (20). This is a straightforward command directed at an individual or a collective group. According to Hare, moral concepts are both evaluative and descriptive. In their evaluative capacity, they are employed to commend. Therefore, when I assert that something is excellent, I am implicitly endorsing it to you. If I indicate that anything is unfavourable, I am implicitly advising you against selecting it. Evaluative phrases are utilised to inform decision-making. Hare contends that human activities can only be deemed moral if they are preceded by precise moral statements.

A Critique of Hare's Moral Prescriptivism

It is important to acknowledge that no philosophical theory exists without facing critiques. Nevertheless, such critiques prompt additional scrutiny and enhancement of philosophical theories. This aims to eliminate such theories of significant faults and hence from philosophical dogmatism. Numerous detractors challenge Hare's prescriptivism, with Alasdair MacIntyre and Don Locke being the most prominent. Alasdair MacIntyre contends that Hare has unwarrantedly equated the logic of a specific moral position with the logic of morality itself. In *What Morality Is Not*, he contests Hare's assertion that moral assessments must be universalizable and prescriptive. MacIntyre contends that Hare's emphasis on the universalisability of moral assessments delineates "a line around one area of moral utterance and behaviour and restrict(s) the term to that area" (325). Consequently, MacIntyre contends that only a subset of moral assessments is universalizable. He asserts that it is completely feasible for an individual to express the sentiment "I ought to refrain from engaging in war, yet I cannot censure or denounce responsible nonpacifists" as a moral judgement. A person may be declining to legislate for others specifically on ethical reasons. MacIntyre argues that asserting all moral assessments must be universalizable posits a thesis that can only be upheld by an a priori and wholly unjustified limitation on the term "moral" (325).

MacIntyre asserts on the case for a standard of universalisability to maintain coherence between professed moral principles and specific assessments, "We may reproach an individual for moral inconsistency, yet we do not deem his statements devoid of meaning" (332). MacIntyre perceives the concept of universalisability not as a logical necessity, but as a manifestation of the liberal political principle that mandates "everyone shall be judged by the same standard" (332), emphasising impartiality about the individual whose actions are being evaluated. He asserts, "it is not inherent to the definition of 'morality' that moral evaluations are universalizable; however, liberals often employ the term 'morality' in a manner that incorporates this notion into its meaning" (333). MacIntyre concludes that, although it is frequently beneficial to initiate reflection on a specific moral dilemma with the inquiry, "What ought someone like me to do in this kind of situation?" in intricate scenarios, expressions such

as "someone like me" or "his kind of situation" become devoid of meaning (335). MacIntyre implies that in circumstances where an individual is bound by conflicting moral principles, it is unfeasible to determine a course of action based on what a similarly bewildered hypothetical individual would decide in an equally perplexing hypothetical context. MacIntyre's position is that a moral judgement regarding such a scenario may not be universally applicable.

Don Locke, the second critic under examination, contends in *The Triviality of Universalizability* that Hare's articulation of the universalisability of moral judgements "appears to devolve into the profound triviality that cases are similar, morally or otherwise, unless they are dissimilar" (25). Locke acknowledges that Hare's perspective on universalisability logically follows from his assertion that moral judgements have descriptive significance. He considers it insignificant to claim that a particular property of an object determines its goodness, badness, or other attributes: "The implication of this being good is merely that all entities classified as X are good, where the condition of being X logically necessitates being good" (28). Locke concurs with MacIntyre that Hare's emphasis on the universalisability of moral judgements is not intrinsic to the logic of morality but rather a specific perspective on morality, supported by the assertion that "we ought not to make exceptions in our own favour" in moral judgements. Locke presents the example of an individual who subscribes to the divine right of kings, a prerogative that pertains only to a single individual at any given moment. He contends that the endorsement of divine right rule constitutes "a moral principle that exempts a specific individual - this is a principle...that appears non-universal" (37). The proponent of monarchical authority by divine right would assert that the monarch's power is bestowed by God, and that anyone granted such power is entitled to govern. However, Locke notes that this rationale pertains to only a single individual. "To the extent that there exists a singular sovereign... these principles indeed create exceptions for specific individuals" (37). Locke addresses the essence of the issue by asserting that for Hare, although moral judgements necessitate reasons, Hare imposes no constraints on what may be regarded as a reason.

Relevance of R. M. Hare's Prescriptivism to Human Everydayness
Hare's prescriptivism is significant since it has facilitated the comprehension of moral judgements from a universal and rational perspective. He has embraced prescriptivism due to its relevance to broader audiences or the public. Prescriptivism addresses significant ethical dilemmas of whether moral judgements should be based on logic or individual choices and opinions. Hare has also addressed the distinction between 'is' and 'ought to be.' He eschewed conventional ethical ideas and instead critiqued the prevailing beliefs of his era. Consequently, he was critical of emotivism, descriptivism, utilitarianism, and Kant's deontological theory. Hare was a philosopher who examined all prevailing moral systems but did not discover solutions to specific enquiries. Consequently, he extracted several concepts from established theories and formulated prescriptivism. In his publications, he endorsed certain aspects of emotivism while opposing numerous other components. Hare asserts that moral statements or assessments neither represent anything nor convey the attitudes of persons. Moral judgements are inherently important for him (Ratheesh 77). Furthermore, prescriptivism elucidates moral reasoning and discourse: we can enquire about an individual's rationale for their prescriptions (in contrast to emotivism, Hare posits that prescribing an action should be accompanied by appropriate justification). We are subsequently at liberty to contest those justifications. Morality necessitates consistency, meaning we must be able to universalise our perspective, and we can engage in discourse over the efficacy of a specific standpoint in achieving this. Prescriptivism more effectively addresses moral disagreement than emotivism, as it posits that the action-guiding normative aspect of moral utterances is inherently embedded in the content of a moral statement.

Moreover, prescriptivism permits us to validly critique another individual's moral perspectives without necessitating the invocation of assertions on realist moral truth or untruth and further examine the subsequent case (Dimmock and Fisher 115). To reinforce the aforementioned significance, it is important to establish that assertive moral statements precede moral actions. Prescriptivism is thus frequently regarded as advancement over Emotivism within the context of non-cognitivist and anti-realist metaethical ideas (Dimmock and Fisher 116). Another significance of Hare's moral philosophy is his differentiation 'between a 'critical' level of reasoning, performed by 'archangels' utilising 'Golden Rule' arguments, and an 'intuitive' level, executed by 'proles' employing straightforward principles (often expressing emotional responses) whose endorsement can be rationalised at the critical level. These two levels delineate not two social castes, but two roles between which each individual learns to switch as necessary. The complication is inherently unavoidable within consequentialism, which necessitates a distinction between how one ought to act and how one ought to contemplate action - since modes of thought yield consequences as significantly as modes of action (and believing one should act in a particular manner does not guarantee success in such action, nor even an attempt). A utilitarian evaluation of practical principles must account for both their observing utility, representing the benefits derived from their implementation, and their acceptance utility, which pertains to the advantages associated with the intention to implement them. It is important to recognise that the intention to behave in a particular manner constitutes a mental act in itself. There is no basis for transitioning to an alternative form of utilitarianism, such as 'rule' instead of 'act', or 'indirect' rather than 'direct'; instead, we are merely broadening act-utilitarianism to encompass a wider array of actions, both mental and physical. A generalisation that Hare supported is that the highest ordinal utility is likely to be associated with highly specific principles, whereas a higher average utility may correspond to some relatively general principles. This results from human ignorance and self-deception. A principle that allows adultery in the context of a deteriorating marriage may possess a greater ordinal utility than one that merely prohibits adultery; yet, if there are individuals adept at faulty rationalisation, its average utility may be diminished (Price 17).

Conclusion

This paper evaluated R.M. Hare's moral philosophy, known as "universal prescriptivism." Hare's ethical theory focuses on analysing the semantic function of moral discourse to elucidate the logic underlying our moral thinking. Hare's universal prescriptivism can be juxtaposed with Kant's Categorical Imperative and the Golden Rule. This renders prescriptivism a Universalist variant of non-cognitivism. Hare has undoubtedly established a reputation for his innovative and exceptional contributions to the philosophical discourse on ethics. This study has expounded on the prevalent misunderstanding within the philosophical community regarding Hare's moral philosophy. The study contends that Hare's universal prescriptivism is erroneous in its claims of moral objectivity or generalisability. Moral assertions that are inherently prescriptive do not immediately apply to individuals other than the speaker; rather, the speaker only "wills" and "desires" that others adhere to his ethical prescriptive preferences. Universal prescriptivism mandates that an individual's decision in a specific context should be one that may be endorsed or recommended to others. In a scenario involving multiple individuals, each must evaluate the intensity of their preferences, and the most dominant preference, determined by 'role switching,' must be universally prioritised over the others. This concept is known as 'preference utilitarianism'. Hare elucidates that while it is comparatively straightforward to address our routine moral dilemmas intuitively; our intuition is insufficient for navigating intricate moral issues. Consequently, it can be asserted that 'intricate circumstances necessitate sophisticated and critical interventions.'

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Article   **Open Access**

LIBERAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: A DEWEYAN APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL REFORM

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the persistent dominance of theoretical knowledge over praxis in Nigeria's education system which underscores John Dewey's philosophy of education. This is with particular reference to his integration of liberal and vocational education in his book, *Democracy and Education*, as an approach to educational reform. Dewey's philosophy advocates for a dynamic and experiential learning process that fosters critical thinking, adaptability, and democratic engagement, merging liberal education's emphasis on intellectual growth with vocational education's focus on practical skills. The aim of this study is to describe how to bridge this dominance by applying Dewey's integration mechanism to enhance educational productivity and reform in Nigeria and globally. In the course of this study, the following methods will be used. The historical method to review the related literature, analytical method to analyse Dewey's idea on education, descriptive method to describe Dewey's integration of liberal and vocational education and demonstrate its relevance for Nigeria's educational system as well as evaluation to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the application. The findings of this work is that Dewey's approach promotes a balanced education system that equips individuals with both intellectual and practical skills, enabling them to thrive in complex modern societies. Also, as long as social institutions uphold competence in relation to administration, Dewey's integrative model will sustain relevance beyond 21st century no matter the direction of the movement of the global community.

Keywords: Philosophy, John Dewey, Educational Reform, Liberal Education, Vocational Education.

Introduction

The situation within the country is the prevalence of some graduates not getting jobs even after graduating with good results due to lack of skill and technical- know-how. This situation is

not unconnected with our educational system which is more theoretical than practical. Though this is largely due to the curriculum adopted in Nigeria which places more emphasis on theory than hands-on-learning, it has led to a growing disconnect between academic knowledge and real-world application. Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits through various methods. It is not just based on transferring information but developing the ability to think critically, solve problems and adapt to changing environments. Whitehead (1967, p.1), defined education as "The acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge". James Majasan (1967, p. 1), defined it simply as "The art of learning". He further emphasized the relevance to the development of indigenous education in Africa. According to John Dewey (1938, pp. 35-36), education is the process of continuous growth and reconstruction of experience aimed at developing the individual's ability to think critically, solve problems and engage meaningfully within the society. To him, education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge but an active, dynamic process of interaction where learning occurs through experiences that promote intellectual, emotional and social growth. Dewey advocated for educational reform because he believed that traditional education was too rigid, authoritarian and disconnected from the real-life experiences of students. For him, the traditional educational system or the banking model of education emphasizes rote memorization and passive absorption of information, where students are seen as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge rather than active participants in their own learning process.

John Dewey's philosophy merged liberal and vocational education. On the one hand, he viewed liberal education as essential for fostering critical thinking, moral judgment and social responsibility while emphasizing that education should be student-centered. On the other hand, his vocational education shifts from the traditional views that often reduces it to mere job training, to "satisfying direction of life activities" asserting that it should cultivate adaptability and critical thinking rather than just preparing them for specific trades. In his progressive education, he rejected the rigid separation between liberal and vocational education as he believed that education should prepare individuals not only for employment but also for meaningful participation in democratic life. This study seeks to evaluate the contemporary divide between liberal and vocational education through the lens of Dewey's educational philosophy. Secondly, it will also examine John Dewey's theory of educational reform as an aid to solving the problems of educational decadence and productivity in Nigeria and globally. This work argues that John Dewey's educational reform will impact greatly on the productivity of education in Nigeria and globally by opening up vistas for innovative diversity. By examining Dewey's ideas on Experiential learning and the integration of different educational approaches, the study aims to explore how his philosophy can inform and guide educational reform through building a non-bound curricular that provide freedom for exploration in learning. The study will adopt the following methods; historical method, analysis, descriptive and evaluative. Through analysis, it will analyze Dewey's ideas on education; historically, literatures will be reviewed to carry the reader along the development of educational system over time, through descriptive method, Dewey's ideas on educational reform with relation to vocational and liberal education will be captured. Then, with evaluative method, the strengths and weaknesses of the application of this reform to Nigeria and global education system will be examined. This method is relevant in this research because understanding the loopholes in models contribute immeasurably to better disposition for consistent improvement.

Literature Review

In *The Republic,* Plato (1997, pp. 514a-521c), implicitly promoted liberal education over vocational education. This is because, liberal education is for the guardian class inclusive of the

rulers. This aim of this education is to uphold moral development (cultivating wisdom, courage and ethical integrity) while vocational education is suitable for the artisans, farmers and other tradespeople whose roles support the city's economic needs. In *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle (1999, pp. 1337b, 1260a-1262b), distinguished between intellectual virtues and moral virtues. The intellectual virtues are wisdom and understanding while the moral virtues are courage and temperance. For him, liberal education is akin to the development of these virtues to aid individual in living a fulfilling life and make ethical decision while vocational education is a secondary pursuit and essential for those who perform functional roles in the society like the fishermen, traders, and so on. In *Didactic magna (the great Didactic) and Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, Johann Amos Comenius (1887 &1896, pp. 7 & 51), expressed his acceptance of liberal education. This is due to his interest in developing the intellectual and moral character that fosters rational thoughts and ethical behaviour. He also promoted vocational education since it prepares individual for a productive life. For him, education should involve practical subjects like Agriculture, Craftsmanship, Commerce alongside academic subjects. This is to equip students with skills needed to contribute to society in terms of technique and productivity.

Also, in *Émile on Education,* Jean Jacque Rousseau (1979, p. 60), presented education as means of achieving personal freedom by fostering the individual's capacity for self-governance. He also upholds experiential learning and vocational education. This is because children learn more by interacting with the environment as well as acquire practical skills for self-reliance respectively. This in turn contributes to society's productivity, hence, the interconnectedness of his liberal and vocational education. In *Some Thoughts concerning Education,* John Locke (1989, pp. 105 & 6), saw education as the process of making a man wise and virtuous. Wisdom here accommodates intellectual insights and practical knowledge in preparation for one's life in the society. He encouraged learning of skills like household management, agriculture and trades that provide foundation for self-reliance. This will in turn promote personal freedom and dignity. In his works *How Getrude Teaches her children, and Leonard and Getrude,* Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1894, p. 35), explains that education prepares individuals for life by cultivating the head (intellectual development to observe, reason and think critically), the heart (interpersonal compassion and moral action) and the hands to work such that they can be conversant with manual labour. The aim is to prepare children for both intellectual pursuit and practical life.

Furthermore, in his seminal work*, Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical,* Herbert Spencer (1861, pp. 20-25), a prominent British philosopher and social theorist developed his philosophy arguing for a curriculum akin more to practical knowledge. Some of the related subjects include physics, chemistry, biology etc. The aim is to promote science and technology as it is directly connected to the demand of modern industrial society and invariably will prepare individuals for life. *In The Life of Thomas Arnold,* Thomas Hughes (1795–1842), an English educator, tries to synthesize moral character development and intellectual rigour as well as preparations for practical life. His emphasis on practical skills is particularly for those in public life and civic duties. For him, synthesis of the above two would equip students for practical tasks in society such as public administration, law and religious services (Hughes, 1895, p. 48). From this point of view, one can see that Hughes is in mind disposition more than the actual activity.   Finally, in his works*, The Principle of Psychology and Talks to teachers on Psychology and on students on some of life's ideals,* William James (1907, pp. 45-48), an American Psychologist and pragmatist Philosopher contributed to educational reform by emphasizing the practical consequences of ideas and beliefs. This he demonstrated by arguing that education should focus more on practical outcomes and real-world application. This is to aid students to think critically in a constantly changing world. This approach promotes

development of flexible thinking skills and the ability to adapt to new situation. A position that greatly influenced John Dewey's philosophy of education. Each of these works demonstrated either preference to liberal, vocational education or both but rarely do they advocate that both aspects of education be integrated, hence the expedience of John Dewey's educational reform.

John Dewey's Concept of Education

Education is the process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, enabling them to function effectively in society. It encompasses both formal and informal learning experiences that shape a person's intellectual, emotional and moral development. John Dewey (1897, p. 77), defined education as the process of living and not a preparation for future Living; "It is not a preparation for life, it is life itself. Instead of preparing students for life after school, he emphasized that education should be a dynamic continuous process of growth and personal development. To him, learning is about interacting with and adjusting to the events of the present world as well as gaining knowledge for the future. According to Dewey (1916, p. 60), education is focused on the intellectual and moral growth of a person and it is fundamentally a social ground for real life experiences. He maintained that the most effective learning occurs when it is based on real world experiential activities that the learner finds relevant. For him, education must be based on the principles of learning through experiences.

John Dewey's Educational Reform

John Dewey was an exceptional supporter of modern academics and social reform. He gave a new direction to educational thoughts and processes. He also rejected the authoritarian structure and the traditional teaching methods in schools describing them as being aloof from the demands of society and of individuals. His educational reform focused on transforming traditional education into progressive model that would integrate liberal and vocational education. His main aim was to create a system that fostered critical thinking, creativity and democratic participation. In *Democracy and education,* he criticized the traditional educational system for being authoritarian and disconnected from the needs of the modern society (Dewey, 1916, p. 13). He further argued that schools should act as "microcosm" of a democratic society, that is, an environment where students learn to collaborate, communicate and solve problems together as he believed that this system would prepare students for active participation in civic life (Dewey, 1916, p. 10). Vocational education was also a key aspect of his educational reform. Unlike other traditional vocational training that focused more on the acquisition of skills, He advocated for an integrated approach. For him, vocational training should develop transferable skills, encouraging critical thinking as well as provide opportunities for personal growth (Dewey, 1916, p.12).

Dewey's Liberal Education

Liberal education refers to an educational approach that focuses on developing the intellectual and moral capacities of students, preparing them for thoughtful and active citizenship. Liberal education focuses on developing a broad range of knowledge and skills. It is often associated with the humanities and the social sciences but it can also include courses like the natural sciences and mathematics. The goal of Liberal education is to produce well-rounded individuals who are able to think critically, communicate effectively and solve critical problems. Liberal Education to Dewey, is an education that promotes the growth of individuals as a reflective and an engaged member of the society, unlike the traditional models that focus on the acquisition of knowledge (Dewey, 1900, p. 78). He critiqued traditional education that compartmentalized knowledge into distinct, unrelated subjects. For him, education should not

be about passive absorption of knowledge which involves just reading of books, rather, it should engage students in real-world issues thereby, fostering a continuous interaction between their learning and experiences on the one hand. One the other hand, in concord with his ideas on democracy, education plays a fundamental role in creating individuals who are equipped to engage with and improve the democratic community. This is because a true democratic system requires citizens who are not only knowledgeable but also capable of critical thought, moral judgement and social responsibility (Dewey, 1916, p. 43).

Dewey's Vocational Education

Vocational education refers to a type of education that focuses on preparing individuals for specific trades, careers or professions and unlike traditional education, which lays more importance on general knowledge and theoretical concepts, vocational education emphasizes practical skills and training that are directly applicable to particular job roles. John Dewey viewed vocational education not just as a means to prepare individuals for specific trades or careers but as an important aspect of an educational philosophy that aims to foster both personal and societal development. He rejected the traditional view of vocational education which focused on just technical skills, since for him vocational education should not just teach practical skills but it should also cultivate an understanding of the social context in which these skills would be applied (Dewey, 1938, p. 52). In his seminal work, *Democracy and education,* Dewey argued that vocational education should be seen as part of a larger process of developing individuals who could think critically and adapt to changing social conditions. His vocational education was not limited to technical proficiency but was set as a tool for both personal development and the betterment of the society (Dewey, 1899, pp. 48-50). He further criticized the traditional vocational education system that was being practiced, for he believed that it frequently produced an education that was isolated from larger intellectual and social settings. According to Dewey, traditional vocational training concentrated only on technical abilities and did not give students the tools they needed to participate meaningfully in the society. He advocates that vocational education should concentrate on helping students acquire a versatile set of skills that can be used in a range of situations rather than just training them to do only a particular task.

Integration of Liberal and Vocational Education

In *The School and Society*, Dewey illustrated how schools could effectively integrate vocational and liberal education by focusing on hands-on learning and democratic participation. He suggested that schools should not only teach practical skills but also engage students in projects that required them to think critically, solve problems, and work collaboratively. By doing so, vocational education could transcend its traditional role and contribute to the development of well-rounded individuals who were prepared to participate in the democratic processes of their society. (Dewey, 1900, pp. 87-90). Dewey believed that a key strength of vocational education was its ability to connect students with their immediate social environment. This connection was essential for developing a sense of responsibility and community. He argued that vocational education should not be seen as inferior to liberal education but should be considered complementary to it. According to Dewey, liberal education emphasizes the development of intellectual and moral capacities, while vocational education focuses on practical skills. However, when combined, they offer a more holistic approach to education that prepares students for both personal fulfillment and societal contribution. In *Experience and Education*, Dewey argued that vocational education should be part of a broader, more inclusive educational system that treated all students as equally capable of intellectual and practical growth. For Dewey (1938, pp. 27-30), the integration of

vocational and liberal education was essential for creating a democratic society where individuals were prepared to contribute both intellectually and practically. Dewey saw vocational education as a means of social mobility and a way to promote social equality. By offering students practical skills in addition to intellectual and ethical training, vocational education could help break down class divisions and create opportunities for all individuals to participate fully in society. This vision of vocational education was aligned with Dewey's broader philosophy of education, which emphasized the importance of experiential learning and the connection between education and social life.

Implications of John Dewey's Concept for Educational Reform

i.   **Promoting active and sustainable democratic principles:** Dewey's principles include intimate connection of education to democratic process of society. As a principle that promotes agency of change, it is undeniable that it will contribute immensely to the democratic awareness of citizens especially the youths when appropriately imbibed. The youths when educated in integrated education will not just overcome disillusionment and skepticism that accompany unfair democracy with right attitude to governance, they will also be financially independent to take and stand firm in their decisions and not swayed by material enticement.

ii. **Revitalizing the Nigerian Educational System**: The level of unemployment rate in Nigeria has invariably led to less regard for formal education. But with Dewey's integration model in Nigerian educational curriculum which ushers in self-reliance, the appeal for education is likely to increase within the country. This is because, it will not only prepare graduates as innovators and entrepreneurs, it will motivate them to develop the right attitude to education thereby killing two flying birds with one formidable stone.

iii. **A Path Towards a More Productive and Innovative Society:** Dewey's philosophy of education will help create a more innovative and productive society. This is largely due to his emphasis on integrative intellectual and practical knowledge/skills. This implies then that, it will help reduce crime in the society especially now that fraudulent activities are on the increase. This is because when citizens utilize their strength in innovation, entrepreneurship and production backed by moral consciousness and responsibility, there will be less or no time for criminal indulgence. Afterall, an idle mind is a devil's workshop and so on.

Evaluation

John Dewey's philosophy of education focused on educational reform, thereby shifting focus from rote memorization to active engagement with real world experiences (Dewey, 1916, p. 78). Its relevance is expressible in the ability of adaptation skills and problem-solving tendencies which aid in retention rates and versatility (Kolb, 1984, p. 45). Furthermore, education for him, should engineer critical thinking and inquiry (Dewey, 1938, p. 23). This will in turn promote intellectual independence, self-confidence and creativity. Put succinctly, for instance, going beyond dates of historical events of social dynamics to researching deeper on causal factors leading up to such events. In a far-reaching effect, when students become intellectually free, self-confident and decision-making agents. It will enlarge possibilities for democratic sustenance allowing for free positive thinking for the stability of the society (Gutek, 2004, p. 107). More so, Dewey's concept of education presents the two types of education as complimentary and not separate. This helps to prepare the students for both personal development and professional success. For instance, combining mathematics and science education with designing sustainable energy solution or combining philosophy of mind with

practical updates on neural research. This is expedient especially in our globalized economy where jobs demand both technical expertise and creative thinking.

This study aims to show that with these core values in Dewey's principles, one can considerably argue that Dewey made a landmark contribution in his philosophy geared towards educational reform. Even in the 21st century, his principle of education is much more relevant promoting project-based learning and collaborative classroom. This is a pattern known to prepare students for the complexities of contemporary life such as climate change, technological innovation and social inequality. However, critics may argue that there are challenges confronting Dewey's philosophy of education in relation to their implementation, theoretical assumptions and cultural adaptability. For instance, Hirsch (1987, p. 37), is of the position that Dewey's approach de-emphasizes the acquisition of essential foundational skills and cultural knowledge necessary for intellectual growth and society's functioning. This entails that foundational knowledge such as literacy, numeracy and historical awareness on which critical thinking and problem-solving are built will lack relevance. Eventually, it will lead to excellency in innovation and creativity but inadequate in core competencies needed for academic and professional success. This is because, experiential learning without structured instruction is unbalanced and risky thereby reversing the challenge of gap in theory and praxis by praxis and theory (Akpan, C, 2005, p. 102). However, a better observation will demonstrate otherwise. This is because, Dewey's emphasis is not one-sided. Dewey's focus is on an integrative model and not intermittently switching sides.

Secondly, Bestor (1984, p. 102), argues that students' autonomy without proper management can weaken academic standards and lead to shallow learning. For instance, in Nigeria, where we have over-crowded classrooms in some areas and teachers rely on strict, organized methods, Akpan (2005, p. 145), is of the opinion that Dewey's pattern is prone to create confusion and make teaching less effective. This will eventually worsen the challenge in education system while still in the bids to solve them. Here, the problem is not Dewey's model but the incompetence of the Government to provide the basic amenities for education in the adequate proportion. When we observe some private-owned schools, they abide by non-crowding of classrooms that will help to avoid confusion, invariably demonstrating that Dewey's model is tenable. Thirdly, Dewey's educational philosophy has been criticized as overly idealistic, especially in countries with limited resources. According to Onwuka, (2005, p. 110), for Dewey's reform to be successful, especially in developing nations, there is need for significant investment in areas like teacher training, better school infrastructure and modern curriculum development on the one hand. On the other hand, Olutayo (2006, p. 98) adds that systemic challenges like corruption and inadequate funding make it even harder to implement Dewey's ideas effectively. Until these confrontations and more are handled, an optimal utilization of Dewey's philosophy will be far from possibility, especially in developing countries. However, these ills may not be tackled once and for all. So, it is only fair that this model is followed gradually as the societal ills are eliminated gradually too.

Conclusion

In this study, efforts have been made to espouse one of the challenges facing development especially in developing nations which centres on disparity in intellectual and practical knowledge. Contributions have also been made to demonstrate how Dewey's educational reform can help bridge this gap between theory and praxis in the curriculum of education. One of the contributions includes integrating liberal and vocational education. However, from this paper, one is convinced that if the challenges are well managed, Dewey's educational philosophy will continue to be relevant beyond 21st century. This is because, no matter the direction the global community and economy is going, it will continue to utilize the two.

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Article   **Open Access**

BEYOND ELECTORALISM: A CRITIQUE OF SCHUMPETER'S DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND THE CASE FOR OHACRACY

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to critique Schumpeter's theory of democracy in order to explore an alternative to his theory of democracy. Schumpeter conceptualizes democracy as the institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote. This description of classical democracy by Schumpeter is hinged on his argument that classical construal of democracy as a democratic institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good is fraught with numerous assumptions that are indefensible. Schumpeter insists that there do not exist a common good that all can be brought to see via rational argument, as even those with good intentions can disagree on what is best for society. Employing the combined methods of exposition and thematic content analysis (TCA), this paper finds out that Schumpeter's theory, on further analysis has some weaknesses. This work is necessary because Schumpeter's model has been influential but has not been adequately challenged from non western framework. Thus, this paper holds that an alternative to both Schumpeter's modern form of democracy and classical form of democracy is the Igbo participatory form of government referred to as *Ohacracy.* It remains a better option, as a form of government, to ensuring human flourishing.

Keywords: Ohacracy*,* Participatory, Democracy, Will, Common Good.

Introduction

Democratic theory and practice have been at the forefront of political philosophy and political science for many years. Democracy has continued to be idealized as a regime of popular rule, based on the ideals of political equality, public deliberation, and popular sovereignty, from the

direct democracy models of ancient Athens to contemporary liberal representative systems. But in his work *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942), Joseph Schumpeter retorts against such universal belief by offering a straightforward and systematic definition. According to him, democracy can be defined as an institutional process of arriving at political decisions under which the people gain the right to make such decisions by obtaining a free competition for their votes, and not the actual governance of the people.

Schumpeter's model, also known as elite democracy or minimalist democracy, has had a significant influence on post-war democratic theory and molded much modern political science theory. "Democracy" cannot and does not imply that the people actually rule in any sense of the words "people" and "rule," he asserts. In the words of Schumpeter (1942), it "means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them." It was Schumpeter's belief that the institutional device of competitive elections, rather than popular control, separated democracies from nondemocracies. No meaningful or substantive manifestation of popular sovereignty is found in the US, UK, and other liberal democracies. Therefore, in his view, the essence of democracy is not leadership but the process by which leaders come to power. While providing a viable and organizational concept of contemporary democracy, Schumpeter's redescription has come under intense attack both from the practitioners of democracy and from normative philosophers. Democracy loses its promise of participation, deliberation, and emancipation as much as critics are concerned when it is nothing more than an occasional electoral contest. Besides, it ignores democratic values increasingly espoused by deliberative and participatory democratic models, such as accountability, inclusivity, civic engagement, and collective self-determination (Pateman, 1970; Habermas, 1996; Dryzek, 2000).

In this paper, Schumpeter's original thesis is reexamined with the aim of questioning whether it is still a valid model for democratic administration in today's world, especially in plural and postcolonial societies such as Nigeria. Even as it is added to the tradition, it contends that Schumpeter's procedural definition remains insufficient to capture the multifaceted cultural, communal, and participatory aspects of democracy in practice in indigenous African societies. This paper presents *Ohacracy,* a theoretical framework patterned after the Igbo system of participatory government, based on communal consensus, dialogic reason, and rotating leadership. It draws lessons from the traditional Igbo polity of southeast Nigeria. *Ohacracy* is an alternative notion of democracy that prioritizes collective sovereignty, neighborhood responsibility, and lateral participation in contrast to Schumpeter's elitist conception. Therefore, the paper introduces two goals: it first critically evaluates Schumpeter's democratic minimalism both philosophically and practically; second, it develops the institutional and normative potential of *Ohacracy* as an intellectually justified and culture-reflective model of participatory democracy. To state this, the research contributes to the now increasingly variegated debate on indigenous governance, intercultural theory of democracy, and political legitimacy seeking models beyond Western liberal paradigms.

Schumpeter on the Non-Existence of Common Good and Common Will

Democracy for Schumpeter is a method of the achievement of "common good" by the articulation of a single, unified popular will. He questions whether there is a widely accepted common good that can be discovered by all the citizens through reason. According to him, the notion that one can label policies as being either "good" or "bad" misses the diversity of human interests and values (Schumpeter, 1942). According to Schumpeter, there is no consensus on what the common good is since it is different among different people and societies. To add to Schumpeter's skepticism, Gerry Mackie contends that liberal-democratic societies do share some degree of agreement on such fundamental principles as the rule of law, emancipation

from slavery, and government by constitution, though no single common good can be capable of universal rational assent (Mackie, 2004). Furthermore, Coleman and Ferejohn (1986) refer that a conception may be useful even though it is indeterminate and contestable.

Arguments concerning particular topics would never be settled even when society concur regarding a general understanding of what constitutes the common good, as for instance with the utilitarian maxim of greatest happiness. Political disagreements would still exist, usually with passion. He also denies the hypothesis that the sum of individual tastes will yield a common will. For him, the democratic process is so incoherent and fragmented as to produce a unified, rational popular will (Schumpeter, 1942). Rousseau's distinction between the "general will" and the "will of all," the former an idealized conception of public reason and the latter the actual, often mistaken choices of the public, is echoed here in this line of reasoning (Rousseau, 1987). Competing visions of the common good are present in consolidated democracies, though they are circumscribed by intersecting values and principles (Mackie, 2004). Sean Ingham refutes Schumpeter by contending that individuals can still shape the result of policies despite having their desires manipulated or imposed. He concludes control remains with the decision-maker regardless of the source of their will by establishing a counterfactual between an autocrat and his advisor (Ingham, 2016). This implies popular will is manipulable but needn't be empty.

Schumpeter on the Non-Existence of Individual Will

Irrationality of the typical voter is the target of Schumpeter's most controversial assertion. He contends that in politics compared to their personal or professional life, people behave with much less level of intellectual involvement. Their intelligence becomes emotional, associative, and primitive once they become part of the political system (Schumpeter, 1942). He compares democratic crowds to unreasonable mobs that can easily be manipulated and driven by mania, making allusions to Pareto and LeBon. Whereas Schumpeter exaggerates irrationality's strength in group action, there are other scholars like Ober (2008) who demonstrate that group conclusions tend to be more correct than individual judgments based on Aristotle and the Condorcet jury theorem. Postmes and Spears (2003) also contend that group action is driven by standards and expectations of group members and not by being irrational. Democratic institutions thus formed are therefore capable of facilitating rational group decision-making. Schumpeter admits that the citizens may be rational about some, mundane issues, such as home politics or problems that directly concern their life, even though he is pessimistic. But if the problems concerned are national or theoretical, reality gets less and perceptions get shaped more by ideological biases and hazy perceptions than by sound judgment (Schumpeter, 1942). The vulnerability of the citizens to propaganda is the threat. Political elites can formulate a public will through expertly shaping issues. The public will is thus built and not spontaneous (Schumpeter, 1942). Nevertheless, following Bernard Manin (1987), democracy should work towards influencing preferences within the framework of public representation and argumentation, rather than identifying a pre-existing popular will. A vibrant representative democracy requires ongoing elections and competitive parties, following Schumpeter. They serve as a brake on the will that has been established and permit replacing of incompetent representatives. Likewise, Hamilton et al. (1787) considered democracy as a vehicle for public opinion expansion and sophistication through informed leadership.

Critiques of Schumpeter's Theory of Democracy

Democratic theorists, political theorists, and comparative politics scholars alike have all highly criticized Schumpeter's minimalist definition of democracy, which is that democracy is a system of competitive leader selection through elections. Although his model is systematic and useful to grasp government, it has several theoretical and empirical inadequacies. Exclusion of

involvement, elitist prejudice, and disregard for contextual democratic demands in postcolonial and plural societies are the three broad criticisms one can invoke to classify these shortfalls en masse. The strongest of all criticisms of Schumpeter's model is that it confines democracy to being a method of choice of leaders, barring public discussion and participatory citizenship—two things most central to democratic legitimacy. Schumpeter categorically states that "the people have no will other than a manufactured one" and elites voted to rule must rule, rejecting the classical view of democracy as rule by the people (Schumpeter, 1942). Classical democratic theorists like John Stuart Mill and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are discredited by this limited understanding with their participatory ideals. In her book participation and Democratic Theory, Carole Pateman (1970) firmly resists this exclusion, contending that democratic participation promotes civic virtue, political skill, and personal development - all of which are required for a functioning democracy. Similarly, Barber (1984) holds in Strong Democracy that restricting democracy to election competition "turns citizens into consumers" and neglects the transformative power of democratic participation. Because it takes away from the people a significant role other than voting, Schumpeter's theory is seen to be anti-democratic in character. Schumpeterian democracy's elite and bureaucratic foundations are the target of a second wave of criticism. Schumpeter quietly justifies oligarchic control of democratic institutions by promoting elite political competition and reducing the status of common people. A few interconnected elites dominate contemporary democracies under such regimes, as described by C. Wright Mills (1956) in *The Power Elite,* so that elections become a ceremonial affair with minimal scope for genuine change.

Finally, Schumpeter's theory is criticized by Dahl (1989) as well on grounds that it espouses a "democracy of spectators" as opposed to a participatory democracy. Dahl stresses contention and inclusion in his theory of polyarchy, two virtues that are either ignored or compromised in Schumpeter's theory. Therefore, even in the context of elections, institutional structures and power disparities that restrict public agency are not recognized by the Schumpeterian theory. This elitist predisposition could only strengthen neocolonial alienation and government structures in postcolonial society. Lastly, Schumpeter's theory has been faulted as being inadequately contextualized, especially in multicultural or postcolonial nations. His approach disregards the diversity of identity, ethnicity, and rule of the society that is prevalent in the majority of African, Asian, and Latin American republics because it was premised on stable, comparatively homogeneous Western democracies. The Schumpeterian emphasis upon vertical accountability and competitive elections seems not only to be reductionist but also very likely to be destabilizing in those cultures where traditional forms of consultation, communal reflection, and consensus play a fundamental role in the governance process, such as the Igbo, Ashanti, or Zulu. Merging liberal democratic principles with postcolonial politics without reference to local practices creates a democratic deficit and eliminates local legitimacy, Chatterjee (2004) argues in *The Politics of the Governed.* Likewise, Ekeh (1975) distinguishes the civic public sphere from postcolonial Africa's primordial public realm, illustrating that indigenous institutions tend to possess oftentimes the moral legitimacy that imported liberal institutions do not. Schumpeter's model is not possible to use as a foundation for solid or sustainable democratic leadership in such environments since it ignores these realities.

Furthermore, Schumpeter's democratic model has been faulted for the relative deficiency of emphasis placed on elections, barring more sophisticated elements like public discourse, civil society, and participatory government. His model raises the suspicion of majoritarianism as it does not incorporate protection of minority interests and leaves little room for lawmakers to be made accountable in the intervals between elections. Schumpeter

risks ignoring social justice and environmental sustainability in the interests of economic efficiency by tightly equating democracy with capitalism and the theory of "creative destruction." Partly true, his premises regarding irrational voters underestimate the influence of civic institutions, the media, and education in the making of well-educated citizens. More critically, however, Schumpeter's approach appears to promote elite domination by prioritizing skill and leadership at the expense of direct engagement. He compares democratic leadership with a patient going to see a doctor or a merchant retaining a manager - not for the autonomy of decision-making, but for outcomes. The inherent dignity of citizen involvement in the formation of public life is beyond the ken of this administrative ideal. But critics contend that public deliberation, institutional design, and education can all lead to enlightened participation. The citizens can be encouraged towards rational discussion and ethical reasoning by adequate democratic procedures. Popular control over policy needs a specific causal relationship between policy and citizens' policy opinions, but this relationship may stand even when citizens have no policy opinions and even when the opinions they do have is an outcome of elite manipulation. This control may not sum up to popular rule if elites have not simply influence but also dominating control over public opinion. For him, there is no reason to expect elites to have dominating control over public opinion if the political environment is indisputably competitive(Ingham, 2016). Having looked at the limitations inherent in both classical and modern forms of democracies in Schumpeter this paper tries to demonstrate that Igbo participatory form of government referred to as *ohacracy* is the way forward.

Igbo Participatory Political Model of Government: *Ohacracy*

Ohacracy is Igbo social political system of government which is firmly founded on their culture, maintained by their customs, norms, values and language. It is a people oriented government. In *ohacracy* power belongs to the people and the people are the sovereign. For Iroegbu, *ohacracy* is the practical conception of societal order and governance in which the communities determine the praxis of the socio-political life of the people while taking into account basic individual and group peculiarities(Iroegbu, 1997). By implication, *Ohacracy* is an active participation of all responsible Igbo persons in the polity which encourages the common good and the common aim in their existential life so that they can delineate and create themselves and stand out as humans in the society. *Ohacracy* is conveyed as a process by which the collective will of the people decides their existence in the community. This form of government has the trait of the spirit of belongingness which is based on African communalism; accordingly, there is need for a brief depiction of belongingness in order to deepen the meaning of *Ohacracy* as an Igbo political system of government.

In order to understand the idea African communalism there is need to understand the concept of belongingness. Belongingness is a theory of justice that promotes the active role of the community and the individual in the society. For Ejenam, belongingness is a principle of membership applied to a given political community. It is what forms a community's cultural, historical, and traditional values(Ejenam, 2007). Iroegbu avers that it is both a *terminus ad quo* and a *terminus ad quem*. It implies "that it is very fundamental such that we cannot speak of social justice in Africa without it. Belongingness makes all members real and participating members of the community. It gives all a sense of belonging"(Onebunne & Alike, 2017). Actually, there is nothing that exists that is not part of reality, which by extrapolation belongs to something or a particular reality. Hence, we are part of a group in order to be able to offer our own quota to the common good of all. Without this act of belonging particularly in a political community there will be no participation. Belongingness, however, outshines these existential facts of every communal function. This idea of belongingness is obvious in John Donne's poem: No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a

part of the main…. any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee (Onebunne & Alike, 2017).

Onebunne and Alike hold that "Belongingness is, therefore, a fundamental quality in understanding whatever is. Nothing can be construed as regards its completeness but in its political relation to other realities, defining itself through other beings. Everything is delineated by a relation, that is, a thing or being is in relation to something, or with an attribute of engaging in something (Onebunne & Alike, 2017). As a result, our identity lies in belonging to a group. Belongingness identifies realities as such. Our nature is in belonging. Its role is in belonging. Its mode and operations are in belonging. Belongingness, as such, is the ontological value of living. By belongingness, being is related to other beings by relationship of what it is or does (Onebunne & Alike, 2017).

The Political Significance of *Ohacracy*

Ohacracy is characterized by belongingness and belongingness is founded in African communalism. Consequently, in African communalism individuals take into consideration the interest of other people in whatever actions that they carry out. It is on the basis of this that the leadership model of *Ohacracy* is conceptualized. Interestingly, *Ohacracy* works based on the customs, culture and values of the Igbo people. Igbo culture like any other African culture is full of symbols and symbolism. For example, *Ofo* in Igbo culture is the symbol of authority, and it plays major roles in *Ohacracy* (Eze et al, 2023). *Ofo does not only* symbolize authority, it does symbolize truthfulness as well. Hence, anyone who upholds *Ofo* should as a matter of necessity and duty promote justice at all times. Alike avers that:

> Symbolism derives its power from the fact that it speaks not only of reflective intelligence but to the entire human psyche. It arouses deep emotional experience, releases hidden energies in the soul, gives meaning and stability to the personality, establishes strong loyalties and disposes a man for consistent and committed actions. Symbols in Igbo land can be seen in *Igba-afa* (divination), morning kola ritual, *Ichiozo* (title taking), bride price ceremony, masquerade ceremonies, etc (Alike, 2016).

It is on the basis of this importance of *Ofo* symbol that Njoku holds that *Ofo* is an authoritative emblem symbolizing justice, righteousness, and truth (Njoku, 2009). Still, *Ohacracy* is a form of government of the people that is known for consensus for the good of everybody, which is embedded in unity, love and progress therefore "*Igwe-bu-ike*," meaning unity is strength(Onebunne & Alike, 2017).This can also be seen in the work "*Njiko ka mma*" meaning staying together is better than being alone which is the theory of communalism as well (Onebunne & Alike, 2017). Moreover, *Ohacracy* is also known for promoting integrity and as such people who participate in it are those with established integrity. *Ohacracy* involves representatives from every family, kindred or even village as far as the person is a man of honour, of good reputation, peace loving, fluent and intelligent. These unique traits make representatives in *Ohacracy* to be trustworthy to function optimally. It is evident from this, what obtains in *Ohacracy* is completely different from what is commonplace in the western form of democracy practiced in Nigeria whereby representatives do not have the moral will to serve. Most of them lack the probity and competence to function proficiently.

Besides, *Ohacracy* promotes servant leadership style. By extrapolation, it is a bottom to the top leadership approach that makes everyone to consider themselves as servants and not leaders who are representative of others in government in order to serve the general populace which they represent. In *Ohacracy,* the Igbo people are of the view that spirit beings such as *Chi- Ukwu* (Supreme God), *Alusi* (Deity), Earth goddess -*Ala* play exceptional roles as well. They

play their roles in order of hierarchy so as to assist human beings or men in the community to achieve their goals independently and cooperatively chiefly in bringing about peace when there are challenges and disagreements in the society(Onebunne & Alike, 2017). Moreover, *Ohacracy* advances equal rights, respect of views of other people and promotes active participation of the people. This implies that it permits for collective participation whereby everyone out of their own volition participates in the decision making process and work as a team so as to achieve a common goal for themselves and the larger community. As regards to transparency, sustainability and accountability, *Ohacracy* is sustainable on the grounds of norms, morals, and laws of the land. All the representatives as a matter of obligation and duty are supposed to obey the laws of the land and this establishes who can be part of the *Ohacracy* government. *Ohacracy* is an Igbo social political form of government and leadership model which is an integral part of the Igbo culture and as such it is sustained using the Igbo language. The Igbo language is the fundamental means of communication and expressing themselves, and as such they define their culture through their language. Onebunne and Alike support this view when they assert that language is culture specific and culture dependent that has social relevance. It facilitates inter-personal relationship in the community, it is spoken and that is why it is part of man, culture and the community in which he finds himself (Onebunne & Alike, 2017).

Moreover, *Ohacracy* is based on justice for everyone in the community or society. The term for justice in Igbo is *Nkedirionye* which is *giving one his or her due*. The Igbo concept of justice holds that in *Egbe bere Ugo bere, nke si ibeya ebena, nku kwaa ya.* This means let the Kite perch, and eagle perch, any that says let the other not perch, let its wing go into pieces (Onebunne & Alike, 2017). Based on the characteristics of unity, brotherhood, consensus and communal life of belongingness possessed by *Ohacracy* as a system of government it is rated high above inefficient and unproductive Nigeria's brand of democracy. Additionally, it is the most sincere and incorrupt form of participatory government (Onebunne & Alike, 2017). Additionally, since it promotes transparency and accountability. The selection processes of representatives in the government is based on character, competence and capacity of the individual and at any point the individual deviates from these ethics of good conducts that were considered before his selection, the person will without delay be withdrawn from the representative position and role. Consequently, members are committed, hardworking, honourable and hands-on in playing their roles well in order to steer clear of disgrace and eviction. This is in contrast to the Nigerian Democratic Party primary processes of electing members that will represent the party. The later is transactional and after the contestants buy their way into becoming candidates of their parties they disarm the members from holding them accountable (Adelekan & Ashibi, 2020). Hence, as an alternative to both Schumpeter's form of democracy and classical form of democracy is the Igbo participatory form of government referred to as *Ohacracy.* It is not only the best form of government Nigeria needs to make efforts to adopt at this critical time in Nigeria's history of failure of governance it can also be universalized and adopted by other countries since democratic governance all over the world is going through serious crisis.

There is need to fill in a major lacuna in *Ohacracy* which could impact negatively on its efficiency and practicability. This lacuna is that *Ohacracy* was mainly practiced in an epoch in traditional Igbo culture when population size was much less and the society was not as complex as it is now, therefore, it will be tough to practice it utterly as it was practiced then. Hence, there is the necessity for *Ohacracy* to adopt the current Igbo town union governance structures that are efficiently working in dealing with social and economic inequalities and infrastructural deficits in Igbo towns and communities. In other words, notwithstanding the

great qualities of *Ohacracy,* its biggest challenge in this modern society is population growth and size. The society is now bigger than what it was in the traditional Igbo society and has become more complex due to cross-cultural, political, religious, urbanization, migration, trade, and technological influences. It will be challenging to practice *Ohacracy* the way the Igbo people practiced it in traditional Igbo society. Accordingly, there is need for it to be based on the modern town union governance structure in Igbo land.

The Governance Configuration of Igbo Town Union Organization

The Igbo town union government is a major element in community and rural development. It serves as a self-help tool means to community development in the post-colonial era. The way to gain membership is by birth, marriage, parental origin or adoption (Obiakor et al., 2021). Furthermore, people who have resided in a specific town for 10 years or more and have acknowledged and accepted the norms and rules guiding the function of the union and the town are entitled to become members of the union. This permits for accommodation, inclusivity, impartiality, participation, variety, novelty, and equity. Interestingly, the union is an association of rational individuals who notwithstanding their class dissimilarity take themselves as equals. Besides, the town union governance system is based on the principles of the rule of law and not blinded by religious and ethnic emotions. The interest of the group is both communal and expansive in nature. Members of the union render aids to their fellow members and at the same time they pay attention to the serious questions regarding how to bridge the fissure between the government and the people by spotting areas of failures in governance, by solving social and economic problems of the community and town (Obiakor and Okoreaffia, 2021). They also assist in rallying the people of the town for meaningful development of the town as regards infrastructures. The governance structure of town unions in Igbo land permits for transparency, accountability, serious punitive measures to put members who go wrong in order (Obiakor and Okoreaffia, 2021). All these qualities which the Igbo town union possesses that make them efficient rural and community development organization in this present-day epoch can aid to fill in the gap of the laps of *Ohacracy* as an effective participatory governance system.

Conclusion

According to Schumpeter, the classical definition of democracy alleges that: The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will (Eze et al., 2023). From Schumpeter's critique of the classical doctrine of democracy, one can see that the above idea is somewhat fraught with assumptions. It assumes that there is such a thing as "common good," that the people are quality enough to decide on issues, especially of the election of representatives, and that the elected representatives saddled with the task of securing the purported common good take the task seriously. Recent political upheavals have led to the revisit of such critiques of democracy as that of Schumpeter, who alleges that democracy is indeed *rule of the politician* - and not of the people. Consequently, the paper after much critical analysis and evaluation of modern and classical theories of democracies in Schumpeter came to the conclusion that both the classical delineation of democracy and Schumpeterian construal of democracy are open to serious weaknesses. In order to fill in this gap in knowledge *ohacracy* which is the Igbo participatory form of government is proposed as the alternative form of government that can be adopted in most African countries like Nigeria where democratic practice is still a huge challenge. *Ohacrcy* can also be universalized and adopted by other countries since democratic governance all over the world is going through serious crisis.

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Article   **Open Access**

AN ACOUSTIC ANALYSIS OF SYLLABLE WEIGHT IN EDUCATED NIGERIAN SPOKEN ENGLISH

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Abstract

Previous studies have indicated that Nigerian-English bilinguals have difficulties in realizing prominence in English stressed and unstressed syllables. Hence, there is hardly a difference in the articulation of heavy and light syllables in the spoken English of many Nigerians. The possibility of inappropriate intelligibility among non-Nigerian listeners becomes unavoidable. This study, therefore, attempts some acoustic analyses of syllable weight in Educated Nigerian Spoken English (ENSE). The work was anchored on the Moraic theory by Hyman (1985). The study adopts the survey research design and obtained data from a sample of 80 subjects. Twenty words containing both light and heavy syllables and a passage were presented to the respondents as the instrument for data collection. These were read and recorded with an Infinix 40i phone. The data were further uploaded into an HP laptop and analyzed both perceptually and acoustically using Praat – a software for phonetic analysis. Simple percentages were used to analyze the participant's production and a native baseline who served as the Control was equally used for the SBE model. The researchers were interested in discovering some acoustic details like the fundamental frequency (f_0), intensity, frequency, formant structure and pausing among others. The researchers discovered that speakers of ENSE hardly realize syllable weight as it is in SBE. Light syllables were most of the times realized as heavy syllables and vice versa. It was also noted that some speakers flattened all the syllables in a word. The researchers, therefore, conclude that most ENSE users realize syllable weight in their spoken English differently from the SPE model.

Introduction

There is no satisfactory definition of the syllable by linguists or language experts. Matthews (1997, p.397) defines a syllable as "a phonological unit consisting of a vowel or other units that can be produced in isolation, either alone or accompanied by one or more less sonorous units". Eyisi (2003, p. 251) defines it as: "a segment which may constitute a single sound or a sequence of sounds of a given language produced with one chest pulse and possessing a peak of

prominence which is usually the vowel or a syllabic consonant". The segment referred to here is the syllable nucleus which the preceding group of consonants within the syllable forms the onset, and the following consonants form the coda. The foregoing definitions indicate that there is yet to be a satisfactory definition of a syllable. Notwithstanding, they all point to its structure and provide a good guide to using the term. The various definitions equally highlight its constituents such as vowels and consonants with the vowels or syllabic consonants forming the peak of prominence and also acting as a unit of rhythm (Eyisi, 2003; Crystal, 1987). A syllable can be produced in isolation or in combination with one or more sonorous units (Matthews, 1997). It is the concern of this study to find out the articulatory and acoustic features of the English syllables as realized by educated Nigerians. The focus is on English syllables with consonant clusters either at the initial or coda positions, especially those features that might be peculiar to spoken English among educated Nigerians when compared to standard British English. It will also consider whether the forms of consonant cluster reduction in Standard Nigerian English (SNE henceforth) could bridge the gap regarding international intelligibility. Soneye and Oladunjoye (2015, p. 256) observed that:

> Permissible complex nature of syllables structure differs significantly from one language to another. Speakers of English as a Second Language (ESL) generally, and in Nigeria in particular, resort to cluster reduction through several ways, as a means of simplification. One or more methods of simplification are often employed: some elide, some insert epenthetic vowels, others may substitute for other phonemes.

The consequence of these noticeable simplification processes is that, it creates different cluster patterns at the onset, for instance: play /plei/ and strike /straik/; and at the coda, e.g. act /ækt/, help /help/ and asked /æskt/. These positions are noticed across various varieties of English (Szigetvari, 2007).

Statement of the Research Problem

It has been claimed that the Nigerian English prosodies are significantly different from SBE pattern. The stress, tone, intonation and rhythm of the SNE have been extensively discussed in available literature (Sunday, 2008; Simo-Bobda, 1995; Akindele, 2021, Josiah and Ngor, 2022). But studies on syllable weight have not been far-reaching. This necessitates this investigation. The researcher asserts that learners of English with Nigerian tonal languages' background have seeming problems with the realization of heavy English language syllables with prominence on the one hand, while deemphasizing the weak syllables on the other hand. Hence, there is hardly a difference in the articulation of heavy and light syllables in the expressions of NSE. The possibility of loss of intelligibility by a non-Nigerian listener becomes inevitable in a number of cases. In view of this problem, the study thus becomes relevant.

Objectives of the Study

With the introductory background to the study presented in section 1,0, the specific objectives of the present research are to:

i.   show how the weight of syllables is realized in ENSE;
ii. indicate the fundamental characteristics of syllable weight (heavy and light syllables) in ENSE;
iii. reveal how light syllables influence the rhythm of ENSE;
iv. demonstrate the relationship between the syllable-timed nature of ENSE and the weight of syllable in ENSE.

Conceptual Clarification

Educated Nigerian Spoken English (ENSE): The Nigerian English sub-variety is usually categorized into varieties I, II, III and IV corresponding to basilect, mesolect, acrolect and the sophisticated varieties respectively (cf, Banjo, 1971; Udofot, 2004; Brann, 2006). Among these strands, Educated Nigerian English (ENE) is classified as the acrolectal strand, the model adopted in this study. ENSE is recognized as a variety of the English language spoken by educated Nigerians. This simply narrows this variety treated here to the educational parameter. This parameter attracts far more attention than all others, perhaps because it is expected to be the model for others, and thus realized with the perception of a standard model of the spoken English in Nigeria (cf Banjo, 1971; Jowitt, 1991, 2019; Josiah and Babatunde, 2011).

Literature Review on Syllable Weight

Hickey (2004) investigates the origin and structure of *Englishes* in Asia and Africa. The author is of the opinion that the varieties of English spoken in these continents show specific linguistic features that vary systematically from structural properties of other varieties of English. He observes that the structural variation of the *New Englishes,* especially when compared to the standard forms of British English, is often ascribed to the influence of the indigenous languages spoken in the country. The study further states that "the background languages of countries where English is spoken have had a decisive influence on its manifestation there" (Hickey 2004, p. 529). This process can best be likened to transfers in second language acquisition. The work cites Schneider (2003), in the proposal that the phonology of a new variety of English will show features which, in many cases, linguists can identify as transfer phenomena from the phonology of indigenous languages. Hickey (2004, p. 519) further asserts that some "salient phonotactic features of Asian and African *Englishes* is the reduction of final consonant clusters. As with many of the phonological features, this is determined largely by the phonotactics of the background languages". The work examines the extent to which some structural properties of the emerging new English varieties can be influenced by LI transfers. The examination is done with instances of syllable-final consonant cluster reduction, a phonological process that has been well described for several varieties of English and whose peculiarities in New English varieties are often ascribed to LI influence (Hickey 2004). The phonological process of syllable-final consonant cluster reduction occurs with the domain of the coda in a syllable and would undoubtedly influence the weight of the syllable. The present study has benefited from Hickey (2004). For instance, knowledge of the phonological process highlighted in the work contributes immensely to the present study, which seeks to investigate the realization of syllable weight in ENSE.

The perception of syllable weight became prominent with in Allen (1973) and McCarthy (1979). Grammars frequently categorize syllables for prosodic purposes, treating one class as heavier (i.e. more stress-attracting) than another. While such categorization is usually dichotomous, complex and gradient scales are also attested with various organizational criteria (Ryan, 2016). In an attempt to comprehend the broad view about phonological forms of words and phrases, it is pertinent to categorize syllables into classes so that one class patterns as prosodically "heavier" than another. Ryan (2016) cites an instance that, in many languages, the location of stress in words is determined by weight, such that stress skips over one or more light syllables in order to land on a heavy one. This renders syllable weight as a salient determinant of stress in stress-timed languages. Heavy syllables are perceived as typically longer or more prominent than the light ones. Whether this assertion is equally applicable to Nigerian spoken English constitutes a major concern to this study. McCarthy (1979) equally identifies syllable structure as the one that stress rules mostly refer to, and syllabic weight

being the principal aspect referred to. The author states that, it is this distinction between heavy and light syllables that affects the placement of stress. First, in many languages, the notion "heavy syllable" invokes a disjunction of syllables containing long vowel or diphthong and syllables with short vowels but closed by a consonant. Second, though heavy syllables often attract the stress, they sometimes reject it or attract its subject to some limitations of say, distance from a boundary. Third, the weight of some heavy syllables may itself vary from a particular language, perhaps again under boundary conditions.This amplifies the importance of weight in syllables. The weight determines whether such a syllable attracts stress or not, though the proposition is not applicable to all languages. In some languages, it may vary due to the boundary conditions it finds itself.

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistically diverse nation. It boasts of over five hundred and twenty two (522) living languages (Taiwo, 2009; Akindele, 2017), including the English language. Akindele (2019, p. 294) observes that "the contact of these languages with English over the years has brought a variety known as Nigerian English (NE). This variety (NE) has been observed to have a significant deviation from Standard English (SE) in its spoken form as well as other areas. This was confirmed in previous studies on Nigerian English phonology (c.f. Atoye, 1989; Eka, 1993; Akinjobi, 2006; Sunday, 2008). In relation to the present study, Akinjobi (2004a, 2004b); Sunday (2004, 2010) and Akindele (2011) investigate the realization of syllables and syllabic consonants, vowel weakening and unstressed syllable obscuration, compound and phrasal stress and variable word stress in Educated Yoruba English (EYE). The rhythm of SNE was studied by Eka, 1993; Udofot, 2007; Akindele, 2015). The significant difference between these previous studies and the present one is that, the previous studies were more or less variationist or sociolinguistic studies while this study focuses on analyzing the syllable weight as realized in Educated Nigeria Spoken English (ENSE). ENSE has evolved as a sub-variety among other sub-varieties of Nigerian English (NE). NE prosody is said to be characterized by marked differences in the spoken form, especially in the English rhythm (Akindele, 2019, p. 31). Being that the rhythm operates within the domain of a syllable and any deviation affecting it can affect the weight of syllables, it becomes an acute problem that deserves a detailed study. Besides, more phonological investigations from other sub-varieties of NE need to be explored in order to make a concrete claim for NE phonology. It will also make room for the identification of areas of convergence and divergence between NE and SBE. This study, therefore, becomes relevant because it will help to contribute to the current debate on the need for the standardization and codification of NE among the comity of world Englishes. Using an instrumental analysis, the study examines whether syllable weight in ENSE conforms to SBE and the implication for NE description within the Expanded Circle Englishes (ECE) perspective. Udoh (2003) treats the syllable in its introduction to phonemic analysis. The work states that:

> The syllable is an important building block for higher domains in phonemic
> hierarchy. It provides some kind of link between suprasegmental phenomena,
> like tone, stress, nasalization, length, among others which can best be
> analyzed and described in terms of the syllable.

This position amplifies the importance or relevance of the syllable in phonology. Udoh's (2003) investigation sees the syllable as "a unit of pronunciation made up of a cluster of segments defined by a sonority peak". According to her, the syllable acts as a structural magnet to other lower sonority elements surrounding the peak. This implies that it is a combination of consonants and vowels that form the syllable. Within the syllable, it is the vowels that form the sonority peak, though she also notes that, in some languages, consonants can serve as a peak, for example, the syllabic nasals in most African languages. The author cites Leggbo, (a language

in Cross River) as an example, where alveolar nasals are realized as peaks. The following words are cited as examples:

/nzuŋ/	'nose'
/'ntɔtɔŋ/	'ashes'
/mkpa/	'spear'
/ŋɲɔŋ/	'jigger'

(Udoh, 2003, p. 26)

The most important aspect of Udoh's (2003) study that relates to the present study is that it heralds a new interest area in the classification of syllables which this study investigates. The author further states:

> Today, a more popular classification is in terms of weight, where a 'light' syllable contains a non-branching rhyme and 'heavy' syllable has a branching 'rhyme' of either a long vowel or diphthong which may optionally be followed by a consonant.

This study is in tandem with the foregoing observation made by the researcher. It therefore, stands as a suggestion for further research from the author which is now taken up for examination in ENSE.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Moraic theory (Hyman, 1985). The theory is one of the non-linear, multi-tiered approaches in phonological analysis which was first proposed by Hyman (1985) and advanced by Hayes (1989) in the study of compensatory lengthening in Yana and other languages (Utulu, 2014). The theory of mora emanated from debates about exactly how the internal representation of the syllable should be portrayed in language. This approach argues that the syllable contains neither an onset nor a rhyme. Rather, every syllable contains one or more moras (Hyman, 1985). Some other phonologists investigating this subject area such as: McCarthy and Prince (1986) and Oostendorp (2005) propose that a syllable's quantity or duration is a function of its number of weight-bearing units ('moras'), which are represented with the Greek letter 'μ'. Because of the strong interrelationship between the subject of phonological weight and phonological quantity and the mora, the mora is seen to be a unit that must be encoded in phonological weight theory. A **mora** (plural *morae* or *moras*; often symbolized **μ**) is the smallest unit of timing, equal to or shorter than a syllable, that theoretically or perceptually exists in some spoken languages in which phonetic length (such as vowel length) matters significantly. For example, in the Japanese language, the name of the city *Ōsaka* consists of three syllables (*O-sa-ka*) but four morae (*O-o-sa-ka*), since the first syllable, *Ō*, is pronounced with a long vowel (the others being short) (Hayes, 1989). Thus, a short vowel contains one mora and is called *monomoraic*, while a long vowel contains two and is called *bimoraic*. Extra-long syllables with three morae (*trimoraic*) are relatively rare. Such metrics based on syllables are also referred to as syllable weight. The general principles for assigning moras to segments are outlined in Hayes (1989), and Hyman (1985), as presented below:

i.   A syllable onset (the first consonant or consonants of the syllable) does not represent any mora.

ii.   The syllable nucleus represents one mora in the case of a short vowel, and two morae in the case of a long vowel or diphthong. Consonants serving as syllable nuclei also represent one mora if short and two if long. Slovak is an example of a language that has both long and short consonantal nuclei.

iii. In some languages (for example, Latin and Japanese), the coda represents one mora, and in others (for example, Irish), it does not.

iv. In some languages, a syllable with a long vowel or diphthong in the nucleus and one or more consonants in the coda is said to be trimoraic.

In general, monomoraic syllables are called "light syllables"; bimoraic syllables are called "heavy syllables", and trimoraic syllables (in languages that have them) are called "superheavy syllables". Oostendop (2005) is equally of the perception that, the syllable does not consist of an onset and a rhyme, but of two morae (from the Latin word meaning 'a short period of time' or 'delay'). The main generalization includes the following:

(1)   i. heavy syllables consist of two morae; and
        ii. light syllables consist of one mora.

Suppose we are dealing with a language in which closed syllables and syllables with a long vowel are heavy, whereas other syllables are light, then, we can represent syllable structure in this language in the following way:

(2)   a. light   b. heavy   c. heavy
         σ   σ   σ

           μ   μ   μ   μ   μ
C   V   C   V   C   C   V

In a language in which only long vowels count as heavy, we get the following structures

  (3)   a. light   b. light   c. heavy
           σ   σ   σ

             μ   μ   μ   μ   μ
    C   V   C   V   C   C   V
    (Figures adapted from Oostedorp, 2005)

The author observes that the mora takes the position of skeletal points. The C's and V's in this figure represent root nodes signaling consonants and vowels. This implies that the phonological timing in this model varies a little from that in x-slot theory where onset consonants do not count for timing, for instance. The concept of "syllable weight" has long been discussed in some scholarly literature. For instance, Allen (1973) had observed that certain syllable types are light and some heavy, and some even comparatively heavier. These variations determine the application of certain phonological processes, notable amongst them is stress assignment. In line with this observation, Hyman (1985) and Hayes (1989) ascribe short vowels to one mora, which are then read off on the weight scale as "light syllable". In the same vein, they ascribe long vowels, diphthongs and vowel-plus-coda sequence to two moras and labelled them as "heavy syllables". By implication, the criteria for the computation of phonological weight are predicated on:

i. the quality/quantity of vowel, i.e. long vowels versus short vowels; diphthongs versus monophthongs,

ii. a closed syllable, i.e. a (C)V(C) syllable structure tagged 'Weight-by-Position' by Hayes (1989), and

iii. the number of moras represented in the moraic template.

Research Design

The design adopted for this study is the survey method. The rationale for this is because this design enables the researcher to gather information about variables from a representative sample of the entire population. This design is essentially cross sectional and describes and interprets what exists at present (Emaikwu, 2011) in the phonology of the syllables. It is more objective, being based on statistical facts and observations of many phenomena, measuring what exists without questioning why it exists (Olaitan and Nwoken, 1988). The survey research design, is therefore, considered the most appropriate in investigating syllable weight in ENSE.

Method of Data Collection

A production study was undertaken with eighty (80) speakers comprising 30 males and 50 females, aged 18-40. The respondents comprised: 10 lecturers and 40 students from the Federal College of Education, Obudu; 15 students from the Mass Communication Department, Cross River State University of Technology, Calabar and 15 students from the English and Literary Studies department, University of Calabar, Calabar. Each word had a designated unstressed syllable for representing each of the three positions – onset, nucleus and coda (ONC). Vowel heights and coda consonant patterns were varied but not controlled by the respondent. For instance, nouns such as ex<u>am</u>ple, <u>o</u>mission, la<u>ven</u>der, vam<u>pire</u>, perspec<u>tive</u> and hurri<u>cane</u>, were used in order to get all possible syllable shapes in all positions occurring without primary stress as final CVC and CV syllables will get primary stress in verbs and adjectives. This is because it is assumed, according to Gordon (2004), that there is nothing different in the phonetics of the rhyme durations of different lexical classes in English and that the difference in their class systems lies in the phonology of the language. Besides, for each subject, one word from each category is randomized into carrier phrases, and the sentences were then duplicated while the two sets are equally randomized. The duration of the syllables in the text read is measured using Praat – a software for speech analysis experimented by Boersma and Weenink (1992-2010). An android mobile phone is also used to record the reading of each participant and then uploaded into a computer for the analysis using the aforementioned software.

Method of Data Analysis

The production of each of the participants is first uploaded into a computer laptop and, with the help of Sound Converter Application (SCA), all the recorded sounds are converted to WAV format which makes it compatible for acoustic analyses in Praat where acoustic parameters such as duration, intensity and pitch are analyzed. Acoustic measures of each of the ENSE articulation on the segmented syllables in the produced items are entered on a table and the overall results derived in decibels (dB) and milliseconds. Simple percentage method is used to analyze the participant's performance and a native baseline who served as the control was equally tracked, using the software. The production is also transcribed perceptually and analyzed metrically as light or heavy mora. The quantitative and qualitative methods are also employed for the data analyses. This is done in order to provide adequate comprehension of the research problem and exactly how to solve it. The rationale is to use the quantitative method to arrive at a satisfactory result for the tested phonological items. The quantitative method employed include the use of mean, standard deviation and independent sample t-test as statistical tools, while metric grid, comprising a framework with columns for relative peak and rows for the rhythmical structures, is used for the qualitative analysis. The emphasis of the metrical grid framework is on the Peak and Valley alternation of the syllables by the participants. For the qualitative analysis, only samples of regular patterns as determined by the statistical results are analyzed.

Data Presentation, Analyses and Results

This section presents the data, analyzes same and collates results obtained from the study. Table 1 presents the perceptual analysis of syllable weight in triphthongs. It also shows the simple percentages made by the respondents on each test item. Table 2 presents the perceptual analysis of syllable weight in compound words and the simple percentages derived from each test item.

Table 1: Perceptual Analysis and Presentation of Syllable Weight in Triphthongs

Test Items	Words	Transcription	GWU	EGR	WR in 1st syllables	WR in 2nd syllables	Percentage %
TI 1.	higher	/haɪə/	/aɪə/	/ha.jə/	63(79%)	17(21%)	100
TI 2.	fewer	/fju:.ə/	/u:ə/	/fju:..wa/	15(19%)	65(81%)	100
TI 3.	layer	/leɪə/	/eɪə/	/le.ja/	20(25%)	60(75%)	100
TI 4.	joyous	/ʤɔɪəs/	/ɔɪə/	/ʤɔ.jəs/	58(76%)	22(24%)	100
TI 5.	player	/ˈpleɪə/	/eɪə/	ˈple.jə/	55(69%)	25(31%)	100

Table 2: Perceptual Analysis and Presentation of Syllable Weight in Compound Words

Test Item	Words	Transcription	G WU	EGR	WR in 1st syllables	WR in 2nd syllables	Percentage
TI 1.	firewood	/ˈfaɪ.əwʊd/	faɪə	/ˈfa.jawud/	35(44%)	45(56%)	100
TI 2.	wardrobe	/ˈwɔ:drəʊb/	wɔ:d	/ˈwɔdrəʊb/	23(29%)	57(51%)	100
TI 3.	textbook	/ˈtekst.bʊk/	tekst	/ˈtes.bʊk	33(41%)	47(59%)	100
TI 4.	chalkboard	/ˈtʃɔ:k.bɔ:d/	tʃɔ:k	/ˈtʃɔk.bɔ:d/	20(25%)	60(75%)	100
TI 5.	workshop	/ˈwɜ:k.ʃɒp/	wɜ:k	/ˈwɔk.ʃɒp/	12(15%)	68(85%)	100

Key:

GWU --------- Gloss Weight Unit

WR ------------ Weight Realized

TI --------------- Test Item

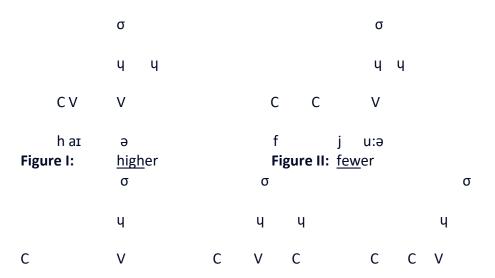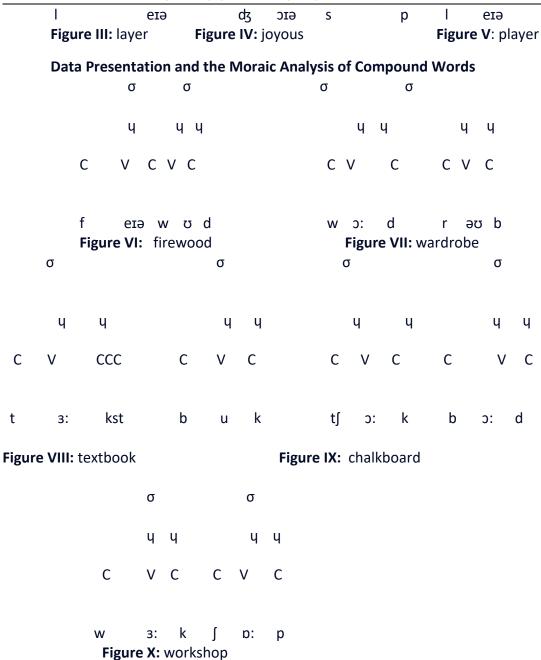EGR ------------Experimental Group Realizations

Moraic Analyses of the Data and Discussion of Results

Figure I – V presents the moraic analyses of the test items that are triphthongs while Figure VI - X presents the moraic analyses of compound words as listed in the tables.

Data Presentation and Moraic Analysis of Syllable Weight in Triphthongs

Figure I: higher   **Figure II:** fewer

l   eɪə   dʒ   ɔɪə   s   p   l   eɪə

Figure III: layer   **Figure IV:** joyous   **Figure V**: player

Data Presentation and the Moraic Analysis of Compound Words

σ   σ   σ   σ

ɥ   ɥ ɥ   ɥ ɥ   ɥ ɥ

C   V C V C   C V   C   C V C

f   eɪə w ʊ d   w ɔ: d   r əʊ b

Figure VI: firewood   **Figure VII:** wardrobe

σ   σ   σ   σ

ɥ   ɥ   ɥ ɥ   ɥ   ɥ   ɥ ɥ

C   V   CCC   C V C   C V C   C   V C

t   3:   kst   b u k   tʃ ɔ: k   b ɔ: d

Figure VIII: textbook   **Figure IX:** chalkboard

σ   σ

ɥ ɥ   ɥ ɥ

C V C C V   C

w   3: k ʃ ɒ: p

Figure X: workshop

Acoustic Analyses of Syllable Weight in ENSE

The figures below present the acoustic analysis of syllable weight in diphthongs. The data shows that the TI 1 "higher" has two moras – and ə, TI 2 "fewer" equally has two moras – u – ə; and y- ɕ, TI 3, "layer" has one mora – eiə, TI 4 "Joyous". Equally has one mora - ɔɪə as well as 'player' - eɪə

Discussion of Results

In table 1, the percentage analysis shows that in Test item 1 (henceforth TI), the first syllable in the word "higher" was pronounced as heavy syllable by 63 respondents 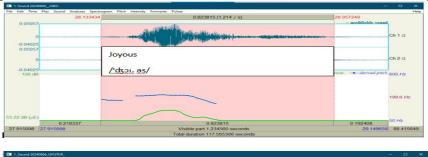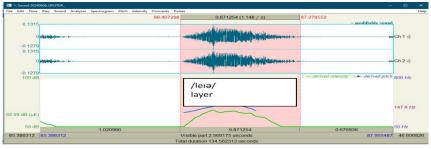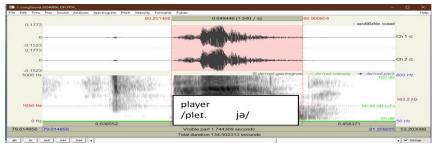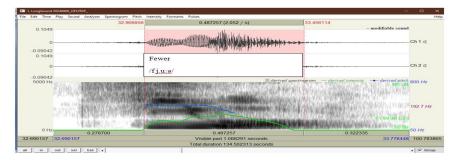representing 79% while 17 respondents indicating 21% realized it on the second syllable. TI 2 (that is "fewer") indicates that 15 respondents making 19% realized the weight on the first syllable while 65 making 81% realized it on the second syllable. TI 3, "layer", was pronounced with weight on the first syllable by 20 respondents which is 25% while 60 respondents, which implies 75%, realized it on the second syllable. TI 4, "joyous" had 58 respondents making 76% realizing the weight on the first syllable while 22 respondent representing 24% realized it on the second syllable. TI 5 on the table, "player", had 55 respondents representing 69% realizing the syllable weight on the first syllable while the other 25 respondents, representing 31% realized it on the second syllable. Table 2, presents the perceptual analysis of syllable weight in respect of compound words and their percentages. In TI 1, "firewood", the data analysis indicates that, 35 respondents which is 44% had their weight on the first syllable while 45 of them making 56% realized the weight on the second syllable. TI 2, "wardrobe" had its weight on the first syllable from 23 respondents making 29%, while 57 respondents making 51% had it on the second syllable. On TI 3, "textbook", 33 respondents, which is 41% pronounced it with the weight on

the first syllable while 47 of them which is 59% pronounced it on the second syllable. T1 4 which is 'chalkboard' was pronounced with weight on the first syllable by 20 respondents which is 25% while the other 60 respondents, representing 75%, had the weight on the second syllable. TI 5, "workshop" 12 respondents representing 15% realized the syllable weight on the first syllable while the other 68 respondents, representing 85% realized it on the second syllable.

Findings of the Study

The researcher discovered that speakers of ENSE hardly realize syllable weight as it is in SBE. light syllables are most of the times realized as heavy and vice versa. Unstressed syllables that are supposedly light are most times realized as heavy. It was also discovered that some speakers flatten all the syllables in a word. From the perceptual analysis and reading of the intensity in the acoustic analyses, it was revealed that the respondents use monotonic pitch. That is, the voice remained at a consistent pitch level without any significant rising or falling, thereby making it sound flat or even. Their pitch was not dynamic to mark out the heavy syllables. The implication of this is that, the phonic patterns of the respondents' indigenous or first language interfere with the realization of words in ENSE. It is noteworthy that, most Nigerian languages are syllable-timed while SBE is stress-timed. Wrong syllable partition is another observation recorded. Most speakers of ENSE find it difficult to determine syllable boundaries. This is mostly observed in multi-syllabic and compound words. Many of the ENSE respondents could not realize triphthongs as a nucleaus element. Rather, they realize triphthongs like bisyllables or monophthongs or even as vowel sequences. For instance, a lot of them pronounced higher' as /haja/. The schwa which in SBE is weak and unstressed was realized as strong and heavy. A majority of the triphthongs are not realized as triphthongs. Rather, they are realized as vowel sequencing. For example, a word like *fire* /faɪə/ is realized as /fa.jə/ by most of the respondents.

Conclusion

The paper examines syllable weight in ENSE. From the analyses of the study, it is revealed that, 69% of the respondents realized the syllable weight on the second syllable instead of the first, while 31% realized it correctly on the first syllable. The study therefore concludes that, most ENSE users hardly realize syllable weight appropriately in their spoken English.

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Article   **Open Access**

THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF THE ABUSE OF PROPHECY IN THE 21ST CENTURY PENTECOSTALISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

There has been so much shift in the prophetic tradition of the church in the 21st century Pentecostalism in Nigeria. These include a number of ritual practices and symbolisms that are totally deviant from the biblical Pentecostal standard. This appears disheartening, confusing and threatening to the Pentecostal Christian community. This research adopts a historical and survey methods to access these issues, and gathered data through various ways including interview, participant observation, books and online publications. The paper discovered that some of the neo Pentecostal prophets in Nigerian prophetic ministry are using prophecy as an ambience of extortion and commercialization, using simony to gain their desires. They use some obnoxious matrixes to capture the psyche of the unsuspected clients for their aggrandizement. This result in tears and sorrows rather than comfort, edification and exhortation for which prophecy was meant. This paper recommends proper hermeneutical engagement to salvage the church from this ignorance that is detrimental to the belief of the church on the death and the subsequent resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Prophecy, Church, Abuse, Implications

Introduction

Prophecy is a much needed culture and gift in the church owing to its hydra headed functions of healing the sick, mending the broken hearted, giving hope to the hopeless, giving revelation to the blind, direction to the confused, and warnings to others against impending dangers amongst other things. It is equally an appreciable virtue in the society especially in African society. This is particularly true because, before the advent of the institutionalized religions (Christianity and Islam) on the shore of Africa, Africans had already experienced an undaunted, unflinching and unalloyed relationship with the supernatural of whom they sought enquiries of the future concerning farming, naming, famine, infertility (Mbiti 1996; Quarcoopome 1987; Folarin 2015). This is why it was very possible for the adaptation of the missionary religions by

the Africans, because the contents of the new religions included the erstwhile practices of the primitive society (divination). Therefore, the idea of prophecy became a culture to the people up to the extent that no African will be comfortable doing anything blindly without seeking the face of the gods (Gehman 2013, Mbiti 1996). With this understanding however, some of the prophets who claim to be solution providers stop at nothing promising the unsuspected clients the needed solutions even when they themselves have little or no knowledge of the case at hand than personal imagination, a situation which is refers to as sick religiosity (Essien, 2017; 2023). Although, the truth remains that there are some prophecies that are truly genuine, yet the practice of fake prophecy has religiously found its way into the church system (Kunhiyop 2012), especially the neo Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, with a view to defrauding the innocent and help-seeking members of the church instead of giving "comfort, edification and exaltation to the church" (George2017; Edet 2021).

This development has brought an untold consequences to the society, ranging from collapse of marriages, destruction of families, and separation of friendships to untimely death. Some under the guise of prophecy have taken an undue sexual advantage of people's spouses to the perils of their marital homes. Most parents-inlaw are considered to be witches and wizards by prophecy, to the detriment of their families. In many instances, marriages are constituted by prophecy, without giving the intended couples a chance to access their social, academic, religious, and medical compatibility before entering into marriage. The effect of this is usually broken marriages, leaving the innocent children at bare to face the menace of parental negligence, poor parenting and clinical vulnerability of giving birth to medically malfunctioned children like sicklers (SS). Now, in most cases, orthodox medication is sacrilegious, diseases like HIV/AIDS, Lasa fever, diarrhea, malaria, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, and the list, that could be well handled medically have been subjected to the whims and caprices of prophecy, thereby causing so many cases of untimely death, leading to greater number of orphans, widows and widowers prevalent in the Church, which inversely brings about an alarming rate of poverty in the society. Values like hard work and creativity have been relegated to the background: most people now wait for prophecy before they begin to engage themselves in any given venture in order to succeed in life. Some even go round seeking prophecy, synonymous to the divination of African Traditional Religion. This also brings about poverty in the church that results in the increase in social vices. It is safe to say also that the abuse of prophecy has orchestrated the incessant proliferation of ill-fated churches littered around the streets, in so much that any daydream of any member of the church, results in the establishment of a new church or healing centre, with a names that go something like this, "Solution Centre", "Mount of Healing", "Mount of Deliverance", and so on. What is done in some of these centres are not farfetched than faking of prophecy to enrich oneself. With this development, discipline in the church suffers a blatant fate because attempt to inflict sanction on any defaulter, results in the secession of the victim with his or her mortal cohorts to the peril of the mother church. These are the problems that this work seeks to address.

Concept of Prophecy

Prophecy is traditionally understood as the act of receiving and communicating messages believed to be divinely inspired. Prophecy is a divinely inspired utterance, revelation or interpretation of a prophet; a prediction of something to come; a "miracle of knowledge" that describes something future beyond human sagacity to foresee; the function or vocation of a prophet, specifically the inspired declaration of divine will and purpose (Ahlstrom, (2024). These messages often pertain to future events, moral directives, or divine will. According to J. Blenkinsopp (1996), prophecy in the Hebrew involves individuals who are called to speak on

behalf of God, delivering messages that range from warnings and judgments to promises of salvation and hope. These prophecies could be seen both in verbal or written forms.

Umaru V. (2023) notes that the term "prophecy" has been functioned and used in various texts in Ancient Near East. The functions of these prophecies or apparent prophecies are on eschatology or apocalyptic, social or religious critique, and communications from gods that have been commissioned.

Theologically, prophecy is considered a *charism* or spiritual gift granted by the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, prophecy is described as a gift for edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3, New International Version, George 2017, Edet 2021). Grudem (2000) opines that prophecy is "speaking what God spontaneously brings to mind," emphasizing the role of the prophet as a conduit for divine communication. Biblically, prophecy represents the inspired word (message) of God, coming from God through a channel chosen by God (a prophet) for His people. It is a mediated message from God communicated to His people through human agents. Citing Udoette, Nmah and Nwadialor (2011) opine that prophecy in Pauline context is a charism (extraordinary power granted by the Holy Spirit). Suffice it to say that for Pauline theology, charism constitutes God's call, addressed to each and every Christian in view of the church, coupled with the ability to perform such services. Charisms are the principles of individualisation or differentiation of every Christian and so determine who plays what role in the Christian community, the body of Christ (*soma tou christou*). On this note, for Paul, "a Christian community without the charisms operative in its members would be unthinkable; it would no longer be like a living body, and hence no longer a body of Christ" (Nmah and Nwadialor, 2011). It is within the context of Pauline's theological reflection on charisms (1Corinthians 14: 12-14) that a discussion on prophecy and its functions is made available. Unlike tongues which are utterances of mysteries in the spirit (*mysteria en pneumatic*) meant for the unbelievers, Paul contends that *ho de propheteuon anthropos lalei* (he who prophesies to men) especially believers. Those who prophesy, speak to human beings for their moral up building, encouragement and consolation. Hence, prophecy has a rich variety.

Sociologically, prophecy can be viewed as a form of social critique and a means of addressing societal issues. Weber (1968) categorized prophecy as a type of charismatic authority where the prophet's legitimacy and influence are derived from their perceived connection to the divine. This perspective highlights the social functions of prophecy to include its role in challenging the existing power structures and advocating for social justice (Bassey, 2023). Although this aspect of prophecy is no longer functional in Nigerian, because of the unprecedented influx of quackery and fraudsters in the church system, yet it was a useful tool in the history of nations like Nineveh (Jonah1:1); Israel(Jeremiah 7:20; Amos 1:1; Habakkuk 2:8), it was a guide to the prosperity of nations (Haggai 1:5-15), Agabus through the inspiration of the spirit predicted a severe famine on the Roman world (Acts 11:28). Quoting Chapell, Bassey (2023) remarks that the New Testament prophets inclusively challenged the unjust society, with a view of flushing out unrighteousness while enthroning justice and equity. The New Testament discusses socio-political roles of the prophets in combating gender discrimination, oppression, social and economic injustice, liberation pronouncement to the poor and the hopeless, condemnation of racism and ethical bias, religious hypocrisy and avarice et cetera. There is the role of prophecy as an agent of social change for which even the Old and the New Testaments prophetic enterprises were known.

Old Testament View of Prophecy

According to Muindi (2012), the phenomenon of prophecy in the context of the ancient Israelite faith and its ancient Near Eastern religious background was generally understood as

the human transmission of divine messages, thereby revealing the divine will to humans. Although the phenomenon of prophecy is portrayed in the Old Testament in a variety of ways: preaching, when God uses the word in an unusual relevant manner and word of knowledge, when God gives an accurate word for a specific person or situation (Kendall 1996), yet, the aspect of intermediary transmission, or proclamation of divine messages to human audience, is generally viewed as the key characteristic of the Old Testament prophecy (Folarin 2021;Bassey 2023; Edet 2021;George 2017; Horton 2006 :219), thereby serving as a guide to the people in their socio-religious community. Thus, the flow of the prophetic intermediary direction is divine-to-human, and, for the betterment of man and his socio-religious environment. An alternative view of prophecy in ancient Israel and in the ancient Near Eastern milieu highlights the rational cognitive role of the prophet. As Palmer (2014:107) avers, the priest was the regular spiritual leader of Israel. But in spiritual emergencies, God raised up prophets. The prophets were the Lord's fire brigade, raised up in special times to put out spiritual fires. While the office of the priest was hereditary, the office of the prophet was based on God's call.

New Testament View of Prophecy

Prophecy in the New Testament is built upon its Old Testament foundations but introduces new dimensions and contexts, particularly with the advent of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the church. Thomas (1992) asserts that **t**he phenomenon of prophecy observed in the New Testament Church is understood variously. Whereas some theological scholars espouse a dispensational approach which posits that prophecy was intrinsically related to the dispensation of the formation of the biblical canon, and therefore ceased with the formation of the canon**,** there is a general consensus in scholarship that there were continuing forms of prophetic manifestations in the New Testament incipient Church, some of which were essentially a continuation of the Old Testament prophetic forms. Notably, the manifestations of prophecy in the New Testament Church are best understood in the light of their background in Israel and in the mission of Jesus. The New Testament apostolic writings portray Jesus Christ as the ultimate revelatory presence of God (1 Timothy 2: 5; Hebrews 8: 6; 9:15; 12:24). The Apocalypse of John also depicts Jesus Christ as the ultimate revelation of God and that his revelatory presence constitutes the *charism* of the New Testament prophecy (Revelation 19:10). Hence, "the spirit of prophecy in Revelation 19:10 refers not to the person of the Holy Spirit, or a heavenly agent but to the charisma of the prophets" (Beckwith, 2001**).**

Muindi (2012) observes that a survey of the usage of the word "prophecy" in the books of the New Testament reveals that, of the One hundred and forty four (144) occurrences, One hundred and Twenty three (123) of them refer to Old Testament prophets, while the remaining occurrences refer to Jesus Christ, to John the Baptist, the incipient Church prophetic figures, such as Agabus (Acts 11: 28; 21:10), the prophets at Antioch (Acts 13:1-2), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32), and daughters of the Evangelist Philip (Acts 21: 9). In addition, there are other references to prophetic manifestations among early church believers. For example, some disciples in Ephesus are reported to have prophesied when Paul placed his hands on them; "they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19: 6). Nonetheless, all forms of New Testament church prophecy appear to be subsumed under the authority of Jesus Christ as the ultimate prophetic revelatory presence of God. The Early Church prophecy as gleaned from the New Testament texts appears to have been, characteristically, invasive prophetic manifestations in congregational settings, though a few people appear to have functioned as prophets in the ministry of the early church (Forbes, 1995). However, the phenomenon of prophecy witnessed in the New Testament incipient church should, ideally, be visualized in terms of two modes: a temporal and authoritative apostolic canonical mode of prophecy in line with the Old Testament canonical prophecy, and a less authoritative but enduring form of congregational

prophecy manifestations (Feldman 1990). The Apocalypse of John is portrayed as canonical prophecy in line with Old Testament canonical prophecy (Revelation 1:3; 22:18) as well as the other New Testament writings which are equated with "the other (Old Testament) scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15-16). However, congregational prophetic manifestations, such as were witnessed in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 12-14), were viewed as a less authoritative form of prophecy which needed to be evaluated to determine whether the prophetic utterances were acceptable to the church or not (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:19- 21). That is a pointer to the discernment of prophecy in the 21st century church.

Prophecy in the 21st Century Pentecostalism of Nigeria
Essentially speaking, a number of activities have sprouted up and evolved in the church that were not invoke from the beginning of Pentecostalism. Arguably one may be tempted to adduce that the advancement in technology, education and civilization are some of the causes of the paradigm shift in the prophetic ministration of the church today, but one will also suffer a baleful impeachment for trying to justify spirituality with mundane things. As long as the Bible remains the standard for Christianity, every form of spiritual activity should draw its inference from it (bible). Meanwhile, the activities that are alien to the prophetic ministration of the church include:

i.   **Ceremonial Mode of Prophecy:** In Nigerian neo Pentecostalism today, prophecy has assumed a new status of operation such as a ceremonial mode of prophesying, especially in bringing out the susceptible client for people to acknowledge to prophetic prowess of the prophet. A situation that is completely foreign to the bible. Prophets assume invocative declaration of Jesus' name as "magical" ascription. They instruct their followers to use the name of Jesus to drive out "illegal" satanic occupants and attackers in their lives. These include among other things demons; gods; spiritual husbands and wives; witches; sickness; satanic strongholds; poverty; enemies; bad luck; death and marital problems. Thus, feet stomping, clapping and pointing hands in the direction of perceived enemies are always accompanied with an unrelenting invocation of Jesus' name, and the declaration the word "Amen" for a repeated number of times, just to create an atmospheric sensation of the acceptance of the radical and provocative prayers. However, the scripture strongly believes in the efficacy of the name of Jesus. But the strongest belief is that the name of Jesus is a strong tower, only for the righteous (Proverbs 18:10). It was not supposed to be used as a tool for exploitation, manipulation and commercialization.

ii. **Dance Around Mode/Syndrome:** Many a time the prophets move among the congregation to reveal clients' problems, and claim to have offered solutions to them. The prophets are always aided by assistants or prophets on training, who carry bottles of anointing oil, towel, and sometime bowls from which the prophets scoop and splash the water or anointing oil on the congregants. This practice according to Udoakang (*interview*) is for the eviction of demonic presence. The eviction of demonic presence is often accomplished by the raising up of arms, coupled with confessional declarations such as "You spirit of poverty, sickness, disease, bad marriage, shame, embarrassment, disappointment, et cetera, today as I raise my hands to heaven, I command you to leave me now; I command the fire of heaven to consume you right now, I command you spirit of poverty to die by fire. Most notable of the incantations are the "shouting of Holy Ghost fire ", "Pleading of the blood of Jesus", "invoking the name of Jesus", and "shouting of Amen" for a given number of times, depending on the magnitude of the problem to be addressed. These are closely followed with ritual practices that are akin to what is obtained in traditional African shrines, very much different from the biblical conception of

prophecy. Some of the prophets usually devote a large aspect of their so called "prophetic hours" for prophecies and visions expedition only, in addressing issues relating to spiritual warfare rather than on salvation, holiness and righteousness. Although, it is admissible that the concept of warfare finds its place in Pauline's theology (2 Corinthians 10:3-6 and Ephesus 6:10-18), yet the maximum place it occupies in the Church today, however makes it worrisome.

iii. **Run Round Mode (The *Utom* Mantra)**: Some of the contemporary prophets believe that victory and freedom in Christ may be achieved through rituals of liberation: the sale of special anointing oil; blessed water; blessed herbal substances; deliverance (exorcism); dropping of olive oil into someone's mouth during ministration; as a representation of Jesus blood; dropping of olive oil into drinking water for healing. Introduction of injunction leave of palm front (*Ezieng*) for arrest of *Obot emana* (spiritual disturbances). Others do prescribe colour candle sticks, water, pieces of wrappers and colanuts for the assignment. Prevalence in most churches today include, covering of someone with wrapper in the presence of audience as a sign of liberation from death or captivity, to be free when uncovered. Breaking of olive oil bottle as a sign of covenant breakthrough and freedom from ancestral powers; introduction of buying of cloths and precious gift to the prophets as a remedy, uplift and change of status. Counselling of individual especially opposite sex by the prophet at privacy. Some even introduce the packing of sand from the church, asking the pastor to sit on bare floor or stand on the table, telling people (Congregation) to jump across the Holy Bible or stand on it, are the reasons why people are saved. The introduction of worldly music, like the *Ekpo* and *Ekpe* - Leopard (war songs) during ministration are common place. Although no music is worldly, but the lyrics (Matthew 2021), yet some forms of musical renditions in the church during prophetic ministration suggests an unbiblical collaboration between spirituality and carnality. Some forms of the *utom* assignment include using umbrella inside the church under which members are entering for divine coverage; taking people to the river to cast out demonic spirits; asking the prayer team to breathe inside water for people to drink and praying from one junction to another. The ritual of bathing a client during mid-night hours is usually performed on ladies and women in search of suitors and children respectively. Such ritual bathes are meant to cleanse client from influences of evil forces and human enemies whom they believe are responsible for delay of marriages and childlessness respectively. Similarly, the ritual of feet washing carries the symbolism of cleansing one's "spiritual feet" from spiritual contaminations believed to be responsible for set-backs, misfortune and failures (Quayesi – Amakye 2015).

Findings of Abuse of Prophecy in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

To have a reliable information about the subject matter, a study was conducted in some the Assemblies of The Apostolic Church in Ikot Ekpene Field,Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, as the first classical Pentecostal church in Nigeria (Paul 2014**,** Ukaoha2013) to see how prophecy is used in the church, the following are a few of the findings:

i. A prophetess had commanded the Pastor through prophecy to look for palm kernel oil, crude oil, *isana* leaves, new palm frond locally known as *ajei* and other items to be used in the healing prayers for a partial stroke patient, who suffered as a result of hypertension (Itoro 2019 *eye witness).*

ii. A prophecy was said to have directed an Elder to anoint the vagina of a woman, who suffered from hydrolysis. The Elder was also supposed to infuse the anointing oil into the woman through the vagina for quick healing (Fransisca Matthew 2023 *personal interview*).

iii. A pregnant woman, who suffered from severe convulsion was delayed in the church, having been prayed for, for about 24 hours, she was advised to wait for more prophetic declarations. If not the presence of the District pastor, the story would have been a sad one. To the glory of God, the woman delivered of a bouncing baby boy at the hospital through the intervention of the pastor (Itoro 2021 *eye witness account*).

iv. A prophetess was suspended for prophesying to a woman she jointly gossiped the previous day on their way from the local market. It was reported that she prophesied exactly the matter they gossiped about the said woman. The prophecy became a case when members of the gossip crew made a standing ovation against it, as according to them, it is "what we discussed yesterday evening while returning from the market" (*Idongesit Etim 2024*).

v. A prophet was apprehended at a member's compound, at midnight, on the expedition of burying a charm in the compound, so that he will come the following day to exhume it through prophecy and the *Utom mantra* exhibition (Itoro 2015 *eye witness*).

vi. During the labour for a child birth of a particular woman, there was a prophecy that they should bring a young palm fruit leave, *ajei*, and some other leaves to the Pastor, who would give it out to the spirits as injunction against their (spiritual) advances on the pregnant woman. But the Pastor refuted the prophecy, prayed for the woman and the baby was delivered safely without the observation of the prophetic directives (Udoakang 2024 *personal interview*).

vii. A married woman approached the pastor and confided in him that she was advised by prophecy to look for a genuine man of God and let him (the man of God) undress her, bath her and redress her with new pairs of cloth, for that would translate into the end of her sufferings. But the Pastor refuted the prophecy, warned, counseled and advised the woman on the right way of tapping God's blessings (Udoakang2024 *personal interview*).

viii. A prophecy was said to have directed a woman to buy deliverance items to include snuff, local gin (kaikai), tobacco, cola nut and the likes, as items of appeasement and propitiation to the spirits of the departed members of the family, at their former (abandoned) compound locally known as *ndon,* who are suspected to be witched hunting members of the family. The pastor at this material time yielded both to the directives of the prophecy and the yearnings and plea of the woman. This is, however, not different from the prescriptions of an African Traditional Religious prophet (Udoakang 2024 *personal interview*).

ix. A pregnant woman who had a prolonged labour for child birth, at the church was advised by prophecy to mention her concubine without which she will not survive the labour. Adding that she was apprehended by the *ekpo nka agwo* deity, a deity in Annang land that is believed to be in charge of punishing adulterous women. The innocent woman out of anger mentioned her father as her first concubine and her husband as the second. Following the delay, misconstrued for infidelity by prophecy, the woman lost one of her twin babies at the hospital, got irritated by the obnoxious abuse of prophecy, and left the church for another till date (Eno Ekanem 2024, *exclusive interview*).

x. A pregnant woman was advised by prophecy not to try going the hospital, keeping to this instruction, the woman became unconscious after a severe bleeding and died at the verge of considering the hospital (Uwem Igwe 2024*, personal interview*).

xi. One Abraham had a rupture in the lower abdomen that could be treated in the hospital, but was advised that an attempt to operate on him in the hospital would mean the end of his life. Yielding to this prophecy, the parents took him round prayer houses till Abraham finally died (*eye witness*).

xii. A prophet told one Mr. A, that he should hand over his car to him (the prophet) for six month without which he will die on an auto crash. As panic as the client would be, he handed over the car to the prophet. But unfortunately, the prophet while using the car for some time involved in a fatal auto crash, that merely considered his live,*(Unyime Ekanem 2024,personal interview)*.

xiii. A man was unconscious when he was brought to the church, and the prophet prophesied that he will not die, he advised that a hut should be built in their family compound presumably, for the ancestors, adding that immediately that is done, the man will resurrect, but the poor man died even before the hut was completed, (*Peter Amos,2025,personal interview*)

xiv. In another church programme prophet told one sister B, to suspend her foundation laying and hand over the plot of land to the prophet for the land was poisoned with some fetishes (juju), the lady reported to her family members, who advised her to ignore such prophecy; today she is happily living in the house she built on the land, against the prophecy, (*Peter Amos,2025, personal interview*).

xv.   In another church session, a prophet told a lady that the prophet himself was her right husband, adding that if she refuses to marry him, she will never be married, but to the glory of God, the sister is happily married with three children to another man (*Amos 2025, personal interview*).

xvi. A prophet prophesied to a man to reject his bride, adding that she was not his rightful wife, but today the man is happily married to his wife, that same woman (God's-power Umoh2024, *personal interview*).

xvii. A prophet told a lady that her womb was locked with padlock, that the only way to unlock the padlock and open her womb was to have divine penetration on her through the genital organ; to sleep with her. (Peter Amos 2024, *personal interview*).

xviii.   A prophet told one Mr. B to empty his account to the prophet's account to be free of spiritual attack, the man did, yet his attack persisted. (Sifon John 2024,*personal interview*)

xix. A prophet prophesied to sister C that her mother in-law was a witch, but when the mother-inlaw was brought to the same church, that same prophet said, her husband was about to kill her (Mary Edet 2024, *personal interview*).

xx.   A lady in a tarry-night programme was prophesied to by a prophet that her husband is impotent, adding that he was with divine anointing to get her pregnant. The lady refused such offer, to the glory of God, the lady is blessed with four children today, against the prediction of the prophet (Unyime Udo 2024, *Personal interview*).

xxi. A prophet told one lady in the church who has reach menopause to buy seven bottles of olive oil and fasted for seven days, for the angel of the lord will visit her on the seventh day, then she will conceive. Little did she know that the prophet was also the angel; as desirous as the lady were, the prophet at the seventh day had a canal knowledge with her, even when she discovered the tricks, she still could not do anything than keep waiting for the fulfilment of the prophecy till date (Ini Okon 2024, *personal interview*).

xxii. A prophet told a six month pregnant woman that she will put to birth in few days, and that what the doctor told her concerning Cesarean Section (CS) will not happen, when she has not yet gone to any hospital to meet with a doctor (Arit Akpan 2024, *personal interview*).

xxiii.   A prophet prophesied to a sister that she should donate her car to someone for an exchange of another car in a short time. But for a long time now, Sister Grace has not been given the car (Iniobong Asuquo 2024, *personal interview*).

xxiv.   A lady testify that she was asked to make sacrifice with item like goat, hen, before she could have a child and she did as was directed by the prophet, yet for a long time now, she has not yet gotten the child (Idongesit Umoh,2025, *personal interview*).

The Socio-Religious Implications of the Abuse of Prophecy

The socio-religious implications of the abuse of prophecy could be discussed in a separate book of its own, but in the confinement of this work, the following grey areas shall be discussed:

i.   **Collapse of Marriages**: A chunk amount of divorce in some part of Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District, of Akwa Ibom State, are attributed to the wrong application of prophecy. According to the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted on this subject, the collapse of some marital homes are caused by wrong application of prophecy . Some prophets and Prophetesses under the guise of prophecy have taken an undue sexual advantage of people's spouses, resulting in divorce. From the responses of many of the respondents, many marriages were instituted by prophecy, without giving the couples a chance to access their social, academic, religious, and medical compatibility. This according to the respondents brings about broken marriages, whenever they discover that the lapses in their compatibility is uncontrollable.

ii.   **Child Abuse**: Some children are miscreants today as a result of the divorce of their parents, occasioned by the abuse of prophecy. Some children who are sicklers (SS) and HIV/AIDS positive today are products of wrong application of prophecy, because their parents married blindly without some medical examinations.

iii.   **Untimely Death**: The result of abuse of prophecy in some families is always untimely death. Now, in most cases, orthodox medication is considered a sacrilege, some diseases like HIV/AIDS, Lasa fever, diarrhea, malaria, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, and the list, that could be well handled medically have been subjected to the directive of prophecy, thereby causing so many cases of untimely death, leading to greater number of orphans, widows and widowers prevalent in the society, which inversely brings about an alarming rate of poverty in the society.

iv.   **Proliferation of Social Vices**: It is ridiculous that values like hard work and creativity have been relegated to the background. Some people are going round seeking prophecy to help them know the kind of work to do and possibly how to start it. This also brings about poverty in the society that results in the increase in vices like criminality and prostitution.

v.   **Proliferation of Unhealthy Spiritual/Healing Homes**: It is safe to say also that the abuse of prophecy has orchestrated the incessant proliferation of ill-fated churches littered around the streets. The establishment of a new churches or healing centres, with a names like, "Solution Centres", "Mounts of Healing", "Mounts of Deliverance", and so on, is a product of prophetic abuse. This is usually a ploy to escape discipline in the mother church of some the prophets. However, this is why disciplines is lacking in the church today because attempt to inflict sanction on any defaulter, will result in the secession of the victim with his or her mortal cohorts to the peril of the mother church.

Some Possible Ways to Return to the Normalcy of True Prophecy

In the words of Grudem (1996), the abuse of prophecy in contemporary times has caused significant harm to individuals and religious communities. To address these issues and return to a more authentic and constructive practice of prophecy, several strategies can be employed. These strategies involve theological education, accountability measures, pastoral care, ethical standards, community engagement, responsible use of technology, and interfaith dialogue.

This comprehensive approach aims at fostering discernment, integrity, and ethical practice in the exercise of prophetic gifts.

Theological Education

According to Mulholland (1975), theological education is seen as the systematic biblical and doctrinal teaching, both theoretical and practical that has as its purpose the preparation of the believer especially, the leader for the role of a special ministry in the church of Jesus Christ." It is the education or teaching giving consciously to someone who is understudying to know more about God and his will to human kind, and the "process by which a person learns to know God personally, to love Him with all his mind, and heart, and to glorify Him with his whole being. This is subjecting the whole faculties of human personality in attempt to know more about God through rigorous learning, practices and disciplines (Matthew 2016, Gerber 1984). The importance of theological education should not be mitigated, as it holds the foundational doctrines and the sustenance of the future of the church. A robust foundation in theological education is essential for fostering authentic prophetic practice. Religious institutions and communities, according to Fee (2003), the church should prioritize teaching about the nature, purpose, and history of prophecy within their traditions.

Biblical Literacy and Studies

Closely related to theological education is Bible studies. A teaching base church cannot easily be misled by the unscrupulous elements of the society. This is why Jesus Christ, the founder of the church, devoted tremendous effort in teaching his audience (Matthew 4: 23; 9:39; 15:9; 21:23; 26:55; 28:20; Mark 14:49; Luke 13:10,22; 21:37; 23:5). The early church also saw the importance of teaching in the church and they made it a priority (Acts 5:25; 15:35; 18:11). Apostle Paul in his ministration toed to Christ's steps and the result was mind boggling (Acts 28:31; Colossians 1:28). This research is not trying to underrate *prophetism,* rather that the church might be able to underscore the right applicability of it, with a view to giving it the right place it deserves as a functional religious activity. This includes studying the context and purpose of prophetic message in the Bible (Grudem, 2000). Providing comprehensive studies for leaders and laypersons on biblical principles related to prophecy will help restore the prime role of prophecy in the church. This includes understanding the role of prophecy in the Christian tradition and recognizing the characteristics of true prophetic messages (Yong, 2006).

Establishing Accountability Structures and Prophetic Oversight Teams

Creating accountability structures within religious communities is crucial to preventing the abuse of prophecy. These structures can help ensure that prophetic messages are tested and evaluated before being accepted. Forming teams within churches or denominations responsible for evaluating and overseeing prophetic messages. These teams should consist of mature, theologically trained individuals who can provide guidance and correction when necessary (Cartledge, 2018).

Peer Review Mechanisms and Pastoral Care/Counselling

Encouraging prophets to submit their messages to peer review by other respected leaders within the community. This process helps ensure that prophecies are weighed and tested in a communal setting before being disseminated widely (Wagner, 2000).Pastoral care and counseling can support individuals who have been harmed by prophetic abuse and guide communities toward healthier practices.

Recognizing Signs of Abuse and Providing Support and Healing to Victims of Manipulative Prophecies

Training pastors and church leaders to identify signs of spiritual abuse and manipulation and respond appropriately. Offering counseling and support to those who have been negatively impacted by false or manipulative prophecies. Helping individuals rebuild their faith and trust in the community is vital for their spiritual and emotional recovery (Garneau, 2018).

Promoting Ethical Standards such as Transparency and Honesty

Promoting ethical standards in the practice of prophecy is essential for maintaining the integrity and credibility of prophetic ministry. Encouraging transparency in the delivery of prophetic messages and honesty about the limitations of prophetic insight (Garneau, 2018).

Humility and Servanthood

Emphasizing that prophetic ministry should be carried out with humility and a servant's heart, rather than for personal gain or power. Ethical guidelines should stress the importance of serving the community and upholding moral integrity (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005).

Community-Based Approaches

Gaffin (1996) is of the opinion that fostering a community-based approach to prophecy can help mitigate abuse by emphasizing collective discernment and shared responsibility. Encouraging prophetic words to be shared and discerned within small groups or prayer circles, allowing for communal input and accountability is also necessary.

Open Dialogue and Feedback

Creating spaces for open dialogue and feedback within the community where individuals can express concerns and experiences related to prophetic messages. This practice helps build a culture of mutual trust and transparency (McClure, 2018).

i. **Utilizing Technology Responsibly and Monitoring Online Prophetic Contents:** The rise of social media and technology presents both opportunities and challenges for the practice of prophecy. Responsible use of these tools is necessary to prevent the spread of false prophecies. Also, religious leaders and communities should monitor and evaluate prophetic content shared online, providing guidance on reliable sources and discouraging the spread of unverified messages (Johnson, 1991).

ii. **Educational Campaigns and Engagement in Ecumenical Interfaith Dialogue:** Launching educational campaigns on social media to inform believers about the potential for abuse and how to discern trustworthy prophetic voices. These campaigns can provide tools and resources for critical engagement with online prophetic content (Campbell, 2010).Engaging in interfaith and ecumenical dialogue can provide broader perspectives on the practice of prophecy and foster mutual learning and accountability. Also, participating in conferences, workshops, and study groups with members of other faith traditions to learn about their approaches to prophecy and discernment (Keener, 1996).

iii. **Collaborative Ethical Standards:** Working together with other religious communities to develop and promote ethical standards for prophetic practice. This collaboration can help create a unified front against the abuse of prophecy and promote best practices across traditions (Ware, 1993).

Conclusion

Prophecy has had a benevolent impact in the Church and the society, but its usage has been rigorously abused, in the 21st century Pentecostalism in Nigeria. This has attracted a baleful rift, argument and contemplation among some Christians of various denominational lines, as to

what the prime meaning of prophecy seems to be, following the current trend of prophetic enterprise in the church. Although ritual (assignment) practices are not totally alien to biblical prophetism: yes, there are ritual practices in the bible, for example in the story of Abraham and the three visitors, the ritual of feet washing was observed (Genesis 18:4), Moses performed a kind of ritual in order to purify the waters of Merah and Elim for Isrealites (Exodus 15:25), Jacob poured oil on the pillar he erected following his dream at Bethel (Genesis 28:18). Jeremiah and Ezekiel observe some ritual practices in their prophetic ministries (Jeremiah 13. Ezekiel 24), Agabus appeared to have employed a form of ritual practice in his prophecy concerning Paul and the Jews of Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11), and it appears legitimate for the church in the 21st century, yet as QuayesiAmakye (2015) observes, such beliefs and ritual practices have tendency of turning the church to unacceptable and unchristian conduct and practices. In particular, it can undermine Christian morality and ethics of patience, contentment, love, hard work, and honesty. 'Under such circumstances, the biblical view of miracles is sacrificed on the altar of religious naivety and personal convenience'. But more than that, even the essence of Christ's death and resurrection is likewise totally lost under such beliefs, ritual practices and symbolism. What emerges instead is a situation in which Christians have become more of miracle – seekers than fruits – bearers. Therefore, this research recommends that proper hermeneutical engagement be done to salvage the church from this mediocrity, and allow the church to flow in the same pace and grace with the early church, as the bible was, is, and will continue to be the standard of judgment for the church and the society.

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Article **Open Access**

CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract

Corruption is the basis of the problem in many societies ranging from social, religious, moral, economic, Political, cultural, academic and so on. It is a global problem and no country is completely free from its menacing grip. In recent times, the level of uncontrolled cases of corrupt practices in Nigerian is so alarming such that if it is left unchecked Nigeria may continue to experience state capture. The unimaginably challenging situation in most African countries ranging from hunger to a high level of poverty among the citizenry, religious crises, insurgency, economic and political unrest have all been attributed to the high rate of corruption, which has entrenched itself in the national ethos, politics, civil society, public and private sectors of business and commerce. The paper identify some key factors that causes corruption to thrive in Nigeria. The work centered on the fact that the high level of corruption in Nigeria is due to poor leadership and bad governance which in turn make corruption endemic and   alarming such that it raised so much concern in recent times. The paper concluded that strengthening institution and promoting good governance can minimize corruption.

Keywords: Corruption, Governance, Leadership, Politics, Institution.

Introduction

Corruption is a significant challenge in Nigeria, affecting various aspects of the country's economy, politics, and society. Yusuf Usman (2014) observed that Gire posited that corruption is like virus which attack main structures that makes for the progress of societies (Gire, 1999). This is particularly true for a developing country like Nigeria where oftentimes valuable funds and resources allocated for sectors like health care, education, job creation and other social developments are either rightly embezzled, misappropriated, or somehow depleted through kickbacks and over-invoicing by agents of government. The magnitude of corrupt prfactices over the years in Nigeria are clearly shown in different periodic rankings of Transparency International (TI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Nigeria has consistently ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world. In the context of Africa for instance, corruption has been so institutionalized that some people consider it as an "African factor" and "African way of doing things". Corrupt practices can take many forms, such as looting the national treasury, bribery, dishonesty, neglect of duty, exploitation, injustice, and lack of fairness among others. This has raised so much concern in many societies in recent times and it is a significant drag in the nation's economic growth and development. The prevalence of corruption brings about decay in ethical values and orientation. These negative impact corruption has posed on economic growth, ethical value, moral and cultural values in Nigerian society today has earned Nigeria a very poor image within and outside her domain. Generally, corruption denotes efforts made to secure wealth or power through illegal means or a misuse of public power for private benefit, usually at the public's expense. Acts of corruption could also involve giving or taking a bribe or the exercise of indiscretion, advance-fee fraud, fraud, money laundering and embezzlements. There are other forms of corrupt practices and economic crimes which include, narcotic, drug trafficking, bribery, looting, child labour, illegal oil bunkering and illegal mining, tax evasion, foreign exchange malpractice including counterfeiting currency, theft of intellectual property and piracy, open market abuse and dumping of toxic and prohibited goods.

What is Corruption?

The term corruption is derived from the Latin word "corrumpo" which means "to decompose", and "to disintegrate or to lose value, to become putrid and useless". Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines corruption as "an act of dishonesty or an illegal behaviour aimed at using public office for one's private gain. Corruption means impairment of integrity, virtue or unlawful means (as bribery); a departure from the original, what is pure or correct". According to Ochulor and Bassey (2000):

> Corruption is the misuse of power for private benefit or advantage. This power may, or may not reside in the public domain. Besides money, the benefit can take the form of promotion, special treatment, commendation, or the favours of women or men…. In ordinary parlance, corruption simply means asking, giving or taking a fee, gift or favours as a condition for performance of one's legal assigned responsibility (pp. 466-476).

Most people are familiar with the term "corruption" and have a general idea of what it means. People often associate the term with greed, dishonesty, secrecy and crime, all of which are examples of unethical behaviour. They also rightly associate the term with concrete acts, such as bribery by business men and grand theft of public funds by politicians. Few people however, advance beyond that point in their understanding of corruption. While examples of corruption from scandals and journalistic exposes are commonly referenced, a broad understanding of the term proves elusive. Experts disagree over the adequacy of the common definition, "use of public power for private gain". There is a strong consensus among researchers, journalists, political leaders, and citizens in general that corruption is a significant problem, but the reasons people give for this proposition vary widely. As with defining corruption and explaining its significance, measuring corruption within and across nations is also fraught with difficulty. There are various available measurements of corruption resulting in a number of country ranking indices, each with their own challenges.

Despite many definitions and contextual uses of corruption, most dictionaries and legal systems agree about its basic meaning. The Oxford and Merriam-Webster dictionaries begin, respectively, with "dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power" and "dishonest or

illegal behaviour especially by powerful people". Moving in unison, they then proceed to deeper notions. First comes a transformation from purity to debasement for example, "a departure from the original or from what is pure or correct". Second, and relatedly, comes the archaic meaning of "decay", "putrefaction" and decomposition". The Latin words "corruptio" and corrumpere" are even clearer on what this transformation process of decay signals, as they are often associated with the words "destroy" or "destruction" in English. Hence, corruption refers to the sort of decay that leads to destruction. This meaning was clear enough in major historical episodes related to corruption, such as the protestant reformation's claims about the Catholic Church, particularly its sale of indulgences (that is, to reduce punishment for sin), and historians explanations for the decline of the Roman Empire. Ramsay MacMullen (1990) posits,

> Bribery and abuses always occurred, of course. But by the fourth and fifth centuries they had become the norm: no longer abuses of a system, but an alternative system in itself. The cash nexus overrode all other ties. Everything was bought and sold: public office…access to authority on every level, and particularly the emperor. The traditional web of obligations became a marketplace of power, ruled only by naked self-interest. Government's operation was permanently, massively distorted (pp. 90-111).

Corruption, therefore, ranges in its manifestations from bribery and fraud to socio-political transformations of the greatest magnitude. Corruption, however, at times, may be better conceived as a suboptimal way of getting things done when ethically superior ways are perceived as being unavailable, flawed, or too costly. Short of collapse, corruption can lead to a tenacious pattern of unethical behaviour that is sustained and replicated over many years. This multiplicity of understandings suggests that corruption is a polyvalent concept. Naturally, it covers a variety of actions by a variety of actors in a variety of contexts. More importantly, from a definitional standpoint, different observers will characterize the same instance of corruption in different ways according to a variety of factors, including their values, assumptions, goals, cultures and skills sets. Accepting that there are different understandings of corruption and rising to this challenge can help us cultivate an integrated and multidisciplinary understandings of corruption.

The term "corruption" was initially linked to business elites taking advantage of the state resources for private gain. Powerful interests from the private sector can influence (or bribe) officials and parliaments to write registration for example giving companies legal access to the exploitation of natural resources. State capture can occur regardless of a country's regime-type, but is more likely to happen in trasnsitioned economies where states are in the process of (re-) building instructions. Nevertheless, state capture can also occur in well-developed and mature democracies, especially in cases involving lobbyists that work on behalf of companies or industry associations. When such lobbyists, explains Graycar (2015), "seek to have legislation written to favour their activities or to disadvantage competitors, questions are raised about whether this is part of the democratic decisions and regulations is (sic) bought" (Graycar, 2015, p. 89).

Causes of Corruption

A monolithic causation of corruption has been floated, adopting the revisionist-cum-functionalist approach that tends to ignore the administrative consequences of corruption instead of the more analytical political economy approach. The consensus is now to discountenance a mono-causal reason of corruption. Instead, the phenomenon has been recognized as being complex. This complexity is further compounded by the simple fact that corruption is self-perpetuating, begetting more corruption as the circle widens. Caiden (1981)

aptly puts it thus, that "once it enters the blood of a public organization, it spreads quickly to all parts such that finally, the whole fabric and sensibilities of the society become affected and thus bastardized". Caiden and Naomi (1977) expressed this eventuality thus; it is a situation where wrongdoing has become the norm and the standard accepted behaviour necessary to accomplish organizational goals according to notions of public responsibility and trust has become the exception, not the rule. In this situation, corruption has become so regularized an institutionalized that organization supports wrongdoing and actually penalized those who live up to the old norms.

The suggested solution has suffered from the revisionist-cum-functional methodology used for its analysis. Thus, the contention has been that good leadership is a panacea for corruption (Olowu, 1982). Citing the cases of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and General Murtala Muhammed of Nigeria, Carino (1985) and Aina (1982) respectively have also expressed similar sentiments. Although instances abound of crusading and morally upright leadership. The prevailing reality has shown this belief to be too naïve and simplistic as either such leaders eventually fall prey to the pervasive corrupt system in the society, or, as in the case of General Murtala Muhammed are deposed or killed. The argument here as this study observed is that, while good, honest and dedicated leadership may go a long way to curbing corruption, it is not a sufficient condition. More fundamental is the implication of a complex casual factor which can lead to the eradication of the phenomenon. It follows that if corruption is a complex issue, attempts to eradicate it must also be complex. As Braibanti (1979) puts it, "unilinear notions of causation and cure of governmental corruption is mythical". According to Caiden (1979), "reforms of corruption is not a costless undertaking" as "the higher the goals of reform, the higher the costs". This consideration seems to have prompted Sherman (1978) to opine that reform efforts should not be dissipated in an attempt to totally eradicate corruption, but should be directed to defeating and preventing organizational corruption and the minimization of individual corruption.

In relation to the constant and variable factors, Singh observed that Prenzler (2009, p. 80) identified central cause of police corruption as weak accountability. However, an example of successful curbing or elimination of petty corruption is evident in World Bank report. According to Singh, in Georgia, during Mikheil Saakashvili's administration (2003 to 2007) reform which increased the police salary by 15 times and also introduced a merit-based recruitment system, found that experienced staff and loyal officials were retained to run divisions, and young energetic staff were appointed that increased the average wages of public officials, for instance, in construction licensing 'by a factor of 20' to further undermine incentives of soliciting or accepting bribes. The work by Hubert Williams (2021) titled "Core Factors of Police Corruption Across the World", argued that there are four major deficiencies areas were police corruption arises from; (a) recruitment, training and promotion; (b) resources, such as pay and equipment (c) system of accountability within departments; courts and the law; and (d) cultural traditions that inhabit the development of professional police standards. This study indicate that, acts of corruption that involve the police, weakens the faith of a common man, because the police to some ordinary citizens is the only arm of government visible, and a yardstick by which they measure authority.

In their paper, Analysis of Corruption from the Ethical and Moral Perspectives" Ochulor and Bassey (2000), posits that some of the major causes of corruption are rooted in our borrowed contemporary materialistic, capitalistic and individualistic philosophical outlook, as well as in the resultant socio-cultural, political and economic situations we have created for ourselves in Nigeria, Ochulor and Bassey see corruption as the consequences of the many years of hardship and the high level of poverty that have become the way of life in the country for

them, and some of the effects of corruption in Nigeria include: poverty, reduction in economic growth and efficiency, underdevelopment and a general collapse of the social structures that make for a healthy society. This study noted that corruption is a global problem and there is no country of the world that is totally free of its menacing grip. Uduigwomen (2001) maintains that the prevalence of corruption in Nigeria shows "a leadership praxis that promotes the selfish interests of a selected few at the expense of the common good." The problem of corruption in Nigeria is at the basis of the problem of Nigeria. Uzoigwe, Chukwuma-Offor and Amara Mary (2021) in their work entitled "Ethical Position and the Problem of Corruption in Nigeria" posits that corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation negatively affecting the development of the country in almost all spheres of human endeavour.

Consequences of Corruption

Saul Mallard (2021), corroborates the United Nations on the issue of corruption by arguing that corruption is a complex, social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all democratic institutions. It slows economic development and contributes to government instability. According to the United Nations, corruption attacks the foundation of democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes and perverting the rule of law. The negative influence cannot be overemphasized; it is clear that today's bureaucratic system is full of quagmires whose only reason for existing is the requesting of bribes. Osamede (2018) in his work entitled "The Crisis of Values as the Foundation of Nigeria's Human Security Challenge", observes that corruption and bad leadership has grossly affected human security in Nigeria. He maintains that corruption is neither faceless nor is it perpetuated by the ignorant and the poor or less privileged in the society, instead, corruption is rampant in everyone and everywhere. Where there is corruption in the land, there is bound to be insecurity. Osamede observed that Omoregbe posited that "an immoral society is also a sick society". This study, argues that, a corrupt society is one where there is dishonesty, fraud, embezzlement of public funds and all sorts of vices and unethical behaviours.

The work of Marie Chene (2014), entitled; "The Impact of Corruption on Growth and Inequality", argued that while there is a broad consensus that corruption has a negative impact on economic growth and development, some researchers continue to argue that corruption may be economically justified as it provides opportunities to bypass inefficient regulations and red tape, and allow the private sector to correct government failures and inefficiency. As such, it could potentially promote economic growth by removing bureaucratic barriers to entry and lowering company transaction costs when trying to comply with excessive regulations. Some studies have also argued that the detrimental impact of corruption on growth may be context specific and associated with factors such as the country's legal and institutional framework, quality of governance, political regime, etc. However, this study suggest that while corruption is consistently detrimental in countries where institutions are effective, it can potentially increase productivity and entrepreneurship in highly regulated countries that do not have effective government institutions and governance systems.

Also, World Bank staff working papers provides data on effect of corruption on political development. According to Gould (1983), "the corruption prevalent in developing countries is said to create a breathing ground for violence" (p.143). This claim has been borne out by the fact in several nations. In Ghana for example, corruption has been blamed for intensifying inter-ethnic conflict during the Nkrumah regime (Werlins 1973). Also, corruption brought violence and social disorganization to Uganda (Gould, 1983, p. 73). This study observed that, many of the military takeovers in parts of Africa (like Nigeria), Asia, and Latin America have been justified by the need to stamp out corruption. However, just as regime changes do not guarantee that corruption will be reduced or eliminated, not all corruption leads to regime

change. Although widespread corruption in Nigeria, for example, has eroded the public trust in the Nigerian government, including its leaders and functionaries. As for the effect of corruption on the political development, it has been noted that corruption:

i.   Encourages and perpetuates closed politics, preventing the development of violence.
ii.   Suppresses political opposition, generating increased resentment and violence.
iii. Perpetuates and widens social class and economic divisions, leading to societal strain and preventing cohesion.
iv.   Prevents policy changes and diverts public resources contributing to conditions of private affluence and public squalor (Caiden and Caiden).

Corruption, rather than contributing to political development, appears to generate conditions of violence, social unrest, political instability and regime change through military take overs. Gould, in his work with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development **/** the World Bank, demonstrates the effects of Corruption on Economic Development and Administrative performances. As Gould (1983) observes, much corruption in the developing countries take place in the import-export sector of their economies. It commonly assumes the form of illegal purchases of the import licenses, under- invoicing and over- invoicing of imports and exports and smuggling. Gould illustrates that in one empirical study that sought to determine how the over- invoicing of imports affected the allocation of investment and the structure of industry in Pakistan, estimates for 1966 and 1970 placed the magnitude of over-invoicing at 20% and 40% of the actual invoice price, respectively. The study concluded that the profit incentives of over- invoicing capital goods influence investment decisions in such a way that they:

i.   discourage the growth of the capital-goods industry, since it must compete with an effectively   subsidized imports.
ii.   create industries that are unnecessarily foreign-capital intensive and perpetuate a pattern of development that is heavily dependent on foreign capital.
iii. reduce the level and growth of consumption and employment by discouraging the use of existing plants and equipment in favor of adding new capital.
iv.   discourage industrial employment through both reduced capital utilization and adoption of labour-saving, capital-intensive techniques.
v.   spread corruption and raise the costs to doing business through the distribution of over-invoicing profits from industrialists to government officials. But under- invoicing and over invoicing also contribute to capital flight from developing countries.

Consequently, Ifedigbo (no date), also demonstrated the effects of corruption in Nigerian economic development, by observing that in the last administration of president Muhammadu Buhari, Price Water HOUSE Coopers (PWC) presented a report entitled "Impact of Corruption on Nigeria's Economy to the Vice President Yemi Osinbajo at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, showing the PWC team report centered on Nigeria's economy overtime. According to the PWC study, corruption in Nigeria could cost up to 37% of Gross Domestic Products (GDP) by 2030 if it is not dealt with immediately. This cost was equated to be about $1,000 per person between 2014 and 2030.

In his work entitled "Corruption Around the World: Causes, Consequences, Scope and Cures" Vito (1998) argued that corruption has been around for thousands of years, but in recent years it has been very alarming. The alarming state of corruption in recent times is a reflection of the increasing scope of the problem of corruption. It should be clear that it is impossible to measure corruption, but it is possible to measure the perception rate of corruption. Kanu (2018), observed that Transparency International Corruption Perception

Index for 2015 showed that Denmark and New Zealand scored 91 percent and ranked the highest countries free of corruption, while North Korea and Somalia with 8 percent were ranked the highest countries on the corruption scale. Also, on February, 2025, the Transparency International (TI), officially launched the 2024 corruption perception index (CP) showing that Nigeria scored 26 out of 100 (. However, action can still be taken to minimize corruption, although there have been several attempts in the past that did not achieved good success in the fight against this ravaging phenomenon corruption. There are several consequences of corruption in Nigeria ranging from increase of poverty, inequality, economic instability and reduced economic growth, undermining of trust in institutions and government, inefficiency and location of resources, distortion of market and competition, and human right abuses. These slowdown development and economic growth, and placed the nation as one of the third countries in the world. Corruption also weaken the rule of law in recent times such that the law is no more seen as the last hope of man. Corruption brings about environmental degradation, social unrest and instability, and reduction of foreign investment. There are specific consequences of corruption in various sectors in Nigeria such as:

i.   Health care: Corruption can lead to inadequate services, poor quality medicine, and limited access to health care.

ii.   Education: Corruption can result in unequal access to education and limit opportunity for an indigent students.

iii. Infrastructure: Poor constructed infrastructure is as a result of corruption most of the times. Corruption increase cost and reduce quality services.

Conclusion

The problem of corruption can be minimize if a sense of duty, goodwill, justice and fairness is embraced and demonstrated by most individuals in a society. It takes societal co-operation to control and reduce corruption or even eliminate it. It is rather unfortunate that today's society rather celebrates what should be abhorred and despises honesty, integrity, equity and truth which is crucial in achieving a good and successful society. We cannot shrink and shy away from modelling ethical and moral behaviours just because the society rarely rewards honesty, truth and other virtue. In addition, this paper suggest that, to minimize corruption in Nigeria, the following must be taken as a priority:

i.   There is need to strengthen institutions and promote good governance.

ii.   Accountability and transparency must be promoted in all sectors and commerce.

iii. Nigerian citizen must encourage whistle blowing and report every act of corruption.

iv.   There must be an effective implementation of Anti-corruption policies and the rule of law.

v.   Cultural and societal change must be promoted to reject corrupt practices.

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COMMERCIALIZATION OF PRAYER HOUSES HEALING HOMES IN ONNA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERA: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONCERN

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Abstract

A bird's eye view of religious space in our contemporary society has shown that commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes are on the increase. Commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes imply running of prayer houses and healing homes as a business with the aim of making economic gain or manipulation of its services with the intentions to exploit members for financial or economic gains. Thus, in the context of commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes, no service is free of charge. However, in this paper, efforts are made to examine the realities of commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes in Onna Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The paper equally discusses the causes as well as the effects of commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes in Onna Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Method of study adopted for this work is survey and phenomenological methods. Findings from this study reveal that many founders of prayer house are taking advantages of gullible miracle seekers, who will do anything just to have respite from their troubles. The result of the findings equally revealed that many founders of prayer houses and healing homes are selling religious tokens acclaimed to possess powers capable of bringing solutions to the problems of the users. Such items include oil, salt, handkerchiefs, water among others. Thus, it is concluded from the paper that Christian religious leaders should guide against commercialization of healing and prayer. Religious leaders need to be contented with what they have, pursue righteousness, honesty, integrity and love for humanity. Finally, it is recommended that the founders of prayer houses and healing homes should be properly trained on theology for proper interpretation of the Bible and better dissemination of the gospel.

Keywords: Commercialization, Prayer, Healing, ONNA, Exploitation.

Introduction

Commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes is gaining a lot of grounds in this part of the world. It does not take much to observe that prayer houses and healing homes found expression in the economic sphere thus speaks for the value of religion as a social institution. Religion is therefore seen as a social reality and found expression in services it renders. It is common knowledge to notice that prayer houses and healing homes are on increase in our contemporary society. It has also been observed that some of the founders and purveyors of these houses and homes earn a living from there and it seems to be a thriving business as evident in the proliferation. Moreover, the astronomic proliferation of these houses and homes in recent time has created wrong images for the church in the society. The majority of people see the church as a "commercial venture". By this act, these houses and homes have been turning to business ventures with different names, missions, ideas and general overseers (GOs) without any positive impact in the society. Commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes imply running of prayer houses and healing homes as a business with the aim of making economic gain or manipulation of its services (spiritual and emotional) with the intentions to exploit members for financial or economic gains. This phenomenon has caused so much damage to faith and belief of adherents. Many gullible followers just take in whatever they are being fed by their religious leaders. It is not only the poor and desperate people who are hooked and fed by all kinds of things but many rich folks are also being fooled.

There are many clear cases of situations where the some founders are taking advantages of these prayer houses and their positions to amass wealth and exploit their innocent members. There are many other cases too in which ministers desecrate the sanctuary with jesting and other disdainful behaviours. Most founders of prayer houses and healing homes are noted for various nefarious acts ranging from embezzlement of church funds, extortion of money from members and abuse of positions or offices among others. Thus, Nnadi (2013) writes in this regard that this age has recorded the most explosive religious crusades, the most populous religious pilgrimages, the most resurgence of the phenomenon of proliferation of churches and the most dynamic witness concrete structure and flamboyant edifices that manifest the existence and physical vitality of various faiths. Yet, the society of this 'religious' magnitude launches herself into the self-destructive forces of moral laxity. With this, one can say without fear of contradiction that our contemporary generation is suffocating in the hands of various shades of religious aberrations fashioned by morally bankrupt deviants who enthrone moral depravity over virtues of the hallowed teachings of religion. Based on the above observations, the present researchers became interested in the assessment of the realities of commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes in Onna Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State on the simple logic that it will bring to light the causes, consequences and other dynamics of commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes in the area.

Concept of Commercialization

Commercialization is the process of managing or running something principally for financial gain. It enables customers or buyer to obtain a wider choice of products/ services and allow the sellers or marketers to generate more profits or gains. Commercialization therefore is the acts of making something available for sale or viable as a profitable commodity. It is equally the process of making service(s) available for sale to the public. When a business has experienced growth and scales its operations, commercialization can occur. The term often connotes especially bringing services into the market and making it available with the intention of making financial or economic gain. Commercialization in the religious context involves turning spiritual services into commodities for sale. As Ukah (2008:10) notes, the commercialization of religion reflects the encroachment of marker logic into spiritual domains

resulting in the monetization of prayer, healing, prophecy, and blessings. In prayer houses, this takes the form of mandatory seed offerings, special fees for consultations and seeking anointed materials. Concern is the overt commercialization of spiritual activities, where access to prayers and religious rituals increasingly depends on the ability to pay. Prayer sessions are often linked to offerings, seed sowing, and the sale of religious items like anointing oil, holy water, and prayer garments.

Concept of Prayer

Prayer is a universal medium of communication between man and God or object of his veneration. According to Onunwa (2005: 54), prayer is an invocation or act that seeks to activate with an object of veneration through deliberate communication. In other words, the term "prayer" refers to an act of intercession or supplication directed towards God or object of man's veneration. Moreover, prayer can also have the purpose of adoration or thanksgiving, and is closely associated with more abstract forms of meditation that required rapt attention and mental concentration. Prayer can take a variety of forms. For instance, it can be part of a set of ritual or liturgy and it can be performed alone or in groups. (Onunwa, 2005: 67). As opined by Ukpong (2019:65), prayer is rooted in the idea of divine providence. It is an affirmation of a superior Intelligence which controls the affairs of the universe. It helps a believer to discover his or her position in God's design and provision. The act of prayer is attested in written sources as early as five thousand years ago. Today, most major religions in the world involve prayer in one way or another; some ritualize the act, requiring a strict sequence of actions or placing a restriction on who is permitted to pray, while others teach that prayer may be practiced spontaneously by anyone at any time. Scientific studies regarding the use of prayer have mostly concentrated on its effect on the healing of sick or injured people. Thus, the efficacy of prayer in faith healing has been evaluated in numerous studies, with contradictory results. Simply put, Prayer is conversing with God or petition and intimacy towards God. It is a communion between God and His creatures (Onunwa, 2005: 66).

Concept of Healing

The word "healing" is an adjective derived from the verb "to heal" which means "to cure a disease or disorder", "to restore to soundness or "to make whole and healthy. Healing involves the removal of the factors that cause disease and infirmity (Obi, 2001: 17). Adigo (2019: 33) defines healing as a process of bringing together aspects of one's self, body mind and spirit, at deeper levels of inner knowing, leading towards integration and balance with each aspect having equal importance and value. Healing comes from the meaning and purpose which people attach to life and experience that helps them to cope with pain. When sickness strikes, and people's hope and meaning are crumbling beneath them, they search for something more substantial to anchor them. Faith healing is an attempt to use religious or spiritual insights such as prayer to prevent illness, to cure disease, or to improve health. According to Egnew (2005: 111), those who attempt healing by prayer, mental practices, spiritual insights, always say that they can summon supernatural help or assistance on behalf of the sick (Adigo, 2019: 34).

Pastoral healing on the other hand is the process of being restored to bodily wholeness, emotional well-being, mental functioning, and spiritual aliveness. Healing may also refer to the process of reconciling broken human relationships, and to the development of a just social and political order among races or nations. Medical healing is defined in terms of developing a sense of personal wholeness that involves physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of human experience (Egnew, 2005: 112). Here, healing can be either orthodox or traditional, which includes use of herbs. Similarly, psychological conception of healing involves reordering an individual's sense of position in the universe. From Egnew's view above, healing

can be defined as a process in the service of evolution of the whole personality towards ever greater and more complex wholeness. Furthermore, the concept of healing among Africans is derived from their perception of the aetiology of sickness. Africans have an integral understanding of creation, with a harmonious membership or union between the gods, the ancestors and living human beings. Life goes on well when this mutual relationship is intact, but when there is a crack in the relationship, there is a consequent disharmony and disintegration (Adigo, 2019: 34). The result is sickness or any other form of misfortune on the part of individual who is believed to be responsible through his or her omission or commission. This is believed to be the principal cause of sickness. Healing therefore follows the process of restoring the broken relationship through rites and rituals. According to Onunwa (2005: 74), the charismatics' perception of healing is dynamic and problem- solving. Such dynamic has helped charismatic movements to increasingly attract people with such needs as employment, children, marriage partners, relief from pain and so on.

Concept of Prayer Houses and Healing Homes

As rightly opined by Ekarika (2017) prayer houses and healing homes – *Ufok Akam* are offshoots of traditional African healing houses just like the neo-primal movements but they abhor anything diabolic or demonic. They comfortably fit into the mould of religious movement but not as churches properly so-called because often practitioners and adherents have recourse to divine assistance for the cures that are performed. They are similarly eclectic, syncretism and exogenous and draw from a large range of sources including Christianity, Islam, Occultism, Oriental magic, Astrology and Metaphysics. Some homes are homeopathic and employ botanical medical clinics, physician among others. According to Hackett (2004), such healing homes have places where patients often stay, the healer having recourse to traditional healing practices and mixing them with whatever religious direction they consider appropriate. During healing session, mysterious invocations are chanted and rituals are performed to ensure the repeal of the ailment which is considered to be a manifestation of evil. Often, the healing is carried out in such a way as can impress upon the patients and the public that the pastor-healer has specific gifts and charisma which come from some other enigmatic sources only acquired by the healer (Ekarika, 2017).

History of Healing in Christianity

One of the central themes in the history of Christianity is the concept of healing (physical and spiritual).Healing is, therefore, one of the most constant themes in the long and sprawling history of Christianity. Porterfield (2005: 18) affirms that Jesus himself performed many miracles of healing during his ministry on earth and Christians, down the ages, have seen this as a prominent feature of their faith. The early Christian church deeply integrated divine healing into their faith, relying on scriptural promises like those found in Mark 16: 17-18 and James 5:14-15, which emphasize healing through prayer, laying on of hands, and anointing with oil. Apostles such as Saints Peter and Paul played pivotal roles in the history of divine healing. Again, early church fathers such as Origen, Alexandria and Saint Augustine of Hippo played significant roles in divine healing, both through miraculous healings and theological contributions that emphasized on the power of faith.

The above observations are meant to show that early believers embraced the power of prayer, laying on of hands and the anointing of oil, believing firmly in the healing promises of Scripture. Thus, the legacy of divine healing within the early church continue to influence contemporary Christian practices, encouraging prayer, faith declarations, and healing services that mirror the holistic care and belief in miracles demonstrated by early believers. Healing is a cardinal theme in the history of Christianity, threading its way over time through ritual practice

and theological belief, and across space through the sprawling, heterogeneous terrains of Christian community life and missionary activity (Porterfield, 2005: 19). Much more commonly, Christian healing involves relief from suffering and enhanced ability to cope with chronic ailments. Thus, medieval pilgrims often made repeat visits to healing shrines, apparently because such visits relieved suffering but did not produce a lasting cure. Part of Christianity's appeal as a means of coping with suffering is the idea that suffering is not meaningless but a part of the cosmic vision of redemption. Along with the actual healing that might be stimulated by faith in a higher power, this imputation of meaning to suffering has itself been a tonic. While the effectiveness of Christian practices as a means of relief from suffering has contributed enormously to their popularity, the real genius of Christianity has been to embrace pain and disability and death and not to limit the meaning of health and healing to their expulsion. Thus, many Christians have accepted the persistence of suffering as part of religious life, while also celebrating relief from suffering as a sign of the power and meaning of their faith.

Origin of Commercialization of Healing in Christianity
The term, church commercialization, denotes two things. First, it denotes the application of commercial principles in the running of the church or applying business principles to church administration or run it as a business with the aim of making economic gain. Secondly, it depicts the manipulation of the services of church (spiritual and emotional) with an intention of exploiting members, or prospects for economic or financial gain (Obiora, 1998: 20). From the Old Testament, prophets Amos, Micah and Ezekiel decried the above aberration. For instance, in the book of Amos chapters 2:8; 4:1; 5:11; 8:4-6; 5: 7 and 6: 12, Prophet Amos raised his voice in protest against the oppression of the poor and needy, corrupt and degenerate religious practices, corruption of justice and honesty, excessive indulgence and disregard for the laws of God. The negative attitude of prophet Amos towards commercialization of religion came out in the clash between him and Amaziah who refused to acknowledge, in any way, the divine source of Amos' prophecies, but considered him as a political agitator. Hunu and Azembeh (2018: 19) commented on this attitude thus: "The fact that Amaziah and other priests in Israel had commercialized religion is indicated in his derogatory advice to Amos that he should go to Judah and earn his bread there" (Amos 7: 12). This reveals that to them, religion was all about money making.

Prophet Micah equally spoke against his listeners for their apostate life style. Their sins include perversion of worship practices, empty religious formalism, oppression of the poor and the defenseless, perversion of justice through bribery and dishonest business practices (Micah 1:7; 3:5-7; 6:6-7; 2: 2. 8-9). As recorded in Micah 3: 11; 6: 11), religious leaders were accused of commercialization of religion while pretending to be serving the people, their true intention was for economic gain. Rather than serve and care for the people as the Shepherds of the nation, these false prophets were leading the people astray. The leaders were concerned with their own welfare, rather than the nations' welfare. Similarly, prophet Ezekiel was particularly against the false prophets and prophetesses who were into the business of commercialization of religion. He warned against using religion as a money- making venture and enjoined religious leaders to lead by example and precept. Prophet Ezekiel was also against lip service and outward show of righteousness by religious leaders. In the New Testament, commercialization of religion got to its peak at the time of Jesus Christ as illustrated in Matthew (21: 12-13; Mark 11: 15-18; and Luke1 19:43-46). Jesus expressed his indignation against the people changing money and selling doves in the temple. Again, during the Passover feast, selling of doves as reported by Hunu and Azembeh (2018: 19) became popular. The organizers of the feast of Passover strictly advised worshippers to buy doves at the temple stalls at an exorbitant price. This was also an evidence of commercialization of religion. Simon Magus or Simon the

magician whose confrontation with Peter is recorded in Acts of the Apostle (8:9-24) attempted to buy the Holy Spirit with money. In fact, the act of simony or paying for position in the church is named after Simon who tried to buy his way into the power of the Apostle for commercial purpose.

Ethnographic Sketch of Onna Local Government Area

Onna Local Government Area was created out of the larger Eket Local Government Area in 1989 by the Military Administration of Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, former Military President and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Atteh and Umoh, 2014: 35). Its name comes from acronym of the four predominant clans in the area: Oniong, Nnung Ndem, Awa-Afaha and Asuna. Onna is bounded on the east by Eket, west by Mkpat Enin and south to Eastern Obolo and Ibeno. The people of Onna are predominantly farmers. Onna is not a host to any oil company while search is ongoing for oil discovery. The state government is doing its best to claim neighbouring community ancestral lands and draw it boundary toward the Atlantic Ocean, so as to enhance and benefit from the PIB bill sign by the Federal government (Atteh and Umoh, 2014: 35). The local government is also home to a number of highly intellectual populations who have made numerous impacts in the community, nationwide and in the diasporas. Onna Local Government is abundantly blessed with natural resources. First of these natural resources worth mentioning is fresh water. Mankind through ages has been struggling for good quality water for use by humans, animals, plant and industries. In Onna, water is always available in flowing streams serving majority of communities. The fairly generous rainfall most of the year' result in flows of the streams given reliance on surface water for domestic uses and industrial purposes. Nature has also endowed Onna people with the presence of a number of minerals. It is part of the basement complex which is important source of minerals and provides rich qualities stones for building and engineering construction. It is blessed with various kinds of clay particularly good ceramics and pottery (Atteh and Umoh, 2014). Moreover, the people of Onna by way of worship are predominantly Christians. They believe in the existence of one Supreme Being. Outside this, there are Traditional worshippers with their unique shrines for their *Idiong, Ndem, Ibok* etc. Their belief is that, though they are different they are messengers of Supreme Being that see to the peace, stability and well- being of the area.

The villages in Onna are: Ikwe, Ikot Akpatek, Ikot Ebidang, Ikot Ebekpo, Abat, Ndon Eyo, Mkpok. Okat, Ikot Edor, Ukpana, Mkpaeto, Ikot Esor, Ikot Eko Ibon, Okom, Ikot Ndudot, Ikot Ebiere, Ikot Udo, Ikot Nkan, Ikot Ndua Iman, Ikot Obong Ishiet, Ikot Akpan Ishiet, Atiamkpat, Awa Iman, Nnung Oku, Ntan Ide Ekpe, Awa Ndon, Awa Atai, Ikot Abasi Oniong, Ikot Mbong, Afaha Ikot Idem Udo, Afaha Ikot Akpan Mkpe, Afaha Atai, Afaha Ikot Nkang, Abak Ishiet, Ini-Ikwe and Ini- Edor (Atteh and Umoh, 2014: 12). Before the emergence of Christianity in Onna, there was indigenous religion which was handed over by the fore-bears. The core premise of indigenous religion was loyalty to the ancestors and accompanying rituals that are expressed by this loyalty. It has been said that Africa including Onna is a *terra religiosa- religious people*. Religion indeed has a profound impact on the attitudes, behaviour, plans, and destinies of the people. At all levels, collective and individual, the indigenous religions of the people inspire reactions and dictate options. Traditions and customs have been religiously expressed and persist for Centuries (Sidbe, 1991:87).

Factors Responsible for Commercialization of Prayer Houses in Onna LGA

Quest for Material Things: One of the major causes of commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes in Africa in general and Onna LGA in particular is the quest for material things.

The glamour and flaunting of wealth by many prayer houses and healing homes' founders and purveyors have made them to become desperate as well as equate success in service to God to mean status and much acquisition of material things. Founders of such homes take advantage of gullible miracle seekers, who will do anything just to have respite from their troubles. The extent to which some of these houses and homes founders or purveyors go to satisfy their curious followers and rip them off their monies is dastardly. Essien (2010: 12) puts it more succinctly that the mad craze for money has made some people willing to commercialize religion for their own benefits and interest. Though one might be tempted to say that there is no difference between the quest for money and that of material things, both walk hand- in-hand. In the early 30s down to the late 70s, simplicity and modesty were the watchword of the pastors. The pastors or reverends as the case may be have relatively simple methods of worship and living Spartan lives. It is also expedient to point out here that, they (clerics) do not own properties like houses, fanciful cars and fat bank accounts. All that mattered to them was modesty if and whenever they wanted to acquire any of the basic needs and nothing more (Essien, 2010: 12).

The experience of the church now in Nigeria since the middle of the 80s down to the present time is a clear indication that there is a sharp departure from the original land mark of reaching the unreached and placing of genuine emphasis on the hereafter. Many of these preachers' messages promise health and wealth to those who believe. Most of their programmes are politically inclined, centered on this world rather than eternity. A bulk of their theology is experiential and emotional, highly influenced by human philosophy and mental psychology, minimizing doctrines and ideas (Raphael, 2013: 34). Their theologies are as well shallow, fraudulent and manipulative in nature. Of a truth, the level of material quest by Nigerian Christians is radically in deviance, and inimical to the values and life of the early Church. Consequently, the position of Raphael (2013: 34) becomes relevant here in that; "a new kingdom in which treasures are found here on earth is preferred to a delayed gratification, and treasure in the heavenly kingdom of 'the other world". This scenario places the Nigerian church in a dilemma and frightening challenge. In the beginning, the religious trends and point of emphasis have been that of values of poverty, simplicity, and detachment from this world of illusion. But now, capitalist ideals – which emphasize and esteem individuals and group betterment, which can be measured in material terms and can be paid for with money are the order of the day (Raphael, 2013: 34).. In their campaign, it was believed that promotion of financial success is a means to attaining personal satisfaction. It was against this background that Raphael (2013) lamented that the idea that poverty could be a state of blessedness in itself, a favourite of preachers as recently as a century ago, is now hopelessly discredited. Even the post Conservative Pulpiteers nowadays exhorts their poor in the name of healing to get ahead, but to do it by non-violence means

Economic Pressure

The economic condition of Nigeria in general which is depicted by the high level of unemployment rate in the society, has led many people into what they would not have done if things were in good shape. Immediately people are unemployed, they float their own prayer houses and healing homes, claiming that God has called them. Although the Nigerian society still needs to be evangelized, people should be aware of false prophets using the name of God to work miracles under black magic (Makinde, 2007). Again, people lose hope due to the harsh social conditions and the lack of political stability needed to revamp the ever-failing economy. Their expectation that politics could solve their economics problem has been shattered. In desperation for solutions, they turn to religion. With prayer houses and healing homes

flourishing everywhere, many people trooped to them for healing. Focusing primarily on the gospel of prosperity, prayer houses and healing homes raise the hope of people.

Quest for Money

Going by the position of King Solomon, 'money answers all things' (Ecclesiastes 10:19b). A careful look at the activities of prayer houses and healing homes today, reveals that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). The early Apostle and believers did all they could to penetrate the interiors for the purpose of evangelism, but in Nigerian society today, there appear to be a great deviation from the example set by early church in the way they go about their preaching and seeking the "lost" . The question that is urgently begging for an answer in the minds of many concerning the proliferation of prayer houses and healing homes in today' society is; why are they operating in the major cities and also charging their members for all the services they render (Raphael, 2013: 55). The plausible answer that readily comes to mind is the fact that, the population density in such locations makes it easier for one to amass wealth than in the remote areas that are ridden with high level poverty. What plays itself out is that, with catchy and animating words, founders and purveyors of healing homes advertise for miracles, which turn out to be a harvest of money. Using both fetish and satanic powers to draw large crowds, they convince their followers to sow 'quality seeds' and wait for their on-coming miracles. It is based on this unfortunate development that Raphael (2013: 48) lamented that many have embraced the doctrine of money, wealth and prosperity instead of the message of salvation. Jesus, during His days on earth, had a similar experience with the Scribes and the Pharisees. He strongly rebuked them for all that they were pursuing was nothing more than how to get rich.

Quest for Fame

Competition, which is a common feature of business in the secular society, has silently masqueraded its way into prayer houses and healing homes. It is sad to say that, so many people are not willing to be "human followers" as taught by Christ (Matthew 18:1-4), but try hard to be *seen and heard*. This is one of the reasons why people who are supposed to be under the tutelage of others are now founders of prayer houses and healing home as well as becoming General Overseers (G.O) everywhere especially in the cities. It is germane to posit strongly here that, behind the veil of church proliferation in Nigeria lies silently the quest for fame (Iheanacho, 2012: 93). The quest for fame has led many preachers into preaching about their church, miracles and not about "Christ" himself and his salvific work. In connection to this ugly trend in the church in the society, Nmah (2008: 94) observes that today, many of our church leaders consciously or unconsciously measure success in life in terms of wealth, prestige and power: the three key principles of stratification, and social mobility in secular society. What become the common trend today in many societies at large, are bill boards, fliers, banners and posters reflecting the images of founders and their wives. Seeing all these, the questions we need to raise are: Was this practice found among the early disciples? Was it part of the early doctrines preached by Jesus himself? Where did this trend come from and how did it find its way into Christendom? Without any doubt, we can see that, selfish interest cannot be separated from such developments. The problem of the church went deeper owing to the fact that, the gospel as preached on the radio, Television and as well as the Newspapers appears to have become more of "celebrity-driven" and focused on what is "tangible and material". In relation to this, Ndiokwere (2002:7) argued that some of the new church founders are those who could not submit to the leadership and instruction of other church leaders, for which reason they broke out to establish control. For such people, leadership is always seen as a threat to self-realization and fulfilment.

Socio-religious Implications of Commercialization of Prayer Houses and Healing Homes in Onna LGA

From the sociological stand point, the astronomical commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes in recent time has created a wrong image for the church in the society. The majority of people see the church as a "commercial venture". By this act, these houses and homes have been turned into business ventures with different names, missions, ideas and general overseeing (GOs) without any positive impact on the society. According to Hundu and Azembeh (2018: 12), this trend has reached an unprecedented height with the commercialization of miracles by charging people who ask for special prayers, healing or miracles, very high prices. All these are flagrant disregard of the divine injunction by Christ that "freely you received and freely you give" (Nmah, 2008: 17). Furthermore, there are many clear cases of situations where the founders and purveyors of prayer houses are taking advantages of these prayer houses and their positions to amass wealth and exploit their innocent members. There are many other cases too in which ministers desecrate the sanctuary with jesting and other disdainful behaviours. Most founders of prayer houses and healing homes are noted for various nefarious acts ranging from extortion of money from members and abuse of position hereby turning prayer houses into their business. This act has dented the image of the church most especially the images of these houses and homes in the society. This is because many people in the society are seeing them as a lucrative business avenue to maximize profit.

It is an indisputable fact that a common notion for the emergence of this houses and homes is commercial reason. Religion has been largely seen as a source of making money. Religion has also been twisted as it were to suit the intents and purposes of the users. Commercialization of religion according to Obiora, is described as "Holy Deceit"- the art of trading in God's name (Obiora, 1998:97). Thus, in the context of commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes, no service is free of charge including salvation. One must pay for it. Ndiokwere (2002:7) recorded how a man whose wife was barren for 12 years, was asked to pay the prophet a sum of two hundred and fifty thousand (N250,000) for the purchase of spiritual items to end the bareness. Again, it was gather that some prayer house and healing homes are fond of asking people to pay a sum for their healing and deliverance. Moreover, many founders of prayer houses and healing homes are selling religious tokens acclaimed to possess powers capable of bringing solutions to the problems of the users. Such items include oil, salt, handkerchiefs, water among others. Miracles are also fabricated in some of these houses and homes in order to attract crowds and raise money (Ndiokwere, 2002:7). One of the damaging effects is unhealthy competition. There is a high level of competition and envy among founders and purveyors of prayer houses and healing homes in African society as a result of quest for fame, title consciousness and positions. The level of unhealthy competition by these houses and homes' founders is radically embarrassing and inimical to the core values of Christianity. In order to avoid the error of this unhealthy competition or division in the church, Paul warned about this among the believers in 2 Corinthians 10:12, where he admonished that:"We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise" (NIV).

Again, it is worthy to note that emphasis of some ministers nowadays is more on the quantitative increase and not the qualitative aspect which should be the main focus. Since everyone wants to be seen and heard, and not being so much bothered about the souls of men that are wallowing in iniquities. The reigning thing now as the result of competition is who is the most eloquent prophet or healer. This has led to clashes between prayer houses and personalities. There have been a lot of controversies/disagreements and contention between

founders. There is also an unhealthy competition for client as each of the prayer houses and healing homes struggle to get their member. Moreover, there have been several cases of fraud, embezzlements and the likes by the founders. In fact, some prayer houses and healing homes are not accountable to their members on how the church money is being used. Similarly, there have been seeming contradictions to what the bible is teaching and what some prayer houses and healing homes are teaching today. There are different doctrinal beliefs, different approaches to the name of God. Members also believe that the healer (prophet and evangelist) are impeccable. Members equally believe everything they say. Sequel to this, some pastors do oppress their members by asking them to eat grass, some are to eat dead rat, ants, snakes etc., just to heal them from various diseases and to set them free from their bondages. Commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes has brought more chaos and disadvantages than the expected gains that religion is expected to offer, this is because one of the purposes of religion is to bring succuor to mankind but in the contemporary worldview it is relatively subjective (Madu, 2003: 94). That is why recently through the media, some African preachers are seen as opportunists because "it is believed that most of the founders of prayer houses and healing homes established them not because of any divine mandate, but because they see Church opening as a business venture"

Most of these prayer houses and healing homes founders are not interested in salvaging the ugly situation at hand as the good shepherd, but rather, they go on extorting money from the members both from the rich and the poor, those who are ignorant of the business of the so called men of God. However, there is no gainsaying that prayer houses and healing homes could be a blessing to the people in the society, if properly managed and guided because they provide succor to the spiritual needs of people. For instance, many people have been thronged to them for healing with incurable diseases of all descriptions, especially cancer, HIV, infertility, lack of success in businesses among others. What is required now from the founders of these houses and homes is to operate them in a way that will be able to change moral decadence of the people in other to reduce the corruption and atrocities that are prominent in the society. This is because a situation, where by Bible teaching is used to emphasize material wealth as some of the founders do today, can easily abolish the Christian values or interest in the Bible. But sound teaching of the Bible can promote faith, hope, trust and sound doctrine.

Conclusion

From the forgoing, it is pertinent to note that Commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes in Onna LGA has brought more chaos and disadvantages than the expected gains that religion is expected to offer, this is because one of the purposes of religion is to bring succor to mankind but in our own idea and worldview it is relatively subjective. Most of these prayer houses and healing homes' founders are not interested in salvaging the ugly situation at hand as the good shepherd, but rather, they go on extorting money from the members, both the rich and the poor, those who are ignorant of the business of the so called men of God. However, there is no gainsaying the fact that prayer houses and healing homes could be a blessing to the people of Onna, if properly managed and guided because they provide succor to the spiritual needs of people. For instance, Onna people have thronged to them for healing with incurable diseases of all descriptions, especially madness, misfortune, infertility, lack of success in businesses among others. What is required now from the founders of these houses and homes is to operate them in a way that will be able to change moral decadence of the people in order to reduce the corruption and atrocities that are prominent in Onna LGA. This is because a situation, where by Bible teaching is used to emphasize material wealth as some of the

founders do today, can easily abolish the Christian values or interest in the Bible. But sound teaching of the Bible can promote faith, hope, trust and sound doctrine.

Recommendations

i.   Government should establish a laid down criteria for the establishment of prayer houses and healing homes in Onna LGA.

ii. The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), Christian association of Nigeria (CAN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) should establish a registration centre for all the prayer houses and healing homes in Onna LGA and also issue guidelines to them on the modus operandi before their operation. They should equally monitor the activities of all the prayer houses and healing homes to avoid abuse of their activities.

iii. Founders of prayer houses and healing homes should guide against commercialization of healing and prayer. They should heed to Jesus' teaching of "freely you received, freely, you must give".

iv. Government should help to salvage the ugly situation. There is no doubt that poverty and harsh economic conditions foster the trend of prayer houses and healing homes in Onna. Hence, the need to reduce hardship and poverty; boost educational standards and create more opportunities for employment. This will go a long way to reduce the multiplication of prayer houses and healing homes and their attendant consequences in Onna LGA

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Article   **Open Access**

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF BABY DUMPING FOR TIV COMMUNITIES IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract

Baby dumping has become a pressing moral issue in Tiv communities in Benue State, reflecting a breakdown of traditional family values and communal responsibility. The problem is exacerbated by socio-economic challenges, cultural stigmatisation, and inadequate support systems for vulnerable families. This study aimed to evaluate the moral implications of baby dumping on Tiv society, exploring its causes, consequences, and potential solutions. A qualitative research methodology was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with community leaders, healthcare providers, and affected mothers to gather comprehensive insights. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observations, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics surrounding baby dumping on Tiv Communities in Benue State. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify recurring patterns and themes, revealing that economic hardship, lack of reproductive health education, and societal stigma were significant contributors to the phenomenon. The study found that the abandonment of infants not only undermined family integrity but also fostered a culture of neglect within the community. Key recommendations included enhancing community support systems, promoting reproductive health education, and addressing the stigma associated with unplanned pregnancies. The study concludes that there is need for a collective response from government, NGOs, and community leaders to restore moral values and protect vulnerable infants and families in Tiv society.

Keywords: Baby Dumping, Tiv Communities, Moral Implications, Socio-economic Challenges, Cultural Stigma.

Introduction

The rising cases of baby dumping in Nigeria have become a source of concern, particularly for communities like the Tiv in Benue State, where traditional values and moral codes have historically guided family and social relationships. Baby dumping, defined as the act of abandoning newborns in inappropriate places such as roadsides, dumpsters, or isolated areas, represents a critical social and moral problem. This issue not only endangers the lives of innocent infants but also reflects deep-rooted societal challenges, including poverty, lack of education, and cultural stigmatisation of unwed mothers. According to recent studies, Nigeria accounts for a significant proportion of baby dumping cases in Africa, with the problem steadily increasing in the past decade (Adewole 34). This situation demands an urgent assessment, particularly in Tiv communities, where the traditional ethos is increasingly under threat from modern societal pressures. The traditional Tiv society places high moral expectations on individuals regarding family structure, childbearing, and the upbringing of children. Childbearing outside of marriage has long been considered taboo, and women who find themselves in such circumstances are often ostracised (Torkuma 45). This cultural stigmatisation, combined with economic hardship and lack of social support, forces many young women to abandon their babies to avoid shame and societal rejection. Consequently, the prevalence of baby dumping in Tiv communities not only raises questions about the erosion of traditional values but also about the adequacy of modern social structures in addressing these challenges.

The ideal situation in Tiv society would be one where every child is valued and cared for, regardless of the circumstances of birth. Traditionally, extended families played a critical role in ensuring that even children born out of wedlock were integrated into the community (Iorliam78). However, the reality is that with the breakdown of extended family systems and increasing urbanisation, many young mothers are left without the necessary support. The lack of social safety nets has contributed to a rise in baby dumping, which poses significant moral and ethical challenges. This disconnect between traditional values and the current reality highlights a critical gap in the understanding of how modernity has affected moral behaviour in Tiv communities. The consequences of baby dumping in Tiv communities extend beyond the immediate loss of life and the emotional trauma experienced by mothers. On a broader level, it undermines the moral fabric of the society, leading to a weakening of family ties and community cohesion. It also raises serious legal and ethical questions regarding the sanctity of life and the responsibility of both individuals and the state in protecting vulnerable members of society. Scholars have noted that the growing prevalence of baby dumping in Nigeria is indicative of a larger moral crisis, one that requires urgent intervention at both the community and governmental levels (Ityav 101).

This study seeks to evaluate the moral implications of baby dumping on Tiv communities in Benue State by examining the societal factors that contribute to this phenomenon and assessing the moral and ethical challenges it presents. Through focusing on the Tiv community, the research aims to understand how cultural values, economic hardship, and modern societal pressures interact to produce such morally charged outcomes. The study also aims to provide recommendations for addressing the problem, drawing on both traditional and modern approaches to social support and moral education. The problem of baby dumping in Tiv communities represents a significant moral dilemma that reflects broader societal issues such as poverty, cultural stigma, and the erosion of traditional values. The research would not only contribute to academic knowledge but also provide practical insights for policymakers and community leaders. By addressing the root causes and moral implications of baby dumping,

the study aims to propose holistic solutions that reinforce the sanctity of life and the moral responsibilities of individuals and the community.

Clarifying Baby Dumping

Baby dumping is broadly defined as the act of abandoning a newborn or infant in a public or isolated location with the intention of relinquishing parental responsibility. According to Adewole, baby dumping refers to the act of discarding an unwanted infant in unsafe conditions, typically as a result of social or economic pressure (Adewole 29). This definition emphasizes the hazardous circumstances under which these infants are left, often without adequate care. However, Adewole's definition lacks clarity in addressing the broader social context and systemic issues, such as the failure of social support structures, that contribute to the practice. Ityav expands on the definition by including cultural and societal pressures, arguing that baby dumping is a response to the societal stigma attached to unwanted pregnancies, particularly those occurring outside of marriage (56). This view is particularly relevant in patriarchal societies where women face severe repercussions for pregnancy outside traditional marriage structures. While Ityav's definition offers insight into the social pressures leading to baby dumping, it limits the scope by focusing primarily on cultural factors without considering other drivers such as poverty, lack of education, or mental health issues. Therefore, the definition, while strong in addressing cultural dimensions, fails to account for the multifaceted nature of the issue.

In contrast, Eze, defines baby dumping as a criminal act resulting from negligence and irresponsibility by parents, often due to ignorance or fear of social condemnation (47). This legal framing of baby dumping highlights the moral and legal violations associated with the practice. However, the definition oversimplifies the issue by framing it purely as a criminal act. In doing so, it fails to acknowledge the complex socio-economic conditions and the psychological distress that often accompany such decisions. While Eze's focus on the criminal aspects draws attention to the legal consequences, it overlooks the need for rehabilitative support for the mothers involved. Furthermore, Iorliam describes baby dumping in the context of Nigerian society as a tragic outcome of extreme desperation, where mothers feel trapped by economic and societal pressures (33). This perspective highlights the intersection of poverty and social marginalisation, particularly for women in rural areas with limited access to healthcare and social services. While this definition is thorough in its socio-economic analysis, it tends to absolve individuals of personal responsibility, shifting the blame entirely to societal factors. While social conditions are certainly crucial, there must also be consideration of the personal choices involved.From the foregoing, a working definition of baby dumping, incorporating the strengths of these perspectives for this study, is the deliberate abandonment of an infant or newborn, often in unsafe and inappropriate locations, as a result of intersecting factors such as poverty, societal stigma, lack of social support, and personal psychological distress. This definition not only covers the legal, social, and economic dimensions but also acknowledges the complexity of the issue by incorporating psychological and cultural influences. It moves beyond simplistic legal or cultural framings and offers a more holistic view, accounting for the multifaceted causes behind the act.

Understanding the Worldview of the Tiv People

The Tiv people, an ethnic group primarily located in the North Central of Nigeria, possess a rich and complex worldview that is deeply intertwined with their cultural practices, social organisation, and religious beliefs. Central to the Tiv worldview is the concept of *Aôndo*, the Supreme Being, who is believed to be the creator and sustainer of the universe. This belief shapes their understanding of existence and the natural order, as the Tiv view the world as a

manifestation of divine will. According to Dzurgba, "the Tiv cosmology is centered on *Aôndo*, who is perceived as the ultimate source of life and authority" (1). This perspective underscores the importance of maintaining harmony with both the spiritual and physical realms.

In Tiv society, the social structure reflects their worldview, where the eldest male, known as *Orya*, holds significant authority within the family unit. The *Orya* is responsible for making decisions, settling disputes, and preserving the lineage's knowledge (Dzurgba 2). This hierarchical organisation emphasizes the value placed on age, wisdom, and communal ties, which are essential for maintaining social cohesion. The Tiv believe that unity among family members is crucial for their collective strength, as illustrated in traditional stories that convey moral lessons about cooperation and harmony (Dzurgba 2). The Tiv's understanding of the spiritual world is also integral to their worldview. They believe in a pantheon of spirits, known as *ujijingi*, which interact with the physical world and influence daily life. These spirits are thought to govern various aspects of existence, such as fertility, health, and prosperity. The Tiv engage in rituals and sacrifices to appease these spirits, seeking their favour for good fortune and protection (5). This practice highlights the interconnectedness of the physical and metaphysical realms in Tiv cosmology, where the spiritual forces are seen as active participants in human affairs. Rituals play a significant role in the Tiv worldview, serving as a means of communication with the divine and the spirits. The Tiv engage in various ceremonies, including animal sacrifices, to honour *Aôndo* and the spirits, reinforcing their belief in the necessity of appeasing these supernatural entities (5). These rituals are not merely acts of devotion; they are essential for ensuring the well-being of the community and the individual. As Gbenda notes, "sacrifices are offered to the Supreme Being through the gods, reflecting the Tiv's understanding of divine hierarchy" (150).

The Tiv also emphasise the importance of storytelling as a vehicle for transmitting cultural values and beliefs. Folktales, known as *KwaghAlom*, serve to educate younger generations about the significance of unity, respect, and moral conduct within the community (Waapela 45). These narratives are not only entertaining but also function as a means of reinforcing the social fabric and instilling a sense of identity among the Tiv people. Through storytelling, the Tiv articulate their worldview, passing down wisdom and cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Furthermore, the Tiv's relationship with nature is reflective of their worldview, as they see themselves as stewards of the land. The fertility of the land and the abundance of resources are viewed as blessings from *Aôndo*, and the Tiv engage in agricultural practices that honor this connection (Wegh 56). Their cosmology emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with the environment, recognising that the health of the land directly impacts their well-being. This ecological perspective is crucial for sustaining their way of life and ensuring the continuity of their cultural practices. The worldview of the Tiv people is a multifaceted construct that encompasses their beliefs about the divine, social organisation, and the natural world. It is characterized by a deep reverence for *Aôndo*, a structured social hierarchy, and a commitment to maintaining harmony within the community and the environment. Through rituals, storytelling, and a profound connection to nature, the Tiv articulate and reinforce their worldview, ensuring the preservation of their cultural identity for future generations.

Incidents of Baby Dumping in Tiv Society
The phenomenon of baby dumping in Tiv society has become increasingly alarming, reflecting broader societal issues surrounding unplanned pregnancies and the stigma associated with single motherhood. In recent years, there have been numerous reports of infants being abandoned in various locations, often left in dire conditions. For instance, on October 26, 2021, a newborn baby girl was discovered abandoned in a black nylon bag along a farm road in Adaka

village, Makurdi, Benue State. The baby had been exposed to harsh weather conditions and was found in critical condition, having been infested by soldier ants and suffering from malnutrition (Uche Nnorom). This incident underscores the desperation of mothers who may feel compelled to abandon their infants due to social and economic pressures.

Joy Kwaghtse picked a baby on her way to farm 26th of October, 2021 around 12 O'Clockin the afternoon in Makurdi

The reasons behind such incidents are multifaceted. Young mothers, particularly in rural areas, often face immense pressure from societal expectations and familial obligations. Many of these women find themselves in precarious situations, leading to unplanned pregnancies, and may resort to baby dumping as a perceived solution to their dilemma. In some cases, the mothers are reportedly HIV positive or otherwise unable to care for their children, compounding their feelings of helplessness and shame (Ameh Comrade Godwin). This stigma often prevents them from seeking help or support, further isolating them in their struggles.

A newborn baby found dead inside a gutter in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue stateat JS Tarkaa Way on Wednesday night, January 20, 2021

Moreover, the lack of adequate social support systems exacerbates the issue of baby dumping. In Tiv society, there is a notable absence of shelters or safe havens for mothers facing unplanned pregnancies. According to local reports, when a baby is abandoned, there are limited resources available for the child's care and the mother's rehabilitation. For instance, in the case of the baby found in Adaka, it took the intervention of a good Samaritan, Joy Kwaghtse, to ensure that the child received immediate medical attention (Uche Nnorom). Such acts of kindness, while commendable, should not be the primary means of addressing this issue; rather, systemic changes are needed to prevent these situations from arising in the first place.

A woman has been arrested by the police for allegedly throwing her newborn baby in a pit toilet in ZakiBiam, Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State in the early hours of Sunday, March 19th, 2017.The baby miraculously survived after neighbours heard the child crying from deep inside the pit and quickly rescued him. Source: https://m.lindaikejis blog.com/2017/03/photos-newborn-baby-dumped-in-pit.html

Furthermore, addressing the economic factors that contribute to baby dumping is vital. Many young mothers in Tiv society face financial hardships that make it difficult to provide for themselves and their children. Implementing programs that offer financial support, vocational training, and access to healthcare can help alleviate some of the pressures these women face. By empowering young mothers with resources and opportunities, communities can foster an environment that supports rather than stigmatizes motherhood. The incidents of baby dumping in Tiv society highlight significant societal challenges, including stigma, lack of support, and economic hardship. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes community education, the establishment of safe havens for abandoned infants, and programs aimed at empowering young mothers. By working collectively to create a supportive environment, Tiv society can reduce the incidence of baby dumping and ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable children.

Factors Responsible for Baby Dumping in Tiv Society
The issue of baby dumping in Tiv society, Benue State, has become a pressing social concern, reflecting the interplay of various factors that contribute to this alarming trend. One primary factor is the stigma associated with unplanned pregnancies, particularly for young women who find themselves in precarious situations. In many instances, these women experience significant societal pressure to conform to traditional family structures, where premarital pregnancy is viewed with disdain. This stigma often leads them to hide their pregnancies, resulting in feelings of isolation and desperation (Ameh Comrade Godwin). Such pressures can drive them to abandon their newborns, perceiving it as the only viable option to escape the societal judgment they face. Another critical factor contributing to baby dumping is the lack of access to reproductive health education and family planning services in the region. Many young women in Tiv society lack comprehensive knowledge about contraception and reproductive health, leading to unplanned pregnancies.A significant number of women reported insufficient access to family planning resources, which contributed to their unintended pregnancies (Uche Nnorom). The absence of education and resources can leave young mothers feeling trapped, ultimately leading some to consider abandonment as their only choice.

Socio-economic factors also play a significant role in the prevalence of baby dumping. Many young mothers in Tiv society face economic hardships that make it difficult to care for themselves and their infants. Reports indicate that some women may be single parents without any financial support, exacerbating their struggles to provide basic necessities for their children (Moses Ndam). For example, the economic challenges faced by young mothers can lead them to view abandonment as a means of alleviating the burden of parenting. This dire situation highlights the need for economic empowerment initiatives that can support these vulnerable women and reduce the likelihood of baby dumping. Moreover, cultural beliefs surrounding motherhood and child-rearing can influence decisions related to baby dumping. In some instances, cultural norms may dictate that a woman must be married or in a stable relationship before having children. Consequently, unwed mothers may feel compelled to abandon their babies to avoid the shame associated with single parenthood. This cultural stigma can lead to a lack of support from family members, leaving these women isolated and without the means to raise their children (Uche Nnorom). Such societal norms contribute to the cycle of baby dumping, as mothers may feel that there is no place for them or their children in their community.

Additionally, the influence of peer pressure cannot be overlooked in the context of baby dumping. Young women in Tiv society may face pressure from their peers to conform to certain behaviors, including the decision to abandon a child. This pressure can stem from a fear of judgment from their friends or the community, as well as a desire to maintain a particular social image (Moses Ndam). For instance, when faced with the realities of motherhood at a young age, some women may be encouraged by their peers to choose abandonment over facing the challenges of parenting. This dynamic reinforces the stigma around unplanned pregnancies and exacerbates the problem of baby dumping. The absence of supportive social structures is another factor that contributes to the prevalence of baby dumping in Tiv society. Many young mothers lack access to social services that could provide them with the necessary resources and support systems to navigate their challenges. Shelters, counseling services, and healthcare facilities can play a crucial role in preventing baby dumping by offering alternatives and support to mothers in distress (Ameh Comrade Godwin). For example, in situations where mothers feel overwhelmed, having access to temporary shelters or support groups can empower them to keep their babies instead of resorting to abandonment. The factors responsible for baby dumping in Tiv society are complex and multifaceted, encompassing social stigma, lack of reproductive health education, socioeconomic hardships, cultural beliefs, peer pressure, and inadequate support systems. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, economic empowerment, and the establishment of social services to support young mothers. By tackling these underlying factors, Tiv society can work towards reducing the incidence of baby dumping and ensuring a safer environment for vulnerable infants and their mothers.

Effects of Baby Dumping on Tiv Society

This practice raises profound moral and ethical concerns while also affecting family structures, social cohesion, and the health of the community. Analysing the effects of baby dumping reveals its impact on traditional values, child welfare, health implications, and psychological consequences within Tiv culture. One of the most prominent effects of baby dumping is the disruption of traditional family values. The Tiv culture places immense importance on family integrity and moral upbringing. When infants are abandoned, it indicates a breakdown of these values, leading to feelings of shame and stigma for families involved. Such acts can erode trust within the community, as families may face ostracisation and judgment from others, further intensifying the moral crisis within Tiv society (Iorfa 102). The health implications of baby

dumping are particularly alarming. Abandoned infants are often left in hazardous environments, resulting in high mortality rates due to neglect, malnutrition, or diseases. Tiv health professionals have reported an increase in infant mortality related to abandonment, with many cases unreported due to stigma (Mker 87). The lack of adequate health facilities and social services exacerbates the situation, placing a significant burden on the existing healthcare system, which struggles to provide support for vulnerable infants.

Moreover, baby dumping poses serious concerns regarding child welfare and protection. The absence of robust child protection policies in Tiv society leaves many abandoned children at risk of exploitation and abuse. Efforts by local governments and organisations to improve child welfare are often hampered by limited resources and awareness (Agyo 65). As a result, many children become orphaned or vulnerable, highlighting the urgent need for effective interventions to protect their rights and well-being (Shuluwa 110). The psychological impact of baby dumping on the community is another critical aspect to consider. The act instills fear and insecurity among residents, leading to increased suspicion of one another. This social fragmentation can prevent individuals from seeking help or reporting incidents of baby dumping due to fear of stigma or backlash (Iorfa 108). Consequently, the cycle of shame and silence perpetuates the issue, making it difficult for the community to address the underlying problems effectively. In response to the alarming rates of baby dumping, community-based initiatives have emerged within Tiv society to tackle the root causes of the problem. Local organisations have launched awareness campaigns to educate families about reproductive health and the importance of seeking help in times of crisis (Mker 90). Furthermore, support systems for at-risk mothers have been established, providing counseling and access to maternal health services, thus fostering a more supportive environment for women and families (Agyo 66).

A Critique of Baby Dumping in Tiv Society

From a moral perspective, this practice raises significant ethical questions regarding parental responsibilities, societal values, and the treatment of vulnerable populations. The moral critique of baby dumping involves examining the implications of this behaviour on individual families, the broader community, and the ethical responsibilities of society to protect its members.From a parental standpoint, baby dumping reflects a profound moral failure to care for one's offspring. The Tiv culture, deeply rooted in communal values, emphasises the importance of family and the responsibility of parents to nurture and protect their children. When parents abandon their infants, it signifies not only a breach of this moral obligation but also a disturbing shift in societal values where individual circumstances take precedence over communal welfare. This act undermines the family unit, which is foundational in Tiv society, leading to a disintegration of trust and familial bonds.

The moral implications extend beyond the individual family to the larger community. Baby dumping can foster a culture of neglect and indifference towards vulnerable members of society. As community members witness the abandonment of infants, there may be a desensitisation to the suffering of others, leading to a collective moral apathy. This shift can create an environment where individuals feel less inclined to intervene or support those in crisis, further exacerbating the issue and contributing to a cycle of abandonment and neglect. Moreover, the abandonment of infants raises critical questions about the ethical responsibilities of the community and government. The Tiv society is characterised by a strong sense of communal responsibility, where the welfare of all members is seen as a collective duty. However, the increase in baby dumping highlights a failure of social structures to support at-risk families. The lack of adequate support systems, such as counseling services and access to

reproductive health education, indicates a moral obligation that society has neglected, leading to increased incidents of baby dumping.

The stigmatisation of both the abandoned infants and their families further complicates the moral landscape of this issue. In Tiv culture, there is often a significant stigma attached to unplanned pregnancies and the circumstances leading to baby dumping. This stigma can result in feelings of shame and isolation for both the mother and the child, making it difficult for them to reintegrate into society. The moral critique must address how societal judgments can perpetuate the cycle of abandonment, as individuals may feel compelled to conceal their situations rather than seek help. From a moral perspective, addressing the issue of baby dumping in Tiv society requires a shift in cultural narratives that promote understanding and support for vulnerable families. Efforts to educate the community about the importance of compassion and the value of life are essential. Initiatives aimed at de-stigmatising unplanned pregnancies and providing social support for at-risk mothers can help create a more nurturing environment. Such moral education fosters a sense of responsibility towards one another and emphasizes the community's role in caring for its most vulnerable members. The critique of baby dumping in Tiv society reveals profound moral implications that extend beyond individual actions to the health of the community as a whole. The practice challenges the core values of family integrity and communal responsibility, necessitating a collective response that prioritises education, support, and compassion. By addressing the moral failures that contribute to baby dumping, Tiv society can work towards restoring its ethical foundations and ensuring the welfare of all its members.

Moral Implications of Baby Dumping for Tiv Society

The act of baby dumping in Tiv society, presents significant moral implications that challenge the core values of familial and communal integrity. This practice raises profound ethical questions regarding individual responsibility, societal values, and the obligations of community members to protect vulnerable populations. A comprehensive evaluation of the moral implications of baby dumping necessitates a focus on the breakdown of family values, erosion of community trust, societal stigmatisation, ethical responsibilities of society, and the importance of community initiatives to address this pressing issue.

Breakdown of Family Values: At the heart of the issue of baby dumping is the fundamental breakdown of traditional family values that have long underpinned Tiv culture. In Tiv society, familial integrity is not just a personal responsibility but a communal expectation. Parents are culturally and morally obligated to nurture and protect their children, with the family unit serving as a vital institution for socialization and support (Susan Tongoveoral interview). When a parent chooses to abandon an infant, this act represents a profound moral failure, indicating a rejection of these responsibilities. The abandonment disrupts not only the immediate family but also the wider community, as it undermines shared norms and the understanding of parental duty.

This failure has far-reaching consequences, as it threatens to dismantle the societal fabric that binds families together. The act of baby dumping signifies a shift in moral priorities, where individual circumstances overshadow the communal welfare. The loss of traditional values surrounding family can create an environment where personal struggles are met with indifference, ultimately leading to the disintegration of the supportive networks that have historically characterised Tiv society (NgufanFanenoral interview). As families become fractured, the moral imperative to care for one another diminishes, resulting in a community less inclined to prioritize familial bonds. Moreover, the implications of baby dumping extend beyond the immediate family, challenging the collective identity of the Tiv people. In a society

where kinship and communal ties are paramount, the abandonment of infants can lead to a sense of collective shame and disconnection (Kungwa Lucy oral interview). The erosion of these values not only affects individual families but also weakens the overall moral fabric of the community, emphasizing the need for a concerted effort to reinforce the importance of family integrity as a pillar of societal well-being.

Erosion of Community Trust: The prevalence of baby dumping has profound implications for community trust, an essential component of social cohesion in Tiv society. Trust among community members is foundational to collective action and support. However, when incidents of baby dumping become more common, they can foster an atmosphere of suspicion and fear. Witnessing such acts can lead to a breakdown in the belief that individuals will care for one another, creating a cycle of moral decay (Agyo 68). As people become wary of their neighbors, the fabric of community life begins to fray, diminishing the collective responsibility that has historically characterized Tiv culture. This erosion of trust can also have practical consequences, as individuals may feel less inclined to intervene when they witness signs of distress or neglect. In a society where communal intervention has traditionally played a critical role in child-rearing and support, the inability to rely on one another can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities (DemenengeWendehoral interview). The psychological effects of mistrust can lead to isolation and despair among community members, further perpetuating the conditions that lead to baby dumping. This environment of mistrust ultimately contributes to a cycle of neglect that can be difficult to break. Furthermore, the implications of diminished trust extend beyond individual actions to the broader community ethos. When people no longer feel safe in their environment, they may withdraw from community engagement, leading to a loss of collective identity and a disconnection from cultural practices that foster unity (Iorfa 112). Restoring trust within the community is essential for rebuilding the moral foundation necessary to address issues like baby dumping. This requires open dialogue, community support initiatives, and a commitment to collective action aimed at reinforcing the values of responsibility and care for one another.

Societal Stigmatisation: The stigma surrounding baby dumping has significant moral implications, impacting both the abandoned infants and their families. In Tiv culture, unplanned pregnancies often carry a heavy social burden, leading to shame and isolation for mothers who find themselves in such circumstances. This stigma can prevent individuals from seeking help, ultimately leading to more desperate measures such as abandonment (Jennifer Zenda oral interview). The moral critique of baby dumping must, therefore, address the societal judgments that perpetuate this cycle, as the fear of ostracism can drive vulnerable individuals further away from the support they need. The impact of stigmatisation extends beyond the immediate family to the abandoned infants themselves, who often bear the brunt of societal judgment. Abandoned children may be viewed as symbols of shame and failure, leading to lifelong implications for their identity and social acceptance (Comfort Aor oral interview). This negative perception can hinder their opportunities for reintegration into society, perpetuating a cycle of neglect and marginalisation. In a society that traditionally values community and kinship, the stigma attached to these children can create barriers that prevent them from receiving the care and support they require.

Ethical Responsibilities of Society: The rise of baby dumping poses essential questions about the ethical responsibilities of society toward its most vulnerable members. In Tiv culture, the communal ethos emphasizes that the welfare of individuals is a collective duty. However, the increasing frequency of baby dumping suggests a failure in social structures to provide

adequate support for families facing difficulties (E. Aende oral interview). The absence of effective intervention mechanisms, such as counseling services, healthcare access, and social support programs, represents a moral shortcoming that allows such practices to persist. Ethically, society must confront the responsibility of creating supportive environments that prioritize the well-being of families. This includes addressing the underlying issues that contribute to baby dumping, such as poverty, lack of education, and inadequate access to reproductive health services (Felix Tsebeeoral interview). Without addressing these root causes, efforts to combat baby dumping may prove insufficient. The moral imperative lies in fostering conditions that empower individuals to care for their children rather than abandon them.

Community Initiatives and Interventions: Community-based initiatives play a crucial role in addressing the moral implications of baby dumping by fostering a supportive environment. Local organizations and community leaders are uniquely positioned to implement awareness campaigns that educate families about reproductive health, responsible parenting, and the resources available for at-risk mothers (John Ioryinaoral interview). These initiatives not only serve to raise awareness but also help to dismantle the stigma surrounding unplanned pregnancies, encouraging individuals to seek help rather than resorting to abandonment. Furthermore, community support programs can provide practical assistance to families in crisis. This may include establishing counseling services, parenting workshops, and access to healthcare resources that empower individuals to make informed choices regarding their pregnancies (Raymond Tyosendaoral interview). In creating a network of support, Tiv society can work to prevent baby dumping and promote a culture of care and responsibility. These initiatives can also facilitate open dialogue within the community, allowing individuals to share their experiences and challenges, thus fostering empathy and understanding.

From the foregoing, the moral implications of baby dumping on Tiv society are extensive and complex, affecting family values, community trust, and societal attitudes toward vulnerable populations. The practice challenges the fundamental principles of care and responsibility that underpin Tiv culture, necessitating a collective response to address the root causes and moral failures that contribute to this issue. Through fostering a culture of understanding, support, and ethical responsibility, Tiv society can work towards combating baby dumping and ensuring the welfare of all its members. Community engagement therefore becomes crucial in combating the baby dumping crisis. Awareness campaigns and educational initiatives can help change societal perceptions regarding unplanned pregnancies and encourage young women to seek assistance. For example, local NGOs and health organizations could establish programs that provide education on reproductive health, family planning, and the resources available for young mothers. This approach can empower women to make informed decisions and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help during pregnancy or after childbirth (Uche Nnorom). In addition to community education, establishing safe spaces for mothers to leave their infants without fear of retribution is essential. Creating designated locations where mothers can relinquish their babies anonymously and safely could significantly decrease the instances of abandonment. Such initiatives have been implemented in various regions worldwide and have proven effective in safeguarding the welfare of unwanted infants (Tor Francis oral interview). Through providing an alternative to abandonment, these measures can help protect vulnerable newborns and reduce the trauma associated with their initial experiences.

Recommendations
i.   From the preceding analysis of the study, it is revealed that poverty and economic instability are significant factors contributing to baby dumping in Tiv society. Consequently,

the study recommends that local government and non-governmental organizations implement economic empowerment programs aimed at improving the financial stability of families.

ii. From the preceding analysis of the study, it is revealed that cultural stigmatization plays a crucial role in the decision to abandon infants. Consequently, the study recommends that community awareness campaigns be conducted to educate the public about the importance of supporting vulnerable families and reducing the stigma associated with unplanned pregnancies.

iii. From the preceding analysis of the study, it is revealed that there is a lack of adequate child protection laws and enforcement in Nigeria. Consequently, the study recommends that policymakers prioritize the development and enforcement of comprehensive child protection laws to safeguard the rights and welfare of abandoned children.

iv. From the preceding analysis of the study, it is revealed that there is insufficient support for mothers facing unplanned pregnancies. Consequently, the study recommends that health care providers offer counseling and support services to pregnant women, including access to family planning resources and prenatal care.

v. From the preceding analysis of the study, it is revealed that community involvement is essential in addressing the issue of baby dumping. Consequently, the study recommends that local leaders and community organizations collaborate to create support networks for at-risk families, fostering a sense of responsibility and care within the community.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates its effectiveness in illuminating the complex and multifaceted nature of baby dumping within Tiv society. It emphasizes the intricate interplay of cultural, economic, and social factors contributing to this urgent issue. Through a thorough analysis, the research identifies critical elements, including poverty, insufficient social support, and cultural stigma, which exacerbate the prevalence of baby dumping. The study's methodological framework, which incorporates qualitative data collection and community engagement, offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of young mothers and the societal pressures they encounter. Furthermore, the exploration of moral implications highlights the pressing need for both community and governmental interventions to address the root causes of baby dumping, rendering the findings both relevant and timely.In conclusion, this study represents a significant contribution to the discourse surrounding baby dumping in Nigeria, particularly in the context of Tiv communities in Benue State. It not only elucidates the ethical dilemmas associated with the abandonment of infants but also calls for a coordinated response from various stakeholders, including policymakers, community leaders, and social service organizations. In advocating for economic empowerment, cultural transformation, and improved support systems for mothers, the study outlines a comprehensive roadmap for addressing the issue of baby dumping. In the long run, the research underscores the importance of restoring traditional values and enhancing community cohesion to protect vulnerable infants and cultivate a more supportive environment for families.

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List of Informants/Respondents

S/N	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
1.	Tor Francis,	55	M	Priest/Teacher	Welfare Quarters, Mkd LGA	8/9/2024
2.	Susan Tongove	50	F	Nurse	Gyado Villa, Mkd LGA	9/9/2024
3.	NgufanFanen	38	F	Teacher	Fiidi, Mkd LGA	9/10/2024
4.	Kungwa Lucy	36	F	Journalist	Zaki-Biam, Ukum LGA	25/08/2024
5.	DemenengeWendeh	52	M	Teacher,	Zaki-Biam, Ukum LGA	25/08/2024
6.	Jennifer Zenda	26	F	Accountant	Zaki-Biam, Ukum LGA	25/08/2024
7.	Comfort Aor	51	F	Nurse	Zaki-Biam, Ukum LGA	25/08/2024
8.	Dr. E. Aende	40	M	Medical Doctor	Gboko South, Gboko LGA	28/09/2024
9.	Felix Tsebee	38	M	Health Research	Gboko South, Gboko LGA	28/09/2024
10	Barr. John Ioryina	44	M	Legal Practitioner	Gboko South, Gboko LGA	28/09/2024
11	Raymond Tyosenda	38	M	Nigerian Police Force	Gboko South, Gboko LGA	28/09/2024

Article **Open Access**

ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR STREET BEGGING AMONG SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Many children live on the streets, robbed of education and vulnerable to many hazards, despite attempts to solve this issue. This paper explored the possible factors influencing street begging among school-age children in the locale. A self-constructed questionnaire was employed to gather data from 100 randomly selected employees in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Development, Kwara State, guided by three research questions. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyse the data. Results showed that major causes of street begging are poverty, parental neglect, substandard housing, homelessness, bad urban family circumstances, family disintegration, and cultural and religious influences. Moreover, street begging was discovered to affect children's educational performance, hence restricting their academic advancement and prospects for the future. The paper suggested poverty alleviation programmes, a committed government committee to monitor policy implementation, sustainable rehabilitation projects, and enhanced family duties towards this problem. Reducing the number of vulnerable children also depends on discouraging polygamy and large families. The results draw attention to the pressing need of efficient policy implementation and greater social responsibility to shield children from severe reality of street life. Combating these underlying issues will help to create a more lasting solution that guarantees every child has access to school and a brighter future.

Keywords: Street Begging, School-age Children, Poverty, Family Structure.

Introduction

Street begging among school-age children remains a pressing social issue in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, reflecting deeper structural and socio-economic problems. The presence of children on the streets, engaging in begging rather than education, signals a significant deprivation of basic rights, exposing them to exploitation, abuse, and a cycle of poverty.

Empirical studies suggest that street begging is not only a consequence of economic hardship but also of cultural norms, poor governance, and systemic neglect (Bowling, 2022; Tsagem & Idris, 2025). Poverty is one of the primary drivers of child begging, as families struggling to meet basic needs often push children into street begging as a survival strategy (Agyemang et al., 2024). In Nigeria, Mbam et al. (2022) reported that over 60% of the population lives below the poverty line, with children being the most vulnerable. Inadequate parental care and family disintegration further exacerbate this issue. Studies by Obimakinde and Shabir (2023) revealed that children from broken homes or large, polygamous families are more likely to be forced into begging due to a lack of financial and emotional support. Also, cultural and religious practices influence the normalisation of child begging in some communities, particularly in the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria, where children are sent out to beg under the guise of religious education (Uroko & Obiorah, 2024). This practice not only deprives children of formal education but also exposes them to various social risks, including exploitation, malnutrition, and physical abuse. In some cases, religious leaders who oversee these children fail to provide adequate care, further worsening their plight (Uche, 2022).

The educational consequences of street begging are severe, leading to poor academic performance, school dropout, and limited future opportunities (Doja, 2020). Children engaged in begging often lack access to basic literacy and numeracy skills, making their reintegration into formal schooling difficult. Studies have shown that street children in Nigeria exhibit lower cognitive development and socio-emotional well-being than their peers who attend school regularly (Ariyo et al., 2022). This educational deprivation perpetuates the cycle of poverty, making it difficult for these children to break free from socio-economic disadvantages in adulthood. Beyond education, street begging also has significant psychological effects on children. Research by Yousaf and Rafique (2025) suggests that children who beg on the streets often suffer from depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety due to social stigma and neglect. Exposure to harsh environmental conditions, exploitation, and verbal or physical abuse further deteriorates their mental health. The lack of parental care and a structured environment deprives them of emotional stability, leading to maladaptive behaviours that persist into adulthood. Government intervention in tackling street begging has been inconsistent, with policies lacking effective implementation and sustainability (Ojedokun, 2021). While various child protection laws exist, enforcement remains weak, allowing the issue to persist. The Kwara State government, for instance, has made efforts to rehabilitate street children through skill acquisition programmes and social welfare initiatives, but these efforts often lack sufficient funding and long-term planning (Salahu, 2019). Without a coordinated and well-funded approach, the effectiveness of such interventions remains limited. Furthermore, rapid urbanisation and poor housing conditions have contributed to the rise in child begging. The increasing migration of rural families to urban centers like Ilorin in search of better economic opportunities has led to overcrowded settlements with inadequate social amenities. Families living in slums often lack access to affordable housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities, forcing children to seek alternative means of survival through begging (Moreno & Sulasula, 2024).

The role of family structure in child begging cannot be overlooked. Large families with multiple dependents often struggle to provide for their children, leading to increased child labor and begging. Research has shown that children from polygamous households are more likely to be pushed into begging due to financial strain (Shaiful Bahari et al., 2021). This study aims to assess the underlying factors contributing to street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis and provide evidence-based recommendations for mitigating this issue. By understanding the root causes, policymakers and stakeholders can develop sustainable

solutions that prioritise child welfare and ensure access to education and a brighter future for all children.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the factors responsible for street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

i. Examine the factors responsible for street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

ii. Investigate the possible effects of street begging on the educational attainment of school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis.

iii. Find possible solutions to the problem of street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis.

Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

i. What are the factors responsible for street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State?

ii. How does street begging affect the educational attainment of school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis?

iii. What possible solutions can be implemented to reduce the prevalence of street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the factors responsible for street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis. The population for the study comprised employees of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Development, Kwara State, who are directly involved in child welfare and social intervention programmes. A sample of 100 respondents was randomly selected to ensure diverse perspectives from individuals working within the ministry. A self-constructed questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was designed based on literature review findings and was divided into three sections: demographic information, factors contributing to street begging, and the impact of street begging on children's education. The instrument was validated by experts in child development and social welfare to ensure reliability and content validity. Data were collected and analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically Mean and Standard Deviation, to determine the most significant factors influencing street begging. The analysis was guided by three research questions aimed at understanding the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to child street begging. Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation of all respondents. The findings from this study will inform policy recommendations aimed at addressing the root causes of street begging and promoting child welfare in Ilorin Metropolis.

Results

Answering of Research Questions: Three research questions were generated and answered using measure of central tendencies (mean and standard deviation). The results are presented in the tables below.

Factors Responsible for Street Begging Among School-Age Children in Ilorin Metropolis
To answer this research question, the mean responses of the respondents to each questionnaire item addressing the factors responsible for street begging were computed. The cut-off mean value was calculated to be 2.5. Items with a mean value greater than 2.5 are considered significant factors, while those below 2.5 are not.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing Factors Responsible for Street Begging

S/N	Items	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Homelessness	2.67	1.14	1st
2	Poverty	2.65	1.04	2nd
3	Mental illness and drugs	2.45	1.02	10th
4	Inadequate access to housing	2.56	1.06	4th
5	Lack of health support services	2.46	1.50	9th
6	Negligence from the parents	2.57	1.04	3rd
7	Breakdown of the family system	2.53	1.03	6th
8	Unemployment of parents	2.48	1.13	8th
9	Poor urban families, where children are subjected to work	2.54	1.14	5th
10	Cultural and religious factors	2.53	1.05	7th
	Total	**2.54**		

The table above reveals that the major factors responsible for street begging include homelessness, poverty, parental negligence, inadequate housing access, poor urban families where children are forced to work, breakdown of the family, and cultural and religious factors. The overall mean of 2.54, which is above the cut-off of 2.50, confirms that these factors contribute significantly to street begging in Ilorin Metropolis.

Effects of Street Begging on the Educational Attainment of School-Age Children in Ilorin Metropolis
The total responses of the respondents, which were initially in a continuous form were transformed to a categorical data, and were categorised into two groups: **negative** (scores between 6–15) and **positive** (scores between 16–24) based on the cut-off score of 9. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of the Effects of Street Begging on Educational Attainment

Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Remark
6 – 15	68	68.0%	Low
16 – 24	32	32.0%	Average

The table reveals that 68% of the respondents indicated that street begging has a negative effect on educational attainment, while 32% reported an average impact. This suggests that street begging significantly hinders the educational progress of school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis.

The Possible Solutions to Street Begging Among School-Age Children in Ilorin Metropolis
To answer this question, the mean responses of teachers to each item addressing possible solutions were computed. The cut-off mean value was **2.5**, with items above this threshold considered as viable solutions.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing Possible Solutions to Street Begging

S/N	Items	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Poverty alleviation programmes targeting beggars and the needy should be promoted	2.59	1.14	1st
2	Sustainable and effective rehabilitation should be promoted	2.56	1.04	3rd
3	Committees should be set up at all government levels to implement poverty alleviation programmes	2.57	1.02	2nd
4	Families should fulfill their social responsibilities, especially to disabled or distressed members	2.54	1.06	4th
5	Individuals should avoid social excesses such as polygamy when they cannot support their children	2.51	0.50	5th
	Total	**2.55**		

The table above indicates that the most viable solutions to street begging include poverty alleviation programmes, effective rehabilitation strategies, government intervention through policy implementation, family responsibility, and responsible family planning. The overall mean of 2.55, which is above the cut-off of 2.50, suggests that these solutions, if properly implemented, can significantly reduce street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis.

Discussions of the Findings

The findings of this study revealed that several key factors contribute to street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis. These include homelessness, poverty, parental negligence, inadequate access to housing, poor urban living conditions, family breakdown, and cultural and religious influences. Homelessness and poverty emerged as major drivers of street begging among school-age children. Respondents indicated that children from destitute families often resort to begging as a means of survival. This finding aligns with Uroko and Obiorah (2024), who established a strong correlation between begging, homelessness, poverty, mental illness, inadequate access to housing, and lack of social support systems. Similarly, Obimakinde and Shabir (2023) emphasised that children engaged in street begging often lack stable homes, parental care, and financial support, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Parental negligence and the breakdown of family structures were identified as significant contributors to child street begging. The findings revealed that children from broken homes or those with absent or negligent parents are more likely to resort to begging. This corroborates the assertion of Ariyo et al. (2022), who argued that the failure of families to provide adequate care and supervision often pushes children into street life, exposing them to risks such as trafficking, child labor, and abuse. Moreover, Sumarni and Darmawan (2024) noted that children from dysfunctional families experience higher levels of social exclusion, forcing them into begging as a coping mechanism.

The study also found that cultural and religious factors play a role in perpetuating street begging among school-age children. Some societies tolerate or even encourage child begging as part of religious traditions or cultural norms. This finding is supported by Yusuf (2020), who documented that in certain regions, particularly among Almajiri children, begging is institutionalised within religious schooling systems. Such cultural acceptance makes it difficult to eradicate the practice without targeted interventions. The findings also demonstrated that street begging has detrimental effects on the educational attainment of school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis. Respondents emphasised that children who beg on the streets instead of attending school missed critical learning opportunities, which ultimately leads to illiteracy and social marginalisation. This finding aligns with the work of Alqahtani (2022), who highlighted that children involved in street begging are at a high risk of academic failure due to irregular school attendance and exposure to street-related dangers. Moreover, studies by Gabriel (2024)

showed that street children face psychological and emotional challenges that further hinder their academic performance. The lack of proper parental guidance, exposure to harsh living conditions, and constant need to fend for themselves make it difficult for them to concentrate on education. Beyond educational setbacks, the study found that children involved in street begging are vulnerable to various social dangers, including human trafficking, child labor, and sexual exploitation. Respondents highlighted that beggars, especially young girls, are at high risk of being trafficked or forced into prostitution. This assertion aligns with Franchino-Olsen (2019), who noted that street children are often targeted by criminals for illegal activities due to their vulnerability. Furthermore, the study revealed that children who beg on the streets are at risk of being involved in road accidents, particularly in areas with heavy traffic. Bello and Olutola (2020) supported this finding, stating that beggars constitute a significant percentage of road accident victims due to their constant presence in high-risk areas.

Conclusion

The study concluded that homelessness, poverty, parental negligence, family breakdown, and cultural and religious influences are the primary factors driving street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis. Additionally, the study affirmed that street begging negatively impacts the educational attainment and overall well-being of children. To address this challenge, concerted efforts from the government, families, and society at large are required to implement sustainable poverty alleviation programmes, strengthen family support systems, and ensure that every child has access to quality education and a safe environment.

Recommendations

To tackle the issue of street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis, the study suggests the following measures:

i. Poverty Alleviation Programmes: Government and non-governmental organisations should implement targeted poverty alleviation programmes that directly benefit beggars and vulnerable families.

ii. Sustainable and Effective Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation programmes should focus on reintegrating street children into society by providing them with education, vocational training, and psychological support.

iii. Policy Implementation and Government Intervention: A dedicated committee should be established at all three tiers of government to oversee the implementation of poverty alleviation initiatives and policies aimed at reducing street begging.

iv. Strengthening Family Structures: Families should be encouraged to take responsibility for their children's welfare, and awareness campaigns should be conducted to promote responsible parenting.

v. Regulating Polygamy and Large Families: Individuals should be discouraged from having more children than they can afford to care for, as large family sizes often contribute to child neglect and poverty.

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Article   **Open Access**

AFRICAN IDENTITY IN TRANSFORMATION: EXPLORING SOCIAL DYNAMICS

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Abstract

The issue of African identity has been one of the major concerns in African discourse. This concern is further heightened in contemporary time by the compelling demand for global standard and push for cultural uniformity as criteria for acceptance into the comity of civilized societies. In this way, attempts at calibrating African identity reflects the principle of existence which asserts that each entity is self-defined, unified with itself, and coherent in its nature. Differently stated. every entity exists separately from the others, with characteristics such as color, size, and shape differentiating it from other entities. The objective of the paper, therefore, is to challenge the position that the debate about African identity is long foregone, and irredeemably so. It demonstrates that the capacity of man to continue to engage in self-interrogation for the purpose of self-affirmation is one of the ontological characteristics of his being. In engaging the method of conceptual analysis. The study establishes a link between the African past, its present and foreseeable future. Finding reveals that the frantic efforts made towards reclaiming and redefining the African personality through social and ideological strides, has culminated into cultural and linguistic activism wherein there is more emphasis by scholars on the need to prioritize indigenous African languages in literature and intellectual discourse The outcome of the study shows that African identity is not a relic of the past but a living and evolving force.

Keywords: African Identity, Colonialism, Post-colonialism, Racialism, Self-affirmation, Reclamation

Introduction

There is no human civilization which has not got a view or aggregate of views that can be called their concept or theory of a human person that is why we often talk of European personality, the Asian personality or the African personality. Often times, it is through these racial or

cultural lenses that a people's view about existence, about human being, human value and what makes a person of one race different from a person of another race become known. Basically, scholars in African philosophy are of the view that there are two ways to understand who a human being is. The first is normative and the send is prescriptive. The former is an evaluation of the human person in respect to obedience to cultural, community and social norms. In other words, the definition of the human person using this approach, takes root from the culture and tradition in which he or she originates and thus set him or her apart from another person of different culture and tradition. The descriptive approach to the human person takes it cue from human physical attributes. In addition, a concept of a person is not something that the people in that society will necessarily think of as separate from their views about many other things. In other words, a people's notion of the human being interlocks with their notion of several other things including their notion of reality, acceptable moral conduct and their method of accessing truth. Human Identity, in short, is made up of a multitude of factors and an individual is both subject to them and at the same time influences others as well. Simply put, the experiences of individual personality in a given society or race create their identity or combine to define who they are. Therefore, the work shall explore the normative approach to the African personality and discuss why it is a bit difficult to properly calibrate who an African is owing to his peculiar experience of the past which has affected his present. It shall show the pragmatic ideological efforts being made to reclaim African identity. It shall begin by discussing briefly the unfortunate colonial experience and its attendant consequences on the African personality viz: lost of identity and clear-cut ideology on which path to go.

Disrupting the African Psyche: Colonialism's Lasting Effects

No doubt, as the saying goes, "one cannot divine the future without making reference to the past". It is on this note that the study will look into the past experiences of the African man which led him to where he is today. It is necessary to understand this experience in order to fully appreciate his present status and what awaits his fate in the nearest future. Colonial rule was rooted in the denial of African history, culture, and social system. It was a background already laid by false imagination by Western anthropologists and explorers. European explorers and missionaries propagated the idea that Africa had no history before their arrival, thereby branding indigenous knowledge as primitive. The imposition of western education, languages, Christianity and Eurocentric values systematically impacted indigenous worldviews and identities. An incident that will forever remain fresh and horrendous in the minds of the African political historians is the events of 1804/1805 Berlin conference. For the purpose of recapitulation, this was a date with history when the Western powers and their allies, sat in Berlin Germany to partition the African territory among themselves. Since that date till the early 1960s, the hitherto African territories were directly and indirectly administered by these colonial interlopers. By virtue of this particular event, Africa lost it pride of place, its cultures were invaded and as William Yeast would put it; "Turning and turning in the widening gyre. The falcon cannot hear the falconer. Things fall apart the center cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world"[1].

Walter Rodney described this era as when the African people were cruelly sold into slavery, used their man powers for the industrial progress of Europe and America. These colonial intruders practically destroyed all that were capable of making Africans great, leaving in its place, mere chaff both in personality and in material resources. Even those left in the soil of Africa, were made to be slaves in their own father land. They underestimated and disparaged African culture and identity. Specifically, the Europeans denied that reason played a

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[1] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*. (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p.4.

significant role in the development of society and culture in Africa as it did in Europe. This claim was an aspect of the myth which was designed as an ideology of legitimation for the colonial enterprise[2]. This unfortunate incidence was technically summarized by C.L.R. James thus:

> Africans are, and always have been, a backward and barbarous people who have never been able to establish any civilized society of their own.... These barbarous people were brought into contact with civilization by the brutalities of the slave trade. However, the unhappy slave trade is happily behind us, and as a result of their contact with European civilization, primitive Africans became a part of a unified world[3]

After brain washing the people, they were meant to see all that is African as bad, barbaric, savagery, evil, fetish and diabolic. While those of Western extraction as good, civilized and superior. Worse still; at a point, according to Achebe, even our own people turned against us by joining them to call our cultures bad.

> Does the white man understand our custom about land?" "How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.[4]

This was what Frantz Fanon described as:

> Two worlds: that makes two bewitching; they dance all night and at dawn they crowd into the churches to hear mass; each day they split widens. Our enemy betrays his brothers and becomes our accomplice; his brothers do the same thing. The status of "native" introduce and maintained by the settler among colonized people with their consent[5].

The above quotation from Frantz summarizes the conditions Africans found themselves in this period, that is, they were confronted with the enemies within and the ones from outside. To the colonizers, then, Africans were an inferior race of people whose religions, where they had any, were without any abiding values; they were people who generally lacked the intellectual and moral resources of the Europeans, whose mission in Africa was a "civilizing mission." This was the situation which the African man found himself under the European intrusion. It was against this background that the African identity was battered. As seen from the discussion above, the African personality passed through tripartite experience; slavery, colonialism and racism. But like Fanon again observes, colonialism only loosens its hold when the knife is at its throat. It was through this circumstance that the colonial interlopers unwillingly granted the various people in Africa their independence. However, emerging from the foregoing experience as characterized above, the perplexing questions within African philosophy now

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[2] Olusegun Oladipo, "Reason, Identity, and the African Quest: The Problems of Self-Definition in African Philosophy" in *Africa Today*, Vol. 42, No. 3, Philosophy, Identity, and Social Transformation (3rd Qtr., 1995), pp. 26-38. Indiana University Press Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/4187048

[3] C.L.R. James, , *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* .(London: Allison and Bushy, 1977), p. 29.

[4] Achebe, op.cit., p.176.

[5] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. (Suffolk Great Britain: The Chancer Press, 1963), p.17.

border on African identity particularly: what is Africa? Who is an African? How can an African be characterized? But as observed by Anthony Kalu, at face value, the answer seems obvious. Surely, everyone knows who the African is. But the answer becomes less obvious once other probing qualifiers and circumstances that make the African experience are added to the question[6]. These were the issues that immediately confronted the new African post-colonial states; how to reclaim the African personality and how to reaffirm that which is authentically African in order to usher the people of Africa into a new dawn.

The Post Colonial African and the Search for Identity

The people of Africa entered into the post-colonial era with hope high, thinking that now that the enemy had gone, it would be a new dawn for the young states, indeed. However, the first issue which confronted African thinkers then as part of decolonization process was how to define who an African is. This was necessary because one needs to know who one is before one can affirm oneself and make progress. This principle is in order with the Socratic dictum, "man know thyself". Accordingly, there was need to re-situate African mode of thinking prior to the invasion of his personality by the Europeans. African thinkers produced ideas and philosophies that were strictly African and which could be equated to what was inherited from the Western ideas. Thus, in the foregoing mission, we can situate African philosophy as essentially an activity, a project, a systematic, coherent inquiry into African experience and his world and how he conceives and interprets the universe. According to, Panthaleon. Iroegbu, "African philosophy is the reflective inquiry into the marvels and problematic that confronts one in the African world in view of producing systematic explanation and sustained responses to them"[7]. This exercise by African thinkers of this period became important because in the views of Frank Ndubuisi,

> African philosophy should take cognizance of the African past and present experience in openness for the future through searching, critical inquiry and well-informed criticisms, not only to rediscover, discover, know and interpret his world, but also to master it and enhance it[8]

Again, this cannot be successfully achieved without first understanding who an African is. Like Kanu further noted, the question that confronted thinkers and political theorists of the post-colonial Africa ranged from: How the African identity should be constructed in the face of the mosaic of identities that people of African ancestry living within and beyond the continent bear? Should all been seen as Africans, and does having an African pedigree qualify them as African? Are all who perceive themselves as Africans accepted as such? Are there levels of "Africanness", and are some more African than others?[9] Stating the opinion of Jideofor, Kanu goes further to observe that in the past, the experience of slave trade and colonialism were the provenance of such an enquiry. However, in recent time (the post colonial Africa), the researcher believes that with the intensification of globalisation the identity of the African would have to be defined from this experience, or else, she would run the risk of being a nameless actor in the world stage[10]. Therefore, what is African identity?

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[6] Anthony Kalu, African Identity and the Emergence of Globalization, in *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* Vol. 3 No. 6; June 2013, p.34

[7] Panthaleon Iroegbu, *Enwisdomization and African philosophy*.(Owerri: International University Press, 1994),p.116.

[8] Frank Ndubuisi, "The Philosophical Paradigm of African Identity and Development", in *Open Journal of Philosophy* 2013. Vol.3, No.1A, 222-230 2013 in SciRes (http://www.scirp.org/journal/ojpp)

[9] Kanu, op.cit., p.34.

[10] Kanu, ibid

African Identity

African philosophy bears on African identity. To understand this more, we have to consider or address certain questions such as: what is identity? What actually characterizes a person as an African? These questions revolve around the issue of identity. For Charles Nweke, the traits and attributes of an object help to identify it. An object's form is referred to as its structural identity. The diversity of nature creates a hybrid identity even though reality is one. "Thus, various aspects of existence bear specific identities so that it is possible to talk of personal identity, cultural identity, national identity, social identity…identity bears the character of specification."[11] Similarly, personal observation has shown that the world is not merely a collection of lifeless, static natural phenomena like mountains and trees.There exists a conscious, engaged, and purposeful entity: Man. In contrast to the previous category of beings that lack awareness of their own existence, man is self-aware and has the intellectual abilities to comprehend himself and make sense of his existence. In the light of this, for Iroegbu, "by African, is understood the geo-political and socio-cultural entity englobed by the continent Africa".[12] He considers more of the place and location. But the questions above went beyond geographical location or designation, the term refers to a being or reality or one who can directly or indirectly trace his route to the African soil or having the characteristics of Africanity. What is rather important is to assert that the African is identifiable naturally; by colour, location or historical origin. The fact remains that, the question of African identity bears on the principle of being that "what is, is and what is not, is not"[13]. It shows, that being is and non-being is not. On this, Richard Popkin says; What is, cannot change into what is not without passing out of existence. Hence, the permanent, the real is and cannot be part of reality or become part of reality. It is what it is, and to become something other than this would involve the contradiction, that it has become what it is not[14]. But again, the question of who an African is remains unanswered. What indeed is an African identity?

In essence, some scholars are of the opinion that the search for African identity is not feasible, since Africans are not one but many peoples and races with a diversity of cultural beliefs, languages and traditions. Emphasizing the truncated effects of African unhealthy contact with the West as the main cause and problem of African identity crisis. As observed at the introductory part of this paper, slavery, racialism and colonialism gave rise to the African psychological and cultural alienation which also gave rise to the loss of collective identity". Also according to Ruch and Anyanwu, "it is all this, this racialism, the slavery and the oppression of colonialism, the ambiguities of attitudes on the part of both whites and blacks which gave rise to the psychological and cultural alienation to the loss of collective identity of the Africans"[15]. The West considered Africa as inferior and without reasoning. They felt that the colour: White is superior while Black is inferior and that the blacks were condemned to be primitives. As again reinforced by Maduabuchi Dukor,

> Africans of the first half of this century have begun to search for their identity
> because they had the feeling that they had lost it. The three factors which led
> to this feeling were; slavery, colonialism and racialism of all these, racialism is
> said to be the source of the colonialism and slavery. It was because Africans
> were considered racially inferior and culturally uncivilized that both Arabs

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[11] Charles Nweke, "African Identity: The Nature of Cultural Perspectives", philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy (Philippine e-journal) 19 (1); 66-75 (2018)

[12] Iroegbu, op.cit., p.116

[13] Jim Unah, *On Being: Discourse of the Ontology of Man*. (Lagos: Fadec Publishers, 2002). P.4.

[14] Richard Popkin, *Philosophy made simple*. (New York: Doubleday Publications, 1993), P.101

[15] A.E. Ruch, & K.C. *Anyanwu, Africa philosophical trend in Contemporary Africa*. (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1981), p.168.

and Europeans felt a moral justification in exploiting them by reducing them to slavery. Therefore the heart of the whole problem of African identity lies in Racialism[16].

African identity carries on the stuff of which any African can be identified and associated with appropriately and comfortably. It bears also, on that underlying element of unity in the plurality of all African peoples. It does not subsist on the accidental facts, may be, by the virtue, that one was born and bred or lives in the African continent. In other words, the fact of location does not strictly define who an African is. Instead, what is most paramount is having the African mind or consciousness: "that we are persons and we can think which the major activity here is"[17]. This is the fact of group consciousness, having common experience or goal. Thus, the issue of rising to consciousness is very important in the philosophical inquires and search for identity. For this view, it does not matter whether you are black Australian, American, Japanese or Jamaican, in as much as you share in the pains, misery, mystery and joys of the black race, you are an African. This consciousness can help to unite the many peoples and races with diversity of cultural beliefs, language and tradition in the African continent. Furthermore, Dukor explains that Africans by consciousness are "people who become aware of themselves as they imagine themselves as history has made them, who treasure their own past and who love themselves as they or imagine themselves to be with a kind of inevitable introversion. Hence identity is a function of culture, group and collective personality"[18].

Another important attribute of who an African is, is the fact of colour. Although of less important when compared with the fact of consciousness, Black is one of fundamental elements of African identity. This again is re-echoed by Dukor when he says that "there is a particular continent where we have large concentration of black people, and that the continent is called Africa. Therefore any man that has a black colour is called an African"[19]. This suggests the appreciation of a colour as an identity. Most of African traditional nationalists emphasized and appreciated the African treasured colour; Black. African continent is known as the land of the black and African race is a black race. It qualifies to be an original primary identity, the blackness and other important features[20]. According to Ndubuisi, Dukor also added another factor which he calls; the generosity and hospitality of African people thus, "looking at the ethical dimension, it has been established for example that the Africans generally welcome people into their community even when they see that you are a stranger, they still welcome you well. But in many other parts of the world it is not like that"[21]. Stretching this explanation further, Ndubuisi adds:

> African identity centers first and foremost on the African self-hood. It is important and proper to assert that the African is easily identifiable ontologically. In African metaphysics, the self is conceived essentially towards other, that is, a "being- with-others". The African is not just a human being but essentially a "being-with". Consequently it is the community which makes the individuals, because of his relationship with other in the community.[22]

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[16] Maduabuchi Dukor, *African freedom of philosophy* . (Germany: LAP LAMBERT Publications, 2010), p.159.

[17] ibid

[18] Ibid, p.159

[19] ibid

[20] Ndubuisi, op.cit., p.224

[21] ibid

[22] ibid

The point to draw from the foregoing discussion is that in order to correct the afore-mentioned underestimation of the African personality by the colonizers and free themselves from the social subjugation that went with it, Africans had to initiate a "counter discourse." The aim of this discourse, of course, was reclaiming African humanity. This reclamation took the form of demonstrating the rationality of African beliefs within the framework of the people's world-views and cultural practices. In epistemological terms, it involved the postulation of a form of rationality unique to Africans who, in metaphysical terms, were said to have a personality different from, but not in any way inferior to, the European personality. According Leopold Senghor, an "African mode of knowing" characterized is in the following terms:

> The African is, as it were, shut up in his black skin. He lives in the primordial night. He does not begin by distinguishing himself from the object, the tree or stone, man or animal or social event. He does not keep it at a distance. He does not analyse it. Once he has come under its influence, he takes it like a blind man, still living, into his hands. He turns it over and over in his supple hands, he fingers it, he feels it. The African is one of the worms created on the third day...a purely sensory field. Subjectively at the end of his antennae, like an insect, he discovers the other. He is moved to his bowels, going out in a centrifugal movement from the subject to the object on the waves sent out by the other[23]

Olusegun further stresses that the African mode of knowing is a holistic one in which dualisms such as those between man and nature, subject and object, mind and matter, are totally absent. This mode of knowing is then contrasted with another which is considered to be characteristically European. This mode of knowing is analytic and, consequently, promotes all manners of dichotomies: between man and nature; subject and object; body and mind and so on.[24] He again clarifies that the life-surge of the African, his being-with attitude is actuated by reason:

> But here reason is not the eye-reason of the European, it is the reason-by-embrace which shares more the nature of logos than ratio. Ratio is compass, set-square and sectants, measure and weight, where logos, before its Aristotelian tempering, before it became diamond, was living speech. Speech, which is the most typically human expression of neo-sensory impression, does not cost the object, untouched, into rigid logical categories. African speech, in raising itself to the Word, rubs and polishes things to give them back their original colour, with their grain and their veins, shooting their rays of light to restore their transparency penetrating their surreality, or rather their underlying reality, in its freshness. Classical European reason is analytical and makes use of the object. African reason is intuitive and participates in the object[25].

The contrasts presented above marked the beginning of "the struggle over the control of identity by means of the definition of reason, its nature and functions," in the arena of scholarly discourse in Africa[26].

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[23] Leopold Sedar Senghor, Prose and Poetry, John Reed and Clive Wake, eds., trans. (London, Nairobi, Ibadan and Lusaka: Heinemann African Writers Series, 1976), pp. 29-30 (emphasis added).

[24] Olusegun, op.cit.

[25] Ibid, p.28

[26] ibid

Pragmatic Ideological Approach in the Post-colonial Identity Redefinition

In the decades following decolonization, African nations have grappled with the profound challenge of reconstructing a society fragmented by colonialism. Indeed, the colonial project did more than subjugate land and resources, it as well sought to reengineer cultural consciousness, devalue indigenous systems, and impose foreign identities. As African countries continue navigating post-colonial realities,a renewed and pragmatic ideological approach has emerged, blending tradition with modernity in effort to reclaim and redefine the African identity. This practical ideological approach is not merely rhetorical or nostalgic, it is a strategic fusion of cultural reclamation, political consciousness and socio-economic restructuring grounded in African realities. This approach is pragmatic in that it acknowledges the globalized context but insists on centering African perspectives and experiences. Other form of pragmatic approach was seen in Pan-Africanism which attempted to establish communal worldview as the African identity. Julius Nyerere like many other post colonial African leaders, came up with what he called "African brotherhood" with its root in the African extended family system. This principle is discovered in African metaphysics that "the self" is conceived essentially towards others, that is a "being-with-others". Life for the African personality is an integrated network of artistically harmonious daily rhythm. Therefore, being that the African people before the coming of the colonial people, had a form of political interaction called communalism, Nyerere of Tanzania adopted what he called "Ujamaa". Hence, he came to the conclusion that socialism was the solution to all the problems which Tanzania faced shortly after independence. He felt there was the need to integrate the individual African persons back to the society. He felt there was no need for the existence of class in the new Africa because such concept was unAfrican. He says:

> Indeed, I doubt if the equivalent for the word 'class' exists in any indigenous
> African language, for language describes the ideas of those who speak it, and
> the idea of 'class' or 'castle' was non-existent in African society[27]

On his part, Kwame Nkrumah reasoned that the post colonial Africa has left us with three different kinds of situations. Hence he writes:

> African society has some segments which are: first, our traditional way of life :
> it has a second segment which is filled by the presence of the Islamic tradition
> in Africa: it has a final segment which represents the infiltration of the
> Christian tradition and culture of Western Europe into Africa, using
> colonialism and neo-colonialism as its primary vehicles.[28]

Therefore, Nkrumah reasons that since independence has been regained, there was a need to forge what he called a new harmony. This new harmony in his view, will allow a combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro-Christian Africa. The fall out of this infusion according to him will be in tune with the original humanist principles underlying African society[29]. For Nkrumah, the post Colonial African personality required a new ideology, ideology which he reasons must be in agreement with humanistic principle of Africa, thus he submits:

> Such a philosophical statement will be born out of the crisis of the African
> conscience confronted with the three strands of present African society. Such
> a philosophical statement I propose to name philosophical consciencism, for

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[27] Julius Nyerere, *Essays on Socialism.* (Daressalaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.11.

[28] Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization*. (New York. Monthly Review Press, 1970), p.69

[29] Ibid, p.70

it will give the theoretical basis for ideology whose aim shall be to contain the African experience of Islamic and Euro-Christian presence as well as the experience of the traditional African society, and by gestation, employ them for the harmonious growth and development of that society.[30]

So what Nkrumah really wanted was total decolonization by forming a new philosophy which serves as the new socio-political order. Ogundowole takes a rather different, although more profound and realistic approach on the issue of forming a new pathway to African development. He reasons that the earlier postulations by Nyerere and Nkrumah still dangled between the Western capitalism and socialism. In place of that, Ogundowole arrives at what he calls "self-reliancism". He believes that external foreign-oriented structures are not likely to lunch the African society into the new dawn which it desires. Ogundowole believes there is need for the African people to understand the Euro-philosophical heritage so as to enable them forge ahead. Thus, he writes:"the position we hold is that the people of the new state need only such an understanding of Euro-philosophical heritage as may help them to free their society from economic backwardness, and from oppressive external influence".[31]

In recent times, the Pan African position on carving out a distinctive niche and reclaiming African identity has experienced a surging revival. Thus, Pan-Africanism is being revived, not in abstract calls for unity but in economic and political collaborations such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA). In this respect, Pan African identity is being leveraged for continental solidarity and global negotiation power. It is on a similar note that we now have concepts like *Cultural Renaissance* and *Afrocentric Education* wherein African intellectuals and policy makers are reimagining education systems to reflect African values, history and epistemologies . In this form, cultural reforms now emphasize African literature, philosophy, language and precolonial histories, thereby moving away from completely Eurocentric narratives. Again, in the area of language, there is a concept as *language revitalization*. Here there is a growing movement to promote indigenous languages in governance, education and media. Particularly, countries like Tanzania and Ethiopia have advanced the use of *Kiswahili* and *Amharic* respectively, as instrument of national identity and unity. Of course, there is no doubt, language is increasingly recognized as vessel of culture and resistance. In a similar vein, South Africa's Ubuntu philosophy in governance is worth mentioning among the individual nations' frantic effort towards identity reaffirmation. Here, their incorporation of Ubuntu, a philosophy emphasizing community, compassion and mutual respect into constitutional and legal frameworks reflects a localized ideological grounding in governance and social justice. More remarkably in recent time is the surge in decolonizing religion and spirituality, most especially among the African youth population. Thus, reshaping African identity is the renewed interest in indigenous spirituality, cosmology and African traditional medicine. This revival challenges the colonial-era demonization of African religions and repositions them as legitimate and vital to African worldview.

In this effort of identity retrieval, one cannot leave out the issue of creative and artistic expression. In this regard, music, film, literature and fashion are becoming powerful tools for articulating African identity. Nollywood, Afrobeats and African speculative fiction offer platforms for self-representation, thereby challenging global stereotypes and affirming African aesthetics. Notwithstanding the strength of these ideological strides, one can object that they appear too elitist and the initiatives sometimes fail to resonate with rural and marginalized

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[30] IBID

[31] Kolawole Ogundowole, *Self-reliancism: Philosophy of a New World Order* (Alternative Development Strategy for the New States). (Lagos: Correct Counsels Limited, 2011), p.44.

communities. Again, there is another concern that the commodification[32] of African culture for tourism or global consumption can risk superficiality and loss of authenticity rather than genuine transformation because it prioritizes profit over cultural integrity[33].

Conclusion

 The research has been able to articulate broadly a good number of issues surrounding the question of African identity. It established a nexus between the African historical past and her continuous search for identity recognition. It demonstrated the practical ideological approach unfolding in postcolonial Africa geared towards reclaiming and reconstructing that which is uniquely African. The study showed, among other things that, by drawing from indigenous epistemologies and blending them with contemporary tools, African societies are forging new identity, one that honours the past while shaping a sovereign and self-defined future. Furthermore, it showed a renewed interest in African culture, language and spirituality. Although this evolving ideological movement may not be uniform across the continent, it reflects a shared impulse which points to the fact that African identity is not just a relic of the past: it is a living, evolving force central to the continent's liberation and transformative development.

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Article   **Open Access**

SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN GOVERNMENT IN ETCHE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between social adjustment strategies and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 5,076 students offering Government as a subject in 25 public senior secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. A sample of 346 Senior Secondary Two Students offering Government was selected for the study using multi-stage sampling procedure. Two researcher-made instruments, entitled "Social Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire" (SASQ) and "Government Achievement Test" (GAT) were used for data collection. Social Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire was face validated while Government Achievement Test was content validated. The internal consistency reliability of the instruments were established which yielded reliability coefficients of .73 and .75 for SASQ and GAT respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic was used to answer the research questions and also test the null hypotheses. Analysis of data revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between peer interaction, help-seeking behaviour, emotional self-regulation and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. Based on the findings, conclusions were drawn and three recommendations made among which is that secondary schools in Etche Local government Area should promote collaborative learning activities such as group discussions, debates, and peer tutoring to enhance peer interaction among students.

Keywords: Social, Adjustment, Strategies, Academic, Achievement, Students.

Introduction

Academic achievement, particularly in subjects like Government that require active engagement with civic ideas, analytical thinking, and social relevance, may be significantly shaped by how well students are socially adjusted to their learning environment. Social adjustment encompasses a student's ability to interact appropriately with peers, teachers, school structures, and expectations. When students develop effective social adjustment strategies, they are more likely to experience emotional stability, constructive relationships, and a conducive learning atmosphere that supports academic success. Undoubtedly, some secondary schools represent a microcosm of the larger society, with students coming from diverse socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. These differences may impact how students relate socially within the school system and the strategies they adopt to adjust. Given the emphasis on performance in core social science subjects like Government especially in external examinations, there is growing interest among educators, parents, and policymakers in identifying non-academic factors that may support or hinder students' performance. While many previous studies may have focused on teaching methods, learning environments, and motivation, none has addressed how social adjustment strategies relate to students' achievement in Government, specifically in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

As highlighted by Ukaegbu and Obikoya (2017), social adjustment strategies refer to the behavioural and emotional techniques students adopt to fit into the social structure of the school. These include conflict resolution, peer interaction, help-seeking behaviour, cooperation, emotional self-regulation, and adaptability. These skills are crucial to fostering healthy interpersonal relationships, managing stress, and maintaining a positive school climate conducive to academic engagement. But for the purpose of this study, only three social adjustment strategies namely peer interaction, help-seeking behaviour and emotional self-regulation were studied. Peer interaction refers to the quality of social engagement and communication among students (Rubin, Bukowski, & Laursen, 2016). Positive peer interactions enhance a sense of belonging and academic cooperation, while negative peer relationships may lead to social exclusion or classroom disruption. As noted by Rubin *et al.* (2016), peer interaction is essential for the development of social competence and school engagement. When students collaborate respectfully with peers, they can share academic resources, engage in group discussions, and stimulate collective learning skills that are especially vital in understanding civic issues and governance topics.

Help-seeking behaviour is the willingness of students to approach others, such as peers or teachers, for academic or emotional assistance (Karabenick & Newman, 2019). This strategy is particularly beneficial to students who may struggle with subject content or experience social anxiety. Thus, help-seeking is a proactive and self-regulatory behaviour that supports learning by enabling students to access necessary guidance (Ukaegbu & Ekpenyong, 2025). In the context of Government studies, students who seek help are more likely to clarify difficult concepts, improve class participation, and perform better academically. Emotional self-regulation refers to the ability to manage one's emotional responses in a way that facilitates positive social and academic functioning (Gross, 2015). It enables students to cope with stress, disappointment, and peer pressure without acting out or withdrawing. Emotional regulation involves strategies such as reappraisal and impulse control that help individuals adapt to changing social environment. A student who regulates emotions effectively is less likely to engage in classroom conflict, more likely to remain focused, and better positioned to handle the academic demands of subjects like Government. Based on the foregoing therefore, it became necessary to investigate the connection between social adjustment strategies and academic achievement in Government among secondary school students in Etche Local

Government Area. A deeper understanding of this relationship could guide teachers in identifying students at risk of social maladjustment, inform counselling interventions, and help create more inclusive and supportive school environment that enhance both social and academic outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Despite efforts to improve curriculum content and teaching methods, students' academic achievement in Government remains inconsistent, particularly in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. Poor achievement of students in Government, a subject that plays a vital role in civic education and national development, has serious implications for both the individual learner and the society at large. Government as a subject is designed to equip students with knowledge about the structure, functions, and operations of the state, as well as their rights, duties, and responsibilities as citizens. When students perform poorly in Government, it may hamper their understanding of democratic principles and weakens their capacity for informed political participation. This may even threaten the growth of a politically conscious and active citizenry, which is essential for the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria. More so, the immediate consequence of poor achievement in Government could be the limitation it places on students' future academic and career opportunities. Government is a foundational subject for disciplines such as political science, public administration, international relations, and law. Students who do not perform well in Government may be ineligible for admission into these programmes at tertiary level of education, thus narrowing their career prospects and hindering their aspirations for professions in the public and legal sectors. This academic limitation can lead to frustration and disinterest in education generally, especially among students who had hoped to pursue careers tied to civic and public service. Therefore, understanding the relationship between social adjustment strategies and academic achievement of secondary school students is crucial in shaping students' attitudes, behaviours, and overall engagement with learning. When students are well-adjusted socially, they are more likely to exhibit positive academic behaviours such as regular attendance, active classroom participation, and effective communication. These behaviours could directly contribute to improved academic outcomes particularly in subjects like Government that require critical thinking and collaborative discussion. Thus, this study sought to investigate the relationship between social adjustment strategies and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government, with a particular focus on Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between social adjustment strategies and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to determine the:

i.   Relationship between peer interaction and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government.
ii.   Relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government.
iii. Relationship between emotional self-regulation and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government.

Significance of the Study

This study would be of significant value to students, teachers, school counsellors, and researchers. Students would benefit directly from the findings, as the study would help them

become more aware of the importance of developing effective social skills such as peer interaction, help-seeking behaviour and emotional self-regulation. This awareness would enable students to reflect on their interactions within the school environment and adopt more positive behaviours that promote academic success and healthy peer relationships. Teachers would find the study useful in identifying the specific social difficulties that hinder students' achievement in Government. With this knowledge, teachers would be better equipped to create supportive classroom environments that encourage cooperation, respectful dialogue, and inclusive group work. Teachers would also be able to integrate social skills development into their teaching strategies to enhance students' academic engagement. More so, the study would provide school counsellors with empirical data to guide the design of targeted intervention programmes aimed at improving students' social adjustment. These programmes could include peer mentoring, conflict resolution training, and emotional management workshops tailored to the needs of students who are struggling socially and academically. Finally, researchers would benefit from the study as it contributes to the existing body of literature on academic achievement, particularly in the Nigerian environment. It would open avenues for further research on the intersection of social behaviour and academic achievement in specific school subjects such as Government and provide a framework for comparative studies across educational systems and states in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

i. What is the relationship between peer interaction and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government?
ii. What is the relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government?
iii. What is the relationship between emotional self-regulation and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the study:

i. There is no significant relationship between peer interaction and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government.
ii. There is no significant relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government.
iii. There is no significant relationship between emotional self-regulation and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government.

Scope of the Study

The study investigated the relationship between social adjustment strategies and academic achievement of secondary school students. Social adjustment strategies variables investigated as independent variables of the study were peer interaction, help-seeking behaviour and emotional self-regulation while academic achievement in Government served as the dependent variable. Only Senior Secondary Two Students offering Government in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State, 2024/2025 academic session participated in the study.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977): Social Learning Theory was developed by Albert Bandura in 1977. The theory posits that learning occurs within a social context through

observation, imitation, and modeling. It stresses that individuals, particularly adolescents, learn behaviours, attitudes, and emotional responses by watching others, especially authority figures and peers. Reinforcement and perceived consequences of actions also play crucial roles in shaping behaviour. This theory is relevant to this present study in explaining how students acquire social adjustment strategies that impact academic achievement. In Etche Local Government Area, students learn from peer groups and teachers how to resolve conflicts, cooperate, and seek help when needed. When positive behaviours are modeled in the school environment such as active participation, respect, and discipline, students are more likely to emulate them, which may result in improved classroom behaviour and academic achievement in Government. On the other hand, exposure to maladaptive behaviours may lead to social and academic challenges. Bandura's theory supports the integration of structured social learning experiences to enhance both adjustment and academic success.

Ecological Systems Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979)

Ecological Systems Theory was introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979. The theory conceptualizes human development as influenced by multiple layers of environmental systems, including the microsystem (immediate relationships like family and school), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (indirect environments), and macrosystem (cultural and societal norms). These systems interact over time (chronosystem) to shape behaviour and development. This theory is relevant to this study as it offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the interconnected factors affecting social adjustment and academic achievement. In the school context, the microsystem comprising teachers, peers, and family may play a central role in shaping students' social behaviours and attitudes toward learning. For instance, students from supportive schools with positive peer culture are more likely to develop adjustment strategies that enhance academic performance in subjects like Government. Moreover, broader community values and educational policies within the macrosystem can also affect students' motivation and behaviour. Bronfenbrenner's theory underscores the importance of nurturing environments at all levels to foster holistic students' development.

Empirical Studies

A study on peer interaction and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Enugu State was conducted by Ume and Okorie (2020). The population of the study comprised 1,210 SS 2 students in public secondary schools. A correlational design was adopted for the study. A sample of 300 students was selected for the study using stratified random sampling procedure based on school location and gender. Instruments used for data collection were the Peer Interaction Questionnaire (PIQ) and the Academic Performance Record Sheet (APRS). Pearson correlation and multiple regression were used for data analysis. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between peer interaction and academic achievement, particularly in subjects requiring collaborative learning. The study recommended that schools adopt structured peer learning programs to enhance academic outcomes. An assessment of peer interaction and its effect on students' performance in Civic Education was conducted by Okonkwo and Eze (2019) in Abia State. The study covered 1,560 SS 3 students in 12 public secondary schools. A cross-sectional design was adopted for the study, and 320 students were selected through proportionate stratified sampling procedure. Instruments for data collection included the Peer Interaction and Support Inventory (PISI) and the Civic Education Performance Test (CEPT). Data were analyzed using t-test and regression statistics. The findings indicated that students who reported high levels of positive peer interaction

scored significantly higher in Civic Education. The study recommended that teachers should promote classroom activities that foster collaborative interaction.

An investigation into peer group influence and academic achievement among adolescents in Edo State was conducted by Aigbe and Omoregie (2019). The study targeted 1,870 students from public senior secondary schools in Benin City. A descriptive survey design was used, and 320 students were randomly selected for the study. Data were collected using the Peer Influence Behaviour Checklist (PIBC) and Academic Records Retrieval Sheet (ARRS). Statistical tools used for data analysis were descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Findings indicated a negative correlation between peer group association and academic performance. The researchers noted that students who spent extended periods with peers outside the classroom environment engaged more in non-academic activities such as social media use and truancy. The study concluded that peer influence, when not directed or moderated by academic goals, could hinder academic success. Recommendations included the introduction of peer regulation workshops and stronger home-school communication to monitor out-of-class interactions. A study on academic help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement among secondary school students in Kwara State was conducted by Yusuf and Ibrahim (2020). The population comprised 2,100 senior secondary students in Ilorin metropolis. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 420 students was selected for the study using stratified random sampling procedure based on school type and gender. The instruments used for data collection were the Help-Seeking Behaviour Questionnaire (HSBQ) and students' cumulative academic scores. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement. The study recommended that schools should encourage students to seek academic support through peer tutoring and teacher consultation.

Adebayo and Ogundipe (2019) explored the relationship between perceived classroom support, help-seeking behaviour, and academic achievement in Lagos State. The study involved 1,500 SS 3 students from urban secondary schools. A descriptive survey design was employed, and 300 students were selected via purposive sampling procedure. Instruments used for data collection were the Classroom Support Inventory (CSI), Help-Seeking Behaviour Scale (HSBS), and an Academic Achievement Checklist (AAC). Data were analyzed using multiple regression. Results revealed that perceived teacher support significantly influenced students' willingness to seek help, which in turn predicted higher academic achievement. The authors recommended teacher development programmes focused on creating supportive classroom climates. Nwankwo and Ibe (2018) conducted a study on students' help-seeking tendencies and academic success in Imo State. The population included 2,300 senior secondary school students across three educational zones. A descriptive design was employed, with a sample of 500 students selected using multistage sampling procedure. The instruments used for data collection were the Help-Seeking Inventory (HSI) and Student Academic Progress Record (SAPR). Pearson correlation analysis revealed that students with high help-seeking tendencies had significantly higher academic scores. The researchers recommended institutionalizing help-seeking as a skill through classroom guidance activities.

An investigation into the influence of help-seeking tendencies on academic achievement among students in Ekiti State was carried out by Aina and Ojebola (2020). The target population comprised 1,260 students from public secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti. A descriptive research design was adopted for the study, and 280 students were randomly selected for the study. Data collection instruments were the Help-Seeking Behaviour Inventory (HSBI) and Academic Achievement Record Form (AARF). Analysis using regression techniques

revealed a weak negative correlation between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement. The authors observed that students who frequently sought help tended to rely excessively on others for academic tasks, leading to reduced autonomy and lower performance. They recommended interventions that promote strategic help-seeking while encouraging student independence and critical thinking. A study on emotional intelligence and academic achievement among senior secondary students in Delta State was conducted by Efe and Odili (2022). The study targeted 2,200 students. The study adopted a correlational design, and 400 students were selected using stratified sampling procedure. The Emotional Self-Regulation Subscale of the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (ESREIQ) and the Academic Achievement Index (AAI) were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using linear regression. Analyses of data revealed that the emotional self-regulation dimension significantly influenced students' academic performance. The study recommended emotional learning as part of co-curricular activities.

Eze and Okpara (2021) examined emotional self-control and academic performance of secondary school students in Social Studies in Rivers State. The population comprised 1,840 students from 10 public schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, and 320 students were selected using systematic sampling procedure. Emotional Self-Control Scale (ESCS) and Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) were employed for data collection. Data were analyzed using t-test and regression. Data analyses showed that students with higher emotional self-control demonstrated significantly better academic performance. The authors recommended training workshops on emotional self-discipline. In a related study in Bauchi State, Abubakar and Usman (2020) investigated the influence of emotional regulation on academic performance among senior secondary school students. The population consisted of 1,560 SS 3 students in public schools. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, and 300 students were selected using multistage sampling procedure. The researchers used the Emotional Regulation Inventory (ERI) and Academic Achievement Test Battery (AATB) for data collection. Analysis using multiple regression revealed a weak negative correlation between emotional regulation scores and academic performance. The study found that some emotionally regulated students tended to avoid academic stress by disengaging from academic challenges, leading to underperformance. The authors recommended interventions that promote task-oriented coping and academic resilience alongside emotional regulation skills. From the foregoing therefore, the researchers observed that none of the past studies reviewed investigated the entire independent variables (peer interaction, help-seeking behaviour and emotional self-regulation) and dependent variable (academic achievement in Government) which the present study investigated. In addition, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is paucity of empirical research on the relationship between social adjustment and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. Thus this present study was carried out to fill the existing gap as observed in the past empirical studies reviewed.

Research Design
A correlational design was adopted for the study. A correlational research design is useful in determining the extent to which two or more variables are related. Hence, correlational research design is more suitable for this study because the researcher was interested in establishing the relationship between social adjustment strategies and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised 5,076 students offering Government in 25 public senior secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State (Rivers State Post Primary Schools Board, Port Harcourt, 2025).

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 346 Senior Secondary Two Students offering Government in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area was selected for the study using multi-stage sampling procedure. First, purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample of the study to ensure that only students offering Government were selected for the study. Second, simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 public senior secondary schools out of the existing 25 schools. Thereafter, proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select SS Two students based on the population of each sampled school.

Instrument for Data Collection

Two researcher-made instruments entitled "Social Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire" (SASQ) and "Government Achievement Test" (GAT) were used for data collection. The instrument - SASQ consisted of 24 items. Eight items were raised to measure each of the Social Adjustment Strategies namely peer interaction, help-seeking behaviour, and emotional self-regulation. The items were presented as statements to which the respondents were instructed to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The second instrument - GAT consisted of 20 multiple choice questions to elicit information on the achievement of Senior Secondary Two students on Government. The students were requested to circle the correct answer from the options labeled A-D. Each correct answer was scored 5 marks.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument - SASQ was presented to one expert in Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Psychological Foundations, and neo expert in Guidance and Counselling, both in University of Uyo for face validation. The second instrument - GAT was presented to two Government teachers for content validation. The researcher ensured that all the areas recommended for corrections were incorporated before producing the final draft.

Reliability of the Instrument

In order to establish the internal consistency reliability of the instruments, the instruments were administered on 20 Senior Secondary Two students in the study area who were not part of the study sample. Cronbach alpha was used to calculate the reliability coefficients of the instruments and reliability coefficients of .73 and .75 were obtained for SASQ and GAT respectively which implies that the instruments are reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The two instruments for the study were administered on the sampled SS Two students through direct delivery method. However, the researchers administered the instruments directly on the respondents with the assistance of one research assistant chosen from the public senior secondary schools being investigated. Filled copies of the instruments were retrieved by the researchers on the same spot.

Method of Data Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic was used to answer the research questions and also test the null hypotheses. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance while all data were subjected to analysis using statistical package for social science (SPSS).

Results

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation between peer interaction and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area

Variables	n	r-value	p-value	Remark
Peer interaction (X)				
	346	.71	.000	Sig.
Academic achievement (Y)				

<div align="center">*p<.05*</div>

The result presented in Table 1 shows the outcome of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis used to determine the relationship between peer interaction and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area. With a sample size of 346 students, the analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (r-value) of .71, indicating a strong positive relationship between the two variables. This means that students who engage more effectively in peer interaction are likely to achieve higher in Government. Furthermore, the p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, showing that the relationship is statistically significant. Based on this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between peer interaction and academic achievement is rejected. Therefore, it is found that a significant positive relationship exists between peer interaction and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area.

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Uyo Local Government Area

Variables	n	r-value	p-value	Remark
Help-seeking (X)				
	346	.77	.005	Sig.
Academic achievement (Y)				

<div align="center">*p<.05*</div>

Table 2 presents the result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area. With a total of 346 respondents, the analysis produced a correlation coefficient (r-value) of .77, indicating a strong positive relationship between help-seeking and academic achievement. This means that students who actively seek help from teachers, peers, parents, or other academic support systems tend to perform better in Government. The p-value obtained is .005, which is less than the significance level of .05, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Based on this result, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement is rejected. Therefore, it is found that a significant positive relationship exists between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area.

Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation between emotional self-regulation and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area

Variables	n	r-value	p-value	Remark
Emotional self-regulation (X)				
	346	.74	.001	Sig.
Academic achievement (Y)				

p<.05

Table 3 shows the result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis used to examine the relationship between emotional self-regulation and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area. The analysis, based on a sample of 346 students, yielded a correlation coefficient (r-value) of .74, which indicates a strong positive relationship between emotional self-regulation and academic achievement. This means that students who are able to manage and control their emotions effectively are more likely to perform better in Government. The associated p-value is .001, which is less than the significance level of .05, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between emotional self-regulation and academic achievement is rejected. It is therefore concluded that a significant positive relationship exists between emotional self-regulation and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis of data on research question one and its corresponding hypothesis one revealed a significant positive relationship between peer interaction and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government. This suggests that students who actively engage with their peers through academic discussions, group studies, cooperative learning, and social interactions tend to perform better in Government as a subject. Peer interaction creates an enabling environment for students to share knowledge, clarify concepts, exchange ideas, and motivate each other toward academic excellence. When students feel accepted and supported by their peers, it boosts their confidence and enhances their willingness to participate in class activities, thereby improving their understanding of the subject. This result supports earlier findings by Ume and Okorie (2020), who reported a significant positive relationship between peer interaction and academic achievement, particularly in subjects requiring collaborative learning. Similarly, Okonkwo and Eze (2019) found that students who reported high levels of positive peer interaction scored significantly higher in Civic Education. However, the study by Aigbe and Omoregie (2019) revealed a negative correlation between peer group association and academic performance. More so, analysis of data on research question two and its corresponding hypothesis two showed that there is a significant positive relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area. This indicates that students who actively seek academic assistance when faced with challenges tend to perform better in the subject. Help-seeking, whether from teachers, classmates, parents, or other sources, allows students to clarify difficult concepts, receive guidance, and build a stronger understanding of subject matter. Such behaviour reflects a proactive and responsible approach to learning, which ultimately enhances academic performance.

This finding is consistent with the study of Yusuf and Ibrahim (2020), who found that there is a significant positive relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic achievement. Similarly, Adebayo and Ogundipe (2019) found that that perceived teacher

support significantly influenced students' willingness to seek help, which in turn predicted higher academic achievement. However, Aina and Ojebola (2020) found that students who frequently sought help tended to rely excessively on others for academic tasks, leading to reduced autonomy and lower performance. Finally, analysis of data on research question three and its corresponding hypothesis three revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional self-regulation and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area. This indicates that students who are capable of managing their emotions such as stress, anxiety, anger, or frustration tend to perform better academically in Government. Emotional self-regulation allows students to maintain focus, remain calm under pressure, cope with academic demands, and respond to challenges in constructive ways, all of which contribute to improved learning outcomes. This finding is supported by the work of Efe and Odili (2022), who reported that the emotional self-regulation dimension significantly influenced students' academic performance. Similarly, Eze and Okpara (2021) found that students with higher emotional self-control demonstrated significantly better academic performance. However, Abubakar and Usman (2020) found that some emotionally regulated students tended to avoid academic stress by disengaging from academic challenges, leading to underperformance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that social adjustment strategies play a crucial role in enhancing the academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in Etche Local Government Area. Specifically, the study established that peer interaction significantly contributes to students' academic performance, as those who engage effectively with their peers tend to achieve better results. Similarly, help-seeking behaviour was found to have a significant positive influence on academic achievement, indicating that students who actively seek academic support perform better in Government. Finally, emotional self-regulation was also significantly related to academic success, suggesting that students who can manage their emotions effectively are more likely to excel academically. These findings underscore the importance of promoting positive social behaviours and emotional competence as integral components of academic development among secondary school students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

i. Secondary schools in Etche Local government Area should promote collaborative learning activities such as group discussions, debates, and peer tutoring to enhance peer interaction among students.

ii. Teachers should encourage an open-door policy where students feel comfortable seeking academic and emotional assistance without fear of ridicule or judgement.

iii. Government of Rivers State should organize regular sessions on self-regulation skills to equip students with tools for handling academic pressure and emotional challenges.

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Social Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire (SASQ)

Instruction: Please, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following items by ticking (√) the appropriate option.

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

S/N	Peer Interaction	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I enjoy working together with my classmates during group assignments.				
2.	I feel comfortable expressing my opinions in discussions with classmates.				
3.	My classmates encourage me to do better academically.				
4.	I regularly participate in peer study groups.				

5.	I feel accepted by most of my classmates.				
6.	I feel motivated when I see my friends performing well academically.				
7.	I believe that peer interaction makes learning more enjoyable.				
8.	I freely share my academic materials and resources with my classmates.				
	Help-Seeking Behaviour				
9.	I ask my teachers for clarification when I do not understand a topic.				
10.	I seek help immediately when I face academic challenges.				
11.	I ask questions in class whenever I am confused.				
12.	I visit the school counsellor when I experience academic stress.				
13.	I feel confident seeking help from people I trust in school.				
14.	I ask my family members for support with my schoolwork.				
15.	I seek help from online resources when I am stuck with a school task.				
16.	I believe asking for help is a smart way to learn.				
	Emotional Self-Regulation				
17.	I am able to stay calm when I am angry or upset.				
18.	I control my emotions so they do not affect my schoolwork.				
19.	I can cheer myself up when I feel sad.				
20.	I am good at managing my feelings during stressful situations.				
21.	I avoid reacting immediately when someone annoys me.				
22.	I am able to express my emotions in a calm way.				
23.	I try not to let my emotions affect my relationships with others.				
24.	I reflect on my emotions before making important decisions.				

Government Achievement Test (GAT)

Instruction: Circle the correct answer from the options labelled A-D.

1. **The principle of separation of powers was popularized by**
A. Plato
B. Aristotle
C. Montesquieu
D. Rousseau

2. **Which of the following is a feature of a federal system of government?**
A. Unicameral legislature
B. Concentration of power in the central government
C. Division of powers between levels of government
D. Absence of constitution

3. **The body responsible for making laws in Nigeria is the**
A. Executive
B. Judiciary
C. Police
D. Legislature

4. **A government that is ruled by a few privileged individuals is called**
A. Autocracy
B. Monarchy
C. Oligarchy
D. Democracy

5. **The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides for a system of government that is**
A. Unitary
B. Federal
C. Confederal
D. Monarchical

6. **The highest court in Nigeria is the**
A. Court of Appeal
B. Supreme Court
C. High Court
D. Customary Court

7. **Which of the following best describes the rule of law?**
A. Power lies with the majority
B. No one is above the law
C. The executive is superior to other arms
D. Laws apply only to the citizens

8. **The term 'suffrage' refers to**
A. Tax collection
B. The right to vote
C. Impeachment of the president
D. Freedom of speech

9. **The type of government in which power resides with the people is**
A. Totalitarianism
B. Aristocracy
C. Democracy
D. Theocracy

10. **Public opinion is mainly expressed through**
A. Secret cults
B. Political appointments
C. The media
D. Military coups

11. **The executive arm of government is responsible for**
A. Interpreting laws
B. Making laws
C. Enforcing laws
D. Reviewing laws

12. **A constitution is said to be rigid when it is**
A. Easy to amend
B. Written in simple language
C. Difficult to amend
D. Based on custom

13. **The head of government in a parliamentary system is the**
A. President
B. Prime Minister
C. Governor-General
D. Monarch

14. **Which organ of government interprets the laws?**
A. The legislature
B. The judiciary
C. The executive
D. The cabinet

15. **Which of the following countries practices confederalism?**
A. United States
B. Nigeria
C. Switzerland
D. United Kingdom

16. **A bill becomes a law after**
A. Presidential speech
B. Debate in parliament
C. Approval by the judiciary
D. Presidential assent

17. **Military regimes are characterized by**
A. Separation of powers
B. Supremacy of the constitution
C. Rule by decrees
D. Multiparty elections

18. **An electoral system in which the candidate with the highest number of votes wins is**
A. Proportional representation
B. Simple majority system
C. Second ballot system
D. Absolute majority system

19. **Citizenship by birth in Nigeria is granted to**
A. Anyone born in Nigeria
B. Children of foreigners
C. Persons born to Nigerian parents
D. Immigrants with residence permits

20. **One major function of political parties is to**
A. Conduct elections
B. Appoint judges
C. Educate the electorate
D. Print money

Article　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Open Access**

BEING, MYSTERY AND FIDELITY: THE EXISTENTIAL PERSONALISM OF GABRIEL MARCEL IN A DISINCARNATE AGE

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Abstract

This article explores the existential personalism of Gabriel Marcel, highlighting his central philosophical themes of being, mystery, incarnation, availability (*disponibilité*), fidelity, and hope. In contrast to the atheistic existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, which often concludes in despair, Marcel advances a theistic and relational philosophy rooted in presence, participation, and metaphysical depth. Marcel's distinction between "being" and "having" underlines the ethical and ontological divergence between objectifying, commodified modes of existence and the relational, incarnate experience of human life. Through the lens of mystery - distinguished from mere problems- Marcel affirms the sanctity and depth of lived realities like love, suffering, and death. His emphasis on the embodied self as a locus of presence offers a critique of the disincarnate tendencies of modernity, especially within a technologically driven culture. Fidelity and hope emerge in Marcel's work not as sentimental ideals, but as existential and metaphysical commitments that bind the self to the other and to transcendent meaning. *Disponibilité*, or availability, expresses the art of being truly present to another, resisting commodification and fostering genuine communion. By engaging with related thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Buber, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, and Ricoeur, the paper situates Marcel within a broader philosophical tradition. Ultimately, it argues that Marcel's thought offers a vital corrective to contemporary forms of alienation and disconnection, illuminating a path toward a more humane, relational, and spiritually grounded understanding of existence.

Keywords: Gabriel Marcel, Existential Personalism, Being, Mystery, Incarnation, Availability Fidelity,

Introduction: Marcel in the Shadow of Existentialism

Gabriel Marcel's existential personalism emerges as a distinctive voice in 20th-century existential philosophy, standing in sharp contrast to the dominant narratives shaped by Jean-

Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. While Sartre's atheistic existentialism begins with radical freedom in a universe devoid of meaning (Sartre, 1943), Marcel's thought is theistic, relational, and participatory. For Marcel, human existence is not a solitary confrontation with absurdity but a dialogical engagement with being, mediated through mystery, presence, and hope (Marcel, 1949). Marcel called his philosophy a "philosophy of the concrete," emphasizing lived experience over abstract theorizing (Marcel, 1964). He was deeply influenced by phenomenology and personalism, sharing intellectual kinship with thinkers like Martin Buber, Emmanuel Mounier, and Edith Stein. Marcel's insistence on embodied subjectivity and interpersonal communion makes him a key figure in bridging existentialism and Christian philosophy, much like Søren Kierkegaard before him. Unlike Camus, who perceived life as an absurd confrontation between human longing and an indifferent universe (Camus, 1942), Marcel believed in the sacramentality of being. He offered a vision in which human suffering, love, and death were not meaningless but invitations to deeper participation in the mystery of existence.

Being vs. Having: Marcel's Ontological Distinction

A defining contribution of Gabriel Marcel to existential philosophy is his ontological differentiation between "being" (*être*) and "having" (*avoir*), first elaborated in his seminal work *Being and Having* (1949). Marcel posits that modern existence is increasingly governed by the logic of possession, appropriation, and utility. The mode of "having" reflects an objectifying relationship to the world in which persons, ideas, and even emotions are reduced to things to be controlled, accumulated, or consumed. In contrast, the mode of "being" signals a deeper, participatory engagement with reality. To exist authentically is not to own, master, or dominate, but to enter into communion with others and with being itself. Marcel describes being as inherently mysterious and interpersonal; it is something we encounter, not something we manipulate. As he puts it, "I am not my body in the way that I have a car; I am my body in a much more intimate and mysterious sense" (Marcel, 1951). This distinction has significant ethical and spiritual implications. The world of "having" fosters alienation, competition, and instrumental relationships, while the world of "being" nurtures reverence, presence, and vulnerability. Marcel warns that the technological age, with its emphasis on efficiency and control, deepens the dominance of "having" at the expense of being, thereby creating what he calls a "broken world" (Marcel, 1951).

Marcel's insights resonate with the concerns of other major philosophers. Martin Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (1927), critiques the forgetfulness of Being in modern metaphysics and calls for a return to an originary understanding of Dasein as being-in-the-world. Although Heidegger's approach is more ontologically abstract, both thinkers converge on the view that modernity has lost touch with a deeper, non-instrumental reality. Similarly, Erich Fromm, in *To Have or To Be?* (1976), echoes Marcel's critique by distinguishing two modes of existence: one based on ownership and consumption, the other on authenticity and relational openness. While Fromm's framework is more psychological and social, it supports Marcel's philosophical and spiritual vision. Furthermore, Simone Weil's reflections in *Gravity and Grace* (1952) align with Marcel's concerns. Weil critiques the reduction of persons to functional roles and pleads for attention to the sacredness of human dignity. She emphasizes that true value cannot be quantified or possessed - it must be received with humility, a stance congruent with Marcel's metaphysics of being. In sum, Marcel's distinction between being and having is not merely semantic or conceptual - it is ontological, ethical, and existential. It challenges us to discern whether our lives are guided by the logic of control or the invitation to communion. His thought calls us to rediscover a mode of existence rooted in openness, participation, and fidelity to the mystery of being itself.

Mystery and Problem: A Metaphysical Clarification

Central to Marcel's metaphysical and existential reflections is his distinction between the categories of "problem" and "mystery." A problem, according to Marcel, is a question that lies outside the subject and is susceptible to solution through analytical reasoning and technical mastery. A mystery, by contrast, envelops the subject; it cannot be detached from one's lived experience or reduced to a formula. In *The Mystery of Being* (1950), Marcel writes, "A mystery is a problem which encroaches upon its own data," meaning that the very act of engaging with a mystery transforms the one who engages. This distinction is not merely epistemological but deeply ontological. Problems demand resolution and control, fitting into the framework of scientific and technological reasoning that characterizes the modern world. Mysteries, however, must be dwelt in, approached with reverence, and inhabited with the whole self. Love, death, suffering, fidelity, and hope are not problems to be solved but mysteries to be experienced and honored. Marcel contends that an overreliance on technical rationality leads to the erosion of the domain of mystery and, by extension, the spiritual core of human life (Marcel, 1950).

This insight finds resonance in other philosophical traditions. Michael Polanyi, in *Personal Knowledge* (1958), distinguishes between tacit and explicit knowing, insisting that the most important forms of understanding - such as scientific intuition or moral judgment - depend on a participatory form of knowledge that transcends mere propositional logic. Similarly, Martin Buber's *I and Thou* (1923) makes a parallel distinction between the "I-It" relation, which objectifies and manipulates, and the "I-Thou" relation, which recognizes and reveres the other as a mystery to be encountered rather than a thing to be known. Marcel's concern with the loss of mystery also aligns with the work of Edith Stein, particularly in her early phenomenological writings on empathy. In *On the Problem of Empathy* (1917), Stein emphasizes that genuine empathy is not a matter of analytical categorization but a deep engagement with the irreducible otherness of the person. Empathy, like mystery, requires participation, not calculation. In contemporary terms, Marcel's distinction offers a compelling critique of technocratic modernity. By treating human life as a set of solvable problems - whether in education, healthcare, or interpersonal relations - modern systems often strip away the dignity and sacredness that come from acknowledging the mysterious depth of the human person. As Byung-Chul Han argues in *The Expulsion of the Other* (2018), modern society's drive for transparency and efficiency leaves little room for the opacity and depth of mystery, thereby flattening the existential horizon. Thus, Marcel's metaphysical distinction serves as a call to recover an attitude of awe and humility before the depths of human existence. In affirming mystery, we affirm not ignorance but reverent participation in what transcends us. Marcel's metaphysics is, ultimately, a spiritual ethic - an invitation to dwell within mystery rather than to flee it.

The Embodied Self and the Crisis of Incarnation

In his critique of modernity, Gabriel Marcel consistently highlights the depersonalization and disincarnation of the human subject - a process by which the body is reduced to an object among objects and the person becomes estranged from their own embodiment. For Marcel, the self is not a disembodied consciousness or an isolated ego but an incarnate being whose body is a fundamental mode of presence and relationality. In contrast to Cartesian dualism, Marcel insists that "I am my body" and not merely that "I have a body" (Marcel, 1951). This affirmation of embodiment is essential to his existential personalism. Marcel's concern with the crisis of incarnation is particularly relevant in the context of technological modernity, where human interactions are increasingly mediated by abstract systems and digital platforms. The body is often seen as a tool, a commodity, or a site of manipulation, rather than a

sacrament of personal presence. Marcel warns that this reduction leads to the erosion of the human capacity for communion. As he observes, "when the body becomes a thing, the person becomes anonymous" (Marcel, 1962).

His views find parallels in the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who similarly rejects the objectification of the body and argues in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) that our primary mode of being-in-the-world is through embodied perception. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is not simply a biological mechanism but the very condition of possibility for experience, thought, and intersubjectivity. Marcel's understanding of incarnation resonates with this view, yet is more overtly spiritual: the body is not just a site of perception, but a site of communion, of presence, of availability to others and to God. Moreover, the crisis of embodiment that Marcel diagnoses is not merely philosophical but cultural and ethical. The contemporary culture of disincarnation manifests in practices that deny the body's integrity - ranging from virtual disembodiment and cosmetic commodification to systems that marginalize or devalue those whose bodies are aged, disabled, or non-normative. Marcel's call to recover the dignity of the incarnate self challenges these tendencies, insisting that to love and be loved requires the courage to be present in and through one's body. Emmanuel Levinas also offers an important complement to Marcel's thought. In *Totality and Infinity* (1961), Levinas emphasizes the ethical significance of the face-to-face encounter, which discloses the irreducible alterity of the other. This ethical immediacy presupposes embodiment - it is through the body that the other speaks, suffers, and calls us to responsibility. Marcel, similarly, emphasizes that ethical and spiritual availability is not abstract but incarnate: to be available to the other is to be bodily present, not just cognitively alert. Thus, Marcel's philosophy of the embodied self provides a crucial counter-narrative to the mechanistic and virtual tendencies of our age. It is a call to reinhabit the body as a place of mystery, vulnerability, and communion. To be a person is to be incarnate - not as a limiting condition, but as a gift that enables the fullness of presence and participation in the mystery of being.

Fidelity and Hope: Existential Virtues in Relationship

For Gabriel Marcel, fidelity and hope are not merely psychological attitudes or social conventions but ontological virtues rooted in the metaphysical structure of human being. In a world characterized by transience, fragmentation, and objectification, these existential virtues serve as pathways to authentic interpersonal communion and spiritual transcendence. Marcel explores these themes extensively in *Homo Viator* (1951), where he portrays the human being as a "wayfarer," one who journeys through the ambiguities of existence sustained by the interior disposition of hope and fidelity. Fidelity, in Marcel's thought, is the affirmation of presence over time. It is a form of constancy that transcends mere obligation or duty; rather, it is a creative and loving commitment to the other, even in the face of change, suffering, or absence. Marcel writes, "To be faithful is to remain available to the other even when the other is no longer present" (Marcel, 1964). Fidelity is thus intimately linked to memory and promise, grounding the self in a relational matrix that resists the dehumanizing pull of temporality and isolation.

Hope, on the other hand, is not mere optimism or a psychological coping mechanism. It is a metaphysical act, an expression of trust in the ultimate meaningfulness of being. Marcel describes hope as "an openness to the transcendent" (Marcel, 1951), a readiness to receive what cannot be guaranteed or controlled. Unlike despair - which closes off the future and isolates the self-hope expands the horizon of existence and sustains the soul's availability to being, to love, and to God. These themes find resonance in the thought of Søren Kierkegaard, especially in *Works of Love* (1847), where fidelity and hope are presented as Christian virtues that demand inwardness, sacrifice, and spiritual endurance. Likewise, Paul Ricoeur, in *Oneself*

as Another (1992), discusses the narrative identity of the self as forged through promises and fidelity over time, echoing Marcel's insight that the self becomes truly personal only through faithful commitment. Marcel's emphasis on these virtues is also a critique of a society marked by utilitarianism and disposability. In a culture where relationships are often seen as transactional and time-bound, fidelity appears countercultural - a radical affirmation of the other's irreplaceable worth. Similarly, hope challenges the dominant narratives of despair and nihilism, offering instead a posture of receptivity and spiritual openness. In pastoral and therapeutic contexts, Marcel's insights have significant implications. Fidelity grounds the possibility of enduring love and covenantal relationships, while hope sustains healing and moral resilience. Both virtues embody Marcel's broader philosophical vision: that to be human is to dwell within mystery, to remain present in love, and to journey forward in trust.

Availability (*Disponibilité*) and the Art of Presence

In Marcel's existential vocabulary, *disponibilité* - translated as "availability" or "readiness to respond" - is a central concept that deepens his vision of the human person as one called into relational communion. This availability is not mere physical presence or utilitarian readiness to help; rather, it is a spiritual and ontological posture characterized by receptivity, openness, and fidelity to the mystery of the other. Marcel defines *disponibilité* as the condition of "being inwardly disposed to respond to the call of the other," and he situates it as the existential foundation for authentic intersubjectivity (Marcel, 1949). Availability is closely tied to the ethical imperative of presence. In a world increasingly saturated with distraction, mediated interactions, and superficial connections, Marcel's call to availability is a radical ethic of attentiveness. To be truly available is to make oneself vulnerable to the other's need, to suspend self-interest, and to practice an interior silence that welcomes the unpredictable and unprogrammable. In *The Mystery of Being* (1950), Marcel writes: "We are only present to someone to the extent that we are inwardly free for them - that we are not preoccupied, not absorbed in ourselves."

The spiritual depth of *disponibilité* invites comparison with the phenomenological ethic of Emmanuel Levinas, who insists in *Otherwise Than Being* (1974) that the ethical subject must be infinitely responsible for the face of the other. While Levinas emphasizes asymmetrical responsibility, Marcel offers a more mutual vision, where availability is a two-way openness in which both persons risk encounter and transformation. Likewise, Martin Buber's concept of the "I-Thou" relationship parallels Marcel's *disponibilité*. In Buber's terms, one must be fully present, without instrumentalizing the other, to achieve true dialogue. For Marcel, this dialogue is undergirded by availability, a cultivated attentiveness that allows communion to emerge within the unpredictable rhythm of real human presence. *Disponibilité* is also linked to the practice of hospitality. As Henri Nouwen notes in *Reaching Out* (1975), true hospitality is not about offering comfort or control but about creating space where the other can be fully themselves. This echoes Marcel's insight that availability is not self-effacing servility, but a spiritual strength rooted in presence, attentiveness, and hope. It demands moral discipline, requiring the self to resist the compulsions of busyness, control, and fear.

In applied settings such as pastoral ministry, psychotherapy, or friendship, Marcel's vision of *disponibilité* becomes deeply practical. Therapists who offer attentive silence and empathetic presence mirror the kind of availability Marcel envisions. Pastors and spiritual directors who resist the temptation to offer quick fixes and instead accompany others through mystery and suffering enact the very posture Marcel articulates. True friendship, for Marcel, is marked not by entertainment or shared interests but by sustained availability - a presence that remains, listens, and honors the other's mystery. In this way, *disponibilité* resists the objectifying and mechanistic tendencies of our technological culture. It serves as an existential

counterweight to commodification, reminding us that persons are not problems to be fixed or resources to be used, but mysteries to be encountered. Marcel's vision of the human person, therefore, is deeply incarnational: it calls for presence over productivity, communion over calculation, and fidelity over efficiency. Ultimately, *disponibilité* is an expression of hope and faith - a trust that being-with the other, even without answers or solutions, has intrinsic value. It is through availability that the self transcends solitude and touches the transcendent in and through the presence of another.

Conclusion: Marcel's Relevance in a Technological Age

Gabriel Marcel's existential personalism offers a profoundly humanistic response to the challenges of modernity. In an era marked by rapid technological advancement, social alienation, and metaphysical amnesia, Marcel's emphasis on being, mystery, incarnation, fidelity, hope, and availability reorients philosophical attention toward the sacredness of personhood and presence. His critique of depersonalization and technological objectification speaks directly to contemporary issues of disconnection, commodification, and the loss of spiritual depth. The postmodern world increasingly values speed, efficiency, and abstraction over depth, attentiveness, and relational integrity. Marcel counters this cultural drift with a vision rooted in ontological communion. Rather than accept the fragmentation of the self into functional roles or data points, he invites us to reclaim the embodied self as a locus of mystery and presence. Against the culture of control and calculation, Marcel proposes the existential disciplines of availability, hope, and fidelity - virtues that anchor human existence in love and transcendence.

Marcel's thought is especially relevant in light of current trends in artificial intelligence, surveillance capitalism, and digital mediation, which risk further distancing persons from the lived realities of embodiment and interpersonal encounter. His insistence on the irreplaceability of the personal - on the uniqueness of every "Thou" and the sacredness of human presence - stands as a philosophical and spiritual bulwark against such dehumanizing forces. Moreover, Marcel's metaphysical sensitivity to mystery offers a counterweight to both scientism and nihilism. Rather than reducing reality to what can be explained, controlled, or commodified, Marcel affirms a participatory ontology that restores wonder, reverence, and openness to the transcendent. In this, he aligns with a broader tradition of thinkers - from Kierkegaard and Buber to Edith Stein and Charles Taylor - who view the human subject not as an isolated ego but as a being-in-relationship, capable of grace, presence, and ethical transformation. In sum, Marcel's existential personalism offers not only a critique of modern reductionism but a constructive philosophical path forward. It calls us to rediscover the concrete, the relational, and the mysterious as central to what it means to be human. In doing so, Marcel remains a vital guide for our time - a thinker who helps us to remember what we risk forgetting: that to exist is not merely to function, but to love, to hope, to remain faithful, and to be present.

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Article   **Open Access**

DIGITAL RADICALIZATION: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS AMPLIFY TERRORIST RECRUITMENT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the role of social media algorithms in amplifying terrorist recruitment efforts in Northern Nigeria. It argues that while platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) are designed to optimize user engagement, their algorithmic logic often favors sensational and polarizing content including extremist propaganda. Terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP have increasingly exploited this digital ecosystem to radicalize and recruit disaffected youth by leveraging local grievances, distorted religious narratives, and emotionally charged media. The paper highlights how the underlying socioeconomic conditions in Northern Nigeria - marked by poverty, youth unemployment, and low education - make the region especially vulnerable to digital radicalization. It also critiques the double standards in how tech platforms respond swiftly to extremism in Western contexts but lag in addressing similar threats in Africa due to inadequate content moderation infrastructure and lack of regional engagement. As a way forward, the paper calls for multi-stakeholder interventions including digital literacy integration in education, improved collaboration between Nigerian authorities and tech companies, and targeted investment in counter-narratives and economic empowerment programs. In an age where algorithms shape ideologies, combating terrorism in Nigeria requires not only military strategies but also digital vigilance, corporate accountability, and inclusive governance.

Keywords: Digital Radicalization, Social Media Algorithms, Boko Haram, Online Extremism, Terrorist Recruitment, Content Moderation, Algorithmic Amplification, Digital Literacy.

Introduction

The digital age has profoundly transformed the global landscape of communication, information sharing, and, perhaps most alarmingly, terrorist recruitment. Traditional forms of radicalization once rooted in secluded training camps, clandestine meetings, ideological

sermons in remote mosques, and the circulation of underground publications have largely given way to the boundless and largely unregulated environment of social media platforms. Extremist groups have quickly recognized and exploited the unprecedented reach, speed, and anonymity offered by digital technologies. These platforms are now central tools not only for disseminating extremist propaganda but also for real-time recruitment, coordination of attacks, and the global spread of radical ideologies (Conway, 2017; Awan, 2017).

As Weimann (2016) notes, terrorist organizations have skillfully adapted to the decentralized and anonymous nature of the internet, turning it into a powerful means of advancing their ideological goals while circumventing traditional security barriers. Digital jihadists utilize sophisticated media content ranging from emotionally charged videos and religiously framed narratives to memes and encrypted messaging apps to attract, indoctrinate, and mobilize recruits. According to Berger and Morgan (2015), groups such as ISIS developed highly coordinated online media wings capable of tailoring content to specific demographics and psychological profiles, a strategy now echoed by groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP in Northern Nigeria. Moreover, the interactivity and algorithmic design of social media further compound the threat. Unlike one-way communication in traditional propaganda, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Telegram allow users to engage directly with extremist content, receive immediate feedback, and gradually become immersed in radical echo chambers (Gill et al., 2017). These digital spaces do not merely transmit messages - they foster communities of belief and provide emotional reinforcement and a sense of belonging, especially to marginalized individuals. As highlighted by Ingram (2016), this narrative-driven recruitment approach appeals particularly to individuals seeking purpose, identity, or revenge, often in socioeconomically fragile contexts.

In the African context, particularly in Northern Nigeria, the situation is even more precarious. Poor digital literacy, high unemployment, and minimal government control of cyberspace offer fertile ground for extremist messaging to flourish unchallenged (Olojo, 2021). The growing affordability of smartphones and data bundles has made it easier than ever for terrorist groups to reach and radicalize disillusioned youth and turn the internet into a silent but deadly recruitment camp that operates 24/7. As Maher (2016) warns, the digital environment is not just a new frontier for terrorist activities - it is rapidly becoming the primary one. In Nigeria, particularly in the northern region, this digital shift has compounded an already complex security crisis. Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have not only sustained their insurgency through violence but have evolved into tech-savvy entities deploying digital strategies for recruitment and indoctrination (Olojo, 2021). Their online presence has grown steadily, with carefully produced propaganda videos, encrypted communication channels, and targeted messaging that appeals to marginalized youth, especially in states plagued by poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment (Nwankpa, 2021). This has made the internet a frontline in the war on terror, one where the enemy is not just holding guns in the forest but also smartphones in their bedrooms. At the heart of this digital evolution lies the role of social media algorithms. These algorithms, engineered by platforms such Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, are designed to maximize user engagement by recommending content that aligns with users' interests and behaviors. While this model benefits entertainment and advertising, it becomes deeply problematic when applied to extremist content. As Tufekci (2018) argues, recommendation systems can unintentionally radicalize users by pushing them toward more extreme content, creating echo chambers where radical ideologies thrive. In the case of Northern Nigeria, these algorithms are not just promoting content they are helping to automate and amplify the recruitment pipelines of terrorist organizations.

Social Media Algorithms are not Neutral

The common assumption that digital platforms are neutral conduits of information has been increasingly challenged in recent years. In reality, social media algorithms are not impartial systems. They are designed with a primary objective: to maximize user engagement and screen time. This objective leads platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter (now X), and TikTok to prioritize content that provokes strong emotional reactions - often controversial, polarizing, or extreme - over content that is accurate, balanced, or constructive (Tufekci, 2015). These algorithmic priorities have far-reaching implications, especially in contexts of violent extremism. Social media platforms operate on engagement-based models where user actions - clicks, likes, shares, comments, and watch time - feed into algorithms that decide what content users see next. Content that generates more interaction is rewarded with wider visibility, regardless of its ideological or factual value. Consequently, sensational or radical content tends to outperform moderate or factual content in terms of algorithmic reach. According to O'Callaghan et al. (2015), extremist materials often exploit emotional triggers such as fear, anger, or identity affirmation, making them inherently more "viral" in algorithmic ecosystems. YouTube's recommendation engine, for example, has been criticized for pushing users toward increasingly extreme content in a phenomenon that Tufekci (2018) terms "the great radicalizer." In her analysis, she found that users who began with relatively innocuous searches (e.g., "Islam") were soon recommended videos that glorified jihad or denounced Western values. This incremental exposure, driven by watch history and algorithmic prediction, deepens a user's immersion in radical ideologies. Similarly, Ribeiro et al. (2020) found that YouTube's algorithm was significantly responsible for directing users from mainstream political videos to far-right or extremist channels, confirming a pattern of algorithmic radicalization.

This issue is compounded by the "echo chamber" and "filter bubble" effects. An echo chamber arises when users are consistently exposed only to viewpoints that reinforce their own beliefs, while a filter bubble occurs when algorithms personalize content so narrowly that users remain unaware of alternative perspectives (Pariser, 2011). These phenomena reduce ideological diversity and increase polarization, making individuals more susceptible to extremist narratives. In radicalization pathways, these algorithmic patterns can isolate users from counter-narratives and reinforce a skewed worldview, often built on victimhood, persecution, or religious absolutism (Sunstein, 2017). In fragile societies like those in Northern Nigeria - where access to balanced education, critical media literacy, and civic engagement is limited - these algorithmic dynamics are even more dangerous. Terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP have learned to manipulate hashtags, metadata, and emotional content to increase their algorithmic reach. According to Awan (2017), Boko Haram's digital strategy includes uploading emotionally compelling videos that mimic legitimate religious discourse, thereby avoiding immediate detection while maximizing visibility to susceptible audiences. The illusion of algorithmic neutrality masks a structural vulnerability one where corporate business models prioritize attention and profit over public safety and ideological balance. As Gillespie (2018) argues, algorithms are not just technical instruments; they are cultural and political forces that shape discourse and behavior. In the context of violent extremism, their amplification of radical content contributes directly to recruitment, radicalization, and ultimately, terrorism.

Northern Nigeria: A Fertile Ground for Digital Radicalization

The Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities of Northern Youth (Poverty, Unemployment, Low Education): Northern Nigeria presents a particularly fragile environment for youth development, making the region vulnerable to radicalization—especially through digital means.

The area is marked by widespread poverty, high youth unemployment, and low educational attainment, which collectively contribute to a sense of hopelessness and frustration among the youth. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020), the North East and North West zones of Nigeria consistently record the highest poverty and illiteracy rates in the country. These structural deficits not only undermine social cohesion but also reduce the capacity of young people to critically engage with digital content or resist ideological manipulation. Research by Okolie et al. (2021) found that youth unemployment in Northern Nigeria is a key driver of radicalization, particularly when combined with weak state institutions and limited access to higher education. Many young people, especially in rural and peri-urban areas, lack critical thinking skills and digital literacy, making them susceptible to manipulation via online platforms. In such conditions, extremist recruiters find fertile ground, presenting their ideology as a path to purpose, status, and belonging - appeals that resonate in the face of chronic economic exclusion.

How Terrorists Exploit Local Grievances and Religious Sentiments Online
Terrorist groups in Northern Nigeria, most notably Boko Haram and its splinter faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have become increasingly adept at manipulating local grievances and religious sentiments to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers. These groups operate in a region marked by entrenched poverty, systemic inequality, political exclusion, and a long history of underdevelopment—conditions which generate deep-seated resentment among the population. Common grievances exploited by these groups include perceived marginalization by the southern-dominated federal government, widespread government corruption, heavy-handed military responses that often result in civilian casualties, and a growing disillusionment with Western-style education, which Boko Haram explicitly opposes in both ideology and name *"Western education is forbidden"* (Adamu, 2020; Botha & Abdile, 2019). Through social media, these terrorist organizations have been able to craft potent and emotionally resonant narratives that present their violent campaigns as divine mandates and their adversaries particularly the Nigerian state and Western allies as enemies of Islam and persecutors of the faithful. Olojo (2021) notes that Boko Haram's propaganda frequently incorporates local dialects, Quranic verses, and references to historic injustices in order to amplify feelings of victimhood and moral urgency. By portraying themselves as defenders of the faith and avengers of historical and contemporary wrongs, these groups establish a moral justification for violence that is compelling to disaffected youth searching for meaning or purpose.

According to Onuoha and Hassan (2019), Boko Haram's digital rhetoric is laced with distorted interpretations of Qur'anic texts and Hadiths, selectively quoted and removed from their theological context to legitimize bloodshed and demonize those who oppose them - including fellow Muslims. These messages are not produced arbitrarily; they are strategically calibrated to resonate with specific cultural, religious, and political conditions in Northern Nigeria. The content is intentionally simplified, emotional, and repetitive key features that align with the cognitive vulnerabilities of audiences who are poorly educated or digitally illiterate (Looney, 2020). Religion holds a central place in the social fabric of Northern Nigeria, and terrorists have weaponized this fact to their advantage. They present their agenda as a sacred duty, thereby silencing dissent and attracting sympathizers who might otherwise oppose violence. This religious framing allows them to bypass political critique and instead elevate their campaign as part of a cosmic battle between righteousness and evil. Digital platforms intensify the effect of these narratives. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Telegram function as echo chambers where extremist ideologies are reinforced through social interaction, repetition, and community validation. Likes, shares, emojis, and forwarded

messages act as subtle forms of endorsement, giving the illusion of widespread support and legitimacy (Conway et al., 2019; Awan, 2017). What is particularly troubling is that these platforms allow content to circulate rapidly and persistently, even after being flagged or taken down. Terrorist recruiters often mirror and re-upload their videos or shift to encrypted messaging platforms, thus staying a step ahead of content moderation efforts. In many cases, they also use memes, nasheeds (Islamic chants), and emotionally charged testimonies to convey their messages in less detectable ways bypassing automated filters while still impacting vulnerable minds (Bloom et al., 2017). These strategies underscore the calculated and evolving nature of digital jihadist propaganda and the need for equally sophisticated countermeasures.

Digital Media Teams Used by Terror Groups to Create Emotionally Appealing Content

Modern terrorist organizations no longer operate in physical isolation - they also maintain well-organized digital media cells tasked with producing high-quality, emotionally charged propaganda. Boko Haram, following the example of ISIS, has developed sophisticated media operations capable of producing slick videos, audio recordings, and written materials designed for maximum psychological impact. These materials often feature testimonies of former fighters, battlefield victories, or martyrdom narratives that glorify violence and instill fear (Awan, 2017). These digital products are not just random; they are crafted with specific communication objectives in mind. As Ingram (2016) notes, extremist propaganda typically follows a "push-pull" model: it pushes recruits away from the status quo (depicting the government as corrupt or illegitimate) and pulls them toward a new identity (as defenders of faith or avengers of injustice). Social media algorithms further amplify this content when users engage with it, allowing a single message to reach thousands or even millions within hours. Moreover, these media teams exploit current events - such as military operations, communal clashes, or political controversies - to reinforce their narratives and provoke emotional responses. Their use of local languages such as Hausa and Kanuri makes their messaging accessible to the intended audience, bypassing language and literacy barriers. This local linguistic adaptation, combined with visual storytelling, helps embed radical ideology within familiar cultural symbols and contexts and enhance its emotional and psychological appeal (Animasawun & Fatile, 2020).

Platform Responsibility and Global Double Standards

The global digital ecosystem is dominated by powerful technology corporations Meta (Facebook, Instagram), Google (YouTube), and X (formerly Twitter) that wield immense influence over what billions of users see, share, and believe. While these platforms have developed robust moderation frameworks to tackle violent extremism in North America and Europe, their response to similar threats in Africa, particularly in regions like Northern Nigeria, remains disproportionately slow, inconsistent, and under-resourced. This disparity raises important questions about the global responsibilities of tech giants and the structural inequalities embedded in digital governance. A critical concern is the unequal speed and rigor with which tech platforms respond to extremist content. In Western contexts, particularly after events such as the Christchurch mosque attack in New Zealand or the Capitol Hill riot in the U.S., social media companies implemented swift measures to deplatform extremist actors, enhance content moderation tools, and issue transparency reports (Frenkel & Alba, 2019). In contrast, when Boko Haram, ISWAP, or other extremist groups release violent propaganda or recruitment videos targeting Nigerian or West African audiences, the response is often delayed or absent altogether. As Akinola (2021) points out, violent content targeting African audiences frequently remains online longer, suggesting either a lack of region-specific moderation strategies or a lack prioritization of African security concerns by platform headquarters.

A key factor behind this digital inequality is the lack of region-specific moderation tools and personnel. Most content moderation algorithms are trained using data derived from Western contexts - English, French, and other dominant global languages - while neglecting local African languages such as Hausa, Kanuri, or Fulfude, which are widely used by terrorist groups in Northern Nigeria (Olojo, 2021). Moreover, the shortage of human moderators with cultural and linguistic competence means extremist messages can evade detection simply by using local idioms or coded speech. Amnesty International (2022) noted that platforms like Meta have fewer dedicated safety and moderation teams for sub-Saharan Africa compared to other regions, which undermines efforts to curb online incitement to violence, hate speech, or radical propaganda. This lack of localized digital governance has severe implications. In fragile regions like Northern Nigeria - where formal education and media literacy levels are low unmoderated extremist content is consumed more credibly, and its psychological impact is greater. Even more alarming is the fact that terrorist groups are aware of these platform blind spots and deliberately exploit them to bypass moderation systems. For example, Boko Haram has repeatedly adapted its messaging style to evade takedown algorithms, using visually suggestive rather than overtly violent material, embedding texts in images, or posting brief videos that disappear quickly strategies that benefit from the platforms' moderation weaknesses (Bloom et al., 2017).

In light of these challenges, corporate accountability must be re-emphasized. Social media companies must not operate as neutral observers while their platforms are used to incite violence or recruit for terrorist causes. Just as these platforms are quick to act in Europe or North America when threats emerge, they must extend the same urgency and seriousness to African regions under threat. Transparency in algorithmic decision-making, investment in Africa-specific moderation tools, and public disclosure of takedown data for extremist content in Africa are essential steps toward digital equity (Gorwa, 2019). Tech firms also have a duty to collaborate more actively with local governments, civil society organizations, and digital literacy advocates to strengthen resilience against online radicalization. The current digital governance model, which leaves Africa at the periphery of content moderation and policy enforcement, reflects a digital double standard that not only undermines trust but endangers lives. As argued by Taye (2020), if platform governance continues to be Eurocentric in practice, it will perpetuate structural violence by allowing harmful content to thrive in regions already struggling with conflict, inequality, and weak institutions. The solution lies not in treating African security threats as afterthoughts but in embedding Africa firmly within the global digital safety framework.

Call to Action: What Nigeria Must Do
To confront the escalating threat of digital radicalization in Northern Nigeria, the Nigerian government, civil society, and international partners must take coordinated, proactive steps. Tackling the problem requires not only technological interventions but also social, educational, and economic reforms that build resilience against extremist messaging. Below are key areas of urgent action:

i. **Introduce Digital Literacy into School Curricula and Community Outreach:** Digital literacy is the foundation for building resilience to online radicalization. Many Nigerian youths, especially in the North, interact with the internet daily through mobile phones but lack the skills to critically evaluate online content or detect disinformation and extremist propaganda. Integrating digital literacy and online safety education into the formal school curriculum will help students understand the risks of online manipulation, foster critical thinking, and empower them to make informed digital choices (UNESCO, 2021). Beyond schools, community-based outreach programs should also be prioritized to reach out-of-

school youth and rural populations. These programs can involve local influencers, religious leaders, and youth organizations to teach safe online behavior, promote digital ethics, and debunk extremist narratives. As argued by Afolayan and Ejiogu (2020), empowering local communities through media education enhances grassroots resilience and deters the influence of terrorist recruiters.

ii. **Collaborate with Tech Companies to Flag and Remove Extremist Content:** Nigeria must actively engage with global tech companies such as Meta (Facebook), Google (YouTube), and X (formerly Twitter) to develop region-specific protocols for detecting and removing extremist content. These collaborations should involve sharing local intelligence about trends in radical propaganda, linguistic nuances (e.g., Hausa or Kanuri dialects), and culturally embedded symbols used by groups like Boko Haram or ISWAP. To this end, establishing a joint content moderation task force comprising Nigerian security agencies, tech firms, and civil society groups could significantly enhance the speed and accuracy of content removal (Akinola, 2021). Platforms must also invest in training more Africa-based moderators and improving automated detection tools to address the local context effectively. As highlighted by Gorwa (2019), co-regulatory approaches where governments and companies share oversight can help balance national security with freedom of expression.

iii. **Address Root Causes (Job Creation, Education Access, and Counter-Narrative Programs):** While tackling online radicalization is critical, it cannot succeed without addressing the underlying socioeconomic conditions that make youth vulnerable to extremist ideologies. The lack of meaningful employment, poor access to quality education, and social alienation create fertile ground for radical recruiters who offer a sense of belonging, purpose, and economic relief. Government and development agencies must scale up investments in youth employment programs, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support in high-risk regions. According to Okolie et al. (2021), such interventions reduce susceptibility to radicalization by improving self-worth and future prospects. Equally important are counter-narrative programs - strategic communication campaigns designed to undermine extremist messaging. These should include testimonies from former militants, peace-focused Islamic teachings, and locally credible voices promoting tolerance and inclusion. As Ingram (2016) emphasizes, counter-narratives must be authentic, emotionally resonant, and culturally grounded to counteract the appeal of extremist propaganda.

Conclusion

Social media has evolved beyond a space for casual interaction and information sharing - it has become a battleground where ideologies, identities, and influence are contested. In Northern Nigeria, this virtual arena is increasingly being exploited by terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP to radicalize vulnerable youth, spread propaganda, and recruit followers. What makes this threat especially dangerous is the silent, invisible power of algorithmic systems that reward sensationalism and extremism, creating echo chambers that reinforce violence rather than challenge it. The urgency to address digital radicalization cannot be overstated. Nigeria is facing a complex security challenge that blends poverty, exclusion, and religious manipulation with the powerful reach of social media. If left unchecked, this phenomenon threatens to deepen instability, prolong insurgency, and undermine long-term development goals in the region. Therefore, a proactive and coordinated response is essential. This includes digital literacy campaigns, robust collaboration with technology platforms, and comprehensive investments in youth empowerment and education. Government agencies, civil society, religious leaders, educators, and private tech companies must come together in a unified front

to dismantle the digital infrastructure that fuels extremism. National security can no longer be defended solely with guns and boots on the ground; it must now include firewalls, algorithms, and informed citizens who can resist radical narratives in both real and virtual spaces.

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