

JOURNAL of Philosophy & Contemporary Issues

ISSN: 3093-060X



Vol. 1, No. 3, December, 2025

A Publication from the Department of Philosophy
University of Uyo, Nigeria

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Gendered Socio-Economic Profiles and Levels of Involvement in Urban Agriculture in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria By <i>Edidiong Bassey Ukpabio, MSc, Iniobong Aniefiok Akpabio, PhD and Beulah Imo Ekerete, PhD.</i>	1-10
2.	African Traditional Medicine: Rebranding the Hermeneutics By <i>Samuel Otu Ishaya, PhD and Hossana Asuquo Abang, MA.</i>	11-24
3.	Advancing Security Discourse through Critical Engagement with Human Security By <i>Oyejide Felix Omotosho, PhD, Lawrence Ogbo Ugwuanyi, PhD, Patricia Ihuoma Ogu, MSc and Amadou B. Jobarteh.</i>	25-35
4.	Empirical Comparative Analysis of Manufacturing Outputs of Asia with the Two Regions of Oceania and the Middle East, 2018-2024 By <i>Bailey Saleh, PhD, Abbas Bailey Saleh, MSc and Albert Bailey Saleh.</i>	36-46
5.	Empowering Nigerian Society for Peace and Security Inputs from Re-Reading 1 Peter 2:13 - 17 By <i>Blessing Uenoson Okoh, PhD.</i>	47-57
6.	A Critique of Kant's Categorical Imperative and Socio-Economic Policy Formulation in Nigeria By <i>Elijah Okon John, PhD and Daniel Asuquo Etim, MA.</i>	58-66
7.	Anthropocentric Antagonism and the Rationality of Humans in Environmental Ethics: A Discourse on Sustainable Human Future By <i>Thomas Egaga Ushie, PhD and Gabriel Akwaji Agabi, PhD.</i>	67-78
8.	The Paradox of Religious Tolerance: Conversion, Law and Social Reality in South-West, Nigeria By <i>Ubong Iniobong Isaac, MA.</i>	79-89
9.	Sacred Spaces, Sacred Economies: Comparative Evidence from CAC's Babalola Memorial Camp and RCCG's Redemption Camp in Nigeria By <i>Emmanuel Oludare Adetula, MA and Olusegun Ayodeji Alokun, PhD.</i>	90-105
10.	Perception of Soft and Technical Skills in the French Programme by Students of RSU and IAUE in Rivers State By <i>Remigus Onyema Lemchi, PhD, and Emmanuel Nwachukwu, PhD.</i>	106-113
11.	A Philosophical Critique of Ethical Failure and Governance Deficits in Nigeria's National Oil Company (NNPC Limited) By <i>Justin Anyarogbu, PhD.</i>	114-128
12.	A Critique of Gender Inequality from the Perspective of Asouzu's Complementarity Philosophy By <i>Adom Kanu Ferdinand, PhD.</i>	129-139
13.	Artificial Intelligence in Public Sector Human Capital Development Opportunities, Risks, and Policy Implications By <i>Tosin Success Ademeso, PhD, Ibrahim Isah Salisu, PhD, Yakubu Shehu Ibrahim, PhD and Precious Chibueze Rufus.</i>	140-152
14.	Using Max Scheller to Elucidate the Place of the Posthuman in the Face of Artificial Intelligence By <i>Gerald Ohaeri, PhD.</i>	153-163
15.	Empirical Comparative Analysis of North America and Latin America Manufacturing Outputs, 2018-2025 By <i>Bailey Saleh, PhD, Abbas Bailey Saleh, MSc and Albert Bailey Saleh.</i>	164-172
16.	Affirmative Action and Gender Equality in Nigeria: A Study of the 35 Percent Policy By <i>Ademeso Tosin Success, PhD and Princess Omobolanle Ogundiran, PhD.</i>	173-180



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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 13, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Ukpabio, Edidiong B.; Akpabio, Iniobong A. & Ekerete, Beulah I. (2025). "Gendered Socio-Economic Profiles and Levels of Involvement in Urban Agriculture in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 1-10.

Article

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GENDERED SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILES AND LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN AGRICULTURE IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study is an analytical review of socio-economic characteristics of male and female urban farmers and their level of involvement in urban agriculture in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to; describe the socio-economic characteristics of male and female practitioners, identify the types of urban agriculture activities they engage in, and ascertain the level of involvement of both gender in urban farming. Data was collected from 240 respondents (120 males and 120 females) who were selected through a multistage sampling procedure, while collated data were analysed with the aid of descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that urban agriculture was dominated by middle-aged adults (41–60 years), accounting for the highest proportion 77.5% of all respondents, with most participants being married (74.6%) and mainly, possessing secondary-level education. (46.3%). Crop cultivation ($\bar{x} = 3.37$) and livestock rearing ($\bar{x} = 3.26$) were the most common urban agriculture activities among both gender, though women showed higher engagement in agro-processing ($\bar{x} = 3.18$) and day-to-day routine tasks. Categorically, a high proportion (50.8%) of respondents demonstrated moderate involvement in urban agriculture, while only a moderate 32.5% recorded high involvement, with women having a slightly higher rate of high involvement in comparison (35.0%) compared to male respondents (30.0%). The results highlight the significant but under-recognised role women play in sustaining urban food systems in the State. The study concludes that gender differences exist in the nature and intensity of participation, with women showing relatively higher involvement. It recommends gender-responsive capacity building, targeted support programmes, and youth engagement strategies to enhance inclusive participation and productivity in urban agriculture.

Keywords: Urban Agriculture, Gender, Socio-economic Characteristics, Involvement, Food Security, Nigeria.

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Introduction

Urban agriculture has gained increasing recognition as a vital livelihood strategy capable of enhancing food security, generating income, and improving urban resilience, particularly in developing countries. Rapid urbanisation, changing consumption patterns, and rising economic pressures have resulted in a growing need for urban households to diversify their sources of food and income through agricultural activities within city spaces (Putra et al., 2020). In Nigeria, urban agriculture has evolved beyond backyard gardening to include a broad spectrum of activities such as crop production, livestock rearing, aquaculture, and agro-processing within urban and peri-urban environments (Ovharhe et al., 2020). Although these activities contribute significantly to household nutrition and survival, participation patterns vary across socio-economic groups, with gender emerging as a defining variable influencing access, involvement, and benefits. Gender remains a key lens through which agricultural participation and benefits can be understood. In most African societies, gender norms shape the roles, responsibilities, and opportunities available to men and women, thereby influencing agricultural engagement, access to land, control over resources, and decision-making power (Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO - 2021). Within Urban Agriculture, these gendered roles are often redefined due to the urban context, where traditional land tenure systems, labour dynamics, and economic incentives differ from rural settings. While studies have shown that women often dominate subsistence-oriented urban farming due to their household food provisioning role, men tend to participate in activities with higher commercial value (Olufemi, 2019)). However, limited empirical evidence exists on how these gender patterns manifest in the urban agricultural landscape of Akwa Ibom State.

The socio-economic characteristics of individuals involved in urban agriculture provide critical insights into participation trends and livelihood outcomes. Factors such as age, marital status, education, income level, household size, and occupation significantly influence the nature and intensity of involvement in urban farming (Gavrilas et al., 2025). For instance, higher education and income levels may affect individuals' motivation, whether for commercial production, household food supplementation, or as a coping strategy against economic shocks (Ansah et al., 2020). In a State like Akwa Ibom, where the rising cost of living, fuel subsidy removal, and limited wage growth have heightened urban livelihood vulnerabilities, understanding the socio-economic profile of urban farmers becomes even more relevant for policy and development planning. Urban agriculture in Akwa Ibom State has recently experienced increased attention due to the State Government's agricultural transformation and food security agenda under the ARISE Initiative, which promotes local food production, youth inclusion, and agribusiness development (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2023). Despite these interventions, there is limited research that disaggregates urban agriculture participation by gender to show who participates, what activities they engage in, and the extent of involvement across households. Such evidence is crucial for designing gender-responsive policies, targeted training, access to inputs, and livelihood support mechanisms that can optimise the socio-economic potential of urban farming.

Existing studies in Nigeria have focused largely on rural agricultural participation or general urban farming without a gender-specific analysis. For example, Olufemi (2019) explored income effects of urban farming in Lagos but did not examine gendered involvement, while Ayogu et al. (2025) reported on food security benefits of urban agriculture in Enugu with limited focus on gender dynamics. This creates a research gap on the socio-economic variations in engagement between men and women in urban agriculture,

particularly within Akwa Ibom State. Addressing this gap is vital for informing gender-equitable agricultural programming and ensuring inclusive participation in urban food systems. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the gendered socio-economic characteristics and levels of involvement in urban agriculture in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, it seeks to:

- i. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of men and women involved in urban agriculture in Akwa Ibom State;
- ii. Identify the main types of urban agriculture practised by men and women in Akwa Ibom State; and
- iii. Ascertain the level of involvement of men and women in urban agriculture in Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

This study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State, located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The State shares boundaries with Cross River State to the east, Abia State to the north, Rivers State to the west, and is bordered to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. Administratively, Akwa Ibom State consists of 31 Local Government Areas (LGAs), with Uyo serving as the State capital. Vegetation ranges from tropical rainforest to coastal mangrove, offering favourable ecological conditions for various forms of urban agriculture, including vegetable production, livestock and poultry rearing, aquaculture, and backyard gardening. Major urban centres such as Uyo, Eket, Ikot Ekpene and Oron play a key role in urban farming activities due to their high population density, increasing food demand, and limited land access, which encourages innovative farming practices such as container, homestead, and small-plot farming. The study population comprised male and female urban agriculture practitioners residing in selected urban areas of Akwa Ibom State. The target population included individuals engaged in various urban farming activities such as crop cultivation, livestock rearing, poultry production, aquaculture, agro-processing and other related urban agricultural ventures. A multistage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. In the first stage, four out of the six agricultural zones in Akwa Ibom State (Uyo, Eket, Ikot Ekpene and Oron) were purposively selected due to their high concentration of urban farming activities. In the second stage, one block was purposively selected from each zone based on the prominence of urban agricultural practices. Two urban cells were then purposively selected from each block, yielding a total of eight urban cells. In the final stage, a snowball sampling technique was used to identify and select 30 urban agriculture practitioners (15 males and 15 females) from each cell, resulting in a total sample size of 240 respondents. Snowball sampling was appropriate for reaching dispersed and informal urban agriculture practitioners who may not be easily identified through conventional sampling approaches.

The sampling frame is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sampling Frame for the Study

Agricultural Zone	Selected Block	Selected Cells	Male Respondents per Cell	Female Respondents per Cell	Total Respondents per Block
Uyo	Use Ikot Ebio	Uyo Urban	15	15	60
		Use Offot	15	15	
Eket	Ukwa	Ikot Usekong	15	15	60
		Afaha Uqua	15	15	
Ikot Ekpene	Ikot Ekpene	Ifuho	15	15	60
		Ikot Abia Idem	15	15	

Oron	Oron/Udung Uko	Esuk Oro	15	15	60
		Udung Osin	15	15	
Total	–	8 Cells	120	120	240

Source: Derived from official data of Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Programme (2024)

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents within the selected urban cells. The questionnaire comprised both closed-ended and Likert-scale items to facilitate ease of response, comparability of data and subsequent analysis. Socio-economic characteristics were measured using structured questions capturing variables such as age (in years), marital status, educational level (ranging from no formal education to tertiary education), primary occupation, household size (number of persons), years of urban farming experience and monthly income derived from urban agriculture. Types of urban agriculture practised were assessed using items relating to crop production, livestock rearing, aquaculture and agro-processing. Respondents rated how frequently they engaged in each practice on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Not at all, 2 = As occasion demandsA little, 3 = Every other seasonSometimes, to 4 = Regularly. Levels of involvement in urban agriculture were measured using 13 core farming activities rated on a four-point Likert scale (1 = Not involved to 4 = Highly involved). Composite scores were generated, and involvement levels were categorised into low, moderate and high based on score ranges. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations to address the study objectives. Mean scores and ranking were computed to determine the types of urban agriculture most practised by men and women. For the level of involvement in urban agriculture, total scores for each respondent were computed (maximum score of 52) and categorised as low (13–25), moderate (26–39) or high (40–52) involvement. All analyses were conducted using the IBM SPSS Statistics software, Version 26.

Results and Discussion

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Men and Women Involved in Urban Agriculture: The socio-economic characteristics of the 240 respondents (120 males and 120 females) involved in Uurban Aagriculture are presented in Table 2. The findings show that urban agriculture in Akwa Ibom State is dominated by middle-aged adults, with 77.5percent % of respondents aged between 41–60 years. This suggests that the activity is more attractive to economically active adults rather than to younger populations. This aligns with Oyebanji (2024), who reported that Uurban Ffarming in Southern Nigeria is highly concentrated among middle-aged individuals due to their household food security obligations and livelihood responsibilities. Only 2.5 percent% of respondents were below 21 years, indicating low youth participation, which may be linked to youth migration to white-collar jobs and lack of interest in agriculture (Kamuzora, 2025). A greater proportion of respondents were married (74.6%), with more females (81.7%) than males (67.5%) in this category, implying that married women may be more engaged in urban farming to support household food supply and family nutrition. About Nearly half of the respondents had attained secondary school education (46.3%), indicating a moderate literacy level that can enhance the adoption of improved agricultural practices. This aligns with Aranguri et al. (2025), who found that basic literacy improves farmers’ ability to access urban agriculture information and markets. Trading was on a proportional basis, the most common occupation (36.3%), particularly among women (46.7%), while men were more likely to be artisans (29.2%). Only 7.9

percent% of respondents were full-time farmers, confirming that urban agriculture is largely practised as a secondary activity. Household sizes were mostly between 4–6 persons (52.1%), reinforcing the potential role of urban agriculture in sustaining household food needs. The majority earned below ₦20,000 monthly from urban agriculture, suggesting that although the practice contributes to livelihoods, its income-generating capacity remains limited, a trend also noted by Kuusaana et al. (2022), who observed that urban farming in developing cities is largely subsistence-driven with minimal commercial returns.

Table 2: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 240)

Socioeconomic Variables	Total (n = 240)		Male (n = 120)		Female (n = 120)	
Age Group						
< 21 years	6	2.5	4	3.3	2	1.7
21–40 years	48	20.0	24	20.0	24	20.0
41–60 years	186	77.5	92	76.7	94	78.3
Mean Age (Years)	–	45.74	–	45.48	–	45.99
Marital Status						
Single	14	5.8	14	11.7	–	–
Married	179	74.6	81	67.5	98	81.7
Divorced	7	2.9	3	2.5	4	3.3
Widowed	40	16.7	22	18.3	18	15.0
Educational Status						
No Formal Education	19	7.9	9	7.5	10	8.3
Primary Education	42	17.5	20	16.7	22	18.3
Secondary Education	111	46.3	55	45.8	56	46.7
Tertiary Education	68	28.3	36	30.0	32	26.7
Occupation						
Full-time Farmer	19	7.9	9	7.5	10	8.3
Civil Servant	58	24.2	31	25.8	27	22.5
Trader	87	36.3	31	25.8	56	46.7
Artisan	56	23.3	35	29.2	21	17.5
Retiree	20	8.3	14	11.7	6	5.0
Household Size						
1–3 Members	36	15.0	28	23.3	8	6.7
4–6 Members	125	52.1	53	44.2	72	60.0
7–9 Members	79	32.9	39	32.5	40	33.3
Mean Household Size (persons)	–	~6	–	~5	–	~6
Years of Experience in Urban Agriculture.						
1–5 Years	80	33.3	44	36.7	36	30.0
6–10 Years	81	33.8	35	29.2	46	38.3
> 10 Years	79	32.9	41	34.2	38	31.7
Mean Years of Experience	–	8.6	–	8.6	–	8.7
Monthly Income from Urban Agric.						
< ₦20,000	144	60.0	74	61.7	70	58.3
₦20,001–₦50,000	72	30.0	30	25.0	42	35.0
₦50,001–₦100,000	10	4.2	7	5.8	3	2.5
> ₦100,000	14	5.8	9	7.5	5	4.2
Mean Monthly Income (₦)	–	28,375.17	–	30,541.82	–	26,208.52
Total	240	100.0	120	100.0	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Types of Urban Agriculture Practised by Men and Women

Urban agriculture in the study area encompasses a diverse mix of cropping, livestock, and value-added activities. As shown in Table 3, crop cultivation recorded the highest mean score among both men ($\bar{x} = 3.42$) and women ($\bar{x} = 3.32$), indicating that crop production remains the most common urban farming activity. This finding corroborates Toku et al. (2024), who reported that limited land space in urban centres often favours small-scale crop cultivation such as vegetables, okra, pepper, and leafy greens. Livestock rearing ranked second overall ($\bar{x} = 3.26$) but was more pronounced among men ($\bar{x} = 3.38$) than women ($\bar{x} = 3.15$), suggesting that men engage more in livestock ventures due to higher labour and capital requirements. In contrast, agro-processing was more common among women ($\bar{x} = 3.18$), reflecting women's stronger role in post-harvest value-addition, food vending, and home-based processing enterprises. This aligns with view of Adeniyi et al. (2023), who noted that women in urban food systems dominate small-scale processing of cassava, grains, and vegetables because of their traditional roles in household food management. Aquaculture showed the lowest level of practice, especially among women ($\bar{x} = 2.63$), possibly due to the technical knowledge and start-up cost associated with fish production. With respect to farming systems, open-space farming ($\bar{x} = 3.10$) and backyard gardening ($\bar{x} = 3.06$) were the most common systems, indicating adaptation to space constraints typical of urban settlements. Similar observations were made by Ovharhe et al. (2020), who argued that backyard gardening is increasingly becoming integral to urban household food systems in Nigerian cities due to land scarcity. In essence, while both genders participate in a broad range of urban agriculture activities, women tend to dominate low-space processing and backyard systems, whereas men show relatively greater participation in livestock-based activities. These gendered patterns reflect socio-cultural roles, resource access, and labour capacity differences.

Table 3: Gender-based Distribution of Urban Agriculture Practices (n = 240)

Variable	Total (n = 240)		Male (n = 120)		Female (n = 120)	
	\bar{x}	Rank	\bar{x}	Rank	\bar{x}	Rank
Types of Farming Activities						
Crop cultivation	3.37	1	3.42	1	3.32	1
Livestock rearing	3.26	2	3.38	2	3.15	3
Aquaculture	2.99	4	3.35	3	2.63	4
Agro-processing	3.05	3	2.92	4	3.18	2
Farming Systems and Techniques						
Open-space farming	3.10	1	3.13	3	3.08	1
Backyard gardening	3.06	2	3.23	1	2.90	2
Planting in containers	3.01	3	3.21	2	2.80	3
Purpose of Urban Agriculture						
Subsistence farming	2.86	2	2.96	2	2.76	1
Commercial enterprise	2.62	3	2.76	3	2.48	3
Mixed (subsistence and commercial)	2.89	1	3.16	1	2.63	2
Scale of Operation						
Small-scale	2.98	1	2.75	2	3.20	1
Medium-scale	2.92	2	3.02	1	2.82	2
Large-scale	2.33	3	2.55	3	2.11	3

Income Generation						
Primary source	2.42	3	2.13	3	2.70	1
Supplementary source	2.55	1	2.46	2	2.63	2
Not a source	2.47	2	2.55	1	2.38	3
Employment and Labour						
Employs workers	2.43	3	2.46	3	2.41	3
Family involved	3.12	1	3.30	1	2.93	2
Self-managed	2.86	2	2.68	2	3.03	1
Market Access						
Regular market access	3.08	1	3.30	1	2.87	1
Limited/Occasional access	2.75	2	2.70	2	2.80	2
No market access	2.29	3	2.18	3	2.40	3

Source: Field survey work (2025)

Levels of Involvement of Men and Women in Urban Agriculture

The results in Table 4 show the level of involvement of respondents in 13 identified urban agriculture activities. The highest-ranked areas of involvement (overall) were planting and crop cultivation ($\bar{x} = 3.35$), weeding and crop maintenance ($\bar{x} = 3.26$), and feeding livestock ($\bar{x} = 3.24$). These activities represent core farm operations that are routine and labour-focused. Women showed greater involvement in routine care-related tasks such as cleaning livestock pens ($\bar{x} = 3.28$) and feeding livestock ($\bar{x} = 3.26$), while men were more involved in land preparation ($\bar{x} = 3.12$) and harvesting ($\bar{x} = 3.22$). This supports the findings of Peralta (2022), who observed gendered performance of agricultural tasks, with men more engaged in physically demanding roles. Slaughtering/processing of livestock recorded the lowest involvement for both genders, particularly among women ($\bar{x} = 2.61$), reflecting cultural norms and lower female participation in meat processing activities. When categorised (Table 4), 50.8 percent% of respondents demonstrated moderate involvement in urban agriculture, while 32.5% had high involvement. Notably, in Table 5, more women (35.0%) than men (30.0%) fell into the high involvement category, suggesting that women may be more engaged in day-to-day urban agriculture activities, consistent with findings by Mulla & Sekhar (2025), who reported that women often contribute more unpaid family labour to urban farming.

Table 4: Level of Involvement in Urban Agriculture by Gender (n = 240)

Activity	Total (n = 240)		Male (n = 120)		Female (n = 120)	
	\bar{x}	Rank	\bar{x}	Rank	\bar{x}	Rank
Land preparation	2.91	10	3.12	8	2.71	12
Planting and crop cultivation	3.35	1	3.42	1	3.29	1
Weeding and crop maintenance	3.26	2	3.28	2	3.23	5
Harvesting of crops	3.15	6	3.22	3	3.08	6.5.5
Processing of farm produce	3.01	8	3.10	9	2.91	9
Storage of farm produce	2.85	11	2.92	11	2.79	11
Marketing of produce	3.20	5	3.15	6	3.24	4
Managing farm finances	2.77	12	2.75	12	2.80	10
Feeding livestock	3.24	3	3.20	4	3.26	3
Cleaning of livestock pens	3.23	4	3.18	5	3.28	2
Livestock healthcare/vaccination	3.10	7	3.13	7	3.08	6.56

Livestock breeding/reproduction	2.96	9	2.97	10	2.96	8
Slaughtering/processing of livestock	2.67	13	2.72	13	2.61	13

Note:

The rating was based on a 4-point Likert scale: Not Involved (1); Low Involvement (2); Moderate Involvement (3); High Involvement (4)

\bar{x} = Mean score; Rank (1 = highest level of involvement, 13 = lowest)

Source: Field Survey Data (2025)

Table 5: Categorisation of Respondents’ Level of Involvement (n = 240)

Level of Involvement	Score Range (13 Items × 4 = 52 max)	Total (n = 240)		Male (n = 120)		Female (n = 120)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
Low	13 – 25	40	16.7	22	18.3	18	15.0
Moderate	26 – 39	122	50.8	62	51.7	60	50.0
High	40 – 52	78	32.5	36	30.0	42	35.0
Total	–	240	100	120	100	120	100

Source: Field Survey Data (2025)

The findings indicate that while both genders participate actively in urban agriculture, women show slightly higher levels of involvement, especially in continuous and labour-intensive tasks that sustain household nutrition. This underscores the significant but often undervalued contribution of women to urban food systems.

Conclusion

The study examined the gendered socio-economic profiles and levels of involvement in urban agriculture in Akwa Ibom State. The findings revealed that urban agriculture is predominantly practised by middle-aged, married, and moderately educated individuals, with women showing slightly higher representation. Trading and artisanal occupations were common alongside the farming activity, suggesting that urban agriculture serves primarily as a supplementary livelihood strategy rather than a full-time enterprise. Although income from urban agriculture was relatively low, it played a significant role in supporting household food supply and reducing living costs, particularly among female-headed households. The results further showed that crop cultivation, livestock rearing, and backyard farming were the most common forms of practice among both men and women, with women displaying greater involvement in routine care, processing, and continuous farm-related tasks. Overall, the majority exhibited moderate to high involvement in urban agriculture, with women recording slightly higher levels of engagement than men. These findings underscore the crucial role of urban agriculture in enhancing household food security and livelihoods, especially for women, and highlight the need to provide targeted support to strengthen their participation and productivity.

Recommendations

- i. Extension services and urban agriculture programmes should prioritise gender-responsive training to enhance both men’s and women’s skills in improved farming practices and resource utilisation.
- ii. Local government authorities and community-based organisations should promote innovative urban agriculture models such as container and rooftop gardening to address space limitations and expand participation.

- iii. Women-focused support initiatives, including access to small grants and input subsidies, should be strengthened to enhance female practitioners' productivity and income from urban agriculture. Awareness campaigns should be intensified to encourage increased youth participation in urban agriculture as a viable livelihood and food security strategy within urban communities.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 20, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Ishaya, Samuel O. & Abang, Hossana A. (2025). "African Traditional Medicine: Rebranding the Hermeneutics." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 11-24.

Article

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AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE: REBRANDING THE HERMENEUTICS

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Abstract

Different critical studies have questioned the dominance of orthodox medicine and the stereotypes against African traditional medicine (ATM) that underscores the hegemony of Western medicine and practice. The objective of this research is to interrogate the stereotype and rebrand the hermeneutics of ATM. Every culture, race and region of the world has established forms, modes and methods by which the health challenges of its people are surmounted. The Chinese, the Indians and the Arabs all have their medical practices that differ from that of the Western world. It is however a fact that the practice of medicine is laced with religious, mythological and philosophical undertones in most regions of the world including Africa. These undertones include metaphysical, epistemological and axiological are what differentiate these kinds of medicine; each of them has its kind of spaces, methods and applications. The aim of each of these medicinal cultures is to cater for the health needs of its people using what they have in their immediate environment. But some of these medicinal cultures and their methods have been misinterpreted and disparaged as a curative practice. ATM is a victim of this hermeneutic misinterpretation. This research is aimed at fostering intellectual understanding of the concepts and practices of ATM including challenging policy makers to see African traditional medicine as the frontline medicine rather than alternative medicine. The analytic method is used for conceptual analysis. The paper is of the view that deliberate effort should be made to equip young people with philosophical skills to understand, analyse and defend the traditional medical practices of the African people against the stereotypes of the West.

Keywords: Alternative Medicine, Orthodox Medicine, Philosophy, Philosophy of African Traditional Medicine, Traditional Medicine.

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Introduction

Philosophy is a discipline that interrogates issues about the universe, about human beings and about existential issues that confronts human beings; it does not claim to know everything but makes definite, critical and objective efforts to acquire knowledge about the universe and everything in it. According to Stumpf (1994) “from the beginning, ... philosophy was an intellectual activity, for it was not a matter of seeing or believing but of thinking and philosophy meant thinking about basic questions in a mood of genuine and free inquiry” (4). Stumpf’s assertion above has remained the focus of philosophy even in this age of artificial intelligence. Philosophy is essentially a rational and unbiased inquiry into whatever is, insofar as it is. The implication of this supposition is that there is no forbidden subject-matter for philosophical scrutiny. So, whatever is; is within the ‘jurisdiction’ of philosophical investigation including medicine and its various mode of practices in different cultures. Simply put, philosophy is a rational and critical reflection about the universe, human beings and the society. As a critical enterprise, philosophy raises critical questions, and tries to proffer solutions to questions raised. That is why one would not be wrong to conclude that it is a systematic search for the truth of all realities. One thing to note is that philosophy does not claim to provide answers to all human problems; it rather makes effort to rationally address them. The fact about this proposition is that the human person and the human society cannot do without philosophy. As a rational activity, the human person needs philosophy because according to John and Ishaya (2019):

Philosophy plays important role in the society such as enabling the human person to change some foundational beliefs. This is because it is an existential fact that most of the things we do or even the way we interpret our experiences are based on our foundational beliefs. It is therefore the task of philosophy to question those beliefs that are not in agreement with the rationality of the human person. And any belief that is in contradistinction to reason is bound to be discarded by the philosopher (82).

The belief in ATM and its efficacy in dealing with the health challenges of Africans was however, dealt a blow by the intrusion of health practices of the Western world and the subsequent demonization of ATM by the colonial masters and the Christian missionaries. The rejection and demeaning of ATM runs contrary to reason hence the need to appropriately situate its narratives. Along this objective, the Philosophy of ATM was made a course of study in the University of Uyo, Nigeria.

The course is a brain child of the Department of Philosophy and it is structured in line with the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) of the National Universities Commission (NUC) in Nigeria. The course is designed to interrogate, examine and evaluate the methods, concepts and philosophy behind ATM using the analytic and critical tools of philosophy; the aim is to expose young Africans to the traditional mode of therapy that had provided and is still providing the healthcare needs of Africans. It aims to equip students and other interested parties in the medical chain with philosophical tools to interrogate the spaces, methods, and application of ATM. Also, this research is intended to introduce the philosophy of African Traditional Medicine as a course of study in philosophy to the academic community especially the humanities, the medical sciences and specialists in orthodox medicine for interdisciplinary understanding. But most importantly, with its set objectives as an academic course of study, the research aims to rebrand the negative stereotypes about ATM that was orchestrated by colonialism and to inculcate a positive interpretation of the practice and its practitioners among young generation of Africans.

Achieving some of these objectives will greatly help in reversing the designation of ATM as alternative or complementary medicine but as a dominant healthcare practice of the African people.

The Genesis of Medicine

The human person is known to be composed of body, soul and spirit. Each of these components has the tendency to degenerate if proper attention is not paid to its well-being. That is why after food and shelter, the next most important want of man is a healthy body, a healthy soul and a healthy spirit. The importance of a healthy human system is reinforced by the African adage that says that 'health is wealth'. In other words, a healthy person is a wealthy person because the three basic components of the person are properly cared for. Medicine is the instrument by which the human person is cared for. The practice of medicine has its beginning from the time human beings found themselves on earth. From the very beginning, man has always sort for ways to make his body return to normalcy after every injury, infection, or unexplained affliction. The bible records how Elisha stopped 'death in the pot' by casting a meal into a poisoned pot of food (2kgs 4:39-41). Medicine is therefore, the instrument that is used to return the human body, soul and spirit to normalcy. Every culture, race and region of the world has established forms, modes and methods by which the health challenges of its people are surmounted. The Chinese, the Jews, the Indians and the Arabs have their unique medical practices that differ from that of the Western world. It is equally important to note that the practice of medicine is laced with religious, philosophical and traditional undertones in most regions of the world including Africa. These undertones include the metaphysical, epistemological and axiological underpinnings. These underpinnings are what differentiates the Western kind of medicine, from Oriental medicine and the Arab kind of medicine from African medicine. Each of them has its kind of spaces, methods and applications. The aim of each of these medicinal cultures is to cater for the health needs of its people using what they have in their immediate environment including the established customs of the people to ensure healthy living and continuity of practice.

The Meaning of Medicine

Medicine can be defined as the science and art of preventing, diagnosing, treating and curing diseases, injuries and disorders that affect the human body and mind. It involves the application of knowledge from various fields such as biology, chemistry, physics and psychology to develop effective treatment and interventions for the afflicted. For Sigerist as cited in Etim (2019) 'medicine is a science that is generally defined as 'what a physician does in diagnosing and curing disease' (12). But this definition according to Etim as argued by Sigerist is too narrow and legalistic because it excludes the activities of non-professionals who are often the ones on the spot, and who are daily grappling to find solution to the issues of disease. The definition therefore limits the practice of medicine to only licensed professionals who are accorded professional status by the state after exhibiting or demonstrating minimum knowledge in the field as required by the law of the land. But the point according to Sigerist is that majority of illnesses that afflict people are never treated by the professional physician especially in traditional societies right from antiquity till date. These illnesses are either treated by the patient themselves, by relatives, non-physicians or traditional medicine men. Louis Lasanga (1985) on his part defines medicine 'as an art and science of healing'. For him medicine is a science because it is based on knowledge gained through careful study, experimentation and observation. On the other hand, it is an art because it depends on how skillful doctors and other medical practitioners apply this

knowledge when dealing with patients. In other words, medicine is a skill that is learned with the sole aim of healing the afflicted by restoring the body, soul and spirit to its initial healthy condition and the relieving of sufferings occasioned by diseases and sicknesses of both the body and of the mind (13). From the definitions given above, it can be deduced that medicine involves the deliberate attempt to find solutions to the various kind of sicknesses and diseases that afflict human beings no matter the method used. It also reveals that human beings are not only afflicted in their bodies but also in their minds, suggesting that the term – medicine encompasses everything that is done to eliminate or reduce human suffering both of the body and of the mind.

Components of Medicine

Medicine has several components that include the following:

- i. **Treatment:** This component of medicine involves the application of remedies or interventions to cure, alleviate and restore disorders of the body, soul and spirit.
- ii. **Diagnosis:** This is the process of identifying and determining the nature of a disease or disorder.
- iii. **Prevention:** This component involves the measures that are taken to prevent diseases or injuries from happening. These preventive measures are taken against known, anticipated and unknown diseases and occurrences.
- iv. **Palliative Care:** This component of medicine involves the focus of care on relieving symptoms, ameliorating pain and stress rather than curing the underlying condition. Palliative care is mostly used on patients that are afflicted with terminal diseases. Terminal diseases are diseases that are yet to have a definite means of curing it and is likely to lead to the death of the patient such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and Parkinson's disease, among others.

Branches of Medicine

Medicine is not an omnibus enterprise; it has branches that cater to specific kind of needs. These branches include:

- i. **Allopathic Medicine:** Allopathic medicine is the general term for modern Western medicine. It is described as the scientific method of treating diseases with remedies such as surgery and pharmaceutical drugs. It is also known as conventional medicine.
- ii. **Alternative Medicine:** Also known as Complementary and Integrative Medicine (CAM); it refers to a broad range of healthcare practices that are not considered part of conventional medicine. It is often used as an alternative to or in conjunction with conventional medicine. Examples of alternative medicine include:
 - a. Herbal Medicine – The use of plants or plant extracts for therapeutic purposes.
 - b. Acupuncture – The insertion of thin needles into specific points on the body to stimulate energy flow.
 - c. Mind-body Therapies – The use of techniques like meditation, yoga and biofeedback that focuses on the connection between the mind and the body.
 - d. Massage Therapy – The use of manual manipulation of soft tissues to relieve pain, reduce stress and improve circulation.
- iii. **Preventive Medicine:** This branch of medicine involves protecting, promoting and maintaining health and well-being by preventing disease, disability, and death through various strategies including, vaccinations, screenings and lifestyle modifications. It focuses on the health of individuals, communities and defined populations.

The Goals of Medicine

There are several goals that medicine aims to achieve but four of them are basic and foundational to any other goal. These goals are pursued by different kinds of medicine. They include:

- i. **Relieve Pain and Suffering** – Every medicine is aimed at relieving pain and suffering caused by sicknesses and injuries, and improve the quality of life of individuals and communities.
- ii. **Prevent Disease and Injury** – Medicine aims to prevent diseases and injuries through public health initiatives like vaccinations, and promoting healthy lifestyles to reduce the risk of illnesses caused by preventable diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.
- iii. **Cure Disease and Heal Injury** – Medicine aims to cure diseases that afflict individuals and heal injuries that may come on individuals through accidents or conflicts. The goal is to restore health and bodily functions.
- iv. **Promote and Maintain Health** – The goal of promoting and maintaining health involves educating individuals and the general public about healthy lifestyles and behaviours. It also involves providing access to healthcare and advocating for policies that support public health.

It is instructive to note that medicine is a constantly evolving field of human endeavour with new discoveries, technologies and treatments emerging regularly including the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for diagnosis and treatment; its primary goal is the improvement of human health and well-being.

Categories of Medicine

Medicine can be categorized into two distinct groups such as medicines and traditional medicine. This categorization is important to situate their proper historical and philosophical evolution.

- i. **Orthodox Medicine:** This category of medicine is also known as Conventional or Western medicine and it is the mainstream system of healthcare in the world today. It relies on scientific principles to diagnose and treat illnesses and it is practiced in a carefully built edifice called a hospital. It uses various interventions such as medications, surgery, radiation therapy, and other medical technologies to address health challenges. Trained medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals are used in the practice of orthodox medicine. It is called Western medicine because of its historical and geographical roots in the Western world (Europe, North America and Australia). Colonization is basically responsible for the popularity and acceptance of orthodox medicine as the mainstream healthcare system in the world. Colonial authorities demonized the healthcare system of the people they came to colonize which made the people to detest their traditional healthcare system thereby setting the stage for the dominance of orthodox medicine.
- ii. **Traditional Medicine:** Traditional medicine is the one that comprises the various health practices, approaches and therapies that have been used for centuries in different cultures and societies to tackle health challenges. These practices are often based on traditional knowledge, beliefs and experiences passed down from generation to generation. For Eze and Okwor (2024), traditional medicine is the one that is indigenous to the people and holistic in its approach to health-related issues. Every traditional society has its own health system and different traditional societies have developed their indigenous healing system to deal with diseases that threaten their individual and

cooperate existence (56). That is why the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2014) defined traditional medicine as:

The sum total of the knowledge, skill and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental health (15).

Following from the definition given by WHO, Abbot (2014) opines that traditional medicine is 'medical knowledge developed by traditional societies based on their culture which includes plants, animals, mineral-based medicine, spiritual therapies and manual techniques for treatment of diseases (web). The deduction from WHO and Abbot establishes the fact that traditional medicine is the medicine that is culturally indigenous and peculiar to a people or society and it encompasses all facets of a people's ontology including physical and spiritual. It is cultural because it is part of their historical and ontological existence; it is peculiar because it is specific to a people's existential space. This is informed by the fact that every region of the world has different plants and minerals that are specific to that region and which may never be found in other regions of the world. That is why there is Chinese traditional medicine, Indian traditional medicine, Japanese traditional medicine, Arabian traditional medicine and African traditional medicine amongst other traditional medicine of different people, cultures and societies.

Characteristics of Traditional Medicine

- i. **Holistic Approach** - Traditional medicine is holistic in its approach to health issues because they do not only consider the physical but also the emotional and spiritual aspects of health. In other words, it considers the totality of the human person in the diagnoses and treatment of health challenges. According to Onunwa (1980) 'there is no demarcation in African traditional society between the sacred and the profane. Both the spiritual and physical realms of the universe are believed to work in consistent harmony and are subject to ordered systems and rhythms' (50). For Etim (2013) 'health for the African is far more social than biological, which invariably does not entirely mean an absence of physical ailments but a wellbeing that is holistic' (146).
- ii. **Use of Natural Remedies** - Traditional medicine uses natural substances such as plants, herbs, barks and mineral extracts to treat diseases and sicknesses.
- iii. **Cultural Significance** - Traditional medicine is deeply rooted in the cultural and social context of the community. Here, the beliefs, myths, norms and customs of the people are incorporated into the healthcare system of the people.
- iv. **Empirical Knowledge** - Traditional medicine is sometimes based on empirical evidence of technicalities and observations passed down from one generation to another. Examples of traditional medicine include acupuncture which is practiced by the Chinese, Ayurvedic medicine, practiced by the Indians, African traditional medicine which is practiced by Africans. These medical practices incorporate diverse range of traditional methods and therapies.

African Traditional Medicine

African Traditional Medicine (ATM) can be defined as the indigenous healthcare practice and therapies used by Africans to maintain health, prevent disease, and treat illnesses. For Eze, cited in Eze and Okwor, African traditional medicine 'is a healthcare system of indigenous

peoples of Africa for healing of diseases and maintenance of well-being within their cultural context which satisfied their health need prior to the emergence of orthodox healthcare system' (59). ATM is a healthcare system with a rich history that dates back to antiquity and is deeply rooted in African culture, myth and spirituality. Scholars of varying persuasions have argued that the practice of traditional medicine is one of the many tools invented by man to help himself navigate the vicissitudes of life that date back to pre-historic times. Therefore, it can be argued that its origin, as with other human phenomenon in Africa is as old as the emergence of man on the earth. The point here, is that ATM is not a recent invention or development. It is a system that has been in practice for as long as Africans have been on the earth. According to the Editorial of the Guardian Newspaper of October 10, 2025 'Traditional medicine in Nigeria is not lacking in popularity, millions still rely on it, particularly in rural areas where modern healthcare is largely absent'. This means that ATM should not be confused with alternative medicine or complementary medicine as some scholars may want to suggest. That is why for Etim (2013), 'African traditional medicine is the medical theory and practice that is native to Africans' (143).

Feature of ATM

There are basic features that characterize the practice of African traditional medicine as a system of healthcare delivery. These features include:

- i. **Use of Natural Remedies** – ATM sources for its therapeutic remedies from nature such as herbs, plants, barks of trees, natural minerals including animal products to treat various types of health challenges.
- ii. **Spiritual and Ritual Practices** – ATM sometimes involve spiritual and ritual practices in the administration of healthcare delivery. This is because when a person's life is threatened by disease or other misfortunes of life, various steps are taken to preserve the life and restore health that may include divinations, consulting deities, prayers and sacrifices. According to Essien (2023) 'if a sudden and accidental death occurs in a family, or an illness that seems to defy proper medical diagnosis, then one discovers the power of the traditional spirituality and practices as clarifications and riposte are often sought from the traditional religious specialists cum spiritualists' (45). Orthodox medicine does not accommodate this aspect of curative measures and to a great extent condemn such practices. This condemnation is borne out of ignorance of the culture, custom and healthcare practices of ATM and its efficacy.
- iii. **Culture Based** – ATM is culture-based. This is so because the traditional health practitioners base their practice on their deep knowledge of the culture of their community and the antecedent of the materials used in carrying out therapeutic and curative services to their people.
- iv. **The Use of Mythology** – ATM is a generational practice that is transmitted from one generation to another through 'myths and stories' (Ishaya 2017). These myths are not documented but are religiously communicated to the next generation of practitioners. The communication usually take the form of descriptions of locations of herbal remedies, incantations to invoke the healing spirits, the mode and kinds of sacrifices and consequences of abdicating procedural instructions.
- v. **Holistic in Approach** – ATM is holistic in healthcare delivery and practice. This means that ATM deals with the totality of human health challenges including the spiritual and physical aspects of health and well-being.

Major Types of ATM

ATM is not an omnibus system where one individual carries out the whole business of attending to all manner of health challenges that affects a community. It is not a one-stop shop where one gets treatment for every kind of health challenge. It has specialties just like the orthodox. There is a form of specialization even though it is sometimes difficult to delineate one kind of practice from another. Types of ATM include: traditional birth practice, spiritual healing, traditional bone-setting and herbal medicine

- i. **Traditional Birth Practice** – This is the use of traditional methods and remedies to support childbirth and maternal health. This type of ATM is mostly practiced by women. It is still the most popular form of healthcare delivery that is accessed by pregnant women in Africa. The practitioners are called Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA). There are however concerted efforts by various governments in Africa to train the TBAs in modern ways of handling childbirth challenges to reduce maternal mortality. Maternal mortality refers to deaths caused by complications during pregnancy, childbirth or postpartum care.
- ii. **Spiritual Healing and Ritual Practices** – This is the employment of spiritual and ritual practices to effect healings. This practice is hinged on the notion in African cosmology that illnesses have spiritual implications that requires an intermediary between man and the spirit to determine how the patient's health can be restored, not only the physical health but also the spiritual including patients that may have lost their minds (lunatics). In most African communities, it is believed that diseases and illnesses have spiritual connections because according to Eze and Okwor (2024) 'studies show that the notion of germs as causative agents of illnesses is totally absent in African worldview' (59). That is why John Mbiti (1969) observes that 'in African villages, diseases and misfortune are religious experiences and it requires a religious approach to deal with them' (169). This approach may involve prayers, divinations, incantation and sacrifices. The aim, always, is the total restoration of the soul, spirit and body of the patient. This aspect of ATM can be practiced by male and female. The practitioners are sometimes referred to as native doctors, or priests. The Ibo tribe in Nigeria calls them 'Dibia', the Ibibio tribe calls them 'Mbia-ibok', the Yoruba tribe calls them 'Babalawo', why the Hausa tribe calls them 'Boka'.
- iii. **Bone Setting** – This is the use of traditional methods to treat bone fractures and perform surgical operations on patients with bone injuries. African traditional medicine has a rich history of using its method to treat complicated bone fractures and in time restore the affected part to normalcy. The practice of this aspect of ATM is sometimes hereditary. No one may take it up except the skill is passed down to him/her from their forebears. But even with lack of formal training in traditional bone setting, the practice continues to enjoy good patronage. According to Idowu Abdullahi in a report in The Punch Newspaper of July 06, 2025 'without formal training of practitioners and regulation by regulatory agencies, traditional bone setting practice in Nigeria enjoys enormous patronage'. The high patronage is however not without reservations from some keen observers of the system. According to Idowu Abdullahi in The Punch report 'patients with bone injuries and fractures often leave traditional bone-setting homes worse than they arrived, with most debilitating outcomes like amputation and permanent disability'. The cause of this according to Abdullahi is that:

Traditional bone setting, in many parts of Nigeria has long been regarded as a family trade, passed down through generations. But in recent years, that

legacy has been overtaken by a wave of new practitioners entering the field out of desperation. For many the trade has become less about the required skills and more of a means of survival in the prevailing economy.

The point to note from Abdullahi is that the seeming failure of healing and cure in some cases is not because the traditional method of bone-setting has failed or is failing but because quacks have infiltrated the trade due to lack of regulation. To corroborate this view, the Director General of the Nigerian Natural Medicine Development Agency (NNMDA) – Prof. Martins Emeje asserts that many Nigerians relied on local bone settings for generations using skills and techniques unknown anywhere else in the world. According to him ‘traditional bone setters have provided sustained healthcare in rural communities for centuries despite neglect by formal institutions’. For him, the sidelining of traditional medicine is due to ‘colonial mentality’ and poor prioritization by the country’s healthcare system. (‘Healthwise’, Punch Newspaper July 2025).

- iv. **Herbal Medicine** – This refers to the use of medicinal herbs and plants to treat various health challenges. The practitioners are called herbalists whether male or female. But this appellation is often rejected by the practitioners because of the negativity that is attached to the word ‘herbalist’. Herbalists are sometimes perceived as unlearned and clairvoyant persons in their chosen line of career but this is not true as some are highly skilled in the art and some are university graduates with relevant qualifications in related disciplines. Because of this negative perception, the practitioners prefer being called ‘Herbal practitioners’.

Relevance and the Challenges of ATM

ATM has served the healthcare needs of Africans from antiquity and remains the nearest and most accessible healthcare provider to a vast majority of the people. The relevance of ATM is not in doubt but the challenges confronting it is enormous.

Relevance of ATM

- i. **Cultural Relevance** – ATM is rooted in the culture of the people and encapsulates their spirituality. It is part of their religious belief system. Before the advent of orthodox medicine, the community chief priest served as the medium between the gods and the people with the power and authority to diagnose sicknesses and recommend type of treatment. This made ATM a very important aspect of the life of the community.
- ii. **Accessibility** – Quick access to healthcare services makes ATM very relevant to the people because of the nearness of practitioners to those in need of healthcare services especially those in the rural areas.
- iii. **Affordability** – ATM is easily affordable by the people. Prescriptions can be obtained easily by those in need since the prescribed items are plants, herbs or things within the community thus making it easy and cheap to be treated of illnesses or other human misfortunes that requires the services of an expert.

Fieldwork

The bringing together of oral and visual texts enhances the quality of writing ethnography because according to Samjee (2000) ‘visual knowledge based on visual thinking and analysis certainly adds to viewing culture’ (102). To enhance the quality of this research, the ethnographic approach was adopted. This methodological choice intends to deepen cultural knowledge and to validate cultural data through structured recorded interviews of long standing traditional medicine practitioners in Idu-uruan in Uruan Local Government Area of

Akwa Ibom State and Afikpo in Afikpo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, comprising of Mr. Nseabasi Ededem Sampson – a registered member of the Akwa Ibom State Traditional Medicine Association of Nigeria and Mrs. Cynthia Otuu – a licensed herbal (fertility) practitioner by the Ebonyi State Ministry of Health. Oral interviews and questionnaires were conducted and administered on both practitioners to unravel some cultural facts about their practices. This is in line with Ajah's (2005) assertion that interviews with knowledgeable elders of the village of origin is a way of unearthing cultural facts.

The structure of the interviews was thematically set with 15 questions. The questions touched on different aspect of traditional medicinal practices including the duration of practice, how the trade was acquired – through apprenticeship or inheritance, the source of the medicines for treatment of sicknesses, the method of treatment, the top three sicknesses that people seek help, the caliber of customers – educated, poor or others, the number of patients seen in a week, trust issues, the challenges faced, and the lucrateness among other questions asked. The pieces of information gathered from the interviews authenticate and complements bibliographic data on some seminal works on African traditional medicine such as John Mbiti's *African Traditional Religions and Philosophy* (1969) and Francis Etim's *Metaphysics of African Medicine: A Discussion on Philosophy of Medicine* (2013). Although these publications follow a philosophical trajectory, they nevertheless reveal the cultural underpinnings and value of African traditional medicine as the entrenched healthcare system of the people.

The Philosophy and Challenges of ATM

The challenge to unravel the wonders of nature caused the early philosophers to ask relevant questions and at the same time proffer answers to questions raised about the ultimate composition of the universe including its components. According to Stumpf (1994) 'Many of the answers given to these questions by the earliest philosophers are not as important as the fact that they focused upon just these questions and that they approached them with a fresh and a new frame of mind' (1). In the same vein, ATM despite its cultural and historical affinity to the African people has continued to face challenges that may have prompted Francis Etim (2013) to ask:

What is really wrong with African medicine? Why the popular acceptance of traditional medicine? Is there anything good about it? What makes African medicine different from its Western counterpart? Why the disdainful regard of it particularly by outsiders? What could be done to salvage the situation? (2).

But unlike the answers of the earliest philosophers that may not be as important as the questions they raised; the questions and the answers raised and answered by African philosophers about ATM are both very important including the philosophical insight they bring into salvaging the health needs of the African peoples. The questions point to a challenge facing the African people because of the unfortunate events of slavery and colonialism. The answers on the other hand point to a solution that considers the African assumptions about reality.

The Metaphysical Challenge of Causality

Metaphysics is a core branch of philosophical studies that is concerned with the question of the ultimate nature. For Stumpf (1994):

Metaphysics goes beyond particular things to enquire about more general questions such as what lies beyond nature, how things come into being, what it means for something to be and whether there is a realm of being which is not subject to change and which is therefore the basis of certainty of knowledge (479).

The practice of ATM is sometimes laced in metaphysical tones that challenge the understanding of non-Africans and Africans of neocolonial orientations. This is because of the issue of causality. In metaphysics, causality is defined as the relationship between cause and effect. That is, that nothing happens without a cause (Etim, 2013:51). In ATM, there is the believe that every sickness, ailment or misfortune has a cause and that the cause most times, emanates from the realms beyond the physical. According to Mbiti (1969):

First and foremost, medicine men are concerned with sickness, disease, and misfortune. In African societies, these are generally believed to be caused by the ill-will or ill-action of one person against another, normally through the agency of witchcraft and magic. The medicine man has to therefore discover the cause of the sickness, find out who the criminal is, diagnose the cause of the disease, apply the right treatment and supply a means of preventing the misfortune from occurring again (169).

For Mbiti, even if it is explained to a patient that he has malaria because a mosquito carrying malaria parasite has stung him, he will want to know why that mosquito stung him and not another person. The only answer which people find satisfactory to that question is that someone has caused or sent the mosquito to sting a particular individual by means of magical manipulations. Suffering, misfortune, disease and accidents are all 'caused' mystically as far as African are concerned (169-70). The deductions from Mbiti are that to an average African, diseases or misfortunes are caused, not by germs, parasites or nature but by another person with the evil intent to cause pain and suffering. This is however far from the truth and it is a great challenge to the practice of ATM in this contemporary period. In as much as it is an accepted truism that some afflictions have connotations beyond the physical realm, to suggest that they are all caused by enemy human agents is stretching the truth beyond limits. The philosophy of ATM is aimed at philosophically dissecting such causal assumptions. This is because causality is theory laden and as pointed out by Ryle cited in Walsh (1967):

There is an element of theory built into the description of every causal scenario. This theory is what helps in the explanation and prediction of events. To explain, one has to seek for the ultimate causes which are the secret springs that lay behind what happens in the natural worlds but are past finding out (100).

The point to note from the above is that the search for the ultimate causes of events or ailments is necessary in explaining and discovering the solutions to the effects of the cause. ATM practitioners may be right in seeking for the ultimate causes of diseases and human sufferings but to suggest that all are caused by wicked human enemies to satisfy the expectations of patients is to put the cart before the horse. This position is supported by Segun Oyegbami (2007) who opines that 'in spite of great improvement in African health services due to the influence of Western medicine, not all cases of illness could be cured'. According to Omosade J. Awolalu (1979):

At some times, doctors in hospitals confessed that certain cases cannot be handled effectively in the hospital because they baffle medical knowledge; such doctors have encouraged people to remove their patients home for treatment in the 'native way'. And in many cases, when necessary 'appeal' is made to the ... forces; healing, which could not be effected in the hospital, has been effected simply by placating these ... forces and applying the 'prescribed' herbs (89).

The Epistemic Challenge

One of the core challenges of philosophy is the issue of certainty or otherwise of knowledge. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that tackles the problem of human knowledge and claims. Defined as the theory of knowledge; some epistemologists posit that 'knowledge is justified true belief'. But the crux of the matter according to Etim (2013) boils down to how to discriminate between mere appearance and reality? (66). The answer to Etim's question is the challenge that is facing the practitioners of ATM in the face of other types of medicines. How do patients differentiate between the frivolous and the authentic therapeutic claims of ATM practitioners? Even though ATM has been the primary source of healthcare system of the African people, the social interruption caused by colonialism and the deliberate demonization of the African social structure cast doubt, disdain, disregard and sometimes outright rejection of African traditional knowledge system and structure. According to Abdullahi in Eze and Okwor (2024):

The introduction of Western medicine and culture gave rise to culture-ideological clash which had hitherto created an unequal power-relation that practically undermined and stigmatized the traditional healthcare system in Africa because of the over-riding power of Western medicine (60).

The point to note from Abdullahi's position is 'that traditional medicine has continued to suffer relegation in Africa so many years after independence because products of European civilization followed after their masters in jettisoning the use of traditional medicine. That is why Chiwuzie, et-al in Eze and Okwor (2024) contend that Western-trained doctors are among the greatest to oppose traditional medicine' (61). From the submissions of Abdullahi and Chiwuzie, one can argue that the central issue here is that of acceptance based on new knowledge that is different from what was already known. Western trained doctors oppose ATM because of the disparity between their knowledge claims; why Western medicine is based on scientific principles; ATM is based on principles more metaphysical than physical. This disparity in knowledge may have led to the designation of ATM as complementary or alternative medicine.

Is ATM an Alternative Medicine?

Alternative or complementary medicine is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a 'broad set of healthcare practices that are not part of that country's own traditional or conventional medicine and are not fully integrated into their dominant healthcare system. Following from this definition given by WHO, it would be counter-productive to designate ATM as complementary or alternative to orthodox or any other type of medicine. This is because as shown in the study, every society across the nations of the world has its own form of traditional healthcare system that is peculiar to it and rooted in their culture. What this means is that the traditional healthcare system of every society should be regarded as its dominant healthcare system and not the other way around especially when research

according to a 2022 WHO report cited in Okwor and Eze (2024) has shown that 80% of Africans patronize ATM rather than orthodox medicine (18). Healthcare systems and practices imported from other parts of the world to Africa are rightly the alternative or complementary systems brought to complement the already existing healthcare system of the African people. Eze and Okwor (2025) captures this view succinctly when they averred that ATM is often confused with complementary medicine which according to WHO is ‘a broad set of healthcare practices that are not fully integrated into the dominant healthcare system’. For them, given this explanation, it is wrong to designate ATM complementary or alternative in Nigeria and some African countries because of its non-integration into the dominant healthcare system. The definitions show that traditional medicine is global and that every society’s health system developed from traditional culture. Thus, regarding traditional medicine as the dominant healthcare is a challenge facing some African countries including Nigeria (59).

Conclusion

The objective of this research was the deliberate rebranding of the distorted and disparaged conceptions of African traditional medicine using the philosophical tools of analysis and criticism. ATM once suffered ideological, psychological and institutional neglect because of the stereotype of Western colonialism and the ‘colonial mentality’ of Western trained medical practitioners who reject and treat ATM and its practitioners with ignominy and contempt. But the narrative is changing. More and more people, including scholars of different disciplines are coming to terms with the reality and efficacy of ATM and its role in maintaining and sustaining the healthcare system of African. The research is of the opinion that more effort should be made to create the right awareness and atmosphere for the system to thrive especially among the young in their digital spaces. With the Department of Philosophy, University of Uyo making the African Traditional Medicine a course of study, other disciplines should be encouraged to follow in that direction. Policy makers and regulatory agencies in the health sector in Africa should also make themselves visible in both the print, electronic and social medias through seminars, conferences and press releases to counter in its entirety the stereotypes of Western narratives. Also, efforts should be made to train and retrain ATM practitioners to inculcate modern trends and practices in their trade such as the use of decent and appealing work spaces. Efforts should also be put in place by the regulators to weed out pseudo elements among the practitioners.

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❖ **Acknowledgements:** This work received TETFUND's Institutional Based Research Grant 2025/2026. We are grateful to the awarding institution for the funding of our project on African Traditional Medicine.

❖ **Note:** Some parts of this work was presented at the 2025 International Conference of the Philosophers Association of Nigeria (PAN)/World Philosophy Day held at the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt on November 19 – 22, 2025.



JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: November 04, 2025 Accepted: December 19, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Omotosho, Oyejide F.; Ugwuanyi, Lawrence O., Ogu, Patricia I. & Jobarteh, Amadou B. (2025). "Advancing Security Discourse Through Critical Engagement with Human Security." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 25-35.

Article

Open Access

ADVANCING SECURITY DISCOURSE THROUGH CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH HUMAN SECURITY

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Abstract

The monumental rate at which lives are lost daily in a more fragile and crises-torn Global System has turned a new leave for growing concerns of a new orthodoxy that arose in security studies. This complements the old thought of the state-centric traditionalism through the debate that sparked intellectual controversy on security between the narrow school and their counterparts from the broad school. For broadened analytical knowledge, this paper investigated why security studies had required a critical engagement with the human security paradigm, as against traditionalists' claims called the narrow school in order to build a strong, virile state through research and policy reframing. Building on key theoretical explorations, in particular those of Newman, (2022) and Hama, (2017), a debate between these two schools had grown dissention on why human security should be a material object in the state. According to the contemporaries, if this becomes attainable, the institutionalization and operationalization of human security at all levels in governance will be valuably justifying. The people-centric approaches cited the protracted humanitarian crises in Gaza, Sudan, and the Ukraine, aside the migration and boarder crises and the ones generated by the COVID-19, Ebola and other crises in the health sector as paramount issues on the global landscape, which need a people-centric approach. As a theoretical-empirical paper, that synthesizes existing scholarship and recent policy/field reports for an updated analytic and policy toolkit on human security, the paper employed the descriptive-exploratory methods, combined with comparative political analysis grounded on relevant literature on security. This provided balanced report that are value free and analytically objective. Findings indicated that human security is a new orthodoxy that embraces the

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people-centric approaches with individuals as referent objects of the state. This contradicts the narrow-based thinking that has become inadequate if not obsolete in deepening the understanding of the notion of security that justified state security as paramount and total. The study concluded that, for broadened knowledge and deepened insights to security, both the state-centric and the people-centric approach analyses should be embraced for a context-sensitive and multi-purpose study objective that are mutually exclusive.

Keywords: Security, Human Security, Traditional approaches, Non-traditional approaches, Narrow-Based Theory, Broad-Based Theory, Critical Engagement, Intellectual Debate.

Introduction

Traditionally, security had been conceived primarily in terms of security of states from military attacks by other states. This expression, coming from Hawre Hasan Hama in his analysis of state security, societal security and human security, was a comparative survey of meanings to the terms security and human security with a new paradigm of 'human security'. The conception knocked on human security as a material project for national security (Hama, 2017). According to him, revitalizing security studies would mean embarking on critical engagement with the human security paradigm that both retains its normative emphasis on individuals and adapts its methods for policy traction in contemporary crises analysis. (Hama, 2017; Easton, 2025). Newman, (2022), observes that, a pragmatic critical approach to human security as both normative framework and diagnostic tool is that 'capable of operationalizing and institutionalizing security for context duality. Newman's later work on human security and pandemic responses infers analytical clarity combined with institutional realism leading to increases in policy resonance. (Newman, 2022; Hama, 2017; Tanaka, 2015; Waever, 2012; Buzan, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

This research explored on the intellectual debate between the state-centric paradigm and the human security thinkers on the one side and on the other, the narrow school scholars and their broad counterparts including the traditional and non-traditional lenses to human security. The idea of critical engagement, which is about what to preserve and what to adapt, is that which revolves around human security as both normative framework and diagnostic tool that can be operationalized through mixed methods, multi-scalar governance, and targeted advocacy. Thus, the study interrogates "Critical engagements with human security in advancing security discourse for it to retain its normative value while becoming more analytically and practically useful for rigorous underpinning (Newman, 2022). Therefore, this study synthesizes the core critiques and defenses of human security, by drawing on Hawre Hama's institutional critique and Edward Newman's articulation of the concept of political sociology with a synthetic contemporary case material (Newman, 2022; Hama, 2017; Tow, 2001).

Methodology

As a theoretical-empirical paper, that synthesizes existing scholarship and recent policy/field reports for an updated analytic and policy toolkit on human security, the paper employed the descriptive-exploratory methods combined with a comparative political survey analysis grounded on relevant literature on security and human security that are balanced and objective.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Human Security: A Historical Emergence

Although, narratives of human security has been widely adopted and adapted within the academic and policy communities (Christie, 2010; Tanaka, 2015). It has attracted open discourse on the terminology and its essence for human protection. This arguably has arisen through the dual- paradigm on the state-centric conception and uses of security, which is the military and 'traditional-based' and its human-face, that centers on the 'individual' and the direct threats to his/her existence on "Wellbeing, Want, Rights and Freedom", aside violent attacks (Kerr, 2013; Chandler, 2008; 2010). Parr and Messineo, (2012), suggests that "While human security is now used as a general term with a wide range of meanings in many contexts from domestic violence to migration, it originated in many debates about 'collective security' around the end of the cold war. Human security as a contemporary approach to governance has played a significant role in the global development discourse since the term was introduced in the 1994 Human Development Report for the diversification of thinking approach to security in global governance. The United Nations through the 1994 UNDP Report established the concept of human security to increase attention and resources on development and to assist the vulnerable people who are victims of vicious internal conflicts (Kerr, 2013). The political objective was to shift financial and human resources away from the traditional security agenda on win-win grounds that this was good for the people in the Global South and good for the security of the Global North (Kerr, 2013). Today in the post-cold war era, the concept has gone viral and wide as a new orthodoxy for keeping the world safe and together from ashes of perils to human life.

A good illustration here was the case of Japan, where the Development Cooperation Charter has seen human security as "the guiding principle that lies at the foundation of Japan's development cooperation" (Tanaka, 2015; Shepherd 2013; Newman, 2010). Chandler (2008) says, "The debate over human security approaches appears to have changed substantially since the 1990s". In the 1990s debate, the advocates of human security posed a radical challenge to the state-based frameworks of traditional security approaches. In the year 2000s, the radicals are on the other side, critiquing human security as the ideological tool of bio-political, neo-liberal global governance. Both approaches counter pose human security to state-based frameworks. Both posit the discourse as the project of new global agency. For liberal advocates, this is global civil society; and for radical post-structuralists and critical realists, this is US hegemony or neo-liberal Empire. They see in it, the centrality of the struggle between Realist, traditional, state-based, interest-based, approaches and new, Liberal cosmopolitan, de-territorialized, value-based approaches, which focus on individual human needs. Pauline Kerr in Collins (2013: 104), posits, "human security as an example of the deepening and broadening of security, believed to have taken place for use since the end of the cold war". To him, "human security takes the individual as the referent object and therefore challenges the traditional view that the state is the referent object". Kerr sums that human security is a concept saying that individuals rather than states, as the traditional view prescribes, are the referent object of security or the entity to be protected in the state (Kerr in Collins, 2013: 104).

Human security lays claim to a spectrum of arguments by different advocates or group of scholars with divers of opinions on what constitutes threats to human lives. They raise such questions as: Is human security just security from wants, freedom and good governance and/or do those threats include diseases and natural disasters like volcanic

eruptions, floods (as has been recorded in Mexico and Guatemala), Tsunami (as in 2012 Japan)? Can violent attacks trigger threats, arising from maladministration rights abuses? The imperative of prioritizing or even securitizing human needs in the context of state protection gingered widening the philosophy human security theory. Efforts to clear all these misconceptions and ambiguities in scholarships by examining the views of all the advocates constitute our object to study in this aspect of the work (Kerr 2013; Chandler 2008; 2010). According to Holliday and Howe (2011) and others, Human Security (HS) is an international security theory which experienced global proliferation in the aftermath of the cold war and which attempts to comprehensively address and widen present day security problems and challenges. It is a response to critical intellectual reflections on international politics and by extension the global security networks, how it can be enhanced, expanded and for what purpose. The HS approach and method is a reflection of significant developments in the international system like the relocation of violent conflicts from the inter- to the intra-state level, the proliferation of human rights norms and the growing sensitivity of states to the feedback and critique of the global community, including both other states and the civil society (Gracious, 2008; Holliday and Howe, 2011; Gomez and Gasper, 2013; Breslin, 2014).

These scholars noted with concern about the dimension of violent conflicts in the world today, particularly, those going on in The Democratic Republic of the Congo with the Rwanda-Backed M23 rebellion, the Sudan worsening crises, the Rohingya conflict, the Gaza conflict, the war between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the ones between Thailand and Cambodia and India and Pakistan, are testimonies for human security crusade. These conflicts and wars, some of which are more internally-based rather than between states have resulted in humanitarian crises that have subjected vulnerable people to human rights abuses, worsening economic conditions, hunger and starvation, homelessness, deprivation and other societal dangers. This has resulted in the louder voices calling for concerns for human security discourses. This has put a searchlight and resort to use of force by the international community on the need for the application of 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) (Holiday, 2011; Newman, 2022). R2P is a norm in the context of International Humanitarian Law that puts it to the states to protect their own citizens from violence and its and other menace and where there is a failure to do so, the international community has an obligation doing that for them (Glacious, 2008; Newman, 2022). With no sight to ending of wars and the enormous internally-displaced crises generated in countries, Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary General in 2005 compelled it upon the General Assembly not just to consider debate on the R2P, but to consider implementing its use as a force to protecting human lives from unlimited violence. In 2011, a crusade intervention in the internal crisis in Libya, as was the case in Iraq in 1993 to quell internal insurrections on the account of RTP applications by North Atlantic Organization (NATO) led by the United States of America and Britain Newman, 2017). In broad terms, Newman asserted that if human security is all about "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear". its ethical values must be upheld by nations to protect the individuals in their territories from dangers of perils and wars. He remarked, that, this phenomenon is normative because it holds that there are ethical responsibilities to re-orient, redirect and refocus or even rebrand security around the "individual" in line with world widely recognizable standards of human rights and governance, and, it is empirical as its applications are being subjected to scientific analysis through intellectual discourses (Breslin, 2014; Newman 2017).

Research claimed that human security extends downwards “to the security of groups and individuals;”, upward, “to the security of international systems;” horizontally, from military security “to political, economic, social, environmental and all sorts (Rothschild 1995). All these inform the efficacy of the centrality of HS as a new orthodoxy in human security theory/school (Rothschild, 1995; Par et. Al, 2012). The concept of human security was conceived as an extension of the old tradition in the context of a broader security scholarship . Indeed, older studies and international policy landmarks – particularly the Palme Commission and the Brundtland Commission – paved the road for the emergence of human security thought. It problematized the conventional normative view and encouraged new thinking by extending it to feminist and gender conceptions, which argued that conditions of security and insecurity are indivisible from masculine power structures and gendered institutions. The changing context brought an increased opportunity to address a more complex nontraditional security agenda – including civil war and state failures, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS – at the international level, within a wider conception of peace and security. (Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues 1982; Buzan, 1983; Ullman, 1983; Mendlovitz 1975; Brundtland Commission, 1987; Newman, 2010; Newman, 2010; Enloe, 2014).

Apart, globalization stimulated this broadening discourse, through the deregulation and marketization of national economies, in the context of networks of international rules and standards, which has encouraged security discourse expansion and brought social and economic insecurities in the destabilized impact of market disruptions, especially in the Global South like Africa. Thomas, (2002) and Newman, (2010) indeed had linked the emergence of the human security concept with the emerging “instability arising from the application of the neoliberal development vision” The Normative changes have underpinned and resulted from these developments, bringing about expectations and standards human rights in governance (Newman, 2010). The growing prominence of transnational norms is extending political discourse beyond the territorial scope of the state; caving in to internationalization of ethical standards as they increasingly impinge upon “national” laws and norms (Newman, 2010). In the context of various political, social, and technological processes, the boundary between the “national” and “international” is therefore increasingly blurred in a number of areas relating to governance and socioeconomic organization (Newman 2010). As governance and human rights, issues have arguably become internationalized; the cumulative effect is that the human needs and rights that underpin human security are slowly becoming factored into decision-making relating to security issues on the global space (Newman 2010). From the bottom up, as people’s awareness and expectations of rights countrywide is, so demonstrably having an impact, expectations and attitudes on governance and its state institutions expressed and re-consolidated in many different forms (Newman 2010).

Another argument, which arose in contemporary studies, was the view that post-Westphalian world provided where norms of inviolable and equal state sovereignty did not rest solely on the individual states. This suggests that states are no longer the sole or even the most important actors in certain areas of international politics. It means states cannot be seen to assume viable or autonomous agentic role of security where insecurity and conflict are primarily characterized by civil war, internal insurrections, banditry and insurgency. Crises of violence resulting in humanitarian quagmires on the international system, and pinned on the incidences of governance and leadership failures and other internal compromises as we have in Nigeria’s banditry and insurgency cases, as well as the political

interregnum in Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry in West Africa,, breaking down domestic efforts to guarantee order and justice, the international community through the security council resolutions could re-visit the norm on Responsibility to Protect for international peace, order and justice to be guaranteed (Newman 2010). The international discourse of democracy, information technology, the acknowledgement of the contributions of civil society to domestic and international politics are pointing evidences to the evolving and unfolding international pragmatism on human rights advocacy for discourse in human security to be sustained (Newman 2010). The Jubilee movement working for debt relief, the movements for the Ottawa Convention banning landmines and in the International Criminal Court, and the opposition to the draft Multilateral Agreement on Investments have all justified necessity for the diversification of security dilemma and broad prism on security studies (Newman 2010). Interest in human security is therefore a response to perceived emerging human security threats against vulnerable individuals, and, if this trend is to be addressed, advancing discourses on security studies to human security is imperative and justifying (Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues 1982; Buzan, 1983; Ullman, 1983; Mendlovitz 1975; Brundtland Commission, 1987; Newman, 2010; Newman, 2010; Enloe, 2014).

However, in a negative sense, certain institutions or values – such as the neoliberal market – appear increasingly in tension with human security. A vocal body of opponents argues that globalization, resulting from technological revolution and emancipation and presumed pivotal among the fundamentals, de-empowers weaker communities, threatens indigenous economic practices, perpetuates patriarchal domination, and results in social inequality heralding emancipation from oppressive power structures and necessitating human security impulses, both in academia and socio-political communities (Thomas and Wilkin 1999: 3). As Roland Paris puts it, human security is the latest in a long line of neologisms- including common security, global security, cooperative and comprehensive security, which encourage policymakers and scholars to think about international security as something more than the military defense of a country's territorial integrity and national government (Paris 2001). In spite of these contrasting views and the multifarious and multidimensional definitions of HS, most formulations still and continue to emphasize the welfare of the ordinary people as germane in HS (Paris 2001). Canada, Norway, and other governmental and non-governmental bodies that have become vocal in the orthodoxy of HS and its promotion and institutionalization and operationalization, have helped to make the concept more or less become an interdisciplinary study in most western and world class universities (Paris 2001; Newman 2010).

Justifications for Human Security Discourse and the Need for Common Ground

The body of knowledge as a critical and astute approach to the pursuit of global security and peace, by reinventing human society in a safer environment, through collectivist-principles, resonates and triggers the narrow school and the broad school debate. This thought, which invents a new approach actually stresses the significance of the individual as the fundamental part of each social unit and calls for a concern for the safety of individuals, who constitute the largest moral human community. This inspired advocates of the schools to engage in an intellectual battle that spurs discountenance among major contemporaries; warranting the need for a common ground on what human security in international relations and diplomacy should be (Akinboye and Ottoh, 2007:59; Holliday and Howe, 2011; Kerr, 2013). Proponents of the narrow such as Mack, (2004) have argued the threat of political violence and internal banditry to people by the state or any other organized political actor

should be the bedrock for human security (HS). This falls in line with the view shared by the Human Security Center with discourse on human security seen as ‘the protection of individuals and their communities’ from war and other forms of violence (Human Security Centre, 2005; Kerr, 2013; Mack, 2004). While Mack and his colleagues acknowledge that there exist other threats apart from systemic violence, their obsession has been on conceptual clarity and analytical rigor, which pose threats of violence, e.g. violence triggered by poverty, starvation and poor governance (Mack, 2004: 367). For Mack, there is advocacy value in expanding the security agenda to include natural disasters, disease contagions/attacks; psychological trauma and many more is imperative and meaningful. Human security discourse was therefore extended to freedom from fear or use of political violence including displacement of people from their place of abode and/or source of living, bodily attacks, killing and deprivation of rights on participatory governance through right to vote and to be voted for in elections (Mack, 2004: 367; Sevic, 2008). Election rigging and the practice of “democracy of the stomach by looting politicians” for personal enrichments as established in the just concluded election failures in Guinea Bisau are justifying reasons for advancing security discourse with critical engagement with human security (Omotosho, 2025; Easton, 2025). Several analytic moves show how a critical human security project advances security studies. These include but not limited to:

- i. Re-situating referent objects and causal chains by which human security pushes analysis from abstract notions of state survival to concrete chains linking structural deficits like (poverty, exclusion), governance failures, and immediate threats to daily life. This reorientation, according to experts, improves explanation and points to interventions at multiple causal junctures, e.g. Responsibility to Protect (RTP).
- ii. Multi-sectoral diagnosis and response logic for human security lens to legitimize multi-sector responses (health, food, protection, livelihoods) and demands interoperability across ministries and agencies. This logic is necessary in the Sahel and pandemic contexts, where single-sector policies fail.
- iii. Attention to institutions and discursive struggle. By advancing human security to engaging with the institutional incentives, that favor state security like budgetary allocations, military influence, and international donor priorities. These narratives securitize or depoliticize human threats, anchoring national boundaries’ security on human security. Hama’s work points to the need for discourse analysis and institutional strategy to shift priorities in practice.
- iv. Operational metrics without de-politicization. One common critique is that operationalizing human security strips it of critique. A critical engagement adopts measurable indicators such as (food security, displacement rates, access to services) while explicitly linking them to power relations and policy choices, preserving normative critique within an evidence base suitable for policymakers (Gomez and Gasper, 2013; Christou, 2014; Hama, 2017).

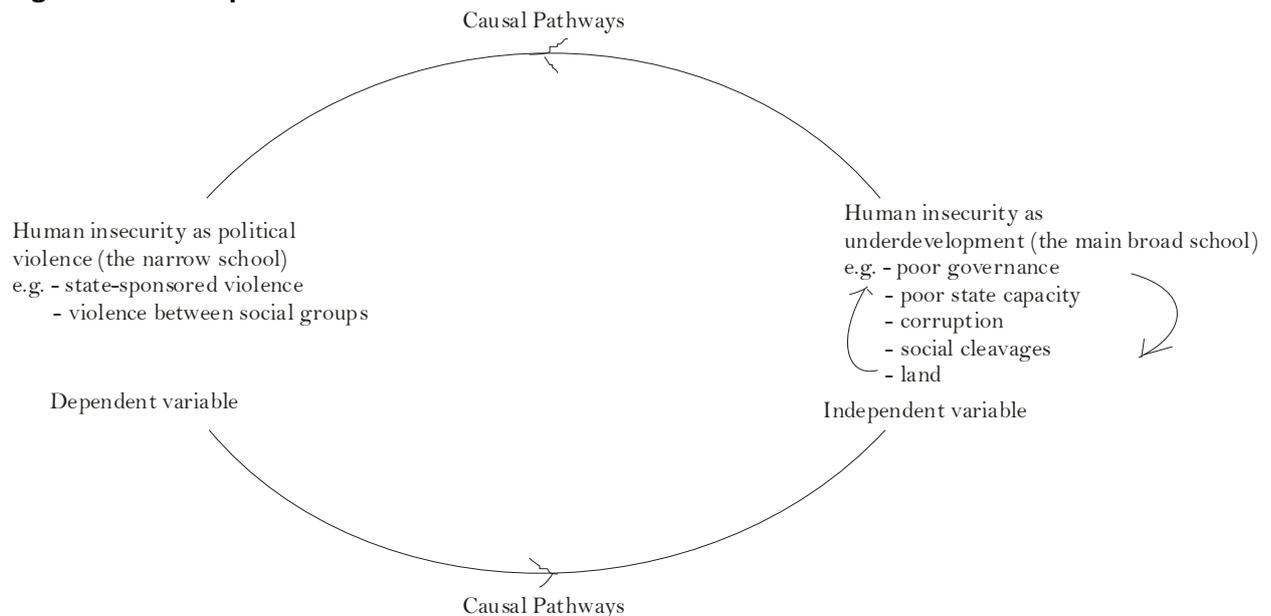
On the broad plane, according to its own proponents, HS transcends mere concern for a threat of political violence to individuals. It is both freedom from fear and want. This position is credited to Human Development Report by UNDP (Bellamy et al., 2002; Kerr, 2013; Newman, 2010; Service, 2008; Thomas, 2000: 114). The critical broad scholars on HS suggest that freedom from Want and other “critical life threatening catastrophes” which are caused by problems of underdevelopment in South-South like The Gambia underscore why engagements with human security become paramount. Notwithstanding, if those threats are rooted in anthropogenic activities and/or natural events outside or within the shores of

any nation. They can be direct or structural, discreet or apparent. To them, HS is principally human-centered and its focus is on the people and their communities. (Kerr, 2013; 107) posits it as “security orientated”, in that its focus is on freedom from fear, danger and other critical life threatening issues. In Kerr (2013, 107), Thakur, however attempts to install some limitations to the broad schools by referring to life-threatening situations culminating from crises and by situating those not in the broader development agenda like that proposed by Alkiri. According to him, the objective of human security is ‘to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that advance human freedoms and human fulfillments’. Thakur posits that, “these broad conceptualizations on the grounds that, though, analytical rigor may be lost, there is inherent value in having inclusive definitions. For Paris, (2001) human security encompasses all forms of abuses up to genocide. This view has led to further critiques by skeptics and anti-behaviorist scholars like Barry Buzan, who critique human security as problematic in the context of international security thought, rendering the entire exercise of human security orthodoxy defense an abstract than empirical (Acharya 2008; Buzan, 2001; Kerr, 2013; Paris, 2001; Thakur and Newman, 2004). These antagonisms cause some limitations for the emphasis on the critical engagements emphasis human security (Kerr, 2013, 109).

Nonetheless, in spite of the differing opinions on the normative mainstream and critical security study, the fact still remains that, none can be discountenanced as they are mutually relevant for in depth and critical investigative research (Kerr, 2013).

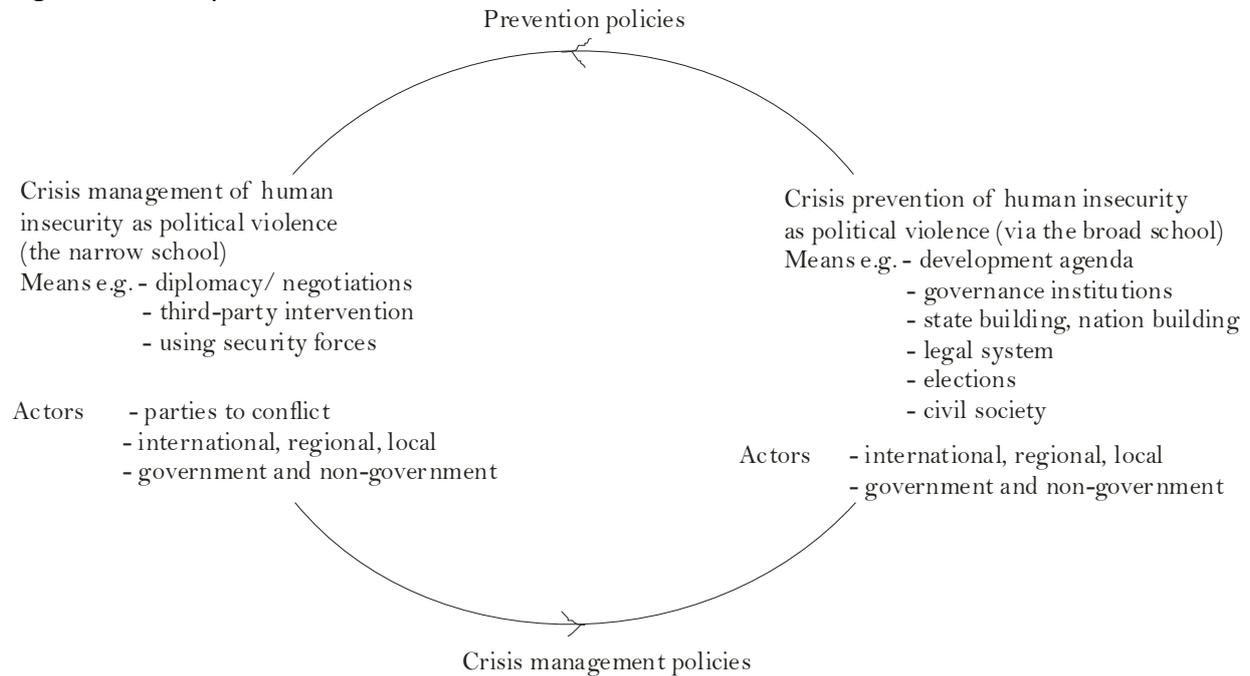
Figures 1.1 and 1.2 below explain the causal variables and the preventive variables to human security: The diagrams are useful for policymakers and academicians to understand how to underpin variables causing insecurity in the states and what variables are considered fundamental to prevent insecurity through advancing discourse on security with critical engagements with human security in contemporary political analysis: Figure 1.1 – Conceptual Frameworks and Fig. 1.2 – Policy Frameworks for the diagrammatic/graphical overlapping explanations of both the conceptual and policy frameworks of human insecurity.

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Frameworks



Source: (Kerr 2013,109)

Figure 1.2 Policy framework



Source: (Kerr 2013,110)

Conclusion

This study delved on human security discourses built around individuals' well-being, incorporating economic, health, environmental, and political threats against it. Its principal strength is normative breadth linking human rights, development, and protection but that breadth was not without its critique. According to the study, conceptual indeterminacy risks policy diffusion and co-optation. Scholars such as Newman, (2022) have argued that reconciling the critical aspirations of human security with political realities requires attending to political incentives and institutional constraints that deprive people their basic constitutional rights and protections rather than treating security on the surface is not just purely ethically rhetorical but outmoded. Study in security ought to be re-fashioned and re-packaged to meet present security challenges currently experienced in the world. Hama, (2017) offered a useful corrective measure by juxtaposing state, societal, and human security traditions and interrogating the institutional logics that privilege state security in policymaking. He demonstrated in his thesis that without engaging the institutional and discursive mechanisms that underwrite state priorities, human security remains marginalized in practice. This underscored the need for methodological pluralism by combining normative argumentation with institutional and discourse analysis if human security is to inform real-world policy. Therefore, both the traditional and the contemporary studies are useful and none is to be discountenanced but mutually exclusive, if security challenges in the states and across the global community is to be adequately.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: November 04, 2025 Accepted: December 19, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Saleh, Bailey; Saleh, Abbas B. & Saleh, Albert B. (2025). "Empirical Comparative Analysis of Manufacturing Outputs of Asia with the two Regions of Oceania and the Middle East, 2018-2024." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 36-46.

Article

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EMPIRICAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MANUFACTURING OUTPUTS OF ASIA WITH THE TWO REGIONS OF OCEANIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, 2018-2024

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to empirically and comparatively analyze the manufacturing outputs of the Asia region with two neighboring regions of Oceania and the Middle East. The study adopted secondary sources of data collection. Documents scrutinized include World Bank Open Data on manufacturing outputs, UNCTAD, and BRICS-JSP. Other documents scrutinized were: academic journals, bulletins, textbooks, scholarly papers, and internet materials. The generated data were analyzed through critical discourse method. Empirical data from verifiable secondary sources were computed by the researcher and presented in tabular and graphical forms; and analyzed through descriptive and explanatory methods, drawing inference where appropriate. The study established that with the continuous manufacturing decline of Western Europe and North American regions, the Asia region has overtaken the two, and is now steadily maintaining the global manufacturing leadership. However, the study established that both the Middle East and the Oceania regions have underperformed comparatively; with the former (M/East) being the least performing region of the world.

Keywords: Asia, Western Europe, Oceania, Manufacturing outputs, North America, Global Economy.

JEL Classification: N10, N20, N60, O1, O19, O47, O57, P0, P16, P33.

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Introduction

For over two centuries the world manufacturing sub-sector has been dominated by the Western European region and the North American region, spanning the period of industrial revolution up to the end of the 20th Century. However, unfolding global events across the world towards the end of the 20th Century and the wake of the 21st Century, have dynamically changed the manufacturing narratives, shifting it away from the two Western regions to the Eastern regions. The Asia region and the region of Oceania leveraging on the nascent global manufacturing vogue, are on course to provide the needed direction for the global economy for the rest of the 21st Century. The Asia region in particular, is surging ahead in the global economic voyage with strong anchorage on manufacturing, thereby displacing the Western European region and the North America region from the global economic and political leadership position (Xu & Pal, 2022). It is not in doubt that the industrialization of both Western European region and the North America region were triggered by manufacturing for most part of the 19th and 20th Centuries; which generated enormous wealth for them during the industrial revolution. They were the leading regions of the world that dominated the world economy through the manufacturing and production of weapons of intimidation that enabled them in conquering and acquiring foreign territories. The human (slaves) and material resources of colonies, were plundered with reckless abundance; the proceeds from which catapulted their economic development statuses; giving them voices and ambience of providing global leadership up to the end of the 20th Century (Felipe, 2018; Wolde, 2022; Harb & Basil, 2023; Krusse, et-al, 2023).

The affluence that accompanied this un-rival global leadership position by Western Europe and North America resulted into crass complacency that made them to be oblivious of the rise of silent achievers from the Asian region, Eastern European region and the Oceania region in terms of industrialization and manufacturing. These upcoming regions had to devise stringent policies and measures through strict utilization of indigenous technologies and local intellectual thinking that set them free from the shackles of Western European and North American subtle economic slavery (Xu & Pal, 2022; Diodato, et-al, 2022; Chaponniere & Lautier, 2020). With visionary governmental frameworks at the helm of affairs in the assertive countries of these regions, they were determined to attain industrial and manufacturing development. They embarked on deliberate policies of promoting the consumption of locally manufactured products and goods by first relying on direct domestic investment (DDI) supported heavily by government. Leveraging heavily on the expertise of their local indigenous technician, engineers and technologies. Given these endowments most Asian countries were able to develop generic versions and pro-types of medicines, automobiles and even aeronautics with initial large domestic markets. Whereas, with shrinking foreign plunders and self-inflicted retreat by the West in terms of population, technologies, industrialization and manufacturing; Asian countries took advantage with their large population to launch out in all global economic fronts; but more particularly in manufacturing. As the result, their manufactured products became the most preferred in the global market because of their affordability and the steady rise and improvement in quality (Shameem, & Jayaprasad, 2020; Rocha, 2018; Liu et-al, 2020).

North America and Western Europe, the formerly economically developed two regions of the Northern Hemisphere appears to be oblivious of the fast-unfolding new global reality. While their economies are facing storms for possible capsizes, the Asia region is tenaciously holding the bull by the horns as it unwaveringly forges ahead with quantitative and qualitative manufacture of goods, products and services with global acceptability. It is

such that global consumers are increasingly looking to the three regions of Asia, Eastern Europe and Oceania for their manufactured products to meet consumption needs. Propelled by these increasing demands by global consumers, the Asia region has been on its toes to meet-up with these rising global consumption demands. In view of this, the emergent lead-manufacturing region of Asia alongside other upcoming regions of the world are fast working towards minimizing the dominance of both Western Europe and North American regions in providing affordable, but qualitative products, goods and services to world-wide consumers (Iqbal, 2022; Joshi, 2021; Haraguchi & Resonja, 2015).

Literature Review

The manufacturing theory and comparative advantage theory have been adopted and utilized as frameworks for the study as outlined and treated below:

- i. **Manufacturing Theory:** Manufacturing Theory is the study of how businesses make use of resources to process and eventually produce goods or services for sale. It is a branch of economics that explains how businesses decide what to do with resources of raw materials and labor at its disposal to efficiently produce goods or services with comparative competitive advantage over other businesses or trading partners. In international economic relations, manufacturing and international trade theory refers to the economic concepts that explains why countries specialize in producing certain goods based on their available resources and comparative advantage over other entities, that attracts to greater benefits to them. The theory identifies three factors that are very essential to the transformation of raw materials into finished goods and services; which include resources, capital and labor. Though this study concurs with this position; but would like to add that the fourth important factor in manufacturing - which is a very disciplined politico-economic conditions. With a very disciplined government presiding over a very disciplined citizenry, there will be no wastages; where all efforts and resources will be judiciously directed at the qualitative and quantitative production of goods and services in which the country or region has comparative competitive advantage in the international market (Alting, 1978; Gandolfo, 1986; Daniel & Brown, 2004; Zhao, et-al, 2006; Zhang & Sharifi, 2007; Watson, 2017; Murdock, 2020; Katina, 2024).
- ii. **Comparative Advantage Theory:** The second theory adopted as framework for the study is the Comparative Advantage Theory. Comparative advantage relates to how much productive and cost-efficient a country is over another country in the harnessing of vital resources in the production of finished goods and services. Furthermore, the theory of comparative advantage which is generally known as Heckster-Ohlin theory, is a classical country-based theory which states that countries will gain comparative advantage if they produce and export goods that requires resources or factors that they have in great supply; and cheaper production factors. The differences in factor abundance and the factor intensity of goods must be in favor of the country that possessed them. The CAT states that countries can benefit from international trade by specializing in producing goods where they have a lower opportunity cost compared to other countries. In another word, it is the ability of a country to produce a particular good or some goods or services at lower opportunity cost than its trading partners. Furthermore, comparative advantage also describes the economic reality of the gains from trade for individuals, firms, or nations; which arise from differences in their endowments or technological progress. The theory emphasizes that countries with

advantage in the differences in factor abundance and the factor intensity of goods, often attains absolute advantage where they become more productive, and cost-efficient than other countries (Alting, 1978; Rodrik, 2013; Szirmai & Verspagen, 2015; Rocha, 2018; Liu et-al, 2020; Wolde, 2022; Xu & Pal, 2022; Krusse, et-al, 2023; Busse, et-al, 2024).

This study aligns with the above position because the Asia region, with the abundance of labor, material resources and land hinged on good governance; is taking advantage of all these to bolster its global manufacturing revolution for the rest of the 21st Century.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative methods to generate data. The document studies method was adopted and utilized in scrutinizing and generating data from mainly secondary sources. Documents scrutinized include World Bank Open Data on manufacturing outputs, UNCTAD, and BRICS-JSP. Other documents scrutinized are: academic journals, bulletins, textbooks, scholarly papers, and internet materials. The generated narrative data was analyzed through critical discourse method. While, empirical data from verifiable secondary sources was computed by the researcher and presented in tabular and graphical forms; and analyzed through descriptive and explanatory methods, drawing inference where appropriate.

Results and Discussion

Results from data generated mainly from secondary sources through document studies on manufacturing outputs of the three regions of Asia, Oceania and Middle East, are hereby presented in tabular forms and in figures; and analyzed through critical discourse, descriptive and explanatory methods.

Manufacturing Outputs of the Asian Region

Compulsive global economic glare is increasingly being focused on the Asia region that has exploded in terms of world manufacturing production and outputs, thereby attracting raw materials, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), goods and labour. The Asia region houses the A7 – China, India, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan. It leads the World in terms of manufacturing for the period covered by this study. For the purpose of clarification, the A7 is simply the combination of the Asian Tigers (Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan) and the Asian Giants (China, India and Japan) (Lewis, 1954; Rodrik, 2013; Rocha, 2018; Wolde, 2022; Duggan, et-al, 2022). As stated earlier, the Asia region leads other regions of the world with total cumulative manufacturing outputs of \$49,902,700,015,725tr representing 47% of the world total for the period of the study (2018-2024). China leads the region with \$31,388,467,575,169tr (63% of the region's total); as well as being the global leader with 29.4% of \$106,856,626,720,000.0tr for the period of this study (2018 to 2024). Japan recorded \$6,958,815,388,002tr (14% of the region's total and 6.5% of the world total) for the same period and placed in the second position. South Korea is in the third position with \$3,022,870,078,122tr (6% of the region's total and 2.8% of the world total). While, India is in the fourth position with \$2,583,126,706,352.0tr (5% of the region's total and 2.4% of the world total) for the same period (Gayal, et-al, 2018; Busse, et-al, 2024; Tahir & Burki, 2023; World Bank Group, 2025; Diodato, et-al, 2022; Krusse, et-al, 2023; Zhang & Sharifi, 2007). This is as presented in the Table 1 below:

Table 1: Manufacturing Outputs of the Asian Region by Country, 2012 - 2024 (\$tr)

SN	Country	Cumulative	ICAA	ACAA	ACCA
1.	China	31,388,467,575,169	2,242,033,398,226.4	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
2.	Japan	6,958,815,388,002	497,058,242,000.0	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
3.	South Korea	3,022,870,078,122	215,919,291,294.0	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
4.	India	2,583,120,706,352	184,508,826,882.3	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
5.	Indonesia	1,589,208,957,256	113,514,925,518.3	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
6.	Thailand	940,340,380,817	67,167,170,058.4	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
7.	Vietnam	628,781,193,728	44,912,942,409.1	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
8.	Bangladesh	606,412,900,000	43,315,207,142.9	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
9.	Malaysia	600,220,909,545	42,872,922,110.9	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
10	Singapore	590,176,544,951	42,155,467,496.5	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
.					
11	Philippines	415,772,739,789	29,698,052,842.1	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
.					
12	Pakistan	309,322,834,836	22,095,202,488.3	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
.					
13	Myanmar	122,609,559,904	8,757,825,707.4	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
.					
14	Sri Lanka	101,976,105,576	7,284,007,541.1	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
.					
15	Hong Kong	24,400,978,573	1,742,927,040.9	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
.					
16	Brunei	16,326,956,779	1,166,211,198.5	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
.					
17	Nepal	10,900,335,519	718,595,394.2	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
.					
18	Afghanistan	7,660,170,810	547,155,057.1	3,564,478,572,551.8	2,772,372,223,095.8
.					
	Asia Total	49,902,700,015,725	3,564,478,572,551.8	49,902,700,015,725	49,902,700,015,725

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adopted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Group, 2025

Key: ICAA – Individual Country Annual Average;
 ACAA – Asia Cumulative Annual Average;
 ACCA – Asia Cumulative Country Average

Manufacturing Outputs of the Oceanian Region, 2018 and 2024

The Oceania which is a contiguous region with Asia (world leading manufacturing region) stand to benefit much from their being geographical neighbors. The Oceania region has put up an impressive performance in the area of manufacturing outputs with a total cumulative of \$6,934,304,053,500tr representing 6% of the world total for the period of the study. With a cumulative annual average of \$990,614,864,785.7tr, the region is the fourth in this regard after Asia, North America and Western Europe. However, all the countries of this region scored less than one percent (1%) of the world total for the period of the study. which means that each of them scored zero (0%) percent. Fiji leads the region with \$3,646,219,238,000tr which represents 0.34% of the world cumulative total of \$106,856,626,720,000.0tr. Australia is second in the region with cumulative total of \$467,235,028,500tr (Felipe, 2018; Musita, et-al, 2023; Siqing, 2018; Nach & Ncwadi, 2024;

UNCTAD, 2025). The individual country performance of the region is as presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Cumulative Manufacturing Outputs of the Oceania Region, 2018-2024 (\$tr)

SN	Countries	Cumulative	OCAA	OCCA	WCAA
1.	Fiji	3,646,219,238,000	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
2.	Australia	467,235,028,500	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
3.	Micronesia	12,589,300	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
4.	Solomon Islands	1,080,574,935	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
5.	Vanuatu	25,398,266	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
6.	New Zealand	184,631,319	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
7.	Samoa	295,033,153	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
8.	Kiribati	94,565,757	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
9.	Tonga	188,315,113,000	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
10	Papua N/Guinea	930,656,436	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
11	Palau	2,920,208	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
12	Marshall Island	8,165,300	990,614,864,785.7	577,858,671,125	15,265,232,399,571.4
	Oceania Total	6,934,304,053,500	990,614,864,785.7	6,934,304,053,500	106,856,626,720,000
	World Total	106,856,626,720,000	4,645,946,292,173.9	7,632,616,194,285.7	106,856,626,720,000

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Group, 2025

Key: OCAA – Oceania Cumulative Annual Average;
 OCCA – Oceania Cumulative Country Average;
 WCAA – World Cumulative Annual Average

Manufacturing Outputs of the Middle East Region, 2018 - 2024

The Middle East is one of the lowest manufacturing regions of the world with a total cumulative of \$2,124,978,846,171tr representing 2% of the world total of \$106,856,626,720,000tr. The Region’s total cumulative annual average stands at \$303,568,406,595.8tr representing 2% of the world annual average of \$15,265,232,388,571.4tr. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the regional leader of the Middle East with \$812,573,024,105tr representing 0.76% of the world total. Iran is second with \$458,781,652,971tr representing 0.43% of the world total. The United Arab Emirate (UAE) is third with \$293,772,108,772tr representing 0.28% of the world total. The state of Israel is fourth with \$184,961,754,344tr representing 0.17% of the world total. Qatar is fifth with \$121,661,345,102tr representing 0.11% of the world total. Oman is sixth with \$65,723,913,134tr representing 0.06% of the world total. Jordan is seventh with \$55,491,715,434tr representing 0.05% of the world total. Bahrain is eight with \$55,408,152,713tr representing 0.05% of the world total. Iraq is ninth with \$33,000,656,201tr representing 0.03% of the world total. Kuwait is tenth with \$27,067,528,529tr representing 0.03% of the world total. Lebanon is eleventh with

\$8,989,994,866tr representing 0.01% of the world total. While, West Bank & Gaza is in the twelfth position and the last on Middle East ladder with \$7,547,000,000tr representing 0.01% of the world total for the period covered by the study. With all their oil wealth, none of the countries of the Middle East region scored up to 1% (they scored 0%) of the world total for the period of the study. It however portrays a very dangerous dimension for their citizens and national economies; where they will remain one of the world’s largest markets for the disposal of manufactured products and goods from industrializing countries of the Asia region who are currently occupying the apex of the global leadership position in manufacturing (Harb & Basil, 2023; Musita, et-al, 2023; Siqing, 2018; Nach & Ncwadi, 2024; Katina, 2024; UNCTAD, 2025). The analysis is summarized Table 3 below:

Table 3: Manufacturing Outputs of the Middle East Region, 2018 - 2024 (\$tr)

SN	Countries	Cumulative	MECAA	MECCA	WCAA
1.	Saudi Arabia	812,573,024,105	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
2.	Iran	458,781,652,971	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
3.	UAE	293,772,108,772	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
4.	Israel	184,961,754,344	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
5.	Qatar	121,661,345,102	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
6.	Oman	65,723,913,134	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
7.	Jordan	55,491,715,434	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
8.	Bahrain	55,408,152,713	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
9.	Iraq	33,000,656,201	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
10.	Kuwait	27,067,528,529	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
11.	Lebanon	8,989,994,866	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
12.	West Bank/Gaza	7,547,000,000	303,568,406,595.8	177,081,570,514.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
	Middle East Total	2,124,978,846,171	2,124,978,846,171	2,124,978,846,171	106,856,626,720,00
	World Total	106,856,626,720,000	4,645,946,292,173.9	7,632,616,194,285.7	106,856,626,720,000

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Group, 2025

Key: MEAA – Middle East Cumulative Annual Average;
 MECCA – Middle East Cumulative Country Average;
 WCAA – World Cumulative Annual Average

Summary of the Manufacturing Outputs of the Three Regions

Asia leads other regions with \$49,902,700,015,725tr representing 47% of the world manufacturing total for the period of the study; with an individual regional cumulative annual average (IRCAA) of \$7,128,957,145,103.6tr. The Oceania region is in the fourth position with \$6,934,304,053,500tr (6%) and individual regional cumulative annual average of \$990,614,864,785.7tr. The Middle East occupies the last position with \$2,124,978,846,171tr (2%), and individual regional cumulative annual average of \$303,568,406,595.8tr. This brings the cumulative total regional individual cumulative annual average to \$8,423,140,416,485.1tr for the three regions under comparison. The regional cumulative annual average (RCAA) for the three regions stands at \$7,370,247,864,424.5tr, while, the cumulative regional average (CRA) for the three regions stands at \$19,656,994,305,132tr. The combined total manufacturing outputs of the three regions of Asia, Oceania and Middle (\$58,961,982,915,396tr) represents 55.18% of the world total. This indicates an increasing manufacturing mode of the Eastern regional blocs; leaving Western

Europe and North America regions alongside other low performing regions with 44.82% of the world total manufacturing outputs for the period of the study (Chaponneiere, & Lautier, 2020; Musita, et-al, 2023; Siqing, 2018; Nach & Ncwadi, 2024; World Bank Open Data, 2025; UNCTAD, 2025). This analysis is summarized in Table 4 and Figures 1, & 2 below:

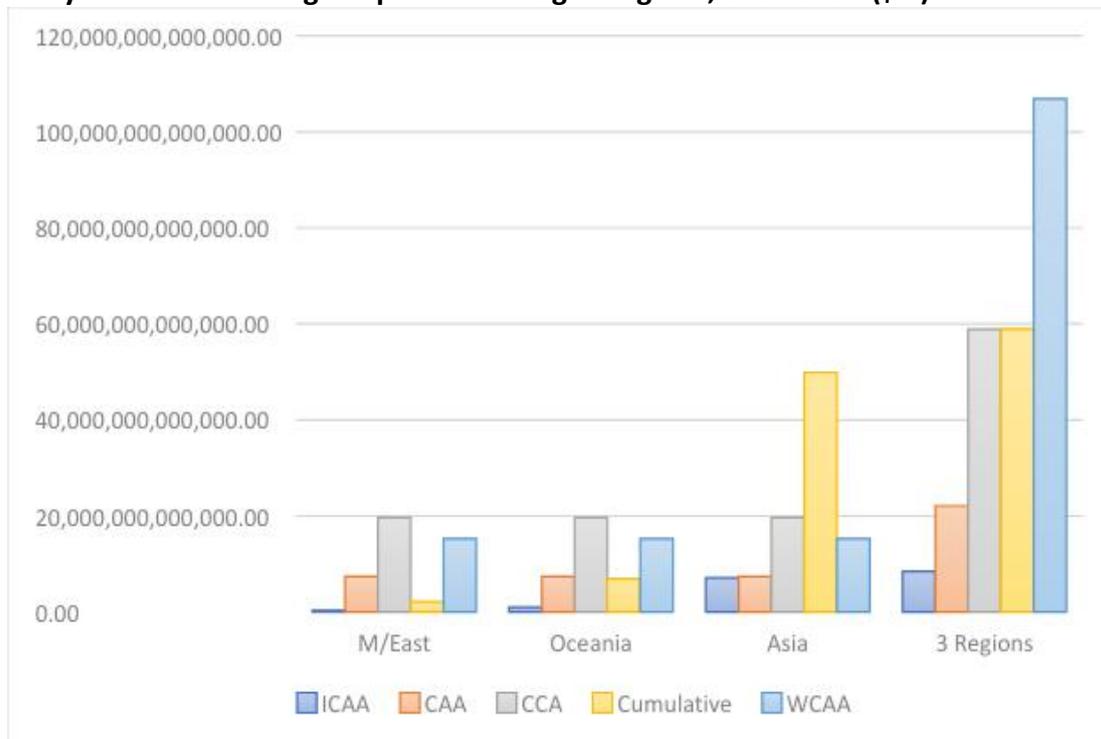
Table 4: Summary of Manufacturing Outputs of the Eight Regions, 2018-2024 (\$tr)

S N	Region	Cumulative	RCAA	CRA	WCAA
1	Asia	49,902,700,015,725	7,370,247,864,424.5	19,656,994,305,132	15,265,232,399,571.4
5	Middle East	2,124,978,846,171	7,370,247,864,424.5	19,656,994,305,132	15,265,232,399,571.4
8	Oceania Regions	6,934,304,053,500	7,370,247,864,424.5	19,656,994,305,132	15,265,232,399,571.4
	Total of 3 Regions	58,961,982,915,396	58,961,982,915,396	19,656,994,305,132	106,856,626,720,00
	World Total	106,856,626,720,000	4,645,946,292,173.9	7,632,616,194,285.7	106,856,626,720,000

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Group, 2025

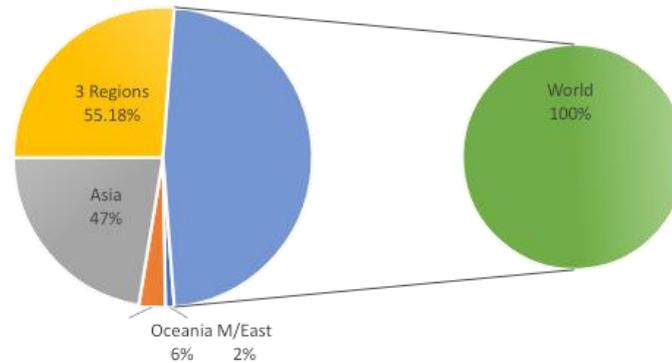
Key: RCAA – Regional Cumulative Annual Average;
 CRA – Cumulative Regional Average;
 WCAA – World Cumulative Annual Average

Fig. 1:
Summary of Manufacturing Outputs of the Eight Regions, 2018-2024 (\$tr)



Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Group, 2025

Fig. 2:
Summary of Manufacturing Outputs of the Eight Regions, 2018-2024 (%)



Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2023; World Bank Group, 2025

Summary of Major Findings, Conclusion/Recommendations

From the analysis so far, the following summary of major findings and conclusion/recommendations are given/proffered below:

Major Findings

- i. The study has established that the Asia region is the leading manufacturing region of the World for the period of the study with total cumulative of \$49,902,700,015,725tr, representing 47% of total World manufacturing outputs which stands at \$106,856,626,720,000.0tr.
- ii. The study has also established that the Asia region has outperformed the Oceania region by 719.65%
- iii. The study also established that the Asia region has overwhelmingly outperformed the Middle East by 2,348%.
- iv. The study further established that the Asia region has outperformed the combined manufacturing outputs of Oceania plus Middle East by 84.64%.
- v. The study revealed that Asia's total individual regional cumulative annual average (IRCAA) of \$7,128,957,145,103.6tr represents the region's actual annual increase rate of manufacturing outputs for the period of the study.

Conclusion

From the analysis so far and summary of the major findings, conclusion can be drawn that the Asia region with \$49,902,700,015,725tr representing 47% of the world total manufacturing outputs; is not only the world regional leader, but it has overwhelmingly outperformed the two regions of Oceania and the Middle East under comparison.

Recommendations

By way of recommendation, the Asia region should as a matter of urgency adopt bilateral and multilateral strategies of ‘pulling-up’ of other countries of the global south (more particularly the Oceania and the Middle East regions) to key into the indigenous local manufacturing by relying heavily on indigenous local thinking. This will make the low performing regions of the global south to pull-together and march-together towards wriggling themselves out of the tricks and intrigues of Western Europe and North America. Nigeria and other developing countries should do it the – ‘Asian Way’ by relying heavily on local strategic thinking for to independently develop indigenous technics and technologies for the manufacture of unique products with comparative competitive advantage in the international market. This will subsequently wriggle their economies from the shackles of economic servitude.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 06, 2025 Accepted: December 28, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Okoh, Blessing U. (2025). "Empowering Nigerian Society for Peace and Security: Inputs from Re-Reading 1 Peter 2:13 - 17." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 47-57.

Article

Open Access

EMPOWERING NIGERIAN SOCIETY FOR PEACE AND SECURITY: INPUTS FROM RE-READING 1 PETER 2:13 - 17

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Abstract

The increasing rise of insecurity across many societies in the Nigerian society which usually manifests in terrorism, banditry and communal clashes has seriously undermined governance, adversely affect scholarly activities and eventually impede sustainable development. It normally erodes social cohesion and unity, thereby creating atmosphere where leadership and scholarship are demonstrated without respect for the common good of everyone. As a result, there is urgent need to redesign scholarship and leadership frameworks that will provide for peace building and security among the Nigerian societies. This Paper therefore examines biblical principles as embedded in 1Peter's 2:13-17 that will provide a moral compass for leaders, scholars and societies to build upon. It argues that a decontextualized interpretation demanding passive submission to governing authorities is theologically untenable and pastorally hazardous in a nation grappling with multi-front insecurity. Through an exegetical analysis of the text in its original Neronian context, the study reframes Petrine "submission" not as blind obedience, but as a strategic, voluntary act of witness. This is balanced against broader biblical imperatives for the prophetic denunciation of injustice and the active pursuit of justice. When evaluated against the biblical benchmark of punishing evildoers and praising the good, the Nigerian state's performance often reveals an immense failure of its God-ordained purpose. Consequently, the study proposes a hermeneutic of "critical collaboration" and "submission as resistance." It concludes that the Nigerian church is called to transcend passive compliance, acting as a vital locus for peace and security by involving in grassroots peace building, promoting interfaith dialogue, and exercising its prophetic mandate to challenge structural injustice, thereby empowering communities where the state has abdicated its responsibilities.

Keywords: Empowering, Nigerian, Society, Peace and Security

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Introduction

Nigeria as a nation, is ensnared in what could be described as immense security crisis. For decades, the country has been grappling with many-sided security crisis that have metamorphized across its geopolitical zones, threatening its corporate existence and national development (Agbiboa, 2013). The universality of violence, perpetrated by a spectrum of state and non-state actors, has greatly subverted law and order, leading to a near-total collapse of the state's capacity to fulfill its main constitutional responsibility: the protection of lives and property (Amnesty International, 2020). The Nigerian state is under serious duress, with its authority and legitimacy challenged by insurgencies, banditry, communal conflicts, and rampant criminality that have become commonplace (Bassey & Asangausung, 2023). This prevalent insecurity is not an accidental occurrence but a direct outcome of deeply entrenched structural and institutional failures. Scholars and analysts have continually pointed to an intense deficit in governance, characterized by systemic corruption, weak institutions, and a glaring lack of political will, as the principal driver of instability (Dambazau, 2011; Oyeyemi, 2019). The state's response, always limited to reactive and heavy-handed military interventions, has proven inadequate and, in many cases, not yielding result. The security apparatus itself has been compromised in gross human rights violations, extra-judicial killings, and arbitrary arrests, transforming a supposed protector into a source of fear and insecurity for many communities (Agbiboa, 2013; Amnesty International, 2020). This reality has shattered the social contract, creating a deep hole of mistrust between the citizenry and the state, thereby promoting a climate where people feel abandoned and unprotected.

An Exegetical and Theological Reading of 1 Peter 2:13–17

¹³ *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,* ¹⁴ *or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.* ¹⁵ *For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* ¹⁶ *Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God.* ¹⁷ *Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.* This passage examines how Christians should comport themselves in public life. Looking at 1 Peter 2:13–17 exegetically requires attention to the social location and rhetorical strategy of the letter. The author frames a set of moral injunctions meant to shape how a vulnerable minority presents itself in a plural and frequently hostile society. The immediate unit (2:11-13) combines household-code material with civic instruction so that private domestic duties and public comportment are incorporated into a single programme of witness and social responsibility. (Jobes, 2005; Balch, 1981; Elliott, 1981). Two converging features determine the reading of 2:13–17. First, 1 Peter employs the Greco-Roman household-code (*Haustafel*) genre: conventional lists of duties (husband/wife, parent/child, master/slave) that were adapted by early Christian writers to shape community attitude and to disable charges that Christians threatened social order (Balch, 1981; Keener, 2021). Second, the letter repeatedly distinguishes its addressees with terms such as *paroikoi* and *parepidēmoi*, usually translated “resident aliens” or “sojourners”, a theological self-identification that carries social consequences. The identity of Christians as “exiles” is figurative and theological (citizens of God’s eschatological realm) but it also likely reflects a real social posture: communities that lacked full civic protections that practised distinctive worship, and therefore attracted suspicion (Elliott, 1981; Seland, 2009; Jobes, 2005). Read together, the *Haustafel* form and the “resident-alien” motif show that the letter’s moral instructions gear towards both to preserve the internal cohesion of the Christian household

and to provide an apologetic programme for honourable public behavior in order to bear witness to God before non-Christians.

The programmatic command that opens the paragraph, “be subject” (*hupotassō*), must be interpreted with lexical, social and theological sensitivity. In classical Greek the verb carries the sense of “arrange under” or “place in proper order,” and in the New Testament it commonly denotes a voluntary positioning under an existing authority rather than blind servility (Michaels, 1988; Jobes, 2005). In the Haustafel frame this language directs Christians how to inhabit hierarchical social structures responsibly: they are to acknowledge civil authorities as part of social order without surrendering Christian moral judgment. Critically, Peter qualifies the injunction: the posture of submission is to be undertaken “for the Lord’s sake” (*dia ton kyrion*). That phrase reframes civic deference as an act of religious fidelity and public witness. Submission therefore functions instrumentally, it preserves public order, silences slander, and honours God’s name among non-Christian neighbours, and it remains bounded by the higher allegiance to God (Elliott, 1981; Jobes, 2005). In other words, Peter neither idealises human government nor dissolves the difference between God’s claim and every political demand; Christians owe respect to institutions as institutions, but that respect is derivative and morally qualified by the prior lordship of Christ. Verse 16 balances the call to submit by insisting that Christians are “free”, a freedom rooted in their new identity in Christ, and therefore must not misuse liberty as a pretext for immoral behavior. The rhetorical pairing prevents submission from being read as passive capitulation: Christians may submit to authorities voluntarily because their freedom in Christ means they are not coerced into a false conformity; they can choose to witness by good conduct (Michaels, 1988; Jobes, 2005). Yet that freedom is not libertinism. Peter specifically warns against using freedom as a “cloak” or “pretext” for wrongdoing; instead, freedom is redirected toward service, the language of being “servants” or “bond-servants” (*doulos*) of God (1 Pet. 2:16). The paradox is formative: Christian liberty frees believers from sin and social defensiveness so they may serve God’s purposes of justice, peace and visible integrity in the public square. Morally, civic engagement is not an expression of autonomous self-interest but a vocation. Christians present themselves as law-abiding, honourable neighbours whose lives point to the Lord who claims them. (Jobes, 2005; Seland, 2009; Keener, 2021).

In the context of state fragility and widespread violence, religious communities, particularly the Christian church, are faced with a great theological and practical challenge: how to live faithfully and constructively in a society where the governing authorities have failed. A key biblical text that speaks to the relationship between Christians and the state, 1 Peter 2:13-17, presents an immediate hermeneutical dilemma. The injunction to “be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme” (1 Peter 2:13, English Standard Version) appears, on a surface reading, to advocate for a posture of passive submission that is deeply problematic in the Nigerian context. To command obedience to a state whose security forces are themselves a source of insecurity and human rights violations seems not only impractical but morally and theologically untenable (Agbibo, 2013). This raises a critical question: is 1 Peter 2:13-17 a resource for empowerment or a tool for subjugation? Historically, such texts have been misappropriated by oppressive regimes to demand quietism and quell dissent, a pattern observed in contexts such as apartheid-era South Africa, where biblical injunctions to submit were used to legitimize an unjust and racist system (Falola & Heaton, 2008). An uncritical, literalist application of this passage in Nigeria could similarly be used to discourage civic engagement, silence prophetic critique, and foster a dangerous passivity in the face of systemic injustice

and governance failure. The central task of this paper, therefore, is to move beyond such a disempowering reading and to critically examine whether the Petrine text, when interpreted with scholarly rigor and contextual sensitivity, can offer a paradigm for agency and empowerment for Nigerian communities.

Insecurity in Contemporary Nigerian Society

The security situation in Nigeria is not a single, uniform crisis but a complex mosaic of distinct yet interconnected conflicts that vary significantly by region (Achumba et al., 2013). This regional diversity is critical to understanding the failure of monolithic, top-down security responses. In the North-East, the nation has been embroiled in a decade-long insurgency waged by Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), which has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of millions (Agbibo, 2013; Bassey & Asangausung, 2023). This conflict has created a severe humanitarian crisis, devastating the region's social and economic fabric. In the North-West, communities are terrorized by rampant banditry and kidnapping for ransom, which have crippled the agrarian economy and made travel perilous (Achumba et al., 2013). These criminal enterprises operate with impunity, overwhelming the capacity of state security forces (Lar, 2020). The North-Central region has become an epicenter of violent farmer-herder conflicts, driven by competition over land and water resources, but often exacerbated by ethnic and religious undertones (Ajibefun, 2018). In the South (specifically the Niger Delta), long-standing grievances over resource control and environmental degradation from oil exploration fuel militancy, oil bunkering, and cultism. Across the nation, these major conflicts are compounded by a pervasive atmosphere of general criminality, including armed robbery, political assassinations, and inter-communal clashes, creating what Galtung terms "direct violence" on a massive scale (Agbibo, 2013). The psychological toll of this constant threat is profound, fostering a pervasive sense of fear and uncertainty that erodes social cohesion and fuels mistrust between communities (Lar, 2020).

Governance Deficits and Socio-Economic Despair

The widespread violence plaguing Nigeria is largely a symptom of deeper, systemic failures in governance and socio-economic development. A consensus among scholars and analysts identifies a profound "governance deficit" as the primary incubator of insecurity (Oyeyemi, 2019). This deficit manifests as systemic corruption, which diverts resources meant for development and security; a lack of accountability among the political elite; and the prevalence of weak or non-existent state institutions, particularly at the local level. This failure of leadership to establish inclusive and responsive governance systems has created a deep disconnect between the state and its citizens, fostering a pervasive trust deficit that extremist and criminal groups readily exploit (Dambazau, 2011). This political failure is inextricably linked to dire socio-economic conditions. Widespread poverty, staggering levels of youth unemployment, and gross inequality create a vast reservoir of disillusioned and marginalized individuals who become vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups offering economic incentives or a sense of purpose (Lar, 2020; Rambo, 2016). These conditions constitute a form of "structural violence," where deliberate policies and systemic neglect cause human suffering and create the fertile ground for direct violence to erupt (Agbibo, 2013). Furthermore, Nigeria's historical trajectory, from the arbitrary colonial amalgamation of diverse ethnic and religious groups without their consent to long periods of military rule, has entrenched deep-seated divisions and weakened the foundations of a unified national identity, making the populace susceptible to manipulation along ethno-religious fault lines

(Falola & Heaton, 2008).

The relationship between these factors is not merely correlational but cyclical and mutually reinforcing. Poor governance and corruption breed socio-economic despair, which in turn fuels insecurity. The state's typical response to this insecurity is a militaristic one, often involving human rights abuses that further alienate the population (Agbibo, 2013). This alienation deepens the trust deficit and erodes the state's legitimacy, creating a vacuum that non-state actors, from insurgents to community vigilantes, are eager to fill, thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence and state fragility (Oyeyemi, 2019). Any attempt to address insecurity without fundamentally tackling these root causes of poor governance and economic injustice is therefore bound to fail.

The Failure of Top-Down Security Paradigms

The Nigerian state's primary response to its myriad security challenges has been overwhelmingly militaristic and centralized, a paradigm that has proven to be both inadequate and often counterproductive (Agbibo, 2013). The dominant strategy has been the deployment of the military and police in reactive, "incident-driven" operations, a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to address the unique drivers of conflict in different regions (Ordue & Nnam, 2017). This approach is rooted in a narrow, state-centric view of security that prioritizes the monopoly of violence over human security, neglecting the political, economic, and social grievances that are the root causes of unrest (Achumba et al., 2013). Moreover, the state's security forces have frequently become part of the problem. Numerous reports document cases of arbitrary arrests, torture, extra-judicial murders, and other severe human rights violations perpetrated by police and military personnel (Agbibo, 2013; Amnesty International, 2020). This misconduct not only constitutes a direct source of insecurity for citizens but also catastrophically undermines public trust, making cooperation and intelligence sharing, essential components of effective policing, nearly impossible (Lar, 2020; Ordue & Nnam, 2017). When the state's agents of social control are perceived as corrupt, brutal, and unaccountable, the social contract is effectively broken. This failure of state-led security creates a dangerous vacuum, compelling communities to seek protection from non-state actors, including ethnic militias and vigilante groups, further fragmenting security provision and challenging the state's authority (Oyeyemi, 2019). The clear inadequacy of this top-down, coercive paradigm underscores the urgent need for alternative, community-centered approaches to peace and security.

Verse 14's description of the state as an agent "to punish evildoers and to praise those who do good" supplies the normative framework that makes Christian "doing good" intelligible to civic authorities: if government's legitimate function is to restrain antisocial violence and to protect social order, then a law-abiding, benevolent Christian presence testifies to the social value of the church and weakens accusations of sabotage (Elliott, 2000; Keener, 2021). Scholars who read 1 Peter through sociological and missiological lenses argue that such exemplary conduct was part of a calculated strategy to preserve Christian uniqueness while reducing social friction, a form of "soft" or persuasive resistance that aims at conversion or, at minimum, at removing hostile preconceived ideas (Le Roux, 2019; Akin, 2019). At the same time, the letter's creed is not scholarly or absolutist about human authority. Peter's moral imagination sets a clear boundary: submission is commanded "for the Lord's sake," and all human institutions are understood as derivative, not supreme. When civil power stops to perform its God-ordained role, when a regime continuously punishes the righteous and rewards the wicked, the theological warrant for uncomplicated submission erodes. Many recent studies as a result emphasise that 1 Peter's strategy is

dependent and contextual: the instruction to “do good” and to respect authorities assumes a fundamental functioning of social order; where that order is inverted, ethical witness may need more public, prophetic, and justice-seeking engagement rather than quiet conformity (Elliott, 2000; Le Roux, 2019). In short, Peter offers a politically charged ethic in which exemplary conduct is both the church’s apologetic and its first line of civic engagement, a witness that aims to expose ignorance, honour God, and, where possible, evoke the praise of a watching world.

Hermeneutic Explanation for the Nigerian Context

Applying first-century texts about political submission (1 Peter 2:13–17) directly and indiscriminately to twenty-first-century Nigerian society risks reproducing patterns of theological validation that once supported colonial and authoritarian rule. Scholarship in postcolonial biblical studies shows that a range of imperial actors missionary, political and academic have historically read such texts in ways that enforced existing power relations rather than interrogating them (Sugirtharajah, 2002; Segovia & Sugirtharajah, 2007). For African contexts especially, historians and theologians documented how colonial administrations and some church bodies attached to Scripture to normalise European rule and to marginalise indigenous political claims (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Farisani, 2014). As a result of that history, contemporary interpreters in Nigeria must avoid simplistic transfers of ancient social instructions into modern policies without careful contextualization and critique. Hermeneutic explanation therefore joins rigorous historical exegesis with a critical attention to reception: it asks how texts have been used by powerful actors, how such usages have shaped local life, and how the Bible can or should serve communities that continue to live with the legacies of colonial domination (Sugirtharajah, 2002; Segovia & Sugirtharajah, 2007). In practice this means treating the Bible not only as an ancient document to be reconstructed but also as a living resource whose contemporary meanings are agreed upon in relation to social memory, political structures, and struggles for justice in formerly colonized societies (Mojola, 2022).

A post-colonial reading requires a critical comparison between the authority to which Peter's audience was to submit and the authority structures in contemporary Nigeria. The Roman Empire, for all its brutality, maintained its legitimacy through the imposition of the *Pax Romana*, a form of order, however coercive, that provided a degree of stability and predictability. Peter's instruction assumes a government that, at a basic level, fulfills its function of punishing evildoers and maintaining public order (1 Pet. 2:14). This stands in stark contrast to the situation in many parts of Nigeria, where the state has demonstrably failed to perform this most fundamental duty (Agbibo, 2013; Amnesty International, 2020). The Nigerian society itself is mostly a source of insecurity, and its institutions are plagued by a "governance deficit" that renders them ineffective and untrustworthy. In this situation, the very basis of the state's legitimacy is called into question. The political theory of the social contract, which stresses that citizens willingly submit to a government's authority in exchange for the protection of their rights and security, is broken when the state defaults on its obligations (Oyeyemi, 2019). Applying Peter's call to "honour the emperor" to a state that has lost its moral and functional authority requires a radical re-interpretation. Honour cannot mean uncritical deference; rather, in a democratic (if flawed) context, it must involve holding the *office* of governance to account, demanding that it lives up to its constitutional and God-ordained responsibilities.

"Doing Good" as Proactive Community Peace building

The gap between the Petrine ideal of a justice-maintaining state and the Nigerian reality necessitates a hermeneutical shift in understanding the central command to "do good" (ἁγαθοποιεῖν). Where the state fails to provide security and punish evil, the mandate for "doing good" cannot be restricted to individual piety or passive law-abidingness. It must expand to encompass the communal and prophetic task of actively creating the conditions for peace and justice that the state has abdicated. This is a move from a theology of quietism to a public theology of reconstruction (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This re-imagined "doing good" becomes a form of constructive, community-based political action. It involves communities taking responsibility for their own security, establishing mechanisms for local justice, and building social cohesion across ethnic and religious lines to resist political manipulation. This interpretation aligns with the core principles of African political theology, which has consistently been concerned with liberation from oppressive structures and the reconstruction of society for the flourishing of all (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Thus, 1 Peter 2:13-17, when read through a post-colonial lens, is transformed from a potential tool of subjugation into a powerful charter for community empowerment and agency in the pursuit of peace and security.

The Political Witness of "Doing Good"

The center of 1 Peter’s civic ethic is the injunction to **"do good"** (ἁγαθοποιεῖν): the public, observable practice of moral excellence performs as the community’s basic form of witness before a hostile or suspicious society. Peter frames this praxis not simply as private piety but as a intentional apologetic and missional strategy: by persistently doing good, the Christian minority aims to neutralize slander and to expose the ignorance of those who malign them (1 Pet. 2:15). Contemporary commentators and recent social-scientific readings intersect on the point that "good works" in 1 Peter are performative and public, meant to be seen by neighbours so that Gospel confession gains credibility through conduct (Jobes, 2005; Akin, 2019). The four concise commands of verse 17, **"Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor"**, articulate the social grammar of that witness. The verbs mark a graduated ethical horizon: universal respect (τίμω) toward all persons; particular, binding love (ἀγαπᾶτε) within the Christian fellowship; exclusive reverence (φοβεῖσθε) reserved for God; and a measured honour (again τίμω) toward imperial authority. Interpreters emphasise that Peter’s use of the same root verb for "honour" with regard to both the emperor and "everyone" is theologically important: it places the emperor within the realm of human honour and thereby considers imperial divinization. In effect Peter both counsels outward deference to political structures and theologically confines complete allegiance to God alone (Keener, 2021; Jobes, 2005).

Table 1: Juxtaposition of Petrine Ideal and Nigerian Reality of Governance

God-Ordained Function of Government (1 Peter 2:14)	Documented Reality in Nigeria	Hermeneutical Implication
"To punish those who do evil."	Widespread impunity for corrupt officials, terrorists, and bandits; state security forces implicated in extra-judicial killings and human rights abuses (Agbiboa, 2013; Rambo, 2016).	The state frequently acts contrary to its divine mandate, fundamentally eroding the theological basis for unconditional submission.

<p>"To praise those who do good."</p>	<p>Systemic neglect of ordinary citizens; harassment of human rights activists and civil society organizations; failure to provide basic social services and infrastructure (Dambazau, 2011; Oyeyemi, 2019; Lar, 2020).</p>	<p>The community's mandate to "do good" must become self-sustaining and prophetic, creating its own structures of support and justice rather than expecting state affirmation.</p>
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Findings

The critical re-reading of 1 Peter 2 provides a robust theological foundation for advocating and participating in bottom-up, community-led security initiatives. The text's criterion for legitimate governance, the punishment of evil and praise of good, implies that when the state systematically fails in this duty, the responsibility for creating order and justice does not simply vanish; it devolves to the community of "servants of God." In this context, the formation of credible, accountable, and rights-respecting community policing forums and local vigilance groups is not an act of rebellion against the state, but a faithful expression of "doing good" (1 Pet. 2:15). Such initiatives represent the community taking responsibility for its own protection, filling the vacuum left by ineffective state security (Oyeyemi, 2019; Ordue & Nnam, 2017). Empowered by this Petrine mandate, Nigerian communities can move beyond being passive victims. The goal is to foster a proactive security posture built on partnership and trust. This involves establishing formal or informal structures for intelligence gathering and sharing with those elements of the state security apparatus that are trustworthy (Ordue & Nnam, 2017). It means creating community watch programs that are rooted in local knowledge and social networks (Lar, 2020). Such efforts, when grounded in the ethical framework of "honoring everyone" (1 Pet. 2:17), can help prevent the abuses that often plague vigilante groups, ensuring they serve as instruments of peace rather than sources of further violence. This is a practical outworking of Christian freedom being channeled into the service of God by securing the well-being of the community.

The Prophetic Role of the Church and Civil Society in Demanding Accountability

In a democratic context, "honoring the emperor" (1 Pet. 2:17) undergoes a significant transformation. It cannot mean sycophantic praise or silent deference to political leaders, especially in the face of corruption and incompetence. Instead, true honor for the *office* of governance is expressed by demanding that officeholders fulfill their duties with integrity and justice. This opens up a vital prophetic role for the church and allied Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria. Their call to "do good" must include the public and often confrontational work of advocacy, monitoring, and demanding accountability (Ibrahim & Adedoyin, 2023; Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). Drawing on their moral authority and extensive grassroots networks, churches are uniquely positioned to act as society's conscience. This involves monitoring government performance, exposing human rights abuses, and advocating for policies that address the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty and corruption (Ibrahim & Adedoyin, 2023). This prophetic advocacy is a contemporary form of "putting to silence the ignorance of foolish people" (1 Pet. 2:15); it exposes the falsehoods of official narratives and challenges the ignorance or indifference of those in power. By acting as watchdogs and advocates, the church and CSOs embody the Petrine call to be responsible, engaged citizens whose ultimate fear is reserved for God alone, freeing them to speak truth to power.

Cultivating a Culture of Active Citizenship: From Passive Submission to Responsible Engagement

Ultimately, the empowerment framework derived from 1 Peter 2:13-17 calls for a fundamental shift in mindset within Nigerian communities: from a culture of passive submission and victimhood to one of active, responsible citizenship. The Petrine model encourages believers to see themselves not simply as Nigerian citizens subject to a failing state, but as members of God's holy nation, living as "exiles" with a divine mission to be agents of transformation within their earthly context (Elliott, 2000; Jobes, 2005). This identity as "servants of God" provides a transcendent purpose that fuels civic engagement even when the state is unresponsive. Promoting this culture requires deliberate action at the community level. It involves promoting civic awareness and education, helping citizens understand their rights and responsibilities and the mechanisms for holding their leaders accountable (Lar, 2020). It means actively building bridges of dialogue and cooperation across the ethnic and religious divides that politicians so often exploit for their own gain (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Ibrahim & Adedoyin, 2023). When a community, inspired by the Petrine vision, begins to "honor everyone" through inter-communal peace initiatives, "love the brotherhood" through mutual support networks, and "fear God" by collectively demanding justice, it becomes a powerful, transformative force. This active, engaged citizenship is the fullest expression of living as "free people" who use their liberty not for selfish ends, but for the service of God and the common good of their nation.

Conclusion

This critical examination has journeyed from the stark reality of Nigeria's security crisis to a deep theological engagement with 1 Peter 2:13-17, seeking a usable past for a troubled present. The initial paradox presented by the text, a call for submission in a context where the state is often an agent of injustice, has been resolved not by dismissing the passage, but by re-reading it through a hermeneutical lens that is both exegetically rigorous and contextually sensitive to the post-colonial Nigerian reality. The analysis has demonstrated that a simplistic, literalist interpretation advocating passive obedience is a distortion of the text's sophisticated theological vision and a disservice to communities grappling with state failure. The argument has shown that the Petrine concepts of submission as conscientious engagement, freedom as liberty for service, and doing good as proactive peace building offer a powerful alternative. When the state inverts its God-ordained role, failing to punish evil and instead perpetrating injustice, the theological basis for simple submission is eroded. In its place, the text provides a mandate for the community of faith, as "servants of God," to become the primary agents in the pursuit of peace and security. This is not a call for anarchy or rebellion, but for a higher form of citizenship rooted in an ultimate allegiance to God's justice. The practical pathways outlined, supporting community-led security, engaging in prophetic advocacy for accountability, and cultivating a culture of active citizenship, are the concrete expressions of this Petrine model. They represent a shift from seeing communities as passive victims to recognizing them as resilient, empowered actors capable of shaping their own destiny. Far from being an ancient text that endorses subjugation, 1 Peter 2:13-17, when critically examined, emerges as a charter for community agency. It provides a robust theological framework that empowers Nigerian communities to navigate the complexities of a fragile state, not with despairing quietism, but with the resilient hope and transformative action born of their identity as a free people in the service of a just God.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 22, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: John, Elijah O. & Etim, Daniel A. (2025). "A Critique of Kant's Categorical Imperative and Socio-Economic Policy Formulation in Nigeria." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 58-66.

Article

Open Access

A CRITIQUE OF KANT'S CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICY FORMULATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper critically assessed Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative as an ethical framework for socio-economic policy formulation in Nigeria. In Nigeria, it has been observed that, some previous socio-economic policies failed due to the problems of nepotism and weak institutions. This created a foundational ethical dilemma on the side of policy formulations and implementers. Thus, this paper sort to solve the problem with the instrumentality of Immanuel Kant Categorical Imperative. The study employed philosophical methods of prescription, critique and analysis to critically examine data gotten from Nigeria's recent policy initiatives, National Development Plan (2021–2025), and the Renewed Hope Plan of President Bola Tinubu (2026–2030). Finding in this study revealed that the Nigeria socio-economic policy formulation is still at the crossroad. It is weakened by persistent policy inconsistencies, nepotism, and poor accountability mechanisms and institution. The paper welcome certain reforms such as the social investment programme to alleviate poverty; and recommended that, the integration of Immanuel Kant Imperatives into policy formulations and implementations would stimulate treating citizens as ends in themselves and weigh policies in the eye of becoming universal laws for the good of all. This in the opinion of the paper would decisively deal with the problem of policy inconsistency, weak institutions and nepotism as well as strengthen socio-economic policy formulations in Nigeria, prioritize transparency, and inspire a duty-based governance culture for even development.

Keywords: Categorical Imperative, Nepotism, Nigeria, Policy Formulation, Socio-economics, Renewed Hope.

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Introduction

Socio-economic policy formulation is a central task of governance in modern state. It, determines the allocation of resources, the distribution of opportunities, and the mechanisms for addressing unemployment, poverty and insecurity. In Nigeria, participants observation has revealed that, socio-economic policy has long been shaped by structural challenges such as corruption, nepotism, and weak institutions. These socio-ethical challenges undermine the country's ability to deliver equitable development and worsen social security and illuminates the moral deficits in Nigeria's policy frameworks. It highlights how Nigerian policies often failed the universality test owing to few privileges political elites and capitalists controlling the vast resources at the expense of collective welfare, thereby reproducing wider socio-economic inequality and social dissatisfaction. In recent times, Nigeria's policy initiatives, such as the National Development Plan (2021–2025) and the Renewed Hope Plan (2026–2030), reflect attempts to addressing pressing socio-economic concerns such as unemployment, food insecurity, housing deficits, and weak human capital development. These initiatives also aim to align with the long-term Nigeria Agenda 2050, which envisions Nigeria at a top global economy by mid-century. Yet, despite ambitious goals, persistence of corruption, nepotism, and institutional fragility raise questions about the ethical coherence and practical justice of these policies to see the light of the day.

In view of the above background, this paper opines that, Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative which is a rigorous moral philosophical structure offers the needed universality framework, viz: respect for human dignity and governance rooted in rational duty . these imperatives have the capacity to address the problem of policy inconsistency and other challenges confronting Nigeria's socio-economic policy formulation. As a deontological ethic, Kant's framework does not measure morality by outcomes or utility but by the moral worth of the principles guiding action. Applying this framework to Nigeria's policy environment allows for a critical interrogation of whether policies reflect universal principles of justice or are corrupted by self-interest and partiality. Kant's insistence on treating humanity always as an end and never merely as a means presents a valuable lens for evaluating whether Nigerian citizens are genuinely the focus of policy or exploited for political and economic gain. The central aim of this paper therefore is to provide a critique of Nigeria's socio-economic policies formulation through the lens of Kant's categorical imperative. Applying Kant's principles into the policy formulation seeks to provide the requires ethical commitment to sustain institutional reforms that prioritize accountability, transparency, and the dignity of all citizens. The intention of the paper is to bridge philosophy and practice by demonstrating how Kantian ethics can illuminate moral failures of Nigerian socio-economic policy formulation while offering pathways for sustainable reform. In doing so, it contributes to broader debates about governance, policy formulation and the role of moral philosophy in political life.

Background to Immanuel Kant's Categorical Thought

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was one of the most influential moral Philosophers of the 18th Century. In his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), he introduced the categorical imperative as the supreme principle of morality, binding on all rational beings regardless of personal desires or outcomes. His categorical imperative commands acting universally and unconditionally. He prescribed a duty for everyone to obey without exception. According to him, one must act only in ways that could be willed the action becomes a universal law, (John,2017, P. 167) opined that "Kant maxims is a philosophical version of Golden Rule" That is, do unto others what you wish would be done to you. Kant

categorical thought is divided into three principal formulations: The Universal Law, which requires that one act only according to maxims that could be willed universally without contradiction. It is universal in the sense that, whatever is right for one person to do is right for everybody. In the same manner, whatever is morally wrong for one person to do is wrong for all. Hence, his maxim “Act only on the maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law” (Kant, 2019. P. 422). This implies that corrupt or self-serving policies have no place in socio-economic and governance by Kant’s standard.

The second is treating humanity as an End. Kant insists that individuals be treated as ends in themselves, never merely as means. He forbids an individual being used as a tool or instrument for achieving a particular goal. By this this, man’s exploitation or inhumanity by another man is morally wrong. Policies and policy makers, therefore, must uphold the dignity of citizens rather than exploit them for political advantage. The third, is acting from the sense of duty. That is to say the moral law by Kant does not depend on what we want, desire or like but on what we ought to do. That means if the moral law which is a universal obligate a moral command for all to obey, it must necessarily follow that individual has it as duty to carry out the obligation. “This principle calls for participatory governance , rule of law, transparent institutions that promote collective autonomy and justice without fear or favour” (Wood 2008, P. 89). Altogether, Kant (2019) posits that there is only one categorical imperative. That is the imperative of act only on the maxim universal law. It evaluates moral worth of actions not by the consequences the action produces but by the intention behind the action guided wholly by duty and reason. Kant distinguishes between two basic kinds of imperatives: the categorical imperative and hypothetical. The categorical imperative here refers to unconditional, intentional actions unlike hypothecal imperatives which are conditional and commands a person to do a thing as a means to an end. Kant’s categorical imperative creates a moral test for policy formulation by evaluating its universalizability, and respect for human dignity.

Socio-economic Policy Formulation in Nigeria

The term “Socio-economic” refers to the study of the relationship between social and economic factors. It looks at how society through social structures, cultural values, and institutions shape economic behaviour and how the economic system in turn affect social life. Smelser (2005) defined it as how the economic phenomena are embedded in social structures, norm, networks and institution. The applications of this term are broad and deeply relevant to contemporary challenges. It provides a framework for analyzing poverty, inequality, and development by showing how social barriers such as class, gender, and ethnicity, political party affiliation, etc, affect economic opportunities. The analysis of it also helps policymaking, particularly in areas of resource allocation to balance inequality, injustice, etc, in the design of policies and execution to address issues like education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability to promote not just economic growth but also social cohesion and well-being. In this way, socio-economics bridges the gap between technical economics and moral, cultural, and political realities of society. In Nigeria, socio-economics formulation refers to the design and implementation of policies that attempt to balance economic growth with the social needs of its diverse population. This process is shaped by the country’s historical, political, and cultural contexts, which often influence the direction of development strategies. Dye’s (2017, P.35). general concept of policy formulation as “the development of appropriate courses of action for addressing public problems” applies directly to Nigeria’s attempts to tackle poverty, unemployment, and inequality through integrated policies. Nigerian socio-economics formulation has therefore

evolved as a response to pressing challenges such as rapid population growth, dependence on oil revenues, regional inequalities, and persistent poverty.

Historical Context of Policy Formulation in Nigeria

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has pursued various socio-economic development frameworks designed to address poverty, unemployment, and inequality. The Early post-independence plans, such as the First National Development Plan (1962–1968) had sought to accelerate industrialization and infrastructure growth. However, political instability and military coups disrupted continuity, weakening the impact of these early efforts (Ekpo 2018, P. 14). During the 1980s, the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), imposed under the influence of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, shifted policy toward liberalization and austerity. While intended to stabilize the economy, SAP deepened social inequalities, eroded public welfare, and exposed the fragility of Nigeria's institutions (Ogwumike 2005, P. 322). Subsequent democratic governments attempted corrective measures, introducing poverty alleviation schemes such as the Poverty Eradication Programme (2000) and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2004–2007). Despite their rhetoric of inclusivity and growth, these policies suffered performance failures under the weight of corruption, poor implementation, and elite capture (Akinola 2017, P. 97). The 2010's marked another shift with Vision 20:20:20, which sought to position Nigeria among the world's top 20 economies by 2020. This ambition was undermined by declining oil revenues, security crises, and institutional weaknesses. In 2021, the government launched the National Development Plan (2021–2025) with emphasis on job creation, infrastructure, and human capital development. Yet, as in previous decades, implementation challenges and governance deficits persisted (Eboh 2022, P. 44).

Contemporary Policy Frameworks

The National Development Plan (2021–2025): focused on diversifying the economy beyond oil dependence, investing in critical infrastructure, and strengthening social protection. Its objectives include creating 21 million full-time jobs and lifting 35 million people out of poverty by 2025 (Federal Ministry of Finance 5). However, weak institutional capacity, limited fiscal space, and pervasive corruption tend to hinder its implementation. Critics argue that while the NDP's goals were laudable, they failed to materialize into substantive outcomes due to systemic governance deficits (Okonjo-Iweala 2018, P. 212).

The Renewed Hope Agenda (2023): under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the Renewed Hope Agenda was introduced in 2023, framing socio-economic policy around eight priority areas: food security, poverty eradication, economic growth, access to capital, job creation, security, rule of law, and anti-corruption. The agenda highlighted the urgency of addressing inflation, foreign exchange instability, and unemployment. Initiatives such as the Renewed Hope Housing Programme and the Renewed Hope Health Connect Committee were launched to improve housing and healthcare access (Federal Ministry of Works 7).

The Renewed Hope Plan (2026–2030): approved by the National Economic Council in 2025, the Renewed Hope Plan (RHP 2026–2030) is designed as a medium-term successor to the NDP and as a bridge to Nigeria Agenda 2050. Its headline goal is to accelerate Nigeria's economy toward a \$1 trillion GDP by 2030 (State House 3). The plan emphasizes continuity of reforms, massive infrastructure investment, job creation, food security, housing,

healthcare, and institutional strengthening. However, the ambitious scope raises questions about feasibility given fiscal constraints and governance challenges. These formulations reflect Mkandawire's (2004, P. 17). argument that "social policy must be deliberately integrated into economic strategies to foster inclusive development" However, Nigeria's socio-economic formulations often face implementation challenges due to weak institutions, corruption, and policy discontinuity. But empirical observation revealed that, socio-economics policy formulation in Nigeria cannot be divorced from politics. Ake stressed that "development in Africa is essentially a political and social process, not merely an economic one" (Ake 1996, P.32). In Nigeria, political patronage, ethnic balancing, and governance structures often shape the design and execution of socio-economic policies. For example, subsidy reforms, power sector restructuring, and poverty alleviation programmes are frequently contested because they affect different social groups unequally. Thus, socio-economics formulation in Nigeria is not just about technical policy design but also about negotiating the balance between economic reforms and social justice. For Nigeria to achieve meaningful development, its socio-economic formulations must move beyond rhetoric and ensure effective implementation that addresses inequality, promotes inclusiveness, and strengthens institutions.

Evaluation of Kant Categorical Imperative and Nigeria's Socio-economic Policy Formulation

Kant's Categorical Imperative is one of the influential ethical theories that guide human actions and policy formulation. It has some limitations and criticism. The categorical imperative focuses on the intention of an action instead of the consequences. There are many situational consequences of an actions which can be more damaging than the intention. For instance, if telling the truth would lead to someone's death, Kant insists that one must tell the truth, for lying cannot be universalized. This is morally rigid and cannot be practiced. It is in conflict with the two reality duties. Such as duty to tell the truth and duty to protect an innocent life. Kant provided no priority on which duty to forego for another. Moreover, Kant's categorical ignores human relationship by advocating for treatment of all persons as autonomous rational and equal. In reality, no one is self sufficient and an independent agent that can succeed all by himself. We all belong to a family, have desire for friendship, to love and be loved. Kant's categorical imperative assumes the possibility of universal principles binding on all rational beings. The universality test can be vague. It can be interpreted differently by different people as he didn't formulate how to measure the maxim of universal actions. What is seen in one clime as morally binding may not be the case in another clime. Hence, different people may justify different actions under the same rule. For instance, Nigeria is characterized by ethnic, religious, and cultural pluralism that complicates the search for a single universalizable moral standard. The policies on resource allocation such as oil revenue distribution are contested along ethnic and regional lines, with different groups advancing divergent claims of justice. Kant's abstract universalism therefore, often fails to account for these contextual realities, where compromise and negotiation, rather than rigid universality, may be required for stability.

Furthermore, the categorical imperative emphasizes duty and rationality but pays little attention to material constraints. The theory over emphasizes rationality. For Kant, human actions and decisions must be always guided by reason. But, reason alone, does not influence one's decision. People are often influenced by their emotions, culture and experiences. Thus, the theory tends to recognize that experiences, situational factors, and emotions also influence one's action. Nigeria faces extreme poverty, high unemployment, and widespread inequality. Policymakers may find themselves compelled to adopt pragmatic

strategies that compromise strict ethical principles in order to secure survival and stability. For instance, fuel subsidy policies have often been retained despite being economically inefficient, because their removal risks massive social unrest (Olawale, 2021). Kantian formalism offers little flexibility for navigating such pragmatic dilemmas, making it appear detached from Nigerian socio-economic realities. However, Categorical imperative presupposes that rational agents are capable of acting from duty rather than inclination. In Nigeria, the entrenched culture of corruption and patronage politics means that leaders are often motivated by self-interest rather than moral duty. Even when policies are ethically sound on paper, their implementation is undermined by rent-seeking behaviour (Okonjo-lweala 2018). The categorical imperative lacks mechanisms to ensure compliance in contexts where institutional weakness and moral failure dominate. This raises doubts about its practical applicability in societies where duty is routinely subordinated to personal gain.

Kant's duty-based ethics emphasize acting according to principles that can be willed universally across time. In Nigeria, however, short-termism and policy discontinuity are the norm. Successive governments often abandon or rebrand their predecessor's programmes for political reasons, undermining long-term development. For example, Vision 20:20:20 was discarded without serious accountability, despite its ambitious goals (Eboh, 2020). Kant's framework highlights the ethical failure of such inconsistency, but it offers no clear solution to political cycles and the instrumentalization of policy for partisan ends. Generally, Kant's approach assumes a perfect moral world where everyone behaves from the point of duty without considering human weaknesses, emotions, and culture differences thereby making his categorical theory too idealistic to guide a universal moral life he was advocating. Moreover, a critical assessment of Nigeria socio-economic policy formulation, revealed that, despite successive frameworks, Nigeria's socio-economic policy environment is marred by recurring structural challenges such as wide spread corruption which undermines resource allocation and policy execution. Development funds are frequently diverted, projects inflated, or abandoned, eroding public trust in governance (Transparency International 2023). Nepotism and Patronage Politics with respect to employment opportunities and access to resources revealed favouritism along ethnic, religious, or partisan lines rather than merit. These practices violate the principles of fairness and universality (Aiyede, 2019). Weak Institutions - the Nigerian state suffers from fragile institutions incapable of enforcing accountability or sustaining reforms. Regulatory capture, weak judicial enforcement, and politicized bureaucracies limit the transformative potential of even well-designed policies (Suberu, 2020). Policy Discontinuity - Frequent changes in political leadership result in abrupt policy shifts, with new administrations discarding or rebranding earlier initiatives. This erodes long-term planning and wastes resources (Ekpo, 2018).

The Way Forward

Kant's categorical imperative, with its emphasis on universality, human dignity, and duty, offers a valuable ethical lens for rethinking Nigeria's socio-economic policy challenges. Applied to governance, this framework provides normative guidance that can address corruption, nepotism, weak institutions, and policy inconsistency. The first formulation of the categorical imperative requires that one act only according to maxims that can be universalized without contradiction. Corruption whether embezzlement, bribery, or fraud cannot be universalized, since a society where everyone steals collapses into distrust and dysfunction. If public officials internalized this principle, corruption would be rejected as morally incoherent. Embedding the categorical imperative into governance would require policies that demand absolute integrity in resource allocation and institutional oversight

(Okonjo-Iweala, 2018). The second principle demands that individuals be treated as ends, not merely as means. Nepotism and patronage politics instrumentalize citizens, reducing them to tools for political advantage. Kant's framework insists that appointments, resource distribution, and policy benefits must respect the inherent dignity of all Nigerians. This principle justifies transparent, merit-based recruitment in public institutions and equitable resource allocation across ethnic and regional divides (Suberu, 2020).

Kant's categorical imperative emphasizes duty rather than consequence. For public officials, this means policy formulation and implementation should not be based on personal interest or political expediency but on adherence to duty to the law, constitution, and citizens. Such a culture of duty strengthens institutions like the judiciary, legislature, and anti-corruption agencies, reducing susceptibility to manipulation or capture (Aiyede, 2019). Kant places high moral value on promise-keeping and consistency. Nigeria's frequent policy discontinuities violate this principle, undermining trust and weakening long-term development agendas. The categorical imperative demands that leaders design policies as if they must be consistently upheld across administrations. This can encourage constitutional safeguards for continuity in socio-economic frameworks such as the Renewed Hope Plan (Eboh, 2020). Although Kant's categorical imperative is not directly a theory of distributive justice, Kant's insistence on respecting human dignity implies, policies must safeguard the autonomy of all citizens. Poverty, unemployment, and inadequate healthcare undermine autonomy by reducing individuals' ability to act as rational agents. Policies that prioritize poverty reduction, universal education, and equitable healthcare thus align with Kant's moral demand to respect citizens as rational beings with intrinsic worth.

Finally, Kant's categorical imperative encourages a governance culture rooted in moral example. Leaders are obligated to act as moral agents whose conduct sets universalizable standards for society. This is particularly relevant for Nigeria, where leadership failure has historically normalized corruption and weakened civic trust. A categorical imperative approach would require leaders to embody honesty, fairness, and duty, thereby reshaping societal values toward accountability and ethical responsibility (Adebanwi, 2017). Categorical imperative demands more than good intentions; it requires that policy be constructed on principles that could be universally endorsed and that uphold the moral worth of all individuals. A just society, in Kant's sense, is not merely one with benevolent rulers but one in which institutions are structured to embody universal laws of justice. This resonates with Nigeria's challenge of building strong, accountable institutions capable of implementing equitable socio-economic policies. The categorical imperative thus provides not only a critique of existing practices but also a guiding ideal for institutional reform and governance. Kant's insistence on universality, human dignity, and duty offers a demanding moral standard for governance, requiring that policies be designed as if they could serve as universal laws and that every citizen be treated as an end rather than a means. When applied to Nigeria's policy environment, particularly within frameworks such as the Renewed Hope Agenda, the analysis reveals a significant moral deficit. While certain objectives such as poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and social welfare expansion reflect universalizable goals, the persistence of nepotism in governance, patronage politics, and fragile institutional enforcement compromises their ethical legitimacy. The paper, therefore, highlights the urgent need for ethical reform.

Recommendations

The study therefore make the following recommendations:

- i. Poverty alleviation programmes, social protection, and infrastructure development should align with the principle of treating citizens as ends in themselves.
- ii. Persistent policy inconsistencies, favouritism, and weak accountability mechanisms and institution need to be decisively dealt with by policy makers to give its' ethical legitimacy.
- iii. Kantian principles of universality be embedded in the socio-economic policy formulations to strengthen institutions, prioritise transparency, and stimulate a duty-based governance culture that resists corruption and nepotism.

Conclusion

This study critically examined the application of Kant's categorical imperative to socio-economic policy formulation in Nigeria. Although the Nigeria socio-economic policy is marred with corruption, nepotism, and weak institutions, The study concludes that the categorical imperative remains a valuable evaluative tool for policy formulation. By aligning this principle with Rawlsian fairness, and African communitarian solidarity, Nigeria socio-economic policies will not be merely a philosophical aspiration but a practical necessity for achieving justice, stability, and prosperity for all Nigerians in the Nigeria states. The integration of these ethical approaches points toward a hybrid model of policy formulation that can overcome entrenched corruption, nepotism, and institutional weakness. By strengthening institutions, embedding transparency, ensuring distributive justice, and building communal participation into policy-making, Nigeria can gradually align its socio-economic frameworks with the universal moral principles required for just and sustainable development.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 20, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Ushie, Thomas E. & Agabi, Gabriel A. (2025). "Anthropocentric Antagonism and the Rationality of Humans in Environmental Ethics: A Discourse on Sustainable Human Future." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 67-78.

Article

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ANTHROPOCENTRIC ANTAGONISM AND THE RATIONALITY OF HUMANS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: A DISCOURSE ON SUSTAINABLE HUMAN FUTURE

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Abstract

In this article, we argue that values in nature are human-centered (anthropocentric) rather than nature or nonhuman-centered (ecocentric); that humans superintend over their relative environment; that nevertheless, humans need nature to survive rather than vice versa. Consequent upon the foregoing, the centeredness of human in the universe is to care for the human and nonhuman entities by ensuring balance and ontological harmony in the ecosystem. In this context, humans are endowed with higher rational faculty to make reasonable decisions and since humans depend on the ecosystem for survival, they are duty-bound, as a matter of obligation, to use their rational power to protect the nonhumans while exploring the natural resources for their needs. Whereas we agree, to a reasonable extent, that value is human-centered, and that other nonhumans serves to a reasonable extent, the needs of humans, we reject the extreme instrumental value ascribed to anthropocentric axiology. We therefore submit with a call for rational anthropocentrism in environmental ethics. Rational anthropocentrism emphasizes the dictates of reason in human interactions with nonhumans in the ecosystem and asserts that man ought to deploy his faculty of reasoning to avoid, prevent and/or address any environmental disequilibrium, disharmony or disaster that might arise in the course of humans' use of nature for their good or from natural disasters. This article uses textual and critical analysis to achieve its aims while reflecting on the way nature and humans have manifested themselves in the universe.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, Eco-ethics, Rationality, Nature, Environmental Sustainability.

Introduction

The debate over morality, rationality, spirituality, or not, of environmental anthropocentrism seems to have been laid to rest, with the enunciation of several environmental ethical

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theories such as ecocentrism, ecofeminism, deep ecology and environmental justice, tailored to banish and bid it farewell. This did not come to pass without the diverse connotation and construal of the term “anthropocentrism”, across related, interrelated and unrelated disciplines, especially the view that the concept negates intrinsic value in nonhuman, thereby construing them from instrumental perspective – as only useful for humans. As Gardiner (398) observes, human actions ought to be opened to ethical evaluation and assessment. Accordingly, the debate on the morality of anthropocentrism was resuscitated in 1997 with an article by Tim Hayward titled “Anthropocentrism: A Misunderstood Problem” where he partly defended the morality of the term from ethical perspective while condemning same as ontological error. The partial defense of the term did not go down well with some environmental ethicists such as Helen Kopina, Haydn Washington, Bron Taylor and John J. Piccolo, who wrote a counter argument in 2018 in an article titled “Anthropocentrism: More than Just a Misunderstood Problem” positing that the term is totally immoral as it promotes ecocide and as such, it should not be adored. Our work is a further contribution to the debate, as we rejig the term from a human rational viewpoint.

The way and manner humans interact with nature ought to be directed by ethical philosophies that are tailored towards the preservation of not just human but also, nonhuman beings in the universe, within the context of the existence of rational human beings. Therefore, in analyzing anthropocentric environmental ethics and charting a rational course towards sustainable human future, several questions agitate philosophers of nature such as: Does nature need human to survive? And can human survive without nature? Both puzzles cannot be solved without recourse to speculation, intuition and presupposition, no matter how scientific the investigation and subsequent solutions might seem. This is so because neither man nor nature have been validly accounted to have existed without each other. Hence, a complementary harmonious rational relationship is inevitably required by both, particularly the sentient humans, to ensure existential eco-ethics and enhancement of the essences of each other. Other moral ecological questions that agitate our minds include: Is it in doubt that humans are at the center of all beings? Is it still debatable that human beings, as the most advanced rational beings, have and/or are conquering other beings and are exercising dominion over every other beings? And is it unethical or existentially evil for humans to negate the intrinsic value of nonhuman to their own advantage? Whereas we do not see anything fundamentally wrong with humans’ place and position in the ecosystem, as the most advanced rational being, it is morally binding on humans to exercise their dominion within the ambit of rationality, taking cognizance of the fact that it is human beings who need nature to survive and not necessarily vice versa. Hence, we recommend rational anthropocentrism as the way of interacting and complementarily using the abundant species in nature for the good of humans. To address the foregoing, this article is divided into five sections: critical analysis and hermeneutics of the term “anthropocentrism”, critique of anthropocentrism, explication of the rationality of humans and towards a rational anthropocentric ethics for sustainable human future. This is followed by the conclusion.

Anthropocentrism

Advancing a clear and acceptable definition of the term “anthropocentrism” in environmental philosophy, is bugged with epistemological and axiological ambiguities and polemics. Nevertheless, we shall attempt explication of the term through its etymology, lexis, and expositions by different scholars and literatures. Etymologically, anthropocentrism is derived from the Greek words “Anthropos” (man), and “kentron” (center), translated as

“human centeredness”. The etymological construal of anthropocentrism connotes different and differing ethico-epistemic understanding of the planet: that humans are at the driver’s seat of socio-ecological care and concern; that humans rule, lead, control or superintend over the universe and everything therein; and at the extreme, that only human matters in the socio-existential ecosystem and everything else that exists should be evaluated in terms of their utility or value to humans; that humans possess intrinsic value while nonhumans like plants and animals, possess instrumental value. Lexically, *Macquarie Dictionary* construes anthropocentrism as the view “regarding [hu]man[s] as the central fact of the universe;” the assumption that humans are the “final end and aim of the universe”; and the viewing and interpretation of “everything in terms of human experiences and values” (Grey, 100). Anthropocentrism is defined by *Webster Dictionary*, as the consideration of man “to be the most significant entity of the universe” or the interpretation or “regarding the world in terms of human values and experiences”. The *Shorter Oxford* dictionary however excludes the concept of “values” from its definition, positing that anthropocentrism is a concept which centres on man, “regarding man as the central fact of the universe, to which all surrounding facts have reference” (Grey, 102).

The foregoing lexical definitions sees anthropocentrism from the Protagoraean perspective where [hu]mans are to a certain extent, the measure of all things: what is valuable in the universe, nature or the ecosystem, what to preserve or destroy, what to exploit and plunder, what to spare, what to remediate, regenerate and conserve. These interpretations, notwithstanding, does not strip the human being of its rationality, in controlling their robust appetite for the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources in the ecosystem. The human beings being the “most significant entity of the universe”, or the “central fact of the universe”, confer more responsibility on them, with regards to ensuring ecological harmony and sustenance in order to ensure a sustainable future for the ecosystem and/or the universe rather than endangerment and ecocide. Vardy and Grosch, advanced two theses from which anthropocentrism could be understood – the strong and weak theses. The “strong thesis” view, they hold, is “predicated on the belief that not only are humans at the center of reality but that they ought to be so”. On the other hand, the “weak thesis” version is predicated on the “simple understanding that reality can only be interpreted from a human point of view, and that, therefore, humans have to be at the center of reality as they see it”. While the weak thesis does not presuppose the incapacitation of humans imaginative power in probing into the possibility or likeness of reality from the “perspective of a non-human or even non-living entity, but it is perhaps beyond the realm of human ingenuity to discover what the internal consciousness of cats, dogs, sand-fleas and others may be like”. The dog, Vardy and Gosch aver, does not moralize about how it should be treated neither does the trees reason about their own existence (224). Nevertheless, rational anthropocentrism which emphasis the dictates of reason, asserts that man ought to deploy his faculty of reasoning to address any environmental disequilibrium, disharmony or disaster that might arise in the course of human’s interaction with nature.

Environmental ethicists, like Helen Kopina, Haydn Washington, Bron Taylor and John J. Piccolo, hold the view that anthropocentrism, in its original connotation in environmental ethics, is the belief that “value is human-centered and that all other beings are means to human ends.” They contend that environmentally-concerned scholars have argued that anthropocentrism is “ethically wrong and at the root of ecological crises” (Kopnina, Washington et al, 119). Whereas we agree, to a reasonable extent, that value is human-

centered, and that other nonhumans serves to a reasonable extent, the needs of humans, we reject the extreme instrumental value ascribed to anthropocentric axiology. Corroborating Kopina, Washington, Taylor, Piccolo and others, and following from the etymological and lexical construal, Solon saw anthropocentrism as the viewpoint which holds that “human beings are the central and most important entity in the world; that humans are superior to non-human life because they are the only ones that have consciousness, values and moral status.” He explains further that this perspective sees nature as “something separate from humans; it exists for the survival and development of human societies; it is the ‘environment’ of humans and a set of resources that can be exploited for their benefit” (107). The assertion of Kopina and others that anthropocentrists see nature as separate from humans is far from reality as humans, irrespective of their socio-environmental persuasion, are enchanted by nature’s splendor.

In another article, while explicating anthropocentrism, Crist and Kopina construe the earth in its natural state as “inexhaustible, largely unknown, enchanted, mysterious, and more encompassing”, as the “original ontology” which they sadly note has been “supervened, while the man-made ontology of the civilized human has become physically entrenched and certainly conceptually reified”. And this, they aver, is “ontological inversion of a part (anthropos) claiming the whole (the biosphere)”, which has emerged through historical course, to the present (389). And the inverted ontology, they believe gave birth to anthropocentric conception of the universe with humans exercising unrestrained dominance and plunder of the earth in adoration of civilization. Explicating anthropocentrism from “inside out”, they contend, from a relativist perspective, that humans have arrogated to themselves the vantage position of being at the center of the earth, dictating what is and what is not, what should be and what should not be. This viewpoint has its ontology in the Judeo-Christian religion where [hu]man is seen to have been given the command by God to “increase, multiply, subdue and dominate” the universe and everything therein (Genesis 1:26-28). Contrary to Kopina and others, philosophers such as Vardy and Grosch posit that since “philosophy in general and moral reasoning in particular are straightforward human activities”, discourses on environmental ethics is “bound, to a greater or lesser extent, to be anthropocentric” (224). Nevertheless, they did not take any explicit stand on the proprietary of the universe, being owned, conquered and dominated by humans to the exclusion of nonhumans, although anthropocentrism in environmental ethics suggests that existing nonhumans should be evaluated in terms of their utility or value to humans, that is, that humans possess intrinsic value while nonhumans like plants, possess instrumental or extrinsic value.

For Hayward, whereas anthropocentrism can “intelligibly be criticized as an ontological error,” any attempts to “conceive of it as an ethical error are liable to conceptual and practical confusion.” This is so because there is an “ineliminable element of anthropocentrism in any ethic at all;” hence, the “rhetoric of anti-anthropocentrism is counterproductive in practice”. He aver further that the widely use of the term “anthropocentrism” for “criticism in environmental ethics and politics, is something of a misnomer”. Nevertheless, while the term can be “intelligibly be criticized as an ontological error, attempt to conceive of it as an ethical error often involve conceptual confusion.” He noted that a wholesale condemnation of anthropocentrism not only “condemn some legitimate human concerns, they also allow ideological retorts to the effect that criticism of anthropocentrism amount to misanthropy” (49). Whereas Hayward, Vardy and Grosch’s position cohere with ours, we cannot make pretention of the culpability of some human

beings in the reckless plundering of nonhumans in the ecosystem. This necessitates our call for a rational anthropocentrism.

Critique of Anthropocentrism

Crist and Kopina, like some other critics, blame the futile attempt to halt human's expansionism in the face of environmental threat, on anthropocentric conception. And this futility, they note, has resulted in the extinction of some species and near extinction of others, because of human's insatiable desire for splendid existence with little or no recourse to "Moral consideration for nonhumans (as well as for devalued humans), and respect for their intrinsic being". They further blame civilization without moral responsibility for the ecological problems bestriding the "forests, rivers, mountains, wild animals, and indigenous people" who have been "quite unable to halt the advent of the civilized conqueror", fuming that "External resistance has been nonexistent or futile" (390). They further rued the negligence of the rational beings taking responsibilities for their irrational actions on the environment as leading to diverse environmental disasters:

As long as no adverse repercussions arose to discomfit civilized humanity's march, the consequences of no limitations have been either unproblematic or unperceived. Auks, passenger pigeons, thylacines, and baiji, to mention a handful among countless unknown and known beings, have been extinguished. Animal populations and especially carnivores like wolves, cougars, bears, sharks, lions, tigers, and many others have declined precipitously. The numbers of fish, sea turtles, whales, and other sea mammals have taken a nosedive, while forests have receded, deserts expanded, topsoil evanesced, and rivers and lakes been thinned of life" (Crist & Kopina 2014: 390).

Also, Solon solicits for a paradigm shift from anthropocentric conception of the ecosystem to a "new eco-society that is not ruled by capital", which projects and protects the "rights of nature", driven by the instrumentality of jurisprudential restraint on property rights and legislative leverage for the restoration of the "balance in our Earth system". The aim of the "Rights of the Mother Earth" project, Solon says, is to "build an Earth society and this requires much more than a change in legal structures," but further entails the creation of "Earth governance systems at all levels – an Earth democracy that takes into account not only humans but also nature and that connects the particular to the universal, the diverse to the common, and the local to the global; a living democracy that grows like a tree, from the bottom up" (127). Solon's submission is in concord with Vandana Shiva's explication of the concept of "Earth Democracy", as being "guided by the principle of subsidiarity, calling for decisions to be made at the lowest appropriate level of governance" (Koons, 53). On his part, Michael Zimmerman notes that deep ecologists loathe anthropocentric environmental perspective. He states that deep ecology is founded on two basic principles, one of which is a "scientific insight into the interrelatedness of all systems of life on Earth, together with the idea that anthropocentrism – human-centeredness – is a misguided way of seeing things". Zimmerman therefore avers that deep ecologists see "eco-centric attitude" as "more consistent with the truth about the nature of life on Earth" than anthropocentric conception (Solon, 115). This argument was later adopted by Kopina, Washington and others to counter Hayward's position.

Anthropocentrism is sometimes identified as a major source of "alienating and destructive attitudes towards the nonhuman world which are a principal target of a number

of salient ecophilosophies” (Grey, 97). Nevertheless, humans cannot make pretension of the fact that they are at the driver’s seat of the universe and its natural ecology. But in acknowledging this fact, they must also see the inevitable needs for a sustainability approach towards the environment, in a complementary socio-ecologically existential ideality. Further, Val Plumwood’s critique of anthropocentrism recommends the articulation of ethic of respect for nature which rejects instrumentalism, or extrinsic conception of value (Okaneme and Ushie, 74) and acknowledges that “nonhumans are intrinsically valuable” and as such, “include them in the universe of moral discourse”. She therefore advocates the need for the reformulation of “a notion of human virtue and human identity, and a reconnection of nature in non-mechanistic” fashion (Grey, 98). Contrary to the foregoing, Hayward posits that anthropocentrism is criticized from a dualistic perspectives: ontological and ethical. The ontological critics hold that anthropocentrism is the “mistake of seeing humans as the center of the world in the sense of failing to see that ‘the way things are in the world takes no particular account of how human beings are, or how they choose to represent them’” (50-51). On the other hand, the ethical critics of anthropocentrism aver that the term is the “mistake of giving exclusive or arbitrarily preferential consideration to human interests as opposed to the interests of other beings”. And for Hayward, whereas the ontological supposition is “consistent with, and might even seem to support, the ethical view that only humans are of ethical value, it does not strictly entail it; conversely, one could hold that ethical view without subscribing to an anthropocentric ontology” (51).

Practically, the tirade launched against anthropocentrism is basically ambiguous and ambivalent in nature, representing both the negative and the positive at the same time. The critics of the term have yet to demonstrate objectively and factually, the exact meaning of being “human-centered: where or what is the ‘center’”, as the thought of anthropocentrism is typically construed as akin to egocentrism (Hayward, 59). Consequently, Frederick Ferre in his “perspectival anthropocentrism” holds that humans “have no choice but to think as humans” (Hayward, 51). This egocentric consideration, to some extent, is consistent with human nature as the first law of nature is self defence and preservation. Hayward submits with a note of caution that the need for restraint is “all the clearer when it comes to attempting to gain a non-anthropocentric perspectives in ethics” because really, it could be that anthropocentrism in ethics, “when properly understood, is actually less harmful than harboring the aim of overcoming it”. This aim of overcoming anthropocentric environmental ethics has led to the espousal of several theories such as ecocentrism, ecofeminism and deep ecology, with some element of defects. Accordingly, Hayward postulates that the ethical instinct which is articulated as the aim of overcoming anthropocentrism is

“Very imperfectly expressed in such terms; that there are some things about ‘anthropocentrism’ which are avoidable, and others even to be applauded; furthermore, the things which are to be condemned are not appropriately called ‘anthropocentrism’ at all; that the mistaken rejection of anthropocentrism misrepresents the fact that harms to nonhumans, as well as harm to some group of humans, are caused not by humanity in general but by specific humans with their own vested interests” (Hayward, 61).

However, in a counter argument, some scholars like Helen Kopina, Haydn Washington, Bron Taylor, John J. Piccolo, reject Hayward’s position, arguing, among others, that a redefinition of the term anthropocentrism, could discount humans’ egocentric behaviours, thereby putting the universe in jeopardy; that anthropocentric “motivations can only make a positive contribution to the environment in situations where humans are conscious of a direct

benefit to themselves”; and that “‘self-love’ alone is an inadequate basis for environmental concern and action” (Kopina, Washington, *et al*, 110). The seeming plausibility of these arguments does not negate the place of humans at the centeredness of values in the socio-existential ecosystem. Our position, still, does not refute the inherent values in nonhumans. And that is the reason for our call for rational anthropocentrism, where humans, at the center of beings, reasonably explore the ecosystems for the mutual benefits of themselves as well as the nonhumans, without triggering the extinction of species or causing of disharmony in the socio-ecosystem.

Nevertheless, for Kopina, Washington, and others, the term “anthropocentrism”, must be used in a pejorative sense, as an antonym to ecocentrism. They argue that whereas the former as an ideology, is “egotistical and solipsistic, obsessed only with humans”, even though the same humans, ironically, do love other nonhumans like “animals, trees, rivers and landscapes, and many indigenous cultures attributed value and respect to them”, the latter promotes the view that “value and ethics lie in the rest of life on Earth”. They insist that although it is not all humans that hold and practice anthropocentric view, comparatively, any attempt to project the term in a good light is like promoting sexism or racism in the pretense that not all humans are sexist or racist (123). Again, while these counter arguments seem plausible, it is counter-productive, degrading the higher rational faculty of humans who have loved and continued to love the planet, legislating and enforcing norms that promote environmental balance and harmony. Humans cannot pretend to love nonhumans when they do not love themselves. Hence, for humans to love themselves is to love the nonhumans, taking cognizance of the fact that humans need nonhumans for their sane survival. For the anti-anthropocentrists, the rebelling of nature against the planet through natural disasters like tsunami, volcanic eruption and asteroid strikes, should be blamed on anthropocentric view of the universe.

The Rationality of Humans

Rationality is an inherent essence of humans. It is the ability of humans to make informed decisions and choices, based on the greatest common good, not only to oneself but also to others; form beliefs based on the moral ontology within time and space, rather than being superstitious or emotional. It was Aristotle who averred that all humans are rational. The contending issues in the declaration of all humans as rational stem from the mistakes human make in the process of taking decisions and making choices. Does these infractions render humans irrational? Whereas humans are intrinsically rational, it does not presuppose perfection, inabilities to make mistakes. However, the ability to recognize that one made mistakes in deciding, choosing, and make amends, gives humans the vantage position of possessing higher rational faculty. Nevertheless, Sosa contends that a “stream of experimental results has put in doubt the traditional conception of man as the rational animal. The mistakes people make are said to be more than just occasional and superficial. They are said to be systematic, ...” (Sosa, 2) Irrespective of the nomenclatural qualifications of human errors, it does not negate the rationality of humans.

From the Platonic perspective, the rational part of humans is the “faculty that calculates and decides”. This faculty “includes not only the ability to understand and to think before we act, the faculty of calculation and foresight, but also the ability to make up one’s mind, the faculty of decision” (Plato, 1987: 147-148). In the same vein, Samuel Enoch Stumpf avers that “the peculiar function of the rational part of the soul is to seek the true goal of human life, and it does this by evaluating things according to their true nature (Ushie, 2018: 49). This article therefore implore humans to use their faculty of reason to calculate

the general risk factors that could be triggered by the negation of nonhuman and its reckless plunder and decide for a rational human centeredness. Corroborating Plato's position, Thomas Aquinas posits that "reason is the rule and measure of acts because it directs man towards the fulfillment of his ends" (Uduigwomen 2006: 22). Rational Anthropocentrism in environmental ethics is pertinently paramount for the harmonious interaction of humans with nonhumans, for the exploration of natural resources, for the general use of nonhuman resources in the planet without negating them, and ultimately, the enhancement of a sustainable future for humans as well as nonhumans. John Marshal, quoted by Iwe, advanced a broader explication of humans' rational faculty. According to him, rationality is:

...Man's ability to think, to reason, to understand situations and the logical link between a cause and its effect, the mental capacity to visualize a situation, to envisage a situation, to foresee the likely consequences of a given course of action, to draw the necessary conclusions and inferences from a line of argument or a statement, to deliberate over issues and situations. By this rational ability, man thinks, deliberates, reflects, visualizes and envisages, understands and judges and learns. All these mental activities are the results of man's reasoning power – a power which is one of the faculties of the spiritual soul of man (Iwe, 2000: 29)

Marshal's explication of the rationality of human summarized the power of reason which can sieve and winnow thoughts, carry out mental experiments on intending actions, the action of using nonhuman resources in nature reasonably, without causing ontological disharmony and disequilibrium in the ecosystem. The ability of human, through the instrumentality of reasoning, will enable them to foresee the likely consequences of instrumental construal of nonhuman resources leading to reckless plunder of the ecosystem, and nip in the bud impending environmental disasters.

Interestingly, rationality is a common factor in all humans. The idea of reason being natural to every human and its fundamental role in human's relationship with one another and the nonhuman entities, is as old as beings in the universe. Writing on the power of reason as the ontology of the natural laws and rights, Fitzgerald avers that "There exist objective moral principles which depend on the essential nature of the universe and which can be discovered by natural reason" He posited further that the positive law is only truly law when it conforms to the rational principles. And "These principles of justice and morality constitute the natural law, which is valid of necessity, because the rules for human conduct are logically connected with truths concerning human life" (15). In Nigeria, the Niger-Delta region is an epicenter of environmental disasters – oil spillages due to irrational drilling, illegal refining of crude oil. This single irrationality has resulted to several other secondary disasters of dire socio-existential consequences to the host communities and the people thereof – the destruction of the mangrove, the pollution of the underground water, the contamination of rivers as well as the water resources such as fishes, prawns, crabs and lobsters. The health implication of this disaster is not only adverse to nonhumans but seriously on humans within the socio-existential ecosystem who are dying by instalment.

The rational question that may crop up at this juncture is: Can humans' rationality alone solve the environmental problems bestriding humans and nonhumans? In responding to this poser, some scholars have advocated for the rule of law – enactment of laws to punish environmental offenders, to preserve endangered species, to secure areas as reserve for nonhumans. Nevertheless, there is another poser for the advocates of the rule of law, particularly, in Nigeria: Has legislations solved or minimized the plundering of the ecosystem?

Has the formulation of new environmental ethical theories, nay, ecocentrism (Kopnina, Washington, et al, 2018: 123), halt the irrational plundering of the natural resources and the destruction of the ecosystem? Evidences abound of illegal mining in the Nigerian forest reserves and parks, illegal logging of trees in the national parks and forest reserves, illegal refining of crude oil resulting in dire environmental disasters, even though there are legislations in place to stem these environmentally unfriendly attitudes. Writing on the environmental disaster in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, with particular reference to the “back barrier”, Bamidele decries that the barrier with its rich resources such as plants, fishes and other natural resources, are experiencing degradation due to the activities of oil exploration in the region, despite its importance to humans as well as nonhumans:

Until recently, these ecosystems and their natural resources have been utilized on a sustainable basis. Some of the plants recorded within the ecosystems have multi-purpose values, while others serve as important sources of medicine, food and construction material. They also provide environmental services such as carbon sequestration, erosion control, nutrient cycling and wind break. The back barrier island act as ‘oasis’ in the mangroves being the main source of potable freshwater for the local population living within the estuarine environment. There is a gradual degradation of these important ecosystems due to non-sustainable use. These forested islands are being flooded and salt intrusion is becoming a common phenomenon. The greatest loss is attributable to the construction of canals/slots which have been built for access and transport of oil and gas, which have been extracted from the Niger Delta since the late 1950s (33).

The foregoing are the few examples of continuous environmental violation by humans and corporate entities irrespective of the existence of legislation aimed at fostering harmonious exploration of natural resources without causing damages to the ecosystem, hence, our resort to rational anthropocentrism to complement the existing advocacies and laws.

Towards a Rational Anthropocentric Ethics for Sustainable Human Future

The human and nonhuman future is ecologically sustainable when it meets “real human needs with only minimal impact on the earth and its other life forms” (Pulido, 123-124). The human centeredness of the universe should not be mistaken, and that humans are the most important beings in the universe should not be in doubt. However, the question is: Humans are most important for what purpose? The centeredness of humans in the universe serves what purpose? It is not for the reckless plunder of nonhuman in the ecosystem but to care for it. Caring for the universe requires rational use of other nonhuman entities for the benefit of not just the humans but for all. As rational beings, humans, playing central role in the universe, should see the universe and nature as a communion of subjects rather than the “collection of objects” (Solon, 107). Humans depend largely on the “natural environment for livelihoods – on farmland or forests, wetlands or coastal areas. For these people, the environment is much more than a source of recreation – it is the basis of the economy”, their being and existence (Glover, vii). Therefore, the objectification of the universe and its natural resources evokes feelings and practices of biting the nose to spite the face – spiting the ecosystem by the human-subjects who see nature as object of exploitation. Nevertheless, humans ought to commune with the universe and its natural endowment, at common and complementary beneficial level. This does not suppose that humans should not deploy the richness of the resources in nature for their benefits but that it should be

done within the ambit of rationality taking into consideration, proper remediation, conservation and restoration of those that are endangered.

Anthropocentric environmental philosophy should not be bedeviled by misanthrope who loathe the inviolable natures of humankind, negating the spatio-temporality and/or relativist implication of anthropocentric construal and applicability in the socio-ethical ecosystem (Ushie, 2015: 172). For a rational anthropocentric environmentalism in Africa, there is the need for “synergy between African culture and education” to promote advocacies for the protection of the planet and rational use in order to achieve desirable balance and harmony in the ecosystem without negating the nonhuman beings (Ushie & Okpe, 221). Following from the foregoing, advocacy for the stoppage of indiscriminate use of environmental resources, rational and/or legislative and normative controls in the areas of pollution – land and air – by carbon dioxide, toxic emissions from mining, scientific and technological industries, indiscriminate dumping of toxic wastes, ought to be discouraged for a sustainable human future. Further, in places that have witnessed environmental disaster, orchestrated by human or nature, environmental remediation such as restoration of degraded habitats, reforestation, recycling, protection of endangered species and environmental advocacy, ought to be encouraged and enforced (Ekwealo, 15). Humans, at the centeredness of beings, with higher rational faculty, ought to act as rational eco-ethical caretakers.

Conclusion

The critics of anthropocentrism have blamed humans to the exclusion of natural disaster, for causing eco-ontological imbalances. What would they say of volcanic eruptions, tsunami, draught, that have spanned pre-civilization era, swallowing some ancient cities without sparing any lives – human and nonhuman? Whereas, as aforesaid, rational beings have the moral responsibilities to do what is eco-ethically right for the survival of all beings in the ecosystem, some of the attack on anthropocentrism is too wholesale and in the extreme. Although the concept of anthropocentrism is not intrinsically anti-nonhumans in the socio-ethical ecosystem, we call for a rational anthropocentric environmental philosophy, an ideology which recognizes the diversity of the humankind and the relative epistemic eco-ethical reality, where humans, at the center of beings, reasonably explore the ecosystems for the mutual benefits of themselves as well as the nonhumans, without triggering the extinction of species or causing of disharmony in the socio-ecosystem. Rational anthropocentrism promotes the use of the natural resources based on the greatest common good, not only to humans but also the nonhumans. From the rational anthropocentric point of view, it is the duty of humans, at the centeredness of values, to care and protect the ecosystem. This obligation is not merely for moral exigencies but for sustainable human presence and future. Within the natural universe, humans need the non-humans to survive and not necessarily the other way. Consequently, humans must deemphasize the wholesale instrumental construal of nonhuman entities to ensure complementary existence and harmony in the ecosystem. If anthropocentrism is construed as humans caring for themselves, as Kopina and others have posited, it shows that for humans to care for themselves is to care for other nonhumans in the ecosystem. We cannot pretend to care for others if we do not care for ourselves.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 20, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Isaac, Ubong I. (2025). "The Paradox of Religious Tolerance: Conversion, Law, and Social Reality in Southwest Nigeria." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 79-89.

Article

Open Access

THE PARADOX OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE: CONVERSION, LAW, AND SOCIAL REALITY IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

Despite Nigeria's constitutional guarantee of religious freedom and tolerance, the lived experiences of converts reveal a troubling paradox. Legal rights exist on paper, yet social realities continue to suppress religious choice. This article examines how conversion to Christianity and Islam in Southwest Nigeria exposed the gap between constitutional ideals and practical enforcement. It interrogated converts on awareness of their legal rights, the extent to which they can seek redress, and what constitutional or institutional mechanisms protect them. Using secondary and primary data from selected communities in Osun, Oyo, Ekiti, and Ondo States, a total of 40 converts participated, with 10 individuals per state (5 converting from Christianity to Islam and 5 from Islam to Christianity). Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to legal awareness, enforcement gaps, and social pressures. The study found that fear of stigma, weak legal enforcement, and community pressure often silence converts, with 80% of participants refraining from seeking redress. While religious institutions advocate for peace, their protective capacity is limited, as only 80% of Christian converts and 35% of Muslim converts reported access to counseling, mentorship, economic assistance, or referrals to legal support. The article argued that tolerance must be treated not as a passive value but as a civic duty, requiring coordinated effort from government, civil society, and faith communities to make religious freedom a lived reality rather than a legal abstraction.

Keywords: Religious Tolerance, Conversion, Human Rights, Constitutional Law, Social Realities, Southwest Nigeria.

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Introduction

Nigeria's Constitution guarantees the right to religious freedom. According to Section, 38(1) of the *1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)*, "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance" (*Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999*). Going further, subsections (2) and (3) carefully stated the right to religious education and instruction, making religious liberty a fundamental right applicable to all citizens regardless of faith or ethnicity. However, several scholars and human rights commentators have argued that the implementation of Section 38 remains inconsistent and, at times, merely symbolic. For example, a study published in *Religion & Human Rights* pointed out that while Section 38 guarantees freedom of belief, these rights are "not absolute" and can be constrained when religion intersects with moral or security considerations (Ajetunmobi, 2020). In a similar vein, the National Human Rights Commission (n.d.) stressed that constitutional protections under Sections 38 and 40 are intended to uphold freedom of conscience, belief, and peaceful assembly; however, enforcement at the community level remains weak. A public commentary by *Vanguard* further describes this condition as "a gap between legal guarantees and social realities," where constitutional rights exist on paper but are frequently undermined in practice (Vanguard News, 2014).

It is important to state here, that despite Nigeria's reputation as a religiously pluralistic nation, hostility against converts, particularly between Christianity and Islam, continues to challenge the country's democratic ideals. Recent human rights reports have documented several cases in which converts face ostracism, threats, or coercion. For instance, an article by the European Centre for the Study of Political Extremism (ECSPE, 2024) details how economic hardship has been exploited to pressure Christians into converting to Islam, demonstrating how social and material realities often override constitutional safeguards. In another angle, we see the International Christian Concern (2024) recounting the case of a Christian man who was jailed and pressured to renounce his faith, while the *Catholic News Agency* (2023) reports on a teenage girl whose conversion to Christianity triggered death threats from family members, leading to a restraining order for her protection. Beyond the above, broader studies show that conversion and interfaith marriage in Nigeria frequently provoke intense social resistance. According to Adewale (2022), conversions often create tensions around religious identity, family honor, and social belonging. Furthermore, the *Open Doors International* (2023) acknowledged that converts, especially those transitioning from Islam to Christianity, regularly experience persecution severe enough to force them from their communities. While the aforementioned works have shown the gap between legal guarantees and social realities, few have examined why converts remain unprotected or uninformed about their constitutional rights, particularly in the Southwest region, where religious pluralism is often celebrated as a model of peaceful coexistence. Existing literature tends to emphasize either the legal framework or the social consequences of conversion, but rarely checks how awareness, access to justice, and institutional responses interact to shape the lived experiences of converts. (ECSPE, 2024; Adewale, 2022; CNA, 2023).

This study raises several critical concerns regarding the practical realities of religious tolerance in Southwest Nigeria. A central question is the extent to which religious converts are aware of their constitutional rights under Section 38 of the 1999 Constitution.

Awareness of rights is fundamental to the exercise of freedom, yet the persistent silence and vulnerability among converts indicate a troubling deficit in civic education and legal empowerment. This situation raises series of guiding questions central to this study: (a) Are converts even aware of their rights? (b) If they are, why do they rarely seek legal recourse? (c) What protection mechanisms actually exist to defend those whose rights have been violated? (d) And what roles do government and religious institutions play in ensuring genuine religious freedom and tolerance? The government's capacity and commitment to safeguarding religious freedom remain questionable, as current initiatives such as interfaith councils and human rights programmes appear insufficient at the grassroots level. It is therefore against the backdrop that guided the questions, and hence, specific objectives this research intends to move beyond describing the problem to exploring how Constitutional protections can be transformed into practical safeguards through awareness, collaboration, and policy reform. The study thus positions itself at the intersection of law, religion, and human rights, aiming to expose the contradictions within Nigeria's legal and social systems as well as to offer a framework for transforming religious tolerance from a constitutional promise into a lived cultural reality.

Literature Review

Religious conversion is a complex and multidimensional process, encompassing not only shifts in doctrinal belief but also transformations in identity, social relationships, and cultural positioning (Rambo, 1993). In similar vein, Gooren (2007) conceptualized conversion as part of broader religious mobility, emphasizing the fluidity of religious identity and the dynamic interplay of internal motivations and external pressures. In the Nigerian context, particularly in the South-West, conversion decisions are rarely purely individual. They are deeply embedded within familial, communal, and socio-political structures (Peel, 2000; Umar, 2006). Corroborating this perspective, Paloutzian (2005) noted that spiritual quests, search for meaning, and existential crises often motivate conversion, but the societal implications of such decisions, including acceptance, alienation, or persecution cannot be understated. In contrast to some psychological models that treat conversion as primarily an intrapersonal process, the African context illustrates that religious shifts are inherently relational and socially mediated, often intersecting with economic, political, and historical dynamics (Esposito, 2002). Historically, the South-West region of Nigeria, predominantly occupied by the Yoruba, presents a unique religious landscape where Christianity, Islam, and indigenous religious practices have coexisted for centuries (Peel, 2000; Clarke, 1982). Islam's early introduction via trans-Saharan trade in the 14th century laid deep-rooted cultural foundations, while Christianity's arrival in the 19th century, facilitated by European missions and returning freed slaves, contributed to the pluralistic religious composition observed today (Ayandele, 1966; Ajayi, 1965).

In a similar vein, scholars have pictured the Yoruba socio-cultural milieu to be characterized by openness, negotiation, and tolerance, enabled both religions to flourish side by side, often peacefully, despite sporadic competition for converts and social influence (Peel, 2003; Kenny, 2000). Corroborating this, recent studies indicate that while religious co-existence in the South-West is generally peaceful, intergroup tensions emerge during moments of social or political stress, reflecting the fragility of informal mechanisms of tolerance (Salawu, 2010). Legally, Nigeria maintains a robust constitutional and international framework for religious freedom. Section 38 of the 1999 Constitution guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the right to change one's religion. While Section 10 prohibits the adoption of a state religion. Internationally, Nigeria is bound by the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which affirm similar protections (Okeke, 2025; Ekwueme, 2018). In a similar vein, statutory instruments such as the National Human Rights Commission Act provide institutional avenues to address violations. Corroborating this, empirical surveys reveal that citizens are formally aware of these rights, yet practical access to protection mechanisms remains limited (The Kukah Centre, 2025). Despite these legal guarantees, enforcement challenges remain pervasive, undermining the protective intent of the law. In contrast to formal constitutional provisions, judicial interpretations are often inconsistent, and law enforcement agencies display ambivalence when responding to religiously motivated conflicts or conversion-related disputes (Imo, 2025; Hussaini, 2023). Police and security interventions, for example, frequently treat such incidents as general security matters rather than violations of religious freedom, leaving converts and vulnerable individuals inadequately protected. Similarly, community and familial pressures frequently enforce normative constraints on religious choice, creating an environment where formal protections exist in theory but not in practice.

Focusing on South-West Nigeria, the region's relative religious tolerance and pluralism mask deeper structural limitations in the enforcement of legal protections. While Yoruba cultural norms promote co-existence, recent events—such as sporadic violence against religious minorities or attacks on places of worship—illustrate that Constitutional guarantees alone are insufficient to prevent harm. Going further, discussions about the potential incorporation of aspects of Sharia in family or personal status matters, even in the South-West, underscore latent tensions that may compromise legal neutrality and undermine freedom of conscience. Thus, while the South-West presents a comparatively tolerant religious environment, the lived realities of religious converts reveal a persistent gap between law and practice. This leads to a significant gap in the existing literature. Despite the comparatively tolerant religious environment of South-West Nigeria, few studies critically examined the performative nature of legal protections for religious freedom in conversion-related contexts. In particular, there is a lack of empirical research exploring how legal guarantees interact with community pressures, social expectations, and sporadic violence to influence the actual experience of converts. In contrast to studies focused on the North or Middle Belt, where inter-religious conflicts have been more visibly documented, the South-West remains underexplored, creating an opportunity to interrogate the *illusion of protection* in a context of cultural tolerance. This gap is especially pertinent given the growing recognition that legal frameworks, while seemingly robust, are insufficient without proactive enforcement, judicial consistency, and supportive institutional mechanisms to safeguard individuals exercising the right to religious conversion.

While Nigeria possesses formal legal and institutional frameworks to protect religious freedom and the right to conversion, both at national and international levels, enforcement challenges and socio-cultural pressures undermine the effectiveness of these protections. In the South-West, a region historically characterized by religious tolerance, this disconnect between law and lived reality highlights a crucial area for further research. Corroborating the broader literature, it is clear that the *illusion of protection* persists: legal provisions exist, yet they are often performative rather than proactive, leaving converts and other vulnerable individuals exposed to social pressures, marginalization, and occasional violence. This literature review establishes the necessity for empirical inquiry into the practical application of legal protections for religious freedom in South-West Nigeria, particularly in the context of conversion.

Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on the Social Identity Theory (SIT) which was first proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The theory posits that an individual's self-concept is strongly influenced by their membership in social groups, and that people derive part of their identity, self-esteem, and sense of belonging from these group affiliations. Individuals tend to categorize themselves and others into "in-groups" (groups they identify with) and "out-groups" (groups they do not identify with), which shapes behavior, attitudes, and intergroup interactions. From keen observation, converts in Southwest Nigeria experience social exclusion, familial rejection, and community scrutiny, reflecting the tension between their original religious group (in-group) and the new religious affiliation (out-group). Hence, SIT explains the emotional and social consequences of conversion observed in this study. The participants' narratives of identity transformation, negotiation of belonging, and creation of surrogate support networks reflect attempts to reconcile personal religious identity with societal expectations. By applying SIT, this study interprets conversion not merely as a private spiritual act but as a socially mediated process, where community, family, and religious institutions act as powerful agents reinforcing group norms and social conformity. The theory underscores that legal and constitutional protections alone are insufficient to safeguard converts without considering the potent influence of social identity.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore how conversion between Christianity and Islam in South-West Nigeria exposes the gap between constitutional ideals and practical enforcement of religious freedom. Given the focus on lived experiences, perceptions, and interactions with legal and institutional frameworks, in-depth interviews were conducted to generate rich, contextualized data. The research aimed to examine whether converts are aware of their legal rights, the extent to which they can seek redress, and how constitutional or institutional mechanisms protect them, with particular attention to fear of stigma, community pressure, and enforcement gaps. The study was conducted in four purposively selected South-West Nigerian communities known for their religious plurality: Ile-Ife (Osun State), Ibadan (Oyo State), Ado-Ekiti (Ekiti State), and Akure (Ondo State). These communities were chosen because both Christianity and Islam have significant historical and contemporary presence, allowing for the investigation of conversion experiences in environments of relative religious tolerance. African Traditional Religion was excluded from this study because it is largely non-proselytizing, and membership is typically inherited or situational rather than the result of active conversion, making it less relevant to the research focus on conversion dynamics between Christianity and Islam. A total of 40 converts participated, with 10 individuals per state (5 converting from Christianity to Islam and 5 from Islam to Christianity). Participants were identified through purposive and snowball sampling, using local religious organizations, community leaders, and referrals from other converts to locate willing individuals. Table 1 shows the sample distribution:

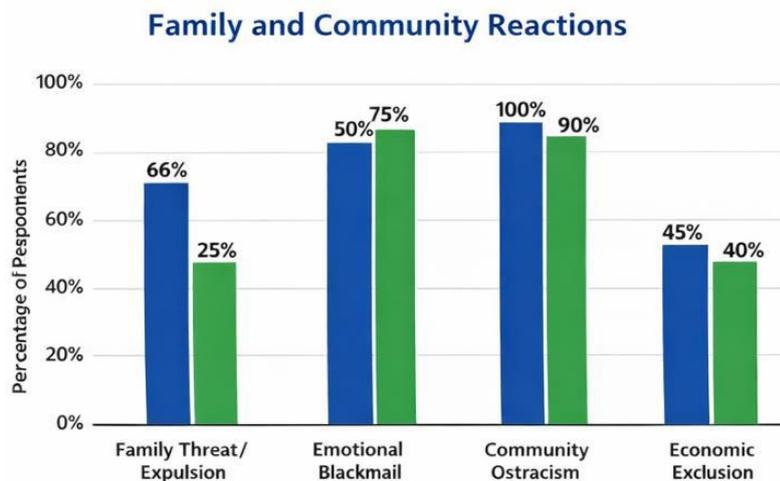
Table 1: Sample Distribution of respondents

State (Community)	Converts C → I	Converts I → C	Total per State
Osun (Ile-Ife)	5	5	10
Oyo (Ibadan)	5	5	10
Ekiti (Ado-Ekiti)	5	5	10
Ondo (Akure)	5	5	10
Total	20	20	40

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns related to legal awareness, enforcement challenges, and social pressures. Ethical safeguards, including informed consent, anonymity, and safe interview locations, were observed throughout the study.

Findings/Results

- i. **The Paradox of Social Realities and Converts' Silence:** Across the sample, 100% of participants reported experiencing social pressures, emotional distress, or threats following conversion. Among the 20 individuals converting from Islam to Christianity, 66% (13 respondents) faced expulsion or overt threats from family members. C-R12 stated, "My father banned me from the house. My mother pleaded for me to stay, but I was sent out." In more extreme cases, C-R1 recounted, "I had to run away for my life when I began to see danger and threats." Meanwhile, among the 20 converting from Christianity to Islam, 75% (15 respondents) experienced intense social scrutiny related to daily practices, dress, or dietary changes. M-R10 explained, "I had to explain why I don't drink at events anymore, and some old friends just stopped inviting me." Cultural expectations around family honor and communal conformity reinforced these pressures, leaving 80% of the total sample (32 respondents) reporting that fear of reprisal kept them from seeking legal redress. Economic vulnerability further compounded this silence, with 60% (24 respondents) indicating that they could not afford legal representation even if they sought it.

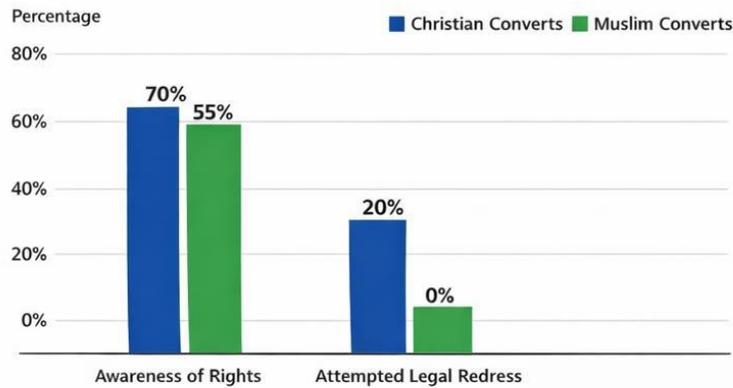


(see Figure 1; Researcher's construct, 2025)

- ii. **Awareness and Access to Justice:** Although most respondents were aware of their constitutional rights, knowledge rarely translated into action. Among the 20 Christian converts, 70% (14 respondents) could articulate that the law guarantees religious freedom, yet only 20% (4 respondents) felt confident to pursue legal remedies. For Muslim converts, 55% (11 respondents) were aware of legal protections, but none had attempted to engage state institutions, citing mistrust, economic limitations, and social pressures. M-R2 stated, "I know the law protects me, but if I go to court, I risk losing my family entirely and I cannot afford a lawyer." Religious leaders, while advocating for peace, often lacked both financial resources and knowledge of constitutional provisions. Another Christian convert, C-R5 expressed that, "The government should provide

security and enforce religious freedom so that converts don't suffer silently," highlighting the gap between legal ideals and lived realities.

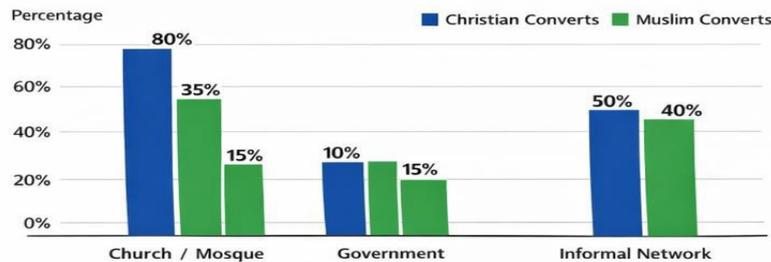
Awareness vs. Legal Access



(see Figure 2; Researcher's construct, 2025)

Family reactions were overwhelmingly negative across both groups. All respondents (100%) had reported emotional distress or disapproval from parents, with 45% (18 respondents) indicating that their mothers faced social repercussions for supporting their children. Christian converts more frequently faced physical threats, expulsions, and denial of financial support; for instance, C-R8 recounted, "It was a tug of war. My mother was sent out of her matrimonial home because of our conversion." Muslim converts, while less likely to be expelled, experienced emotional blackmail, silent disapproval, and community suspicion. M-R3 noted, "I was no longer trusted within my previous Christian circles and was subtly labeled a 'traitor.'" Across both groups, 80% of participants (32 respondents) reported disruption of social support networks, requiring negotiation of new affiliations and surrogate communities.

Support Systems Access

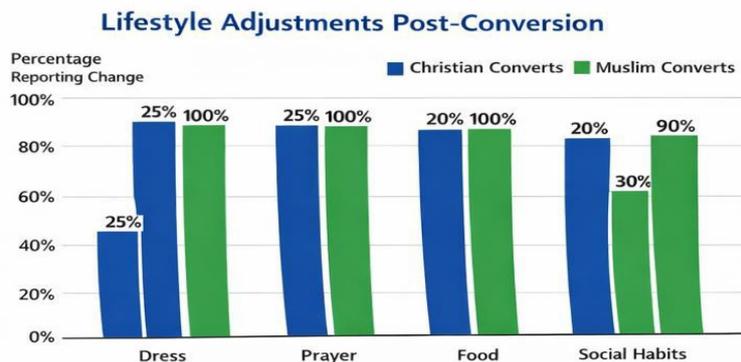


(see Figure 3; Researcher's construct, 2025)

The process of conversion brought significant identity transformations. C-R2 explained, "I now identify as a Christian first, though I still respect where I came from," while M-R6 said, "I feel more spiritually disciplined now... I've also started to feel like I belong to a global Muslim community." These narratives reflect the dual nature of conversion as both departure from old affiliations and integration into new communities (Hagan, 2008). Emotional and economic discrimination was common; C-R9 noted, "People stopped associating with me, and I couldn't get assistance from our community group," and M-R5 shared, "I was excluded

from a church-based programme I had previously led.” These experiences align with Ojo (2014), emphasizing that social rejection often poses a greater barrier than legal exclusion in pluralistic societies.

Support systems varied across religious communities. Among Christian converts, 80% (16 respondents) received counseling, material support, and mentorship from churches, with C-R11 stating, “I feel welcomed by my church family. It’s where I finally feel I belong.” In contrast, only 35% of Muslim converts (7 respondents) reported receiving guidance from mosques, often informal or inconsistent. M-R12 recommended, “Mosques should have beginner classes and emotional guidance, not just prayer sessions,” highlighting a need for structured institutional support. Across both groups, participants emphasized the need for financial aid, safe housing, counseling, and government enforcement to protect converts from familial and communal pressures. Community reactions further amplified challenges. Christian converts described name-calling, exclusion from social events, and economic marginalization. C-R4 shared, “Neighbours stopped greeting me. Some even warned their children to avoid me.” Muslim converts faced similar subtler forms of ostracism; M-R8 remarked, “Some people don’t know how to relate to me anymore.” Both groups advocated for interfaith dialogue and joint community initiatives. C-R10 suggested, “Church and mosque youth should do joint community service—cleanups, sports, outreach,” while M-R3 recommended, “We must replace fear with knowledge. Personal relationships break stereotypes.” These voices reinforce Sanneh’s (2003) argument that relational engagement, not doctrinal conformity, fosters coexistence in multi-faith societies.



(see Figure 4; Researcher’s construct, 2025)

We can thus see here that conversion is both spiritually transformative and socially costly. Converts face familial rejection, community hostility, economic vulnerability, and institutional gaps, yet display resilience by integrating into supportive faith communities.

Conclusion

Nigeria’s government has established formal mechanisms intended to promote religious harmony and protect freedom of belief, most notably the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC). It was established in 1999 as a voluntary body with equal representation from Christian and Muslim leaders. The NIREC provides a forum for ongoing dialogue between the two major faith communities and aims to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and religious harmony across the country. These efforts include interfaith seminars, workshops, and joint communiqués addressing societal problems such as insecurity and social injustice (Nigeria Inter-Religious Council, 2025). However, the practical effectiveness of such institutions has been questioned. Critics, including NIREC’s co-chair, the Sultan of Sokoto,

have expressed concern about the council's ability to translate dialogue into meaningful action on the ground, pointing out that decisions made at meetings are not always implemented (Eze, 2023). As a result, while these government-sanctioned bodies carry symbolic legitimacy and play important roles in national discourse, their impact on structural change, especially in areas beset by inter-religious tension remains contested. In addition to NIREC, government-mandated institutions like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) play roles in advocating for citizens' rights, including the protection of freedom of religion. The NHRC regularly engages with religious leaders, urging them to champion human rights, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, and it continues to intervene and condemn violence in conflict-affected regions of Nigeria (Voice of Nigeria, 2023). These activities indicate that the government does possess legal frameworks for human rights protection, but enforcement and consistent realization of those rights are often uneven across the country, especially where insecurity and communal violence are rife.

Religious institutions themselves provide vital moral, spiritual, and community support that complements official state efforts. Bodies such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Muslim leadership structures participate in interfaith projects and cooperation networks that seek to foster peace and understanding (Christian Association of Nigeria, 2023). As umbrella organizations representing broad constituencies, these groups help mediate social tensions, emphasize shared ethical values, and contribute to community cohesion. One notable initiative is the Interfaith Code of Conduct, jointly developed by Christian and Muslim leaders to promote peace, justice, and harmony among Nigeria's diverse religious communities; this code underscores shared commitments to respect, human dignity, and non-violence (Columban Interreligious Dialogue, 2023). Even so, the authority of religious institutions tends to be moral rather than juridical, meaning that while they can guide behavior and influence social norms, they generally lack the legal power to directly enforce protections when rights are violated. Taken together, these observations suggest that Nigeria's efforts to normalize religious tolerance require collaborative engagement across multiple sectors. Government bodies and interfaith councils offer useful platforms for dialogue and policy articulation, but they are often constrained by structural and implementation challenges that limit their transformative impact. Religious leaders and organizations contribute essential moral frameworks and grassroots outreach but cannot substitute for the rule of law or state enforcement mechanisms. The findings of this study reveal that Nigeria's greatest religious challenge is not the absence of laws protecting freedom of belief but rather the failure to internalize tolerance as a shared societal value. Constitutional guarantees remain undermined by persistent social realities, including community prejudices, lack of awareness, and insufficient enforcement mechanisms, all of which deny converts the freedom to fully exercise their rights. The paradox lies not in legal frameworks themselves but in the gap between legal provisions and lived experiences. Addressing this requires a multi-pronged approach, combining policy enforcement, civic and religious education, and sustained interfaith engagement. Only through this synergy can religious freedom become more than a formal right to claim. It can become a norm actively lived and respected, fostering a society where tolerance is both practiced and internalized as a core civic and ethical value.

Recommendations Toward a Culture of Active Tolerance

This study emphasizes that religious tolerance in Nigeria should not be treated as optional or passive; rather, it must be embraced as a civic ethic deeply rooted in law, education, and everyday social practice. To move toward this ideal, several practical measures are

recommended. First, religious freedom education should be integrated into civic studies at both secondary and tertiary levels, ensuring that young citizens understand the legal rights of all religious groups and the moral imperatives of coexistence. Second, community-level legal aid programmes should be established to assist victims of religious discrimination, making legal recourse more accessible and reinforcing the protective function of constitutional guarantees. Third, interfaith youth engagement programmes should be encouraged to foster early exposure to diversity, cooperation, and dialogue across religious lines, cultivating empathy and mutual respect from a young age. Finally, periodic dialogues between government agencies and religious bodies should be institutionalized to review policies, evaluate ongoing initiatives, and respond proactively to emerging conflicts, ensuring that tolerance is continually reinforced through both legislation and practice.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 20, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Alokun, Olusegun A. & Adetula, Emmanuel O. (2025). "Sacred Spaces and Sacred Economies: Comparative Evidence from CAC's Babalola Memorial Camp and RCCG's Redemption Camp in Nigeria." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 90-105.

Article

Open Access

SACRED SPACES AND SACRED ECONOMIES: COMPARATIVE EVIDENCE FROM CAC'S BABALOLA MEMORIAL CAMP AND RCCG'S REDEMPTION CAMP IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Sacred sites in Nigeria are no longer only loci of spiritual meaning; they increasingly function as engines of informal economic activity. Yet, scholars have emphasised macro-level outcomes (roads, housing, infrastructure) while neglecting comparative, micro-level evidence on who benefits, by how much, and under what conditions. This study addressed that gap through a comparative analysis of the Christ Apostolic Church's Ayo Babalola Memorial Camp (Ikeji-Arakeji) and the Redeemed Christian Church of God's Redemption Camp (Mowe). A mixed descriptive design was employed, drawing on questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions with visitors, vendors, transport operators, and key informants (N≈360), combining primary fieldwork at CAC (2025) with harmonised secondary data for RCCG. Religious Economy Theory (RET) provided the theoretical frame, treating camps as actors in a competitive spiritual-economic marketplace. Findings reveal that both camps generate substantial but uneven economic benefits for informal actors. During camp week, CAC vendors and operators record income rises from ₦10,000–₦20,000 to ₦21,000–₦100,000, while RCCG counterparts achieve far higher earnings, with 60% making ₦100,000–₦200,000 and 40% above ₦200,000. Both camps enhance livelihoods and visitors' spending, yet shared challenges persist, notably traffic congestion, sanitation issues, and price inflation, reflecting divergent scales of sacred economies. The study argued that Nigerian sacred spaces operate as competing "firms" in a religious market, with institutional scale and character shaping economic outcomes. It recommends that policymakers and camp managers treat religious camps as development partners by improving transport, sanitation, vendor regulation, inclusion, and sustainable economic planning.

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Keywords: Sacred Spaces, Sacred Economy; Religious Economy Theory (RET), Faith-Based Tourism, Nigeria.

Introduction

Sacred sites are fundamental to every religious tradition, serving as loci of meaning for the religious man. The religious experience, as Mircea Eliade (1959) puts remains incomplete without attachment to a specific space where the divine once manifested theophany. Classic examples such as Moses and the burning bush shows the enduring relationship between religious memory and sacred geography. The discourse on sacred sites has shifted from the traditional notion. It is important to state, here, therefore that sacred sites are no longer conceived solely as hubs where the injured, sick, weak individuals seek out spiritual solace. They have also become physical sites of attraction, tourism, and economic activity. Recent scholarship like Ezenagu, Layefa, Okpoko, and Okpoko (2022) explored sacred spaces like the Redemption Camp, Osun-Osogbo Grove, and NASFAT Camp to show that ritual performances constituted the primary attraction, though faith-based tourism remains underdeveloped due to weak packaging. Similarly, Onnoghen, Okpo, and Usang (2023) demonstrated how religious festivals in Calabar, a region in south-south of the country, drive economic development, with direct impacts on hotels, restaurants, and transport sectors. From the aforementioned studies, it is quite clear that sacred sites in Nigeria are increasingly recognised as engines of socio-economic activity. Olukole (2022) examination of residents' perceptions of religious tourism at the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Redemption Camp showed much gains in infrastructure development, job creation, and improved living standards, while also noting challenges such as traffic congestion and pollution. Similarly, Adejimi and Aremu (2019) showed that commercial, hospitality, and educational institutions within the camp sustain its economy and provide spillover benefits to neighbouring communities. Ukah (2016), analysing the political economy of prayer camps, documents of how Redemption Camp is evolving into a religious city that shapes urban planning and real estate development in Nigeria.

Despite these valuable contributions, scholarship has tended to emphasise macro-level outcomes such as roads, schools, banks, and housing, alongside residents' perceptions of improved quality of life or externalities like congestion and environmental strain. What remains underexplored are the micro-level aspects of how economic activities are generated, shared, and sustained during religious gatherings. Few studies provide systematic comparisons between different categories of camps. For example, denominational memorial sites versus mega-Pentecostal cities using matched indicators like vendor income, transport earnings, and visitor expenditure. The informal economy, including okada riders, petty traders, and seasonal workers, is especially neglected, with limited attention given to before-and-during event income comparisons. Moreover, little research has addressed how camp size, institutional structure, and the frequency of religious events shape the scale and sustainability of these economic benefits. This study addresses these gaps by offering a comparative investigation of two significant Nigerian sacred spaces: the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) Babalola Memorial Camp in Ikeji-Arakeji, which is an annual denominational pilgrimage site, and the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Redemption Camp in Mowe, a permanent and expanding Pentecostal city. In doing so, it contributes to global debates on religion and development by generating fine-grained empirical evidence on who benefits, how much, and under what conditions. Practically, the findings hold relevance for policymakers, religious institutions, and local communities by identifying ways to harness the economic opportunities of religious conventions while mitigating challenges such as

congestion, environmental strain, and uneven benefit distribution. Hence, this study will engage different sections including literature review, theoretical framework, methodology and findings to inform its readers.

Literature Review: Sacred Places and Sacred Spaces

Interrogating the literature is very germane at this point, especially on the subject matter of sacred places. The Sacred places, across religions, embody the intersection of the spiritual and the material. They are understood as sites of divine encounter, memory, and ritual, but also as spaces increasingly implicated in tourism, economy, and social change. The subject matter of discuss here has also been of interest to numerous scholars within Africa and even beyond. For some erudite scholars, sacred places assume two dualities. First, as tourist centre and second as spiritual hubs. Ezenagu, Layefa, Okpoko, and Okpoko (2022) illustrated this duality in their study of sacred spaces such as the Redemption Camp, Osun-Osogbo Grove, and NASFAT camp. They found that ritual performances remain the primary attraction for visitors, yet faith-based tourism in these contexts is underdeveloped due to weak packaging and marketing. In a similar vein, Ezenagu and Okpoko (2022) looked at how faith-based events generate employment and enhance visibility for sacred sites in Southwest Nigeria but argue that poor infrastructure reduces their overall potential. These studies collectively establish that while sacred sites in Nigeria possess strong ritual and spiritual draw, their economic potential remains hindered by inadequate structures. This argument aligns with Benson (2013), who observed that visitors to sacred sites in Southwest Nigeria often encountered infrastructural deficits, especially in waste management and physical facilities. Likewise, Nwachukwu (2022), in studying Igbo shrines, identified them as heritage tourism assets but emphasized that they remain underdeveloped and under-promoted. Here, we can see that these studies suggest that inadequate planning and infrastructure serve as recurring constraints, limiting sacred spaces from evolving into sustainable tourism hubs. In addition, Etuk (2024a) provides an emic analysis of Ibibio indigenous economic systems, revealing how spiritual, cultural, and economic activities were historically intertwined in ways that shaped community life, which aligns with Deopa and Rinaldo's (2023) argument that African traditional religious values function as informal environmental regulators by preserving forests and restricting exploitation. Together, these studies suggest that sacred sites, whether indigenous or Christian, have historically functioned as engines of socio-economic life.

Onnoghen, Okpo, and Usang (2023) extended the discussion by examining the case of Calabar religious festivals. The researcher showed that sacred events attract both domestic and international tourists, producing significant ripple effects across hospitality, transport, and restaurant sectors. However, weak government involvement constrains sustainability. Ele (2021) took interest on a broader economic lens, describing religion as "Nigeria's hidden tourism economy," particularly for its spillover effects on small and medium enterprises, while calling for robust tourism policy reform. Both perspectives reinforce the economic relevance of sacred sites but reveal institutional weaknesses in governance and policy. Globally, studies also confirm the need for careful management of sacred economies. Xie and Lai (2023), in the Asian context, examined Hindu and Buddhist heritage sites, emphasizing the importance of balancing visitor management with the preservation of sacredness. In addition, Acosta (2023), on pilgrimage shrines, further identified varied motives ranging from spiritual, cultural, and social as factors that drive pilgrimage, while noting increasing youth interest. These comparative insights place the universality of the sacred economic tension, where growth in visitor numbers often risks

undermining the spiritual essence of the site. Scholars have warned of “profane encroachment” within sacred places. For example, Olurotimi (2024) argued that sacredness in Southwest Nigeria is increasingly compromised by the rise of commerce within worship compounds, thereby calling for clearer boundaries to preserve spiritual integrity. Similarly, Ezenagu (2022) underscored how ritual performances and indigenous cosmologies attract tourists, but poor marketing and commercialization distort the spiritual essence. These critiques draw attention to the fragile balance between commodifying sacredness and retaining authenticity.

By contrast, some scholars highlighted the positive environmental implications of sacredness. Deopa and Rinaldo (2023), studying African Traditional Religion, found that sacred beliefs contributed to increased forest cover and acted as informal regulators of resource use. In similar fashion, Ngoka, Chukwu, and Ume (2024) mapped sacred groves in Abia North and emphasized their cultural and ecological significance, though lamenting their low tourism visibility. Complementing these, Isaac, Oripeloye, and Adejo (2024) argued that faith itself can be harnessed as a key driver of environmental stewardship and sustainable development in Nigeria, reinforcing the idea that religion acts not only as a moral compass but also as a tool for ecological responsibility. Taken together, these works broaden the understanding of sacred spaces as both ecological assets and informal systems of conservation. In the Nigerian Christian context, the rise of Pentecostal camps demonstrates another dimension of sacred space evolution. Ukah (2016) conceptualized the RCCG Redemption Camp as an “urbanizing sacred space,” showing how prayer camps influence urban planning, land development, and the real estate market. In a historical parallel, Etuk (2024b) demonstrated that missionary stations established by Mary Slessor in Ibibioland between 1876 and 1915 functioned not only as centres of evangelism but also as nodes of economic exchange, reinforcing the long-standing integration of religion and economy in Southern Nigeria. This demonstrates that the economic role of sacred sites in Nigeria is not a recent development, but rather one with deep historical antecedents. In similar vein, Olulowo and Oluwarinde (2022) link Pentecostalism to the growth of informal urban economies and shifts in consumption patterns through the prosperity gospel, with RCCG and CAC serving as primary case studies. These works situate sacred camps not merely as religious sites but as socio-economic and political actors shaping Nigerian modernity.

Scholarly research on sacred economies revealed that religious sites and practices are not only spiritual locations but also dynamic economic systems that shape material life and social relations. In historical contexts, sacred economies were integral to religious institutions’ survival and social influence, as seen in medieval Chinese Buddhist monasteries where monastic landholdings, donation practices, and exchange of goods for salvation produced sustained material infrastructures closely linked to religious authority and communal life (Walsh, 2010). Similarly, the concept of an *economy of the sacred* highlighted how ritual objects and devotional practices have economic value beyond mere symbolism, as seen in German Catholic pilgrimage economies where pilgrims’ procurement of sacred souvenirs mediated spiritual presence and contributed to local religious markets (Doney, 2014). The sacred economy also spans contemporary socio-economic processes in Thailand, where the worship of sacred beings has become intertwined with economic uncertainty, generating new forms of wealth accumulation, risk transformation, and livelihood strategies in neoliberal contexts (Malangpoo, 2023). At a theoretical level, analyses of ancient Mediterranean religion situated sacred economies within broader frameworks of symbolic and spatial production, emphasizing that religious consumption, communication, and spatial

practices cannot be reduced to monetary transactions alone but are inherently embedded in cultural and communicative economies (Rüpke, 2022).

We can therefore argue here, that the reviewed literature converges on the fact that sacred spaces are multifaceted: they are sites of ritual attraction, drivers of local and national economies, and even informal environmental regulators. Yet, several gaps persist. First, most studies emphasize either infrastructure deficits (Benson, 2013; Ezenagu & Okpoko, 2022), tourism potentials (Ele, 2021; Onnoghen et al., 2023), or ecological implications (Ngoka et al., 2024; Deopa & Rinaldo, 2023; Isaac et al., 2024), without connecting these dimensions in a comparative framework. Second, while urbanizing camps such as RCCG Redemption Camp are richly studied (Ukah, 2016), denominational memorial sites like CAC's Babalola Memorial Camp remain underexplored in terms of their socio-economic roles. Third, empirical studies seldom disaggregate who benefits most from sacred economies, informal actors such as street vendors, transport operators, and seasonal workers remain largely invisible. Finally, there is little attention to comparative dynamics between different types of sacred camps (Pentecostal megacamps versus denominational memorial sites) and how their institutional structures affect the depth and sustainability of economic gains. Thus, the existing scholarship underscores the profound significance of sacred spaces in shaping spirituality, economy, and environment. However, the absence of fine-grained, comparative, and distributional analyses leaves critical gaps that this study seeks to address by examining the socio-economic dynamics of CAC's Babalola Memorial Camp and RCCG's Redemption Camp in Nigeria. The next section will consider the theoretical framework to place the study in scholarly context.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Religious Economy Theory to place the study in scholarly context. Religious Economy Theory (RET) was developed by sociologists Rodney Stark and colleagues to explain religious behaviour and institutional growth in terms of supply and demand dynamics. RET proposes that religion operates within a competitive marketplace, where individuals make rational choices based on perceived costs and benefits, while organisations adapt their structures and offerings to attract and retain adherents (Strulik, 2016; Pennycook, 2014). In this model, individuals seek spiritual fulfilment, social belonging, and material opportunities, while weighing these against costs such as financial contributions, behavioural restrictions, or travel burdens. RET also assumed that competition fosters diversity and innovation in religious landscapes, as groups tailor their services to meet the varying needs of their followers. Applying RET to the Nigerian context shows how sacred sites operate as both spiritual centres and economic marketplaces. Religious camps such as the RCCG Redemption Camp and CAC's Babalola Memorial Camp offer adherents not only opportunities for worship and ritual participation but also avenues for economic engagement through trade, transport, and hospitality. Visitors, residents, and vendors rationally calculate the benefits of attending or participating in these events such as spiritual renewal, income generation, networking against the inconveniences of traffic, high costs, or congestion. The persistent popularity of these camps suggests that for many, the perceived benefits outweigh the costs, a pattern consistent with RET's predictions about religious participation in competitive environments (Strulik, 2016).

RET also helps to explain the institutional differences observed between RCCG's Redemption Camp and CAC's Babalola Memorial Camp. RCCG has strategically expanded its offerings, universities, banks, housing estates, and hotels thus, transforming its camp into a permanent religious city that appeals to both national and transnational audiences (Ukah,

2016; Adejimi & Aremu, 2019). This diversification can be interpreted as organisational innovation in response to religious market competition, ensuring that the camp provides a wide array of both spiritual and material benefits to adherents. By contrast, CAC's camp retains a denominational and memorial character tied to the legacy of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola, attracting a loyal base of followers during annual conventions but at a comparatively smaller scale. RET suggests that this reflects niche-market positioning, where CAC maximises religious and economic benefits within its denominational boundaries rather than competing directly with mega-Pentecostal institutions.

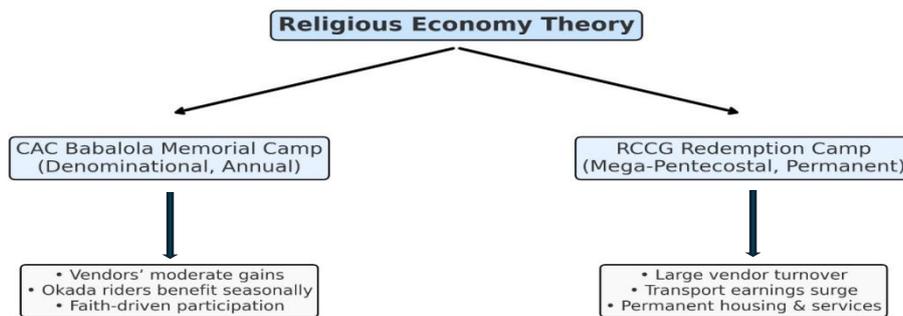


Fig 1: Diagram linking Religious Economy Theory with CAC and RCCG camps (Source: Researcher's construct).

Methods/Materials

This study adopted a comparative case study design to explore the socio-economic significance of two major religious convention camps in Nigeria: the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) Babalola Memorial Camp at Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State, and the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Redemption Camp at Mowe, Ogun State. These sites were selected for their contrasting profiles: CAC as a denominational memorial ground attracting annual pilgrimages and RCCG as a transnational Pentecostal megacity hosting monthly Holy Ghost Services. The study population comprised visitors, residents, vendors, transport operators, and key stakeholders such as camp managers and local officials. A total of 360 respondents were engaged across the two sites, distributed as 100 visitors/residents, 50 vendors, 50 transport operators, and 5 key informants at each camp. Data were generated through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Questionnaires were administered to vendors and visitors to collect information on demographics, spending patterns, livelihood impacts, and perceived challenges. Semi-structured interviews targeted transport operators and key informants to capture detailed perspectives on income flows, infrastructural demands, and management practices. FGDs involving 6–8 participants each were organised among vendors, residents, and youths to explore collective experiences. Primary data for CAC were collected through fieldwork in 2025, while RCCG data were drawn from published studies and reports (e.g., Ukah, 2011; Oni, 2019; Adeboye, 2017), which were harmonised with the CAC dataset for comparability.

The data were analysed using a mixed descriptive approach: quantitative responses were summarised in frequency tables and percentages, while qualitative narratives were thematically coded into causes of economic change, perceived benefits, and challenges. Ethical protocols were strictly observed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and anonymity through coded identifiers (e.g., V-CAC-01 for a vendor). Sensitive information

such as income was collected in ranges to reduce discomfort. Reliance on secondary sources for RCCG was explicitly acknowledged to avoid misrepresentation. This combined approach ensured methodological rigour and provided a reliable basis for comparing the two sacred spaces as engines of local economic transformation.

Study Contexts: The Camps and Sacred Spaces

CAC's Ayo Babalola Memorial Camp The Ayo Babalola Memorial Camp at Ikeji-Arakeji holds a significant place in the collective memory and spiritual practice of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and Nigerian Christianity. Its prominence stems from the legacy of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola, whose 1930 revival at Oke-Oye, Ilesa is widely recognised as foundational to the CAC and a pivotal moment in the rise of indigenous *Aladura* Christianity in Nigeria (Christ Apostolic Church North America, n.d.). Babalola's ministry characterised by prophetic visions, healings, and widespread conversions helped shape the revivalist ethos that continues to influence Pentecostal practice in the country. Sacred pilgrimages to sites associated with Babalola, including Odo-Owa—his birthplace and the location of his prophetic well—reflect the sacralisation of geography in the CAC tradition and contributed to the spiritual significance of later church sites. Oral historical accounts within the denomination maintain that the location where the current camp stands is where the young Babalola received his divine call into ministry, reinforcing the site's spiritual authority. While the spiritual importance of the camp derives from Babalola's legacy, the formal establishment of the Ayo Babalola Memorial Camp is widely attributed to Pastor Isaiah Ogunbomehin. Ogunbomehin is credited with identifying, securing, and initiating the development of the site, transforming it from a wooded tract into a structured camp that would become central to CAC conventions and gatherings. Coverage by *Church Times Nigeria* on the inauguration of the Pastor Isaiah Ogunbomehin Foundation notes Ogunbomehin's instrumental role in founding what has grown into the CAC Joseph Ayo Babalola Memorial Miracle Camp in Ikeji-Arakeji (Anonymous, 2024). Furthermore, reporting in *CAC World News* summarises historical details of Ogunbomehin's life and confirms that he was the key figure behind the camp's development, stating that "Pastor Isaiah Ogunbomehin... was the one God used to discover Christ Apostolic Church, Babalola International Miracle Camp, Ikeji-Arakeji after the great Apostle slept in the Lord" (Bankole, 2019).

Nigerian Christian discourse often frames Ogunbomehin's contribution as a continuation of Babalola's prophetic mission. Events such as the annual conventions, evangelistic campaigns, and other denominational gatherings held at the camp have led many adherents to view the location as a spiritual locus associated with divine encounter, renewal, and deliverance. Following his death on July 21, 2019 at age 81, Ogunbomehin's legacy has been preserved through foundations and initiatives established in his honour that sustain the camp's mission and humanitarian vision (Bankole, 2019). In its contemporary expression, the Ayo Babalola Memorial Camp functions as both a religious and socio-economic hub. Regular programmes—including youth conferences, women's conventions, assemblies for children and teenagers, and annual gatherings for evangelists, prophets, and church planters—are held at the site. These events often run multiple sessions per day and attract worshippers from across Nigeria and the international diaspora (Bankole, 2025). Beyond its spiritual significance, the influx of pilgrims fosters significant local economic activity. Vendors, book sellers, transport operators, hoteliers, and artisans benefit from increased trade, while the host community experiences heightened demand for services, infrastructure, and temporary employment. In this sense, the Ayo Babalola Memorial Camp operates both as a sacred religious landscape and a catalyst for informal economic

development, embodying the intersection of religion, collective memory, and community growth within Nigerian Christianity (Bankole, 2025; Anonymous, 2024)



Fig II: The photograph was taken during the Good Women Conference 2025 at the CAC camp

RCCG's Redemption Camp

The Redemption Camp of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), situated along the Lagos–Ibadan Expressway in Mowe, Ogun State, is today regarded as one of Africa's most expansive religious cities. Once a sparsely inhabited area infamous for highway robbery, the site was acquired and developed under the leadership of Pastor Enoch Adejare Adebayo beginning in the early 1980s, and has since grown into a sprawling spiritual and socio-economic landscape. According to Pastor Adebayo, the land that became the Redemption Camp was originally dense wilderness and a haven for criminals before the church's presence reshaped its identity and usage in alignment with its vision for a "City of God." Adebayo has repeatedly recounted how divine guidance and faith overcame the early material and environmental challenges associated with the site's establishment (Bisi Daniels, 2018; Bankole ABE, 2024). The camp, now more commonly referred to as Redemption City, spans approximately 2,500 hectares following the formal issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy by the Ogun State Government on August 4, 1998. Over the decades, what began as a religious campground has transformed into a multifunctional urban settlement with residential estates, worship facilities, infrastructure, schools, hospitals, banks, and civic services, effectively functioning as a self-sustaining community (Anonymous, 2024).

Scholars studying religious urbanism frame Redemption City as a distinct example of religious space integrated with urban infrastructure, a phenomenon where sacred landscapes intertwine with economic and social systems to produce what some term a "sacred city." This development pattern exemplifies how large Pentecostal organisations extend their religious influence into the material conditions of everyday life, restructuring space to serve both devotional and civic functions (Adejimi & Aremu, 2019). The camp's spiritual significance is especially evident during major worship gatherings. The Annual Holy Ghost Congress and monthly Holy Ghost Services continue to draw millions of worshippers from across Nigeria and abroad, reinforcing Redemption City's role as a major pilgrimage and worship hub within global Pentecostalism. These convocations provide regular occasions for collective devotion, spiritual renewal, and communal identity formation among adherents, with extensive crowds participating in rituals, prayers, and sermons throughout the events.

Beyond its religious function, Redemption City drives considerable economic activity within the local and regional context. During peak gatherings, vendors, hoteliers, transport services, artisans, and informal traders benefit from increased demand for goods and services, while surrounding communities experience growth in real estate opportunities, retail trade, and hospitality services. This economic spill-over illustrates how religious tourism and large-scale spiritual events contribute to local economies, even as challenges such as environmental strain, traffic congestion, and regulatory oversight persist (Adejimi & Aremu, 2019). Symbolically, Redemption City operates as the global nerve centre of the RCCG’s missionary and outreach mandate, embodying the expansive vision articulated by Pastor Adeboye. Its evolution from a humble camp into a major urbanised religious centre demonstrates the capacity of faith institutions to shape social space in ways that intersect spiritual meaning with tangible development outcomes. By integrating religious ritual, economic vitality, and infrastructural growth, Redemption City exemplifies a distinctive model of mega-Pentecostal spatial production that continues to influence both ecclesial practice and urban studies in Nigeria and beyond.



Fig III: The photograph was taken during the Holy Ghost Convention 2024 at the RCCG camp.

Sacred Spaces- Sacred Economies Nexus

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents (Visitors + Residents) by Social Status, Livelihood and problems encountered, N= 200

Variable	CAC (n=100)	RCCG (n=100)
Status	Visitors = 72% Residents = 28%	Visitors = 80% Residents = 20%
Age (Years)	21–40 yrs = 32% 41–60 yrs = 48% 60+ yrs = 20%	21–40 yrs = 45% 41–60 yrs = 40% 60+ yrs = 15%
Spending (₦)	₦11,000–20,000 = 25% ₦21,000+ = 75%	₦21,000+ = 82% ₦11,000–20,000 = 18%
Livelihood improved by camp	Yes = 85% A little = 10% No = 5%	Yes = 90% A little = 7% No = 3%
Problems experienced	High prices = 45% Traffic = 20% Sanitation = 20% Others = 15%	Traffic = 50% Sanitation = 25% High prices = 15% Others = 10%

Sources: Field work and RCCG data adapted from Ukah (2008), Adedibu (2016), and Afolabi (2015).

Interpretation: Table 1 shows both camps are predominantly visitor-oriented (CAC visitors 72%, RCCG 80%), with the majority in economically active age groups and higher average spending at RCCG (₦21,000+: CAC 75% vs RCCG 82%); correspondingly, most respondents report improved livelihoods (CAC yes 85%; RCCG yes 90%). Practically, this indicates that pilgrimage fuels demand for goods and services and that RCCG’s larger, more transnational attendance amplifies per-capita spending and multiplier effects; however, the types of negative externalities differ — CAC respondents cite high prices most (45%) while RCCG respondents emphasise traffic (50%) — revealing that scale and infrastructure shape how sacred economies benefit and burden hosts.

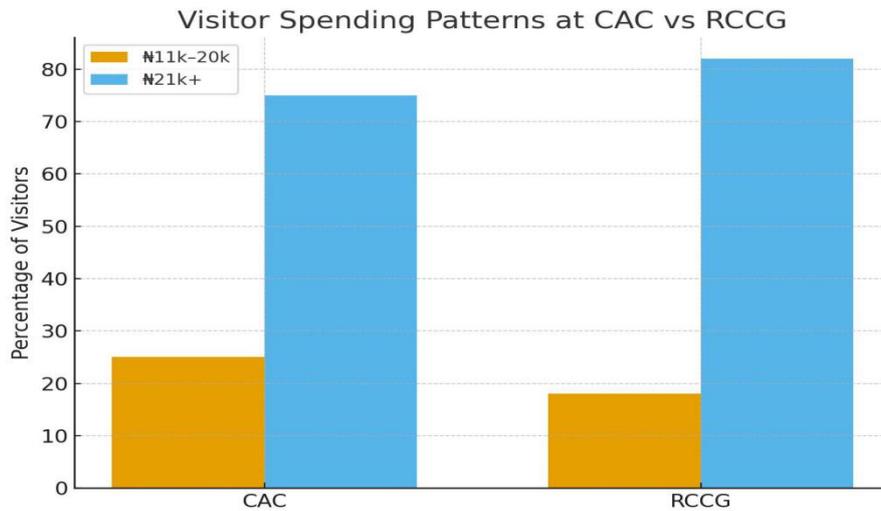


Fig IV: Status of respondents (visitors vs. residents) at CAC Babalola Memorial Camp and RCCG Redemption Camp.

Interpretation: Both camps attract predominantly middle-aged visitors. Average spending is higher at RCCG, consistent with its larger and more transnational attendance. At CAC, high prices were the most reported problem, while at RCCG, traffic congestion dominated complaints.

Table 2. Distribution of Camp activities and income, N= 100

Variable	CAC (n=50)	RCCG (n=50)
Main goods sold	Clothes = 40%; Books = 20%; Drinks = 10%; Food = 5%; Others = 25%	Food = 35%; Clothes = 25%; Accommodation rentals = 20%; Books & religious items = 15%; Others = 5%
Normal week income	₦10,000–20,000 = 62%; ₦21,000+ = 38%	₦15,000–25,000 = 50%; ₦26,000+ = 50%
Camp week income	₦21,000–50,000 = 42%; ₦51,000–100,000 = 40%; ₦100,000+ = 18%	₦100,000–200,000 = 60%; ₦200,000+ = 40%
Extra helpers hired	Yes = 28%; No = 72%	Yes = 65%; No = 35%
Lasting benefits	New customers = 85%; None = 10%; Not sure = 5%	New customers = 92%; None = 8%

Sources: Field work and RCCG data adapted from Adedibu (2016).

Interpretation: Table 2 reveals a clear differentiation in vendor economies: CAC vendors concentrate on clothes (40%) and books (20%), earn modest normal-week incomes (majority ₦10k–20k) and see moderate camp-week boosts, whereas RCCG vendors are more service-diverse (food 35%, accommodation rentals 20%) and report much larger camp-week turnovers (60% in ₦100k–200k band). RCCG’s higher rate of hiring extra helpers (65% vs CAC 28%) shows stronger short-term employment multipliers and organizational complexity; both camps, however, register durable customer gains (>85%), indicating that sacred events create lasting market linkages beyond one-off spikes.

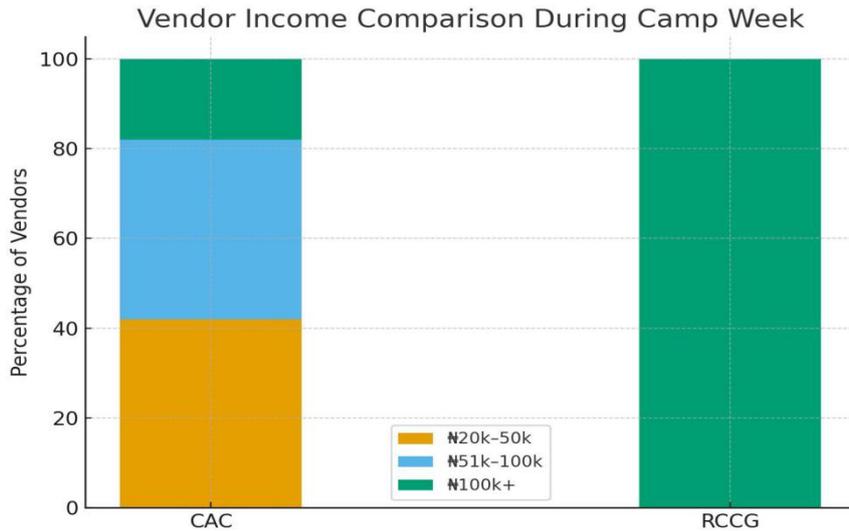


Fig V: Vendors’ camp-week income distribution at CAC Babalola Memorial Camp and RCCG Redemption Camp.

Interpretation: Vendors at RCCG report significantly higher turnover and more frequent hiring of extra hands compared to CAC. However, both camps generate lasting benefits in terms of expanded customer bases.

Table 3. Transport Operators

Variable	CAC (n=50)	RCCG (n=50)*
Normal trips/day	5–10 trips = 50% 11–20 = 30% 20+ = 20%	10–15 trips = 40% 16–25 trips = 35% 25+ trips = 25%
Camp week trips/day	20–30 trips = 45% 31–40 = 35% 41+ = 20%	40–50 trips = 50% 50+ = 30% 30–39 = 20%
Normal income/day	₦2,000–5,000 = 70% ₦6,000–10,000 = 30%	₦5,000–10,000 = 45% ₦11,000–15,000 = 35% ₦16,000+ = 20%
Camp income/day	₦10,000–20,000 = 50% ₦21,000–30,000 = 30% ₦31,000+ = 20%	₦20,000–30,000 = 45% ₦31,000–50,000 = 35% ₦50,000+ = 20%
Challenges	Long hours = 40% Fuel cost = 20% Traffic = 20% Others = 20%	Traffic congestion = 60% Fuel scarcity = 20% Security concerns = 20%
Livelihood improved?	Yes = 80% A little = 15% No = 5%	Yes = 90% A little = 7% No = 3%

Interpretation: Table 3 demonstrates that transport operators experience large, predictable income multipliers during camp weeks (e.g., CAC camp-week daily income mostly ₦10k–20k; RCCG often ₦20k–50k+), with RCCG operators servicing far more trips and reporting greater absolute earnings; yet both groups face constraints (long hours, fuel costs, and especially traffic congestion at RCCG). This indicates that mobility networks are central to sacred economies: they enable the flow of pilgrims and goods, generate livelihoods, and at the same time produce infrastructural stress that can degrade the quality and sustainability of those same livelihoods

Discussion

The findings from CAC's Babalola Memorial Camp and RCCG's Redemption Camp demonstrate that religious convention camps in Nigeria are not only sacred spaces of worship but also engines of socio-economic transformation. By comparing a historically rooted but modestly scaled camp (CAC) with a mega-Pentecostal camp (RCCG), this study illustrates how religious tourism operates along a spectrum of localised and transnational economic impact.

- i. **Shared Economic Impacts:** Across both camps, vendors, transport operators, and residents reported significant improvements in income and livelihood during camp events. For example, 85% of CAC vendors and 92% of RCCG vendors confirmed gaining new customers beyond the camp week, suggesting that convention activities foster long-term commercial linkages. Similarly, both CAC and RCCG transport operators reported exponential increases in trips and income during camp periods, with over 80% affirming that their livelihoods had improved. We can see here that these findings support earlier studies that painted religious gatherings as seasonal opportunities for informal economic growth in Africa (Oni, 2019; Ukah, 2008). Both camps also presented challenges that mirror each other. Traffic congestion, inflated prices, and sanitation issues were recurrent problems, confirming previous research that religious tourism often produces socio-environmental strain alongside economic opportunities (Adedibu, 2016). Yet, the persistence of attendance growth indicates that participants perceive the spiritual benefits as outweighing these inconveniences in most cases.
- ii. **Differences in Scale and Scope:** The comparison reveals striking differences in scale. At CAC, average visitor spending clustered between ₦11,000–20,000 and ₦21,000+, while at RCCG, more than 80% of respondents reported spending above ₦21,000 at weekly basis. Vendor income during camp week at CAC ranged mostly between ₦21,000–100,000, whereas RCCG vendors reported much higher earnings, often exceeding ₦200,000. This discrepancy reflects RCCG's global network, branding, and the transnational flow of pilgrims (Ukah, 2011), which contrasts with CAC's more localised but deeply historic constituency (Peel, 2016). Transport operators also illustrated the contrast as well: while CAC riders reported camp weekly income of between ₦10,000–30,000, RCCG riders frequently exceeded ₦30,000–50,000 daily. This disparity underscores how megachurch camps like RCCG function as semi-urban economies with dense commercial ecosystems (Adeboye, 2017).
- iii. **Cultural Positioning of Camps:** Another key difference lies in the cultural positioning of both camps. The CAC Babalola Memorial Camp is tied to the legacy of Joseph Ayo Babalola, the prophetic founder of Nigeria's first indigenous Pentecostal movement. Its memorial function sustains a pilgrimage character that attracts a steady but modest flow of participants, often older worshippers and denominationally loyal members. In contrast, the RCCG Redemption Camp embodies a modern Pentecostal megacity,

complete with banks, real estate, universities, and commercial services (Ukah, 2008). It attracts a younger, urban, and transnational demographic, making its economic footprint wider and more diversified.

- iv. **Religious Economy Theory (RET) Lens:** Framing these findings within Religious Economy Theory (RET) sharpens the contrast. RCCG exemplifies “innovation and diversification,” expanding beyond worship into education, housing, and commerce to capture a broad and heterogeneous constituency. Its model reflects RET’s insight that religious organisations thrive by competing in a marketplace of spiritual and social goods. CAC, meanwhile, illustrates “niche positioning” by anchoring itself in historical memory and denominational loyalty. Its pilgrimage-like orientation secures a stable but smaller membership base. Together, the two camps confirm RET’s claim that religious vitality often emerges not from monopolies but from plural strategies of survival, innovation, and adaptation within competitive religious fields.
- v. **Global Relevance of Sacred Economies:** The comparative evidence reveal that sacred spaces are increasingly doubling as economic hubs. The CAC camp demonstrates how even modest, historically rooted sites generate income, support small vendors, and sustain local transport operators. RCCG, on the other hand, illustrates how Pentecostal megachurches transform into global religious economies with regional and international spillover. These findings reinforce global debates on the intersection of religion, economy, and development (Haynes, 2021), showing that Nigerian convention camps are laboratories where spirituality and capitalism intersect. Hence, it is quite impossible to separate religion from economics. For scholars of global religious studies, this comparison becomes relevant because it sketches how African Christianities are shaping new paradigms of religious tourism and economic agency. Whereas Western scholarship often focuses on pilgrimage to ancient sacred sites (e.g., Mecca, Lourdes, Jerusalem), Nigerian convention camps show how new sacred economies are being constructed in postcolonial contexts, often with greater intensity and economic embeddedness (Adogame, 2013).
- vi. **Policy Implications:** Finally, the study offers practical lessons. Local governments stand to benefit from the informal economies generated by camps but must also address the strain on infrastructure. For CAC, policies could focus on road improvements and sanitation facilities to enhance the visitor experience. For RCCG, traffic management and environmental regulation are urgent priorities given the camp’s massive scale. More broadly, these findings suggest that religious convention camps of-course, deserve recognition not just as sites of worship but as informal engines of rural–urban development.

Conclusion

This study has shown that religious convention camps, regardless of size or level of institutionalisation, serve as vital nodes of socio-economic activity in Nigeria. While existing research on mega-camps like RCCG’s Redemption Camp have shown large-scale infrastructural development, the findings from CAC’s Babalola Memorial Camp demonstrate that even smaller, denominational camps generate substantial short-term and residual economic benefits. The likes of vendors, transport operators, and other informal actors experience significant income boosts during camp weeks, while some vendors even report longer-term customer retention. However, these gains are tempered by challenges such as inflated prices, traffic congestion, poor sanitation, and limited accommodation facilities.

Meanwhile, the comparative insight underscores two key realities: first, sacred spaces are not merely religious centres or pilgrim centres but also important engines of informal economic growth; and secondly, the scale and institutional structures of camps shape both the magnitude of benefits and the nature of attendant challenges. This duality goes a long way to show the importance of integrating religious camps into broader economic and infrastructural planning discussions in Nigeria and in Africa as a whole.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

- i. There is a need for the government, religious authorities, and local councils to invest jointly in transport systems, waste management, accommodation, and sanitation facilities around campgrounds to reduce congestion and enhance sustainability.
- ii. Guidelines should be established for vendors and transport operators during camp periods to prevent exploitative price hikes while ensuring equitable access to economic opportunities for both local and external participants.
- iii. Policies should encourage participation of marginalized groups (women, small-scale traders, local artisans) to ensure that economic benefits are broadly distributed rather than concentrated among a few.
- iv. There is a need for regular socio-economic impact assessments to be conducted across different types of camps to track benefits and challenges. This will help create tailored interventions for mega-camps versus smaller denominational camps.
- v. Camps should encourage vendors to build business continuity beyond camp weeks through contact exchange, micro-financing, and cooperative systems. This will ensure that temporary economic gains translate into sustainable livelihoods.
- vi. Finally, there is a high need to strengthen partnerships between camp management and local host communities to balance economic benefits with social and environmental responsibilities, ensuring that both visitors and residents enjoy improved living standards.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 18, 2025 Accepted: December 29, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Lemchi, Remigus O. & Nwachukwu, Emmanuel (2025). "Perception of Soft and Technical Skills in the French Programme by Students of *RSU* and *IAUE* in Rivers State." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 106-113.

Article

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PERCEPTION OF SOFT AND TECHNICAL SKILLS IN THE FRENCH PROGRAMME BY STUDENTS OF *RSU* AND *IAUE* IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This paper examines the level of awareness and acceptance of soft and technical skills by students of French in 200 level at the Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (hereinafter called *RSU* and *IAUE*, Port Harcourt). To elicit responses from our respondents, a questionnaire containing seven (7) relevant questions demanding a *Yes* or *No* answer was administered on the students who were chosen haphazardly. The results indicated that most students lacked the information about necessary skills which could boost their chances of securing jobs easily on graduation. The study therefore recommended a review of the French programme at the university level to conform with the economic, social and technological changing times in not only in Nigeria but also the world. went further to recommend a review of the French programme at the university level to conform with the economic, social and technological changing times in not only in Nigeria but also the world.

Keywords: Soft and Technical Skills, Employability, Programme, Awareness, Foreign Language.

Introduction

French language teaching and learning have undergone some transformations in the areas of core aspects of linguistics and literature. A very strong factor that has made it to be so is the foundation of its teaching and learning since it was not intended at the beginning to be vocational both in conceptualization and implementation. This situation accounted for most French graduates ending up in the classrooms be it at the primary, post-primary or the tertiary level. As much as it is important to transmit knowledge from generation to

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generation which is the basis of education, changing times occasioned by man's improvement through science and technology have altered a lot of human existence, hence the need to change with the times since it is often said that the only constant thing in life is change itself. The programmes of French studies across educational institutions have been tailored around the four cardinal skills in language acquisition namely: reading, writing, listening and speaking without any recourse to other emerging trends and skills which would help the graduates to be in good stead and remain competitive in a dynamic society like ours. Today, the importance of what is known as technical and soft skills has added an impetus to the growing demand for restructuring of French programme in line with the changing times. As more and more institutions of higher learning in Nigeria (colleges of education, polytechnics and universities) offer courses in French at not only the NCE level but also Degree, Master and Doctorate, it follows that more graduates are being churned out on a yearly basis and they would like to find places to render their services to earn a living. This situation opens the need to possess certain qualities and skills that attract employers in both the formal and informal sectors.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include to:

- i. determine the level of awareness and acceptance of soft and technical skills in the university programme of French students.
- ii. make recommendations that would help curriculum planners and stakeholders in achieving a more robust, sustainable and impactful programme that would not only motivate the learners of French at the tertiary level but also make them multi-tasking and employable in the competitive labour market.

Statement of the Problem

French studies at the university level have always concentrated on four skills of language learning namely reading, speaking, writing and listening. From these four skills, the graduates/students are made to study aspects of literature, translation and linguistics, all culminating into an expertise in the language. It should be noted that the above scenario started from the foundation of French programmes which were rooted as a secondary school subject by few missionaries in elite secondary schools in the 40's shortly before Nigeria gained its independence from its former colonial master Britain. The implication of this is that most graduates end up as classroom teachers in primary and secondary schools apart from a few 'lucky' ones who found themselves in government agencies, ministries (like the foreign service) and parastatals (like government media houses). The researchers of this study feel that widening the horizon or scope of French studies at the tertiary level by including soft and technical skills in the programme would go a long way in making the graduates multi-tasking thereby opening up the space for employment and sustainability in a very challenging environment which has been the lot of Nigerians. It is believed by the researchers also that if these very important skills are interwoven with the foreign language skills in French studies, it would go a long way in manpower sourcing and development across the sectors of the Nigerian economy. After all, versatility in man opens the door of ability and competence in life with the view to surviving.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in so many ways. The essence of the research is to find out the level of awareness and acceptance of soft and technical skills in French programmes at the

tertiary level considering the changing times and sophistication that have accompanied the labour market. The research is expected to go a long way in helping future French graduates to drive towards the acquisition of some cutting-edge skills necessary in the course of their programme. The research will also assist curriculum planners to design a more sustainable system that engender French graduates who are multi-tasking and adaptable in a changing and challenging world. Education policy makers will also find the data collected useful in designing a future oriented programme devoid of living in the past.

Literature Review

Guest (www.pearson.com) believed that soft and technical skills are factors that play vital roles in shaping and determining career success and progression. Although hard skills are the core which shows one's qualifications for a position and therefore takes him nearer for job consideration, soft skills are equally important in a challenging world of ours today. In other words, when a candidate for a job possesses certain hard and soft skills, his chances of succeeding professionally are very possible. Birt(2025) in elucidating the necessity of technical skills reasoned that technical skills are important because they enable employees to effectively use the tools, programmes and processes required for their roles, making them more competitive and capable in a wide range of jobs. Just like Guest(op cit), Birt equally agreed that technical skills are equally hard skills in that they rank among the 'required' skills while the soft skills are often termed 'desired' by employers. Diplomat (2025, in *Indeed Career Guide* posits that hard skills are:

... Qualities acquired for performing physical or digital tasks and they are now essential across many industries. There has to be industry relevant technical knowledge which can make one a stronger applicant, improve performance and open up more career.

Birt (2025) explained further that both the *required* and *desired* technical skills are necessary. What this means is that while required skills are essential in carrying out the role expected of the job seekers, desired skills are not directly essential but can give the candidate a competitive edge. We can equally deduce here that the 'required skills' are technical in nature while the 'desired' ones are ranked among soft skills; however both go hand in hand to enhance job prospects. Furthermore, Birt(2025) enumerated the core soft skills of candidates to include Adaptability: the candidate must endeavor to adjust to new conditions, work flows or technology. Critical thinking: He must be able to objectively analyse information to make informed decisions. Emotional intelligence: this is the ability to understand, manage and utilize one's emotions. In other words, no matter your perceptions or thoughts however diverse they may be, you should keep it aside and face your job professionally. In terms of the hard or what is known as technical skills, the following are useful for employability in the 21st Century: Computer programming, Data analysis, Graphic designs, foreign language proficiency, Project management and Technical writing (Birt, 2025).

It should be noted here that hard or technical skills are quantifiable and teachable abilities specific to a job or industry and they are acquired through formal education, training programmes and practical experience like studying French at the university but soft skills are developed from exposure, interpersonal relationships and socialization. The latter skills here are not necessarily acquired but learned and developed with time and they are associated with open embrace with people and contacts in the course of both formal and informal interactions. For instance, communication skill being the ability to convey information clearly and effectively is an attitude cultivated with time and not necessarily

studied at the four walls of a university, so also are teamwork and problem-solving technics of the individual. The acquisition of language like French at the university is a skill in that it is technical in nature but at the same time foreign language skill like French language is often classified as a hard or required (Diplomat, 2025). In Nigerian universities, many Departments of French do not have a curriculum that boast of training the graduates to be multi-tasking but the programmes are more often than not structured to reflect aspects of linguistics, translation studies and literary knowledge in French. The four year programme (sometimes five in some universities) is often tailored around the acquisition of the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, ditto for the Master and Doctoral studies. The researchers of this study believe strongly that this posture is not in itself unprogressive but concerted efforts should be made to reflect the changing times in a challenging society. Contextualising the teaching and learning of French language at the university level, Lemchi (2021, p.23) remarks that:

In Nigerian universities, the policy for foreign language studies recommends that English remains the medium of instruction while French which is pertinent to us in this study is offered as either a General Studies Course or in some case compulsory course in a few selected faculties like the humanities, social and management.

The objective of this policy is to produce bilingual graduates who may find themselves in the oil, civil and diplomatic sectors of the economy. However, there are some students who offer the language course at degree level in which they spend four or five years depending on the university not also forgetting "a year abroad" embedded in the programme. This last group identified here forms the core of our study and thus our population.

Methodology

Data Collection: The data for this study were collected by using the quantitative approach. Quantitative research method in language study and research involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data. Among others, this research method includes the use of questionnaires, chi-square tests, t-tests, and corpus analysis 25. Quantitative research is particularly valuable in language acquisition studies where it helps in identifying patterns and testing hypothesis about language learning processes. The method equally provides objective, measurable data that can support or refute theoretical claims (Vasishth et al, 1986). The researchers have thus chosen the quantitative research method through which they structured appropriate questionnaires to elicit data and analyse them with the view to finding out the perception of university French students towards the inclusion of soft and technical skills in the core of their studies. To achieve this objective, the researchers visited the universities to identify with the students and get approval from the Heads of Department so that our activities do not distort the university programme. Our questionnaire contained seven multiple choice questions in conformity with our research methodology.

Method of Data Analysis

The researchers of this study established the research questions through the use of questionnaires where they prepared seven multiple choice questions that demanded the respondents to choose an option between *Yes* or *No* to a particular question, the collection and capturing of the data were meticulously done so as to maintain the integrity of the study. This was done in order to avoid any typos, data capturing errors, outliers, or anomalies that

might affect our dataset. The researchers analysed the data finally to get result from the multiple choice questions. Depending on the option chosen by the respondents for each question, the item was calculated using the overall population of study. This helped the researchers to determine the level of acceptance and awareness for the inclusion of soft and technical skills in the degree programme of selected university French students.

Area of Study

The study was carried out in Obio-Akpo LGA of Rivers State. The researchers chose this area because they lived close to the universities where the research was carried out and the researchers were assisted by a lecturer in the Department of French which helped them to have contacts with colleagues and subsequently the students who participated in the study.

Population of the Study

The population comprised a group of respondents that meet a designated set of criteria and in this study. It includes 200 level students in the Department of French at two universities namely Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) all in Obio-Akpo Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Sample and Sample Technique

The respondents were drawn from students in the Department of French of the universities in Obio-Akpo Local Government Area of Rivers State. Both universities are state government owned and they are mixed but their numerical strength was not the same and our limitation to use only students in 200 level formed the inequality in population. At Rivers State University, hereinafter called RSU for the purpose of this study, 33 students participated while at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, 28 students were involved bringing the whole population to a total of sixty-one students.

Instrument for Data Collection

In this study, the researchers used structured questionnaire to elicit responses from the respondents/participants. The questions comprised seven items designed to obtain information from the students of French Department to determine the level of perception for the inclusion of soft and technical skills in their language programme. These questions are the following:

- i. Do you think that only aspects of language, literature and translation are enough to enable you secure a job after graduation?
a. Yes b. No
- ii. Would you like a vocation/skill other than language, literature and translation to be included in your studies?
a. Yes b. No
- iii. Do you think that if a separate skill apart from language, literature and translation is introduced to your studies it would enhance your job prospects after graduation?
a. Yes b. No
- iv. In practical terms, do you think that lack of soft and technical skills limit the chances of French graduates to secure jobs easily?
a. Yes b. No
- v. Are you knowledgeable about soft and technical skills?
a. Yes b. No
- vi. I prefer soft skills to be added in my French programme.
a. Yes b. No

- vii. I prefer technical skills to be added in my French programme.
 a. Yes b. No

The result of analysis of data on the questionnaire administered and conducted on French students to find out the level of acceptance and awareness of the inclusion of soft and technical skills in the programme at the Department is summarized in Table 1.:

Table 1: Results of Respondents’ Responses on Inclusion of Soft and Technical Skills in French Programme at RSU and IAUE, Rivers State

S/N	Description of Items	Options		Percentage (%)		Remark
		YES	NO			
1.	Do you think that only aspects of language, literature and translation are enough to enable you secure a job after graduation?	18	43	29.5	70.4	Nil
2.	Would you like a vocation/skill other than language, literature and translation to be included in your studies?	39	22	63.9	36.0	-
3.	Do you think that if a separate skill apart from language, literature and translation is introduced to your studies it would enhance your job prospects after graduation?	51	10	83.6	16.3	-
4.	In practical terms, do you think that lack of soft and technical skills limits the chances of French graduates to secure jobs easily?	48	13	78.6	21.3	-
5.	Are you knowledgeable about soft and technical skills?	11	50	18.0	81.9	-
6.	I prefer soft skills to be added to my French programme.	28	33	45.9	54.0	-
7.	I prefer technical skills to be added to my French programme.	43	18	70.4	29.5	-

The analysis of the data from the table above shows that a greater number of French students do not think that their programme as presently constituted with literature, linguistics and translation can actually help them satisfactorily to secure good jobs going by the 70.4% representing 43 respondents of them answering in the negative. To the researchers, this gives a sense of insecurity about job prospects without relevant skills needed in the field. However, the remaining 18 respondents representing 29.5% think otherwise though the questionnaire did not ask the reason for this. On the necessity to include vocation/ soft and technical skills in the French programme, a higher number of the students responded in the affirmative. Thus, 39 students representing 63.9% are favourably disposed to this item as against 22 respondents representing 36.0% who thought otherwise. On the third item which dwelt on the probability that an inclusion of a separate skill would enhance job prospects after their graduation, more (88.5%) are of the opinion that it would

help them while 16.3% representing only 10 students thought otherwise. The implication of this scenario is that there may be curriculum insufficiency in their current programme vis-à-vis employment prospects.

Apart from the factors analysed above, 48 students representing 78.6% think that lack of soft and technical skills in their programme limited their chances to start plum jobs easily. The implication being that more and more graduates of the discipline are like endangered species in the labour market. However, only 21.3% of them representing 13 students think that lack of both soft and technical skills inhibited their job chances after graduation. Talking about the awareness level of the respondents about soft and technical skills as an advantage or acutting edge superiority for job find, 11 students representing 18.0% are aware of the importance of this factor while 50 respondents representing 81.9% claimed in the questionnaire that they were not knowledgeable of the existence of these contemporary skills. Interestingly and in an era of technological revolution using the social media, AI and all worth not, most of the students lacked this vital information. On the preference between soft and technical skills being included in their programme, the former had 11 students representing 18.0% while the latter skill had 50 students representing 81.9% students from a total of 61 who responded.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study tried to determine the extent French students were aware of soft and technical skills which could help them to navigate in the labour market after graduation. Quite paradoxically, a greater number of the respondents were not aware of these skills as contemporary practice which helps many graduates no matter the discipline to secure jobs with their hands-on experiences. The study found out that aspects of literature, language and translations which are the hallmark of the French study at Nigerian universities were not enough to adequately prepare the graduates in the labour market. In other words, the horizon of their programme at the university should be expanded to give them what the researchers believed were 'cutting-edge' advantage when they face the realities at the labour market because life as a university student is a different ball game immediately they graduated.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing however, the researchers recommend the following steps to be taken in order to create advantageous positions for French graduates in the labour market:

- i. At the arrival in the university in Year One, students should be made to choose at least a technical skill as part of the core curriculum of their study. Although some may argue that a related course like *Entrepreneurship* is already being offered compulsorily in Nigerian universities, the course has been plagued by obvious lack of logistics, dearth of manpower and the tendency to continue teaching it theoretically.
- ii. The relevant authorities like the National Universities Commission(NUC) and the Ministry of Education should allow some form of autonomy of universities because this gives room for creativity of university personnel instead to always run to Abuja for approval of programmes that fits the whims and caprices of the élite who more often patronize foreign universities for their children and wards.
- iii. Those who have practical experiences should be engaged to impart mainly technical skills instead of always relying on personnel with theoretical knowledge. Over classroom talk has been the bane of Nigerian educational system with graduates being churned out with paper qualifications without necessary skills.

- iv. In the same vein, the attitude of the students towards knowledge acquisition at the ivory tower must change for the better in such a way that students concentrate on their studies more and lay less emphasis on money making. Thus, there is the need for the students to embrace 'first thing first' believing that there is light at the end of the tunnel for it is after rain that sunshine comes.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 18, 2025 Accepted: December 29, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Anyarogbu, Justin (2025). "A Philosophical Critique of Ethical Failure and Governance Deficits in Nigeria's National Oil Company (NNPC Limited)." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 114-128.

Article

Open Access

A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF ETHICAL FAILURE AND GOVERNANCE DEFICITS IN NIGERIA'S NATIONAL OIL COMPANY (NNPC LIMITED)

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Abstract

Corruption and mismanagement of resources have been perennial problems of NNPC. Given this realisation, this paper investigated the underlying factors that catalyse these tendencies. Using the method of philosophical analysis, this paper offers a critique of the ethical failure and governance deficits within Nigeria's National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL). Drawing on corporate governance theories (particularly agency, stakeholder, and stewardship theories), the study argues that persistent governance deficit and ethical challenges at NNPC are not merely managerial lapses or regulatory inefficiencies, but manifestations of institutional ethical failure arising from its hybrid role as both a commercial enterprise and a public trustee. The analysis situates NNPC within debates on corporate moral agency, diffused responsibility, and public accountability in state-owned enterprises (SOEs). It demonstrates how opacity, political interference, and weakened fiduciary obligations structurally undermine ethical governance, normalising misconduct and eroding public trust. Furthermore, the paper engages normative questions of responsibility, distinguishing between individual culpability and collective institutional blameworthiness. In addressing these challenges, it integrates African communitarian perspectives, particularly Gyekye's relational ethics and Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy, to propose a governance framework that foregrounds public stewardship, relational responsibility, and institutional integrity. The study concludes that meaningful reform requires not only procedural and legal adjustments but also the deliberate cultivation of an ethical institutional culture capable of sustaining legitimacy, trust, and moral accountability in Nigeria's oil sector.

Keywords: Corporate Governance, Enterprise, Ethical Failure, Governance Deficit, Institutional Failure, Stewardship.

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Introduction

Corporate governance is often discussed in managerial and legal terms focusing on efficiency, performance, and regulatory compliance. Yet such an approach risks overlooking the fundamentally moral character of governance particularly in institutions whose operations bear directly on public welfare. Corporate governance structures determine not only how decisions are made but also how responsibility is distributed, how power is constrained, and how trust is either sustained or eroded. When governance fails, the failure is not merely technical; it is ethical, implicating questions of responsibility, legitimacy, and justice (Boatright, 2018). These ethical concerns become especially acute in the case of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Unlike private corporations, SOEs operate at the intersection of commercial activity and public authority. They are expected to pursue efficiency and profitability while simultaneously acting as custodians of public resources and agents of national development. This dual role creates persistent moral tension since commercial rationality may conflict with public accountability, and political influence may undermine fiduciary responsibility. This is incumbent on the fact that conventional models of corporate governance developed primarily for private firms are often ill-suited to capture the ethical complexity of SOEs (OECD, 2015).

Nigeria's National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) presents a paradigmatic case of this ethical tension. Following its incorporation under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) of 2021, NNPCL was formally transformed from a statutory corporation into a limited liability company, ostensibly to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability (FGN, PIA, 2021). Yet the persistence of governance controversies surrounding the company suggests that structural transformation alone is insufficient to resolve deeper institutional and moral problems. The challenge, therefore, is not simply whether NNPCL complies with formal governance codes, but whether its institutional design and operational culture satisfy the ethical requirements appropriate to an entity entrusted with managing a nation's most significant public resource. This paper argues that the governance deficits associated with NNPCL are best understood not as isolated managerial failures or regulatory gaps, but as manifestations of institutional ethical failure. Drawing on corporate governance theories (particularly agency theory, stakeholder theory, and stewardship theory), the paper examines how responsibility becomes diffused within hybrid public-commercial institutions, enabling opacity, moral hazard, and the erosion of public trust. In doing so, the study situates NNPCL within broader philosophical debates about corporate moral agency, collective responsibility, and the ethical obligations of public institutions. The central claim advanced here is that NNPCL's governance challenges reflect a deeper normative problem, which is, the absence of an ethically coherent model of corporate governance appropriate to state-owned enterprises operating in fragile accountability environments.

Conceptual and Normative Concerns

Corporate Governance Beyond Managerial Control: Corporate governance is commonly defined in terms of structures and processes through which corporations are directed and controlled. In much of the mainstream literatures, governance is treated instrumentally as a mechanism for aligning managerial behaviour with shareholder interests, reducing agency costs, and improving organisational performance (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). The authors articulated in their foundational work on agency theory that "The problem here is how to get managers to act in the shareholders' interest. ... It is the existence of agency costs which gives rise to the necessity for monitoring and bonding activities designed to reduce these

costs. ... Agency costs are as real as any other costs” (pp. 308, 312, 357). While such accounts are analytically useful, they are normatively thin. They presuppose that the primary purpose of governance is efficiency and value maximisation; leaving largely unexamined the ethical dimensions of power, responsibility, and legitimacy embedded within governance arrangements. This instrumental focus risks reducing governance to a mere technical exercise, overlooking how it shapes broader social relations and public welfare.

From a philosophical perspective, corporate governance should instead be understood as an ethical architecture: a system of norms, roles, and accountability relations that shapes how decisions affecting others are made and justified. Governance structures allocate authority, define obligations, and determine whose interests count and whose can be marginalised. As such, governance is inseparable from moral evaluation. A governance system may be procedurally sound yet ethically deficient if it systematically obscures responsibility, entrenches injustice, or permits harm without accountability (Crane et al., 2019). Crane et al (2019) emphasised this point when they argue that ethical business conduct requires scrutinising not only outcomes but the underlying assumptions of power and justice in organisational design. This broader conception is particularly important for institutions whose operations have significant social and political consequences. In such contexts, governance cannot be reduced to internal corporate compliance or board effectiveness; it must be assessed in light of its impact on public trust, distributive justice, and institutional integrity. The ethical evaluation of governance thus requires moving beyond formal rules to interrogate the moral assumptions underlying institutional design. This involves recognising that governance arrangements embodies normative choices about who bears risks, who benefits from decisions, and how conflicts between private interests and public goods are resolved. In essence, effective governance in ethically charged domains demand a commitment to principles that transcend mere efficiency, incorporating considerations of fairness, transparency, and long-term societal well-being.

Corporations and the Question of Moral Agency

A central philosophical issue in evaluating corporate governance is whether corporations themselves can be regarded as moral agents. Traditional moral philosophy tends to treat agency as an attribute of individuals, grounded in intentionality, rational deliberation, and the capacity for moral judgment. Corporations, by contrast, are artificial entities composed of many individuals, raising doubts about whether they can meaningfully bear moral responsibility. Despite these concerns, several scholars have argued persuasively that corporations can function as collective moral agents. Peter French (1984), for example, contends that corporations possess internal decision-making structures (what he terms “corporate internal decision (CID) structures”) that allow them to form intentions and act upon reasons in ways that are not reducible to the intentions of individual members. In a detailed exposition, French (1984) explains:

A Corporation’s Internal Decision (CID) Structure ... comprises two elements ... (1) an organizational or responsibility flow chart that delineates stations and levels within the corporate power structure and (2) corporate decision recognition rule(s) ... usually embedded in something like corporation policy. ... When these two elements ... are in place in a corporation they constitute a license for treating the corporation ... as an intentional actor capable of being morally responsible for its actions (pp. 41-46).

When harm results from actions produced by such structures, responsibility cannot be exhaustively assigned to particular individuals; it attaches to the organisation as an institution. This perspective challenges methodological individualism, which views corporations merely as aggregates of human actors, and instead posits that organisational processes can generate genuine corporate intentionality. This view has been further developed by scholars who argue that institutions can bear responsibilities precisely because they structure individual behaviour and constrain available choices. Erskine (2003), for instance, extends this to institutional moral agency more broadly, noting that institutions shape moral possibilities through their decision, procedures and cultural norms. On this account, moral responsibility arises not only from individual wrongdoing but also from the predictable and systematic outcomes of institutional arrangements. If an organisation's governance framework consistently enables opacity, irresponsibility, or abuse, then the institution itself is morally implicated, even when individual actors operate within formal rules. This collective dimension underscores the need for governance designs that foster ethical deliberation at the organisational level, rather than relying solely on individual virtue.

Responsibility, Accountability, and Institutional Failure

Understanding corporate governance as an ethical architecture brings into focus the distinction between responsibility and accountability. Responsibility concerns moral authorship (who ought to answer for outcomes) whereas accountability concerns the mechanisms through which actors are called to justify their conduct and bear consequences. In complex organisations, these two dimensions frequently diverge. Responsibility may be widely diffused, while accountability remains weak or symbolic (Hood, 2011). This divergence is especially pronounced in state-owned enterprises, where overlapping lines of authority, political influence, and bureaucratic insulation obscure moral authorship. Bovens (1998) describes this phenomenon as the "problem of many hands," in which harmful outcomes result from collective action, yet no single actor can be clearly identified as responsible. Bovens (1998) elaborates extensively on the implications, thus:

Because many different individuals contribute in many different ways to decisions and policies of organisations, it is often very difficult, if not impossible, to identify who is morally responsible for political outcomes. ... The problem of many hands occurs when the combined contributions of a number of identifiable individuals to a process produce a morally objectionable outcome, but none of the individuals involved can reasonably be said to have caused the outcome in a morally relevant sense (pp. 45, 50).

Under such conditions, governance failure becomes normalised not because actors are unaware of ethical standards, but because institutional structures systematically undermine effective accountability. Hood (2011) complements this by examining blame avoidance strategies in public organisations, where diffused responsibility facilitates the evasion of consequences. From a normative standpoint, such arrangements constitute a form of institutional ethical failure. They erode the conditions under which moral responsibility can be meaningfully exercised and assessed. Where governance structures routinely prevent the attribution of responsibility, they fail not only administratively but morally. This insight is crucial for evaluating entities like NNPC, whose hybrid public-commercial identity exacerbates responsibility diffusion and weakens ethical constraints. In such cases, reform must address not only individual conduct but the structural features that enable moral hazards to persist unchecked.

Implications for the Evaluation of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)

The conceptual analysis developed in this section suggests that the ethical evaluation of SOEs like NNPC requires a distinct normative framework. Unlike private firms, SOEs are embedded in public authority and derive their legitimacy from their role as stewards of collective resources. Their governance structures must therefore satisfy higher ethical standards of transparency, responsibility, and public justification. The OECD (2015) emphasises this distinction, noting that:

State-owned enterprises (SOEs) often pursue multiple and sometimes conflicting objectives, including public policy objectives that may not be aligned with commercial interests. ... Good corporate governance of SOEs is crucial for ensuring that they operate efficiently, transparently and accountably, while contributing to sustainable development and economic resilience (pp. 11-13).

Assessing SOEs solely through the lens of efficiency or profitability risks obscuring these ethical obligations. A philosophically informed approach to corporate governance instead asks whether institutional arrangements enable or undermine moral responsibility, whether they respect public trust, and whether they contribute to or erode the ethical legitimacy of state power. These considerations provide the normative foundation for the subsequent analysis of NNPC's governance deficits. By integrating insights from agency theory, collective moral agency, and accountability challenges, this framework highlights the need for governance models that prioritise ethical coherence in hybrid institutions operating amid fragile accountability environments.

Theoretical Foundations

Agency Theory and the Problem of Moral Hazard: Agency theory remains one of the most influential frameworks in corporate governance scholarship. At its core, it conceptualises the firm as a nexus of contracts in which principals (owners) delegate authority to agents (managers), whose interests may diverge from those of the principals. Governance mechanisms (such as boards, incentives, and monitoring) are therefore designed to minimise agency costs arising from opportunism, information asymmetry, and moral hazard. Jensen and Meckling (1976) capture this tension succinctly:

An agency relationship is a contract under which one or more persons (the principal(s)) engage another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf which involves delegating some decision making authority to the agent. If both parties to the relationship are utility maximizers there is good reason to believe that the agent will not always act in the best interests of the principal (p. 308).

While agency theory offers valuable insights into control and accountability, its ethical limitations are particularly evident in the context of state-owned enterprises. The theory presupposes a relatively clear identification of principals and agents. In private corporations, shareholders typically occupy the role of principals. In SOEs, however, the identity of the principal is deeply ambiguous. The state, political office-holders, citizens, and even future generations may all plausibly claim principal status. This multiplicity undermines the central assumption of agency theory and generates what may be described as normative indeterminacy (Bovens, 1998). This ambiguity not only complicates oversight but also creates opportunities for agents to prioritise short-term selfish political objectives over long-

term public benefit, thereby entrenching moral hazard at an institutional level. From a moral standpoint, this indeterminacy facilitates responsibility diffusion. When no single principal can effectively exercise oversight, agents are shielded from robust accountability. Moral hazard becomes institutionalised rather than exceptional. Managers may act in ways that serve political, personal, or sectional interests without clear mechanisms for ethical sanction. Under such conditions, agency theory not only fails to resolve ethical failure but risks legitimising governance arrangements that obscure moral responsibility behind contractual abstractions (Boatright, 2018). The result is a governance framework that, while analytically elegant, proves ethically inadequate for institutions charged with stewarding public resources.

Stakeholder Theory and the Ethics of Public Harm

Stakeholder theory emerged partly as a response to the moral narrowness of shareholder-centric models of governance. It argues that corporations have ethical obligations to all parties affected by their activities, including employees, consumers, communities, and society at large (Freeman, 1984). Freeman (2010) explains that “The stakeholder approach begins with the assumption that values are necessarily and explicitly a part of doing business. It asks managers to articulate the shared sense of the value they create, and what brings its core stakeholders together. This propels the firm forward and allows it to generate outstanding performance” (p. 24). This framework is especially relevant to SOEs, whose operations directly affect public welfare and national development, like NNPC. In the context of a national oil company, stakeholders extend beyond immediate economic actors to include host communities, environmentally vulnerable populations, and citizens whose livelihoods depend on the equitable management of natural resources. Stakeholder theory thus provides a richer ethical vocabulary for evaluating governance failures that manifest as environmental degradation, distributive injustice, or intergenerational harm (Crane et al., 2019). Given the recognition of these broader impacts, the theory invites a more comprehensive assessment of how governance decisions ripple through society, often perpetuating harm to marginalised groups.

However, stakeholder theory also faces significant normative challenges. Critics argue that expanding the range of stakeholders without clear priority rules can dilute responsibility and weaken accountability. When an institution claims to serve everyone, it may in practice be answerable to no one (Sternberg, 2000). Sternberg (2000) warns that vague stakeholder obligations can undermine the definable telos of business, leading to arbitrary decision-making. For SOEs operating within weak institutional environments, stakeholder rhetoric can become a moral facade that masks entrenched governance abuses. The ethical promise of stakeholder theory is therefore realised only when accompanied by institutional mechanisms capable of translating moral obligation into enforceable responsibility. Without such safeguards, the theory risks becoming aspirational rather than operational especially in contexts where power imbalances already favour elite capture.

Stewardship Theory and Fiduciary Ethics in Public Institutions

Stewardship theory offers a more normatively robust framework for evaluating governance in state-owned enterprises (SOEs). In contrast to agency theory’s assumption of self-interested agents, stewardship theory emphasises trust, duty, and intrinsic motivation. Managers are conceived not merely as agents pursuing private gain but as stewards entrusted with the care of collective resources. Davis et al (1997) elaborate this alternative model:

Recent thinking about top management has been influenced by alternative models of man. Economic approaches to governance such as agency theory tend to assume some form of homo economicus, which depict subordinates as individualistic, opportunistic, and self-serving. Alternatively, sociological and psychological approaches to governance such as stewardship theory depict subordinates as collectivists, pro-organizational, and trustworthy (pp. 20-21).

This conception aligns closely with the ethical expectations placed upon public institutions. In SOEs, managerial authority is not simply delegated for efficiency; it is conferred as a form of public trust. The moral failure of such institutions, therefore, cannot be adequately captured by metrics of performance alone. It involves a breach of fiduciary duty and a violation of the ethical norms governing public office (O'Neill, 2002). This fiduciary perspective demands that stewards prioritise the long-term sustainability of resources over immediate gains, recognising that their role carries inherent moral weight derived from public mandate. Philosophically, stewardship theory resonates with broader traditions of moral thought that emphasise responsibility tied to role occupancy. To hold an office is to assume obligations that are not reducible to contractual terms. When stewards exploit institutional ambiguity for private or political ends, the resulting failure is not accidental but ethical. This framework is particularly valuable for assessing NNPC whose legitimacy depends less on profit generation than on the integrity with which it manages Nigeria's petroleum resources. Since it fosters intrinsic motivation and trust-based relationships, stewardship theory offers a pathway toward governance that honours public fiduciary ethics rather than merely mitigating opportunism.

Institutional Ethics and Structural Failure

While agency, stakeholder, and stewardship theories illuminate different dimensions of governance, none alone fully captures the ethical dynamics of large, complex organisations. Institutional ethics provides a complementary perspective by focusing on how organisational structures, norms, and incentives systematically shape behaviour. On this view, ethical failure often arises not from individual vice but from institutional arrangements that normalise wrongdoing or render moral action costly (Hood, 2011). Young's (2011) account of structural injustice is particularly instructive here. She argues that individuals may participate in processes that produce unjust outcomes without possessing malicious intent or direct control. Responsibility, in such cases, is political and collective rather than purely individual. Young develops this in depth, noting that:

Structural injustice exists when social processes put large categories of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time as these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities. ... Structural injustice, then, is a kind of moral wrong distinct from the wrongful action of an individual agent or the repressive policies of a state (pp. 52, 60).

Relative to corporate governance, this insight shifts attention from isolated misconduct to the moral quality of institutional design. In SOEs, structural features (such as politicised appointments or opaque reporting lines) can perpetuate injustice even as individual actors comply with formal rules. This perspective has significant implications for evaluating SOEs. If

governance structures predictably generate opacity, irresponsibility, or abuse, then ethical failure is systemic. Reform, therefore, requires more than replacing personnel or strengthening compliance rules; it demands a reconfiguration of the moral architecture of governance itself. This institutional-ethical lens provides the normative foundation for the subsequent examination of NNPC's governance deficits, highlighting how entrenched structures can sustain ethical deficits across regimes and administrations.

NNPCL as a Hybrid Institution: Structure and Ethical Tensions

From NNPC to NNPCL: Institutional Transformation under the PIA

Nigeria's National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) emerged from a significant institutional reconfiguration following the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) in 2021. The Act transformed the former Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), a statutory body, into a limited liability company governed by the Companies and Allied Matters Act (FGN, PIA, 2021). This transition was intended to insulate petroleum operations from political interference, promote commercial efficiency, and enhance transparency and accountability. As the PIA explicitly provides in its governance provisions, "The objective of the Company is to carry out its operations on a commercial basis without reliance on government funds and to maximise value for shareholders in a manner comparable to private companies in the oil and gas industry" (FGN, PIA, sec. 64(a)-(b)). From a governance perspective, incorporation marked a formal shift from bureaucratic administration to corporate management. In principle, this transformation aligns NNPCL with global trends in the reform of national oil companies, many of which have sought to balance state ownership with commercial discipline (Tordo et al., 2011). However, philosophical rationalism requires asking not only whether the new structure is legally coherent, but whether it is ethically coherent. Institutional form does not automatically resolve moral problems embedded in organisational culture, incentive structures, or accountability relationships. The persistence of governance concerns following incorporation suggests that structural reform, while necessary, is insufficient. The ethical question is whether NNPCL's governance framework adequately reconciles its commercial objectives with its continuing public responsibilities, or whether it merely redescribes old institutional tensions in corporate language. This tension underscores the need for a normative framework that addresses not merely procedural changes but also the deeper moral obligations of entities managing collective resources.

The Hybrid Identity Problem: Commercial Logic versus Public Trust

At the core of NNPCL's governance challenges lies its hybrid institutional identity. On the one hand, NNPCL is expected to operate as a commercially viable enterprise, competing in global energy markets and generating revenue. On the other hand, it remains wholly owned by the Nigerian state and is entrusted with managing resources that are constitutionally regarded as belonging to the Nigerian people. This dual mandate generates a persistent ethical tension. Commercial logic prioritises efficiency, competitiveness, and profit maximisation, while public trust demands transparency, equity, and responsiveness to citizens' interests. When these logics collide, governance ambiguity arises. Decisions may be justified as commercially sensitive to avoid disclosure, or as politically constrained to excuse inefficiency. In such contexts, ethical responsibility risks being displaced rather than resolved. Philosophically, this tension reflects what may be described as a category error in governance design which implies the assumption that a corporate form can seamlessly absorb public fiduciary obligations without a corresponding ethical framework. Without

explicit moral prioritisation, hybridity becomes a source of normative confusion rather than institutional strength. O'Neill (2002) rightly observes in her discussion of trust in public institutions that "Trust is placed in institutions when we rely on their good judgement and good faith, but also when we expect them to meet standards of accountability that are not merely procedural but substantive, ensuring that public resources serve public ends" (p. 76).

Political Influence and Responsibility Diffusion

Another defining feature of hybrid SOEs (NNPCL in this case) is their exposure to political influence. Even where formal incorporation aims to reduce state interference, informal political pressures often persist through appointments, policy directives, and fiscal expectations (Khan, 2010). Such influence does not necessarily involve illegality; rather, it operates through structurally embedded expectations that blur the boundaries between political authority and corporate governance. In the Nigerian context, this dynamic is compounded by historical patterns of clientelism and rent distribution. From an ethical standpoint, political influence contributes to responsibility diffusion. When outcomes are shaped by overlapping actors (corporate managers, government officials, regulators, and political principals) it becomes difficult to attribute moral authorship. This reinforces the "problem of many hands," in which accountability is fragmented and ethical failure becomes systemic rather than episodic (Bovens, 1998). Crucially, responsibility diffusion does not imply the absence of moral responsibility. Rather, it signals an institutional failure to create conditions under which responsibility can be clearly assigned and ethically assessed. Governance structures that tolerate or normalise such diffusion undermine the moral legitimacy of the institution, regardless of formal compliance with legal standards. In hybrid SOEs like the NNPCL, this erosion of legitimacy manifests in diminished public trust and recurrent calls for reform.

Transparency, Opacity, and Ethical Legitimacy

Transparency occupies a central place in the ethical evaluation of public institutions. While complete openness may be impractical in commercially competitive environments, persistent opacity in entities managing public resources raises serious moral concerns. Transparency is not merely an administrative virtue; it is a condition for public justification and democratic accountability. Rawls (1993) emphasises this in his account of public reason, suggesting that "The idea of public reason specifies at the deepest level the basic moral and political values that are to determine a constitutional democratic government's relation to its citizens and their relation to one another. ... It is the duty of citizens and officials to justify their political decisions by reference to these shared values" (pp. 217, 220).

In hybrid institutions like NNPCL, appeals to commercial confidentiality can conflict with citizens' legitimate demand for information. When such conflicts are resolved systematically in favour of opacity, governance legitimacy is weakened. Ethical governance requires not absolute disclosure, but principled clarity about what must be disclosed, to whom, and on what moral grounds. From a philosophical perspective, opacity becomes ethically problematic when it shields decision-making from public scrutiny in ways that prevent meaningful accountability. In such cases, governance failure manifests not as the violation of explicit rules, but as the erosion of the moral relationship between institution and public. This erosion is central to understanding the ethical deficits that continue to characterise governance debates surrounding NNPCL, where public demands for accountability often confront claims of commercial necessity. Note that the analysis in this section does not presuppose bad faith or individual misconduct. Rather, it treats NNPCL as a

case of institutional ethical tension, where structural hybridity, political embeddedness, and weak accountability mechanisms interact to produce persistent governance challenges. This framing avoids reductionist explanations and allows for a more philosophically robust critique.

Ethical Failure and Governance Deficits in NNPC

Ethical Failure as Institutional, Not Episodic: Ethical failure in complex organisations is often mischaracterised as a sequence of discrete incidents attributable to individual wrongdoing. Such an approach, while administratively convenient, obscures the deeper moral dynamics at work within institutions whose structures systematically shape behaviour. From a philosophical standpoint, ethical failure is better understood as institutional when it arises predictably from governance arrangements that diffuse responsibility, weaken accountability, and normalise opacity (Hood, 2011). In the case of NNPC, the persistence of governance controversies despite formal restructuring suggests that ethical deficits cannot be adequately explained as episodic lapses. Rather, they point to enduring institutional conditions that undermine ethical responsibility. When governance frameworks repeatedly fail to generate clarity about who is answerable for decisions affecting public resources, moral failure becomes structural. This form of failure is especially troubling in SOEs where the moral stakes extend beyond organisational performance to public trust and distributive justice. As Hood (2011) notes in his examination of blame avoidance in public systems, institutional designs often facilitate the displacement of responsibility, allowing systemic issues to persist unchecked.

Opacity and the Moral Limits of Commercial Confidentiality

One of the most significant governance challenges facing hybrid SOEs is the ethical tension between commercial confidentiality and public accountability. While competitive markets may justify certain forms of nondisclosure, institutions entrusted with public resources bear a heightened obligation to justify secrecy on moral grounds. Opacity becomes ethically problematic when it prevents stakeholders, particularly citizens, from assessing whether power is being exercised responsibly (OECD, 2024). This situation captures almost perfectly the ethical pitfalls of NNPC. From a normative perspective, transparency is not merely an administrative virtue but a condition of public reason-giving. O'Neill (2002) argues that accountability requires more than information disclosure; it requires intelligible justification addressed to those affected by institutional decisions. When governance structures privilege confidentiality without corresponding mechanisms for public justification, they erode the ethical legitimacy of institutional authority. Applied to NNPC, this insight suggests that governance deficits are not reducible to technical reporting gaps. They reflect a deeper ethical failure to sustain the moral relationship between the institution and the public it serves. Where opacity becomes routine rather than exceptional, governance loses its justificatory force, particularly in contexts where historical secrecy has compounded resource curse dynamics.

Responsibility Diffusion and Institutional Blameworthiness

A defining feature of ethical failure in large public institutions is the diffusion of responsibility across multiple actors and layers of authority. Decisions are shaped by boards, executives, ministries, regulators, and political principals, creating an environment in which no single agent appears fully responsible for outcomes. This diffusion does not eliminate moral responsibility; instead, it transforms it into a collective problem (Bovens, 1998).

Scholars of institutional ethics argue that when harmful or unjust outcomes are produced through normal organisational functioning, the institution itself becomes morally blameworthy. Peter French's (1984) account of corporate moral agency is particularly relevant here. If an organisation's internal decision-making structures systematically produce outcomes that undermine ethical standards, then moral evaluation must extend beyond individual actors to the institution as such. In this sense, governance deficits within NNPC may be interpreted as failures of institutional moral agency. The absence of clear accountability pathways does not absolve the institution; it constitutes the very basis of its ethical failure. This reframing shifts the analytical focus from identifying culpable individuals to evaluating the moral adequacy of governance design, a perspective shared by scholarly critiques of rentier state structures that enable diffused accountability.

Normalisation of Ethical Breach and Organisational Culture

Institutional ethical failure is often sustained through organisational cultures that normalise practices which, in isolation, might appear ethically questionable. Over time, repeated exposure to weak accountability, political interference, and opaque decision-making can recalibrate moral expectations, rendering ethical concern exceptional rather than routine (Crane et al., 2019). This explains the systemic decay that has made economic and political corruption a habitual characteristic of the NNPC. Such normalisation does not require malicious intent. It can emerge gradually as actors adapt to institutional incentives and constraints. From a philosophical perspective, however, this adaptation is itself ethically significant. When institutions systematically reward compliance over integrity, or silence over moral deliberation, they undermine the conditions necessary for ethical agency within the organisation. This cultural dimension of governance failure underscores the limitations of reform strategies focused solely on rules and procedures. Ethical governance requires institutional environments that actively support moral judgment, dissent, and responsibility-taking. Without such environments, formal governance reforms risk becoming ethically performative rather than substantively transformative. The cumulative effect of governance deficits, responsibility diffusion, and opacity is the erosion of public trust. Trust, in the philosophical sense, is not blind confidence but a moral relationship grounded in justified expectations of responsible conduct (Baier, 1986). Public institutions depend on trust not only for legitimacy but for their capacity to function effectively within democratic societies. When governance failures persist without clear moral reckoning, trust deteriorates. This erosion has broader ethical implications, extending beyond the institution itself to the political community it serves. Williams (2002) observes that institutions that lose their claim to truthfulness and responsibility undermine the moral fabric of public life.

Philosophical Evaluation: Legitimacy, Trust, and Moral Authority

Ethical Legitimacy of Hybrid Institutions: The preceding analysis demonstrated that governance deficits in NNPC are not merely administrative or procedural; they constitute a challenge to the ethical legitimacy of the institution itself. Ethical legitimacy refers to the extent to which an institution's authority is justified not only legally, but morally (Boatright, 2018). Unlike private corporations, whose legitimacy may rest primarily on contractual compliance and performance, state-owned enterprises derive authority from their role as stewards of collective resources (Davis et al., 1997). This stewardship role imposes heightened moral obligations, particularly in resource-rich postcolonial contexts where public institutions often bear the burden of historical inequities and expectations of

equitable distribution. From a philosophical perspective, legitimacy entails the capacity of an institution to justify its actions to those affected by them. Rawls (1993) emphasizes that political and institutional authority is justified only when exercised according to principles that could be publicly accepted under conditions of fairness. Applied to NNPC, this requires governance structures that are transparent, accountable, and oriented towards public benefit. When opacity, responsibility diffusion, and political interference prevail, the institution fails to meet the moral conditions necessary for legitimacy, regardless of its compliance with corporate law.

Public Trust as a Moral Imperative

Trust is central to the moral evaluation of public institutions. Annette Baier argues that trust constitutes a normative relationship: it is not mere confidence, but an expectation grounded in the belief that actors will act responsibly and with integrity (Baier, 1986). In hybrid institutions like NNPC, trust is both instrumental and moral. It enables effective institutional functioning while signalling the ethical quality of governance. The erosion of public trust is therefore a tangible manifestation of ethical failure. When citizens perceive that institutional decisions are opaque, misaligned with public interest, or shaped by diffuse responsibility, trust is undermined. Philosophically, this creates a moral deficit: authority persists, but the ethical claim to obedience and support is weakened. In the case of NNPC, sustained governance deficits threaten not only operational efficiency but also the moral authority of the state as custodian of national resources.

Responsibility and Institutional Reform

A central insight of institutional ethics is that responsibility is not exclusively individual. French's concept of corporate moral agency implies that institutions themselves can be ethically evaluated, and where structures produce predictable harm or injustice, the organisation bears moral responsibility (French, 1984). For NNPC, this suggests that reform should not focus solely on personnel changes or compliance mechanisms. Instead, ethical reform requires a reconfiguration of governance structures to ensure that responsibility is intelligibly assigned, accountability mechanisms are effective, and public trust is actively maintained. Stewardship theory provides guidance here. By framing managerial and institutional roles as fiduciary responsibilities rather than contractual obligations, it is possible to reconceptualise governance as a moral practice. O'Neill (2002) reinforces this by stressing intelligent accountability that fosters trustworthiness rather than mere oversight.

Philosophical Implications for State-Owned Enterprises

The case of NNPC illustrates broader normative lessons for SOEs in postcolonial states. Hybrid structures, while administratively convenient, introduce ethical tensions that cannot be resolved solely by legal or procedural reforms. Institutional design must integrate commercial efficiency with moral responsibility to stakeholders and the public. There is therefore the need for governance frameworks that are ethically coherent, not merely legally compliant. Furthermore, the ethical critique of NNPC highlights the role of institutional culture in sustaining moral norms. Without mechanisms to cultivate ethical awareness, deliberate responsibility-taking, and transparency; governance structures risk reinforcing opacity and normalising ethical breach. Institutional legitimacy, public trust, and moral authority are therefore inseparable from the design and ethical orientation of governance itself. This perspective aligns with broader reflections on ethical governance in

Africa, where fragile institutions must navigate the demands of development, accountability, and public justification in resource-dependent economies.

Towards an Ethically Grounded Model of Corporate Governance for SOEs

Reconciling Commercial Objectives and Public Responsibility

Hybrid state-owned enterprises such as NNPC face the persistent tension between commercial efficiency and public fiduciary obligations. Conventional reforms focusing solely on corporate compliance or performance metrics are insufficient. As the preceding analyses demonstrate, ethical governance requires the integration of commercial logic with normative responsibility. Governance structures should ensure that profitability does not displace moral obligations to citizens, host communities, and future generations. Thus, reconciliation demands a deliberate normative shift, recognising that public resources carry intrinsic ethical weight beyond market valuation. From an African philosophical perspective, this integration can draw on communitarian ethics, which emphasises relationality, shared responsibility, and the primacy of the common good. Philosophers such as Kwame Gyekye (1997) argue that ethical decision-making is embedded in social networks, where individual and institutional actions are evaluated based on their contribution to communal welfare. Gyekye (1997) contends notes that “The communitarian ethic... stresses the importance of the community in the life and moral thought of the individual, while at the same time acknowledging the intrinsic worth and dignity of the individual person” (p. 96). In relation to NNPC, a communitarian framework implies that governance must actively align corporate decisions with societal well-being, ensuring that institutional success is measured not solely by profit but also by ethical stewardship of national resources. Such an approach bridges global governance models with contextually resonant African moral philosophical traditions.

Embedding Stewardship as a Moral Principle

Stewardship theory provides a complementary normative lens, emphasising duty, trust, and intrinsic motivation (Davis et al., 1997). Managers and boards are conceived as stewards, responsible not merely for compliance with formal rules but for sustaining the ethical integrity of the institution. In the context of NNPC, stewardship requires that corporate actions reflect both economic prudence and moral accountability toward the Nigerian populace. This fiduciary orientation prioritises long-term public benefit over short-term gains, fostering governance that honours the public trust inherent in resource management. African philosophical traditions resonate strongly with this notion. Innocent Asouzu’s (2004) *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy, for example, articulates the ethical necessity of balancing personal, institutional, and communal responsibilities. Asouzu (2004) describes this as “complementary ontology,” where mutual dependence and shared futures demand ethical actions that serve the whole (pp. 42-48). This approach reinforces the idea that governance structures should promote relational responsibility, where ethical norms are internalised within organisational culture, rather than treated as external impositions. By embedding stewardship as a moral principle, SOEs like the NNPC can cultivate institutional practices that reflect both universal fiduciary duties and African communitarian values.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the governance deficits and ethical failures of Nigeria’s National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) through a philosophical lens, situating the discussion within global corporate governance theories and African ethical perspectives. The analyses demonstrate that NNPC’s challenges are not merely technical or managerial but

institutional and moral. The hybrid identity of the company as both a commercially oriented enterprise and a custodian of public resources creates persistent ethical tensions that conventional reforms alone cannot resolve. Drawing on agency, stakeholder, and stewardship theories, the study highlighted how responsibility diffusion, opacity, and political influence systematically weaken ethical accountability. Ethical failure in NNPC is therefore structural, emerging from institutional design rather than episodic misconduct. Having presented governance deficits as institutional ethical failure, this paper emphasises that reform should address the moral architecture of governance, not merely its procedural components.

The incorporation of African philosophical perspectives particularly communitarian ethics and Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy further deepens the normative analysis. These frameworks underscored that governance is relational and that institutional legitimacy derives not solely from legal compliance or financial performance but from alignment with the common good, collective responsibility, and public trust. Embedding such ethical principles into governance structures ensures that institutions like NNPC can exercise authority responsibly, maintain public legitimacy, and cultivate moral accountability among actors. Ultimately, this study contributes to the philosophical discourse on corporate governance by demonstrating that ethical evaluation is indispensable for state-owned enterprises operating in fragile accountability environments. It proposes a governance model that integrates commercial efficiency with moral responsibility, transparency, and stakeholder engagement informed by both global standards and African ethical thought. Such a model not only strengthens institutional legitimacy but also reinforces public trust thereby enabling state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to fulfil their dual mandate of economic performance and social stewardship. The lessons of NNPC are therefore broadly applicable to SOEs across Africa and the Global South. Effective governance is inseparable from ethical integrity, and the pursuit of both ought to be deliberate, structural, and philosophically grounded. In this sense, corporate governance is not merely an administrative concern; it is a moral project, shaping the legitimacy, trust, and ethical standing of institutions entrusted with public resources.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: November 18, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Ferdinand, Adom K. (2025). "A Critique of Gender Inequality from the Perspective of Asouzu's Complementary Philosophy." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 129-140.

Article

Open Access

A CRITIQUE OF GENDER INEQUALITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ASOUZU'S COMPLEMENTARY PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

This article titled "A Critique of Gender Inequality from the Perspective of Complementary Philosophy," argues that Asouzu's complementary philosophy can be used to critique gender inequality. Gender inequality is an existential and phenomenological issue that confronts humanity globally. This issue highlights a strain in human relationships, where one gender is perceived as inferior and the other as superior. As a result, the gender viewed as inferior is marginalized and oppressed, while the superior gender enjoys certain privileges. Gender inequality presents an existential challenge that warrants philosophical investigation. This paper utilizes Asouzu's complementary philosophy as a framework for this inquiry. The rationale for employing Asouzu's complementary reflection stems from the central concept of his philosophy: the notion of the "missing link." This concept suggests two possibilities: 1) an entity can exist independently, and 2) an entity exists in relation to others. The strength of this complementary philosophy lies in the argument that entities must exist in a mutually complementary relationship. In this regard, the paper contends that gender inequality implies that one gender (the superior) can exist alone, while the other (the inferior) cannot and is deemed inconsequential. Furthermore, the paper posits that both genders cannot thrive separately; instead, they must exist in a mutually complementary relationship, as both are essential "missing links" to one another. Therefore, this paper opposes gender inequality, which leads to the bifurcation and polarization of society along gender lines, and advocates for the harmonious coexistence of both genders as interdependent entities. The paper employs philosophical methods such as critical analysis, exposition, and logical evaluation to support its argument.

Keywords: Asouzu, complementary, Gender, Inequality, Philosophy.

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Introduction

Asouzu's complementary philosophy, rooted in African culture, particularly the Igbo concept of "Ibanyidanda," emphasizes the importance of complementarity in understanding existence. Unlike Aristotle's view, Asouzu argues that entities achieve completeness through mutually complementary relationships, describing being as a "missing link" (Edet, *Being as Missing Link* 28-32). Emmanuel Efem Etta and Joseph Nkang Ogar expand this by asserting that being is part of a unified transcendental whole, emphasizing that "nothing exists in isolation," which promotes unity (*Being as Being and Complementary Reflection* 27). Asouzu's complementary reflection has various branches of philosophy, including 'complementary ethics' (*The Method and Principles* 329), 'complementary epistemology' (*The Method and Principles* 227; *Ibanyidanda... Some Basic Problems* 74-90), 'complementary logic' (*Ibanyidanda... Some Basic Problems* 90-112), 'complementary socio-political philosophy' (*Effective Leadership*), 'complementary environmental philosophy,' and a 'complementary philosophy of religion' (Adekunle 96-102). Complementarity also encompasses a method known as complementarism, where insights from multiple models are integrated to better understand reality (*Explanation as a Comprehensive Task in Complementary Reflection* 67). Scholars like Mesembe Edet have applied this method to African values (*The Application of the Methodology of Complementary Reflection in an Enquiry Concerning Traditional African Central Values and the Development of Afroxiology*), showcasing its versatility in philosophical discourse. Complementary reflection, as both a method and philosophy, can address the existential and phenomenological challenges of gender inequality. This issue affects global relationships, often leading to gender opposition, where one gender is marginalized while the other enjoys privileges. Such inequality denies the marginalized gender full humanity and contributes to social imbalance. Asouzu's complementary philosophy can effectively tackle this by introducing the "missing link," suggesting that opposing realities can coexist in a mutually beneficial way. By viewing gender as a complementary dynamic, we can promote a more harmonious relationship between genders.

Understanding the Problem of Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is a significant social issue today. To understand it, we must first define what gender inequality is, as it stands in direct opposition to gender equality. The term "gender equality" comprises two key concepts: "gender" and "equality." Aver Theophilus, citing Gupta, defines gender as "the widely shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate male and female behavioral characteristics and roles." It is a social construct that differentiates women from men and shapes their interactions. Also, Theophilus cites Idyorough as saying that:

Gender as social construction of relations between male and female in terms of roles such that certain roles are seen as exclusively females and other as males. In the context of this work, gender denotes the social differentiation or cultural distinction between men and women and the attribution of certain roles on the basis of that differentiation. (2)

With defining gender, one has to move over to defining equality in connection with gender equality. According to UN Women:

Equality between women and men (gender equality) refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same

but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. (Cited in Shang 3-4)

The negation of gender equality results in gender inequality, which is characterized by the absence of equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for men, women, boys, and girls. Although gender inequality can affect anyone, some scholars have argued that it is primarily experienced by women and girls. For instance, Baoping Shang argues that gender inequality involves "the lack of equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and girls" (Shang i). Furthermore, he states that "gender inequality is the result of gender bias and social norms that restrict women's rights and opportunities" (Shang 4). This perspective aligns with the views of some Western scholars who argue that women are often seen as inferior and subordinated to men (Aristotle, *Politics* 2796; 2810-2812; Aquinas 621-622; Nietzsche 56; Freud 257). However, there are scholars who contend that men also experience gender inequality (Chinweizu 9-14; Benatar 9; 15; 16; 25; Reeves 15; 35; 4; Wojnicka 1-4).

Shang emphasizes that "gender inequality refers to the part of gender gaps that are driven by gender bias and unequal gender rights and opportunities" (Shang 5). Based on this definition, it is important to recognize that gender inequality can lead to a gender gap, which refers to "the observed differences between men and women or between boys and girls in relevant indicators" (Shang 3). After outlining the definition of gender inequality, one can now explore its dimensions. There are several dimensions of gender inequality, including political, legal, economic, educational, social, cultural, and demographic aspects. Each of these dimensions will be briefly discussed. Political gender inequality persists globally, with women historically excluded from politics. Despite slow progress in representation, women remain significantly underrepresented in political offices. Joyce Jacobsen notes that this includes lower numbers in elected positions and corporate appointments (1). In contrast, Chinweizu argues that men are also subordinated as they govern to please women (9-12). Legal gender inequality is present in many societies. Jacobsen highlights ongoing legal discrimination against women long after suffrage (1). The World Bank points out that women receive only three-quarters of the legal protections afforded to men. They face numerous legal barriers, from job restrictions to unequal pay and inadequate protections against harassment. For instance, laws allow husbands to "correct" their wives, thereby neglecting women's rights within the legal system (cited by Shang 1).

The criminal justice system often prioritizes men's interests, failing to adequately address spousal abuse and sexual harassment. Women can be harassed without explicit legal protection against such acts (Theophilus 6). Moreover, there are concerns that men accused of rape face an environment biased against them, leading to unreported cases where men and boys are victims of sexual violence without legal protections. Economic gender inequality is evident across various sectors, primarily disadvantaging women. Historically, many countries excluded women from formal work, relegating them to low-paying, private household roles (Scott 1, 7). Although improvements have been made, the economic gap remains. Shang notes that women generally have lower access to formal financial services compared to men (3). Even when women join the workforce, they tend to occupy low-status, low-paying jobs and earn less than men for similar qualifications (3). Moreover, educational gender inequality persists globally. Jacobsen points out that while some countries show men

as disadvantaged in educational attainment, historically, women have faced greater barriers to education (Jacobsen 1). Shang corroborates this, stating that significant gaps still exist in tertiary education, despite progress in school enrollment (3). Today, Reeves observes that while girls are often outperforming boys in school, boys are generally suffering in school (23). Despite this, challenges remain for both genders in different educational contexts.

Social gender inequality affects both men and women, with differing consequences. Jacobsen highlights that men often face violence, imprisonment, and disability, while women are frequently victims of domestic violence and sexual assault (Jacobsen 1). Alarming, "one-third of women experience gender-based violence (GBV) in their lifetimes" (Scott 13), which reinforces gender inequality. Many men also struggle to report such violence due to societal perceptions that overlook them as victims. Cultural gender inequality presents challenges for both genders. In numerous societies, women face significant disadvantages, such as restrictions on property ownership and inheritance, which predominantly favor men. This economic dependency perpetuates inequality, as men are often seen as the custodians of cultural norms. However, Chinweizu argues that some cultures empower women to control men (14-23), a view supported by Benatar, who points out that societal structures can also perpetuate inequality against men (16). For example, men are often less likely to gain custody of children after divorce, leading to emotional and psychological stress (Benatar 40; Reeves 41). Demographic gender inequality shows that men can also face disadvantages, such as living shorter lives on average (65 years for men, 69 for women). Additionally, women may experience discrimination even before birth, leading to situations where men outnumber women in certain countries (Jacobsen 1). This highlights the demographic segregation experienced by men and women in different contexts.

Gender inequality is a significant existential challenge that requires philosophical engagement. This inequality encompasses various issues, including poverty and women's well-being. From an economic perspective, gender inequality hinders growth, as women, who comprise over 50% of the African workforce, often work unpaid in the informal sector or earn less than men despite equal qualifications (Ashraf Wani and Dastidar 388-389). They encounter limited career advancement opportunities, job security issues, and reduced access to education, often managing smaller, less profitable enterprises. Patriarchal culture has perpetuated male dominance, resulting in domestic abuse, emotional violence, and unfair workplace treatment, which collectively lead to severe emotional and economic consequences for women. Gender inequality not only stems from poverty but also contributes to it, with similar negative impacts observed across nations. Gender inequality leads to significant individual and societal losses, despite women constituting over 50% of the population. Only 7% of governments are led by women, resulting in decisions that often favor men, which is inefficient for society. Deeply rooted in history and culture, gender discrimination harms women's self-worth and dignity (Ashraf Wani and Dastidar 388-389).

Addressing gender inequality is critical as it impairs men and women's well-being, limits opportunities, and undermines social welfare. In many developing economies, lower female tertiary enrollment rates due to bias result in the underutilization of women's talents (Shang 7). The urgency of tackling this issue stems from the substantial social and economic consequences it carries. Gender inequality directly harms women through violence and harassment, rooted in biased social norms. This misallocation of female talent affects economic growth and investment. Reducing gender inequality can improve decision-making, enhance firm performance, and yield macroeconomic benefits like increased productivity and reduced income inequality (Shang 4). Zulfqar Ashraf Wani and Ruchi Ghosh Dastidar

highlight that sex-selective abortion is a major aspect of gender inequality, leading to human trafficking, demographic imbalances, and sexual exploitation, with India and China as key examples. In China, a preference for male children due to societal undervaluation of females and the one-child policy has resulted in a significant gender imbalance, with approximately 32 million more boys than girls under 20. Similar trends are seen in India, where boys are celebrated and girls devalued, violating the right to life and skewing the natural sex ratio (Ashraf Wani and Dastidar 387-388). This issue challenges philosophers to advocate for women's representation as a means to correct gender disparities. To promote gender equality, focus should be on improving women's education, public health, childcare facilities, and their voices in all societal spheres. This dissertation will use Asouzu's complementary philosophy to support equal treatment for men and women, beginning with an exploration of complementary ontology principles.

A Discourse on Asouzu's Complementary Philosophy

Complementary philosophy has its own method known as the method of 'Complementary Reflection' or 'Complementarism'. For Asouzu, method is a crucial pathway for philosophizing, as it enables philosophers to achieve their ultimate goal: arriving at truth, particularly objective truth. Therefore, he argues that method is a central concern in philosophical inquiry because it is essential for creating a conducive and "correct atmosphere for doing philosophy" (Asouzu, *Ikwa Ogwe* 148). This method is what allows philosophers to accomplish the objective of their inquiry — truth. Asouzu advocates against equating individual or personal truth with objective truth. For him, objective truth can only be attained through the correct method or mindset (disposition). This perspective sets the foundation for his *ibuanyidanda* method of philosophy. In this method, each inquirer with conflicting views must perceive themselves and their positions as missing 'links'. The aim of this approach is to create the necessary conditions for reconciling conflicting positions (*Ikwa Ogwe* 53). This framework encourages individuals to adopt an open-minded attitude and accommodate the perspectives of others. Through this process, they can come to understand objective truth and develop confidence in the knowledge of others. This mutual dependence among all stakeholders (inquirers) fosters an environment where they communicate their relative discoveries about truth freely and meaningfully, without the fear of being deceived (*Ikwa Ogwe* 150). This is possible through complementary mindset.

Complementary mindset (also referred to as the global mindset or *obioha*) harmonizes and unifies reality, viewing different aspects as interconnected missing links. The complementary mindset seeks to harmonize these realities so they find their completeness within a whole where they can complement one another (*Ibuanyidanda* 402). Complementary mindset is essential for a proper understanding of existence. This understanding is facilitated by principles, imperatives, and criteria developed and articulated by Asouzu. The key principles include the principle of integration (or harmonious complementation) and the principle of progressive transformation. The principle of integration or harmonious complementation asserts that "anything that exists serves as a missing link in reality" (*Inaugural Lecture* 44). This leads to the idea that missing links do not exist in isolation. They exist in a mutually complementary relationship and serve to and affirm the existence of each other (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, *African Metaphysics, Epistemology and a New Logic* 97). This principle of integration serves as the metaphysical counterpart to the practical principle of *Ibuanyidanda*, known as the principle of progressive transformation. The principle of progressive transformation states that "all human actions are geared towards the joy of being" (*Inaugural Lecture* 44). One can deduce that "all actions

that are meaningful and right are the ones that lead to the joy of all who are affected by the actions” (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, *African Metaphysics, Epistemology and a New Logic* 97).

One cannot but say that these two principles of complementary philosophy have their root and grounding in complementary imperative and the truth and authenticity criterion. Asouzu’s complementary imperative avers that “Allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy” (*Inaugural Lecture* 44). The point is that “the awareness of our self-insufficiency should remind us of our mutual dependence and should lead us to seek complementation” (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, *African Metaphysics, Epistemology and a New Logic* 98) resulting in joy. The above imperative although helps one understand the above stated two principles, it still leaves room for the truth and authenticity criterion to ground the principles. Asouzu states his truth and authenticity criterion thus: “Never elevate any world-immanent missing to an absolute instance” (*The Method and Principles* 2005: 69, 270, 317-47). The key deduction from this criterion is that “it is better to place all missing links on the same plane” (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, *African Metaphysics, Epistemology and a New Logic* 98). These principles, imperative, and criterion elevate the concept of complementarity rooted in the Igbo aphorism ‘*ibuanyidanda*’ from a mere observation and descriptive statement to a synthetic-analytic statement (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, *African Metaphysics, Epistemology and a New Logic* 98). They define complementary philosophy and its method as distinct from any other philosophical system that might be derived from African cultural world or anywhere else in the world. There are lots of key concepts in complementary philosophy that should be discussed here. They include the phenomenon of concealment (*ihe mkpuchi anya*), noetic propaedeutic, existential Conversion, *obioha*. missing link, personal autonomy – *ima onwe onye* (being-in-control), and the joy of being (*jide k’ji*).

- i. **The phenomenon of concealment (*ihe mkpuchi anya*):** According to Asouzu, the “‘phenomenon of concealment’ is an existential condition that militates against the capacity to reason soundly, judge correctly and imaginatively; most especially in matters dealing directly with our most cherished interests. It ... can lead to errors of judgement in the way we relate to our needs and our interests” (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem* 12). Asouzu also links human ambivalence situations to this phenomenon of concealment (*ihe mkpuchi anya*) (*Inaugural Lecture* 50). Consequently, he asserts that these human ambivalence situations and *ihe mkpuchi anya* serve as barriers to perceiving reality from a holistic perspective. These barriers impose fragments and limited aspects of reality as the entirety of reality, impacting how philosophy and the pursuit of knowledge are conducted. This influence is detrimental because it restricts the pursuit of truth, which should naturally guide us to knowledge. It also negatively affects interpersonal relationships.
- ii. **Noetic propaedeutic:** Asouzu explains noetic propaedeutic as a pre-education of the mind and human reason intended to overcome the fractured unity in human consciousness that results from the tensions of ambivalent existential situations and *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment) (*Inaugural Lecture* 49). Noetic propaedeutic acts as a pedagogical and psychotherapeutic approach through which the mind is pre-educated before it engages with broader realities.
- iii. **Existential Conversion:** Existential conversion that mechanism that enables the mind to achieve noetic propaedeutic, live beyond the phenomenon of concealment, and have a comprehensive mindset required for seeing reality in comprehensive manner. In

Asouzu's words: existential conversion is "a form of consciously lived experience of a subject in view of activating those innate transcendent categories that bestow authenticity" (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem 75*). Existential conversion that the mind "learns to convert the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness of *ibuanyidanda* philosophy into practical action" (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem 59*).

- iv. **Missing link:** Asouzu defines missing links as "all imaginable modes of relations that can be abstracted and interrelated in a complementary, mutually beneficial way" (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem 50*). These fragments of reality are inherently incomplete on their own but find completeness through their complementarity within the larger whole. In this way, Asouzu describes them as entities and the entities of entities, ideas and the ideas of ideas, units and the units of units, encompassing both spirit and matter, animate and inanimate, among others (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem 59; Inaugural Lecture 50*).
- v. **Personal autonomy – *ima onwe onye* (being-in-control):** Also, existential conversion brings to *obioha* another dimension of thinking known as *ima onwe onye* (being-in-control). In the view of Asouzu, *ima onwe onye* is an act of existential conversion in which "an acting and a thinking subject is entrapped and such that finds expression in the experience of transcendent complementary categories of consciousness with missing links" (*Inaugural Lecture 54*). *Ima onwe onye* is not only a thinking pattern, it is also "an important attribute of an authentic being (individual)" (Chimakonam, Globalization and *Ibuanyidanda 5*). A true person is one who is in control of him/herself and his/her faculty of reasoning when he/she confronts realities. Such an individual remains unbiased in relating with these realities and others. It is at this point that the individual is able to harmonize missing links within the whole, where their limitations and insufficiencies are complemented and their being actualized. Asouzu goes on to assert that it is "the highest form of self-consciousness" (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem 76*).
- vi. **The joy of being (*jide k'ji*):** The joy of being is one of the aims of complementary philosophy. According to Asouzu. "In all cases, *ibuanyidanda* seeks ways of converting relativity historical conditions to very positive experiences and through which the joy of being (*jide ka iji*) can become a reality and sustained" (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem 76*). The joy of being enable an individual to relate with others in unity and to act in such a way that they also considered in a positive light. So, the individual sees him/herself and others as missing link who are mutually dependent on each other (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem 103*). The joy of being (*jide k'ji*) aims at harmonising and promote harmonious coexistence among realities and individuals. This is seen in the harmonious relationship of mutual complementary service for the common good.

How Asouzu's Complementary Philosophy Can be Used to Address Gender Inequality

To understand gender inequality, it is essential to look beyond the sociocultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical dimensions and explore a philosophical perspective. This is where Asouzu's complementary philosophy comes into play. While we have previously discussed that cultural, economic, political, and social factors contribute to gender inequality, it is important to identify the underlying cause of this issue. Gender inequality arises when one gender is regarded as superior to the other, leading to the latter being deprived of the opportunities and rights enjoyed by the dominant gender. This raises the question: what

causes this imbalance in relationships? One could argue that this disparity is linked to what Asouzu refers to as the phenomenon of concealment (*ihe mkpu chi anya*) (*Ibuanyidanda* 57, 235, 358; *The Method and Principles* 61-69). How does this phenomenon enable gender inequality? The answer is straightforward. All relationships—whether among humans or between humans and non-human entities—originate in the mind. Thus, the way individuals perceive and comprehend realities significantly influences their interactions with others and the world. The phenomenon of concealment acts as a mechanism that hinders the mind from recognizing that realities are interconnected and capable of coexisting. Instead, it leads individuals to view realities as fragmented and perpetually divided, making it difficult to achieve harmony or unity. This flawed perception of how realities exist and relate (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem* 12) ultimately shapes how people engage with and treat one another.

Gender relationships are significantly influenced by the phenomenon of concealment, which operates in a negative sense. This concealment can lead to errors in human judgment and action. It manifests alongside situations of human ambivalence, where individuals possess a dual capacity to relate to one another: first, as unified beings and second, as irreconcilable opposites. The phenomenon of concealment hinders the formation of unity and promotes the perception of oppositional differences. Consequently, when concealment dominates thinking, society often views one gender as superior to the other. This results in the dominant gender enjoying opportunities, privileges, and rights that the inferior gender is denied. In many societies, this leads to gender inequality, as the male gender is often regarded as the embodiment of humanity, entitled to all the benefits that women are deprived of. Conversely, in some contemporary contexts, gender imbalance may favor women, portraying femininity as synonymous with humanity. In these instances, being a woman grants individuals access to the opportunities, privileges, and rights associated with being human. The phenomenon of concealment acts as a barrier, preventing society from recognizing that both male and female genders share a common humanity, and that the opportunities, privileges, and rights inherent to this humanity should be equally accessible to both. This phenomenon obscures the perception of gender equality, resulting in a divide between those regarded as human and those who are not. Also, one can argue against gender inequality and for gender equality using Asouzu's complementary philosophy. For instance, Asouzu's complementarism can be employed in arguing for gender equality. As noted earlier, philosophical approaches tend to produce subjective and fragmented conceptions of truth, which according to Asouzu, can overcome through complementarism – a method for achieving an objective and holistic understanding of truth (*Ikwa Ogwe* 146). For Asouzu, objective holistic truth considers all possible perspectives of truth through the lens of complementarity, ensuring that no aspect of truth is overlooked since they are complementary to one another.

This method has significant implications for addressing gender inequality. If gender inequality is rooted in the perception that one gender (either male or female) epitomizes the essence of humanity, while the other is seen as lacking in full humanity, then there is a pressing need for a more inclusive approach to understanding reality—one that is holistic and embraces differences. Asouzu's complementarism provides such a method, as discussed above. Just as different truths complement each other to form a more complete understanding of objective truth, men and women can also be seen as complementary in defining humanity. This perspective highlights that humanity comprises both men and women in a mutually supportive relationship. While acknowledging the differences between

genders, it emphasizes the commonality that underlies all subjective truths—namely, that humanity itself represents a shared truth. By adopting a complementary approach, we can overcome the problem of gender inequality, allowing both men and women to enjoy equal opportunities, privileges, and rights. Thus, to truly define humanity, we must think of the male and female genders as being in a mutually complementary relationship.

Also, the principle of integration can be employed to address the problem of gender inequality. This principle highlights the concept of "missing links" as essential realities that cannot exist in isolation. Each of these links is dependent on the others, and they come into existence only through their interconnected relationships (Asouzu, *Inaugural Lecture 44*; Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, *African Metaphysics, Epistemology and a New Logic 97*). In other words, without one another, their existence is impossible. Missing links derive their significance from their opposing counterparts; thus, they must coexist within a whole—referred to as the community—where they complement one another. This principle has the potential to eliminate the issue of gender inequality. The principle asserts that "individual entities exist" (*African Metaphysics, Epistemology and a New Logic 97*), which implies that male and female are individual entities that rely on each other for their existence. Building on the concept of missing links, we can say that men and women are essential to one another in the community of humanity. Neither can exist in isolation; they must coexist and work together to form a complete human experience. By embracing the idea of missing links, as articulated in Asouzu's principle of integration, both men and women can be recognized as equals, with neither being considered superior or inferior to the other. They are interconnected and serve as essential links within society. Likewise, the principle of progressive transformation can be utilized to tackle the issue of gender inequality. This principle suggests that human actions are not aimless; rather, they are directed toward achieving joy or the joy of being. However, only the right actions can lead to this joy (Asouzu, *Inaugural Lecture 44*; Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, *African Metaphysics, Epistemology and a New Logic 97*).

Applying the principle of progressive transformation to address gender inequality one can argue that humans (men and women) act to bring about joy. The joy of being arises when humans act to unite all individuals as one. This mindset can help address the issue of gender inequality. In this context, it's crucial for humans to ensure that their actions promote joy for both men and women. Gender inequality leads to sadness, as it denies individuals their rights as members of humanity. However, by embracing the principle of progressive transformation, humans can act in ways that recognize both males and females as integral parts of humanity, allowing them to enjoy the opportunities, privileges, and rights that come with being human. Furthermore, the complementary imperative offers a valuable perspective for addressing the issue of gender inequality. This idea asserts that all beings have limitations, and these very limitations can be harnessed to foster joy (Asouzu, *Inaugural Lecture 44*; Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, *African Metaphysics, Epistemology and a New Logic 98*). The question arises: how can this be applied? Just as all beings have their specific limitations, so too do men and women possess unique limitations. Consequently, neither gender can be considered a perfect representation of humanity. It is through acknowledging these inherent limitations that both men and women can be viewed as complementary to one another in defining what it means to be human. Translating this understanding to the issue of gender inequality, we can assert that women must be recognized as complementary equals, embracing their inherent limitations alongside those of men. This perspective is crucial for overcoming gender inequality. The truth and

authenticity criterion can be applied to address gender inequality by emphasizing that nothing should be considered absolute. This means that neither the male nor female gender should be treated as superior. In this context, both males and females should be viewed as equals, with equal opportunities, privileges, and rights that come with being human.

In Place of a Conclusion: Towards Achieving Gender Inequality using Asouzu's Complementary Philosophy

Since the underlying cause of gender inequality is psychological—specifically, the phenomenon of concealment (*ihe mkpu chi anya*)—the solution will also require a psychological approach. This involves a noetic propaedeutic supported by existential conversion. Noetic propaedeutic refers to re-educating the mind to recognize reality as consisting of missing links that can be harmonized and unified (Asouzu, *Inaugural Lecture* 48). This is achievable when the mind undergoes existential conversion—allowing it to “experience the transcendent complementary unity of consciousness with all missing links” (Asouzu, *Inaugural Lecture* 54-55). When the mind undergoes noetic propaedeutic and existential conversion, it ultimately develops a complementary (Obioha – global) mindset. Such psychological transformation could serve as a foundation for overcoming gender inequality and achieving gender equality. Gender inequality can be overcome, and gender equality achieved, when individuals adopt a complementary mindset. With this mindset, individuals begin to see both male and female genders as complementary units in society. This means that they “have learned how to view units as complements within a comprehensive universal setting” (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda* 83). Viewing both genders as complements suggests they can be treated as equals in society. This perspective implies that individuals recognize both genders as missing links within society, seeing them as integral parts. This recognition results from having undergone noetic propaedeutic and existential conversion, enabling individuals to appreciate both genders as transcendent categories of unity in consciousness, according to Asouzu. Those with a complementary mindset have learned “to convert the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness of Ibuanyidanda philosophy into practical action” (*Ibuanyidanda...Basic Philosophical Problem* 59). Thus, the practical implication is that if all individuals experience noetic propaedeutic and existential conversion, they will possess a complementary mindset. This mindset will not only allow individuals to see both genders as equals but will also motivate them to treat each other as such.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: November 18, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Success, Ademeso T.; Salisu, Ibrahim I., Ibrahim, Yakubu S. & Rufus, Precious C. (2025). "Artificial Intelligence in Public Sector Human Capital Development: Opportunities, Risks, and Policy Implications." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 140-152.

Article

Open Access

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN PUBLIC SECTOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT: OPPORTUNITIES, RISKS, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming how organizations manage human capital, including the public sector. This article examines the opportunities, risks, and policy implications of AI for human capital development in public sector institutions, with a particular focus on Nigeria and other developing countries in Africa. Drawing on Human Capital Theory, Technological Determinism, and Policy Implementation Theory, we explore how AI can enhance recruitment, training, performance evaluation, talent management, and workforce planning in government, as well as the challenges such as job displacement, ethical concerns, data privacy issues, skills mismatches, and implementation barriers. A review of recent empirical studies (2018–2025) highlights both international and local (Nigerian/African) experiences in integrating AI into public sector human resource management. The findings indicate that while AI offers significant potential to improve efficiency and decision-making in public sector human capital development, realizing these benefits requires careful policy planning, capacity building, and governance to mitigate risks. The paper concludes with recommendations for policymakers, public administrators, and researchers on harnessing AI's benefits for public sector workforce development in a responsible and inclusive manner.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Public Sector Human Capital Development, Public Administration, Human Resource Management, Digital Governance, Policy Implementation.

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) – defined broadly as computer systems capable of performing tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and decision-making – has moved from the realm of science fiction to practical reality in recent years. Across the globe, governments are increasingly exploring AI to improve public administration and service delivery. In particular, AI technologies have significant implications for human capital development in the public sector, meaning the enhancement of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of public employees. Human capital is often regarded as one of the most critical assets of any organization, including government agencies, as it underpins effective policy implementation and service delivery (Becker, 1964). In the public sector, developing human capital is essential for building capable institutions that can meet citizens’ needs and achieve developmental goals. The intersection of AI and public sector human capital development is of growing importance. On one hand, AI tools offer opportunities to recruit talent more efficiently, personalize training and upskilling programs, optimize performance management, and better plan the public workforce of the future. Governments in advanced economies are already piloting AI-driven solutions – from algorithms that screen job applicants to chatbots that guide employees through benefits enrollment – aiming to increase efficiency and objectivity in human resource management (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018; Zuiderwijk et al., 2021). On the other hand, the adoption of AI in managing public servants raises concerns. Will AI applications displace jobs or deskill public employees? Could algorithmic bias and opaque decision-making undermine fairness and accountability in government hiring and promotions? Are public institutions in developing countries equipped with the infrastructure and skills to implement AI successfully? These questions highlight the dual nature of AI’s impact on the public workforce, such as, transformative potential, coupled with significant risks and challenges (Frey & Osborne, 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2019).

This study addresses these issues by examining “Artificial Intelligence in Public Sector Human Capital Development: Opportunities, Risks, and Policy Implications.” The rationale for focusing on this topic is threefold. First, as governments worldwide face pressure to modernize and improve efficiency, AI provides a new toolkit to reform public sector human resource practices. Understanding how AI can be leveraged for human capital development could help unlock productivity gains and better public services. Second, the risks associated with AI – from ethical dilemmas to labor market disruptions – are particularly acute in the public sector, which tends to employ a large workforce and uphold principles of equity and public accountability. A critical analysis is needed to ensure AI is adopted in a way that safeguards these values. Third, there is a dearth of research focusing on developing country contexts such as Nigeria and other African nations in this domain. Much of the discourse on AI in government centers on high-income countries; however, developing countries have distinct challenges like limited digital infrastructure, capacity gaps, and different labor market dynamics. This paper seeks to fill that gap by providing Nigeria/Africa-specific insights alongside global perspectives. These challenges are well documented in Nigerian public administration scholarship, particularly regarding institutional capacity and policy implementation constraints (Ademeso et al., 2025; Nwosu et al., 2024).

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. We begin with conceptual clarifications of key terms – AI, human capital (and its development), and public administration – to establish a common understanding. Next, we outline the theoretical framework guiding the analysis, drawing on Human Capital Theory, Technological Determinism, and Policy Implementation Theory to frame the interplay between technology,

people, and policy in the public sector. We then delve into the opportunities of AI in public sector human capital development, examining specific areas such as recruitment, training, performance evaluation, talent management, and workforce planning where AI applications are making an impact. This is followed by a discussion of the risks and challenges inherent in adopting AI for these purposes – including potential job displacement, ethical and bias issues, data privacy concerns, skills mismatches, and implementation barriers. The article then considers the policy implications, with an emphasis on how governments (especially in Nigeria and similar developing countries) should craft policies and strategies to harness AI's benefits while mitigating its downsides. We incorporate an empirical review of recent studies and reports from 2018–2025 that shed light on AI's effects on public sector human capital, comparing global trends with local realities in Nigeria/Africa. Finally, we present conclusions and actionable recommendations targeted at policymakers, public sector managers, and academic researchers, aimed at ensuring that AI's integration into public sector human capital development is both effective and responsible.

Conceptual Clarifications

Before analyzing the interface of AI and human capital development in the public sector, it is important to clarify the core concepts underpinning this study.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI can be defined as the ability of machines or computer systems to perform tasks that would typically require human intelligence. These tasks include learning from data, reasoning and making decisions, understanding natural language, recognizing patterns, and even creative problem-solving. AI encompasses a range of techniques (such as machine learning, natural language processing, and robotics) that enable computers to simulate cognitive functions like perception, learning, and decision-making. In practical terms, AI systems can analyze vast datasets to uncover insights, automate routine processes, and make predictions or recommendations. For example, an AI-powered system might screen job applications to identify the most qualified candidates, or it might serve as a virtual assistant that answers employees' HR-related questions. In the context of public administration, AI is applied in tools like chatbots for citizen inquiries, algorithms for fraud detection in public programs, and decision support systems for policy analysis (Zuiderwijk et al., 2021). It is important to note that AI is not a single technology but rather a field comprising various subfields and levels of complexity – from narrow AI systems designed for specific tasks, to more general AI systems that could perform a wide range of intellectual tasks (the latter remains largely theoretical as of 2025). For the purpose of this article, AI refers primarily to narrow AI applications relevant to managing and developing human resources in organizations.

Theoretical Framework

This analysis is underpinned by several theoretical perspectives that together provide a holistic understanding of AI's role in public sector human capital development. We draw on Human Capital Theory to understand the value of investing in people, Technological Determinism to consider how technology drives organizational change, and Policy Implementation Theory to frame the challenges of enacting AI-related reforms in government.

Human Capital Theory

Originating from economics (with early contributions by Schultz in 1961 and Becker in 1964), Human Capital Theory posits that individuals and organizations can invest in human resources (through education, training, and health) to enhance productivity and economic outcomes. Education and training are seen as investments that incur costs in the present but produce benefits in the future in terms of higher earnings for individuals and greater performance for organizations (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). In a public sector context, Human Capital Theory implies that governments should invest in developing the skills and knowledge of their employees to improve public service delivery. By equipping civil servants with new competencies (for example, digital literacy or data analytics skills), public agencies can increase their effectiveness and adapt to changing demands. This theory provides a rationale for integrating AI into human capital development: AI can be viewed as both a tool and a catalyst for human capital investment. On one hand, AI tools (such as adaptive learning platforms or intelligent tutoring systems) can enhance training programs by personalizing learning experiences and accelerating skills acquisition (Brynjolfsson et al., 2023). On the other hand, the rise of AI creates new skill requirements – public employees need to develop “AI competence” and digital skills to work alongside AI systems. According to a recent study in Latvia’s public sector, employees who received AI-related training rated their competence significantly higher than those without training, underscoring the value of training in building human capital for an AI-enabled workplace (Lāma & Lastovska, 2025). Human Capital Theory thus suggests that strategic use of AI in the public sector should involve using technology to augment human capabilities, not just replace them. The ultimate goal is a more skilled and adaptable public workforce that can improve governance outcomes. This argument aligns with Nigerian public administration scholarship, which emphasizes that in order to assess readiness, governments should conduct infrastructure audits prior to the widespread implementation of digital tools (Ademeso, 2024).

Technological Determinism

Technological Determinism is a theory that examines the relationship between technology and society, essentially arguing that technological change drives social and organizational change. The term was popularized by Thorstein Veblen and later discussed by scholars like Marshall McLuhan and Langdon Winner (McLuhan, 1964; Winner, 1986). In its strong form, technological determinism suggests that the introduction of a new technology (such as AI) inevitably brings about certain changes in society or organizations, often beyond human control. Applied to our topic, this perspective implies that AI, as a transformative technology, will inevitably reshape public sector work and human capital management. As AI systems become capable of performing tasks like data entry, record-keeping, analysis, and decision recommendations, the nature of many public sector jobs will change. Routine administrative roles might be reduced or eliminated, while new roles (such as data scientists, AI specialists, or positions overseeing AI systems) emerge. Trends show that governments are beginning to re-engineer processes to incorporate AI and automate repetitive tasks (Zuiderwijk et al., 2021). However, it is important to consider a tempered view: technology influences change, but human choices and policies still play a crucial role in guiding how AI is implemented. Critics of pure technological determinism argue that governments can and should shape the deployment of AI in line with public values. For the purposes of this framework, we acknowledge that AI’s advancement is a major driver of change, but we also recognize the agency of policymakers in managing this change. The deterministic lens warns that failing to

prepare for AI-driven changes could leave public institutions scrambling to catch up, reinforcing the need for proactive human capital development and policy planning.

Policy Implementation Theory

Even the most revolutionary technology will not have significant public sector impact unless it is effectively implemented within bureaucratic systems. Policy Implementation Theory examines the processes and factors that determine whether a given policy or innovation is translated into actual results on the ground. Classic works such as Pressman and Wildavsky's *Implementation* emphasize the complexity of moving from policy decision to implementation, highlighting the numerous coordination, capacity, and resource challenges involved (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). More recent scholarship continues to explore the importance of institutional context and administrative capacity in policy execution (Howlett, 2019). In the context of AI in public sector human capital development, Policy Implementation Theory is highly relevant. Governments may articulate ambitious AI strategies or adopt digital reforms, but executing these plans involves significant challenges. Bureaucratic resistance, lack of technical expertise, insufficient funding, and regulatory constraints can all impede implementation. For example, a government may adopt an AI-driven recruitment system, yet individual agencies may struggle to operationalize it due to legacy systems or weak human resource capacity. These challenges are particularly acute in developing countries such as Nigeria, where institutional capacity deficits, fragmented coordination, and infrastructural constraints have historically undermined reform efforts (Agba et al., 2023; Nwosu et al., 2024). Nigerian governance scholars consistently note that weak implementation—not policy absence—is often the binding constraint in public sector reform (Ademeso, 2025). Policy Implementation Theory therefore encourages analysis not only of AI's potential, but also of the institutional and administrative conditions required to realize that potential. Key insights from this theory include the need for clear objectives, stakeholder engagement (including civil servants and their representatives), sustained capacity building, and continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms. Without these, AI initiatives risk remaining symbolic or underperforming. This theoretical lens reinforces the argument that AI adoption in public sector human capital development must be accompanied by deliberate implementation strategies if it is to deliver meaningful outcomes.

Opportunities of AI in Human Capital Development (Public Sector)

AI technologies offer a range of opportunities to enhance human capital development in the public sector. In this section, we discuss how AI can be applied in key areas of public human resource management: recruitment and hiring, training and capacity building, performance evaluation, talent management and retention, and workforce planning. By automating routine tasks, analyzing data at scale, and providing data-driven insights, AI has the potential to make these functions more efficient and effective.

Enhanced Recruitment and Selection

One of the most immediate ways AI is impacting human capital development is through transforming recruitment and selection processes. Public sector recruitment has traditionally been characterized by lengthy procedures, heavy paperwork, and, in some contexts, subjective decision-making. AI tools can streamline these processes by automating application screening and candidate shortlisting. AI-powered software can evaluate large volumes of applications against predefined criteria, significantly reducing the time and cost involved in recruitment (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018).

Studies indicate that automating parts of recruitment allows human resource personnel to focus on strategic decision-making rather than routine administrative tasks (Zuiderwijk et al., 2021). In the South African public sector, research has shown that AI integration could reduce excessive paperwork and accelerate recruitment cycles, while improving procedural transparency (Chilunjika et al., 2022). Automation through AI also has the potential to reduce human bias in recruitment if systems are properly designed and trained on representative data. Algorithms can be programmed to focus on qualifications and competencies rather than demographic characteristics, potentially promoting merit-based selection (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). However, this benefit depends critically on data quality and ethical oversight, issues discussed in later sections. For Nigeria and other African countries, AI-enabled recruitment could address persistent criticisms of inefficiency, patronage, and delay in public service hiring. By reducing manual bottlenecks and standardizing screening processes, AI tools could improve transparency and shorten recruitment timelines, especially for large-scale civil service intakes (Agba et al., 2023).

Risks and Challenges of AI in Public Sector Human Capital Development

While AI offers compelling opportunities to improve public sector human capital development, it also introduces a variety of risks and challenges that require careful management. These include potential job displacement and workforce disruption, ethical concerns and algorithmic bias, data privacy and security issues, skills mismatches and training gaps, and implementation barriers such as infrastructural deficits and resistance to change. Recognizing these challenges is crucial for developing strategies to mitigate them, so that the adoption of AI in the public sector can be done responsibly and sustainably.

Job Displacement and Workforce Disruption

A foremost concern with the introduction of AI and automation in any sector is the impact on employment. In the context of public sector human capital, there is a fear that AI systems and robots could displace a significant number of jobs, particularly those involving routine administrative tasks. Public sectors worldwide employ many people in roles such as data entry, clerical support, record management, and basic customer service, which AI-driven software can potentially perform faster and more efficiently. Studies have projected high percentages of jobs being susceptible to automation in coming decades. Frey and Osborne (2017), although not specific to the public sector, estimated that a substantial proportion of jobs in advanced economies are at risk of computerization, with routine and rule-based tasks being the most vulnerable. In the African context, Seseni and Mbohwa (2018) observed that white-collar office jobs, including human resource administrative roles, face increasing automation pressure. Their research suggested that functions such as payroll processing and records management could increasingly be handled by intelligent software systems. These concerns are particularly salient in developing countries where unemployment remains a significant challenge and the public sector is a major source of formal employment. In Nigeria, the prospect of AI-induced job losses in government raises social and political concerns, especially given the country's large youth population and persistent graduate unemployment. Research indicates that public sector employees often perceive AI as a threat to job security, which can generate resistance to technological reforms and reduce morale (Wisetsri et al., 2022).

However, it is important to distinguish between job displacement and job transformation. While AI may automate certain tasks, it also creates demand for new roles and skills. Access Partnership (2014) argued that AI adoption is more likely to transform jobs

than eliminate them entirely, as employees shift from routine tasks to roles requiring judgment, creativity, and interpersonal skills. In the public sector, automation of administrative processes could free employees to focus on complex service delivery functions that require human discretion and empathy. The net employment effect of AI in the public sector depends largely on policy choices. Without proactive reskilling and redeployment strategies, AI adoption could exacerbate unemployment and inequality. Conversely, if governments reinvest productivity gains into expanding public services and training workers for new roles, AI could contribute to workforce modernization without large-scale job losses. This underscores the importance of people-centered AI strategies that prioritize workforce transition and skills development.

Ethical Concerns and Algorithmic Bias

The use of AI in human resource management raises significant ethical concerns, particularly when algorithms influence decisions about recruitment, promotion, and performance evaluation. A central issue is algorithmic bias—the risk that AI systems may reproduce or amplify existing social inequalities. Because AI models learn from historical data, biased datasets can lead to discriminatory outcomes even when systems are designed to be “objective” (Zuiderwijk et al., 2021). Evidence from both private and public sector contexts illustrates these risks. Recruitment algorithms trained on historical hiring data have been shown to disadvantage women and minority groups where past employment patterns were skewed. In the public sector, such biases would undermine principles of equity, fairness, and meritocracy that underpin civil service systems. Studies emphasize the need for continuous auditing and validation of AI systems used in HR functions to detect and correct bias (OECD, 2019). Beyond bias, transparency and accountability pose additional ethical challenges. Many AI systems function as “black boxes,” making it difficult to explain how decisions are reached. In public administration, where decisions must often be justified and open to appeal, opaque AI-driven processes conflict with established norms of administrative accountability. If an AI system influences promotion or training selection decisions, affected employees may demand explanations and avenues for redress. Ensuring explainability and maintaining human oversight are therefore essential safeguards in the ethical deployment of AI. Ethical concerns also extend to workplace surveillance. AI enables unprecedented monitoring of employee behavior, including productivity tracking and sentiment analysis. While such tools may improve efficiency, excessive surveillance can erode trust, reduce autonomy, and negatively affect organizational culture. Public sector institutions, which are expected to model ethical employment practices, must carefully define acceptable boundaries for AI-based monitoring.

Data Privacy and Security

AI systems rely heavily on data, including sensitive personal information about employees. Public sector HR databases typically contain detailed records related to identity, performance, health, and career history. Integrating AI into these systems heightens the risks associated with data privacy breaches and unauthorized access. Many developing countries lack comprehensive data protection frameworks or face challenges in enforcement. While some progress has been made, concerns remain regarding institutional capacity to safeguard data effectively (World Bank, 2023). Inadequate data governance can undermine trust in AI systems and expose governments to legal and reputational risks. Privacy challenges also arise from data integration and secondary use. AI applications often combine data from multiple sources to generate insights, raising questions about consent,

proportionality, and purpose limitation. International research highlights growing public concern about how AI affects privacy, particularly in employment contexts where power asymmetries limit employees' ability to refuse data collection (Kelley et al., 2013). Security threats further compound these risks. Government information systems are frequent targets of cyberattacks, and AI platforms may introduce new vulnerabilities. A breach of AI-enabled HR systems could compromise large volumes of sensitive data or manipulate algorithmic outputs. Robust cybersecurity measures, vendor oversight, and regular system audits are therefore critical components of AI governance in the public sector.

Skill Mismatch and Change Management

Another major challenge is the skills mismatch between existing public sector workforces and the competencies required to deploy and manage AI systems. Many public institutions lack personnel with expertise in data analytics, machine learning, and AI governance. Leadership-level knowledge gaps further complicate decision-making related to AI procurement and oversight. Studies on AI readiness consistently highlight skills shortages as a primary barrier to adoption, particularly in developing countries (Oxford Insights, 2022). In Nigeria, limited digital literacy within the civil service constrains the effective use of advanced technologies, even where policy interest exists. Without sustained investment in capacity building, AI initiatives risk underutilization or failure. Change management challenges are equally significant. AI adoption can disrupt established work routines and organizational hierarchies, generating uncertainty and resistance among employees. Fear of job loss, distrust of algorithmic decision-making, and skepticism toward new technologies can undermine implementation efforts. Effective change management requires clear communication, employee involvement, and leadership commitment to demonstrating AI's value as a supportive rather than punitive tool.

Implementation and Institutional Barriers

Finally, institutional and infrastructural barriers present formidable challenges to AI adoption in the public sector. These include unreliable power supply, limited internet connectivity, budget constraints, fragmented data systems, and bureaucratic inertia. In many African contexts, foundational digital infrastructure remains underdeveloped, making advanced AI applications difficult to sustain (Agba et al., 2023). Financial constraints also limit governments' ability to acquire and maintain AI systems. Beyond initial procurement costs, AI requires ongoing investment in system updates, training, and data management. Weak institutional coordination and siloed data practices further reduce the effectiveness of AI initiatives. Policy ambiguity represents another barrier. In the absence of clear guidelines on AI use in public administration, officials may either avoid innovation altogether or adopt technologies without adequate safeguards. Nigerian governance scholarship repeatedly emphasizes that weak implementation frameworks, rather than lack of policy intent, are the primary obstacles to reform success (Ademeso, 2024). In summary, while AI offers transformative possibilities for public sector human capital development, its risks and challenges are substantial. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate policy design, institutional strengthening, and sustained investment in human capital.

Policy Implications and Recommendations for Nigeria and Developing Countries

The analysis of opportunities and challenges makes it clear that the integration of AI into public sector human capital development is not automatic or without pitfalls. It requires deliberate policy design, institutional readiness, and sustained governance attention. This

section discusses the policy implications of AI adoption in public sector human capital development and outlines strategies for governments—particularly Nigeria and other developing countries—to harness AI responsibly while mitigating its risks.

Developing National AI Strategies and Frameworks

A critical first step for governments is the articulation of clear national strategies or policy frameworks on AI. Such frameworks provide direction, set priorities, and establish principles for AI adoption across sectors, including public administration. National AI strategies help coordinate fragmented initiatives, mobilize resources, and signal political commitment to technological transformation. Nigeria has recently taken steps in this direction through the development of a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy, which emphasizes responsible AI deployment, ethics, and the development of local talent. This approach reflects a growing recognition that AI adoption must be aligned with national development objectives and institutional capacity. For public sector human capital development, national AI strategies should explicitly address workforce transformation, training requirements, and the implications of AI for public service employment. For developing countries more broadly, AI strategies must be context-sensitive. Unlike advanced economies, many developing countries face constraints such as limited digital infrastructure, weak data ecosystems, and uneven skills distribution. Policy frameworks should therefore prioritize foundational investments, including digitization of government processes, data governance systems, and capacity building for public servants. Nigerian public administration literature underscores that policy ambition without institutional readiness often leads to reform failure (Ademeso, 2025). National strategies should also define governance arrangements for AI, including institutional responsibilities for coordination, regulation, and oversight. Without clear accountability structures, AI initiatives risk duplication, inefficiency, or ethical lapses. Establishing dedicated AI units or inter-ministerial task forces can improve coherence and monitoring.

Strengthening Regulatory and Ethical Guidelines

Effective AI integration in public sector human capital management requires robust regulatory and ethical safeguards. Governments must ensure that AI applications comply with existing labor laws, civil service rules, and data protection frameworks. Where legal gaps exist, reforms may be necessary to address automated decision-making and algorithmic accountability. Data protection is a foundational concern. AI systems process large volumes of personal and sensitive information, making privacy safeguards essential. Clear rules regarding data collection, storage, access, and use must be enforced. In employment contexts, transparency about how employee data are used by AI systems is critical to maintaining trust. Non-discrimination and fairness must also be central to AI governance. Public sector recruitment and promotion systems are expected to uphold equity and meritocracy. AI tools used in these processes should therefore be subject to regular audits for bias and discriminatory outcomes. Ethical guidelines should require human oversight of AI-supported decisions, particularly those with significant consequences for employees' careers. Transparency and explainability are equally important. Public sector institutions must be able to explain how AI systems influence decisions affecting employees. Opaque algorithms undermine accountability and may conflict with principles of administrative justice. Policies should therefore encourage the use of explainable AI systems and establish clear mechanisms for appeal and review.

Investing in Infrastructure and Digital Inclusion

Policy frameworks must recognize that AI adoption is contingent on adequate digital infrastructure. Reliable electricity, broadband connectivity, and secure data storage systems are prerequisites for AI deployment. Many public sector organizations in developing countries continue to operate with outdated or fragmented ICT systems, limiting their ability to adopt advanced technologies. Investing in digital infrastructure should therefore be viewed as part of broader public sector reform rather than a standalone technology initiative. Digitization of records, integration of information systems, and standardization of data formats enhance not only AI readiness but overall administrative efficiency. These investments can be supported through public–private partnerships and international development cooperation. Digital inclusion is another critical policy consideration. AI adoption should not exacerbate existing inequalities within the public workforce. Training and access to digital tools must be equitably distributed to avoid creating a divide between technologically skilled elites and other public employees. Inclusive digital policies can help ensure that AI serves as a tool for empowerment rather than exclusion.

Capacity Building and Change Management

One of the most important policy implications of AI adoption is the need for sustained investment in human capital. Governments must prioritize training and capacity building to ensure that public servants have the skills required to work effectively with AI systems. This includes not only technical skills for specialized personnel but also general AI literacy for managers and frontline staff. Capacity building initiatives should be institutionalized through public service training institutes and continuous professional development programs. Training should cover topics such as data literacy, ethical AI use, and interpretation of AI-generated insights. Without these skills, AI systems risk being underutilized or misapplied. Change management is equally critical. AI adoption represents a significant organizational change that can provoke uncertainty and resistance. Clear communication, employee engagement, and leadership support are essential to fostering acceptance. Policymakers should ensure that AI initiatives are framed as tools to support and enhance public service work, rather than as mechanisms for workforce reduction. Nigerian governance research emphasizes that reform success depends not only on policy design but also on how reforms are communicated and implemented within institutions (Ademeso, 2025). Change management strategies should therefore be integrated into AI adoption plans from the outset.

Leveraging Global Cooperation and Standards

Developing countries can benefit from international cooperation in AI governance. Participation in global forums, adoption of international best practices, and alignment with established ethical frameworks can strengthen national approaches. International guidelines such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Principles on Artificial Intelligence provide useful benchmarks for responsible AI use in public administration. Collaboration with academic institutions and research organizations can also support evidence-based policymaking. Governments can partner with universities to evaluate AI pilots, develop context-specific solutions, and train public servants. Such partnerships enhance local capacity while ensuring that AI applications are grounded in empirical research.

Empirical Review of AI in Public Sector Human Capital: Global and Nigerian Perspectives

Empirical research on AI in public sector human capital development has expanded in recent years, although evidence from developing countries remains limited. Existing studies provide insights into patterns of adoption, perceived benefits, and implementation challenges.

Global Empirical Evidence

International studies indicate growing use of AI in public administration, particularly for routine administrative tasks, data analysis, and decision support. Zuiderwijk et al. (2021) found that AI adoption in public governance is increasing but remains constrained by concerns over transparency, accountability, and public trust. Surveys of public sector employees in advanced economies suggest that AI can improve efficiency, but also reveal persistent anxieties about job security and skills adequacy. Empirical evidence also highlights the importance of training. Studies show that public servants who receive AI-related training report higher levels of competence and confidence in using AI tools. However, trust in AI systems remains uneven, underscoring the need for transparent design and effective communication.

Nigeria and Africa: Empirical Insights

Empirical research in Nigeria and Africa is still emerging. Available studies suggest that AI adoption in public sector human capital management remains at an early stage, characterized by pilot projects and exploratory initiatives. Research focusing on Nigerian public institutions indicates growing awareness of AI's potential, alongside concerns about infrastructure, skills, and ethical governance. Studies in South Africa highlight similar patterns, noting that while AI could enhance recruitment efficiency and reduce administrative burdens, institutional readiness remains limited. Skills shortages and unclear governance frameworks are frequently cited as barriers to implementation. These findings align with broader assessments of AI readiness, which consistently place many African countries behind global leaders in terms of infrastructure and human capital.

Overall, empirical evidence suggests that AI holds promise for improving public sector human capital development, but that realization of this promise depends on sustained investment in capacity building, governance, and infrastructure.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Artificial Intelligence holds both transformative promise and disruptive challenges for public sector human capital development. As this article has demonstrated, AI can significantly enhance recruitment efficiency, personalize training, support data-driven performance management, strengthen talent management, and improve workforce planning in government institutions. These opportunities are particularly relevant for developing countries such as Nigeria, where persistent capacity constraints, inefficiencies, and skills gaps continue to undermine public sector performance. At the same time, the risks associated with AI adoption are substantial. Job displacement fears, ethical concerns, algorithmic bias, data privacy challenges, skills mismatches, and institutional implementation barriers present serious obstacles to successful integration. Without deliberate governance and policy interventions, AI could exacerbate inequality, erode trust, and reinforce existing institutional weaknesses rather than resolve them. From a theoretical perspective, Human Capital Theory underscores the centrality of investing in people to realize the benefits of AI-driven transformation. Technological Determinism highlights the inevitability of technological change while emphasizing the need for proactive adaptation. Policy

Implementation Theory reminds policymakers that the success of AI reforms depends less on policy intent than on institutional capacity, coordination, and sustained execution. Together, these perspectives reinforce the argument that AI should be viewed not merely as a technological upgrade but as a catalyst for comprehensive public sector reform.

Empirical evidence from global and African contexts suggests that while AI adoption in public administration is increasing, its impacts remain uneven and highly dependent on contextual factors. Countries with strong institutional frameworks, skilled workforces, and robust governance mechanisms are better positioned to harness AI effectively. In Nigeria and similar developing economies, AI initiatives remain largely exploratory, highlighting the need for deliberate capacity building and policy coherence. Based on the analysis, this study offers the following key recommendations. First, governments should adopt people-centred AI strategies that prioritize workforce development, reskilling, and employee engagement. AI should augment human capabilities rather than displace them. Second, sustained investment in digital infrastructure and public sector training is essential to close skills gaps and ensure institutional readiness. Third, robust ethical and regulatory frameworks must be established to address issues of fairness, transparency, accountability, and data protection. Fourth, AI implementation should proceed incrementally through pilot projects, allowing governments to learn, adapt, and build trust before scaling up. Finally, collaboration with academic institutions, private sector actors, and international partners can support evidence-based policymaking and innovation. In conclusion, AI presents a critical opportunity for strengthening public sector human capital development, but its success depends on thoughtful policy design, effective implementation, and sustained investment in people and institutions. For Nigeria and other developing countries, the challenge is not whether to adopt AI, but how to do so in a manner that advances public value, enhances institutional capacity, and promotes inclusive and responsible governance.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: November 25, 2025 Accepted: December 28, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Ohaeri, Gerald (2025). "Using Max Scheler to Elucidate the Place of the Post-Human in the Face of Artificial Intelligence." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 153-163.

Article

Open Access

USING MAX SCHELER TO ELUCIDATE THE PLACE OF THE POST-HUMAN IN THE FACE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

The discovery and presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in our times has certainly redefined the way so many things are done today. And not only redefining the way things are done, AI's presence has gone further to even redefine or challenge how posthumans perceive themselves or their role in the world. With the projected development of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and its projected successor Artificial Superintelligence (ASI), there are AI scientists and engineers who think that these systems would eventually not only achieve human-level intelligence but would even outperform posthumans in all areas of intelligent behaviour. Consequent upon this, these systems would even make human engagement in most things redundant and may even ultimately pose existential problems to posthumans. In the face of this scenario, this paper, using the expository and evaluative method, seeks to interrogate this claim. Max Scheler's philosophical anthropological insight provides the guiding light for this interrogation. The result of this interrogation is that in spite of whatever quantitative and even qualitative intelligence manifestations seen in these systems, they can never come to rival the ontological status of posthumans and cannot therefore replace them in the order of things.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Human Intelligence, Posthuman.

Introduction

Since the term **Posthuman** could be ambiguous, it is necessary before delving into the subject matter proper, to clarify in which sense it is being used here. Three possible shades of meaning could be associated with it. "Posthuman" could mean, among other things, simply and literarily "after-man" in the same way postmortem means "after death" or postexilic means "after the exile." An interpretation of posthuman in this sense would, of

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course, be nonsensical in the language of logical positivists. It is nonsensical because it would not be referring to anything. A posthuman society, in this sense, simply cannot exist because, as Agnes Heller (1999:2) rightly observed, man is a historical being and only man creates history. A society “after-man” would therefore be inconceivable. Posthuman could also mean, in the thinking of transhumanism, “technologically enhanced man.” Akin to humanism, transhumanism, in the words of Richard S. Lewis, (2021):

seeks to reduce suffering, inequality, and premature death – or more positively: to increase access to health, happiness, and longevity of all human beings and their environment – through the strategic use (including nonuse) of technology.

The use of technology being contemplated here is what has been called in biotechnology brain emulation, also referred to as mind uploading. “This is the concept,” continues Richard S. Lewis, “that the brain could possibly be digitalized.” The idea, he goes on to say, is that:

this process could possibly capture the ‘mind’ and consciousness of a person, making them no longer reliant on a biological body. This potentiality would allow their consciousness to live almost indefinitely, or at least greatly enhance their lifespan, and would qualify- at least in the minds of many – as a Posthuman.

Simply put then, the Posthuman is for transhumanists an evolutionary development that will occur in the distant future when technology would have made this possible. Posthuman in any of the above two senses simply cannot be appropriate in our context. To understand “Posthuman” in a way that enables us discuss appropriately the above topic, we must turn now to the new field of philosophical discipline called **Philosophical Posthumanism**. This discipline is, in the main, a philosophical critique of the prevalent idea of man handed down to us by the Renaissance and Enlightenment era of the 17th and 18th centuries Western Europe. This prevalent idea of man or humanism, according to Beatrice Han-Pile:

is often associated with an optimistic and secular view of the world which asserts the privilege of human beings over non-organic (or organic but nonhuman) entities, defending the rights of human beings to happiness and to the development of their individual potential (cited in Richard S. Lewis).

In view of the very obvious negative associations accompanying this view of rational humanism, as it is also called, **Philosophical Posthumanism** has worked out a new concept of posthuman which, among other things, “discusses the human as removed from the center of all things and the exceptionalism that has surrounded the idea since the Enlightenment.” In this new view, the focus is on inter-relatedness of existence, the notion that there is no stand-alone individual. In Philosophical Posthumanism therefore:

the human being is conceptualized here not as an independent and autonomous entity with clear cut boundaries but a heterogeneous subject whose self-definition is continuously shifting, and that exists in a complex network of human and non-human agents and the technologies that mediate between them (cited in Richard S. Lewis).

In thinking of the posthuman in the context of philosophical Posthumanism, we are thinking of ourselves, as Lewis puts it, “as we are now (and have ever been)” but now in the midst of other beings whose presence in our human space forces us to new self-definitions or self-awareness. Among the complex network of human and nonhuman agents with which the

Posthuman must now contend are the AIs that have, in the recent times, invaded our hitherto exclusive human space.

The Philosophical Background to the Emergence of Artificial Intelligence

This philosophical background is provided us by Francis Bacon (1561-1626), one of the founding fathers of modern philosophy. One of his greatest contributions to both Science and Philosophy is his book, **The New Organon**, which he so named in obvious reference to Aristotle's logic, which is named **The Organon**. As the title depicts, Bacon here proposes a new logic or way of arriving at knowledge. The hallmark of this new logical method, Bacon says, is **induction**. And the ultimate aim of the inductive process, according to him, is the discovery of the *forms* of things (and from these forms to gain power into the workings of nature). By the form of things, Bacon does not of course mean form in the Aristotelian sense. By forms, he means the laws that constitute the nature of things. The form of heat, for example, is the law that governs heat. To discover the form of heat therefore is to discover the law of heat, that is the element that is essential to heat which, if present, there will be heat and if absent, there will be no heat. Such forms are abstracted inductively from experience and are not mere abstractions, generated by imagination like platonic or scholastic forms. **Philosophy of nature**, for him, studies these forms/laws in themselves and their general import for various embodiments of the nature in question.

Presently, I am not aware whether it was the application of Bacon's principle that led to the production of heaters. One area where the application of this principle seems to me obvious is in reproductive medicine. Scientists in this field, having successfully studied the law of fertilization, have gone on to enable fertilization outside the normal natural locus of fertilization which is the human or animal body. It is this breakthrough that gave humanity her first test tube baby, Louise Brown, on 25th July 1978 in Oldham, Northwest England. Genetic scientists have today gone further than their first-generation forebears. While the first test tube babies had to be planted back into their mothers' wombs for normal gestation and growth, modern geneticists have gone further to study what Bacon would call the laws of the womb that allow it to nurture the fertilized egg to human fruition. Again, having successfully done that, they have proceeded now no longer to re-implant the fertilized egg back to the mother's womb but to an artificial incubator equipped with all the womb-like enabling conditions for the growth of the foetus. With this development, the woman no longer needs to carry her baby in her womb for nine months.

The Emergence of Artificial Intelligence

As a technical term, "Artificial Intelligence" was coined and introduced into scientific vocabulary by the acclaimed father of the discipline that now goes by the name **Artificial Intelligence**, John McCarthy, an American computer scientist and inventor. In 1956 John McCarthy organized a summer conference at Dartmouth University, USA to which he invited a group of scientists from several professions who had hitherto begun to discuss the potential of developing an artificial brain. Notable among the invited scientists were Alan Turing, Marvin Minsky, Allen Newell, and Herbert A. Simon. The topic for discussion in this conference as reflected in its caption was **Artificial Intelligence!** It was at this conference that McCarthy introduced and defined Artificial Intelligence as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs" or "a branch of computer science by which we create intelligent machines which can think like humans, act like humans, and able to make decisions like humans" (cited in Jakanovic (2022)). On their part, Allen Newell and Herbert Simon (2019:6) describe Artificial Intelligence as "the part of

computer science devoted to getting computers (or other devices) to perform tasks requiring intelligence.” For Margaret Boden (1990:1), Artificial Intelligence “is sometimes defined as the study of how to build and/or program computers to enable them to do the sort of things that minds can do.” According to John Haugeland (1997:1), Artificial Intelligence is “the attempt to construct intelligent artifacts, systems with minds of their own.”

What comes out clearly from these various definitions is that Artificial Intelligence or the science of Artificial Intelligence is a secondary or derivative science founded on the science of computer or computer science. The challenge that faced these scientists now was to discover, in line with Francis Bacon’s prescription, the form of intelligent manifestation/processes in man and then to replicate this outside the natural locus of intelligent processes which is the human mind to a machine/computer i.e. a non-human entity. There were indeed efforts in this direction even before the 1956 conference convoked by John McCarthy. In the article *Artificial Intelligence – Alan Turing and The Beginning of AI* the author, B.J. Copeland noted that the earliest substantial work in the field of artificial intelligence was done in the mid-20th century by the British logician and computer pioneer Alan Mathison Turing. Therein he writes:

In 1935 Turing described an abstract computing machine consisting of limitless memory and a scanner that moves back and forth through the memory, symbol by symbol, reading what it finds and writing further symbols... This is Turing’s stored program concept, and implicit in it is the possibility of the machine operating on, and so modifying or improving, its own program.

Having now studied, as if were, the *form* or *law* of intelligent manifestations or processes, these scientists had then to develop the type of supercomputers that would have the capabilities to do what the AI scientists expected them to do, namely mimic those actions and behaviours these AI scientists see as actions and behaviours that display intelligence as possessed by human beings. It is this replication of such intelligent processes outside their natural locus which is the human brain/mind, that qualifies this intelligence as artificial like artificial limbs or artificial hairs etc. (For a detailed analysis of the opposition of “natural” and “artificial” in respect of intelligence, see Justin Onyeukaziri (2022). Following the euphoria that greeted the initial success of the program and the future prospect it held, many companies like Google, Apple, Honda, General Motors, NASA and even governments invested heavily in the emerging AI industries. No doubt from the early 2000s till date, tremendous developments have taken place in the area of artificial intelligence and its accompanying technologies. Tracing these developments here goes beyond the task of this paper. (See here Amanda Peterson).

Such intelligent software is ubiquitous in our world today. When today we unlock our smart phones with a voice mail or our finger prints, we do not realize perhaps that it is AI at work here. When we open our smart phone and ask it for the current exchange rate of the dollar or whether it will rain in the next one hour and we get from it the required information, I guess we do not know that it is AI at work. When we type our letters or projects with our modern laptops and make spelling mistakes, and our laptops not only point these spelling or grammatical errors, but go on to correct them, we do not realize perhaps that it is AI at work here. When you are at any standard international airport, and instead of a custom officer looking at your face to cross-check if you are really the one whose image is on your passport, you simply slot your passport through a given portal and look straight into

a mirror in front of you and the gate opens for you, you do not realize perhaps how AI is at work also in this place. I can go on and on to enumerate the various instances of the ubiquitous presence of AI in our everyday lives today. (On this note, see Amanda Peterson, and Afe Babalola).

The Place of the Posthuman in the Face Of AI

The question of the place of man, whether the rational man of the Renaissance cum Enlightenment era or the posthuman of Philosophical Posthumanism, has always been contentious. It was this contentiousness that led Max Scheler in the first place to write the book, *Man's Place in Nature*, years before the advent of AIs. It is my considered opinion that the arguments adduced therein to cement the singular position of man in the universe are still valid in our changed circumstances. The old proponents of the equality of man with other animals had hinged their argument on the assumed presence of intelligence found in these animals. Engineers in the AI industry want us to believe that the AI systems they are producing are intelligent beings. They predicate intelligence to them because these AI systems exhibit semblances of the intelligence these engineers see in humans. It would seem then that the possession of intelligence by man, animals, and this time around, AI systems is the ground for the thought of placing the three together, man, animals, AIs and then querying the place of man not only in the face of animal intelligence but more pungently in the face of AI systems. I say more pungently because these AI systems seem to have even outperformed animals in the area of demonstrating human-like intelligent behaviours. The question we must ask ourselves now is: are these so-called intelligent behaviours of AI systems such as to make us cast doubt on the place of the posthuman in the face of these AI systems? Let us first of all determine to what extent we can even talk of intelligent behaviours with reference to AI systems. From there, we can then attempt to answer the question of whether the AI systems can make us doubt the place of the posthuman in the face of these AI systems.

Human Intelligence and Machine Intelligence

Let us take the typical case of the intelligent machine or AI system that is said to have beaten the world champion, Garry Kasparov, in a chess match. This AI system achieved this feat simply because it was trained, as AI experts would say, in countless number of times within the micro-world of chess playing. It thus masters, as if it were, all the possible moves the human agent could make. It is explainable therefore that it could beat Garry Kasparov or indeed any human agent for that matter. But is this feat indicative of human intelligence? Consider that outside its micro-world of chess playing, this AI system is, of course, incapable of performing any other feat whatsoever. This is certainly unlike the human agent who, even if he loses the chess match can play many other games like ludo, whot, scramble, tennis, and engage in a multitude of other intelligent behaviours. Furthermore, we could ask, in the act of playing chess, were the two agents, the AI agent and the human agent, really performing the same act, namely: processing information and taking decisions? On the surface level, it would seem so. On a deeper level, both are certainly not performing the same act. While the human agent, Garry Kasparov, is thinking out, *sui generis*, the moves he has to make, the AI agent is fore-programmed to make the moves it makes. Take also the case of the chatbot that answers any questions put to it or the generative AI that spins out a perfect love-letter when asked of such. Are these AI systems thereby really exhibiting human-like intelligence as some AI enthusiasts would want us to believe? Let us hear what some AI experts have to say on this matter. Bernard Marr (May 8, 2024) writes:

Think of Generative AI as a highly-skilled parrot. It's capable of mimicking complex patterns, producing diverse content, and occasionally surprising us with outputs that seem creatively brilliant. However, like a parrot, Generative AI does not truly "understand" the content it creates. It operates by digesting large database and predicting what comes next... For example, when Generative AI writes a poem about love, it doesn't draw from any deep, emotional reservoirs; instead, it relies on a vast database of words and phrases typically associated with love in human writing. This makes it excellent for tasks like crafting articles on global economics or generating marketing copy, it can convincingly mimic human-like prose based on the information it's trained on. However, it lacks the ability to grasp complex human experiences or perform tasks it hasn't been specifically programmed to handle, such as managing your taxes or strategizing economic policies.

When AI scientists qualify AI systems as "generative," I guess they thereby mean to point to the ability of such machines to generate information in the manner the human brain does this. But is this suggestion that the generative AI and the human brain/mind are performing similar operations justifiable? If anything, what these so-called generative AIs are doing is a very poor semblance of what happens in the brain when it comes to the brain generating information. Think of what the human mind does with the closed-up twenty-six (26) letters of the English alphabet with which it generates countless number of words, ideas or information. And when AI systems are fed with or trained on the products of such original generative processes, and in turn simulate such generative prowess, AI apologists want us to equate what such AI systems are doing with the spontaneous generative power of the mind. The words of William H. Calvin (2004:74) come to mind in this connection: "But you don't want to confuse a mechanism that amplifies the effects of the real thing with, well, the thing itself."

Yann LeCun, Meta's chief scientist and winner of the prestigious Turing Award, and often referred to as one of the "three godfathers of AI" is even more blunt in his condemnation of the so-called intelligence of these AI systems. His critique includes even the much talked about Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) purported to mimic human intelligence more comprehensively. For him there isn't even anything like AGI because, he says, "human intelligence is nowhere general" (See Thomas Macaulay (2024)). In the above article, LeCun pointed to a quartet of cognitive challenges facing all AI systems, namely *reasoning, planning, persistent memory, and understanding the world*. "These are four essential characteristics of human intelligence - also animal intelligence, for that matter, that current AI systems can't do" he said. Without these capabilities, he further notes, AI applications remain limited and error prone. These intellectual shortcomings, he goes on to say, are particularly prominent in large language models (LLMs):

We are easily fooled into thinking they are intelligent because of their fluency with language, but really, their understanding of reality is very superficial. They are useful, there is no question about that. But on the part towards human-level intelligence, an LLM is basically an off-ramp, a distraction, a dead end.

He then goes on to criticize the enormous amount of data used in the so-called training of these LLMs. According to him, it would take a human around 100,000 years to read all the text ingested by a leading LLM. That, he notes, is not the primary way human beings learn.

He goes on to note that we consume far more information through our interactions with the world. He then estimates that a typical four-year-old has seen 50 times more data than the world's biggest LLM. In conclusion, he then notes, "most human knowledge is actually not language so those systems can never reach human-level intelligence." Anthony Chemero, a Professor of Philosophy and Psychology in the University of Cincinnati College of Arts and Science agrees completely with Yann LeCun that LLMs differ from human cognition because they (LLMs) are not embodied like living beings who are always surrounded by other humans and material and cultural environments. Unlike humans, he says, AI doesn't have embodied experiences or emotions, making its intelligence fundamentally different from human intelligence (See Angela Koenig (2023)). In the face of these grave limitations, reflective computer scientists and AI experts are beginning to question themselves whether one can really talk of intelligence in reference to computers and AI systems. At the end of his already cited article, B.J. Copeland (2024:12) notes:

AI has no real definition of intelligence to offer, not even in the subhuman case. Rats are intelligent, but what exactly must an artificial intelligence achieve before researchers can claim this level of success. In the absence of a reasonably precise criterion for what an artificial system counts as intelligent, there is no objective way of telling whether an AI research program has succeeded or failed.

Prof. Stuart Russell of the University of California at Berkeley, described as a world leader in the field of Artificial Intelligence, is not guessing what AI scientists' definition of intelligence is. He believes that the current approach to building "intelligent" machines is profoundly dangerous. This is because he regards AI scientists' prevailing concept of intelligence – the extent that actions can be expected to achieve given objectives – as fatally flawed. The inappropriateness of this notion of intelligence he highlights in these words:

AI researchers build machines, give them certain specific objectives and judge them to be more or less intelligent by their success in achieving these objectives. This is probably ok in the laboratory (cited in John Naughton (2021)).

In spite of these obvious proofs to the contrary, there remains still a group of AI scientists who think that they can, through more and more technological improvements, eventually achieve the ultimate professional goal of AI research which is ASI, that genius that never sleeps, as Bernard Marr describes it, and that would eventually even outperform human intelligence. Notable amongst such AI scientists is Ray Kurzweil, an American computer scientist and techno-optimist said to be a long serving authority on artificial intelligence. Rich Stanton (2024) credits Ray Kurzweil as saying: "we are going to expand intelligence a million-fold by 2045 and it is going to deepen our awareness and consciousness." For Ray Kurzweil and his like minds, we must therefore continue our investigation by now inviting Max Scheler to the discussion.

Max Scheler on the Place of the Posthuman in the Face of Artificial Intelligence

In the introduction to his philosophical anthropological work, **Man's Place in Nature**, Max Scheler dismissed the traditional theological, philosophical and scientific views of man of his time. Scheler sees the traditional theological view of man, exemplified in the Judeo-Christian view of man as **Imago Dei**, while the Greek view of man as **homo sapiens** exemplifies for him the traditional philosophical view. The scientific view for him is exemplified by Charles

Darwin's evolutionary theory of man. These three traditional views, Scheler (1962:6) observes, are held "in complete separation from each other." The imperative Scheler therefore saw himself confronted with was to offer in his work "a unified idea of man." The pathway to this was a recourse to a metaphysical dimension of man not envisaged in the above three traditions. In his view, man is not explainable only within the phenomenon called psychophysical life. According to Suncrates James W. Kidd, for Scheler, man is "a locus and a focus where life and spirit intercept." Max Scheler first published his philosophical anthropological work, *Man's place in Nature* in 1928, decades of years before the advent of AI. It is therefore understandable that the issue of AI was not known to him and as such could not have been a possible topic of discussion. What makes Max Scheler relevant in the discussion surrounding AI is, of course, the purported claim of intelligence ascribed to these AI agents by their creators, and the subsequent challenge thus posed by these AI agents to the posthuman. In their quest to replicate or even outperform the intelligent behaviours of the human being by multiplying intelligence a million-fold in the AI systems they create, these AI scientists lay a disproportional emphasis on intelligence as if intelligence on its own is the defining element of man. The more intelligent the AI system is, as it were, the more human-like it would be. This is where Max Scheler comes in. In the confusion created by rival claims of animal intelligence as held by some scientists of his time, Max Scheler sets forth his search for that which really distinguishes man from animals. Out of his metaphysical standpoint, he queries:

If the animal has intelligence, does this mean there is only a difference in degree between man and animal - or is there still an essential difference? Is there still in man, ... something that is not yet defined by, or included in, the capacity for choice and intelligence? (Max Scheler, 1962:35).

Assuming now that what we see manifested by AI systems is intelligence, we could well reframe the above question in our present context thus:

If the AI system has intelligence, does this mean there is only a difference in degree between man and AI - or is there still an essential difference? Is there still in man, ... something that is not yet defined by, or included in, the capacity for choice and intelligence?

In answering the above question, Max Scheler (1962:35f) notes:

... I assert that the nature of man, or that which may be called his unique place in nature, goes far beyond the capacity for choice and intelligence and would not be reached even if we were to enlarge these powers, in a quantitative sense, to infinity.

That unique characteristic or principle, to use Scheler's terminology, which underpins the humanness, the being, of man Scheler calls "spirit. Describing this principle, he writes:

The Greeks affirmed the existence of such a principle and called it reason, we will use a more inclusive term and call it "spirit" - a term which includes the concept of reason, but which, in addition to conceptual thought, also includes the intuition of essences and a class of voluntary and emotional acts such as kindness, love, remorse, reverence, wonder, bliss, despair, and free decision(1962:36).

Any psycho-physical entity that possesses this spirit, Scheler calls **Person** while any psycho-physical entity, like plants and animals, that do not possess it, in spite of their possessing

other psycho-physical attributes with man, attributes like choice and intelligence, he calls **Psychic Centres**. Intelligent machines being artifacts are, of course, no psychophysical (natural) entities. In this case they do not even qualify to be called psychic centres. Of interest to us now is what this spirit does, according to Scheler, in the agent in which it is present. The fundamental difference between a person (i.e. possessor of spirit) and a mere psychic centre or indeed any entity that does not possess spirit, Scheler holds, is the power of objectification possessed exclusively by persons because of the presence of spirit in them. By objectification, Scheler means the ability or power to turn anything and even his environment into objects. It is this power that ultimately enables a person (man) to objectify even his psychic powers, including his intelligence:

By virtue of the spirit, man is capable of expanding the environment into the dimension of a world and of objectifying resistance. He is also capable - and this is most remarkable - of objectifying his own physiological and psychological states, every psychic experience and every vital function. It is for this reason that this being can also throw his life away freely (Max Scheler 1962:40).

It is, of course, the power of this objectification that makes it possible for man or the Posthuman to objectify his intelligence (brain) and transfer this to man-made machines thus creating AIs in the first place. With reference to animals which, like human beings, are psycho-physical organisms, Max Scheler (1962:41) holds that though "the psyche of the animal functions and works, the animal is not a potential psychologist or physiologist." The animal is, of course, not a potential psychologist or physiologist simply because it cannot objectify its psychic state or physiological make-up. One can go on and on to enumerate what the animal cannot become because of this lack of the ability to objectify anything whatsoever. The animal cannot, for example, objectify its biological make-up to become a biologist, neither can it objectify its environment to become an environmentalist nor its food to become a nutritionist, etc. What is said here of animals applies even with greater force to non-organic entities like AI systems. Being the man-made tools they are, they can and do indeed help man in these various and varying fields of human endeavors but they cannot replace man by becoming any of these things man is or can become. At the end of his article *Generative AI hype is ending – and now the technology might actually become useful*, the author, Vitomir Kovanovic (2024) makes what I consider a very insightful observation:

In the end, the AI revolution will look like an evolution. Its use will gradually grow overtime and little by little, alter and transform human activities, which is much better than replacing them.

It is because of their losing sight of the metaphysical or spiritual dimension of man that these AI scientists and engineers are focusing exclusively on intelligence and its possible expansion thereby missing the point, especially in their quest to rival or challenge the place of man. AIs may challenge the posthuman in his socio-economic space (and they would not be the first non-human agents to do so). On the ontological level, AIs, no matter how potentially intelligent they are purported to be, haven't even any *locus standi*, as lawyers would say, from which to challenge the posthuman. The reason, in Scheler's view, is simple: the posthuman's place in the cosmos is not determined only by the quantum of intelligence possessed but by the unique possession of spirit. The strenuous efforts being made by AI scientists to bridge the gap, as it were, between man and AI systems, especially the superintelligent machines, is, to my mind, an effort in futility. No one, of course, denies the

enormous benefits accruing to man from AI technologies. The problem, as Justin Onyeukaziri (2022:110) succinctly puts it “lies in the theoretical ends of the research and development of artificial intelligence, especially when the end is a claim that intends to negate or eliminate the ontological difference between the natural and the artificial or to scientifically reduce the artificial to the natural or the reduction of the natural to the artificial.” This attempt, he notes, is neither plausible nor possible.

Conclusion

In the words of Bernard Marr (Oct. 31 2024:10:31) AI scientists want us to believe that the AI invention is “potentially the most significant technological leap in human history... that could become humanity’s greatest achievement or its last invention”. But is this really true? Sober minds will certainly not agree with that. Let me leave AI apologists with this quotation from Galileo Galilei (1632) cited in William H. Calvin (2004:137):

But surpassing all stupendous inventions, what sublimity of mind was his who dreamed of finding means to communicate his deepest thoughts to any other person, though distant by mighty intervals of place and time! Of talking with those who are not yet born for a thousand or ten thousand years; and with what facility, by the different arrangements of twenty characters upon a page.

Even when AI is considered, rightly or wrongly, humanity’s greatest achievement, would this warrant tilting admiration to the invention rather than the inventor? In the hype surrounding AI, this seems to me the case. The novelty of the discovery of AI is only a testimony to one of the insights of Francis Bacon that the human mind is adapted to study nature and make it subservient to man’s interest. AI and indeed whatever scientific or technological breakthroughs that humans have put in place or would put in place in the future are all pointers to the not-yet-totally exploited possibilities of the human mind. Any wonder or admiration about AI and all it can do should therefore be directed not to the AI tools themselves but to the human mind, the human intellect that conceived and created them.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 20, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Saleh, Bailey; Saleh, Abbas B. & Saleh, Albert B. (2025). "Empirical Comparative Analysis of North America and Latin America Manufacturing Outputs, 2018-2025." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 164-173.

Article

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EMPIRICAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NORTH AMERICA AND LATIN AMERICA MANUFACTURING OUTPUTS, 2018-2025

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to make empirical comparative analysis of North America and Latin America manufacturing outputs between 2018 and 2025. Both North America and Latin America regions have been participating in the manufacturing sector of the global economy; but at different pace. North America is the second leading region after the Asia region of the world in this regard. Whereas, its southern neighbour Latin America, has been struggling to escape from the bottom of the world regional ladder. The Latin American region has underperformed compared with that of the North American region. The study adopted secondary data with documents obtained from World Bank Open Data on Manufacturing, UNCTAD annual reports, academic journals, bulletins, textbooks, scholarly papers, and internet materials. The generated narrative data were analyzed through critical discourse method. While, empirical data generated from verifiable sources, was computed by the researcher and presented in tabular and graphical forms and analyzed through descriptive and explanatory methods, drawing inference where appropriate. The study established that the Latin American region with 3% of the world manufacturing outputs has seriously underperformed. By way of recommendation, the Latin America region should rely heavily on strategic local thinking and technics to come up with unique products for exports.

Keywords: Latin America, Manufacturing Output, North America, Empirical Comparism, Global Economy.

JEL Classification: N20, N60, O1, O19, O47, O57, P0, P16, P33.

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Introduction

Industrialization has brought about general economic development of the northern hemisphere which was triggered by manufacturing for most part of the 19th and 20th Centuries. It generated enormous wealth for them during the industrial revolution up to the point when the 'China-shock' set in. Though Latin American countries have been into the manufacturing business since their political independence, yet they could hardly meet their domestic consumption needs, talk less of massive exports. The poor performance of the Latin American region in this regard, has been wrongly attributed to their colonial past. It was wrongly held that the plunder of human capital (slaves) and material resources of Latin American colonies, catapulted the economic development of its northern neighbor, the North America region; that made its leader the United States (US) to also dominate global political and economic affairs up to the end of the 20th Century. However, what will Latin America say about the current global manufacturing leadership of China, which was once colonized by Japan? It is all about purposeful political leadership that have their countries and citizens at heart. The problem of Latin America so far is not that of resource wherewithal, but that of lack of political-will from their leaders to succeed in the nascent global manufacturing vogue. Where there is the political-will, the economic-will, certainly will be there to harness and direct all resources to the manufacturing production process that will generate enormous production activities with the accompanying employment generation and wealth creation for the Latin American populace. As long as the Latin American region fails to adopt the manufacturing vogue, it will continue to be among the back benchers of the world regional manufacturing outputs. Latin America should do it the - 'China way' or the 'Asian way' (Felipe, 2018; Wolde, 2022; Harb & Basil, 2023; Krusse, et-al, 2023; Xu & Pal, 2022; Diodato, et-al, 2022; Chaponniere & Lautier, 2020).

The selection and eventual election of virtuous people into political leadership positions in all Latin American countries should be paramount. Such visionary and patriotic leaders must be determined in attaining industrial and manufacturing development for the region by embarking on deliberate policies of promoting the consumption of locally manufactured products and goods by first relying on direct domestic investment (DDI) supported heavily by government through stimulus packages. Leveraging heavily on the expertise of their local indigenous technicians, engineers and technologists, Latin American countries can develop generic versions and pro-types of medicines, automobile and even aeronautics with initial large domestic markets. With shrinking foreign plunders and self-inflicted retreat by the West in terms of population, technologies, industrialization and manufacturing; Latin America can take advantage of its vast resources (land, population, marine, minerals, etc.), and proximity to the North American region to launch-out in all global economic fronts; with specific focus on manufacturing. This will make their unique manufactured products, goods and services to be acceptable in the global market (Shameem, & Jayaprasad, 2020; Rocha, 2018; Liu et-al, 2020; Iqbal, 2022; Joshi, 2021).

Literature Review

The manufacturing theory and comparative advantage theory have been adopted and utilized as frameworks for the study as outlined and treated below:

- i. **Manufacturing Theory:** Manufacturing Theory is the study of how businesses make use of resources to process and eventually produce goods or services for sale. It is a branch of economics that explains how businesses decide what to do with resources of raw materials and labour at its disposal to efficiently produce goods or services with comparative competitive advantage over other businesses or trading partners. In

international economic relations, manufacturing and international trade theory refers to the economic concepts that explains why countries specialize in producing certain goods based on their available resources and comparative advantage over other entities, that attracts greater benefits to them. The theory identifies three factors that are very essential to the transformation of raw materials into finished goods and services; which include - resources, capital and labour. Though this study concurs with this position; but would like to add that the fourth important factor in manufacturing - which is a very disciplined (clean) politico-economic condition. With a very disciplined government presiding over a very disciplined citizenry, there will be no wastages; where all efforts and resources will be judiciously directed at the qualitative and quantitative production of goods and services in which the country or region has comparative competitive advantage in the international market (Alting, 1978; Gandolfo, 1986; Daniel & Brown, 2004; Zhao, et-al, 2006; Zhang & Sharifi, 2007; Watson, 2017; Murdock, 2020; Katina, 2024).

- ii. **Comparative Advantage Theory:** The Comparative Advantage Theory (CAT), is the second theory adopted as framework for the study. Comparative advantage relates to how much productive and cost-efficient a country is over another country in the harnessing of vital resources in the production of finished goods and services. Furthermore, the theory of comparative advantage which is generally known as Heckster-Ohlin theory, is a classical country-based theory which states that countries will gain comparative advantage if they produce and export goods that requires resources or factors that they have in great supply; and cheaper production factors. The differences in factor abundance and the factor intensity of goods must be in favour of the country that possessed them. The CAT states that countries can benefit from international trade by specializing in producing goods where they have a lower opportunity cost compared to other countries. In another word, it is the ability of a country to produce a particular good or some goods or services at lower opportunity cost than its trading partners. Furthermore, comparative advantage also describes the economic reality of the gains from trade for individuals, firms, or nations; which arise from differences in their endowments or technological progress. The theory emphasizes that countries with advantage in the differences in factor abundance and the factor intensity of goods, often attains absolute advantage where they become more productive, and cost-efficient than other countries (Alting, 1978; Rodrik, 2013; Szirmai & Verspagen, 2015; Rocha, 2018; Liu et-al, 2020; Wolde, 2022; Xu & Pal, 2022; Krusse, et-al, 2023; Busse, et-al, 2024).

This study aligns with the above position because the Latin American region is naturally endowed and blessed with vast land, abundant and cheap labour, mineral resources and marine resources; that if well harnessed and directed at the manufacture of unique products, can launch the region onto global manufacturing explosion for the rest of the 21st Century. This is the main reason for the adoption of this theory as a framework for the study.

Methodology

The study adopted secondary data sources for analysis. The data were sourced mainly from UNCTAD Statistical Data, World Bank Group Open Data and BRICS-JSP. Other documents scrutinized include published materials such as textbooks, academic journals, scholarly papers, and internet materials. The generated narrative data were analyzed through critical discourse method. While, empirical data generated from verifiable secondary sources were

computed by the researcher and presented in tabular and graphical forms; and analyzed through descriptive and explanatory methods drawing inference where appropriate.

Results and Discussion

Results from data generated mainly from secondary sources through document studies on manufacturing outputs of the two regions of the world are hereby presented in tabular forms and in figures; and analyzed through critical discourse method, descriptive and explanatory methods.

Manufacturing Outputs of North America, 2018 - 2024 (\$tr)

The manufacturing performance of North American countries for the period covered by the study has been in steady decline where manufactured goods and services, more especially automobiles from mostly Asian countries have become the most preferred by consumers in the former’s domestic environments. The US is almost the lone-ranger in the North American region whose cumulative total manufacturing performance of \$14,427,349,678,000tr represents 13% of the World cumulative total of \$106,856,626,720,000tr; and 91% of the regional total of \$15,796,978,230,442tr for the period of the study. This leaves the remaining twenty-two countries of the region with 9% of the regional total and 1% of the World total. The Latin American region is placed second behind the Asia region that leads the world with \$49,902,700,015,725tr (47% of the world total). On a country-to-country manufacturing outputs performance, and as just stated above, the US comfortably leads the North American region with 91% of the region’s total cumulative of \$15,796,978,230,442tr for the period of the study. Canada is second with a total cumulative of \$782,186,223,189tr (0.7% of World total), and 5% of the regional total cumulative. Mexico is third with a total cumulative of \$185,190,230,397tr (1% of the regional total). The remaining twenty countries of the region score less than 1% of the regional total. Another disturbing development is that, with the US garnering 91% of the North American regional total; it shows that the remaining twenty-two countries of the region recorded only 9% of the region’s cumulative manufacturing outputs. This portends great danger to North American countries in view of unwinding new global realities and challenges of a post-western era; whereby, if something untoward happens to the economic and political equilibrium of the USA, their individual national economies will face serious hiccup (Atkinson, et-al, 2012; Baily & Bostworth, 2014; Vanchan & Bryson, 2017; Scott, et-al, 2020; Kudrenko, 2024; Daehn, et-al, 2024; DeNight & Berthelette, 2024). Table 1 is a summary of the manufacturing output of North America, 2018-2024:

Table 1: Cumulative Manufacturing Outputs of the North American Region, 2018-2024 (\$tr)

SN	Countries	Cumulative	NACAA	NACCA	WCAA
1.	US	14,427,349,678,000	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
2.	Canada	782,186,223,189	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
3.	Mexico	185,190,230,397	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
4.	Guatemala	71,603,938,911	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
5.	Dominican Rep.	66,941,757,246	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
6.	Costa Rica	41,855,011,555	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
7.	Trinidad & Tob	28,384,391,686	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
8.	Panama	25,911,294,900	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
9.	Haiti	25,783,289,068	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
10.	Nicaragua	13,630,467,024	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
11.	Jamaica	9,092,186,925	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
12.	Barbados	1,754,300,000	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
13.	Belize	1,142,128,200	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
14.	Bahamas	1,206,600,000	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4

15.	St. Lucia	381,709,629	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
16.	St. Kitts&Nevis	321,688,259	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
17.	Antigua	310,552,117	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
18.	Grenada	269,260,349	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
19.	St. Vinc & Gren	246,802,112	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
20.	Dominica	105,430,815	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
21.	Cuba	49,766,419,100	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
22.	El-Salvador	31,653,233,100	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
23.	Honduras	31,891,437,860	2,256,711,175,777.4	686,825,140,454	15,265,232,388,571.4
	North America	15,796,978,230,442	15,796,978,230,442	15,796,978,230,442	106,856,626,720,00
	World	106,856,626,720,000	4,645,946,292,173.9	7,632,616,194,285.7	106,856,626,720,000

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2026 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Group, 2025

Key: **NACAA** – North America Cumulative Annual Average;
NACCA – North America Cumulative Country Average;
WCAA – World Cumulative Annual Average

Manufacturing Outputs of Latin American Region, 2018 - 2024 (\$tr)

Latin America with manufacturing outputs of \$2,747,368,978,621tr representing 3% of the world total (\$106,856,626,720,000tr), is among the three lowest performing regions of the world in this regard. This represents 18% of the world cumulative annual average of \$15,265,232,388,571,4tr. Brazil with total cumulative manufacturing of \$1,295,419,032,052tr is the only country in the region that scored 1% of the world total for the period of the study. The remaining ten countries such as: Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Guyana and Suriname scored less than 1% of the world total for the same period. This does not portray the region as serious in keying into the unwinding global manufacturing vogue. The implication of this is that, countries of the region will continue to serve as large open-markets for manufactured products and goods principally from the Asian region for a very long time to come. As the economies of countries of the Asian region continues to grow and expand, those of the Latin American region will continue to shrink, with the accompanying socio-economic problems of job-losses (unemployment), criminal-gang activities, drug pushing and general insecurity in their domestic environments (Wolde, 2022; Duggan, et-al, 2022; Harb & Basil, 2023). The summary of the manufacturing outputs of Latin American region is shown in tables 2 & 3, and figures 1 & 2 below.

Table 2: Manufacturing Outputs of the Latin American Region, 2018 - 2024 (\$tr)

SN	Countries	Cumulative	LACAA	LACCA	WCAA
1.	Brazil	1,295,419,032,052	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
2.	Argentina	564,649,801,125	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
3.	Colombia	253,717,999,053	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
4.	Chile	187,232,617,760	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
5.	Peru	189,836,393,965	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
6.	Ecuador	120,865,566,000	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
7.	Paraguay	52,837,992,023	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
8.	Uruguay	45,629,403,878	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
9.	Bolivia	29,888,148,240	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
10.	Guyana	1,739,748,314	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
11.	Suriname	5,552,276,211	392,481,282,660	249,760,816,238.2	15,265,232,388,571.4
	Latin America	2,747,368,978,621	2,747,368,978,621	2,747,368,978,621	106,856,626,720,00
	World Total	106,856,626,720,000	4,645,946,292,173.9	7,632,616,194,285.7	106,856,626,720,000

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2026 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Group, 2025

Key: LACAA - Latin America Cumulative Annual Average;
 LACCA – Latin America Cumulative Country Average;
 WCAA – World Cumulative Annual Average

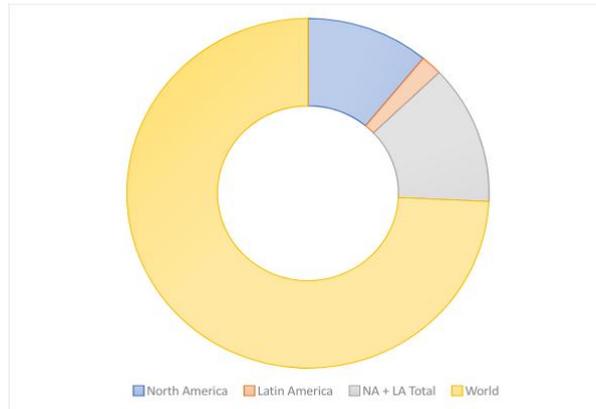
Table 3 is a summary of the Comparison of North America and Latin America Manufacturing Outputs, 2018-2024:

Table 3: Summary of the Comparison of North America and Latin America Manufacturing Outputs, 2018-2024(\$tr)

1.	North America	15,796,978,230,442	15,796,978,230,442	15,796,978,230,442	106,856,626,720,000
2.	Latin America	2,747,368,978,621	2,747,368,978,621	2,747,368,978,621	106,856,626,720,000
3.	NA + LA	18,544,347,209,063	2,549,192,458,437	545,421,976,734	106,856,626,720,000
4.	World Total	106,856,626,720,000	4,645,946,292,173.9	7,632,616,194,285.7	106,856,626,720,000

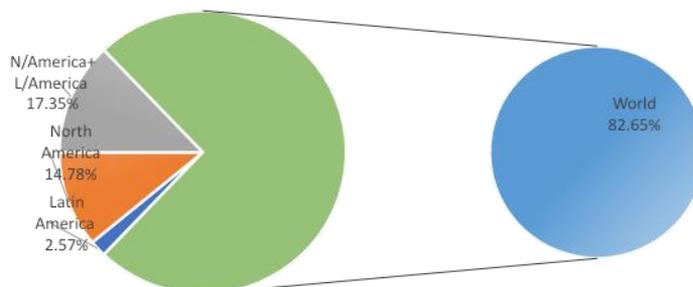
Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2026 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Group, 2025

Fig 1: Summary of the Comparison North America and Latin America Manufacturing Outputs, 2018-2024(\$tr)



Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2023; World Bank Group, 2025

Fig 2: Summary of the Comparison of North America and Latin America Manufacturing Outputs, 2018-2024(%)



Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2026 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2026; World Bank Group, 2025.

Summary of Major Findings, Conclusion / Recommendations

Summary of major findings, conclusion and recommendations derived mainly from the analysis are hereby presented below:

Major Findings:

From the analysis so far, the following major findings have been sieved:

- i. The study has established that the Latin America region with only 3% of the world manufacturing outputs and third from the bottom of the world regional ladder, has underperformed.
- ii. The study has also established that the North America region with manufacturing outputs of \$15,796,978,230,442tr, has overwhelmingly outperformed the Latin America region (with \$2,161,326,035,222tr) by 575%.
- iii. The study has further established that the US alone recorded 91% of the regional total and 1% of the world total; while the remaining twenty-two countries of the region recorded 9% of the regional total; and scored less than 1% of the world total. This shows a region-wide poor performance; whereby if the economy of the US is negatively affected, it will have adverse effect on the economy of the North American region.
- iv. The study has also established that, US the North America region leader (with \$14,427,349,678,000tr), has overwhelmingly outperformed Brazil the Latin America region leader (with \$1,295,419,032,052tr) by 1,113.72%.
- v. The study has by extension established that the world regional leader, the Asia region, has overwhelmingly outperformed the Latin American region by 1,816.38%.

Conclusion

From the analysis so far, conclusion can be drawn that the Latin America region with \$2,161,326,035,222tr representing 2% of the world total manufacturing outputs has seriously underperformed. The North American region with manufacturing outputs of \$15,796,978,230,442tr, has outperformed the Latin American region by 731%.

Recommendations

By way of recommendation, the Latin American region should in all honesty seek first visionary leaders who have their countries and region at heart; who would adopt local strategic thinking and coming up with independent innovations of producing local unique products, goods and services with comparative competitive advantage in the global market. Furthermore, their political leaders should embark on the harnessing of their individual countries' abundant natural endowments such as human, land, marine, and minerals to launch-out on aggressive manufacturing, which is now a global vogue and a vital economic instrument for attaining economic and political relevance in the world.

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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 1, Number 3 (December 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: December 19, 2025 Accepted: December 29, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

Citation: Success, Ademeso T. & Ogundiran, Princess O. (2025). "Affirmative Action and Gender Equality in Nigeria: A Study of the 35 Percent Policy." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 1 (3): 174-180.

Article

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AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF THE 35 PERCENT POLICY

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Abstract

This study critically examines the role of affirmative action in fostering gender equality in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy (35% AAP). Introduced to mitigate entrenched gender disparities in political participation and representation, the policy's progress has been uneven and fraught with challenges. This paper delves into the historical context, the implementation dynamics, and the socio-political barriers impeding the policy's success. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the findings highlight the policy's limited successes in increasing female political participation while underscoring systemic obstacles such as weak legal enforcement and cultural resistance. The study advocates for strengthening institutional frameworks, enhancing public awareness campaigns, and fostering community engagement to overcome these barriers. The research contributes significantly to understanding affirmative action's potential and limitations in promoting gender equality, offering actionable insights for policymakers, scholars, and advocates.

Keywords: Affirmative Action, Gender Equality, 35% AAP, Political Representation, Women Empowerment, Nigeria.

Introduction

Gender inequality continues to be a pressing and persistent issue in Nigeria, where women are vastly underrepresented in political, economic, and decision-making spheres. The 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy (35% APP) represents a significant step toward addressing this imbalance by mandating a minimum of 35% representation for women in appointive and elective positions. This aligns with global Conventions, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which advocate for increased female participation in governance as

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a pathway to inclusive and sustainable development. Despite its promising framework, the policy has not yielded the transformative change envisioned at its inception. Nigeria's political landscape remains dominated by male counterparts, with women often excluded due to systemic challenges such as inadequate political will, weak enforcement mechanisms, and socio-cultural biases. Recent data which the women's representation in legislative roles remains below 10%, highlighting a significant gap between policy objectives and real-world outcomes. This paper seeks to bridge this gap by analyzing the policy's efficacy, identifying persistent challenges, and offering evidence-based recommendations for fostering gender parity in Nigeria's governance structure. Through a mixed-methods approach, this study provides a comprehensive exploration of both the successes and shortcomings of the 35% APP and aiming to chart a pathway toward its effective implementation.

The underrepresentation of women in Nigerian governance continues to undermine the country's democratic ideals and development goals. Despite Nigeria's ratification of numerous international frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which emphasize gender equality, these commitments have not translated into tangible progress. The 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy was introduced as a corrective measure to address these systemic disparities by ensuring a minimum threshold for women's inclusion in decision-making roles. However, its implementation has been inconsistent and largely symbolic. Challenges to the policy's success are multi-faceted. Institutional inertia, characterized by a lack of legal mandates and accountability mechanisms, has significantly hindered progress. Cultural and societal norms, deeply rooted in patriarchal ideologies, continue to devalue women's contributions to governance. Furthermore, financial and logistical barriers disproportionately affect women's ability to compete in the political arena, exacerbating their exclusion. The result is a persistent gender gap that not only marginalizes women but also deprives the nation of diverse perspectives essential for inclusive policymaking. This study aims to interrogate these challenges, examine the policy's impact, and propose actionable strategies to align Nigeria's governance with its gender equality aspirations.

Research Questions

- i. What are the historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts that have shaped the development and implementation of the 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy (30% APP) in Nigeria?
- ii. How has the 30% APP influenced women's representation in appointive and elective political roles, and what measurable impacts can be identified?
- iii. What institutional, societal, and individual-level barriers continue to impede the policy's success, and how can these challenges be addressed to ensure more effective implementation?

Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy's role and effectiveness. The methodology integrates these components: examination of policy documents, government reports, international agreements, and legislative frameworks to trace the origins, intentions, and implementation dynamics of the policy. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with policymakers, gender equality advocates, female politicians, and academics to gain insights into the lived experiences and perspectives regarding the policy's impact and challenges.

Structured questionnaires administered to a diverse sample of Nigerians to assess public perception of the policy and its impact on gender equality in political representation. Data from these methods were analyzed using thematic analysis for qualitative data and descriptive and inferential statistical methods for quantitative data. The triangulation of these methods ensures the reliability and validity of the findings.

Literature Review

Affirmative Action

Affirmative Action (AA) refers to policies that take care of race, ethnicity or gender into consideration in an attempt to promote equal opportunity in socioeconomic and political life; It is a policy project aimed at countering discrimination against minorities and disadvantaged social group. The origin of Affirmative Action is traced to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America whereby President John F. Kennedy by Executive Order 10925 established the President's Commission on Equal Employment Opportunities Order which provided that: Contractors doing business with the American government will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and employees are treated during their employment without regard to their race, colour or national origin. By 1964, affirmative action was solidified by the Civil Rights Act sponsored by Senators Joseph Clark and Clifford Case. Importantly, Affirmative Action for Women began with agitations and movements within the United Nations in which the charter (1945) included a provision for equality between men and women (chapter III, article 8). It is widely believed that socio-economic variables like literacy rate, patriarchal system, culture, race, religion; violence, night meetings, blackmail, rigging; societal attitudes, social cohesion, and social capital, as well as, poverty rate, earnings/income opportunity, cash benefits, property ownership/rights of inheritance, house hold division of labour and party funding. largely affect women participation in politics. In attempt to overcome the impacts of these variables on women political participation, various female officials within the United Nations and leaders of women's movements on the global stage successfully turned these principles into action through several resolutions and conferences from 1945 to 1975 which eventually turned 1975 into International Women's Year; and 1976-1985 into the "Decade of Women". Affirmative action policies have been widely studied as mechanisms to address systemic inequalities and foster inclusion in governance. Globally, countries such as Rwanda and Sweden have demonstrated the transformative potential of affirmative action in increasing women's representation in political and decision-making spheres. Rwanda, for instance, has achieved over 60% female representation in its legislature, largely attributed to robust quota systems and a cultural shift toward valuing women's contributions to governance (Devlin & Elgie, 2008).

Gender Inequality and Decision Making in Democracy

The concept of gender has its origin in Latin which signifies 'kind' or 'group'. In contemporary times, the concept has been used to represent masculinity and feminism. Today the concept of gender is used to denote unequal perceptions and roles that a society assigns to both males and females, especially, the female or women group (Anyalebechi, 2016: 64). Ugwu (2008) sees the concept of gender within the mindset or the fact of being male or female or in relation to sex of human race which intrinsically has generated the question of roles and placements in the society. Blomgren, (2010) sees gender as the roles, relationships, attitudes, behaviour and values. that society ascribes to men and women.

O'Neil and Domingo (2015) assert that decision-making power is the ability to influence decisions that affect one's life. These include issues that affect both one's private and public life. Therefore, the ability of people, especially women to have formal access to political positions and to decision making is considered critical in empowering women. Again, O'Neil and Domingo (2015) have argued that decision-making powers, to a large extent, determine women's access, capabilities and actions. It also determines if they have influence over political processes or decisions as it concern their private lives. Therefore, it can be said that women's access to political processes and decision making is central to their access to leadership positions and ability to wield power like their counterparts, the menfolk.

There are growing numbers of literature on gender issues over the past three decades. For instance, Umoh, Momoh, and Rwang (2019) examined gender (In)equality, challenges and implications for African states; O'Neil and Domingo (2015) in their study make a case for empowering women in decision making and the need to reduce gender inequality; Anyalebechi (2016) identified the causes of gender inequality in Nigeria; Beaman, Dufl, Pande, and Topalova (2006) examined gender bias against women in politics and policy-making in rural India; Chappell and Waylen (2013) examined the imperatives of promoting gender equality in various institutions'; Diaz and Marin (2013) in their study made a case for the advancement of women's rights agenda in Columbia; Domingo, Holmes, O'Neil, Jones, Bird, Larson, Presler, Marshall, and Valters, (2015) in their study provided evidence on the need to improve Women's voice in leadership and decision-making; Hughes, Duncan, and Pournik, (2014); Klugman, Hanmer, Twigg, Hasan, McClearySills, and Santamaria, (2014) examined women leadership role as critical for their empowerment; Krook, (2010) undertook a comparative study on women representation in parliament; Krook, and O'Brien (2012) made a case for the need to appoint more women as cabinet ministers all over the world; O'Neil and Cummings (2015) examined the use of the information and communication technologies in increasing the voice and influence of women and girls; and O'Neil and Plank, (2015) identified the need to provide support to women and girls' in leadership positions. All these studies have severally attempted to identify the plight of women and have stressed the need to improve the socio-economic and political wellbeing of women all over the world, especially in countries where the level of gender inequality is wide spread.

Recent studies have shown that women all over the world, especially within the last three decades, are becoming more popular in public domain than any other period in the history of human society. This is evident in terms of the number of women who have access to decision making, especially in parliament, judiciary and professional associations (O'Neil and Domingo, 2015) in countries like Cuba (53.2%); Bolivia (53.1%); Mexico (48.2%), Grenada (46.7%), Nicaragua (45.7%) and Costa Rica (45.6%); Namibia (46.2%); South Africa (42.7%) and Sweden (46.1%) (WEFORUM, 2019). From the review of the above literature, we discovered that very limited number of studies have made a case for the domestication of the thirty percent affirmative action as a strategic framework for women's empowerment in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Thirty Five Percent Affirmative Action (30% APP) in Nigeria's Democracy

Gender issues have dominated many international discussions and debates in recent years all over the world. Though, significant efforts have been made by the international community to improve the conditions of women, the level of implementation have been less than encouraging in some countries, especially in the developing countries. On the contrary, the developed countries are making giant strides in this regard. In the past three

decades, gender gaps across the world have declined, especially in developing countries of the world. For instance, the Economist report 2015 showed that the percentage of women representation based on global statistics has showed increase from 11.3% in 1995 to 22% in 2015. However, earlier report from the UN Women, (2011) shows that modest progress was recorded in 2011 in which women attained 40% of formal labour force and 27% of judges all over the world. Besides, other breakthrough recorded was that women have started gaining access to hitherto male dominated professions like the police force in which women were able to achieve 9% in 2011.

In the literature of gender studies, a numbers of factors have been identified to be responsible for the worsened situation of gender inequality in many developing countries of the world especially in Africa. Some of these factors range from economic exploitation and impoverishment to discriminatory cultural norms; exclusion from public life; poor access to education; poor economic incentives; political hindrance and constitutional constraints (Anyalebechi, 2016). However, in Nigeria, especially since the return to democratic rule on May 29, 1999, the level of women's representation in politics and decision making has been low despite the status of the country as a signatory to many international frameworks for gender equality. Besides, a number of factors have been identified to have been responsible for gender inequality. Some of these factors include; discriminatory cultural norms; lack of access to education; poor economic incentives; political hindrances and constitutional constraints inherent in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Enemuo, 1999). It is pertinent to note that despite the adoption of many international instruments for women's empowerment in Nigeria, the domestication of these instruments has been problematic. Available statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics (2018) have shown that over the past twenty years of democracy in Nigeria, women have not been adequately represented in decision making processes. Thus, there is the need for the domestication of the 35% affirmative action for women involvement in the decision-making process in the country.

Data Analysis

The research utilized thematic analysis to derive key insights from semi-structured interviews, policy documents, and international frameworks, providing a nuanced understanding of systemic challenges and opportunities associated with the 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy. Weak policy enforcement emerged as a critical issue. Respondents, including policymakers and gender advocates, highlighted the absence of penalties for political parties or institutions failing to achieve the 35% target, impeding policy success. Patriarchal norms continue to hinder progress, with about 80% of interviewed female politicians reporting social stigma and limited support due to entrenched gender stereotypes. Legislative and governmental inertia were frequently mentioned, with respondents citing resource constraints and political resistance as barriers to advancing gender-sensitive reforms. A structured questionnaire was administered to 1,000 respondents across urban and rural regions, with data analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to capture public perceptions and structural barriers. Only 28% of respondents were aware of the policy, with urban respondents demonstrating twice the awareness level compared to their rural counterparts. A significant portion (42%) believed the policy had minimal impact, while 35% were undecided, citing inadequate implementation and visibility. Financial constraints were the top-cited barrier (64%), followed by lack of support from political parties (58%) and societal biases (52%).

A significant relationship was identified between lack of enforcement mechanisms and gender disparity in political participation ($p < 0.05$). Public awareness positively correlated with support for gender-inclusive policies, emphasizing the importance of targeted educational campaigns to boost advocacy. The study examined Nigeria's progress against the backdrop of affirmative action successes in other countries, such as Rwanda, South Africa, and Sweden. Strong legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms in Rwanda have achieved over 60% female representation in the legislature. South Africa's proportional representation system and voluntary party quotas significantly improved female participation in governance. In Sweden, cultural shifts toward gender equity played a pivotal role in sustaining policy success. These comparisons highlight the importance of aligning affirmative action policies with robust electoral reforms, cultural awareness initiatives, and institutional support mechanisms. An intersectional approach revealed how gender intersects with socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geography to shape political participation. Women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds face heightened barriers, such as limited access to campaign funds and political networks. Rural women reported feeling excluded from political spaces, underscoring the need for decentralized policy implementation. Ethnic minority women face additional marginalization and are underrepresented in mainstream political parties. The study traced the evolution of the 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy using historical data and government reports. The policy was introduced as part of Nigeria's commitment to international frameworks like the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW. Legislative records from 2000 to 2023 revealed consistent underperformance, with women's representation in governance averaging only 8.5%. Interviews revealed that political parties view the 35% quota as non-binding, leading to superficial compliance and tokenistic implementation. This comprehensive analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equity through affirmative action in Nigeria. It provides a robust foundation for actionable recommendations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy represents a critical step in Nigeria's journey toward achieving gender equality in governance. Despite its promise, the policy has not delivered the transformative outcomes originally envisioned. The study's findings reveal that systemic flaws—ranging from weak enforcement mechanisms and lack of accountability to entrenched cultural biases and inadequate institutional support—continue to undermine its effectiveness. Women's political representation remains below 10%, far short of the 35% target, which signals the need for a stronger, multi-dimensional approach to bridging the gender gap in Nigerian politics. The comparative analysis of successful case studies, such as Rwanda, South Africa, and Sweden, demonstrates that affirmative action policies can drive substantial improvements when implemented within a supportive framework. These include robust legal mandates, electoral system reforms, active public engagement, and cultural shifts. However, Nigeria's context presents unique challenges, including a deeply rooted patriarchal society, economic disparities, and a rural-urban divide that requires localized and culturally sensitive strategies. One of the most critical takeaways from this research is the interplay between policy design and implementation. While the 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy provides a theoretical foundation for advancing gender parity, its impact has been constrained by insufficient enforcement and the absence of tangible incentives for compliance. Additionally, the policy's top-down approach has failed to resonate with

grassroots communities, particularly in rural areas where women's participation in governance is even more limited.

The conclusion underscores the importance of taking a holistic and integrated approach to gender equality in Nigeria. Legal reforms must be accompanied by capacity-building initiatives, financial support for female candidates, and public awareness campaigns to challenge societal norms that devalue women's leadership. Furthermore, addressing intersectional barriers—such as those faced by economically disadvantaged women and ethnic minorities—is crucial for ensuring an inclusive and equitable governance structure. Ultimately, this study reaffirms that achieving gender equality is not merely a matter of numerical representation but a transformative process requiring systemic, institutional, and cultural change. The 35 Percent Affirmative Action (30% APP) has illuminated the path forward, but significant work remains to translate its potential into meaningful progress. A renewed commitment from policymakers, political parties, civil society, and communities is essential to creating a governance landscape where women can thrive and contribute to Nigeria's sustainable development. In view of the findings of this study, the following are suggested:

- i. There's need for the National Assembly to enact binding laws that enforce the 35% quota, coupled with penalties for non-compliance by political parties and government institutions.
- ii. Government at every level should create public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the importance of gender equality and the goals of the 35 Percent Affirmative Action Policy, using media and community outreach to shift societal perceptions, and also empower local women's groups, promote gender equality advocacy, and address cultural biases against women in leadership roles.
- iii. The government should implement institutional reforms by introducing proportional representation systems and encouraging political parties to adopt voluntary gender quotas, ensuring women have equitable access to leadership positions.
- iv. Federal Government need to provide capacity-building support for aspiring female leaders through financial assistance, training programmes, and mentorship initiatives to help overcome financial and logistical barriers to political participation.

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