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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. **Challenges of Educational Funding and Inaccessibility to Secondary Education Opportunities for Students in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State** By *Otele Amaebido*. ……1-11
2. **Justice and Mercy in Legal Reasoning in Nigeria: A Meeting Point** By *Peter Onyebuchim Nwogu Confidence Chioma*. ……12-18
3. **Conflict Entrepreneurs and Peace Entrepreneurs: A Convergence of Interest and Sustainable Peacebuilding in Nigeria** By *Elisha Mallam Duchi and Felix Onyela.* ……19-34
4. **Broadcast Imperialism and the Controversy of Cultural Alienation** By *Nsikan-Abasi Sam Nkana and Joy Osowoofabe Tuku.* ……35-48
5. **Xenophobia and Intra-African Conflicts in the 21st Century: The Nigerian Lessons in South Africa** By *Samuel Asuquo Ekanem, Chinenye Precious Okolisah and Amachondi Hikon Yohanna*. ……49-60
6. **The Making of a Leader in the Yoruba Traditional Society: A Panacea for the Contemporary Challenges in Africa** By *Moses Oludare Aderibigbe*. …..61-73
7. **The Moderating Role of Gender on the Relationship between Banking Reforms and Banks' Customers Psychological Well-Being** By *Richard Agyapong and Christopher Boachie*. ……74-83
8. **'Martyria' (μαρτυρία) or 'Witnessing' as a Basis for the Realization of Jesus' Prayer in John 17:21 (That All May Be One): An Ecclesia - Ecumenical Approach** By J*ulius Otoaye, Absalom Gad Ephraim, Cletus Kazzah Dauya and Comfort Njiwu James*. ……84-101
9. **The Problem of Verification and the Rationality of Inductive Logic: An Exercise in Metalogic** By *Gladys Onome Ogorure*. ……..102-115
10. **An Examination of African Ontological Perception of Being in Relation to Development** By *Elijah Okon John and Idongesit Johnson Daniel.* ……116-132
11. **Social Media Messages and Political Party Loyalty in Akwa Ibom State** By *Nsikak Solomon Idiong, Unwanaobong Ekpenyong Williams and Akanimo Christian Attang*. ……..133-148
12. **School Management Resources and Students' Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary schools in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District and Bayelsa East Senatorial District** By *Otele Amaebido.* ……149-159
13. **Democracy and Good Governance: A Cultural Model for Technological Innovation and Societal Inclusivity** By *Simeon Nwabueze Osogu, Faith Mulade and Umezurike John Ezugwu*. ……160-165
14. **The Ontology of Oil: Philosophical Reflections on Resource Curse and Human Flourishing in the Niger-Delta, Nigeria** By *Gabriel Asuquo*. ……..166-175
15. **Effects of Terrorism on Democratic Governance in Northern Nigeria: A Perspective** By *Chinenye Attracta Ifiok*. ……176-185
16. **Complementary Ontology in the Light of Innocent Asouzu and the Challenge of National Unity** By *Joseph Aondongu Aye*. ……186-197
17. **The Ethics of Power and Political Leadership in Africa** By *Raphael Anayo Onyeji and Michael E. Abam*. ……198-204

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CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL FUNDING AND INACCESSIBILITY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAYELSA STATE

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Abstract
This study examined challenges of educational funding and inaccessibility to secondary education opportunities for students in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 96,861 principals, vice principals, teachers and students in all the 217 public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The Taro Yamane formula was used to derive a sample size of 398 respondents, however, 354 responses were retrieved and used in the study. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of statistical significance. The instrument for data collection was developed by the researchers named 'Challenges of Educational Funding and Inaccessibility to Secondary Education Opportunities Questionnaire' (CEFISEOQ)" formatted on a four-point rating scale of SA, A, D, and SD. The instrument was validated by experts in educational management and measurement and evaluation, all in the department of Educational Management in the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State. The internal consistency (reliability) of the instrument was determined by using the Cronbach's alpha analysis procedure, producing a reliability coefficient of 0.87 for all the variables within the instrument. Mean scores with a criterion mean of 2.50 and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while Chi-square analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that inadequate government funding contributes to low-quality of education and increasing operational costs influence funding inconsistency. The study concluded that most government secondary schools are poorly funded in Bayelsa State and increasing operational costs in secondary schools have negatively affected teachers and students' ability to carry out their function effectively. The study recommended that the need for the

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government to partner relevant stakeholders to build the capacity and knowledge of educational administrators to effectively manage school funds transparently and in accountable manner.

Keywords: Educational Funding, Inaccessibility, Inadequate Government Funding, Low-Quality of Education, Increasing Operational Costs, Bayelsa State.

Introduction

Education is an instrument for achieving socio-economic and technological growth and development of any nation. It is the greatest instrument for growth and development of any society or individual. Education is a creative and dynamic process that is fundamental to human right and the cornerstone of every society. It is the bedrock for meaningful development of any country and plays crucial role in the development of human resources of a country. As such education is a priority in every well-meaning society (Luka *et al.,* 2025), because it is a unique component of societal development. Educational funding is the governmental and organisational processes by which revenue is generated (through taxation, tuition fees, and philanthropy) and distributed and expended for the operational and capital support of formal schools (Gutries & Schuermann, 2021). It is the financial support that is provided to students or institutions for educational development (Ineye-Briggs, 2023). Educational funding is the bed rock to the achievement of educational objectives, as it is use to provide all men and materials needed in the running of educational programmes (Unimna. & Unimna, 2025). However, one of the critical challenges facing Nigeria's secondary schools is inadequate funding from the government (Olamoyegun *et al.,* 2022). Over the years, Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education has been dwindling (Ineye-Briggs, 2023). The issues regarding Nigeria's education system are truly concerning as there is a recurring challenge with budgetary allocations to education, which have been decreasing despite increasing enrollment rates (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). The financial allocation to most public secondary schools seems not to be adequate because so many financial obligations are left unfilled (Obi *et al.,* 2022).

Funding for education in Nigeria is a significant challenge, as the country has a complex funding landscape, with multiple sources of funding from public, private, and donor sources (Amadi & Nwogu, 2023). In recent years, Nigeria educational institutions, especially secondary schools have encountered challenges of budget cuts due to shifting governmental policies (Unimna. & Unimna, 2025). As such, the researcher is interested in investigating the challenges of educational funding and inaccessibility to secondary education opportunities for students in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Statement of the Problem

The provision of a high-quality education depends on the availability of adequate government funding, especially in public secondary schools regarding equitable allocation of resources, creating a unique and productive educational landscape. Public secondary schools funding enables the acquisition of modern instructional materials, hire competently qualified teachers, provide and maintain infrastructural facilities and prioritize essential expenditures by the adoption of efficient budget management practices. Furthermore, in order to avoid financial challenges and allocate funds equitably appropriately, secondary schools can effectively manage their operational costs. Currently, high-quality and an equitable educational system is undermined by enormous challenges that confront secondary schools in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. Insufficient funding for schools, including secondary education, has been a significant issue within the educational sector, as it leads

to a lack of resources to drive educational objectives. Without adequate provision of funds to schools, maintenance related expenses make secondary schools to look vulnerable due to the rising operational costs. Additionally, secondary schools fail to address their most prioritized needs, because of increasing operational cost. The above-mentioned problems motivated the researcher to investigate how inadequate government funding and rising operational cost influence low quality of education and fundings inconsistencies in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to investigate challenges of educational funding and inaccessibility to secondary education opportunities for students in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

i. Examine how inadequate government funding contribute to low-quality of education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
ii. Determine how increasing operational costs influence funding inconsistency in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the conduct of this study:

i. Does inadequate government funding contribute to low-quality of education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
ii. Does increasing operational costs influence funding inconsistency in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance:

i. There is no significant relationship between inadequate government funding and on low-quality of education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
ii. There is no significant relationship between increasing operational costs and funding inconsistency in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Review of Related Literature

Educational Funding: Funding is the means of appropriating money for projects to bring about expected outcome (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). Funding according to Onuh and Eke (2024) is the sum of money set aside for the execution of projects in an organization, while funding denotes the process of making the fund available for the carrying out of stated plans, objectives and programmes. Funds are needed for procurement of facilities, imprest, training of teachers, maintenance and repairs, among others (Amaefule *et al.,* 2024). Funds are needed for setting up school plants such as classroom blocks, administrative blocks, library and laboratory blocks to facilitate effective teaching and learning (Fagbemi et al., 2022). Funding education is primarily the responsibility of the government at all levels. To a great extent, the level of funding determines the quality of education. Through funding, relevant instructional materials are purchased, and an adequate number of human resources are provided to realise the objectives of the school (Ineye-Briggs, 2023). Educational funding as governmental and organisational processes by which revenue is generated (through taxation, tuition fees, and philanthropy) and distributed and expended for the operational and capital support of formal schools. (Gutries & Schuermann, 2021).

Inadequate Government Funding

This issue of poor funding of education remains unchanged even in recent times and clearly justifies one of the reasons why the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) specified that, for the educational systems of developing nations to witness stability, at least 26% of their budgets must be channelled to the education sector (Nwankwo & Omenyi, 2023). However, Nigeria falls short of international standards recommended by the United Nation and Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which suggested allocating 26% of the national budget to education. (Ifeanyi *et al.,* 2021). In spite of UNESCO's recommendation, the albatross on Nigeria's education sector has continued to be heavy poor funding (Ndujihe, 2019). Without an adequately funded functional education, no country can develop beyond the level of its education (Unimna. & Unimna, 2025). However, in Nigeria, the scenario is quite different as the country's educational funding requires urgent and concerted attention because the Nigerian education system has continued to witness series of decline in government financial allocations to the sector (Muhammad & Yusuf, 2024).

Increasing Operational Costs

The ability of schools to deliver quality education is hindered by significant challenge posed by increasing operational costs. The operational costs in schools are used to meet the routine expenses, for example, salaries, teaching and learning activities equipment, electricity, telephone, water, and others (Riinawati, 2022). The funds available to schools are outpaced by the supply and maintenance of utilities, as school expenses continue to rise. Important decisions needed to improve the standard and quality of education cannot be made due to the severe financial constraints. Failure to maintain existing infrastructure, staff reduction, and the inability to carry-on with important programmes can adversely affect the educational environment and students learning outcome. Increasing operational costs in secondary schools have negatively affected teachers and students' ability to carry out their function effectively. The operational costs of education include: basic salaries of educators and education personnel and allowances attached to salaries, consumable educational materials or equipment, and indirect educational operational costs in the form of electricity, telephones, maintenance of facilities and infrastructure, overtime pay, transportation, consumption, taxes, and insurance (Surur, 2020). As more and more programmes or activities are organized by secondary schools, the greater the operational costs required (Murdiyaningrum & Perdana, 2020).

Low-Quality Education

Low-quality education is reflected in the deteriorating academic performance of students in the various levels of education such as primary, secondary and tertiary in the educational system. Nigeria's educational system is in serious crisis due to low-quality education, which has impacted both the micro level and macro level of education (Nnorom, 2025). Low-quality education characterized by inappropriate teaching methods, lack of research funds, examination malpractice, lack of competent personnel, lack of access to education, lack of facilities and conducive learning environment (Abanyam & Agbo, 2019). The developed countries of the world spend a larger chunk of their budget on education. The difference between the developed and underdeveloped countries is due to the gaps of knowledge (Shehbaz *et al.,* 2025). There are a number of factors that leads to low quality of education. When these factors accumulate within a specific education system, the provision of quality education becomes impossible. They include unsuitable teaching methods, ineffective

system of examination, poor learning environment, which contributes to low quality of education (Saleem *et al.,* 2024).

Funding Inconsistency

Schools experience uncertainty of resource availability even when the budget has been passed due to lack of fund. When funding is not available for some critical sub-heads or such funding becomes inconsistent, it affects the smooth functioning of secondary schools. Students' benefits are undermined, especially with regards to educational strategies that are implemented in the long-term to make plans for the academic year. The lack of sufficient financial resources hampers the ability of school administrators to provide necessary infrastructure, learning materials, and support services (Legbo, 2022). Government support is severely limited for schools that are underprivileged, particularly, as it concerns inconsistent funding and its consequences. Secondary schools cannot provide adequate infrastructure, instructional materials and paying personnel salaries, when basic operations are not fully carried out because of reduced or delayed allocation of funds. Insufficient funding can result in inadequate staffing, outdated infrastructure, limited access to technology, and a lack of extracurricular opportunities (Alao & Okoliko, 2024). As a result, the drop-out rates of students are consistently increasing followed by poor academic performance as disruptions occurs in students' academic experience.

Inadequate Government Funding and Low-Quality Education

Nigeria's education sector suffers from inadequate funding, leading to various challenges for schools, teachers, and students (Iibi & Igbudu, 2025). This lack of funding manifests in insufficient classrooms, and infrastructure; learning environments; limited educational materials such as textbooks, and technology; insufficient investment in teacher training and development and low teacher salaries and benefits, which can negatively impact teacher motivation and retention (Oke, 2020). Inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, outdated curricula, and limited community support undermine educational quality and integrity (Mushtaq, 2025).

Increasing Operational Cost and Funding Inconsistency

Increasing operational cost creates economic precarity that is characterized by low wages and delayed payments, amplifies stress and uncertainty (Ali *et al.,* 2022). Administrative inefficiencies and exploitation further contribute to feelings of vulnerability (Azhar *et al.,* 2024). When teachers are dedicated to their roles, they go beyond basic teaching responsibilities to adopting innovative teaching methods, offering additional support to students, and continuously improving their professional skills (Malik *et al.,* 2023). Additionally, the removal of fuel subsidies has further strained school budgets, increasing operational costs and making tuition hikes a contentious issue (Eze, 2023).

Methodology

The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 96,861 respondents comprising of 217 principals, 434 vice principals (academic and administration); 3808 teachers and 92,372 students in all the 217 public secondary schools in Bayelsa State (Source: Bayelsa-EMIS, 2025). The Taro Yamane formula was used to derive a sample size of 398 respondents, however, 354 responses were retrieved and used in the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The instrument for data collection was developed by the researchers named 'Challenges of Educational Funding and Inaccessibility to Secondary Education Opportunities Questionnaire' (CEFISEOQ)" formatted in four-point rating scale of SA, A, D and SD. The

variables are measured as SA (3.35 – 4.0) 4-points; A (2.6 – 3.25) 3-points; D (1.85 – 2.5) 2-points and SD (1 – 1.75) 1-point. The instrument was validated by experts in educational management and measurement and evaluation, all in the department of Educational Management in the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State. The internal consistency (reliability) of the instrument was determined by using the Cronbach's alpha analysis procedure, producing a reliability coefficient of 0.87 for all the variables within the instrument. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answering the research questions, a criterion mean of 2.50 (1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10/4 = 2.50) was used as a decision-making threshold for accepting or rejecting the responses to the items. Linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This section focuses on the empirical presentation of data, data analysis, summary of findings and discussion of findings.

Research Question One: Does inadequate government funding influence low-quality of education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation on inadequate government funding and low-quality of education, N =354

No	Item Description: Low-quality of education	SA	A	D	SD	X	SDV	Decision
1	Poor maintenance of school facilities is due to inadequate government funding	166	144	40	4	3.33	.719	Accept
2	The quality of teaching is undermined by lack of funding	149	153	46	6	3.26	.744	Accept
3	Shortages of instructional materials is caused by inadequate budget	187	125	33	9	3.38	.760	Accept
4	The quality of education can be enhanced by government funding	154	110	73	17	3.13	.904	Accept
	Grand Mean /Standard Deviation					**3.28**	**.782**	**Accept**

Source: Fieldwork, 2026; Criterion mean = 2.50; N = 354

As shown in Table 1, shortages of instructional materials is caused by inadequate budget received the highest mean rating of 3.38 (std = .760), when cause of low quality of education was assessed. This was followed by poor maintenance of school facilities is due to inadequate government funding (*X*= 3.33, std = .719). This was closely trailed by the quality of teaching is undermined by lack of funding (*X*= 3.26, std = .744). Next in order of magnitude was the quality of education can be enhanced by government funding (*X*= 3.13, std = .904). The grand mean of 3.28 with a standard deviation of .728 confirmed that inadequate government funding contributes to low-quality of education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Question Two: Does increasing operational costs influence funding inconsistency in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation on increasing operational costs and funding inconsistency, N =354

No	Item Description: Funding inconsistency	SA	A	D	SD	X	SDV	Decision
5	It is very difficult to administer school effectively because of rising	150	133	47	24	3.16	.898	Agree

	operational costs							
6	The studies and programmes of schools are often disrupted by inconsistent funding	147	121	66	21	3.09	.929	Agree
7	The high cost of services makes it difficult for schools to pay for daily maintenance of utilities	134	133	62	25	3.06	.914	Agree
8	Essential school activities cannot be sustained due to funding delay from the government	159	107	57	31	3.11	.975	Agree
	Grand Mean /Standard Deviation					3.11	.929	Agree

Source: Fieldwork, 2026; Criterion mean = 2.50; N = 354

As shown in Table 2, it is very difficult to administer school effectively because of rising operational costs received the highest mean rating of 3.16 (std = .898), when cause of funding inconsistency was assessed. This was followed by essential school activities cannot be sustained due to funding delay from the government (*X*= 3.11, std = .975). This was closely trailed by the studies and programmes of schools are often disrupted by inconsistent funding (*X*= 3.09, std = .929). Next in order of magnitude was the high cost of services makes it difficult for schools to pay for daily maintenance of utilities (*X*= 3.06, std = .914). The grand mean of 3.11 with a standard deviation of .929 confirmed that increasing operational costs influence funding inconsistency in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Hypothesis Testing

The two hypotheses were tested using the chi-square (χ^2) statistical tool at a 0.05 level of significance

Hypothesis One

$H_0$1: There is no significant relationship between inadequate government funding and on low-quality of education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 3: Analysis of Inadequate Government Funding and Low-Quality of Education

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.785[a]	.616	.614	.249

Source: Authors' Computation

a. Predictors: (Constant), Inadequate Government Funding

Significant (P<0.05)

The R-value indicated the strength of the correlation (= .785, which is a strong correlation), between inadequate government funding and on low-quality of education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The coefficient of determination ^{2} = .616, indicated that inadequate government funding accounts for 61.6% of variation in low-quality of education, while the remaining 38.4% is accounted for by factors not specified in the model i.e. beyond the scope of this study.

Table 4: Analysis of Inadequate Government Funding and Low-Quality of Education

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	34.844	1	34.844	563.678	.000[b]
	Residual	21.759	352	.062		
	Total	56.603	353			

a. Dependent Variable: Low-Quality of Education
b. Predictors: (Constant), Inadequate Government Funding

The result showed the (= .000), which indicated that the regression model is significant. It implied that low-quality of education is influenced by inadequate government funding and the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between inadequate government funding and low-quality of education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

Table 5: **Coefficients[a]**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.035	.091		11.349	.000
	Inadequate Government Funding	.662	.028	.785	23.742	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Low-Quality of Education

The result in Table 7 showed an unstandardized coefficient of = .662, this implied that for a unit increase in inadequate government funding, the model predicts that low-quality of education will increase by .662 unit. Similarly, for standardized coefficient of Beta = .785, it implied that for one standard deviation increase in inadequate government funding, the model predicts that low-quality of education will increase by 0.785 standard deviation units (78.5%), when all other predictors are held constant.

Hypothesis Two

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between increasing operational costs and funding inconsistency in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 6: Analysis of Increasing Operational Costs and Funding Inconsistency

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.810[a]	.657	.656	.235

Source: Authors' Computation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Increasing Operational Costs

Significant (P<0.05)

The R-value indicated the strength of the correlation (= .810, which is a strong correlation), between increasing operational costs and funding inconsistency in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The coefficient of determination ^{2} = .657, indicated that increasing operational costs accounts for 65.7% of variation in funding inconsistency, while the remaining 34.3% is accounted for by factors not specified in the model i.e. beyond the scope of this study.

Table 7: Analysis of Increasing Operational Costs and Funding Inconsistency

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.161	1	37.161	672.789	.000[b]
	Residual	19.442	352	.055		
	Total	56.603	353			

a. Dependent Variable: Funding Inconsistency
b. Predictors: (Constant), Increasing Operational Costs

The result showed the (= .000), which indicated that the regression model is significant. It implied that funding inconsistency is influenced by increasing operational costs and the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between increasing operational costs and funding inconsistency in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

Table 8: **Coefficients[a]**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.066	.082		12.946	.000
	Increasing Operational Costs	.670	.026	.810	25.938	.000

b. Dependent Variable: Funding Inconsistency

The result in Table 8 showed an unstandardized coefficient of = .670, this implied that for a unit increase in increasing operational costs, the model predicts that funding inconsistency will increase by .670 unit. Similarly, for standardized coefficient of Beta = .810, it implied that for one standard deviation increase in increasing operational costs, the model predicts that funding inconsistency will increase by 0.810 standard deviation units (19%), when all other predictors are held constant.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that low-quality of education is influenced by inadequate government funding in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. It also indicated that when such funds are not available, it affects the overall funding of the school system. This aligns with the works of Unimna. and Unimna (2025), who argued that without an adequately funded functional education, no country can develop beyond the level of its education. Furthermore, the study revealed that funding inconsistency is influenced by increasing operational costs in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. It also showed that increasing operational costs in secondary schools have negatively affected teachers and students' ability to carry out their functions effectively. This collaborated the works of Umar and Gorondutse (2025), who affirmed that operational costs have surged due to inflation, aging infrastructure, and increasing student enrolment.

Conclusion

Most government secondary schools are poorly funded in Nigeria. This manifests in the deplorable condition of classrooms and offices, poor quality of teachers, lack of teaching materials, no or poorly equipped laboratories and libraries, and poorly motivated and remunerated staff. However, the level of public funding for education in Nigeria has been inadequate, and the education sector has been underfunded for many years. Similarly, Cost of operations in public secondary schools are used to meet routine and non-routine expenses consisting of facility and infrastructure maintenance and procurement of inventories, such as electricity and telephone bills, taxes and extra-curricular activities. As such, operational costs are part of the educational costs needed to carry out successful and effective educational activities, especially in secondary schools.

Recommendations

i. The Nigerian government should devote 26 percent of their budgets to education in line with UNESCO recommendations to facilitate educational programmes like setting up

classroom blocks, administrative blocks, library and laboratory blocks to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

ii. Political leadership commitment should set clear educational funding targets to create a more stable and supportive policy framework for ensuring that funding initiatives are successfully implemented.

iii. There is need for the government to partner relevant stakeholders to the build the capacity and knowledge of educational administrators to effectively manage school funds transparently and in accountable manner.

iv. The reporting system in public secondary schools should be adequately and monitored to ensure that funds are used appropriately and efficiently for intended educational purposes.

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JUSTICE AND MERCY IN LEGAL REASONING IN NIGERIA: A MEETING POINT

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Abstract
This study critically examined the dominant legal ideology behind justice and mercy in legal reasoning. Coincidentally, the philosophy behind reasoning shows that it is a very common phenomenon in the day-to-day affairs of man in society. In the application of justice and the granting of mercy, reasoning plays a dominant role because law writing itself is a product of reasoning, and this is referred to as legal reasoning. The underpinning purpose of this research study is to examine how reasoning influences justice and mercy in the judicial process. The study utilized scholarly works to establish the interplay between justice and mercy in legal reasoning by applying Anselm's theoretical framework. The result revealed that both play complementary roles in Jurisprudence.

Keywords: Justice, Mercy, Legal Reasoning, Anselm's Theoretical Framework, Nigeria.

Introduction
Nigeria, as a nation with a rich cultural heritage and a population of over 200 million citizens, have faced significant challenges in different facets of society due to individuals, government, business or organizational labour disputes. The actions and inactions of Nigerians have increasingly highlighted concerns about the falling standards of respect for law and order. It is a general perception that argument or disagreement, a failure to fulfil binding business claims, verbal controversy, contest by opposing adversaries, expression of opposing views or controversial oppressive actions and others are practically unavoidable in the relationship of man, hence the necessity to have a reliable structure that oversees dispute management in Nigeria. In the past, there were other methods like trial by ordeal, which the criminal code has made unlawful in Nigeria. An example of trial by ordeal is when King Solomon was to share a baby between the two women, since the legitimacy was in doubt. However, the

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modern processes of settling disputes are adjudicatory methods. This method is regarded as litigation, and it involves the trial of a dispute in a court of law. This method gives the lawyers and their clients the freedom to decide the direction to take when handling cases. Each party is allowed to call on a witness one after the other, and at the end justice is delivered, sometimes through the exercise of mercy.[1] Truthfully, justice and mercy will be absent in a society if no litigation of infringement on fundamental rights or causing of bodily or material harm is recorded. The perceived offended person, known as the plaintiff, usually complains to the court of competent jurisdiction about a legally offensive act and brings an action against the defendant.[2] Facts on the causes of the dispute are examined in the process of fact-finding, and the adversarial or inquisitorial methods used to determine the case by the judge; the decision of the judge during the trial is binding on both parties.

The terms Justice and mercy in legal reasoning are two variants that are often expressed in the same sentence or phrase by many people in a free society.[3] However, they are different in application. Justice looks at judicial issues as they should be; therefore, it establishes tension with mercy because mercy involves deviation from the strict demands of justice in a specific case. However, in legal reasoning, they are often seen as having complementary roles necessary for a humane and effective judicial system: Justice to many in society, looks harsh and deprivative in its adjudication, while mercy often views the legal system from compassionate and human kindness perspectives.[4] Legal reasoning, therefore, is the adoption of an orderly or sensible pattern, involving a logical and persuasive approach in handling legal matters, which enables the average person to see the pattern of reasoning of the legal system and the practitioners, not unnecessarily against norms. It is important to understand the interpretation of the judicial officials and the motivations for their emphasis. It is also important to understand the language of the law concerning the judicial approaches. This is so because justice is built on the framework of consistency, predictable application of statutory rules and regulations aimed at maintaining social order nationwide.[5]

Theoretical Framework

A philosophical understanding of the theoretical framework on the principle of merciful justice views both as opposites rather than complementary, essential for an equitable justice delivery system in a free society. Anselm's (1077 - 1078) solution to the paradox of justice and mercy, titled prosodion, underscored the importance of fairness, equal treatment and giving individuals the necessary reward for their negative act in Justice delivery and engendered the significance of consequences for wrongdoing in the minds of the people to maintain orderliness and protect the innocent from unnecessary adversaries. This theoretical framework on justice and mercy exposes the interplay across philosophical, ethical, legal, and theological contexts, with the purpose of addressing the tension between fairness and giving someone due justice or showing mercy when necessary. The evolution of this theory incorporates leniency or withholding punishment, sometimes for first offenders of minor crimes, driven by compassion to humanize the justice system and foster social cohesion. Therefore, the theory leverages genuine coexistence between justice and the prerogative of mercy. Additionally, the principle posits that offenders should be given the right of defence but deserve punishment or better conditions to preserve justice while allowing grace. Mercy in this context is seen as an act of grace that goes beyond the minimum requirements of justice but does not violate statutory regulations that are against the violations, since justice and mercy maintain society's social security and stability.

Conceptual Clarifications

Legal Reasoning: Outwardly, the philosophy behind reasoning shows that it is a very common phenomenon in the day-to-day affairs of man in society, because law writing itself is a product of reasoning, and this is referred to as legal reasoning. In Nigeria, the judicial system has faced multiple challenges embedded in the cultural misconstruction of class, interest, prejudice, connections, legal caprices, nepotism, favoritism, ethnicity and endemic corruption. These undertones have repeatedly impacted legal reasoning negatively in procedural Jurisprudence. Legal reasoning can be defined as the process of studying problems, recording arguments, and making decisions within the legal domain. However, Rufai referred to legal Reasoning is a concept adopted to carefully examine the judicial process relating to a dispute in the course of determining the dispute by a judicial officer.[7] It is the down-to-earth analysis of the facts of the case before applying legal rules, procedures, and precedents in a matter. It enables the judge to arrive at a justifiable decision. In other words, it includes the interpretation of statutory regulations, the constitution, case studies from previous rulings, concentration on judicial precedents of Court rulings relating to the matter for determination to achieve justice for both plaintiffs and defendants. This process helps to protect the image of the judicial officer from being tagged as biased when giving a verdict. The concept of judicial reasoning emphasizes that the burden of proof must be determined as the truth of the law before pronouncement.

In fairness to the judiciary, legal reasoning in the decision-making process advantageously ensures fairness, enables citizens to predict what the decision will be like, improves on the principle of consistency in adjudication, transparency and accountability, by observing logical and legal norms.[8] It is anchored on reasonable justification for all decisions of the court, explained in legal terms in the process of judgment delivery and specific facts of the case are retained. Legal reasoning is essential for the consistent and fair application of law, guiding judges and lawyers in their decisions and helping to prevent scandalous judgments. In his explanation, Adeyell [9] asserted the importance of well-articulated judgments that build trust in the integrity of the judicial process and the legal system as a whole. When the citizens in a free society see that decisions are carefully and logically rooted in law, the tendency to accept, obey and respect judicial authority becomes higher.

Justice: The rule of law has stood as a very important social control and regulation mechanism to foster peace and unity in the Nigerian state. In the daily engagement of man, justice-granting has become increasingly necessary with great urgency, particularly in Nigeria, with more than four hundred dialects and ethnic nationalities fused as one nation. Justice becomes a catalyst that stands as a boundary between acceptable and unacceptable conduct in daily interactions amongst Nigerians. Respect for citizens' rights and access to justice is pivotal to the growth of any nation. The judiciary, being the last hope of the common man, depends on and must act without fear, favour or ill will because access to Justice strengthens the peace and development of a nation. Philosophically, justice is all about fairness, moral rightness, and equity in the administration of the law. There is no justice when cases of infringement are not treated equally and do not adhere strictly to legal rules, procedures and precedents, which are key to the administration of justice[10]. Administration of justice requires the judicial officers to be consistent and impartial in the application of statutory regulations. [11]and court rules without prejudice, interest, or caprices, if the predictability of the legal system is to be retained. [12]

Rafai argues that it involves the application of just treatment to all involved in all cases, fair play and is seen as impartial by any of the contending parties, without discriminatory tendencies. [12] In other words, justice must be seen to favour the judicial process, the plaintiff and the defendant simultaneously without bias. [13] It is also the principle of justice that the judicial officer must hear both sides, meaning that a man is to be heard before being condemned. In this context, the court is bound to listen to all the parties in any dispute brought before it before delivering decisions or judgments.[14] It is an indispensable requirement in justice delivery that the party who has to decide shall hear both, giving each an opportunity of hearing what is urged against him. In another respect, Lord Denning defined justice as follows: The measures authorized by the law to keep the streams of justice Pure: to see that trials and injuries are fairly conducted, that arrests and searches are properly made; that lawful remedies are readily available and that unnecessary delays are eliminated. [15]. The goal of Justice rests on the successful recognition and enforcement of the rights and duties of citizens within a free society.

The Justice System: The justice system encompasses all the institutions saddled with the administrative responsibility of justice and processes for enforcing laws, ensuring justice and impartiality in maintaining public order. For the justice system to thrive, the police, correctional centre, and the various regulatory bodies must work in synergy with the courts as participating drivers of the system. [16]. The justice system will be outsmarted by dubious elements in society if legislative bodies do not create new laws to arrest the challenges of modern technology conspiracy in the area of cybercrimes and others. Secondly, administrative agencies are especially engaged to implement and oversee the legal processes. [17]. The collaboration calls for ethical conduct of all intersecting entities or agencies to enhance sustainability of law and order.

The Concept of Access to Justice

The issue of access to Justice in Nigeria has been over flagged by scholars because of the increasingly highlighted concerns of falling standards of the judiciary occasioned by Nigeria inbuilt derogatory variables beyond lawyers, judges and legal the processes thereby implicating the entire justice system, including law enforcement agencies, social workers, self-seeking and face-saving national legislators, correctional facilities handlers and other stakeholders. Legal principles and guidelines serve as a mirror as moral compass for society; unexpectedly, they are often manipulated to favour interest groups in Nigeria. Nonetheless, access to justice is a constitutional right of every citizen, either as complainant or accused. It is based on the desire and ability of individuals to seek and obtain a remedy through formal or traditional legal arrangement against grievances that can redeem fairness, equality before the law and speedy decision regardless of socio-economic, political status, geographical location of the offender. In other words, access to justice is to seek and obtain fair, timely, and effective remedies through the judicial system because it is a fundamental right to all particularly to protect the vulnerable in society and to sustain human dignity in a free society. Fundamental issues of access to justice for all are provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 8), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 14) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 7).

Challenges of Justice Delivery in Nigeria

The judiciary and justice delivery are the last hope of the common man because of their roles in protecting the rights of every individual, corporation, organization even the government against violations by the strong in society. This cardinal role lies at the heart of

every judicial institution in Nigeria. However, the Judiciary has been struggling to assert its rights to perform this laudable duty since it was exposed to excessive subjugation and humiliation in the hands of successive military regimes because of the infusion of executive and legislative powers into the hands of the leaders. This made the judiciary constantly overwhelmed during the military era, and the common man's rights were constantly abused. [17]. A rising hope to change the narratives occurred when democracy and the rule of law were restored, and constitutional provisions began to guarantee the independence of the judiciary, thereby contributing to the efficiency of justice delivery. Justice delivery is the act and process whereby citizens go to court, complain of violation of their rights, and thereafter a remedy is granted to the winning party by a court or tribunal. [18]stated additionally that the challenges of justice delivery in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized considering the successive Military Administration incursion into political governance. Despite the constitutional provisions and other statutory regulations to safeguard justice delivery, traditionally, there are numerous challenges that undermine. Efforts to deliver justice satisfactorily to contending parties have been a mirage because too much time is spent handling litigation, executive interference, Lawlessness, Corruption, Insufficient Funding, Financial inducements by litigants, ethnic and religious bias, enforcement difficulties, Justice Compromise, and internal interference by friends and relations. [19]

The Concept of Mercy

Mercy in the philosophy of law can be regarded as forgiveness from someone empowered to give punishment for an offence committed. The true rule of law opposes mercy because mercy encourages judicial officers to exercise discretion to reduce the harshness of the law. Mercy is a matter of exercising compassion rather than respect for rights. Without the exercise of mercy, the practice of accountability would have been rigorous and offensive to many citizens in a society. In the judicial system, common sense is the basis for the granting of mercy. Most times, while concluding litigation, the judicial officer is usually called to exercise justice with mercy. In other words, mercy is a voluntary act by a judge out of compassion and leniency shown to an offender who is ordinarily liable to a specific punishment. [20] It involves punishing an offender less severely than the offender deserves.

Balancing justice and mercy is key because excessive granting of mercy can undermine deterrence, create public distrust of the judicial system, and ultimately lead to lawlessness and disorder. On the other hand, justice without mercy can become dictatorial, draconian, and considered too harsh, leading to discontentment, resentment and a legal system being fought against by the citizens. It is the tempering of justice or moderating the potential harshness of the blind law that enables mercy to consider the individual circumstances of life, the case merits, the sentence required of the offence, the degree of damage caused, particularly if the offender is a first timer. [21]Applying the doctrine of mercy allows for options in legal consideration, preventing the system from becoming too rigid or cruel, having in mind the unique intricacies of human aggressive nature and responses [22]

Challenges of Exercising Mercy in Nigeria

Granting mercy, or exercising leniency, which is discretionary to a judge, sometimes creates positive or negative notions in the judicial system, especially when a judge's neutrality is doubted and presumably influenced by pressure from powerful quarters or personal bias based on course mate, tribalism or colleague mentality. Sometimes, mercy is granted based on the status of the offender, political affiliation, wealth and fame in society. This show of mercy has, over time, created national outcry regarding it as a breach of trust and justice for

sale. Granting mercy in some cases. Symbolize compassion instead of the question of selective forgiveness and political favoritism. Sensibly enough, partial agitation of cases, especially high-profile cases, damages the image of the judges and the judicial system, becoming a multinational tool for self-help by the common man in society and ultimately orchestrating the breakdown of order.[23] Emphasized that the scenario can impact negatively on deterrence because granting undue mercy sends the wrong signal that crime pays more than patriotism, thereby emboldening others with the intent for criminality to emulate the forgiven offences. A case in question is the unabated issue of pipeline vandalism and oil theft, which have different legal reasoning because of weak deterrence in Nigeria. Sometimes granting mercy can produce inconsistent outcomes for similar cases, making the criminal justice system appear unreliable and unpredictable. [24] Occasionally, a judge's derogatory leniency as a show of mercy in Nigeria has become a demoralizing factor as it undermines the efforts and resources expended in handling the litigation from the investigative stage to the final submission of the judge. [25]

Methodology

The study, "Justice and Mercy in Legal Reasoning in Nigeria: A Meeting Point," adopts a qualitative doctrinal research methodology, complemented by comparative legal analysis. The choice of methodology is informed by the nature of the study, which examines the conceptual and legal relationship between justice and mercy within the Nigerian legal system. The research focuses principally on constitutional provisions, statutes, judicial decisions, legal principles, and scholarly opinions relating to justice, mercy, judicial reasoning, sentencing, pardon, judicial discretion, the rule of law, and the administration of justice.

Research Design

The study adopts a doctrinal legal research design. Doctrinal research involves the systematic identification, examination, interpretation, and synthesis of authoritative legal rules and principles contained in legislation, judicial decisions, and other recognised legal sources. This approach is appropriate for determining how the concepts of justice and mercy are recognised, interpreted, and applied within the Nigerian legal framework. The study also employs a comparative legal approach where relevant. Selected foreign jurisdictions are examined to provide comparative perspectives on the exercise of mercy, pardon, sentencing discretion, and the reconciliation of compassion with the demands of justice. The comparative approach is used principally to illuminate the Nigerian position and identify possible lessons for improving the administration of justice.

Findings: The Meeting Point

Justice and mercy are two key drivers in the determination of matters in the judicial system. Justice, being regarded as the consistent, impartial application of established statutory regulations, constitution, and other extant principles of law, is aimed at ensuring fairness, allowing individuals to receive what they are due without prejudice or caprices, while mercy is the compassionate exercise of leniency to reduce a punishment that is otherwise deserved, taking into account limitations that are unique in circumstances. [26] The philosophical question in justice delivery is whether justice and mercy are compatible, complementary, or mutually exclusive, knowing that mercy operates within the framework of the discretion of judges who have the legal right to impose punishment based on their discretion. [27]However, the doctrine of mercy helps the judicial officer to look into the heart of the convict from a human perspective that humans always err or change their lifestyle. Sometimes amnesty is granted to forgive past wrongs for the greater growth of peace and reconciliation in society,

thereby balancing expected harsh justice with long-term societal rebuilding. In line with the above, it is increasingly advocated that there should be cases where the judicial officer is authorized by a higher authority to temper justice with mercy. In such cases, there must be mutual understanding between justice and mercy to achieve national cohesion.[28]

Conclusion

Administration of justice is the primary function of a state judicial system purposely to institute moral rightness among the citizenry, inculcate national ethics, natural laws, religious and traditional fairness or equity, along with punishment for offences committed. Essentially, the justice system allows the doctrine of mercy when delivering certain judgments, considering the pros and cons of the case in relation to the law and the circumstances of the individual. Therefore, this research work concludes that justice and mercy play complementary roles in the administration of the philosophy of law if viewed from a doctrinal approach.

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CONFLICT ENTREPRENEURS AND PEACE ENTREPRENEURS: A CONVERGENCE OF INTEREST AND SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Today's world is replete with conflict entrepreneurs whose existence is premise on the presence of physical and structural violence. Contrastingly, there are peace entrepreneurs who promote constructive inter-relationship and profit in protecting humanity. Conflict entrepreneur's continuous and sustained destructive political and ethno-religious rhetoric in Nigeria's democratic space, had reinforced sustained structural violence. However, peace entrepreneurs support resolution, reconciliation and transformation of conflict to build peace. The research examined utilization of political and ethno-religious rhetoric to perpetrate structural violence; transformation of structural to physical by conflict entrepreneurs; effectiveness of legal instruments in promoting peacebuilding; and strategies for constructive transformation of divergent interests. Using secondary data analysis, the study showed that conflict entrepreneurs weaponization and utilization of political and ethno-religious rhetoric reinforces structural violence that transform into physical violence. It also pointed out that ineffective accountability and transparency on SALW aggravate humanitarian crises, it indicated that collaborative symbiotic relationship by conflict and peace entrepreneurs protect national security and peacebuilding. The research concluded that, weaponization of political and ethno-religious rhetoric sustained and reinforces structural violence that promotes majoritarian domination accompanied with minoritarian resistance. It asserted that security forces and political actors dearth of credibility and honesty on SALW undermined national security; and believed that symbiotic relationship between conflict and peace entrepreneurs would reconcile and safe humanity from self-implosion. The paper suggested criminalization of the weaponization and utilization of political and ethno-religious rhetoric; effective political oversight of arms

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treaties enforcement; and political and security leaderships focus on new operational commands' security architecture that promote national security, and economic interests for effective peacebuilding.

Keywords: Conflict Entrepreneur, Peace Entrepreneur, Poligion, Sustainable Peacebuilding, Nigeria.

Introduction

Today's world is replete with people and organizations that produces and trade on instruments of violence. Their existence is premise on the presence of physical and structural violence. Perpetration of this violence sustains their means of livelihood. While some operates within the confines of the law, others operate outside its purview. Generally, there are state and non-state actors involved in these activities. These entities employed violence legally and illegally to pursue their objectives. They constitute what is referred to as conflict entrepreneurs, like rogue politicians and religious leaders; black-market informant, kidnap for ransom, illicit arms procurement networks (Gbemisola & Durojaye, n.d; Moore, 2023). Conflict merchants or entrepreneurs thrives in violent disputes instigation and prolongation for the purpose of selling weapons, influence power dynamics, and takes advantage of the chaos for illegal activities. Regime change, illegal mining, political and social instabilities constitute the means to achieving power as an end. These individuals and corporations exploit social, political, cultural, economic, and ethno-religious divisions to stoke up tensions to an inflammatory proportion. They thereafter watch societies go into flames for their personal gains (Ripley & Hofer, 2025).

Transformation of structural violence into physical manifestation of crisis had been the driving force behind these people and entities continual existence in business. Political outliers, arms/weapons smugglers/traders, chaotic situational profiteers, and polarizing ethno-religious and political leaders with divisive rhetoric more than often expand societal cracks. Disinformation and misinformation among others continue to shape public opinions in favour of political elites with numerical advantage for political gains. Merchants of instability exploit the loopholes to conduct their operations unchecked (Jacob *et al*, 2026; MacArthur, 2026). Conflict entrepreneurs constitute the oxygen that gives life for the sustenance of military industrial complex and arms smuggling cartel's businesses. Weapons manufacturers and terror organizations are mutually complimentary. Without terrorism in the form of war, communal attacks and kidnappings, arms producing companies could have folded up. The reinforcing influence of high-conflict is due to uncontrolled narratives and trust-deficiencies orchestrated by conflict entrepreneurs in political, ethno-religious and security circles. Transformation of violence into a profitable and lucrative endeavour by elites, continue to sustain instability that undermined security and peacebuilding (MacArthur, 2026; Yusufu *et al*, 2025). Every form of violence has its beneficiaries who are either explicit or implicit in nature. They are equally complicit in action. Conflict merchants wait for every available opportunity for war/crisis to make blood money. The insatiability and greedy nature of these purveyors of violence for profits pushed them to go through the path of destruction. They destroy lives, families, communities, societies and nations for wealth accumulation. Violence gives conflict advocates access to resources cheaply. However, peace would demand the use of human creative ingenuity and innovation to achieve positive development (Obuseh, 2014).

Obuseh (2014) conceptualized conflict entrepreneurs as individuals or organizations that profits from violent conflicts through the sales of weapons and services to parties at

war, and to civilian non-combatants. Smugglers of small and light weapons, military hardware's contractors service the violent needs of legal and illegal perpetrators of violence. Activities of multinational military corporations like Northrop, General Dynamics, Raytheon, Grumman, Boeing, Lockheed, Nour USA Ltd, Custer Battles, Aegis Defense Services, Bechtel, CACI, Titans among others, continue to fuel bellicose actions between security and resistance forces, networks of criminal elements and mercenaries. These violent actors had neutralized efforts towards global peace, which undermined development (Nnabuihe, *et al*, 2018; Obuseh, 2014). While most state actors believe in peace through unmatched military power, the struggle to balance these dynamics creates tensions and crises. Concerns for national security and defense often led nations into war. Conflict entrepreneurs in an anarchic international system promote the notion of building stronger militaries for national self defence. Dougherty (2025) pointed out that, Pete Hegseth United States Secretary of War new approach of peace through strength, advocates for the restoration of warrior ethos, rebuild military capability, and reestablish deterrence. Militarism and peacebuilding becomes immiscible when might become right. Globally, nations could not build the same military strength and capacity to serve as deterrence. The disequilibrium in balance of power undermines global security and peace.

Peace entrepreneurs are proponents of constructive inter-relationship that promotes reconciliation and transformation among competing interests. These include community peace builders, inclusive agribusiness owners, NEEM foundation, conflict prevention and peace building initiative (Aina, 2022; Peace Insight, 2021). Ganson (2022) pointed out that until we recognize that private sector development in conflict environment must be a peace process that needs political settlement on matters of economy, we would not make progress. Military industrial establishment, private militaries and arms smugglers, whose central concerns had become profit making, continue to endanger national security and peacebuilding. Their primary objectives mostly exacerbate conflict; undermine security which threatens harmonious relationship. Peace entrepreneurs are proponents of reconciliation and transformation of adversarial relationships from destructive to constructive peacebuilding. They profit in protecting humanity and promote value for human lives. Both conflict and peace entrepreneurs have profitability as their common motivation; but the process. Peace entrepreneurs could be public and private. Public peace entrepreneurs are official representative of government who promote and execute policies with the primary objectives of benefitting from its accompanying lasting peace. The profitability threshold is good governance that engenders security, peace and development. Private peace entrepreneurs are group of private citizens operating outside the chain of official state authority with the sole goal of eliminating, neutralizing and eradicating elements of violence. These constitute the prerequisite for effective security and sustainable peace (Lehrs, 2016).

Entrepreneurial features of building new skills, networks and sources of wealth are attitudinal. Making peaceful atmosphere for both innovative and creative instincts of the human mind to thrive entails a mindset (Kaplan & Magendzo, 2019). Culture of peace sets the trajectory for pro-peace entrepreneurship through personal transformation, social contributions, inclusive interactions, conflict trigger removal, and intergroup policy persuasion (Joseph *et al,* 22). A way of life that focuses on eliminating resource scarcity, and expanding opportunities, constitute the powerful tool for peace entrepreneurial sustainability, and human survival. While culture of violence promotes chaos and instability: culture of peace supports stability and general security that supports peacebuilding. The

culture of violence focus is conflict prevention, resolution, management, and transformation through military power, which employs peacekeeping and enforcement actions to build peace (Dougherty, 2025). Koltai and Muspratt (2016) argued that the combined weight of American diplomacy and military power cannot end unrest and extremism in the middle-east. This includes other trouble regions of the world. Impliedly, aggregation of military strength champion by military industrial establishment could only bring profit through conflict but constructive peacebuilding. Therefore, emphasis on integration of constructive peacebuilding and entrepreneurial peace is central to sustainable global peace. Public peace entrepreneurs pursue the mandate that maintains security and peace through diplomacy and military strength. Similarly, private peace entrepreneurship is centered on building peace through unofficial channels.

Statement of the Problem

Sustained destructive political and ethno-religious rhetoric in Nigeria's democratic space had reinforced sustained structural violence. Governmental structures and function's operations are replete with manipulation that reinforces discriminations, segregations, suppressions, and outright oppressions of the contextual minorities. Operations of democratic and constitutional government have neither prevented structural violence, nor protect the society from the destructive consequences of conflict profiteers. Militaries core functions of protection against territorial incursion and deterrence for war had witnessed a destructive transformation into perpetration of armed violence. The notion of war prevention that favours peace had become subjugated to war perpetration for sales of military graded weapons. This could be nuclear or conventional field battle armaments, combat aircraft, and warships which keep conflict entrepreneurs in business. Presence of government and rebel forces, private military mercenaries and extremist groups had promote conflict entrepreneurs, while continually undermined peace entrepreneurs operations. Both state and violent non-state actors' patronage of these military industrial corporation's products, through legal and illegal sales had put humanity in harms ways. Legal frameworks that promote peace and security are often made ineffective for utilization by peace entrepreneurs. Conflict entrepreneur capture of state power, and non-state violent actors destructive response had forestalled constructive peacebuilding efforts.

Objectives of the Study

The paper sought to:

i. Examine sustained utilization of political and ethno-religious rhetoric to perpetrate structural violence
ii. Investigate sustained transformation of structural violence to physical violence by conflict entrepreneurs
iii. Inquire into the ineffectiveness of global legal instruments that promote peacebuilding
iv. Ascertain strategies that promotes constructive transformation and convergence of interests for effective peacebuilding

Methodology

This study adopted systematic review of secondary data for critical analysis from major databases like Web of Science, Scopus, Science Direct, and Social Science Research Network among others. The scope comprises review of related literatures on the topic like political and ethno-religious rhetoric, structural and physical violence, and conflict and peace entrepreneurs, legal instruments on arms control and constructive transformation and convergence of diverse interest for peacebuilding. Secondary data from scholars with strong

visibility from global, regional and national within the study's coverage were consulted. This adds value to the quality of current discussions and arguments within the field under investigation. The study underwent systematic collection, analysis, and synthesis of data in line with the research objectives. These include journal publications, government archives, and reports to response to the research objectives.

Literature Review

Political Rhetoric: Political speeches through media platforms, social and political gatherings that reinforce the notions of human differences more than exacerbate conflict. These often aggravate divisional fault lines. It keeps docile public under control and cultivates their loyalty for conflict sustainability and benefit. Emergence of polarizing figures, who exploit numerical advantage from all strata of the society, produces the incentives for winning the gullible ones. Political conflict entrepreneurs employed divisive rhetoric as a strategic move to tactically manipulate the easily deceived for personal gains (Jacob *et al*, 2026, Oluwagbemi, 2025). Political elites with poor capacity for effective governance exploit citizen's gullibility and manipulate their reasoning to challenge them. These provide plausible escape route and deniability for whatever wrong perpetrated while in power. Politics had been conceptualized to mean who gets what, when and how. Since it is the determinant for resource allocation, elites deploy whatever strategies available to access political and economic power. While human needs are insatiable, the resources are limited: therefore results to incompatibilities. Public figures awareness of citizens ineffective scrutiny of public statements to understand unexpressed intentions, often deploy them for eruption of physical violence. Conflict profitability entails winners and losers. The dispute relation which is 2:1 entails two people fighting for one thing. While the dilemma perspective 1:2 entails one person scrambling to choose between alternatives. Fixated perception of dispute and dilemma blurred critical reasoning that expands options to satisfy wants, needs and interests (Gbemisola &Durojaye, n.d).

Akpan *et al* (2024) discovered that, conflict entrepreneurs benefit from conflict when they provide weapons, goods and services to adversaries most especially in war. Political conflict entrepreneurs understand power grabbing through instigation of war or chaos. This absolved them from having to prove their capability through issue based discourse. Their core understanding of power is influence, while giving their gullible followers delusional sense of belonging. The 2015 election process was marred with inflammatory commentary of Dog and Baboon would be soaked in blood; and threat of formation of parallel government if the outcome of the election was rigged in favour of the ruling People's Democratic Party. However, political peace entrepreneurs pursue their interest by stressing that the blood of a single Nigerian does not worth their political ambition (Premium Times, 2014; Vanguard, 2012).

International Peace Institute (IPI, 2017) posited that sustaining peace narrative established the existence of an ecosystem that could simultaneously prevent the outbreak of conflict and proactively foster peaceful societies. Provision of war machinery and the corresponding military doctrines that drives battle strategies and tactical deployment is a function of creativity and innovation considered as conflict prevention. The essence of establishing armed forces globally is prevention and protection of nation's sovereignty. However, leaders wielding political power conceptualize and utilize the notion of military might for prevention differently. Peace entrepreneurs believed in the policy of global technological innovation and creativity to build militaries within the context of deterrence

for peacebuilding. They also advocate for the use of technology to eliminate hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy and to build constructive peace. Advocates of peace entrepreneurs believed that economic opportunities that eliminate unemployment, equitable resources distribution and inclusive policies promotes constructive peacebuilding ecosystem, whose essential benefit worth scrambling for (Chigudu, 2025; IPI, 2017; Jospeh & Van Buren, 2022).

Conflict entrepreneurs on the other hand, pursue the ideals of technological creativity and innovation for the production of military weapons to instigate violence. Thereafter it is used to violently intervene in the ensuing conflict, in pursuance of destructive peacebuilding. Conflict entrepreneurs promote the provocation of violent conflict as prerequisite for the utilization of instruments of violence to curtail armed violence. The existence of violence creates instability for human and material resource exploitation. Adamu and Akuva (2025) asserted that conflict entrepreneurs and profiteers are the masterminds' of northern Nigeria insecurity, which have had destructive impact on the region's economic development. The sustainability of the violence due to alleged connivance of violent non-state actors with unpatriotic security forces had turned this imminent danger to national security, a profitable enterprise (Ogbonnaya, 2020).

Ethno-Religious Rhetoric

The games of destructive rhetoric for political gains are encompassing. The symbiotic relationship between political and ethno-religious rhetoric continue to gain prominence in national political discourse. Conflict entrepreneurs take advantage of every available situation for political profiteering. Numerical advantages emerge from intra-religious, inter-religious, intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic amongst others. Ethno-religious numerical political conflict rhetoric played up with the notion that, dropping the sitting Vice President from the All Progressive Congress 2027 ticket and non-presence of northern Muslim from Fulani, Hausa and Kanuri extractions would greatly diminish the chances of returning the party back to political power (Okocha, 2026).Ethno-religious rhetoric more than often manipulates and influence electoral outcomes in most parts of the country. Inter-religious factors often played out in most parts of the federation. Ethnicity had also drives substantial number of voter's decision-making in other states. Electorates more often give bloc votes to candidates from similar ethno-religious background, but issue based. Identity politics riding on the wheels of ethno-religious rhetoric established vulnerabilities to exploitation of fault lines (Chibuike *et al,* 2021; Daniel, 2025; Isiaq *et al,* 2018). These cracks reinforced political domination of the ethno-religious minority groupings by the majority. Hanatu Musawa Minister of Arts and Culture's warning that non-presence of Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri and Muslim would jeopardize the APC chances, constitute a political bullying of the ethno-religious minorities in the north. This constitutes an act of structural violence against these minorities. The key elements of structural violence include discrimination, suppression, oppression, and intimidation of these vulnerable groups, to scheme them out of political limelight. Meanwhile, it promotes political visibility of the majority ethno-religious groups (Okocha, 2026).

Ethnicity and religious sentiments continue to play up emotions that shape electoral outcomes. These put effective leaders from disadvantageous ethno-religious groupings at the risk of not been politically viable. However, there are no absolute majority ethno-religious groupings. Presidential elections requires broad based supports of 25% of votes cast across 2/3 majority states, and the highest votes as criteria to win presidential elections (Oboh, 2017). Political bullying and discriminatory voting attitude based on ethnicity and

religion established majority dictatorship and minority resistance struggles. Multiple ethno-religious configurations accompanied with divisive rhetoric reinforced disunity due to structural violence (Gbemisola & Durojaye, n.d; Jabo, 2025). Elections been the central feature of democracies and good governance, continue to face imminent danger of sustainability due to extraneous factors of ethnicity and religions (Tokpo, 2024). Ethno-religious rhetoric shaped public opinions, which promote fear/division. This more than often transform to violence, like the 2011 general election. Weaponization of the media platforms to pollute the political environment had significant destructive impact on social mobilization for recruitment of political public officers (Ademosu *et al*, 2026).

Ethnicity, Religion, and Politics

Politics and religion conceptualized as ***Poligion*** entails the conscious weaponization and utilization of politics and religion as an instrument for strategic and tactical moves in political discourse that shapes and influence citizen's opinions during public the leadership recruitment process. Political merchants with dearth of ability for constructive discussion do exploit ethnic, religious and political gullibility of the citizenry. Their weak and inept reasoning is often compensated with incendiary rhetoric that increases their political visibility. This put them forward as proponents of the divide, their inflammatory commentary favours. The game of ***Poligion*** is not restricted to the political discourse alone. It continues to penetrate public institutions and boardroom decision-making on recruitment. This produces incapable workforces that formulate and implement policies, which undermines efforts towards development (Nnabuihe, *et al*, 2018). Conflict entrepreneurs deliberately instigate and weaponize violent ethno-religious confrontation for personal political gains. These include access to contracts and other packages that enhance instigators economic welfare. The end game had always been profiting from the resultant division. The citizens would always lack the common united front to fight ethno-religious rhetorical conflict entrepreneurs in their scrambling for political power. Peace entrepreneurs could also, employ ethno-religious constructive rhetoric for unity, peace and security. Leaders of faiths sometimes deploy their psychological and professional expertize for enlightenment. These entail the utilization of religious knowledge to transform citizens reasoning that focus on credibility and integrity (Afamu & Akuva, 2025).

Poligion further gain momentum with 2027 election build up when Sheikh Sani Yahaya Jingir stated that Nigeria must continue with Muslim-Muslim ticket and that Christians are "Infidels" in the presence of two sitting governors of Kano and Jigawa. However, sharp rebuke trailed the comment from peace and national unity advocates. These include National Human Right Commission, Christian Association of Nigeria, and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and former Governor Kwankwaso who knocked the cleric for the inflammatory remarks (Johnson *et al,* 2026). Raising religious numerical advantage for continued political dominance reinforced concerns for national unity and cohesion. Premiumtimes (2026) cited Fani-Kayode added that Jingir is not only feeding into that false narratives with his reckless words, but he is also endangering the chances of our candidates in the 2027 presidential elections because for us to win, we need both Muslim and Christians' votes. Sheikh Jingir had done immense damage to President Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima. He suspected Jingir of working against them. Jingir's poligion statement's widespread condemnation among segment of the national political and religious stakeholders, reflect the religious and political danger it posed to the nation's unity. Rev Joseph John Hayab considered the description of Christians as "Infidels" a derogatory language. He expressed dismay that two governors who should have rebuke the cleric's

remarks became silent, and asserted that, the current Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket was produced both by Christians and Muslim voters. Hayab suggested the inclusion of religion in census to end toxic the claims of population dominance (Akhaine, 2026).

Structural and Physical Violence

While structural violence generally implies either relative or absolute deprivation, physical violence connotes utilization of coercion on citizens and their properties. The transformation of structural violence like discrimination, suppression and oppression into physical violence of inflicting terror on people, has its economic and political motivations. Political bullying of the ruling APC of possible failure if an ethno-religious majority name is not on the 2027 presidential ticket, generally suppressed the intentions of ethno-religious minorities no matter their capacity for good governance (Okocha, 2026). Transformation of indirect to direct violence became obvious when President Jonathan jettison an arrangement within a political party and contested 2011 election. Former Vice President Atiku warned that, those who made peaceful change impossible would make violent change inevitable. Atiku argued that, PDP had zone its ticket to the north; and that the northern option is still in play. Political rhetoric of violent change inevitability and voting and escorting of votes transform into 2011 post-presidential election violence (Umoru, 2010). Wakili (2014) cited Doyin Okupe erstwhile President Jonathan Aide on public affairs stated that, Atiku's statement "Those who make peaceful change impossible, make violent change inevitable had instigated the insurgent into taking up arms against the country". This rhetoric witnessed increased Boko Haram attacks. The consequences had been the expansion and transformation of these attacks into banditry, communal attacks and increased farmers/herders clashes. The ensuing 2011 post-presidential violence led to the declaration by President Jonathan that, his political ambition does worth the life of a single Nigerian, prior to the 2015 general election (Ademosu *et al*, 2026). Destructive rhetoric of inevitability of violence if certain political interests are threatens opens the flood gate for physical violence. The potency of direct negative confrontation employs the instrumentalities of arms to maximum effect.

Conflict entrepreneurs penetrate and infiltrate all strata of the political and social realms for economic benefits. Illicit arms trafficking and resultant economic motivations had aggravate contemporary national insecurities like kidnappings, militancy, separatist agitations, banditry, communal attacks, farmers/herders clashes, and insurgency that employed terrorism to achieve their goals. Activities of conflict entrepreneurs and profiteers of violence, whose interests are centered on prolonging, stimulating and instigating violence eruption, often exploit these contemporary threats to national securities to aggravate problems. Whenever and wherever conflict emerged due to competition for resources or self-interest; convergence of constructive peacebuilding diminishes, while destructive incompatibilities expand (Berebon, 2024; Duchi & Onyela, 2026). Conflict entrepreneurs at political and ethno-religious levels struggled to get the spoil of national resources for personal but public interest. Advocacy for maintaining zoning was strictly an elitist propaganda to acquire political power. The failure of it resulted in violence. The intersection of political and economic conflict entrepreneurs', who manipulate ethno-religious sentiments for self-aggrandizement, witnessed aggravation of violent confrontations. Illegal resources exploitation and trade in arms continually exacerbates national insecurities. Armed dealers and smugglers provide the instruments that enhance the perpetration of violence. The continuing instigation of the violent rhetoric by ethno-religious and political leaders keeps their interest alive (Berebon, 2024).

Legal Instruments and Peacebuilding

Persistence of illegal arms dealings and smuggling indicates ineffectiveness in global arms control legal instruments. Global and regional jihadist movements and their national affiliates continue to smuggle weapons unchallenged. The problem is exacerbating by the exploitation of ungoverned spaces arms traffickers and dark networks for profit. These criminal business enterprise further worsened national insecurities for the benefit of few merchants of violence. Questions arose as to the effectiveness of treaties on arms control across international borders (Duchi & Onyela, 2026). International Governmental Organization (IGO) like United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS have robust legal framework established for effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts. While these efforts operate at different levels, the challenges of ungoverned spaces at land, sea and air more than often neutralizes its efficacy. National Center for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW) coordination and regulation of global and national efforts aligned with ECOWAS, AU, and UN. However, the efficacies of these efforts face significant challenges with the presence of arms traffickers and conflict merchants. The convergence of interests between these entities continually undermines institutional and legal frameworks (Adedayo *et al,* 2025; Duchi & Onyela, 2026). International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA, 2024) stated that:

For effective control and manufacturing of SALW, states are required to implement measures towards prevention and reduction of SALW impacts on people, communities and nations'. These measures include addressing the entire life-cycle of weapons and ammunitions. This includes manufacture, transfer, stockpiling, warehousing, authorized usage, and disposal. These rules exist to promote authorized utilization of arms and ammunitions that established the foundation for peace entrepreneurs to builds constructive peace in the society. Prevention of war and deterrence against state's sovereignty violation constitute the central aim of arms treaties. However, military industrial establishment faced existential danger of business and profit extinction without conflict. Merchants of violence exploit social, economic and political fissures to worsen instability (Herbert & Husaini, 2018). This reinforced dearth of accountability and responsibility beneficial to their needs and interests. Meanwhile, the interest of public peace and security continue to become jeopardize when illicit arms move across porous borders to violent non-state actors (Alusala, 2018). IANSA (2024) pointed out regulations, accountability and transparency in the manufacture and utilization of SALW by ECOWAS, AU and UN. Ineffective enforcement of arms treaties at all levels motivates illicit arms deals to rebel/irredentist groups and global/national terror networks. The persistency of Tuareq and Boko Haram insurgency among other violent groups, are a function of the weak institutions and legal instrument's enforcement (Amadi & Onu, 2026). Key challenges of Arms Trade Treaties (ATT) had been centered on confidentiality about reports on implementation. Juxtaposing violent non-state actors access to weapons and state sponsored terrorism, create suspicious connection with confidential implementation of public policies aimed for global peace and security (ATT Monitor, 2016; ECOWAS, 2021).

Arms production and regulations constitute a prerequisite for accountability and transparency on trade in instruments of violence. Perlo-Freeman (2021) stated that global arms trade has proven remarkably resistant to effective controls with direct enabling consequences on conflict situations. In addition to institutional reforms that promote good governance, arms trade regulatory controls reinforced the condition for sustainable peace (IANSA, 2024). This promotes constructive peacebuilding when weapons of violence

remained in the hands of state actors only, and for the purpose of protection of the citizens and the state against violation. However, utilization of state's instruments of violence against law abiding citizens or failure to protect them gives incentives for resistance. Violence by aggressors and response by resistance movement result in humanitarian crises (United Nations, 2018). Illegal accessibility to weapons that endanger peacebuilding emanate through security forces lack of accountability and transparency. This led to diversion of legally acquired arms; and weakens arms trade treaties enforcement (Peacebuilding Initiative, 2009; UN, 2018). While legitimate arms transfer for national security had aggravated humanitarian crises, illicit transfers from formal and informal routes had put civilian lives in more harm. Hezbollah and Hamas weapon access through Iran, had witnessed United States support of Israel with superior firepower (Chappell & Bakumenko, 2025). Access to weapons by Bandits, Fulani Herdsmen and Boko Haram resulted in increased kidnappings, attacks on communities.

The consequences had been mass killings and displacement of citizens from their habitual places of residence. Poor enforcement of the regulatory control of arms production, distribution and utilization had witnessed the persistent rise in direct and indirect terror sponsorship. Supplies and funding of rockets and tunnels to attack civilian population by state-actors to Houthi, Hamas and Hezbollah for resistance; and the financial/military support to Israel for self-defense against constitute violence against civilians caught in crossfire. Direct sponsorship of violence includes security and intelligence operations for terror groups and state actors. While indirect sponsorship entails government provision of sanctuaries and refusal to expel terror networks operating within their countries. Others include the use of charity entities as cover and radicalization of vulnerable groups for violent purposes (Bhan & Kabiraj, 2020; Perlo-Freeman, 2021).

Convergence of Interests and Constructive Peacebuilding

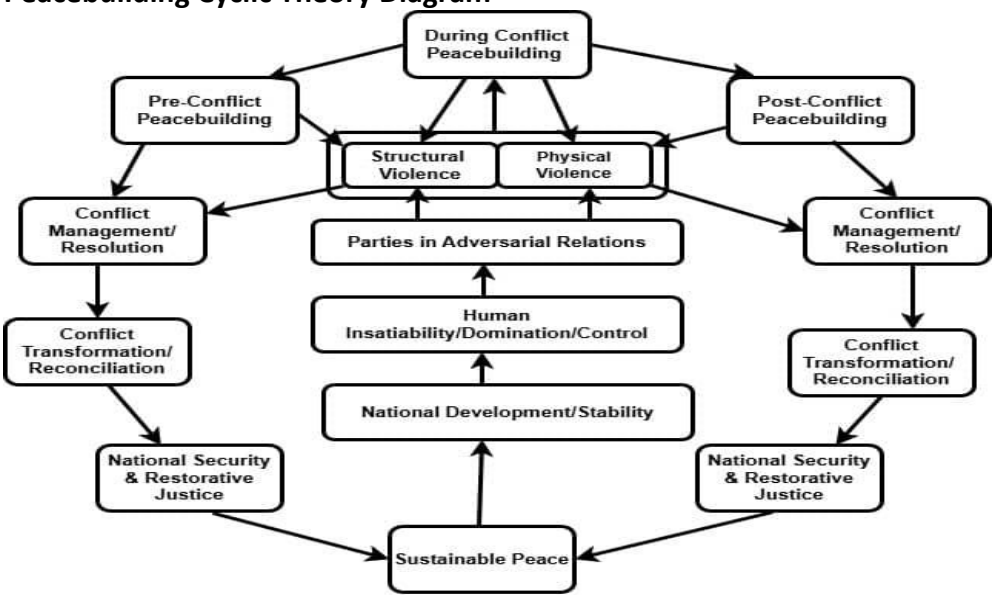
The notion of the Devil and Deep Blue Sea found manifest expression when military industrial establishment provide arms for prevention, deterrence, employment and revenue generation for continual existence of the State. It also exacerbates violence when product from their companies endangers humanity. The government is empowered with these instruments of violence to maintain law and order. The intersection of both peace and conflict entrepreneurs centered on inclusiveness in value creation/innovation, resolving/managing economic concerns, and changing constructively the structures of the society that reinforces physical violence (Van Buren & Joseph, 2024). Equipping the armed forces with latest military technologies to train forces on preventive military action, while providing effective security for economic, social, and political security, supports humanitarianism. These eliminate the control of ungoverned sea, land and air borders by violent non-state actors. Constructive enforcement of legal national and global instruments for the regulation and monitoring of SALW movements requires adequate and effective security coverage of all ungoverned spaces. These include reconfiguration of security architecture with new command formations. These security forces formation comprising military police, conventional police (Police Mobile Forces Squadrons), intelligence police and community police would maintain law and order for the exploration and exploitation of natural resources for national development and peacebuilding (Duchi & Onyela, 2026).

Peace entrepreneurs advocates for positive peacebuilding that neutralizes the propensity for division. They are proponents of honor and value for humanity, which is the precondition for sustainable peacebuilding (Hayab, 2026). Conflict entrepreneurs endanger humanity with instigation of violence for unrestricted resources exploitation, and arms deals.

They majorly profit in human suffering. However, transforming the need for destructive profit making constructively, entails changing the complexity and expanding the interest pie. Exploitation of the legal instruments positively requires accommodation of the need for profits, while eliminating danger to human lives. Arms companies focus on production for defence and security without chaos, laid the foundation for the pursued of individual goals to service human needs, interests and wants. While conflict complexity emerges due to pursued of one interest by two people, our human wants are unlimited. This creates opportunities for striving to service human wants which covers the needs and interests (Gbemisola & Durojaye, n.d). While conflict instigators favours instability for arms trade and unrestricted resource exploitation, peace builders promote training of security forces for national security, and legal resource exploration, for the general good. Relatedly, political conflict merchants pursue the strategies of tense atmosphere that advanced disillusion. Creating tension flows from both economic and political viewpoints.

Hartung (2022) stated that Saudi Arabia's decision to cut oil production resulted to pricing crises. This was followed with arms embargo on the Kingdom by US and allies. Increase energy prices and arms restrictions; provide opportunities for conflict entrepreneur's profitability. These entrepreneurs produce and supply arms for wars. However, peace entrepreneurs advocates against dishonest arms transfers to diverse actors, which continually increases the likelihood for violence. Conflict and peace entrepreneurs promote confrontation and collaboration respectively, as strategies for peacebuilding. Proponents of violence intensify military technological advancement for global domination. Advocates of non-violence either indirect or direct seek neutralization of human suffering from diverse perspectives. These actions include against mass killings and displacement, suppression, oppression and discrimination (Perlo-Freeman, 2021).

Peacebuilding Cyclic Theory Diagram



Source: Duchi, 2026

The Peacebuilding Cyclic theory (PCT) sought to explain that, conflict and peace entrepreneurships have both context and phases. At during-conflict and pre-conflict peacebuilding phases; and within the context of structural violence: conflict entrepreneur's advocates for the exploitation of available numerical advantages for domination. Minorities more than conceived this as pathway to absolute deprivation. These include discrimination, suppression, and oppression of the minorities on public issues that endanger their very

existence. Peace entrepreneurs utilize conflict management approach to doused rising tension through intelligence operations. They equally advocate for conflict resolution through institutional among other reforms, which eliminates factors for indirect violence against the vulnerable groups.

During-conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding phases; and within the context of direct or physical violence, conflict entrepreneurs promote violent aggression for the purpose of selling Small Arms and Light Weapons. Undermining national security through creating instability and stoking tension within political, economic and social spheres constitute the functional objectives of conflict entrepreneurs. Peace entrepreneurs pursue conflict management for the restoration of order through security and intelligence operations. The effectiveness of this, translate to removing factors that engender violence. Transformation of the majoritarian domination to collaboration and cooperation changes the minoritarian resistance dynamics. Neutralization of domination and resistance by conflicting parties reconcile and reconnect humanity. Reconciliation eliminates chances for destructive conflict. Eliminating conflict reestablish peace that supports national security which restore order and justice for effective peacebuilding. Therefore, the cycle restart again back to human domination, adversarial relationships and into the context and phases again.

Discussion of Findings

The study reestablished the continuous weaponization and utilization of political and ethno-religious rhetoric in favour of majority by conflict entrepreneur. They lack the capacity to put forward issue based discourse. It also pointed out that the effectiveness of the divisive nature of ethno-religious rhetoric for political gains is a function of lack of people's sensitivity and gullibility to conflict entrepreneur's nuances. Conflict entrepreneurs instigate conflict, sacrifice humanity for political and economic interests and needs. Continuous promotion of might is right, which gives merchants of violence edge. The research stated a contrasting feature of peace entrepreneurs. They advocate for technological innovation and creativity for building industries for arms and food production, scientific discoveries for advancement in education, health among others. Continuous symbiotic relationship between political and ethno-religious rhetoric, continue to gain national prominence. This reinforces majoritarian tyranny and minoritarian resistance in our national political discourse. The investigation revealed that, political and ethno-religious rhetoric continues to reinforce structural violence. These include political bullying of the minority groups in national political discourse. Evidence includes threats of making the country ungovernable resulting in increased insecurity; and threats of non-support for APC ticket by Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri Muslims if not present, resulting to non-consideration of Christian minorities within these ethnic extractions.

The inquiry disclosed that, destructive rhetoric of inevitability of violence if certain political interests are threatens opens the flood gate for physical violence. Conflict entrepreneur infiltration and penetration of the social, economic and political landscape for personal and organizational profitability exacerbate insecurity that threatens national security. It noted that, lack of effective implementation of arms treaties establishes access for SALW to violent non-state actors to continually perpetrate violence against humanity for profit. Robust framework for effective regulation and monitoring faced the challenges of ungoverned land, air, and sea borders that undermine the legal instruments efficacy to curtail activities of jihadist, militants, among others, which impinged on national

peacebuilding efforts. Lack of transparency and accountability by security forces in arms regulation and monitoring remained a significant challenge, resulting in humanitarian crises. The research pointed to the effective interrelationship between conflict and peace entrepreneurs centered on inclusive value creation/innovation to resolving, managing and transforming divergent interests to converge constructively, and build effective peace. Transforming the need for destructive profit making constructively entails changing the complexity and expanding the interest pie. These laid the foundation for the pursuit of individual goals that meets human wants and interest under basic needs. The study indicated that equipping the security forces would enable effective exploration and exploitation of natural resources for national development and peacebuilding. This is made possible through the reconfiguration of security forces architecture comprising military, police, intelligence and community security working in synergy for effective national security that engender development and peace.

Conclusion

The study believed that:

i. Continuous weaponization and utilization of political and ethno-religious rhetoric in pursuit of personal interests by conflict entrepreneur will always sustain division and undermine national security and peacebuilding
ii. Political and ethno-religious rhetoric continuous reinforcement of structural violence through political bullying of minorities, are the catalysts that speed up physical violence. This often aggravates majoritarian domination and sustained resistance by the minorities.
iii. Sustained dearth of credibility, integrity and honesty by security forces and political actors in enforcement of legal instruments on SALW undermined human security, national security and global security: leading to international disorder.
iv. A symbiotic relationship between conflict entrepreneur's production of arms for protection and prevention against territorial incursion, and peace entrepreneur's pursuit of enabling environment for exploration and exploitation of natural resources, would reconcile and safe humanity from self-implosion.

Recommendations

The research therefore suggested that:

i. Political culture should be engendered that criminalize weaponization of political and ethno-religious rhetoric that undermine national cohesion, peace and development.
ii. Poligion rhetoric that reinforces the existence of and transformation of structural violence into physical manifestation be considered despicable and condemnable in national political discourse. This eliminates tendencies for majoritarian domination and continuous minoritarian resistance.
iii. Conscious and effective regulation and monitoring of the purchase and utilization of SALW by security forces with tight political oversight will neutralize proliferations to violent non-state actors.
iv. New Operational Commands security architecture in the geopolitical zones is formed. This would provide effective training that promote and protect national security and economic interests that build peace for humanity should be the central focus of political and security leadership at all levels.

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BROADCAST IMPERIALISM AND THE CONTROVERSY OF CULTURAL ALIENATION

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Abstract
This work examined the relationship between broadcast imperialism and cultural alienation as well as the controversy involving these concepts. Particular attention was paid to the influence of foreign radio and television programmes on indigenous cultures. The study explored the extent to which the unequal flow of broadcast content could promote foreign lifestyles, languages, values, consumption patterns and social ideals, while potentially weakening local cultural identity and traditional practices as it were. It also considered the opposing argument that international broadcasting can facilitate cultural exchange, broaden audience's knowledge, promote technological development and encourage intercultural understanding as could be. It examined whether exposure to foreign broadcast content should be regarded as cultural domination or as an inevitable aspect of global communication and cultural interaction. It argues that the consequences of broadcast imperialism are not entirely negative or positive, but depend largely on the volume of foreign content, the strength of the local media industry, audience interpretation and the policies governing media content. It concludes that strengthening indigenous broadcasting, encouraging local content creation and production, promoting media literacy, and implementing balanced broadcasting policies are essential for preserving cultural identity while allowing societies to benefit from global media exchange.

Keywords: Balanced Broadcasting, Broadcast Imperialism, Broadcasting Industry, Cultural Alienation, Cultural Identity, Globalisation, Global Media Exchange, Indigenous Culture.

Introduction

Broadcasting has long been regarded as an important instrument of social communication, cultural transmission and national development. Through radio and television, societies

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communicate information, preserve traditions, promote social values and shape public perceptions of events and lifestyles. However, the expansion of international broadcasting and the increasing circulation of foreign media content have raised questions about the extent to which broadcasting can influence, transform or even displace the cultural values of less powerful societies. This concern is commonly discussed within the framework of broadcast or media imperialism, a concept closely associated with the broader theory of cultural alienation. Media imperialism refers to a situation in which the media systems, technologies, content and cultural products of powerful countries exert disproportionate influence over the media environments of less powerful countries (Omoera & Ibagere, 2010). The concern is particularly significant in developing societies where economic, technological and institutional inequalities can make domestic broadcasters dependent on foreign content, technology and expertise.

The relationship between broadcasting and cultural domination has its roots in the wider history of imperialism. Hitherto, traditional imperialism involved political and economic control over territories, whereas contemporary forms of cultural imperialism may operate through communication systems, entertainment products, languages, lifestyles and representations. In this sense, the media can become a channel through which the values and worldviews of dominant societies circulate across national boundaries. The argument is not simply that audiences watch foreign programmes, but that prolonged and unequal exposure may influence what audiences perceive as desirable, modern, successful or socially acceptable. In Nigeria, for example, researchers have associated the influence of Western television content with changes in areas such as dressing, consumption patterns, language and perceptions of material success (Ihechu & Dike, 2022). Such developments have generated continuing debates about whether international media exchange represents cultural enrichment or a subtle form of cultural domination.

The issue becomes more complicated in the contemporary media environment because broadcasting is no longer restricted to conventional terrestrial radio and television. Satellite television, digital broadcasting, streaming platforms, social media and mobile technologies have significantly expanded the volume and diversity of content available to audiences. Consequently, audiences in countries such as Nigeria can simultaneously consume locally produced programmes and content originating from Europe, North America, Asia and other parts of Africa. This development has weakened the earlier assumption of a simple one-way flow of information from the West to the rest of the world. Recent development therefore questions whether the classical media-imperialism model adequately explains contemporary global media circulation, particularly as African media products increasingly reach international audiences and as cultural products move in multiple directions (Mohammed, 2025). Nevertheless, the persistence of unequal economic and technological relationships means that the argument about media imperialism remains relevant. The ability to produce, distribute and promote media content requires substantial financial resources, technical infrastructure and professional expertise. Countries with stronger media industries are consequently better positioned to distribute their cultural products internationally. Endong (2021) observes that Nigeria's attempt to protect its cultural identity through local-content policies reflects concerns about the influence of globalised media. However, the effectiveness of such policies can be limited when local broadcasters face inadequate funding, technological constraints and difficulties in producing content capable of competing with well-financed foreign productions.

One of the major controversies surrounding broadcast imperialism is therefore the question of cultural alienation. Cultural alienation can be understood as a condition in which individuals or groups become increasingly detached from, indifferent toward or uncomfortable with aspects of their own cultural identity as a consequence of sustained interaction with alternative cultural systems. In the context of broadcasting, the controversy arises when foreign programmes become more attractive or prestigious to audiences than indigenous cultural expressions. The concern is that audiences, particularly young people, may gradually develop preferences for foreign lifestyles, accents, fashion, music, food, social practices and values while regarding aspects of their indigenous culture as old-fashioned or inferior. Recent research examining African media representation similarly identifies the preference for foreign productions over local narratives as a potential source of cultural alienation and weakening of indigenous cultural expression (Mensah et al., 2026). An examination of the pertinence of the issue is therefore inevitable.

The Issue

It would be misleading to assume that every form of foreign media consumption automatically produces cultural alienation. This is one of the central controversies in the debate. Audiences are not passive recipients who simply absorb everything presented to them. They interpret media messages according to their social experiences, cultural backgrounds, education, age, religious beliefs and personal interests. Foreign programmes may introduce audiences to new ideas, technologies, artistic forms and social experiences without necessarily destroying their attachment to their indigenous culture. Indeed, the interaction between local and foreign cultures can produce cultural hybridity, in which elements of different cultures are combined to create new forms of cultural expression. Contemporary African entertainment provides evidence of this more complex relationship, as African music, film, fashion and other cultural products increasingly circulate globally while simultaneously incorporating influences from outside the continent (Mohammed, 2025). The Nigerian broadcasting environment provides a particularly useful context for examining this controversy. Nigeria possesses a highly diverse cultural environment, with numerous ethnic groups, languages, traditions and forms of indigenous knowledge. Broadcasting therefore has the potential to strengthen cultural identity by giving visibility to local languages, histories, music, festivals, values and social experiences. At the same time, Nigerian audiences are exposed to substantial quantities of international programming.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that foreign media content is not necessarily imposed on audiences. In many instances, audiences actively choose such content because of its production quality, storytelling techniques, technological sophistication, celebrity appeal or perceived relevance to contemporary lifestyles. Endong (2014) argues that audience preference for Western media products can itself create pressure on Nigerian broadcasters to increase foreign content because broadcasters respond to audience interests and commercial considerations. This creates a cycle in which audience demand encourages foreign programming, while continued exposure to foreign programming can further strengthen audience familiarity and preference for those cultural forms. Furthermore, the controversy surrounding broadcast imperialism cannot be separated from the economic dimension of global media. International media organisations possess significant advantages in production, distribution and marketing, allowing their programmes to reach audiences across multiple countries. Local broadcasters may consequently find it more economical to acquire foreign programmes than to produce comparable local content. This situation can reduce opportunities for indigenous producers

and potentially weaken the development of domestic creative industries. At the same time, international media circulation can generate employment, expose local producers to professional standards and facilitate the international distribution of African cultural products. The recent global visibility of Nigerian and Ghanaian entertainment demonstrates that cultural influence is not necessarily permanently concentrated in Western countries (Mohammed, 2025).

Against this background, examining broadcast imperialism and the controversy of cultural alienation is important because broadcasting remains a powerful arena in which cultural identities are negotiated and reconstructed. The central concern is not whether audiences should be prevented from consuming foreign media, but how societies can participate in global media exchange without losing the capacity to represent, preserve and develop their own cultural identities. For Nigeria and other African societies, this requires attention to the production of quality indigenous content, sustainable local media industries, effective broadcasting policies, indigenous-language programming and the development of audiences that can critically engage with both local and foreign media. The subject therefore remains relevant in the digital age, where the boundaries between broadcasting, streaming and social media have become increasingly blurred and where cultural influence can operate through both traditional broadcasters and global digital platforms.

Theoretical Framework

This theories associated with this work are the Dependency Theory and the Cultivation Theory. The Dependency Theory was propounded by Sandra Ball-Roacheach and Melvin De Fleur in 1976. The theory is backed up with the following assumptions as explained by Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso

i. Dependency theory proposes an integral relationship among audiences, media and the larger social system.
ii. The theory predicts that people depend on media information to meet certain needs and achieve certain goals.
iii. According to the theory, people do not depend on all media equally as two factors influence the degree of media dependence. First, one will become more dependent on media that meet a number of one's needs than on media that provide just a few. The second source of dependency is social stability. When social change and conflict are high, established institutions, beliefs and practices are challenged, forcing one to re-evaluate and make new choices. At some times, one's reliance on the media for information will increase and at other times, one's dependency on media may go down.
iv. One's needs are not always strictly personal, but may be shaped by the culture of various social conditions.
v. The more alternatives an individual has for gratifying needs, the less dependent he or she will become on any single medium.

The theory further explains the relationship in the content of the mass media, the nature of society and the communication behaviour of audiences. The need for people to get information makes them depend deeply on the media for information on shelter, food, employment, transportation, political issues, entertainment and other aspects of family life. This dependency level exposes individuals to the different cultures that are carried by these media outlets, thereby putting into practice the cultures of other societies and by extension, forgoing indigenous cultures.

The Cultivation theory was propounded by George Gerbner, L. Gross, M. Morgan and N. Signorielli in 1976. The theory was introduced to examine the influence of television on viewers. It proposes that long term exposure to media shapes how consumers of media perceived the world as well as conduct themselves, (Nabi and Riddle, 2008). According to Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008), cultivation theory concentrates on long term effects of exposure on both adults and children, rather than on short term impact on attitudes and opinions. They provide the following assumptions to the theory:

i. Cultivation analysis basically means that heavy TV viewers will cultivate the perception of reality portrayed by the TV.
ii. People predicate their judgements about their actions in a world on the cultivated reality provided by tension.
iii. Television is essentially and fundamentally different from other mass media. It is the only medium in history which people can interact.
iv. The medium is the central cultural arm of society as typified by America. There, television is the chief creator of synthetic cultural patterns (entertainment and information).
v. The substance of the consciousness cultivated by television is not so much specific attitudes and opinions as more basic assumptions about the facts of life and the standards of judgement on which consciousness is based.

The cultural imperialism theory propounded by Herb Shiller in 1973 has the following assumptions

i. Western nations dominate the media around the world, which in turn has a powerful effect on Third World cultures by imposing on them Western values and thereby destroying their native cultures.
ii. Humans react to what they see on television because there is nothing else to compare it to besides their own lives, usually portrayed as less what it should be.
iii. The theory is value-neutral and objective. It does not matter what beliefs the people of the Third World may already have the television programmes from the Western world will communicate the same message and affect them in the same way.

How Broadcast Imperialism Contributes to Cultural Alienation

Broadcast Imperialism brings about cultural alienation by flooding local media markets with foreign-dominated contents. This is experienced in the following ways:

i. **Identity devalue**: Exposure to foreign broadcast media presents Western media culture as the most ideal for local consumers. With long term exposure, local consumers tend to put to practice the cultures of their subtle oppressors, thereby disassociating themselves from their local cultures. Ansah (1989) posits that through the use of modern technology and mass communication, some cultures risk losing their identities and become submerged by the cultures belonging to those who control modern technologies and mass communicative software.
ii. **Lifestyle integration/homogenization**: When foreign broadcast contents dominate local media sphere, traditional practices are replaced with foreign cultures. This could be seen in the choices of foods, clothing, social values, language, etc. Hassan (2013) states that the major fear for global media undermining of indigenous cultures is captured thus: "Exposure through the media to foreign cultures and lifestyles can both be stimulating and destabilizing; it can inspire both appreciation and envy. Concern that the authority of the international media could result in cultural homogenization and could damage

indigenous cultures.... Many people are worried that media images will strengthen the consumerist ethos in societies in early stages of development. There are questions about distortion and imbalance as the world's news is filtered predominantly through western prisms and dissatisfaction that information flows from and within the development ware are inadequate."

Implications of Cultural Alienation for Nigeria's Broadcast Industry

According to the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2002), broadcasting shall among others

i. Seek, identity and promote Nigeria's diverse cultures
ii. Select critically, the positive aspects of foreign cultures for the purpose of enriching the Nigerian culture
iii. Develop and promote the application of indigenous aesthetic values
iv. Promote the development of a high level of intellectual and artistic creativity
v. Foster generally acceptable moral, ennobling and spiritual values.

Cultural alienation in the Nigerian Broadcast industry breaches the code of the industry as stated above, with particular inference to seeking, identifying and promoting Nigeria's diverse cultures, using the broadcast media as vehicles for transmitting such cultural practices from generation to generation.

Positive Impact of Broadcast Imperialism on Culture

Rather than audiences simply abandoning their indigenous cultures, they may appropriate, reinterpret and combine foreign cultural elements with local practices (Mohammed, 2025; Soong, 2025). While cultural alienation is generally viewed as a negative consequence of broadcast imperialism, some scholars debate that there are direct benefits. These benefits include:

Promotion of Cultural Exchange

One of the positive effects of broadcast imperialism is the promotion of cultural exchange. International television channels and other broadcast platforms expose audiences to lifestyles, traditions, languages, music, values and social practices from different parts of the world. This exposure can increase knowledge of other societies and create opportunities for intercultural interaction. Contemporary global media flows are increasingly characterised by movement in multiple directions, making cultural exchange more complex than the traditional idea of a dominant Western culture simply replacing local cultures (Noh, 2024). In the African context, the increasing international circulation of African entertainment demonstrates that cultural exchange is not exclusively a one-way process. African music, film, fashion and other cultural products are increasingly reaching global audiences, creating opportunities for African cultural expressions to participate in international media spaces (Mohammed, 2025). Consequently, exposure to foreign broadcasting can create an environment in which cultures encounter, influence and respond to one another.

Exposure to New Ideas and Perspectives

Broadcasting from foreign countries can expose audiences to ideas and perspectives that may not be widely represented in domestic media. International programmes can introduce audiences to different approaches to education, family relationships, gender roles, political participation, social development and interpersonal relationships. Such exposure can encourage audiences to compare foreign practices with existing cultural norms and critically evaluate their own social environment. Recent research on Western cable television channels in Nigeria demonstrates that international channels such as DSTV, GOTV and StarTimes can influence viewers' perceptions and behaviours (Adebiyi et al., 2025). While

such influence can raise concerns about cultural dependence, it also demonstrates the capacity of broadcasting to broaden the range of ideas available to audiences. The value of this exposure depends largely on the audience's ability to interpret foreign content critically rather than accepting every representation uncritically.

Encouragement of Cultural Hybridity

Another positive cultural consequence is the development of cultural hybridity. Cultural hybridity occurs when elements from different cultures interact and become incorporated into new cultural forms. Instead of foreign broadcasting completely eliminating indigenous practices, local audiences and producers can modify foreign influences and combine them with existing cultural traditions. Noh (2024) argues that contemporary trans-cultural flows are more complex and multidirectional than the dominant-subordinate model traditionally associated with cultural imperialism. Similarly, Mohammed (2025) demonstrates how African entertainment industries are increasingly interacting with global cultural forces while maintaining distinctive African cultural expressions. This suggests that foreign broadcast content can become a resource through which local creators develop new forms of music, television, film, fashion and popular culture.

Stimulation of Local Media Production

The availability of international broadcast content can stimulate local media producers to improve their own productions. Competition from foreign programmes can encourage domestic broadcasters to invest in better production techniques, programme formats, technical skills and storytelling. Rather than merely copying foreign content, local producers can adapt successful international formats to suit domestic audiences. This development is particularly relevant to African media industries, where local entertainment producers increasingly compete for audiences within an internationalised media environment. Mohammed (2025) observes the growing strength of African entertainment industries and the increasing global attention given to Nigerian and Ghanaian cultural products. The interaction between local and foreign media can therefore contribute to the development of more sophisticated and internationally competitive cultural industries.

Development of Media and Professional Skills

Broadcast imperialism can also facilitate the transfer of broadcasting knowledge, professional practices and production techniques. Exposure to foreign broadcasting standards can provide local media practitioners with opportunities to observe different approaches to programme production, journalism, technical operations and media management. This does not necessarily mean that foreign practices should replace indigenous approaches. Instead, local professionals can selectively adopt useful techniques while adapting them to their own cultural environment. Recent discussions of media imperialism emphasise that contemporary media influence involves complex relationships between global and local actors rather than a simple one-directional transfer of culture (Albuquerque, 2024).

Increased Global Cultural Awareness

Foreign broadcasting can increase people's awareness of cultures, societies and events beyond their immediate geographical environment. Audiences can learn about international lifestyles, artistic traditions, social problems and cultural practices through television and other broadcast content. This can contribute to a greater awareness of cultural diversity and the interconnectedness of contemporary societies. Soong (2025) observes that global media have become important instruments through which perceptions, ideologies and cultural

values circulate across national borders. Although this circulation can produce cultural dominance, it also means that audiences have access to a much wider range of cultural information than would be available through purely domestic broadcasting. Such exposure can encourage curiosity about other cultures and facilitate intercultural communication.

Promotion of African Culture on the Global Stage

Perhaps one of the most important contemporary developments is that global media systems increasingly provide opportunities for African cultural products to reach international audiences. African musicians, filmmakers, fashion designers and other creative practitioners are using international media networks to circulate cultural products beyond the continent. Mohammed (2025) identifies the growing global influence of African entertainment and argues that Nigerian and Ghanaian cultural industries are increasingly participating in global popular culture. This development shows that international media flows can potentially be used by local cultures to gain visibility rather than simply serving as channels through which Western culture dominates other societies. For Nigeria, this provides opportunities for Nollywood films, Nigerian music, fashion, food, language and other cultural expressions to gain international recognition. Thus, although the structure of global media may remain unequal, local cultures can appropriate global broadcasting networks to promote their own identities.

Creation of New Cultural Identities

Broadcast imperialism can also contribute to the development of new cultural identities. Continuous exposure to both local and foreign media can result in individuals identifying with multiple cultural influences simultaneously. Young audiences, in particular, may combine indigenous cultural values with elements of global popular culture in their everyday language, fashion, music and social practices. This process should not automatically be regarded as cultural loss. Contemporary research increasingly recognises that cultural interaction can result in the creation of new identities and cultural expressions. Noh (2024) argues that contemporary trans-cultural communication challenges the earlier assumption that global cultural influence is simply a relationship between a powerful culture and a powerless recipient. Local audiences can actively negotiate and reinterpret global media influences.

Negative Impacts of Broadcast Imperialism on Cultures

Broadcast imperialism refers to the dominance of the media systems, programmes, values and cultural products of powerful countries over those of less powerful countries. Through television, radio, satellite broadcasting and increasingly digital streaming platforms, audiences in developing countries are exposed to large quantities of foreign content. While international broadcasting can promote cultural exchange, an unequal flow of media content may produce significant negative consequences for indigenous cultures. UNESCO continues to identify unequal cultural flows, media concentration and inadequate support for local content as important challenges to cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2022).

Cultural Homogenisation

One of the major negative effects of broadcast imperialism is cultural homogenisation, whereby differences between cultures gradually become less visible as audiences adopt values, lifestyles and patterns of behaviour presented by dominant foreign media. When foreign programmes occupy a substantial proportion of broadcasting schedules, local audiences may increasingly encounter foreign cultural practices as the standard for entertainment, fashion, family life and social behaviour. This can weaken cultural

distinctiveness, particularly where local media industries lack the resources to compete with internationally dominant producers. UNESCO (2022) notes that the global flow of cultural goods and services remains substantially unequal, creating concerns about the diversity of cultural expressions available to audiences.

Erosion of Indigenous Cultural Values

Broadcast imperialism can contribute to the erosion of indigenous values by repeatedly presenting foreign norms as desirable, modern or superior. Television programmes and other broadcast content can influence people's perceptions of appropriate behaviour, relationships, beauty, consumption and social status. Consequently, younger audiences may gradually attach greater prestige to foreign cultural practices than to traditional ones. Mohammed (2025), examining cultural imperialism and African entertainment industries, argues that global cultural influences can reshape the narratives through which African cultures and entertainment are represented.

Decline in Indigenous Languages

Foreign-dominated broadcasting can also contribute to the marginalisation of indigenous languages. Where international languages dominate television, radio and digital entertainment, audiences may increasingly associate those languages with education, sophistication, employment and social mobility. Indigenous languages may consequently receive less exposure and prestige, particularly among younger generations. This is significant because language is an important means through which cultural knowledge, oral traditions and collective identity are transmitted. UNESCO defines cultural diversity partly through the diverse ways in which communities express and transmit their cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2005).

Weakening of Local Media Industries

Broadcast imperialism may place domestic broadcasters and content producers at a competitive disadvantage. Foreign programmes can be attractive to broadcasters because they may provide high production quality and established audience appeal without requiring the same level of local production investment. If broadcasters rely heavily on imported programmes, opportunities for indigenous producers, actors, writers, directors and technicians may decline. UNESCO (2022) therefore recommends supporting local media outlets and investing in local content to improve its visibility and sustainability.

Promotion of Foreign Lifestyles and Consumerism

Another negative consequence is the promotion of foreign consumption patterns and lifestyles. Commercial broadcasting frequently connects entertainment with particular brands, fashions, foods, technologies and standards of living. Repeated exposure can encourage audiences to view foreign products and lifestyles as symbols of success or modernity. This may produce a form of cultural dependency, where local populations increasingly look outside their own societies for models of desirable living. The problem becomes more pronounced when local cultural products receive considerably less media exposure than imported content.

Distortion and Stereotyping of Local Cultures

Broadcast imperialism can also affect how indigenous cultures are represented. Dominant international media organisations may portray developing societies through simplified or stereotypical images, focusing on poverty, conflict, exoticism or other externally constructed representations. Such representations can influence how outsiders perceive a culture and,

importantly, how members of the culture perceive themselves. Mohammed (2025) highlights the continuing influence of global cultural power on the ways African entertainment and cultural narratives are constructed and circulated internationally.

Marginalisation of Indigenous Cultural Expressions

When foreign content receives greater airtime and financial support, indigenous music, folklore, traditional drama, local history and other cultural expressions may be pushed to the margins of the media environment. This reduces opportunities for cultural traditions to be transmitted to younger generations. UNESCO has consequently emphasised the importance of supporting diverse cultural expressions and improving the discoverability of local content, particularly in increasingly digital media environments (UNESCO, 2022).

Loss of Cultural Identity Among Young People

Young people are particularly susceptible to the cultural influences contained in broadcast content because media consumption forms part of their socialisation. Continuous exposure to foreign characters, accents, lifestyles, values and social norms may influence their understanding of identity and belonging. When foreign cultural models become more familiar and attractive than indigenous ones, young people may develop weaker connections with traditional practices. This does not mean that every young person exposed to foreign media loses their cultural identity; rather, the concern is that persistent and unequal exposure can shift the cultural balance in favour of dominant external influences.

Economic Dependence on Foreign Content

Broadcast imperialism also has an economic dimension. Dependence on imported programmes can create a situation in which local broadcasters and audiences become consumers rather than producers of internationally circulating cultural products. UNESCO's assessment of global cultural trade describes cultural flows as still characterised by significant imbalance and calls for policies that promote more equitable circulation of cultural goods and services (UNESCO, 2022).

Reduction in Cultural Diversity

Ultimately, broadcast imperialism can reduce media and cultural diversity when a small number of powerful countries, corporations or media systems dominate international content circulation. Cultural diversity depends on communities having meaningful opportunities to create, distribute and consume their own cultural expressions. UNESCO therefore stresses the need for diverse representation, support for local media and investment in local creation as mechanisms for protecting cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2022)

The Controversy

Broadcast imperialism refers to the unequal flow of television, radio, film and other broadcast content from powerful, technologically advanced countries to less developed countries. The concept is closely associated with concerns about cultural domination, media dependency and the unequal structure of international communication. Schiller (1969) argued that the dominance of American media and communication industries enabled powerful countries to extend their economic and ideological influence into developing societies. In this sense, broadcasting is not merely an avenue for entertainment and information; it can also become an instrument through which cultural values, lifestyles and worldviews are transmitted across national boundaries. The controversy surrounding broadcast imperialism largely centres on its possible contribution to cultural alienation. Cultural alienation occurs when individuals or groups become detached from, or develop

diminished attachment to, their indigenous cultural values, traditions, languages and ways of life. When audiences are consistently exposed to foreign programmes that portray particular lifestyles as modern, desirable or superior, they may gradually adopt some of the values and behavioural patterns represented in those programmes. According to Tomlinson (1991), cultural imperialism debates are fundamentally concerned with the relationship between global communication and the transformation of cultural identities.

One major argument is that the heavy consumption of foreign broadcast content can weaken indigenous cultural expressions. In many developing countries, locally produced programmes compete with productions from economically stronger media industries that possess greater financial and technological resources. Tunstall (1977) observed that the international media environment has historically been characterised by the dominance of Western media products. Consequently, audiences in developing countries may encounter foreign perspectives more frequently than locally generated representations of their own societies. This imbalance can reduce the visibility of indigenous customs, languages, histories and social practices within the media environment. The issue becomes particularly significant among young people. Television and other forms of popular media provide audiences with representations of beauty, family life, relationships, consumption, fashion and social success. Where foreign content dominates the broadcasting environment, young audiences may begin to measure their own cultural practices against those represented in foreign programmes. This does not necessarily mean that audiences completely abandon their cultures, but sustained exposure can contribute to changes in attitudes and cultural preferences. Gerbner et al. (1986), through cultivation theory, demonstrated how persistent exposure to media representations can influence the ways audiences perceive social reality.

However, the claim that foreign broadcasting automatically produces cultural alienation remains controversial. Critics of the cultural-imperialism perspective argue that audiences are not passive recipients of media messages. People interpret, negotiate and sometimes reject media content according to their own cultural experiences. Liebes and Katz (1990), in their comparative study of audiences' interpretations of Dallas, demonstrated that viewers from different cultural backgrounds could interpret the same foreign television programme in substantially different ways. This suggests that the cultural consequences of international broadcasting cannot be explained simply through a one-way model in which Western media directly replace indigenous cultures.

Similarly, Straubhaar (1991) argues that audiences tend to develop preferences for media content that is culturally proximate to them. Cultural proximity suggests that viewers are often attracted to programmes that share their language, values, humour, traditions and social experiences. Thus, although foreign programmes may be widely distributed, audiences may still prefer local or culturally familiar productions. This challenges the assumption that the availability of foreign broadcast content necessarily results in the disappearance of local culture. Another dimension of the controversy concerns globalisation. Global media circulation can expose audiences to new ideas, technologies and social practices. Foreign programmes can therefore contribute positively to cultural exchange and broaden people's understanding of societies beyond their immediate environments. Appadurai (1996) explains that global cultural flows create complex interactions between different societies rather than simply producing a one-directional transfer of Western culture. From this perspective, audiences may combine foreign influences with indigenous traditions to create new cultural identities. Nevertheless, concerns about structural inequality remain important. The ability of wealthy countries and multinational media corporations to produce and distribute

content on a large scale gives them considerable influence over the international media environment. McPhail (2006) notes that international communication has historically been characterised by inequalities in the production, distribution and consumption of media content. Developing countries may consequently remain dependent on imported programmes because of inadequate funding, production facilities, technical expertise and distribution networks.

The controversy therefore lies in determining whether broadcast imperialism should be understood primarily as cultural domination or cultural exchange. From the cultural-imperialism perspective, the unequal flow of broadcast content can undermine indigenous cultures and encourage cultural dependency. From the opposing perspective, international broadcasting facilitates cultural interaction and provides audiences with opportunities to encounter alternative perspectives. The actual outcome may depend on factors such as the volume of foreign content, the strength of local media industries, government broadcasting policies, audience preferences and the cultural context in which programmes are consumed. In Nigeria, the issue is particularly relevant because Nigerian audiences consume both locally produced programmes and substantial quantities of foreign television and digital content. The growth of Nollywood and other indigenous media industries demonstrates that foreign cultural influence does not necessarily eliminate local cultural production. Rather, Nigerian producers have also appropriated global media formats and technologies while incorporating local languages, traditions, social experiences and narratives. This illustrates the complexity of cultural interaction in the contemporary media environment.

Conclusion

Broadcast imperialism can therefore have profound consequences for indigenous cultures. Its negative effects include cultural homogenisation, erosion of indigenous values, marginalisation of local languages, weakening of domestic media industries, promotion of foreign lifestyles, stereotyping, reduced transmission of indigenous traditions, cultural alienation among young people, economic dependence and declining cultural diversity. However, these effects should not be interpreted as meaning that all foreign media exposures are harmful. The central concern is imbalance: when foreign cultural products dominate the broadcasting environment while local creators lack comparable opportunities to produce and distribute their own content. A healthier media environment requires a balance between international cultural exchange and deliberate protection and promotion of indigenous cultural expression. Although broadcast imperialism remains controversial because of its potential to promote cultural domination and weaken indigenous cultural practices, its cultural consequences are not exclusively negative. There are indications that international broadcasting can facilitate cultural exchange, expose audiences to new perspectives, stimulate local media production, encourage professional development, increase global cultural awareness and contribute to cultural hybridity. In addition, the growing international visibility of African entertainment demonstrates that cultural flows can operate in more than one direction. Thus, the controversy of cultural alienation within broadcast imperialism lies in the tension between cultural exchange and cultural domination.

On one hand, international broadcasting can promote intercultural understanding, broaden audiences' knowledge and create opportunities for cultural interaction. On the other hand, persistent inequality in media production and distribution may allow dominant cultures to exercise disproportionate influence over the cultural choices and identities of less powerful societies. The contemporary situation is therefore more accurately understood as a complex interaction involving imperialism, globalisation, audience agency, cultural hybridity,

commercial interests and indigenous cultural resistance rather than as a simple process in which one culture completely replaces another Broadcast imperialism remains controversial because its relationship with cultural alienation is neither completely deterministic nor entirely insignificant. International broadcasting can create opportunities for cultural exchange and exposure to diverse ideas, but unequal media flows can also give economically powerful countries disproportionate influence over cultural representation. Cultural alienation is therefore more appropriately understood as a potential consequence of sustained and unequal media influence rather than an inevitable result of exposure to foreign broadcasting. Strengthening local content production, supporting indigenous languages and encouraging diverse broadcasting systems can help developing countries participate more equally in the global communication environment.

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XENOPHOBIA AND INTRA-AFRICAN CONFLICTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE NIGERIAN LESSONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract
Xenophobia in contemporary Africa constitutes one of the most paradoxical manifestations of the continent's unfinished project of liberation. At a historical moment when African states increasingly proclaim Pan-African solidarity, continental integration, free movement, economic cooperation, and a common developmental destiny, hostility toward African migrants exposes a profound contradiction between Africa's political aspirations and its lived ethical consciousness. This paper philosophically examined xenophobia and intra-African conflicts in the twenty-first century through the Nigerian experience in South Africa. It argued that the recurrent hostility directed against Nigerians and other African migrants cannot be adequately explained by unemployment, poverty, competition for resources, migration, crime, or weak governance. These conditions become politically and morally destructive only when they are interpreted through exclusionary conceptions of identity, belonging, citizenship, nationality, and the "Other." The paper therefore approached xenophobia as an ontological, ethical, political, epistemological, cultural, and developmental problem. It interrogates the historical paradox of Nigeria's substantial contribution to South Africa's liberation and the subsequent emergence of anti-Nigerian hostility; examines the socio-economic, political, cultural, and institutional causes of xenophobia; and analyses its consequences for Nigeria–South Africa relations, democratic legitimacy, African economic integration, AfCFTA, Agenda 2063, Pan-Africanism, Ubuntu, and African humanism. The paper further argued that xenophobia represents a crisis of recognition because it reduces persons to accidental identities such as nationality and ethnicity while obscuring their essential humanity. Drawing upon classical political philosophy, contemporary theories of justice and recognition, African philosophy, and the author's Essencist philosophy, the paper proposes an ethics of essential recognition, historical reciprocity, developmental justice, ethical citizenship, and continental humanism. It concludes that Africa's liberation remains

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incomplete unless political independence is accompanied by moral transformation. The Nigerian experience in South Africa therefore provides not merely a bilateral lesson but a philosophical warning: Africa cannot construct an integrated, peaceful, prosperous, and genuinely united continent while fellow Africans remain strangers in the moral imagination of one another.

Keywords: Xenophobia, Afrophobia, Pan-Africanism, Ubuntu, African integration, Migration, Human dignity, Developmental justice, Essencism, African Renaissance.

Introduction

The twenty-first century presents Africa with a profound philosophical paradox. On the one hand, the continent is moving toward unprecedented projects of political and economic integration. The African Union's Agenda 2063 imagines an Africa characterized by inclusive development, democratic governance, peace, cultural confidence, continental integration, and the free movement of people and capital. Its second aspiration explicitly envisions an integrated continent politically united on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. On the other hand, African societies continue to experience conflicts rooted in ethnicity, nationality, religion, territoriality, resource competition, and hostility toward migrants from neighbouring African states. Xenophobia in South Africa represents one of the most disturbing expressions of this contradiction. The philosophical problem is deeper than the occurrence of violence. Violence against migrants raises fundamental questions concerning the meaning of humanity, citizenship, belonging, justice, community, and development. What does it mean to call Africa a continent united by common history when an African migrant may become an enemy merely by crossing a colonial border? What is the moral meaning of Pan-Africanism if nationality can override historical solidarity? Can constitutional democracy be considered successful when vulnerable foreigners are unable to enjoy the dignity formally guaranteed by constitutional law? And can African economic integration succeed where the movement of African people is accompanied by fear and hostility? These questions become particularly significant in the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa. Nigeria played a major political, diplomatic, economic, and moral role in opposing apartheid and supporting the liberation of South Africa. Nigeria's historical solidarity with South Africans was an expression of the Pan-African principle that the liberation of one African people was inseparable from the freedom of the continent as a whole. The emergence of recurrent xenophobic hostility against Nigerians in post-apartheid South Africa consequently presents an extraordinary historical and philosophical irony. The former object of racial oppression has itself become, in certain circumstances, an agent of exclusion toward other Africans.

This paradox should not be interpreted as an indictment of South Africans collectively. Such a generalization would reproduce the very logic of collective stereotyping that xenophobia embodies. Rather, the issue concerns the social, political, institutional, and philosophical conditions under which particular communities become willing to perceive fellow Africans as threats. Contemporary scholarship confirms that xenophobic violence in South Africa is multidimensional. Misago's recent multideterminant analysis identifies socio-economic and political deprivation, xenophobic beliefs, collective discontent, political economy, mobilization, and governance as interconnected determinants rather than isolated causes. Other scholarship has similarly demonstrated that anti-African xenophobia is embedded within processes of othering, exclusion, and contested belonging. This paper argues that these empirical explanations become philosophically intelligible only when

examined through the deeper category of recognition. Xenophobia begins when the foreigner ceases to be perceived as a person and becomes instead a category: "Nigerian," "Zimbabwean," "Mozambican," "foreigner," "criminal," "job-stealer," or "outsider." The person disappears behind the stereotype. What is lost is not simply tolerance but recognition of common humanity. The paper therefore advances an Essencist interpretation. Essencism, as developed by Samuel Asuquo Ekanem, approaches human and social problems by interrogating the essential dimensions of existence and by distinguishing what is fundamental from what is accidental. Applied to xenophobia, the distinction is morally decisive: nationality, ethnicity, language, political identity, and geographical location are historically contingent characteristics, whereas humanity and dignity constitute more fundamental grounds of moral recognition. A political community may regulate citizenship and migration, but it cannot legitimately transform nationality into a measure of human worth. The argument proceeds from this premise: xenophobia is fundamentally a failure to distinguish political difference from ontological inequality. The foreigner may be legally different in status, but such legal difference does not entail lesser human worth. When political identity becomes a justification for dehumanization, democratic citizenship itself becomes morally corrupted.

Conceptual and Philosophical Clarification

Xenophobia as the Construction of the Other: Xenophobia literally denotes fear or hostility toward foreigners, but such a definition is insufficient philosophically. Fear alone does not explain violence. The decisive question is how fear becomes attached to a particular social identity and converted into moral exclusion. Xenophobia therefore involves a process of othering through which a community constructs another group as fundamentally alien. Benedict Anderson's conception of the nation as an "imagined community" demonstrates that national identity is constructed through shared narratives, symbols, memories, and boundaries (6–15). National identity can create solidarity among citizens, but it can also establish a distinction between "us" and "them." The ethical danger arises when this distinction becomes absolute. Kwame Anthony Appiah's cosmopolitanism offers a counter-principle. Human beings may possess strong local attachments while simultaneously recognizing obligations to strangers (xvii–xxv). National belonging and universal humanity are therefore not necessarily contradictory. The problem begins when national identity becomes morally exclusive. Xenophobia transforms the legitimate distinction between citizen and non-citizen into the illegitimate distinction between human and less-than-human. It consequently represents a philosophical failure of classification. The migrant is no longer interpreted according to individual conduct but according to a collective identity imposed upon him or her.

Xenophobia and the Ethics of Recognition

Hegel's philosophy demonstrates that self-consciousness develops through recognition by another self-consciousness (111–121). Recognition is therefore constitutive of social existence. A person denied recognition is not merely deprived of courtesy; he or she is denied participation in the reciprocal moral world through which human identity becomes socially intelligible. Levinas takes the argument further by locating ethics in the encounter with the other. The vulnerable face of another person imposes responsibility before calculation of interest (75–89). Xenophobia reverses this ethical order. Instead of encountering the migrant as a face demanding responsibility, it encounters the migrant as a category generating suspicion. Ubuntu provides an African philosophical parallel. Its

foundational intuition that human existence is relational means that the self cannot achieve authentic humanity independently of others. The denial of another's humanity consequently diminishes one's own humanity. Essencism brings these insights together through the principle of essential recognition: because persons possess intrinsic human worth, recognition cannot legitimately depend upon nationality, ethnicity, economic utility, or political convenience.

Historical Context: Nigeria, South Africa, and the Paradox of Liberation

The Nigerian South African relationship cannot be properly understood without the history of apartheid. South Africa's apartheid system institutionalized racial domination and systematically denied the majority population political rights, economic opportunities, and human dignity. The struggle against apartheid consequently became an African and global moral cause. Nigeria was among the African states that strongly supported the anti-apartheid struggle. Its contribution included diplomatic advocacy, material assistance, political mobilization, scholarships, support for liberation movements, and international pressure against the apartheid regime. Nigeria's role reflected the Pan-African conviction that the oppression of one African people was an injury to the moral integrity of Africa as a whole. This historical background gives the contemporary Nigerian experience a distinctive philosophical significance. The relationship contains a principle of historical reciprocity. Those who benefited from the solidarity of others during a period of existential struggle acquire a moral obligation to preserve solidarity when historical circumstances change.

The point is not that South Africans must tolerate unlawful conduct by foreign nationals because Nigeria once supported the anti-apartheid struggle. Such an argument would itself be morally defective. The proper principle is more universal: Nigerians and South Africans are equally entitled to justice, and historical solidarity provides an additional reason for strengthening not abandoning the bonds between the two peoples. Post-apartheid South Africa's constitutional order embodies principles of human dignity, equality, and non-discrimination. Yet recurring xenophobic violence exposes a gap between constitutional norm and social practice. Scholarship has observed that xenophobic violence has become recurrent in post-apartheid South Africa and is directed substantially against migrants from other African countries. This contradiction is philosophically important because it demonstrates that a progressive constitution cannot by itself produce a progressive consciousness. Frantz Fanon's distinction between political liberation and psychological decolonization remains relevant. Colonialism does not disappear completely when political sovereignty is achieved; its categories can survive within consciousness and social relations. Fanon's warning is therefore applicable beyond colonial domination itself: liberation requires reconstruction of the human subject (204–16). The Nigerian lesson is consequently twofold. First, Africans must preserve historical memory as a moral resource. Second, liberation must be continuously translated into ethical practice. Otherwise, the oppressed may reproduce forms of exclusion against others.

Theoretical Framework: Justice, Recognition, Ubuntu, Pan-Africanism and Essencism

The paper adopts an interdisciplinary philosophical framework combining five complementary perspectives: theories of justice, recognition, African communitarian ethics, Pan-Africanism, and Essencism. Rawls's theory of justice requires social arrangements to be assessed from an impartial standpoint in which arbitrary circumstances should not determine basic rights and opportunities (118–29). Nationality cannot therefore become an arbitrary basis for denying fundamental human dignity. Kant provides an even more

fundamental principle. Persons must always be treated as ends rather than merely as means (37–43). A migrant cannot legitimately be treated as an economic scapegoat through whom political frustrations are discharged. Recognition theory adds the relational dimension. Hegel establishes reciprocal recognition as central to self-consciousness, while Levinas establishes ethical responsibility toward the other as prior to self-interest. African philosophy contributes the principles of Ubuntu and communal personhood. Mbiti's account of African relational existence emphasizes the social embeddedness of the individual, while Wiredu's philosophical work demonstrates the importance of communal rationality and culturally grounded concepts in African thought. Pan-Africanism extends this relationality from community to continent. Nkrumah's Africa Must Unite insists that African political fragmentation threatens collective freedom and development (217–30). Contemporary African integration projects institutionalize this vision. Agenda 2063 seeks a prosperous, integrated, peaceful, people-driven Africa and explicitly connects continental unity with Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. Essencism provides the paper's distinctive philosophical synthesis. Its central analytical move is to distinguish essence from accident. Nationality is accidental in the ontological sense that a person could have been born under a different territorial jurisdiction without becoming a different kind of human being. Humanity, by contrast, constitutes the essential basis of moral dignity. The philosophical consequence is significant: political borders may define jurisdiction but cannot define human worth.

Socio-Economic and Political Causes of Xenophobia

Inequality and Relative Deprivation: South Africa's extraordinary socio-economic inequalities provide an important context for xenophobic mobilization. Unemployment, poverty, inadequate housing, unequal access to services, and perceptions of economic exclusion generate legitimate social grievances. Yet poverty does not logically entail xenophobia. The philosophical problem is one of causation. Economic deprivation may generate frustration, but it does not determine its object. Someone must interpret the cause of the deprivation before frustration becomes hostility toward migrants. Xenophobia therefore involves misdirected causality. Marx's analysis of ideology helps explain how structural contradictions can be displaced onto vulnerable social groups (125–33). Instead of confronting institutional failures in employment, governance, education, industrialization, and distribution, communities may be encouraged to perceive migrants as the source of scarcity. This is philosophically unjust. Migrants do not create all the structural conditions within which they participate. Moreover, migrant entrepreneurs may generate employment, supply goods and services, pay taxes, and contribute to economic dynamism. Contemporary research likewise cautions against reductionist explanations of xenophobic violence, emphasizing the interaction of deprivation, beliefs, political economy, mobilization, and governance. The proper response to deprivation is therefore distributive justice, not scapegoating..

Unemployment and the Politics of Scapegoating

Unemployment is frequently invoked as justification for hostility toward migrants. The claim that foreigners "take jobs" possesses political emotional force, but its analytical simplicity conceals the complexity of labour markets. Development is not merely an increase in national income. Sen argues that development concerns the expansion of substantive human capabilities (18–24). Employment matters because it contributes to dignity, autonomy, and the ability to pursue meaningful lives. Yet the same principle applies to migrants. Nigerians who establish businesses or seek employment are exercising capabilities

that are fundamentally human. Their aspirations do not become illegitimate merely because they cross a border. Government therefore bears primary responsibility for expanding employment opportunities. The ethical failure occurs when public frustration over unemployment is transferred from institutions to vulnerable migrants.

Governance, Populism and Political Responsibility

Government has an ethical responsibility to protect persons within its jurisdiction. Xenophobic violence consequently raises questions concerning state capacity and political accountability. Political leaders who use inflammatory rhetoric concerning foreigners may intensify hostility. Conversely, political leaders who ignore xenophobia may permit exclusionary practices to become normalized. Misago's research emphasizes governance and political mobilization as important elements in the causal chain of xenophobic violence. Arendt's analysis of political exclusion demonstrates the danger of constructing populations as threats to the political community (438–45). Foucault similarly shows how discourse produces categories through which societies interpret reality (98–104). Political language therefore has consequences: when foreigners are persistently represented as criminal, parasitic, or dangerous, social consciousness may eventually treat violence against them as legitimate. Democratic government must consequently cultivate constitutional morality rather than merely constitutional legality.

Cultural Identity and the Crisis of Belonging

The question "Who belongs?" lies at the centre of xenophobia. Cultural identity is legitimate, but it becomes destructive when transformed into an exclusive moral identity. Nationalism played a necessary role in African liberation. However, nationalism that once resisted colonial domination can become exclusionary when it begins to define fellow Africans as alien. The paradox is especially severe because colonial borders themselves divided communities whose historical interactions preceded the colonial state. The philosophical challenge is therefore to distinguish identity from identitarian exclusion. A South African can affirm South African identity without denying the humanity or legitimacy of a Nigerian. A Nigerian can affirm Nigerian identity without denying the moral equality of a South African. Ubuntu provides precisely such a relational model. The self is not destroyed by the existence of another; it is fulfilled through ethical relations with others.

Consequences of Xenophobia

Consequences for Nigerians: The first consequence is the violation of human dignity. Xenophobic attacks expose Nigerians to physical violence, destruction of property, psychological trauma, displacement, economic insecurity, and social exclusion. Research on migrants' experiences in South Africa has documented rejection, marginalization, abuse, and emotional suffering among African migrants. The consequences also extend to Nigerian families dependent upon income and remittances from South Africa. Business destruction affects not only individual entrepreneurs but household welfare, education, healthcare, and future investment. Psychologically, xenophobia transforms ordinary existence into insecurity. The migrant begins to inhabit social space as a potentially dangerous space. This produces alienation in an existential sense: the person is physically present but morally displaced.

Consequences for South Africa

Xenophobia also damages South Africa itself. It undermines constitutional credibility, weakens democratic culture, discourages investment, damages businesses, and threatens the country's reputation as a leader in African affairs. South Africa's "Rainbow Nation"

identity rests upon reconciliation, pluralism, and constitutional inclusion. Persistent hostility toward African migrants creates a contradiction between this national self-image and social practice. Recent scholarship has explicitly identified anti-Black African xenophobia as a pressing problem extending even into universities and other institutions, demonstrating that the phenomenon cannot be confined to street violence. The moral consequence is therefore internal: violence against the other changes the character of the community that perpetrates or tolerates it.

Diplomatic Consequences for Nigeria–South Africa Relations

Xenophobia repeatedly strains one of Africa's most important bilateral relationships. Nigeria and South Africa are major political and economic actors whose cooperation affects regional and continental affairs. Diplomatic relations require trust. Recurrent violence generates public anger in Nigeria and pressure upon the Nigerian government to respond more forcefully. South Africa, meanwhile, faces the challenge of reconciling its domestic security responsibilities with continental leadership. The danger is escalation from individual violence to collective resentment. Philosophically, such escalation must be resisted because collective blame reproduces the logic of xenophobia itself. Justice requires differentiation: perpetrators must be held individually responsible; governments must be held institutionally responsible; but entire populations must not be morally condemned.

Xenophobia and African Economic Integration

The deepest continental consequence of xenophobia lies in its contradiction of African integration. AfCFTA is designed to deepen intra-African trade and economic integration, while Agenda 2063 envisions expanded movement of goods, services, people, and capital. The African Union describes Agenda 2063 as a framework for inclusive and sustainable socio-economic transformation and explicitly links continental integration with Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. Yet economic integration cannot be achieved through treaties alone. It requires social trust. Investors must trust institutions; entrepreneurs must trust markets; workers must trust legal protection; students must trust educational institutions; and migrants must trust that their humanity will not disappear when they cross a border. Xenophobia destroys this infrastructure of trust. It discourages investment, interrupts entrepreneurship, undermines labour mobility, weakens academic cooperation, damages tourism, and generates diplomatic uncertainty. It therefore possesses a developmental cost far greater than the immediate value of the property destroyed during attacks. The contradiction is profound: Africa wants the free movement of capital while making the movement of human beings dangerous; it seeks continental markets while allowing national identities to generate hostility toward continental participants; it desires economic unity while tolerating moral fragmentation. Nkrumah's argument that African unity is necessary for meaningful development therefore remains relevant (217–30). The modern challenge is to transform political Pan-Africanism into everyday social ethics.

Xenophobia, Pan-Africanism, Ubuntu, and African Humanism

Pan-Africanism is not merely an institutional project. It is a moral claim concerning the shared destiny of African peoples. The history of liberation demonstrates that African freedom has always depended upon solidarity extending beyond national boundaries. Nigeria's support for South Africa during apartheid embodied this principle. Contemporary xenophobia challenges it. Ubuntu provides another philosophical resource. Its relational conception of personhood implies that humanity is constituted through relationships. The destruction of another person's dignity consequently diminishes the moral quality of one's

own community. Tutu's emphasis on reconciliation illustrates the possibility of transforming historical conflict through recognition rather than revenge. Ubuntu does not mean the absence of justice; it means that justice should ultimately restore rather than destroy social humanity. Pan-Africanism and Ubuntu therefore converge around a fundamental proposition: African identity cannot be reduced to territorial nationality. The philosophical danger is that colonial borders become mistaken for natural moral divisions. They are historical constructions. Africans who cross them do not cease to be African.

An Essencist Diagnosis and Prescription

The distinctive contribution of this paper is its interpretation of xenophobia through Essencism. Essencism begins with a simple but profound philosophical distinction: human beings possess essential characteristics that should not be confused with accidental characteristics. Nationality, ethnicity, language, political affiliation, economic class, and geographical location belong to the sphere of historical contingency. Humanity and intrinsic dignity belong to a more fundamental moral order. Xenophobia reverses this hierarchy. It treats an accidental characteristic national origin as if it determined essential worth. The Nigerian becomes "Nigerian" before becoming human. Once this conceptual inversion occurs, discrimination becomes easier to rationalize. Essencism therefore proposes five principles for overcoming xenophobia.

Essential Recognition

Every African must first be recognized as a human person. Legal status may determine particular rights and responsibilities, but it cannot determine intrinsic worth.

Historical Reciprocity

Africa must preserve collective memory. Nigeria's contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle should be remembered not as a claim to privilege but as evidence of the ethical possibility of African solidarity. Historical memory creates moral continuity between past sacrifice and present responsibility.

Ethical Citizenship

Citizenship must become more than possession of legal nationality. It should entail responsibility for protecting the dignity of others, including migrants and minorities. Democracy is not simply majority rule. A democracy that permits the majority to dehumanize minorities betrays the moral purpose of democracy.

Developmental Justice

Governments must confront the structural causes of deprivation unemployment, poverty, inequality, corruption, inadequate education, weak institutions, and exclusion instead of transferring responsibility to migrants. Development should expand human capabilities while preserving justice.

Continental Humanism

Africa requires an ethical consciousness capable of complementing its institutional integration. AfCFTA, Agenda 2063, and the African Union cannot achieve their fullest objectives without a moral culture that regards African mobility and cooperation as normal rather than threatening. Continental humanism does not abolish national identity. It places national identity within a wider hierarchy of belonging.

Nigerian Lessons for the Future of Africa

The Nigerian experience in South Africa generates several lessons of continental significance. First, political liberation does not guarantee moral liberation. Apartheid may be abolished institutionally while exclusionary consciousness survives in new forms. Second, economic deprivation must never become an ethical licence for scapegoating. Genuine grievances should be directed toward structural reform and accountable government. Third, historical memory is indispensable to continental solidarity. Societies that forget the sacrifices through which their freedom was achieved may lose the ethical obligations produced by those sacrifices. Fourth, democratic constitutions require democratic consciousness. Constitutional rights become fragile when public culture does not internalize equality and dignity. Fifth, development requires trust. Economic integration cannot flourish amid fear of fellow Africans. Sixth, national identity must be reconciled with continental identity. Being Nigerian, South African, Ghanaian, Kenyan, or Congolese should not prevent an individual from simultaneously being African. Seventh, Africa needs philosophical education. Xenophobia is partly a failure of reasoning: the inability to distinguish individual conduct from collective identity, citizen status from human worth, economic competition from moral hostility, and legitimate national interest from exclusionary nationalism. The university therefore has a particularly important role. Philosophy should not remain confined to abstract metaphysical disputes. It must engage concrete African problems and cultivate citizens capable of interrogating prejudice, ideological manipulation, historical distortion, and unjust institutions.

Conclusion

Xenophobia and intra-African conflicts reveal a fundamental contradiction in the contemporary African condition. The continent increasingly speaks the language of unity, integration, free movement, sustainable development, democracy, human rights, and the African Renaissance, yet fellow Africans can still experience hostility because they were born on the other side of a colonial border. The Nigerian experience in South Africa makes this contradiction especially visible. Nigeria's historical support for South Africa's liberation represents the possibility of African solidarity at its highest level. Contemporary xenophobia represents the danger of abandoning that solidarity once political circumstances change. This paper has argued that xenophobia cannot be adequately understood as a consequence of unemployment, poverty, migration, crime, cultural difference, or weak governance alone. These conditions become explosive through political narratives and social interpretations that construct migrants as threatening others. The deeper problem is therefore a crisis of recognition. The migrant becomes a stereotype before becoming a person. Nationality becomes more important than humanity. Political boundaries become moral boundaries. Economic frustration becomes xenophobic resentment. Historical solidarity becomes historical amnesia. Constitutional equality becomes formal rather than lived morality. Against this condition, the paper has proposed an Essencist alternative. If human beings possess an intrinsic dignity that precedes nationality, ethnicity, and territorial identity, then no political community may legitimately transform foreignness into inferiority.

Borders can regulate political membership; they cannot establish different degrees of humanity. The future of Nigeria–South Africa relations and of African integration therefore depends upon a transition from territorial nationalism to ethical continentalism. This does not require the abolition of national identities. Rather, it requires placing national identity within a broader moral order in which African peoples recognize their interconnected histories, interests, responsibilities, and destinies. The African Union's vision of an integrated

continent, its Agenda 2063 aspirations, and the African Continental Free Trade Area will remain incomplete if economic integration proceeds without ethical integration. Africa must therefore integrate not only its markets and institutions but also its moral imagination. The ultimate lesson of the Nigerian experience in South Africa is consequently philosophical: Africa cannot achieve genuine unity while Africans remain strangers to one another in the realm of moral recognition. The unfinished task of the African Renaissance is therefore not merely to build stronger states, richer economies, or more sophisticated institutions. It is to create a consciousness in which the dignity of the other is recognized as inseparable from one's own dignity. In that transformation lies the possibility of moving from liberation to genuine freedom, from coexistence to solidarity, and from political Africa to a morally integrated Africa.

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THE MAKING OF A LEADER IN THE YORUBA TRADITIONAL SOCIETY: A PANACEA FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA

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Abstract
Contrary to the popular opinion that leaders are born is the view that emphasizes the role of 'the making' in leadership. The Yoruba traditional society imposes the responsibilities of guarding and guiding the future leaders on the royal families where they emanate. Thus, the moral, religious and social values are well observed by the future kings and queens, culminating in good leadership. This is unlike what obtains in contemporary society where anyone under the influence of money, political godfatherism and elitism could become a leader without having any leadership qualities. This paper attempt to downplay the modern system of how leaders emerge in the society and also argue that the acts of disorderliness, injustice, depreciation of value system and the systemic collapse of the social structure are the consequences of the neglect of the making of leaders in contemporary society. Given this, the paper advocated for a revisit of the traditional process through moral education, spiritual initiation and social/family ideology for the leaders in the making as it obtains in the Yoruba traditional society. In achieving this, the philosophical methods of conceptual clarification and critical analysis are employed to ensure that those who leads are those who are made.

Keywords: Leadership making, Traditional Society, Leaders, Yoruba, Africa.

Introduction
The question of the forms of government, suitable for producing good leadership in Africa has long dominated discourses. Scholars from different fields of studies have argued in favour or against the appropriate relevant forms of government fit for the political system in Africa. The Monarchical system, which was the indigenous arrangement has been relegated for its failure to meet the modern day demand. The military system has been described as an

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aberration, while the liberal democracy imposed has generated more problem for Africa than one could imagined. Hence, the problem of leadership persist in Africa. However, on the one hand, it could be argued that all these system of government do not lack the basic ingredients necessary for producing leaders since it is working appropriately in some human societies. But on the other hand, one may say that the problem affecting leadership in Africa could then be traced to the way this system is being practiced. Given the above, an attempt is made in this paper as a way of departure from contesting the best forms of government which would be ideal for Africa. The concern here is to rather, examine the procedure of how leaders emerge, this aspect is what is captured as 'the making' of the leaders, and in doing this, we shall be looking at this process from the Yoruba traditional society.

The moral/ethical requirements, the religious rites, which ensures the sacredness of leadership position and the social/community involvement in this process are discussed. However, the justification of this argument is against the backdrop of the challenges being confronted on how leaders emerge in the contemporary society under the influence of money bag, political godfatherism and elitism. This methods of attaining power has resulted into all forms of disorderliness, injustice, hostility and above all culminated in systemic collapse of the socio-political and economic structure of the society. Given this, the procedure for the appointment of leaders must as a matter of urgency be re-visited. To achieve this, the philosophical methods of conceptual clarifications of key concepts, which are germane to this discussion shall be looked into, while the critical analysis of the Yoruba traditional system will equally be examined. This is with the aim of ensuring that the contemporary challenges of leadership, currently going on in Africa can still found an appropriate solution within the Africa socio–political and cultural system. The paper is divided into four parts, the first aspect is to examine the philosophical discourse on leadership. The second part situates the Yoruba concept of leadership and the process of the emergence of leaders, while, the third part analyze the contemporary challenges of leadership in Africa. The fourth, which is the last part presents the Yoruba concept of 'the making' as a panacea to the contemporary problem of leadership in Africa. The conclusion, of course, is the summary of the work.

Philosophical Discourse on Leadership

Philosophers from time immemorial have devoted their time to the questions that bothers on the issue of leadership. Different views and opinions of each philosophers, according to their ideological leaning have long dominated discourses. Plato, Aristotle and other prominent ancient Greeks philosopher alongside their contemporary counterpart, have postulated on what an ideal leadership should be in human society. However, it should be noted that the question of who should rule constitute one of the difficult and puzzling question in political philosophy. Given this, there are those who advocates that "the people should rule themselves" this schools of thought are in support of democracy (John Locke). Also, we have those whose view is that "one man should rule" these are in support of monarchy (Thomas Hobbes). Plato, however, advocates for a specially trained group of intellectuals to rule, this view is known as "Aristocracy", the rule by the best.[1] Plato's attempts to address the question of who should rule led to his theory of an ideal man or a perfect man. Plato believes that everyone is composed of two different elements: body and soul, thus, what makes an ideal person is the combinations of both physical and psychological perfection. Perfection to Plato here connotes 'health', that means that a person is physically and psychologically healthy when he/she is not suffering from disease and when the soul is in perfect state. Human soul, according to Plato is divided into three

parts – the 'rational element', the 'spirited element' and the 'appetitive element'. The rational element is that part of the soul that enables one to reason, to argue, and to deliberate. The spirited element is what makes one courageous or cowardly and gives one strength of will. And the appetitive element consists of desires, and passions, such as the desire for food, drink, and sex. [2]

Following the above, for a person to be psychologically healthy, the three parts of one's soul must function harmoniously. Reason should be in command of the appetites, and the spirited elements should support the dictates of reason in order to ensure that the appetites are kept under control. The appetites should not be repressed completely but should be satisfied only when reason says that it is appropriate. For Plato therefore, it is only when all these three elements are working harmoniously, without one dominating the others that an individual can be referred to as a healthy or ideal individual. By extension, Plato argues that the same analysis of individual could be applied to the state. An ideal state would be composed of three classes: the rulers to administer it; warriors to defend it; and all other citizens to provide the essentials of life, such as food and shelter. Each of these classes have a resemblance of the individual soul: the ruling class as the rational element; the soldier as the spirited element; and the other citizens as the appetitive element. All these functioning harmoniously would equally form an ideal society.[3] Going by the above pictures of an ideal individual and society, the question that is central to our discussion is on how a good leader would emerge? According to Plato, all children, male and female, should be raised communally, i.e by the state, until they were about eighteen. During the course of their training, they were to be subjected to three types of tests in order to determine prospective rulers from those who were to become warriors and artisans. The test would covers the physical, intellectual and moral, if a person could not withstand the moral temptation, then such individual might sacrifice the interests of the society in order to satisfy his/her own interests. Plato thus advocates further intellectual training in abstract sciences, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and ultimately the study of philosophy or dialectic which would form their theoretical preparation for the task of ruling and thus become a 'philosopher kings'. Finally, in order to avoid any reason for putting their private interests over the public welfare, they would not be allowed to have private families or to possess private property or wealth. To Plato, family interests and desire for riches were the two obstacles to unbiased and impartial leadership and once these two are eliminated, the leaders were to be given absolute authority in running the society and no one from the lower classes should be allowed to intervene in the administration of the government.

The foregoing Platonic idea of how an ideal leader and state could emerge, is good and brilliant, however, Plato's philosophy would lead to raising authoritarian and antidemocratic government. It would amount to the government for the people and not by the people. The justification of giving rulers absolute powers on the premise that ruling is a skill which must be acquired would lead to granting absolute authority to a special group for the purpose of ruling the society. Nevertheless, the aspect of this theory that deals with the process through which leaders would emerge should be well commended. This idea would allow the leadership structure to be strengthened as it would give way to only those who are qualified to rule and not just anybody who is not capable of undergoing the rigor and sacrifices which leadership positions demand. Niccolo Machiavelli is another philosopher that reflects on leadership, which this paper considers useful. Having studied the forms of governments to be found in states, which originated with Greek writers on politics, notably Aristotle- monarchies, aristocracies and democracies, and instead of providing a

conventional description of these three types of state-he confines himself to principates and republic.[4] Machiavelli maintain that all states and dominions that exists to exercise power over men are either republics or principalities, he identifies principalities as such that is hereditary in nature, where the family of the prince ruled for generations. Although, he offered no judgement about which is the better form of government but rather devotes his attention to the prince.[5] In his popular essay called *The Prince,* Machiavelli focuses on how the new princes can secure their position, and the dangers that have to be avoided. Niccolo Machiavelli identifies two ways by which one can become a prince: those who become a prince through fortune alone do so with little effort, but to maintain their position they need a great deal. They encountered no obstacles along their way, since they fly their way there but all their problems arise once they have arrived. Those that fall into this category attained power either because they have money, or because they enjoy the favour of those who grants them the power.[6] Niccolo observes that those leaders would not know how to hold their state, since, if they are men that are not of great intelligence and virtue, they will not know how to command. He compared such rulers as other natural things that are born and grow rapidly, but does not have roots and branches thus will be wiped out by the adverse weather. However, the princess who possess virtue that they know how to prepare themselves rapidly to preserve what fortune has dropped into their laps, and to construct afterwards those foundations others have laid before becoming princes will last.[7] The point Machiavelli is making here is that people who ascend the position of leadership through money or favour of others would not last, only those individuals that are of great virtue and have prepared themselves would preserve the position.

For Machiavelli, the ruler must concern himself with only one 'moral value': How to acquire power and maintain it. Consequently, what defines right and wrong actions for the ruler or for someone aspiring for power is whether the action he takes will help him acquire and maintain power. The ruler, "therefore, must not have any other object nor any other thought, nor must he adopt anything as his art but war, its institutions, and its discipline; because that is the only art befitting one who commands." In other words, any action that helps a leader consolidate his hold on power must be deemed 'morally right' and any action that makes a ruler less secure in his position must be considered 'morally wrong'. Machiavelli recognized the need for peace and order in a state. He said peace and order must be acquired and fostered, as a matter of first preference, through non-violent means. He, however, advised that in case the non-violent means did not work, the ruler should not shy away from killing in order to bring about peace and order. He emphasized that violence as a means towards order and peace worked only if the ruler made sure he harmed people as swiftly and with as few a number as possible. Machiavelli said that a 'good' ruler must, for as long as it helps him to maintain power, practice generosity. The aim of generosity for a ruler is to build a good reputation for himself. To maintain his reputation for generosity would include not to burden the people with heavy taxes, if this happens, the prince will be held in low regard by everyone.[8] He advised rulers to ensure that they are feared in such a way that they are not hated. When a ruler is hated people develop a strong urge to work against him. To achieve a position where he is feared but not hated, the ruler must "…abstain from the property of his citizens and subjects, and from their women. If he must spill someone's blood, he should do this when there is proper justification and manifest cause."[9]

Machiavelli identified some qualities which would make leader enjoy respect or approval, the core among such qualities are mercy, faithfulness, humanity, trustworthiness,

and religious. He, nevertheless, warned the ruler not to sincerely believe in any of these qualities, what was important according to him is for the ruler to merely appear to believe in these qualities. He wrote, "I shall dare to assert this: that having them and always observing them is harmful, but appearing to observe them is useful: for instance, to appear merciful, faithful, humane, trustworthy, religious, and to be so; but with his mind disposed in such a way that, should it become necessary not to be so, he will be able and know how to change to the opposite." [10] Going by the way of evaluation, Machiavelli has brought to bear some important virtues which are necessary for leaders to possess. However, his argument that the only morality for a ruler is to maintain himself in power is adversely used considering the political history in Africa. According to Kalungu-Banda, [11] if Machiavelli's teachings were followed by societies – and we have seen what happens when societies are unfortunate to have such leaders – we would end up with the rule of the jungle. As the ruler wantonly imposes his will and cunning ways on society, a spirit of survival of the fittest sets in. We would live in a society where life would be, in Thomas Hobbes' words, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." And some society are, unfortunately, going through this as we speak. The responsibility of running society is too important to be left to one or a few individuals with the state's powers of coercion. Rulers are supposed to run state affairs in trust of the people. It is the kind of authority that should make sense only because it is derived from the will of the people rather than the dictates and vagaries of one or a few rulers. Machiavelli presents power as if it is an end in itself. Power and authority are a means to an end – a society where everyone can realize his or her potentials. On this note, Machiavelli is to be commended on the basis that his writing exposed the thoughts and attitudes of some people who aspire or are already in power and yet are totally unsuitable to hold high office.

The Yoruba Concept of Leadership

A fruitful discussion on Yoruba political system, cannot but acknowledge the introductory remarks of scholars like Falola who aptly noted that, the civilization created by the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria could be described as one of the most advanced in Africa with complex and sophisticated traditional political, economic and socio-cultural systems.[12] This remark is premised on the fact that the Yoruba's are well organized group of people, their history is well detailed and advanced, it contains the ingredients suitable to be used as a paradigm for evaluating the contemporary society. Given this, the paper examines the traditional political arrangement with emphasis on the kingship system of the people. According to Alao, the enduring legacy or success of Oduduwa, who was the progenitor of the Yoruba, is best illustrated by the arrangement of chieftaincy institution based on divine kinship in spite of debilitating external influences. This to him, is the most characteristic and most developed feature of Yoruba civilization. The centralization of political authority and the adoption of beaded crown as a symbol of royal authority form the basis for identifying the direct descendants of Oduduwa and also the legitimizing political authority or kingship among the Yoruba.[13] The political unit on which the government was based in all the Yoruba kingdoms was the town, headed by an *Oba* (king), while the smaller unit was headed by *Baale* (chiefs) who was under the king. As head of the government, the *Oba* was regarded as a divine king and was in custody of an absolute power. Different names which attests to the power of the king includes: *alase ekeji orisa* (ruler, the companion of the gods), *kabiyesi, ki abi yin ko si* (There is no question of any querying your authority). These and many more are the attributes of the king, but great as the power of the kings appears, the *Oba* was not an absolute ruler in practice, there were councils of chiefs known as *igbimo* whose names

varied from places to places. They were called *Oyo Mesi* in Oyo, the *Ogboni* in Egba, and the *iwarefa* in Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti and Ondo towns.[14]

The *igbimo* (council) were the representatives of certain lineages and were meant to check the *Obas*. He could not make any law or decisions on crucial issues affecting the town without their input, they have the power to remove any king that is becoming tyrannical. Hence, the position of *Oba* was held in high esteem, consequently, there was the need for whosoever would become a king to be well trained and be brought up with certain qualities needed to function in such an exalted office. It is against this backdrop, that the paper examines the essential requirements for anyone to become an Oba in Yoruba society. Following the claim to monarchical system of government in Yoruba society as earlier noted, the office of the *Oba* is hereditary and confined to particular lineages, most especially those of the founders of settlements. According to Bayo Omolola, the installation of a Yoruba king showcases royalty, the process involves *pipe awon idile oba* (consultation), *bibeere lowo ifa* or *ifa dida*, (ifa divination), ikeede (announcement), *ebo riru* (rituals or sacrifices), and *iwuye* (coronation) ceremony, and *kiki oba* (homage to the king). [15] The take off point of the selection of a king whenever the position is vacant begins with the committee of high chiefs who were equally known as kingmakers. Usually, the royal families would be invited to a meeting where they would be told to nominate candidate (s) for the position of the *Oba.* More than one candidate may be nominated, and there might be a contest among royal families if the order of succession is not agreed to by all families. On this note, Akintoye pointed out that all male members of the family (sons and grandsons of former kings) are qualified to be selected as king. According to him, the Yoruba people rejects the principle of progeniture (automatic succession of a king by his oldest child) and even any succession of a king directly by his own biological son. In some kingdoms, this was allowed so far that certain categories of a king's offspring were totally excluded from selection as a king.[16] The essence of this careful rules and procedures was to presents a candidate that would be void of any shortcomings and be acceptable to all as a new *Oba*.

On the part of the kingmakers during the selection process, Akintoye acknowledged that the council could be lobbied by agents and supporters of the candidates and other members of the public. But while the council was obliged to keep itself open to the currents of opinion in the public, it owed the very critical responsibility of not letting any citizens have any idea how its mind was working. Its member were forbidden, on oath, to divulge its information even to members of their own families. For this reason, its members would reject no candidate's gifts - or, if the decision were to accept no gifts, would reject gifts from all candidates and their agents.[17] Although, it should be pointed out, however, that there were times in history when the king makers were corrupted and attempted to put the wrong person in office. But the implication of such acts on both the aspirant and the king makers were characterized with grave consequences. The point here is that there were sense of discipline on the part of the kingmakers, integrity was on high esteem and above all, the leadership position especially that of *Oba* was treated with honour and respect, given the sense of divine involvement in the appointment. The primary duties of the chiefs at this stage of consultation are therefore to search for a candidate that would be strongly acceptable to the lineage, respected in the community, be a good manager of his immediate family, be a hardworking and achieving person.

In a similar view, Adegbindin explains further that Yoruba gods do not approve of such bad characters as high-handedness, greediness, gross irreverence toward something sacred and so on, it is only in *ifa* oral text that qualities of good leadership are well

pronounced. This is why a council of chiefs cannot be said to complete without the membership of an *ifa* priest whose main "protocol" in the traditional council was to read out to the council (or, at times, the general public) the position of *ifa* on whatever decision the council or the *Oba* embarked upon.[18] Though the view of every chief (as a lineage head) was respected in the council usually by virtue of his age and genealogical proximity, the council regarded the words of pronouncement of the *ifa* priest as final in very crucial matters. Thus, the *ifa* priest occupied the exalted position of a spiritual leader in the council. The role of *ifa* (a god of divination endowed with timeless wisdom and knowledge on human affairs) on the selection or appointment of *Oba* is crucial. As Adegbindin further affirm, *ifa* enlightens further on the selection or appointment of a good leader or *Oba* in traditional Yoruba society. In the case of two or more people aspiring to occupy the throne, for instance, the kingmakers-having ensured that none of the candidates was high-handed, greedy or sacrilegious-could allow a form of peaceful voting to take place. In this case, what was required of the kingmakers was to find out that the candidate was supported by the majority in the council. Usually, a candidates who was the most affluent, influential, and had the most grasp of the institution of kinship emerged as the choice of the majority. This is "elimination method" in the selection of a leader or an *Oba* and must still be supported by *ifa* .[19] To further justify the role of *ifa* in the selection of a leader in Yoruba land, Owolabi applied the hermeneutic-narrative approach to show how *ifa* in traditional Yoruba society respected the institution of democratic leadership. He identified some qualities an aspiring Oba or leader must possess.[20] To this end, Adegbindin, in a proper perspective, identified the verse of *Ofun-nagbe* (*ifa verse*) that explains this:

Okanjuwa eeje won o mo o pin
Eni apa tosi, won a fun won nitan;
Eni aya tosi, won a fun won leyin;
Eni itan tosi, ibi komuokun eegun dede ori eran ni won fi i fun won;
A dia feni iwaju ti o deni ikeyin;
A fai mowa wu won ni
Beni iwaju ijosi ba deni ikeyin
A fai mowa wu won ni

Translated thus:

Greediness drifted them away from fair-sharing (of cow)
He who deserved the forelimb they gave the thigh;
He who deserved the brisket got the hump;
He who deserved the thigh got the bony head;
Divination was undertaken for the most senior
who would become the most junior,
It's their lack of moral rectitude
If the most senior became the most junior
It's their lack of moral rectitude. [21]

The meaning of the above verse centers on when a community needed to have a crowned king who would manage the affairs of the community with wisdom, consummates firmness, equity, and fairness. To avoid undue rivalry and a sense of dissension in their ranks, the sixteen *Odu* decided to embark on a journey to visit *Olodumare* **(**the Almighty) who they expected would use his most divine wisdom to select the best candidate from among them. During their long journey, they came upon a big snake, killed it, and distributed it amongst

themselves into sixteen places. They gave *Eji Ogbe* the head of the snake, knowing well that the head is the boniest of the reptile. But *Eji Ogbe* took his part without complaining. At last the sixteen *Odu* reached *Olodumare's* palace and, in *Olodumare's* court, they narrated their ordeal concerning their choice of a capable leader. Having listened to them, *Olodumare* promised to meet his divine counsel on the matter the following day and ordered the palace attendants to entertain his guests with a slaughtered cow which the guests should share among themselves. *Ofin Meji* and others who were close to him in rank shared the cow into sixteen places. Again, it transpired that they gave *Eji Ogbe* the head of the cow as his share. He took this unattractive part of the cow without protest and ate it. In *Olodumare's* court, the following day, the issue was tabled and *Olodumare* called the most senior *Odu* to explain the sharing formula of the snake they killed on the way and the cow which he gave them as gift. After the revelation that *Eji Ogbe* received the head of the snake and that of the cow, *Olodumare* then counselled that *Eji Ogbe,* the youngest, be made the king of his community. A point of interest here is that the sharing of the cow is central to Owolabi's hermeneutic interpretation as noted here:

> The unwillingness of the Almighty to impose a leader on the people can be interpreted to mean that the consent of the led is very important in making the leader acceptable and respected by the led. This, in a way, is an implicit endorsement of the democratic mode of choosing a leader. Furthermore, the advice that the youngest and the least ambitious deserves to lead the community is, in effect, a recommendation that the leader be humble rather than powerful, and at all times willing to serve the followers. Finally and most importantly, conferring leadership on the one, who, without protest, receives the least attractive part of the cow is a clear demonstration that leadership entails service and self-sacrifice, a task that only the patient, the painstaking, and the wise can undertake with success. After all…only the patient, the painstaking, and the wise can engage the head of a cow and benefit maximally from it.[22]

The above provides the pictures of how *ifa*'s involvement in appointment of good leader is different from the human approach during selection process. The candidate that is greedy and full of selfish ambition would automatically be severed by *ifa* through divination. This is what makes the process of the making of a leader in Yoruba traditional culture worthwhile. Again, the moment the process of divination had been fully completed, other ritual processes follows before the final coronation which is where the participation of the public becomes essential. In all, the Yoruba traditional political system emphasizes the importance of possessing good moral character on the part of the aspirant and the king makers. It showcase the relevance of divination to ascertain the suitability of any candidate and indicate the democratic process of appointment of any individual into leadership position.

The Contemporary Challenges of Leadership in Africa

Central to any discussion on the challenges facing the contemporary African societies is the question of the contact African had with colonialism. While the effects are multi-dimensional in nature, as it cut across cultural, social, economic and political spheres, the most important of these is the political. The reasons for this assertion is based on the prevalent situation on which majority of Africa nations found themselves. On this note, Sogolo reiterate that, hardly would any writer on contemporary issues in Africa today proceed without relating whatever he has to say to the colonial experience of the African people.[23] He states that the

present Africa would not be what it is today if the colonial phase of its history were erased. Although, one cannot, however, say with certainty what the present state of affairs could have been, perhaps not beyond the vague speculation that at least the economy of the continent, its political system and, indeed, the socio-cultural institutions would have been different. My aim here is not to go into details on the subject of colonialism since much work has been done in the literature.[24] However, it should be pointed out that colonialism has affected traditional culture in many irreversible ways. According to Williams Abraham;

> They put an end to the political hegemony of local cultures, not only by their assumption of powers of coercion and the introduction of new social institutions, new ways of doing things, and new reasons for doing them, but also by their juxtaposition of local cultures within newly defined geographic boundaries, which did not coincide with any previously existing.[25]

The points raised here are crucial, it depict how the new institutions introduced by colonialism, changed the course of African socio-political development. Such affected areas constitute problems which most nations are yet to recover from. The emphasis here is that the colonial legacies left an indelible mark on the culture and the value system of the traditional society. However, looking beyond the colonial factors, the genesis of bad governance in most African nations could be traced back to the period of struggle for independence. The anxiety for self- rule beclouded the people from seeing the "sharp conflict with the interests of the petit- bourgeoisies nationalists who led the struggles for independence." It appears that the nationalist were more interested in replacing Europeans in leading positions of power and privileges rather than concentrating on transformation agenda for the people. The disposition of most leaders both to the people and the nation as a whole has been majorly characterized as being negative. They often manipulate the citizens for their own selfish ends and the people were made to become means to their self interest.

The word political is intended to refer to public affairs: the official goods, affairs, fortunes, agencies, resources and institutions of the state which is a human community with organized, public institutions. There is no doubt that corruption is the bane of development in third world and the effect of this has made the condition of living perpetually backward. According to Oyeshile, corruption has almost become a way of life in Nigeria, for instance, it is the bane of development and a major cause of social conflicts.[26] To this end, it should be noted that the negative effects, which corruption generates are evident in Africa. Some of the effects includes; erosion of public trust, allows incompetence, it delays all forms of economic intercourse, thereby boosting costs and diverting energies to the concealment of private gain. These, without doubt culminate in abandoned project, poorly maintained roads, and lack of good health facilities and inadequate funding of educational institutions. Our position here is to reiterate that the failure of African leaders, both civilian and the military counterpart, due to corruption and mismanagement of the public funds has further worsened the precarious conditions of the people in Africa. Thus, the problem facing most nations then become compounded, it is both external and internal. Following the observations presented above, the questions that arise at this stage are numerous: What are those things inherently wrong with Africa that the continent has remained untransformed ever since independent? What is responsible for the rapid developments taking place in other continent of the world which are absent in Africa? And what philosophy should Africa adopts that can facilitate the development we need?

An attempt to provide answers to these various questions would afford us the opportunity to briefly consider the views of some scholars who have reflected on this issue relating to how to achieve development in Africa. Following the summation made by Oladipo, some African scholars have argued that the way to cure Africa of her political problems, is through the reclamation of pristine Africa traditions and customs, Such scholars preach a certain kind of " re africanisation", and their argument is on the premise that there are certain values which are considered to be distinct from (though not inferior to) Western values and ways. This commitment to the revival of Africa culture as argued in a way could be a step in the right direction. In this regard, this may be one way by which Africans can develop the capacity to correct some of the socio-political problems that arises from the forces of colonialism. Oladipo noted further that the development of a universal African consciousness would therefore be a means of undermining the socio-economic basis of the colonialist or racialist denigration of the Africa personality. It would also provide the condition for generating the self-confidence, which is a precondition for the achievement of self-directed change in Africa.[27] The point here is that the hope for the political reconstruction of Africa is attainable if the cultural values can be revived. However, some other African scholars are of the view that since there have been changes as a result of contact with other societies, that what Africans need today is a break with their cultural inheritance, which they find deficient in some fundamental ways. This position as Oladipo maintain, is based on the observation that change is an inescapable aspect of the human condition and that no society can develop in contemporary times without liberal democracy and science and technology which are the hallmarks of the exposure to the force of Western influences.

The Change we Need

Having considered the views of these schools of thought, the fact remains that on the one hand, there are certain core values that are useful in solving the socio-political and economic problem in Africa, while on the other hand, there is the need to embrace some Western values such as democracy, science and technology without which there can be no significant development in contemporary Africa society. Here comes the middle ground, which recognizes the fact that continuity and change are interwoven aspects of human experience. This is what some notable African philosopher called cultural synthesis.[28] Given the above, the take off point in addressing the problem with the political system in Africa, following the views of those who support re:Africanization is to revive those core values. The values of morality, the concept of following due process through which leaders emerge as contained in the Yoruba traditional system must be critically considered. However, those good Western values such that can promote leadership development in the contemporary society should be embraced as well. At this juncture, the question that may readily come to mind is how these political values would be practicable, considering the challenges of modern liberal democracy which promotes multi- party systems, electoral umpires', and competition among others. The impact of Islam and Christianity on the minds of people versus the place of *ifa* divination, which has been termed as paganism. It should be noted that for these values to be functional, there is the need for restoring the traditional institutional structure, which will serve as platform through which good leaders can emerge.

As pointed out earlier, the value of morality must be revisited as a matter of urgency for all to embrace if there will be any possible solution to the political challenges. Morality is fundamental to the establishment of a good leadership. It helps to provides and enforce rules for the harmonious adjustment of the interests of individual to those of others in the

society. Morality seeks to uphold rules, such that can guarantee harmony and differentiate right and wrong, good and evil. Also morality instills in people good character and helps to treat others in a way that deserves social recognition and dignity. It is lack of sense of morality that make citizenry, political aspirants and the electoral umpires alike to throw their sense of dignity away because of monetary reward, position and popularity. The Yoruba traditional society laid high premium on this virtue and that was what made the past ideal. The concept of *Omoluabi* (human dignity and good name) gave every member in the society a sense of belonging. This virtue will go a long way to restore decorum to our political system. When this become a collective will, embraced by old and young with a stiff sanctions to any erring members in respective of status or position, the menace of corruption will become the thing of the past as people would be awake to a new phase of Africa. In addition to the above is the need to re-emphasize the necessity for proper training and impartation of knowledge on those aspiring to be leaders in the society. Given the picture of the Yoruba traditional society as discussed earlier, the place of training and awareness of the requirements, discipline and sacrifices the position of Oba demands was clearly made plain to the aspirants. To buttress this, Bewaji identifies the problem of lack of knowledge on the part of leadership as the main problem responsible for the setback in most African nations. According to him;

> most African political, economic, social, intellectual, religious, cultural etc., leaders suffer to various degrees, a combination of intellectual privations. These privations include ignorance, selective memory, bad faith, intellectual self-deception and deliberate hatred for knowledge.[29]

The point he is making here is that knowledge and leadership are very crucial to progress, development and overall success of the people and the societies at large, however, contemporary African leaders seem to have deliberate hatred for knowledge. Thus, they lack the capability to bring development to the continent. Anya O. Anya, while commenting on this same issue noted that there has been a lack of knowledge of the environment, a lack of experience of the cultural antecedents of the African societies and a lack of will arising from the absence of knowledge and experience.[30] Lack of knowledge, as being used here, does not mean that the intellects of African leaders are plain slate, rather what they claim to know is naïve and narrowed down to their self-interest. Hence, the stories of ethnic clashes, religious upheavals, mismanagement of funds, corruption and civil unrest, among others, are the only legacy they pass from one generation to the other. It appears therefore, from all indication that the principal problem of development in Africa is a problem of knowledge. This then takes us back to the problem Plato identified in his idea of the ideal state and who should aspire to occupy the position of philosopher king. Given this, the way out of the present problem is to begin with leadership re-education and that of the followers alike. While we make efforts to invest energies in the development of science, technology, democracy and so on, we should not fail to ensure that the intellect is cultured with the capacity for critical intellectual reflection and self-introspection. This, according to Bewaji, is based on the Rortyan idea of the "brain as hardware and culture as software" for knowledge and information acquisition, processing and utilization in contemporary world". The realization of this deficiency of knowledge by the people is the first battle to win, those who are appetitive, who could not pass moral test would remain as citizens to provide the essentials of life, such as food and shelter. While the spirited would remain as warrior to defend the nation and finally, the ruling class as the rational element, all these functioning harmoniously would equally form an ideal society. Those who are not properly trained for

leadership have no business in occupying the position, the issue is not about being literate or not but a cultural education, which involves in placing proper values and dignity in individual lives and well-being.

Another major institutional structure that would be needed to ensure the stability of the emergence of good leadership in Africa is the religious institution. Given the history of the Africans, religion forms an important part in the life of the people. And the example of the Yoruba traditional society, earlier mentioned, depict the role of religion, which cannot be pushed aside in the selection process of leadership. Today, the impact which Islam and Christianity have made on the minds of many that made the Yoruba *ifa* practice to be seen as paganism has greatly affected the respect people accord to religious sanctions when aspiring for leadership position. The perception that the Christian and Islamic Gods does not strike like the African gods often made some leaders to do contrary. Efforts would be needed to put the religious values into proper perspective. Given the situations as it is, the position of the paper is not campaigning for a return to the African traditional religion per se, but that all the religious institutions should desist from promoting corrupt leaders and if possible invoke a sanction upon an erring leader. The point here is that the traditional society had a means of finding out from ifa who the appropriate leader would be, and whosoever emerged was accepted by all. Similarly, the religious institution should be fully involved in the selection process, any aspirant with questionable character should be publicly rejected by all. On this note, the contention of this paper is that Africans has a good cultural and political values which when it is well cultivated will be suitable to resolve the current political challenges our society is undergoing. There is a merit in considering the relevance of traditional political values and ideas to the African modern political life and systems. Our resolve to revisit these processes would go a long way to give us a new nation of Africa that we are dreaming of.

Conclusion

This paper examined the concept of leadership, and critically analysed it beyond the contest of the best forms of government that is ideal for Africa. It examined the procedure of how leaders emerge, and this was captured as 'the making' of the leaders from both philosophical and Yoruba traditional discourses. In doing this, the moral/ethical requirements, the religious rites, which guaranteed the sacredness of leadership position and the social/community involvement of the Yoruba traditional society was brought to fore. The challenges confronting the contemporary society under the influence of money bag, political godfatherism and elitism, as it resulted into all forms of disorderliness, injustice, hostility and systemic collapse of the socio-political and economic structure of the society were examined. Given this, the paper contends that the procedure for the appointment of leaders must as a matter of urgency be re-visited using Yoruba traditional society as a panacea to the contemporary problem of leadership in Africa.

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THE MODERATING ROLE OF GENDER ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BANKING REFORMS AND BANKS' CUSTOMERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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Abstract
This study investigates the impact of banking reforms on banks' customers' psychological well-being, with a particular focus on the moderating role of gender. The research aims to determine whether the effect of banking reforms on psychological well-being differs between male and female customers. Adopting a quantitative research approach, the study employs a causal research design and analyzes primary data collected through structured questionnaires administered to 1,000 bank customers across selected financial institutions. The sample includes both male and female respondents from diverse demographic and socio-economic backgrounds. Data analysis was conducted using Smart PLS software to assess the direct effect of banking reforms on customers' psychological well-being, as well as the moderating effect of gender. The results reveal that banking reforms positively influence customers' psychological well-being (β = 0.153), suggesting that improvements in banking structures and services enhance emotional, cognitive, and social satisfaction among customers. However, gender significantly moderates this relationship (β = 0.472), with female customers exhibiting stronger psychological responses to reforms than their male counterparts. This suggests that women are more sensitive to service improvements and institutional changes, highlighting the importance of considering gender-specific preferences in policy implementation. There are no conflicts of interest to declare. All data were collected solely for academic purposes, and no external entities influenced the research process or findings.

Introduction
Banking reforms have emerged as essential tools for transforming the structural and operational dynamics of financial institutions, particularly in emerging and developing economies. These reforms are often introduced to enhance regulatory compliance, improve

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service delivery, strengthen risk management frameworks, and promote trust and stability within the financial system (Smith & Jones, 2024). Globally, initiatives such as the enforcement of capital adequacy requirements, digitization of financial services, and compliance with international financial reporting standards have significantly influenced customer experiences within the banking sector. While the overarching aim of these reforms is to build a more resilient and efficient financial sector, their effects on customers especially in terms of psychological well-being remain underexplored. The psychological well-being of bank customers refers to their emotional, cognitive, and social responses to banking experiences, including perceptions of trust, security, satisfaction, and autonomy. Reforms such as improved digital infrastructure, customer protection policies, and enhanced transparency can reduce uncertainty and promote a sense of control and satisfaction among customers (Brown et al., 2024). Conversely, abrupt policy shifts, increased service fees, or reduced human interaction due to automation may generate anxiety, frustration, or feelings of exclusion. Hence, the impact of banking reforms on psychological well-being is neither uniform nor straightforward and is often shaped by demographic and psychosocial factors including gender. Gender plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals perceive and respond to institutional changes. Research suggests that men and women differ in their attitudes toward financial risk, service expectations, and digital engagement (Mensah & Tetteh, 2024). For instance, female customers may place greater value on relational banking, trust, and personalized services, and may be more sensitive to disruptions brought about by reforms. Male customers, on the other hand, may prioritize efficiency, convenience, and technological innovations. These gender-based differences imply that the psychological effects of banking reforms may not be equally felt across male and female customers.

In Ghana, the banking sector has undergone substantial reforms, particularly during the 2017–2019 regulatory overhaul led by the Bank of Ghana. These included recapitalization directives, enhanced customer protection laws, digitalization drives, and stricter compliance enforcement (Ahmed et al., 2024). While these reforms succeeded in restoring financial stability and increasing public trust, they also restructured the customer-bank relationship in ways that could differently affect psychological well-being across gender lines. Given these dynamics, an important empirical question arises: Does gender moderate the relationship between banking reforms and the psychological well-being of customers? If so, how can policymakers and financial institutions design reform strategies that are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the psychological needs of all customer groups? In conclusion, while banking reforms aim to enhance overall customer experiences and system stability, their psychological effects vary based on individual and social characteristics particularly gender. This study, therefore, seeks to empirically assess how gender influences the relationship between banking reforms and customers' psychological well-being, offering insights for gender-responsive policy design, inclusive banking practices, and customer-centered financial reforms in developing economies such as Ghana.

Literature Review

Empirical research on the effects of banking reforms on customer-related outcomes reveals a multifaceted landscape influenced by both institutional changes and individual-level characteristics. While banking reforms are traditionally aimed at improving financial system stability, regulatory compliance, and operational efficiency, recent studies have begun to explore their broader social and psychological implications—particularly on customers' well-being. Psychological well-being in this context refers to customers' emotional, cognitive, and social perceptions in relation to their banking experiences, encompassing feelings of trust,

satisfaction, autonomy, and financial security. Reforms such as enhanced digital banking infrastructure, consumer protection regulations, anti-money laundering (AML) compliance, and greater transparency have the potential to reduce uncertainty, improve service quality, and increase trust in financial institutions (Brown & Mensah, 2023). For instance, Sharma and Singh (2024) found that digital transformation reforms in Indian banks positively influenced customer satisfaction by making financial services more accessible, transparent, and user-friendly. However, the extent to which these reforms improve psychological well-being is shaped by demographic and social factors—especially gender. Gender has been recognized as a critical moderating variable in how customers experience and react to banking reforms. Studies suggest that men and women differ in their attitudes toward financial services, risk tolerance, trust, and emotional responses to institutional change. According to Adeyemi et al. (2024), female customers in Nigeria exhibited greater levels of anxiety and concern during financial reforms involving changes in bank ownership and capital structures, whereas male customers were more focused on the operational and transactional aspects. These gendered differences imply that reforms may not affect all customers uniformly, and the psychological impacts can vary based on gender-specific expectations and sensitivities.

In the context of Ghana, Mensah and Tetteh (2024) explored the aftermath of the 2017–2019 banking sector clean-up and found that while reforms boosted public trust and stabilized the sector, female customers expressed more emotional distress over the collapse of certain banks and the subsequent restructuring processes. These concerns were linked to a perceived loss of relational banking and diminished personal engagement with financial institutions. Conversely, male customers tended to appreciate the efficiency gains and digital alternatives introduced during the reform process. Several studies have emphasized the need to consider gender differences in reform impact assessments. Johnson et al. (2024) assert that financial institutions must account for gender-specific communication and service strategies during reform implementation to avoid alienating particular customer segments. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2024) observed that women's psychological responses to reforms were significantly influenced by the perceived trustworthiness and emotional intelligence of frontline banking staff—factors often overlooked in traditional reform assessments. Furthermore, Celerier et al. (2020) argue that a gender-sensitive approach to reform design is essential for promoting financial inclusion and psychological equity. They advocate for reforms that integrate both technical improvements and customer-centric considerations, especially those that address the emotional and cognitive needs of female customers who often value relational aspects of banking. This includes better education on reform objectives, increased access to human-centered financial services, and safeguarding mechanisms that enhance psychological security.

Theoretical Review

Two key theories underpin the relationship between banking reforms and banks' customers' psychological wellbeing in Ghana: the *Efficient Market Hypothesis* (EMH) and the *Agency Theory*. These theories provide valuable insights into how banking reforms can influence the efficiency of banks through improved market functioning, regulatory oversight, and better governance structures.

Efficient Market Hypothesis (EMH)

The Efficient Market Hypothesis (EMH), as proposed by Fama (1970), asserts that in an efficient and transparent market, all available information is rapidly and accurately reflected

in asset prices. Applied to the banking sector, EMH implies that reforms which enhance transparency, improve regulatory oversight, and promote fair competition contribute to the overall efficiency of financial services—not only in terms of institutional performance but also in customer satisfaction and trust. From a customer-centric perspective, reforms aligned with EMH—such as digitization, enhanced disclosure, customer protection policies, and better risk communication—should foster more predictable, accessible, and equitable financial services that positively influence customers' psychological well-being (Bawumia, 2022). In Ghana, the 2017–2019 banking sector reforms were geared toward eliminating inefficiencies, restoring public confidence, and promoting financial stability. Key elements of these reforms included the recapitalization of banks, the liquidation of insolvent institutions, and the strengthening of regulatory frameworks (Owusu-Nantwi, 2023). These measures helped increase customer trust, reduce financial anxiety, and improve perceptions of system reliability, which are essential components of psychological well-being. However, the extent to which customers benefit psychologically from these reforms may differ based on gender. Empirical studies show that gender plays a significant role in shaping financial perceptions and emotional responses. Female customers, for example, may prioritize relational banking and emotional security, and are therefore more sensitive to service disruptions and trust deficits. Male customers may be more focused on functionality and efficiency (Aryeetey & Harrigan, 2022). This suggests that while reforms enhance market efficiency overall, the psychological benefits derived from them may be unequally distributed across gender lines. Thus, EMH provides a useful lens to examine how reforms influence customer well-being, while gender moderates the extent of these outcomes.

Agency Theory

Agency Theory, introduced by Jensen and Meckling (1976), explores the conflicts that arise when the interests of principals (e.g., customers or stakeholders) and agents (e.g., bank managers or institutions) are misaligned. In the context of banking, poor governance, lack of transparency, and regulatory lapses can lead to customer distrust, dissatisfaction, and psychological stress. Therefore, reforms that seek to realign agent behavior with stakeholder interests—such as strengthened governance codes, consumer protection laws, and transparency mandates—serve to reduce agency costs and improve customer experiences and well-being (Mensah & Okyere, 2023). The banking reforms implemented in Ghana were in part a response to widespread agency conflicts, such as mismanagement, opaque practices, and loss of depositor confidence. Governance reforms—such as the introduction of independent boards, improved disclosure standards, and customer redress mechanisms—were instrumental in addressing these issues (Ncube, 2021). These interventions aimed to enhance accountability and improve customer perceptions of institutional trustworthiness, thereby contributing to emotional and cognitive security. However, customer reactions to such reforms are not homogeneous. Gender moderates the relationship between reforms and psychological well-being due to differences in emotional processing, trust-building mechanisms, and financial literacy. For instance, women may derive more psychological comfort from reforms that emphasize safety, transparency, and accessibility, while men may focus more on procedural efficiency and technological innovation (Ofori-Abebrese & Annim, 2023). Consequently, Agency Theory supports the view that reforms aimed at improving agent behavior (banks) must also consider how different segments of principals (customers), especially across gender lines, experience these improvements. In summary, both the Efficient Market Hypothesis and Agency Theory provide strong theoretical foundations for understanding the relationship between banking reforms and customers' psychological well-

being. The integration of gender as a moderating variable highlights the need for inclusive reform design that recognizes diverse customer expectations, trust dynamics, and emotional responses.

Methodology and Data

This study adopts a research methodology rooted in the pragmatism research philosophy, which advocates for the application of practical, problem-oriented approaches to answering specific research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2024). Given the aim to examine both the direct effect of banking reforms on customers' psychological well-being and the moderating role of gender, a quantitative research approach was employed, using a causal research design. This approach enables the analysis of relationships among constructs and the statistical testing of moderation effects. Primary data served as the main source of empirical evidence and were collected through structured, closed-ended questionnaires. The questionnaires targeted a diverse population of bank customers who had been exposed to major banking sector reforms in Ghana—particularly those implemented between 2017 and 2019. These reforms included digital banking transitions, capital restructuring, customer protection policies, and institutional consolidations. The target population consisted of adult customers from selected commercial banks, with a focus on ensuring representation across gender, age, and regional backgrounds.

The sampling frame included customers from three of Ghana's most economically active regions: Greater Accra, Ashanti, and Eastern Regions, based on data from the Bank of Ghana (2024). A total of 4,000 questionnaires were initially distributed. After cleaning and validating the data, a final sample of 2,500 respondents was retained, yielding a 62.5% response rate. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation of male and female customers. Within each gender stratum, purposive sampling was used to select respondents with adequate exposure to banking reforms. In addition, snowball sampling facilitated access to long-term customers who had experienced both pre- and post-reform service environments. The research instrument captured three main constructs: perceived impact of banking reforms, psychological well-being (emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions), and gender as a moderating variable. Responses were captured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Data were analyzed using Smart PLS 4, a structural equation modeling (SEM) tool suitable for testing both measurement models and structural models with interaction effects. The analysis involved path modeling to assess the direct effect of banking reforms on customers' psychological well-being, and a moderation analysis to examine whether gender significantly alters the strength or direction of this relationship (Hair et al., 2024). Bootstrapping techniques were used to test the significance of path coefficients and interaction terms. This methodological approach ensures a robust and data-driven investigation into how banking reforms influence customer well-being, and how gender differences shape this relationship. The findings are expected to offer actionable insights for policymakers and financial institutions in designing inclusive and psychologically responsive reform strategies.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of Direct Effects: In addressing the effect of banking reforms on banks' customers' psychological well-being, the study revealed that banking reforms exert a statistically significant positive impact on key dimensions of psychological well-being, namely emotional satisfaction, cognitive trust, and social reassurance. Among these dimensions, emotional satisfaction was found to be the most strongly influenced by banking reforms ($\beta = 0.472$),

followed by cognitive trust (β = 0.441) and social reassurance (β = 0.409), respectively. Furthermore, gender was found to significantly moderate the relationship between banking reforms and psychological well-being. The interaction effect showed that female customers experienced stronger psychological benefits from banking reforms compared to their male counterparts. Specifically, women reported higher levels of emotional satisfaction and trust in response to reforms related to service transparency, digital inclusion, and institutional accountability. While male customers also experienced positive effects, their responses were comparatively moderate, indicating a gendered difference in how reform policies are internalized and perceived. These findings underscore the importance of considering gender as a key demographic factor when evaluating the impact of sector-wide policy changes. They suggest that reform strategies should be inclusive and responsive to gender-specific psychological needs, ensuring that both male and female customers derive equitable benefits from institutional changes. The detailed statistical outcomes are presented in Figure 1 and Table 1 of the study.

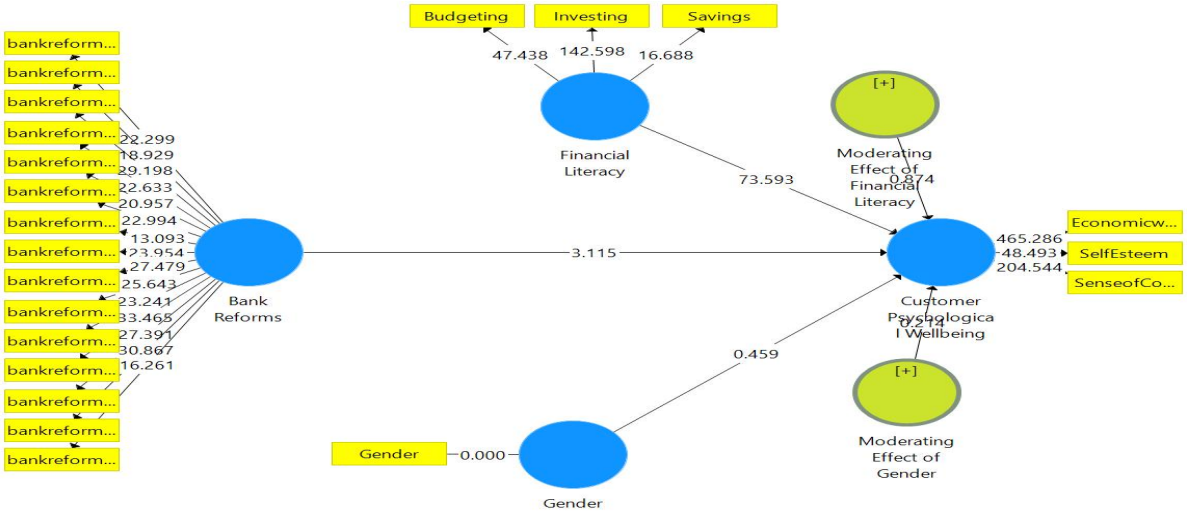


Figure 1

Table 1 Regression Analysis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Bank Reforms -> Customer Psychological Wellbeing	-0.064	-0.065	0.021	3.115	0.002
Financial Literacy -> Customer Psychological Wellbeing	0.964	0.962	0.013	73.593	0.000
Gender -> Customer Psychological Wellbeing	0.006	0.005	0.014	0.459	0.647
Moderating Effect of Financial Literacy -> Customer Psychological Wellbeing	0.012	0.01	0.014	0.874	0.383
Moderating Effect of Gender -> Customer Psychological Wellbeing	-0.007	-0.006	0.214	0.831	

Discussion of Results

The findings reveal a complex relationship between banking reforms and customers' psychological well-being, with gender emerging as a significant moderating factor. The direct effect of banking reforms on psychological well-being was found to be negative but statistically significant (β = -0.064), indicating that while reforms are often designed to improve the banking sector's efficiency and stability, they may inadvertently induce stress, confusion, or dissatisfaction among customers. This aligns with prior studies suggesting that systemic changes such as digitalization, branch restructuring, and regulatory shifts can disrupt customers' sense of security and familiarity (Boateng & Tetteh, 2024). More importantly, gender was found to significantly moderate the relationship between banking reforms and psychological well-being. The interaction effect showed that female customers experienced a more pronounced negative impact of banking reforms on their emotional and cognitive well-being compared to male customers. This could be attributed to differences in financial literacy, adaptability to technological changes, or perceived levels of financial vulnerability. Female customers, for instance, may be more risk-averse or sensitive to changes in banking services, especially when such changes affect accessibility or interpersonal service delivery. This moderating effect supports the work of Agyeman et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of demographic characteristics - particularly gender - in shaping customers' responses to financial system reforms. It highlights the necessity for banks and policymakers to recognize that reforms are not experienced uniformly by all customer segments. Psychological well-being is multi-dimensional and is influenced not only by institutional factors but also by customers' socio-demographic identities.

Interestingly, while some reforms such as enhanced digital platforms and customer self-service options were positively received by certain male customers, they were a source of anxiety for many female customers who reported a preference for traditional, interpersonal banking methods. This discrepancy suggests that a gender-blind approach to reform implementation may unintentionally marginalize or stress vulnerable customer groups. Furthermore, the inclusion of psychological well-being as a composite outcome - encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social well-being - allowed for a more nuanced understanding of reform outcomes. The results demonstrate that the success of banking reforms should not be judged solely on financial metrics, but also on their broader human impacts. In conclusion, the study establishes that while banking reforms exert a statistically significant influence on customers' psychological well-being, the strength and direction of this effect are meaningfully shaped by gender. It is therefore imperative for policymakers and bank executives to adopt a gender-sensitive approach when designing and implementing banking reforms. Tailored communication, targeted financial literacy initiatives, and inclusive service delivery models may help mitigate the unintended psychological burdens of reform, especially among female customers.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of banking reforms on customers' psychological well-being, with a specific focus on the moderating role of gender. The findings revealed that while banking reforms generally aim to improve systemic efficiency and service delivery, they also exert a negative influence on customers' psychological well-being - particularly in emotional and cognitive dimensions. Importantly, this effect is not uniform across all customer groups. Gender significantly moderates the relationship between reforms and psychological well-being, with female customers experiencing more adverse impacts than their male counterparts. The moderating role of gender highlights the importance of recognizing

demographic diversity in assessing policy outcomes. Psychological well-being is influenced not only by institutional changes but also by individual-level characteristics such as emotional resilience, digital literacy, and comfort with change. As such, reforms that are not inclusive in design and implementation risk deepening customer dissatisfaction and alienation, particularly among vulnerable groups. These findings underscore the need for gender-sensitive approaches in the formulation and rollout of banking reforms. Policymakers and financial institutions must ensure that reforms are accompanied by supportive measures such as inclusive communication strategies, tailored customer education, and human-centered service delivery models. By doing so, banks can better safeguard the psychological well-being of all customers, foster trust, and enhance long-term customer satisfaction.

Recommendation of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations can be made;

i. **Enhance Customer Communication and Engagement**: Banks should establish robust communication strategies to inform customers about the purpose, benefits, and implementation of reforms. Clear and transparent communication reduces uncertainty and anxiety, fostering trust and enhancing customers' psychological well-being. Engagement programs such as regular updates, Q&A sessions, and customer feedback mechanisms can further bridge the gap between reforms and customer satisfaction.
ii. **Promote Financial Literacy Initiatives**: Given the positive effect of financial literacy on customers' psychological well-being, banks and policymakers should prioritize financial education programs. These initiatives should focus on improving customers' understanding of financial products, market trends, and the implications of banking reforms, enabling them to make informed decisions and adapt to changes effectively.
iii. **Implement Customer-Centric Banking Reforms**: Reforms should be designed with a focus on customer needs and preferences. Policymakers must assess the potential psychological and emotional impact on customers before introducing reforms. Conducting pre-implementation surveys and pilot programs can help identify and mitigate adverse effects, ensuring that reforms improve customer experiences.
iv. **Introduce Gender-Inclusive Policies**: Although gender was not a significant moderating factor in this study, banks should still promote inclusive policies that cater to diverse customer demographics. Tailored financial products and services for different genders and age groups can create a more personalized banking experience, contributing to psychological well-being.
v. **Strengthen Support Systems for Transition Periods**: Banks should provide additional support to customers during the transition phases of reforms. This includes offering counseling services, helplines, and tailored financial advice to help customers navigate changes. Such proactive measures reduce stress and enhance the overall psychological resilience of customers during periods of uncertainty.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The use of a purely quantitative approach may limit the depth of understanding, as qualitative insights from stakeholders were not captured. The geographical focus on only three regions in Ghana restricts the generalizability of the findings, excluding other regions with potentially different banking experiences. Self-reported data from respondents may introduce biases, affecting result accuracy.

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'*MARTYRIA*' (ΜΑΡΤΥΡΊΑ) OR 'WITNESSING' AS A BASIS FOR THE REALIZATION OF JESUS' PRAYER IN JOHN 17:21 (THAT ALL MAY BE ONE): AN ECCLESIA - ECUMENICAL APPROACH

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Abstract
The division that exists among Christians remains a major challenge to the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17:21: "that they all may be one." Although Christians belong to different Churches and traditions, they share a common faith in Jesus Christ and are called to bear witness to the Gospel. This paper examines *martyria*, understood as Christian witnessing, as a possible basis for the realization of Christ's prayer for Christian unity. It focuses particularly on the witness of Christians who have remained faithful to Christ in the face of suffering, persecution, and death. The study argues that the witness of the martyrs can serve as a meeting point for Christians who are divided by doctrinal, historical, and ecclesial differences. Their witness points beyond denominational boundaries to a common commitment to Christ and His Gospel. Using a theological and biblical approach, the paper examines the relationship between martyria, Christian unity, ecclesiology, and ecumenism. It further argues that shared Christian witness can encourage mutual understanding, reconciliation, cooperation, and a stronger sense of communion among Christians. The paper concludes that martyria is not only a testimony of faith but can also become a powerful expression of Christian unity. When Christians recognize and learn from the common witness of those who have suffered for Christ, they can move beyond their differences and give a more credible witness to the world. In this way, *martyria* can contribute to the ongoing effort to realize Jesus' prayer that his followers may be one.

Keywords: *Martes*, Christian Witness, Martyrdom, Christian Unity, Ecumenism, Ecclesiology, John 17:21.

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Introduction

Christianity is fundamentally a faith of witness. From the beginning, those who encountered Jesus Christ were called not only to believe in him but also to bear witness to him through their words, actions, and manner of life. The New Testament presents the apostles as witnesses to Christ and His resurrection, making Christian witness an essential part of the mission of the Church (Trites, 1977). This witness, expressed through the Greek concept of *martyria*, involves remaining faithful to Christ and communicating the Gospel in the midst of the world. It can take different forms, including proclamation, Christian service, faithful living, perseverance, and, in situations of persecution, suffering and martyrdom. Thus, *martyria* should not be understood only as dying for the faith but more broadly as the Christian responsibility to remain faithful to Christ and bear credible testimony to the Gospel. At the same time, the history of Christianity has been marked by divisions among Christians. Differences in doctrine, ecclesial authority, worship, traditions, and historical experiences have contributed to the emergence of different Christian communities and denominations. Although these traditions have preserved important aspects of Christian faith and spirituality, their separation has also affected the visible unity of the Church and, in some situations, weakened the common witness of Christians. The question of Christian unity therefore remains closely connected with the mission and credibility of the Church. Ecumenical reflection has recognised that Christians are called to move beyond division towards greater communion while respecting legitimate differences among Christian traditions (World Council of Churches, 1997).

It is within this context that Jesus' prayer in John 17:21 becomes particularly significant: “that they may all be one.” Jesus does not present the unity of his followers as an end in itself. He connects their oneness with his relationship with the Father and with the response of the world: “so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” The verse therefore establishes an important relationship between Christian unity and Christian witness. The unity of believers has a missionary purpose because the way Christians relate to one another can either strengthen or weaken the credibility of their testimony to Christ. John 17:21 provides an important biblical foundation for reflecting on the ecclesial and ecumenical responsibility of Christians to seek greater communion (Thomaskutty, 2022). The significance of *martyria* becomes even clearer when Christian witness is considered in situations of suffering and persecution. Throughout Christian history, believers from different traditions have endured discrimination, violence, imprisonment, displacement, and death because of their faith. The witness of such Christians demonstrates that commitment to Christ can remain stronger than the divisions created by denomination, tradition, or ecclesial identity. In several contexts, Christians who belong to different traditions have shared experiences of suffering and have stood together because of their common faith in Christ. The Ugandan martyrs, for example, provide an important African example of Christians from different traditions whose shared witness can be understood beyond denominational boundaries (Duke & Osim, 2020).

This raises an important question for the contemporary Church: Can *martyria*, understood as Christian witness, provide a basis for greater Christian unity? The question does not suggest that theological and ecclesial differences are unimportant or that martyrdom automatically removes divisions among Christians. Rather, it draws attention to the possibility that Christians can discover a deeper relationship through their common commitment to Christ and their shared responsibility to bear witness to the Gospel. When Christians pray together, serve together, stand with one another in times of suffering, and

remain faithful to Christ despite difficulties, their common witness can become an expression of the unity for which Jesus prayed. Therefore, this study examines *martyria* as a basis for the realisation of Jesus' prayer in John 17:21, “that they may all be one,” from an ecclesia-ecumenical perspective. It explores the biblical and theological meaning of *martys* and *martyria*, the development of Christian martyrdom, the relationship between Jesus' prayer and Christian witness, and the challenges that continue to affect Christian unity. It further considers how the shared witness of Christians, particularly in situations of suffering and persecution, can contribute to dialogue, reconciliation, solidarity, cooperation, and a more credible Christian witness in the world.

Research Problem

Christianity is founded on the call of Jesus Christ to unity, yet the history of the Church has been marked by continuous divisions among Christians. These divisions have developed from differences in doctrine, Church authority, traditions, worship, historical experiences, and denominational identities. Although many Christian communities profess faith in the same Christ, such divisions often limit their ability to pray, worship, work, and witness together. This situation raises an important theological question concerning how Christians can move from division towards a more visible and meaningful communion. The problem becomes more significant when considered in the light of Jesus’ prayer in John 17:21, “that they may all be one,” which connects the unity of believers with the mission of making Christ known to the world. If Christian unity is related to the credibility of Christian witness, continued division among Christians can weaken the Church’s common testimony. At the same time, Christians in different traditions continue to experience persecution, suffering, discrimination, and violence because of their faith. In many of these situations, believers demonstrate courage, faithfulness, sacrifice, and commitment to Christ despite serious difficulties. Their witness often reveals a shared Christian identity that goes beyond denominational boundaries. However, while the studies examine Christian witness, martyrdom, Christian persecution, John 17, and ecumenism, these themes are often treated separately. Less attention has been given to how *martyria*, understood broadly as Christian witnessing and not only as death for the faith, can serve as a theological basis for promoting Christian unity. The experiences of martyrs and suffering Christians from different traditions raise the possibility of a common witness that can bring divided Christians into greater dialogue, solidarity, cooperation, and communion. Therefore, the central problem of this study is the continuing gap between Jesus’ call for Christian unity and the divisions that weaken the common witness of Christians. The study seeks to examine whether *martyria* can provide a meaningful basis for addressing this gap by exploring how shared Christian witness, particularly in situations of suffering and persecution, can contribute to reconciliation and the realization of Jesus’ prayer that his followers “may all be one” (John 17:21).

Research Questions

The paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

i. What is the meaning and theological significance of *martyria* as Christian witness, and how is witnessing to Christ expressed through faith, commitment, sacrifice, and Christian life?
ii. What is the relationship between *martyria*, martyrdom, and Jesus’ prayer for unity in John 17:21, and how can faithful witness to Christ strengthen the call for Christian unity?

iii. How can the common witness of Christian martyrs contribute to reconciliation and greater unity among divided Christian communities, particularly by encouraging mutual understanding, cooperation, and a shared commitment to Christ?

Aim and Objectives of the Paper

The aim of this paper is to examine *martyria*, Christian witnessing, as a basis for the realization of Jesus' prayer in John 17:21, "that they may all be one," from an ecclesial-ecumenical perspective. The paper seeks to show how the common witness of Christians, particularly the witness of the martyrs, can contribute to overcoming divisions, strengthening communion, and promoting greater unity among Christian communities. The paper seeks to:

i. Examine the meaning and theological significance of *martyria* as Christian witness, with particular attention to how witnessing to Christ is expressed through faith, commitment, sacrifice, and Christian life.
ii. Explore the relationship between *martyria*, martyrdom, and Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17:21, with a view to understanding how faithful witness to Christ can strengthen the call for Christian unity.
iii. Assess how the common witness of Christian martyrs can contribute to reconciliation and greater unity among divided Christian communities, especially by encouraging mutual understanding, cooperation, and a shared commitment to Christ.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative theological approach based on the analysis of biblical texts, scholarly literature, and relevant Church and ecumenical documents. It examines *martyria,* martyrdom, Christian unity, and ecumenism, with particular attention to John 17:21. The study interprets these sources to assess how Christian witness can contribute to reconciliation and greater unity among divided Christian communities.

Literature Review

Allison A. Trites, in The New Testament Concept of Witness: Allison A. Trites, in The New Testament Concept of Witness, provides an important biblical foundation for understanding the meaning of Christian witness in the New Testament. Trites examines the concept of "witness" and "testimony" within their biblical and historical contexts, paying particular attention to the Greek term *martys*. Rather than treating witness simply as a general religious idea, Trites studies its development in relation to the legal language of the Old Testament, Jewish writings, and the New Testament. He argues that the idea of witness is an important and continuing theme in the New Testament and that it is especially developed in the Gospel of John, Acts, and Revelation (Trites, 1977). A major contribution of Trites is his explanation of witness as the giving of testimony. In the New Testament, a witness is not merely someone who has personal knowledge of an event but one who communicates and confirms what has been witnessed. This is particularly important in relation to Jesus Christ. The apostles are presented as witnesses because they testify to what they have seen and experienced, especially the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Acts 1:8, for example, presents the disciples as witnesses who are to carry the message of Christ beyond Jerusalem and into the wider world. Trites' study therefore shows that Christian witness is closely connected with the mission of the Church. Witness is not an optional activity added to Christian faith; it is part of the responsibility of those who have received and accepted the Gospel (Trites, 1977). Trites also gives particular attention to the Gospel of John, which is highly relevant to the present study. The Fourth Gospel contains a strong emphasis on

testimony and witnesses. John presents different figures as witnesses to Jesus, including John the Baptist, Jesus Himself, the disciples, and others who testify to His identity and mission. This emphasis shows that the Johannine understanding of faith is closely connected with testimony. People are invited to believe in Jesus through the witness that is given concerning Him. Trites therefore helps to establish an important connection between witness, faith, and belief in the Johannine tradition. This is particularly significant for the present study because John 17:21 also connects Christian unity with the response of the world: Jesus prays that his followers may be one "so that the world may believe" (Trites, 1977). Another important aspect of Trites' work is the relationship between witness and suffering. His study recognizes that the language of witness gradually became associated with the development of the English word "martyr." However, Trites does not reduce the New Testament concept of witness to martyrdom. The primary meaning remains that of testimony or bearing witness. This distinction is important because Christian witness can take many forms. A Christian can witness through proclamation, faithful living, service, obedience, and commitment to Christ, while martyrdom represents a more radical situation in which that witness is maintained despite persecution and even death. Trites therefore provides a useful foundation for distinguishing between martyrs as witness and martyrdom as one particular form of costly witness.

Mark Oxbrow – "Mission and Martyrdom: A Reappraisal of Mark in African Context

Mark Oxbrow, in his article "Mission and Martyrdom: A Reappraisal of Mark in African Context," examines the relationship between Christian mission, witness, and martyrdom, using the life and death of St Mark as an important historical lens. Oxbrow begins with the Greek term *martys*, which carries the meanings of both "witness" and "martyr." His study therefore challenges the tendency to separate Christian witness from martyrdom. For Oxbrow, the connection between the two concepts can be seen in the experience of Christians who give testimony to Christ through their words, lives, and willingness to remain faithful even when such faithfulness involves suffering. This understanding is important because it presents martyrdom not as an isolated event but as an extreme expression of a wider Christian vocation to witness (Oxbrow, 2020). A significant contribution of Oxbrow's study is his emphasis on the African dimension of Christian history. He argues that the history of Christianity has often been presented mainly through Western perspectives, with insufficient attention given to the development of Christianity in Eastern and African contexts. By examining the tradition surrounding St Mark and the early Christian presence in Africa, Oxbrow draws attention to the importance of African Christianity in understanding Christian mission and martyrdom. He further suggests that the history of African Christianity provides important resources for contemporary Christian discipleship. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because it places martyria within a context where Christian witness has historically been expressed through mission, suffering, perseverance, and sacrifice (Oxbrow, 2020). Oxbrow also broadens the meaning of Christian witness beyond the moment of death. His discussion of St Mark's life, witness, and death shows that Christian witness is expressed through the whole process of discipleship. The missionary proclamation of the Gospel, the commitment to Christ, and the willingness to suffer for the faith can be understood as connected dimensions of Christian witness. In this sense, martyrdom becomes the point at which Christian testimony may become costly, but it does not exhaust the meaning of martyria. This is important for the present study because *martyria* is being understood broadly as Christian witnessing through faith, life, commitment, service, and perseverance, while martyrdom represents one radical form of such witness.

Another important aspect of Oxbrow's work is its connection between witness and mission. Christian witness is directed beyond the individual believer because it is part of the Church's mission to proclaim Christ to the world. This has particular relevance to John 17:21, where Jesus connects the unity of his followers with the world's belief in his mission. Oxbrow does not primarily focus on John 17:21 or on the ecumenical implications of Christian unity; however, his understanding of witness as an essential part of Christian mission provides a useful foundation for considering how the common witness of Christians can contribute to the credibility of the Gospel. If Christian witness is part of the Church's mission, then the way Christians relate to one another also becomes significant for that witness.

Johnson Thomas Kutty – "Oneness in John 17:1–26 as a Paradigm for Wider Ecumenism and Dialogue"

Johnson Thomaskutty, in his article "Oneness in John 17:1–26 as a Paradigm for Wider Ecumenism and Dialogue," examines Jesus' prayer in John 17 with particular attention to the theme of oneness. His study is based on a detailed reading of the whole prayer rather than treating John 17:21 as an isolated statement. Thomas Kutty argues that the theme of oneness holds the prayer together and provides an important way of understanding the relationship between Jesus, the Father, the believing community, and the world. He therefore presents John 17 as a significant biblical resource for thinking about Christian unity and ecumenical dialogue (Thomas Kutty, 2022). One of the major contributions of Thomas Kutty's study is his explanation of the different relationships expressed within Jesus' prayer. He identifies the relationship between the Father and the Son, the Son and believers, the Father and believers, and the relationship among believers themselves. These relationships are not presented as separate realities but are connected within the wider vision of oneness found in John 17. The unity of believers is therefore related to their relationship with Christ and with God. This provides a theological basis for understanding Christian unity as something deeper than simply institutional cooperation or agreement between different churches (ThomasKutty, 2022). ThomasKutty also gives particular attention to the relationship between Christian oneness and the world. In John 17:21–23, Jesus connects the unity of his followers with the world's recognition that the Father sent Him. Thomaskutty therefore understands Christian unity as having a missionary dimension. The united presence of believers becomes a sign through which the mission of Christ can be recognised by the world. This is especially relevant to the present study because it demonstrates that Christian unity is not only an internal concern of the Church. The way Christians relate to one another can either strengthen or weaken the witness they give to Christ. The relevance of Thomas Kutty's work to the present study is therefore very strong. His research establishes the connection between John 17, Christian oneness, mission, witness, and ecumenical dialogue. However, his study does not specifically examine *martyria* or the witness of Christians who suffer and remain faithful to Christ as a possible basis for the unity expressed in Jesus' prayer. The present study builds on ThomasKutty's understanding of John 17 by bringing it into conversation with the theology of Christian witness and martyrdom. It therefore asks how *martyria*, understood broadly as faithful Christian witness, can become a practical meeting point through which divided Christians can express their common commitment to Christ and move towards greater communion. In this way, the present study extends the discussion from the theological meaning of oneness in John 17 to the role that Christian witness can play in making that oneness more visible in the life and mission of the Church.

Peter Nguyen – "Contemporary Martyrdom and Ecumenism"

Peter Nguyen, in his study of "Contemporary Martyrdom and Ecumenism," examined the relationship between Christian martyrdom and the ecumenical movement. He argued that contemporary martyrdom can become a form of ecumenism because Christians from different traditions may share the experience of suffering and remaining faithful to Jesus Christ. According to Nguyen, this shared witness can create a form of communion that crosses denominational boundaries. His argument is important because it shifts attention from the divisions that have historically existed among Christians to the ways in which Christians can become united through their common faith and witness (Nguyen, 2019). A major contribution of Nguyen's study is his observation that the history of Christianity contains both division and shared suffering. He recognized that Christians have, at different points in history, persecuted one another because of theological and ecclesial differences. Such experiences contributed to the fragmentation of Christianity and demonstrate how deeply divisions can affect Christian relationships. However, Nguyen contrasts this history with the experience of modern Christians who have suffered or died because of their commitment to Christ rather than because of denominational disputes. In such situations, the suffering of Christians can become a point of encounter rather than division. Their witness can reveal a shared Christian identity that exists beyond particular ecclesial traditions (Nguyen, 2019). Nguyen gives particular attention to the contribution of twentieth-century martyrs to Christian unity. His discussion includes Christians from different traditions who suffered together in situations of political oppression and resistance.

One example is the shared witness of the German Jesuit Alfred Delp and the Lutheran Helmuth James von Moltke, who were executed because of their involvement in opposition to the Nazi regime. Their different ecclesial backgrounds did not prevent them from sharing a common commitment to human dignity and resistance to injustice. Their experience demonstrates how Christian witness can become a point of solidarity between traditions that remain institutionally and theologically distinct (Nguyen, 2019). Nguyen's work is highly relevant to the present study because it provides a direct connection between martyrdom, Christian witness, and ecumenism. However, his study does not develop this relationship specifically through Jesus' prayer in John 17:21, nor does it examine *martyria* broadly as including Christian witness through ordinary faithfulness, service, suffering, and perseverance. The present study therefore builds on Nguyen's contribution by placing the ecumenical significance of Christian witness within the framework of Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one." It argues that *martyria* can serve as a meeting point where Christians from different traditions recognise their common commitment to Christ and strengthen their witness together. Thus, the present study brings together the biblical, theological, historical, and ecumenical dimensions of witness in a way that extends the discussion of martyrdom beyond its traditional focus on death and persecution.

Emmanuel Orok Duke and Stella E. Osim - "The Ecumenicity of Ugandan Martyrologic Events"

Emmanuel Orok Duke and Stella E. Osim, in their article "The Ecumenicity of Ugandan Martyrologic Events," examine the nineteenth-century Ugandan martyrs from an explicitly ecumenical perspective. Their study focuses on the Christian martyrs who suffered and died during the persecution under King Kabaka Mwanga II and argues that their witness should not be remembered only within individual denominational traditions. The authors point out that Christians from different traditions, including Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans, were among those who suffered and died because of their Christian faith. They

therefore challenge a narrowly denominational understanding of the Ugandan martyrs and emphasize the importance of viewing their experience as a shared Christian witness (Duke & Osim, 2020). A major contribution of the study is its understanding of suffering as a possible source of unity. Duke and Osim argue that when Christians suffer for a common faith, the experience can create a bond that is stronger than their denominational differences. In the Ugandan case, Christians from different traditions were confronted with a common threat and remained committed to their faith despite persecution. Their common suffering therefore created an opportunity for them to give united witness to Christ. This is important because it demonstrates that Christian unity can sometimes become particularly visible when believers focus on what they share rather than on the differences that separate them (Duke & Osim, 2020). The authors further argue that the memory of the Ugandan martyrs has significance for contemporary African Christianity. They suggest that remembering these martyrs through an inclusive Christian narrative can help address denominational rivalry and encourage Christians to recognise their common identity in Christ. Their study therefore moves beyond the historical description of martyrdom and considers its continuing ecclesial significance. The Ugandan martyrs become an example of how Christian witness can cross denominational boundaries and provide a basis for solidarity among Christians. This perspective is particularly relevant to the African context, where denominational, ethnic, and social divisions can sometimes affect relationships among Christian communities (Duke & Osim, 2020).

The Etymological and Exegetical Meaning of Martys

The concept of martyria is important to this study because it provides a foundation for understanding Christian witness and martyrdom. The English word “martyr” comes from the Greek *martys (μάρτυς*), which fundamentally means a witness or one who gives testimony. Within Christianity, the term became closely connected with those who bore witness to Jesus Christ and remained faithful to their testimony, even in situations of suffering and persecution (Oxbrow, 2020). However, martyrs should not be understood only in relation to death for the faith. Its broader meaning points to Christian testimony expressed through faith, proclamation, and faithful living. As Christianity experienced persecution, martyrdom came to be understood as a radical expression of this witness, particularly when believers remained faithful to Christ even at the cost of their lives (Wysocki, 2015; McLarty, 2020). It is therefore important to distinguish between martys, *martyria,* and martyrdom. While martys refers to the witness and *martyria* to the act of bearing witness, martyrdom represents a particular and radical form of Christian witness involving suffering and, in many cases, death (Oxbrow, 2020; Wysocki, 2015). The following subsections examine the biblical usage of martys and the relationship between these closely connected concepts and their shared meaning (Oxbrow, 2020; Wysocki, 2015).

Biblical Usage of Martys in the New Testament

In the New Testament, martys (μάρτυς) is primarily used to mean a witness or one who gives testimony. Christian witness is particularly centred on Jesus Christ, his life, death, and resurrection. The term is closely connected with the mission of the early Christian community, whose members were called to make Christ known through their testimony. This usage is clearly seen in Acts 1:8, where Jesus tells His disciples, “You will be my witnesses.” The Acts of the Apostles repeatedly presents the apostles as witnesses to the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:32). Their witness was not simply personal but formed part of the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel to the world. The Book of

Revelation further presents witness as faithful testimony to Christ. Jesus is described as "the faithful witness" (Rev. 1:5), while believers are encouraged to remain faithful to Him in difficult circumstances (Rev. 2:10). The New Testament use of martys, therefore, establishes Christian witnessing as an important aspect of discipleship and mission (Oxbrow, 2020).

The Relationship Between Martys, Martyria, and Martyrdom

The terms martys, *martyria,* and martyrdom are closely related but should not be treated as identical. Martys refers to the witness, while *martyria* refers to the testimony or act of bearing witness. The term martyrdom describes the particular situation in which this witness is maintained through suffering or death for the faith. Oxbrow (2020) notes the close relationship between the meanings of witness and martyr in the Christian tradition. The development of early Christian martyrdom shows how witnessing could become a costly form of testimony. Wysocki (2015) explains that the martyr's faith, life, testimony, and death were all understood as forms of Christian witness. Martyrdom was therefore regarded as a particularly radical expression of testimony to Christ. Thus, martyria is not to be limited to dying for Christ. It includes the wider Christian responsibility to bear faithful witness through words, actions, and perseverance. Martyrdom is one extreme expression of this witness, while *martyria* encompasses the broader life of Christian testimony. This distinction is important for this study because it allows Christian witness to be examined both in ordinary Christian life and in situations where faithfulness involves suffering or death.

The Development of Martyrs from the Early Christian Period to the Medieval Era

The development of martyrs within Christian history was closely connected with the changing experience of the Christian community. While the New Testament primarily used the term in the sense of witness, the persecution experienced by Christians in the first centuries gave the concept a deeper historical significance. Christians who publicly confessed Christ and remained faithful despite suffering increasingly came to be recognized as outstanding witnesses. By the second century, martyrdom had become more closely associated with the idea of Christian testimony, particularly in accounts of believers who chose faithfulness to Christ rather than abandoning their faith under persecution. The Acts of the Martyrs preserved these experiences and presented the lives, faith, suffering, and death of martyrs as powerful forms of testimony to Christ (Wysocki, 2015; McLarty, 2020). The end of the major periods of Roman persecution did not reduce the importance of the martyrs within Christianity. Rather, the memory of those who suffered and died for the faith became an important part of Christian identity and religious life. Their stories were preserved and transmitted to later generations, while their lives became examples of courage, faithfulness, and commitment to Christ. Martyr narratives gradually developed alongside other forms of Christian literature about holy persons. As Harvey (2009) explains, writings about martyrdom eventually formed part of wider hagiographical traditions that continued through the Byzantine and medieval periods. The martyr's passion, which focused on suffering and death, existed alongside the vita, or life of a saint, reflecting the growing recognition of different forms of exemplary Christian life. By the medieval era, therefore, the understanding of Christian witness had developed beyond the immediate experience of persecution and death without losing the importance of martyrdom. Martyrs continued to occupy an important place in the memory and spirituality of the Church, but other forms of faithful Christian life also became recognised as examples of commitment to Christ. The historical development from the early Church to the medieval period thus shows continuity as well as development: martyrdom retained its fundamental connection with witness, while

martyrdom became recognised as one of the most radical expressions of Christian faithfulness. The literary traditions that began with accounts of early martyrs continued to influence Christian understandings of holiness and exemplary witness throughout the medieval period (Harvey, 2009; McLarty, 2020).

An Examination of Jesus' Prayer in John 17:21: "That They May All Be One

Jesus' prayer in John 17:21 is an important biblical foundation for understanding Christian unity. The verse forms part of Jesus' prayer before his passion and includes not only his immediate disciples but also those who would later believe through their message. Jesus prays that his followers "may all be one," relating their unity to the communion between the Father and the Son and giving it a missionary purpose: "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). The passage therefore connects unity, faith, and Christian witness, making it particularly important for ecclesial and ecumenical reflection (Thomaskutty, 2022). However, its meaning should not be reduced simply to institutional or organizational unity, since the wider context of John's Gospel also presents unity in relation to communion, faith, love, and discipleship (Malan, 2011). The following subsections will examine the literary and theological context of John 17, the meaning of unity in verse 21, its relationship with Christian witness, and the ecclesial and ecumenical significance of Jesus' prayer.

The Literary and Theological Context of John 17

John 17 stands at an important point in the structure of the Fourth Gospel. Theologically, John 17 centres on the relationship between the Father, the Son, and those who believe in the Son. The prayer moves broadly from Jesus' concern about the completion and glorification of His mission to His intercession for His disciples and, finally, for those who will believe through their message (John 17:1–26). Themes such as glory, eternal life, revelation, faith, discipleship, sanctification, and the continuing relationship between God and believers are therefore closely connected within the chapter. Recent Johannine scholarship also described John 17 as a culmination of Jesus' teaching and prayer within the Farewell Discourse (Wróbel, 2017; Myers, 2026). The literary and theological context of John 17 is therefore necessary for interpreting verse 21. The prayer for the oneness of believers occurs within a wider account of Jesus' relationship with the Father and his concern for the community that will continue his mission in the world. Understanding this context helps to prevent John 17:21 from being treated as an isolated statement and provides the basis for examining more closely the meaning of Christian unity (Thomaskutty, 2022).

The Meaning of Unity in John 17:21

The meaning of unity in John 17:21 has been interpreted differently by scholars. While the passage has often been used in ecumenical discussions as an important biblical foundation for Christian unity, some scholars caution against reducing Johannine unity to institutional or structural unity. Malan (2011), for example, argued that the passage should first be understood within its own historical and literary context rather than simply being treated as a direct call for confessional or organisational unity. Nevertheless, later theological and ecumenical reflection has continued to recognise the importance of John 17:21 for thinking about how Christians may express their common relationship with Christ in the midst of diversity. Therefore, the unity described in John 17:21 may be understood as a unity grounded first in communion with God and expressed in the relationship among believers. This understanding is important for the present study because it suggests that Christian unity cannot simply be reduced to the removal of every difference between Christian

communities. Rather, the passage directs attention to the deeper relationship that believers share through Christ. Such a shared foundation does not automatically resolve doctrinal and historical divisions, but it provides an important basis for dialogue, communion, and the search for greater visible unity among Christians.

The Relationship Between Unity and Christian Witness

John 17:21 establishes a close relationship between the unity of believers and their witness to the world. Jesus prays that his followers may be one "so that the world may believe" that the Father sent him. Christian unity, therefore, is not presented as existing only for the benefit of the believing community but also has a missionary purpose, since the relationship among believers can become a visible testimony to Christ and his mission. This relationship between unity and witness has also become important in ecumenical reflection, the World Council of Churches has emphasized that the credibility of the Church's mission is closely related to the degree to which Christians can bear witness together despite their divisions. Common witness does not necessarily require complete agreement on every doctrinal question, but it involves Christians recognizing and expressing the faith and values they already share in Christ (World Council of Churches, 1997). This relationship is particularly significant for the present study because when Christians who profess faith in the same Christ remain deeply divided and unable to cooperate, their witness may be weakened; conversely, greater communion, mutual recognition, and common action can strengthen the public credibility of the Gospel. In this sense, Christian unity becomes not only an internal concern of the Church but also an important part of its mission abroad (Heckel, 2024; Thomaskutty, 2022).

The Ecclesial and Ecumenical Significance of Jesus' Prayer

Jesus' prayer that "they may all be one" has important ecclesial significance because unity belongs to the identity and mission of the Christian community. The Church is called to express the communion that believers share through their relationship with Christ. For this reason, Christian division cannot be regarded simply as a normal expression of diversity. The Second Vatican Council teaches that divisions among Christians contradict the will of Christ and weaken the proclamation of the Gospel (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964). Similarly, John Paul II emphasises that the search for Christian unity is not a secondary concern but is connected with the very nature and mission of the Church (*Ut Unum Sint*, 1995). The prayer also has a strong ecumenical significance. John 17:21 provides an important biblical foundation for efforts to overcome divisions and promote greater communion among Christians. Ecumenism does not necessarily mean the removal of every legitimate difference in tradition, worship, or theological expression. Rather, it involves dialogue, mutual understanding, cooperation, and the search for the fuller unity that Christ desires for his followers. *Unitatis Redintegratio* therefore encourages Christians to recognise the elements of faith and Christian life that they share while continuing to work towards deeper communion (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964). For the present study, the ecclesial and ecumenical significance of Jesus' prayer is closely connected with Christian witness. Christians who remain divided may still share important elements of faith and may be called to give common witness to Christ. The search for unity can therefore be strengthened through prayer, dialogue, cooperation, and the recognition of a shared Christian identity. In this sense, Jesus' prayer continues to challenge the Church to move beyond division towards deeper communion, so that its life and witness may more clearly reflect the Gospel it proclaims.

Christian Witness in the Midst of Suffering and Persecution: A Global Perspective

Christian witness continues to be tested by suffering and persecution in many parts of the contemporary world. Although the forms and intensity of persecution differ from one region to another, many Christian communities experience violence, discrimination, restrictions on worship, imprisonment, displacement, and other forms of pressure because of their religious identity. The 2026 World Watch List reports that more than 388 million Christians however, experience high levels of persecution or discrimination worldwide, with particularly serious situations in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The report also records thousands of Christians killed or detained and thousands of churches and Christian properties attacked during the reporting period (Open Doors, 2026). This contemporary reality shows that Christian witnessing remains more than a historical memory of the early martyrs. In many communities, professing and practicing the Christian faith continues to involve serious personal and communal risks. At the same time, persecution should not be understood in only one form, since Christians may face pressure from governments, armed groups, extremist movements, criminal organizations, or hostile social environments. Recent international assessments of religious freedom likewise identify serious violations in several countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America (USCIRF, 2026). For the present study, these experiences are important because they demonstrate how Christian witness can be expressed under difficult circumstances. The following subsections will first examine the suffering and persecution experienced by Christian communities across different parts of the world and then consider how many Christians continue to demonstrate faithfulness, resilience, and commitment to their faith despite these challenges.

The Suffering and Persecution of Christian Communities Across the World

Christian communities continue to experience different forms of suffering and persecution across the world. These experiences vary according to political, social, religious, and cultural circumstances and cannot be explained by a single cause. In some situations, Christians are directly targeted because of their religious identity, while in others they suffered within wider conflicts but remain particularly vulnerable because of their faith. Persecution may involve killings, physical attacks, abduction, imprisonment, discrimination, restrictions on worship, destruction of churches and Christian property, forced displacement, and pressure on individuals to conceal or abandon their faith. The 2026 World Watch List reports that more than 388 million Christians experience high levels of persecution or discrimination globally, while millions living in the countries with the highest levels of persecution face very high or extreme pressure. These realities demonstrate that Christian persecution remains a serious contemporary concern and that suffering continues to form part of the lived experience of many Christian communities (Open Doors, 2026). Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, has become one of the regions where violence against Christian communities has received significant international attention. Countries such as Nigeria, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mozambique, and other affected areas have experienced insecurity arising from armed conflict, insurgency, extremist violence, weak governance, and other forms of instability. In some places, Christian communities have been directly attacked, while in others conflict has created conditions in which they become especially vulnerable to violence, displacement, and the destruction of their communities. The scale of the problem is reflected in the 2026 World Watch List, which identifies sub-Saharan Africa as the centre of the most severe violence affecting Christians. The report records that a large proportion of Christians killed during its reporting period were in this region, while Nigeria, Sudan, and Mali were among the countries receiving the

highest violence scores. These experiences show that persecution in Africa is closely connected not only with religious hostility but also with broader problems of insecurity, political instability, armed conflict, and the inability of some states to protect vulnerable communities (Open Doors, 2026).

Christian communities in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia also face serious challenges, although the forms of persecution differ from one country to another. In Yemen, Syria, Libya, Iran, Iraq, and Egypt, Christians experienced the consequences of conflict, social hostility, extremist violence, restrictions on religious freedom, and pressure on converts and minority communities. Similarly, in parts of Asia, including North Korea, Pakistan, India, Myanmar, China, and Afghanistan, Christians faced imprisonment, surveillance, discrimination, restrictions on conversion and religious practice, mob violence, or pressure from governments and wider society. The experiences of Christians in these regions demonstrate that persecution does not always take the form of physical violence. In some contexts, restrictions on gathering for worship, the closure of churches, legal limitations, family pressure, and discrimination in public life may gradually weaken the ability of Christians to practice and transmit their faith. The 2026 World Watch List identified many countries in these regions among those where Christians face the highest levels of persecution and discrimination, showing the global and diverse nature of the problem (Open Doors, 2026). The suffering of Christian communities is also evident in parts of Latin America, where persecution may take forms different from those found in Africa or Asia. In countries such as Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Colombia, Christian leaders and communities may encounter criminal violence, threats from armed groups, political pressure, restrictions on religious activity, or attempts to silence religious voices. In such situations, Christians are targeted not only because of personal religious belief but also because the Church and its leaders speak against injustice, corruption, violence, or other social problems. This wider global picture makes it clear that Christian persecution has no single pattern. It may arise from government repression, extremist movements, armed conflict, organized crime, discrimination, restrictions on conversion, or hostility towards religious minorities. Nevertheless, despite these differences, the continued suffering of Christian communities raises an important question about how believers maintain their faith and identity under such conditions. This provides the basis for examining faithfulness, resilience, and the continued commitment of Christians to their witness in the following subsection (Open Doors, 2026).

Faithfulness, Resilience and the Refusal to Abandon Christian Witness

The suffering experienced by Christian communities does not necessarily result in the abandonment of Christian faith. Across different contexts of persecution, many believers continue to maintain their religious identity, gather for worship, proclaim their faith, and support their communities despite serious risks. Research on persecuted Christian communities has identified different responses to persecution, including strategies of survival, cooperation with other communities, and open forms of witness. These responses show that resilience is not simply the ability to endure suffering but also the capacity of Christian communities to preserve their faith and communal life under difficult circumstances (Philpott & Shah, 2018). Faithfulness in situations of persecution is often expressed through perseverance rather than through a deliberate desire for suffering. Christians facing violence or discrimination may continue to practise their faith, maintain their communities, care for displaced persons, and preserve hope despite insecurity. Such commitment can become a significant form of witness because believers continue to identify

themselves with Christ even when this identity involves personal or communal costs. Mosoiu (2019) similarly argued that persecution can become an occasion for *martyria,* while cautioning that Christians should remain faithful without deliberately seeking or provoking martyrdom.

The contemporary experience of persecuted Christians also demonstrates that resilience has both personal and communal dimensions. Individual believers may remain faithful in the midst of fear and loss, while Christian communities develop forms of solidarity that enable them to continue worship, ministry, and service. In Nigeria, for example, recent studies of Christian communities affected by insecurity have linked experiences of persecution with the strengthening of Christian identity and continued commitment to witness, while also recognizing the severe consequences of violence, displacement, and loss of life (Shok, Donatus, & Salisu, 2025; Nomeh, 2025). The refusal to abandon Christian witness should therefore be understood not as the absence of fear or suffering but as continued commitment in the midst of difficult circumstances. This may be expressed through worship, service, forgiveness, solidarity, proclamation, and the preservation of Christian identity. In its most radical form, such faithfulness may lead to martyrdom, but Christian witness is also sustained through the daily perseverance of communities that continue to live their faith despite pressure and insecurity. In this sense, contemporary experiences of persecution show that martyria remains a living reality within Christianity and continues to raise important questions about the relationship between suffering, discipleship, and faithful witness (Middleton, 2020; Okigbo, 2026).

The Challenges of Christian Unity

The search for Christian unity continues to face serious challenges that have developed through centuries of theological disagreement, historical division, cultural differences, and the formation of distinct denominational identities. Although Christians share fundamental elements of faith, including belief in Jesus Christ, divisions remain concerning doctrine, the interpretation of Scripture, the sacraments, Church authority, ministry, worship, and ecclesial structures. These differences can create significant obstacles to full communion and continue to influence how different Christian traditions understand themselves and relate to one another. The Second Vatican Council recognises that differences in doctrine, discipline, and the structure of the Church remain among the major obstacles to full ecclesial communion, while the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order movement similarly identifies disagreements concerning faith and Church order as important challenges to Christian unity (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964; World Council of Churches). However, the challenge of unity cannot be explained only by doctrinal differences. Christian divisions are also shaped by history, tradition, culture, political developments, and the strong denominational identities that have developed over time. These factors can make dialogue difficult because questions of unity often involve deeply held beliefs and inherited understandings of Christian identity. For this reason, the search for unity requires Christians to address their differences honestly without ignoring the theological convictions that distinguish their communities. Ecumenical dialogue, therefore, seeks neither to remove legitimate diversity nor to achieve unity by weakening Christian doctrine, but to promote deeper understanding, mutual respect, and a more faithful search for communion (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964; John Paul II, 1995). The following subsections examine these challenges more closely by considering doctrinal and theological differences, the influence of tradition, history, and denominational identity, and the importance of dialogue in moving from division towards greater communion. In relation to the present study, these challenges are

particularly important because a common Christian witness must take seriously the differences that continue to divide Christians while also recognizing the faith and commitment to Christ that they share.

From Difference to Dialogue: The Search for Communion

The existence of differences among Christians does not mean that the search for unity is impossible. Although doctrinal disagreements, historical divisions, cultural differences, and denominational identities remain significant obstacles, dialogue provides an important means through which Christians can address these differences peacefully and constructively. Ecumenical dialogue allows different Christian traditions to explain their beliefs, listen to the experiences of others, correct misunderstandings, and identify both the issues that continue to divide them and the faith they already share. The Second Vatican Council describes dialogue as an important part of the ecumenical movement because it enables Christians to develop a more accurate understanding and appreciation of one another's teaching and religious life (*Unitatis Redintegratio,* 1964). The World Council of Churches similarly understands the search for unity as a process in which churches address historical and theological divisions while seeking to live out their common calling in Christ. Dialogue, however, does not mean that Christians must abandon their theological convictions or pretend that genuine differences do not exist. Effective ecumenical dialogue requires honesty about areas of disagreement together with humility, charity, patience, and willingness to listen. Christians are called to understand their own traditions more deeply while making a serious effort to understand how other communities express the Christian faith. In this process, differences can sometimes be examined more carefully and may reveal that certain disagreements are less absolute than previously assumed. The ecumenical movement therefore seeks neither a superficial agreement nor a form of uniformity that removes legitimate traditions. Rather, it seeks a communion in which Christians can recognise one another, grow in mutual understanding, and work towards overcoming those divisions that contradict the unity Christ desires for his Church (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964; World Council of Churches, 1991).

Prayer and practical cooperation are also important dimensions of the movement from difference towards communion. Christians can pray together for unity and cooperate in areas where they share common responsibilities, including service to the poor, promotion of peace, defence of human dignity, education, humanitarian assistance, and responses to violence and social injustice. Such cooperation does not automatically resolve theological disagreements, but it enables Christians to encounter one another beyond denominational boundaries and to recognise the faith and values they hold in common. The Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism emphasises that shared prayer and cooperation can express existing bonds among Christians and strengthen their witness to the Gospel. Similarly, the World Council of Churches identifies common witness as an important expression of the unity that Christians already possess even while divisions remain. For the present study, the movement from difference to dialogue is particularly important because Christian unity should not be understood as the complete disappearance of every theological or ecclesial difference. Rather, it involves a gradual movement towards deeper communion, mutual recognition, and common Christian witness. This is where *martyria* becomes relevant: Christians from different traditions can discover a point of convergence when they bear witness to Christ through faithfulness, service, suffering, and commitment to the Gospel. Their common witness can create opportunities for relationships that theological disagreements alone may not provide. Thus, dialogue, prayer, cooperation, and common

witness can help transform Christian difference from a permanent source of separation into an opportunity for deeper communion and a more credible expression of the unity for which Christ prayed.

A More Credible Christian Witness

The unity of Christians has an important relationship with the credibility of their witness to the world. Jesus' prayer that his followers may be one is directly connected with the purpose "so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). Christian unity is therefore not simply an internal concern of the Church but also has a missionary and public dimension. When Christians who profess faith in the same Christ remain divided by hostility, rivalry, suspicion, and an inability to cooperate, their proclamation of reconciliation, love, and communion may become less convincing. Ecumenical reflection has repeatedly recognised that divisions among Christians can weaken the credibility of the Gospel, especially when the Christian message of unity and reconciliation is not sufficiently reflected in the relationships among believers themselves (World Council of Churches, 1997; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964). A more credible Christian witness does not, however, require the elimination of every difference among Christian traditions. Christians have developed different theological, spiritual, liturgical, and cultural expressions of faith, and legitimate diversity can contribute to the richness of Christian life. The challenge is to ensure that such differences do not develop into hostility or become reasons for refusing to recognise the faith and dignity of other Christians. Greater credibility can therefore be achieved when Christians remain faithful to their convictions while also developing mutual respect, dialogue, prayer, reconciliation, and cooperation. Through common action in areas such as peacebuilding, care for the poor, defence of human dignity, education, humanitarian assistance, and responses to violence and injustice, Christians can demonstrate that their shared faith in Christ is capable of producing visible expressions of communion. Such cooperation does not remove all theological disagreements, but it enables Christian unity to become more visible in the life and mission of the Church (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 1993).

The contribution of *martyria* to this discussion is particularly significant. The experiences of Christians who remain faithful in situations of discrimination, persecution, violence, and suffering reveal a form of commitment that often goes beyond denominational boundaries. Christians from different traditions may continue to disagree on important theological and ecclesial questions, yet they can share a common willingness to confess Christ, preserve their faith, serve others, and remain faithful to the Gospel even under serious pressure. This shared witness provides an important basis for recognizing a deeper relationship among Christians without pretending that their divisions have disappeared. The witness of those who suffer for Christ therefore challenges the divided Christian community to reflect on what it means to belong to the same Lord while remaining separated from one another. A more credible Christian witness emerges when Christians take both truth and communion seriously: they neither ignore genuine differences nor allow those differences to completely prevent common prayer, dialogue, service, solidarity, and witness. In this sense, *martyria* can serve as an important meeting point in the search for Christian unity because it directs attention to a shared commitment to Christ and his Gospel. The movement towards deeper communion can therefore strengthen the Church's witness and enable Christians to reflect more clearly the unity, reconciliation, and love that they proclaim to the world (John 17:21; World Council of Churches, 1997).

Conclusion

This study has examined *martyria* as a basis for the realisation of Jesus' prayer in John 17:21, "that they may all be one." It has shown that martyrdom fundamentally refers to Christian witness, while its development in the early Church became closely associated with faithful testimony in situations of suffering and martyrdom. The study also established that Jesus connects the unity of believers with their witness to the world, showing that Christian unity is not only an internal concern but also important for the credibility of the Gospel. Despite the doctrinal, historical, cultural, and denominational differences that continue to divide Christians, the experiences of believers who remain faithful to Christ amid persecution and suffering reveal a shared commitment that can bring Christians together. Therefore, *martyria* cannot by itself remove all divisions within Christianity, but it can provide an important basis for dialogue, solidarity, cooperation, and common witness. When Christians recognise their shared commitment to Christ while respecting their legitimate differences, their witness can become more credible and reflect more clearly the unity for which Christ prayed.

Recommendations

i. Christian communities should promote greater ecumenical dialogue. Churches should therefore create more opportunities for Christians from different traditions to meet, listen to one another, discuss their differences, and identify areas of shared faith. Such dialogue can reduce suspicion and encourage mutual understanding.
ii. Churches should encourage common Christian witness. In this, Christian communities should work together in areas such as peacebuilding, care for the poor, defense of human dignity, humanitarian assistance, and responses to violence and injustice. Such cooperation can make Christian unity more visible in society.
iii. The witness of Christian martyrs should be given greater attention. Churches should teach Christians about the lives and witness of believers who remained faithful to Christ in situations of persecution and suffering. Where possible, the stories of martyrs from different Christian traditions should be presented as part of a shared Christian heritage rather than only within separate denominational traditions.
iv. Christian formation should emphasise unity and faithful witness. Seminaries, theological institutions, and Christian formation programmes should teach that martyria involves not only martyrdom but also daily Christian faithfulness, service, love, and commitment to the Gospel. This can help Christians understand that unity is expressed through the way they live and witness together.
v. Church leaders should strengthen practical cooperation among Christian traditions. Bishops, priests, pastors, and other Christian leaders should encourage joint prayer, peace initiatives, community projects, and other forms of cooperation. Such practical relationships can help Christians move beyond historical divisions and contribute to the realization of Jesus' prayer, "that they may all be one" (John 17:21).

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THE PROBLEM OF VERIFICATION AND THE RATIONALITY OF INDUCTIVE LOGIC: AN EXERCISE IN METALOGIC

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Abstract
The problem of induction was raised by Hume and other philosophers who rejected induction as a valid mode of inference. Hume asks how we come to know that the future will resemble the past, since nature does not operate in uniformity. There is no relationship between the cause and effect. As a result, we cannot ascertain the future. The relationship between the cause and effect, according to Hume can only be ascertained via a posteriori knowledge. Given the arguments against inductive reasoning, there is a need for us to employ viable grounds to ensure the importance of induction. The problem that necessitates this work is David Hume's critique of cause and effect as related to induction. The fundamental objective is to demonstrate how induction is employed in our day to day activities and in the scientific domain. This work is analytical and critical. Our finding has shown that we can have a comprehensive understanding of induction, if we patiently and carefully examine all aspects of inductive reasoning. In this regard, the conclusion is that every philosopher and scholar of logic should widen their scope of knowledge of reality by embracing inductive logic.

Keywords: Logic, Metalogic, Induction, Science, Rationality, Society.

Introduction

Reasoning is part of human existence. But we have both good and bad reasoning and logicians study this under philosophy. Philosophers ask certain questions and attempt to answer them in a certain way, because it is generally agreed that philosophical thinking aims at breaking down a lot of bad reasoning, stereotypes and prejudices that arise from our daily living in this world. Some of these stereotypes are not delivered to us deliberately or with the desire to mislead us, rather we may have been born with them. In the quest to alter or change the behavior and experience of man, the demands of philosophical training seem partly discordant from the natural tendencies of human nature. Human nature in most cases

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seeks to be primitively egoistic, harmful to others, intolerant, anachronistic, oppressive, disobedient to the rule of law, emotional and disdainful of the rules of logic, objectivity and sound reasoning. This is the truth about human beings.[1] Suffice it to say that "philosophy is deeply rooted in human life."[2] The human being views himself as a central element of life generally using the human mind to generate thought and the body to perform actions. Viscount Samuel says that "men's actions are governed by their ideas: right ideas lead to good actions and good actions bring welfare: wrong ideas lead to bad actions and bad actions bring suffering and disaster."[3] Hare, another icon of philosophy, insists that "the nature of the philosopher's contribution and interest will become clear if we consider the main forces in the world which endanger peace… these forces are ideas." [4] Ideas can be good or bad even as ideas. Ideas in themselves are the things that philosophy engages. Central to the study of philosophy is the use of logic, ethics and critical thinking for the improvement in the quality of the reasoning, thinking, imagination and knowledge of the people. Philosophical thinking facilitates the improvement in the capacity to understand deep questions that affect the lives of people.

Meaning and Nature of Induction

Induction can be a problem in daily life and also in science such that we ask: Is it rational to move from a few known cases to assert the knowledge of an unknown (inductive analogy) or any unknown (inductive generalization)? Or given the fact that the sun rose in the past as far as our memory recollects, does it mean that the sun will rise tomorrow? The original example is from Page 34 Of Bertrand Russell's Book Title *the Problems of Philosophy*, Published In New York Under The Oxford University Press in 1998. suppose a turkey is fed every morning. After observing this regular pattern repeatedly over many days, the turkey comes to expect that it will continue to be fed every morning. On the basis of its past experiences, it therefore infers that it will be fed the following morning. However, on Christmas Eve, instead of being fed, the turkey is slaughtered. The turkey's inference, though based on numerous and consistent observations, turns out to be false. This demonstrates the problem of induction: repeated past experiences may provide strong grounds for expecting a particular outcome, but they cannot logically guarantee that the same pattern will continue in the future. Theoretically, deductive logic and inductive logic are two prominent branches of Logic. Deductive logic provides valid premises for its conclusion, while inductive logic on the hand does not establish valid premises for its conclusion, but rather its premises provide justifiable grounds for probable conclusion. Inductive arguments are usually characterised with analogy which is never in opposition with the validity of deductive reasoning. This is because inductive premises do not furnish necessary grounds for its conclusion, but instead, relies on less or more coherent argument than others. The debate between deductive and inductive reasoning centers on their logical foundations. While deductive reasoning yields conclusions that necessarily follow from its premises, inductive reasoning has been criticized for failing to provide sufficient logical certainty for its conclusions. For this reason, some philosophers and scholars regard induction as useless, since its premises do not always provide evidence for its conclusion, but rather rely on probability.

Furthermore, inductive reasoning has also been criticised by philosophers especially by the British philosopher, David Hume. According to Hume, induction cannot be justified on the ground of causality.[5] As a result, he states some conditions for the possibility of causality; firstly, one thing is the cause of the other, if these conditions are involved: 'X', the cause, precedes 'Y', the effect, in time. Secondly, 'X and Y' are proximately related in time and place.

Lastly, there is history of X preceding Y and of X and Y being connected in place and time. He believed that if one thing causes another as an effect, the cause must pave the way for the effect, and he noted, sometimes, the cause and effect appear to occur at the same time. For instance, as soon as I press the switch of light, the light in my room turns on. There is a connection between pressing the switch, and the light turning on. Pressing the switch, preceded the turning on of the light in the room. The former precedes the latter, such that there is a succession of an event A causing an event B as it effects. According to Hume, it helps us to justify a causal effect by pointing to a regular tendency. On the other hand, if there is no history of regularity between a particular cause and a particular effect, then the critical thinker should wait for such trend to surface before accepting an alleged causal connection.

Since Hume's criticism of induction, the theory has been conceived as inadequate. Nevertheless, induction has proven to be the foundation and backbone of scientific statement. Karl Popper proposed the theory of falsificationism as a tool to be employed in solving induction problem. As an epistemologist, Popper gave a novel perception or criterion of fallibility: the observable and categorical accounts.[6] The former condition observes a particular instance, for example, 'John is a mortal', while the later condition gives a universal statement about things. Such as 'All men are mortal.' Like science which systematically studies the universe through observation and experiment of particular circumstances in pursuit of knowledge that permit us to generalize, in the same vein, inductive reasoning supposes that one can move from a progression of particular instances of observation to a universal or general assertion. For example, this is a white swine. That is also a white swine, and so on. From these particulars about an instances of a white swine, we may proceed to universal assertion such that all swine are white. However, Karl Popper argued that although inductive generalizations may gain support from repeated observations, they remain logically uncertain because a single contrary instance can invalidate a universal claim. Thus, the observation of a black swan falsifies the proposition that all swans are white. Nevertheless, according to Popper, science could not be high and dry on such an inferential basis. On this ground, he proposed the theory of falsification as a solution to the problem of induction. The fallibility theory states that a statement is fallible if there is the intrinsic possibility that it can be demonstrated as false. Secondly, statement is falsifiable if it is possible to imagine of observation which could negate them.

> A theory is falsifiable if the class of its potential falsifiers is not empty. We must clearly distinguish between falsifiability and falsification. We have introduced falsifiability solely as a criterion for the empirical character of a system of statements. As to falsification, special rules must be introduced which will determine under what conditions a system is to be regarded as falsified. We say that a theory is falsified only if we have accepted basic statements which contradict it. This condition is necessary, but not sufficient; for we have seen that non-reproducible single occurrences are of no significance to science. Thus a few stray basic statements contradicting a theory will hardly induce us to reject it as falsified. We shall take it as falsified only if we discover a reproducible effect which refutes the theory. In other words, we only accept the falsification if a low-level empirical hypothesis which describes such an effect is proposed and corroborated. This kind of hypothesis may be called a falsifying hypothesis.[7]

Hume and the Problem of Induction

We mostly assume that the studies we make about observable phenomena are able to justify some expectations about unobservable phenomena of the future. However, the fundamental source of induction problem is basically related to David Hume. He questions whether there is any rational basis for justifying inductive inferences from observed instances to unobserved cases. He therefore, presents arguments which appear to cancel the possibility of any reasoning from the premises to the conclusion of inductive inference. According to Hume, there are two probable forms of arguments: demonstrative and probable argument. A demonstrative argument, according to Hume, produces the wrong form of conclusion, while on the other hand, the probable involves in circular form of argument.[8] Hume stresses that we should explain reason we form any conclusion from our previous observable instances and goes beyond observable phenomenon. For Hume, he is not against the idea that we could infer from such premises; the problem is to comprehend the basis of the inference in the process of argument. Hume's problem of induction is a form of an analysis of concepts of cause and effect. For Hume, the relation of causation is the only connection through which we can go beyond the proof of our memory and senses, since the causal relation connects our past and present knowledge to our expectation or probability about the future. He reasons that we cannot make a causal inference by only a priori method. But rather, we can rely on experience in regular correlation of matters of fact. For example, we infer that a gun shot at man's head killed him. If such inference is based on chain of reasoning, then he would want to know what that reason is. [9]

If I have found that such an object has regularly been in correlation with such an effect, subsequently I hope that other objects, which are in similar form, with similar, circumstance will give similar results. Hume considers the possibility of this form of reasoning and argues that it is impossible, to supply argument regarding uniformity rules. He holds that the reason cannot be demonstrative, since demonstrative reasoning only establishes conclusions which cannot be conceive to be false. This implies that no contradiction that the course of nature may change, and the objects we have experienced, may be different or contrary effects. He went further to argue that, it is impossible to distinctively assume of an instance where the unobserved cause does not follow the regularity that is, up to the present moment observed. Reasoning cannot be such, with regard to matter of fact and real existence. Regarding probable reasoning, Hume argues, such reasoning which claims, progression upon the ground that possibility, will be like the future as it is in the uniformity to the past. If the chain of reasoning is based on an argument of this form, it will again depend on this probability, taking that for granted, which is the reason for failure to provide a chain of reasoning which is not circular. [10]

According to Hume, our tendency to go beyond past similarity projecting into the future is not established by reason; but rather, to find a way to avoid this conclusion. His solution to the problem of induction is, when the mind goes from the knowledge of idea or impression of a single object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determined by reason, but by certain laws, which correlates together the ideas of these objects and unite them in the imaginary mode. He therefore, argues that it does not matter how many times we get multiple impressions of events, we cannot reason from them to create new ones. He started the problem with causality on the basis of induction by bifurcating human knowledge into two methods the relation of ideas and matters of fact. For Hume the relations of ideas, signifies all truth that has to do with geometry, algebra, or arithmetic, etc. All these truths can be known a priori; we don't require employment of our senses to justify it. A priori

knowledge is necessary, as a result, we can't assume it to be false. On the other hand, matter of fact signifies all the truths concerning the external world; empirical truth that require the use of our senses to discover the reality of things. They are contingent and can sometimes be conceived as being false. [11] Hume argues that it does not matter how many times we get multiple impressions of events; we cannot reason from them to create new ones. The problem of induction is from time to time motivated through a comparison between principles of induction and principles of deduction. Valid deductive principles are necessarily truth, while inductive rules are not necessarily true. For illustration, one valid deductive principle might be from premises of the form All B are C and A is B, the corresponding conclusion of the form A is C follows.

The first principle illustrated in the following argument:

All men are mortal;

John is a man;

Therefore, John is mortal.

The above argument leads us to the inference that the principle here is valid in the fairness that there is no probable way in which premises satisfying the principle can be true without, consequently, the conclusion also being true. On the other hand, inductive rule might be from premises of this form,

Overwhelming Bs is known to be C;

There are no known instances of Bs that are not C;

And a is B;

Thus conclusion can be inferred of the form a is C.

The second principle may possibly be illustrated in the following inductive argument;

Overwhelming number of men are known to have been mortal;

There are no known instances of men who are not mortal;

John is a man;

Consequently, John is mortal.

The above illustrations show that the principle of induction is not as valid as its counterpart (deductive) principle does. The premises of the inductive inference could be true even though its conclusion is not true. Even if there are no known instances hitherto of humans that are not mortal, it is unquestionably possible that one could live forever. We can therefore, say that deduction has a form of perfect reliability in a way that induction does not. Whereas the other problems crop up when one considers how to justify inductive principles. It might seem that the simple possible justification could go like, induction has been overwhelmingly reliable in the past, and as a result, induction will be reliable in the future. This justification, according to critics of inductive reasoning is a circular justification for the reason that, it uses an inductive principle to justify an inductive principle. The problem of induction was not only falsification, which merely proved that a theory was wrong; but the possibility of future falsification. Since induction entirely relies on the past to predict the future; when there was really no reason to believe that the future would be anything like the past, we can infer that inductive argument can never prove something conclusively; it can only show what is likely to happen.

Karl Popper argues in his theory of falsifiability, that the inferences made in science are not inductive but deductive; and science does not begin with empirical observations and proceed to generalization. The problem of induction arises from the fact that it draws general conclusions from a finite number of particular instances, while the empirical sciences frequently advance universal propositions that extend beyond the available evidence, such

as the natural laws which believe an infinite degree or number of instances to be true. And what is really intended by these propositions? These questions specify the problem of induction concerning the justification of universal propositions of the empirical sciences in regard to, how we know more than we know?[12] There are great numbers of matter of fact that we believe to be true which can't be known via our senses without help. 'We believe that it will not rain tomorrow' and that 'our bread later this evening will nourish us', although we have not observed either of these things with our senses, Hume asks, how then do we reason to beliefs like this? According to Hume, we do so by using relations of cause and effect. For instance,

P1 This pizza is made of bread, tomato, and cheese.
P2 Bread, tomato, and cheese will cause nourishment.
C This pizza will nourish me.

Hume tried to illustrate how we come to know the (P2 propositions) propositions about relations of cause and effect. For him, there are just two methods that can guarantee us to know something, they are; a priori, by reflecting upon the relations between our ideas, or a posterior, by inspecting our sense impressions. He thus, went further and argue that propositions about cause and effect cannot be known a priori. He gives the following argument, "A priori knowable truths are necessary; we cannot conceive of them being false. But, we can always conceive of a cause failing to produce its effect. Relations of cause and effect are not a priori knowable."[13] Hume considers as the basis of his argument that relations of cause and effect must be known a posteriori. What we must know according to Hume, is to employ some sorts of chains of reasoning like: in P1 above; bread, tomato sauce, and cheese caused nourishment in the past, then in C, we assume that bread, tomato sauce and cheese will cause nourishment in the future. Hume, thus ask, what makes us belief that the past should serve as a guide to the future? In actual fact, if we know that the past should serve as guide to the future as a good inference, then we can either know it a priori or a posterior. We cannot know the future a priori, for the reason that we can conceive of bread, tomato sauce, and cheese, not causing nourishment and it is not necessary that bread, tomato sauce and cheese cause nourishment. As a result, we inevitably know it via posteriori. This can only be true if we are allowed to go from the past cause connecting to the future causal relationship, then it must be on a principle of the uniformity of nature, that the future will resemble the past. In that regard, bread, tomato sauce and cheese cause nourishment in the past; the future will resemble the past, hence bread, tomato sauce and cheese will cause nourishment in the future.

Nevertheless, Hume argues that we can not necessarily know that the future can resemble the past, a priori, since, it is conceivable that nature do not operate in uniformity. His argument goes like this: The future has resembled the past in the past (P1 above). Thus, the future will resemble the past in the past (C, above). That which give us the idea that we can conceive of nature operating uniformity up till present, suddenly cease to operate uniformity as expected (P1), will only give us reason to believe C, if we assume something extra-that nature operate in uniformity. For instance, the future resembles the past in the past (P1); the future will resemble the past in the past (P2); therefore, the future will resemble the past(C). [14] The process of circular reasoning that this pizza will cause nourishment, according to Hume; is not a good reason to believe that this pizza will cause nourishment. He went further to argue that, we can reason that the sun will rise tomorrow, that the earth will continue spinning on its axis, that oxygen will not suffocate us, that unsupported objects near the earth's surface will continue to fall. Hume maintains that the

only way we can know anything regarding unobservable matters of fact is by linking them to observable matters of fact through chains of cause--and–effect. Nevertheless, we can only know that unobserved causal connections will be similar to the observed causal connections if we assume that the future resembles the past. But 'nature's' past uniformity cannot give us reason to think that nature will operate uniformly in the future; if we presume that the future will resemble the past, which is precisely what we are trying to establish. So we can infer that there is no good, non-circular reason to think that observed regularities will continue into the future.

Further Analysis of Induction

Induction is a powerful reasoning technique used to prove properties about a structured collection of objects. It allows you to demonstrate that a rule or property holds true for an entire set by verifying it for a starting base case, and then proving that if it holds for one object in the structure, it must also hold for the next. Induction exploits the finite, structured nature of these objects to overcome their random complexity. Induction mostly corresponds to probabilistic, uncertain, approximate reasoning, and as such corresponds to everyday reasoning. On a daily basis we draw inferences such as how a person will probably act, what the weather will probably be like, and how a meal will probably taste, and these are typical inductive inferences. So it seems to be a form of reasoning that is actually a pervasive cognitive activity, then induction is of appropriate interest. Although induction is uncertain by nature, there is an interesting set of regularities associated with induction upon which researchers are still relying on in discovering new phenomenon. Furthermore, induction is related to, and could be argued as central to a number of other cognitive activities, including categorization, similarity judgment, probability judgment, and decision making. For instance, much of the study of induction has been concerned with category-based induction, such as inferring that your next door neighbour sleeps on the basis that your neighbour is a human animal, even if you have never seen your neighbour sleeping. And as will be seen, similarity and induction are very closely related, many accounts of induction using similarity as their main currency. The philosophical definition of inductive reasoning is more toned than simple progression from particular instances to broader generalizations. Rather, the premises of an inductive reasoning indicate some level of probability for the conclusion but do not produce it; this means, they advocate truth but do not guarantee it.

Theoretically speaking, there are certain principles and norms that are further examined carefully in precise form, known as assumptions of induction: assumption of the uniformity of nature and the assumption of law of causality. For that reason, we can define induction as the principle of a universal proposition on the basis of the uniformity of nature and law of causation. Induction establishes general or universal propositions and is based on observation that involves what is known as Inductive leap (generalization); and the conclusion of inductive inference is probable. The breadth of induction can be analyzed under: inductive logic that studies the nature and three forms of induction namely, induction per simple enumeration, argument from analogy and scientific induction; inductive logic that studies the nature and conditions of observation and experiment; and Inductive logic that studies experimental methods. The aim of logic is to accomplish both formal and material truth. Induction provides the universal premises and supplies material truth. Induction reveals inner unity and harmony of the universe as the basis of all empirical sciences. In addition, Induction is a necessary guide in our individual life, since; life is guided by the generalization based upon observation of a few instances. The terms validity and invalidity do not apply to induction. We can rather evaluate induction in the area of scientific

domain, the higher the level of probability in attendance on its conclusion by the premises of an induction the greater the merit of that argument. [15] Induction goes from the specific to the general, and deduction goes from the general to the specific. Below are true illustrations of these form of argument:

a) Inductive Argument

i. Socrates is a man and mortal.
ii. Hume is a man and mortal.
iii. John is a man and mortal.
iv. Mill is a man and mortal.
v. Therefore, probably all men are mortal.

b) Deductive Argument

i. All human beings are mortal.
ii. Socrates is a human being.
iii. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

In the case of an Inductive argument, its conclusion is claimed to follow from its premises with probability-and probability is further dependent upon something else. Induction aims at material truth which is impossible until some amount of observation of experimentation is assumed.[16] Induction is more concerned with the truth or falsity of its premises than deduction that is, deductive arguments place emphasis on the logical rules, while on the other hand, inductive argument cannot arrive at the logical certainty that deductive conclusion can establish and a deductive argument cannot establish the material truth of its premises. According to C. S. Peirce, induction is a process of probable inference. A process of probable inference moves from an event, and or a consequence to a general rule. For example, when we have a half full bag of cola nuts and we picked out nine-tenths of a hand full of ideal cola nuts then, we may infer as follows: then we may infer inductively that all the tenth of the cola nuts are ideal. This means that an inductive argument moves from what is known or a set of instances to a statement about either an unknown instance or a generalization about of what is known. Hence, in induction the drawing of inferences or the process of inductive entailment rest on notion of probability. Induction is probable from a common sense perspective because when we have instances, of occurences of identicle object of perception, then it is possible to draw probabilistic inferences.[17] Peirce intention was to make the validity of induction rest upon some principles of regularity in nature. According to Peirce, "even if nature were not uniform, induction would be sure to find it out, so long as inductive reasoning could be performed at all". He posits that:

> An argument from analogy may be strengthened by the addition of instance after instance to the premises, until it loses its ampliative character by the exhaustion of the class and becomes a mere deduction of that kind of class called complete induction, in which, however, some shadow of the inductive character remains as this name implies. [18]

In view of the above, Peirce further divided induction into three major categories: crude induction; qualitative induction and quantitative induction.

Crude Induction: This is the lowest and weakest form of induction, based upon the common practice of generalizing about future events on the ground of previous experience. For example, it has been observed that cancer is deadly, for the reason that every known case has been demonstrated to be so. Its general form is (All observed Qs are X Therefore, All Qs are X).

Qualitative Induction: This is the intermediate form; it is termed hypothetical reasoning. It requires testing a hypothesis by sampling the possible premises that may be made on the basis of it. It is a form of analysis which consists of order -generalizing, into rules, the combinations of quality that are found in the data material. Systematically from the observation that 'in the instance of burglaries a, b and c the medicine chest was robbed'; and the awareness that 'Mr. Jones committed burglaries a, b and c, thus, the inference is drawn that 'Mr. Jones all the time robs the medicine chest when he breaks in.'[19]

Quantitative Induction: *This* is the highest form of induction; *it examines the probability that a* member of a certain class will have a certain character. Its modus operandi consist in finding a representative sample of the class and noting the quantity of them that possess the quality Q. after that, the inference is drawn that the quantity holds for the whole class.
Although, crude, qualitative and quantitative induction are different in form, however their justification is, according to Peirce, the same. The validity of Induction consists in the fact that it proceeds according to a method. The nature of this method is that it may give provisional results that are incorrect. Nevertheless, such a method, if progressively pursued, eventually corrects any fault. Induction is the only kind of reasoning that possesses this category of validity, and none can be more than resolving than this kind. Peirce's polemic target was a theory that would make the validity of induction rest upon some principles of uniformity or regularity in nature. [20] According to Bertrand Russell, induction allows us to infer from connections among sense-data. For example, when we notice A is in connection with a thing B, and A, has never been found isolated from B, the greater number of connection in which A and B is established of continuing existence, the greater probability of both occurring in new instance.[21] Furthermore, Russell emphasized the principle of induction as insufficient of being discredited on the ground of experience; because although experience provides the most capable grounds for authenticating the principle as regards the instances that have been investigated, instances that are not investigated rely completely on inductive principle to validate any inference from what has been investigated to what has not been investigated. The view of induction is that all arguments base on experience argue to the future, of the experience of the past and presume the principle of induction without begging the question. On this ground, it is necessary to accept the inductive principle based on its inherent verification or relinquish all justification of our expectation of the future.[22]

Metalogic, Metaphysical Questions in Logic and Rationality

Logic has a rather long history dating to the classical masters such as Aristotle and others. These scholars were interested in discovering laws or rules that can guide or direct thinking leading to structured human thought processes capable of producing useful ideas, substantial theory and practical results. When the rules of these structured human thought processes are studied intellectually then we have logic emerging as a field of academic study. Logic is useful in the area of theory and practice of security studies, for instance. The study of logic is important for other academic and professional disciplines. Such disciplines include mathematics, statistics, economics, engineering, electronics, computer studies, international relations, law, history among others. A major benefit of logic is that it is a tool for achieving a more critical, rigorous, analytical, argumentative and systematic practice of philosophy: To determine the strength or weakness of a proof or evidence of a claim and also showing the implications of holding or not holding onto a particular position or point.

In all of the above cases, logic represents an intellectual activity that is guided by laws to moderate human thinking using propositions and arguments. Arguments and propositions are the bases for organizing thought processes so as to separate correct thought patterns or processes from incorrect ones. The correctness or incorrectness of a thought process is based on inferential procedure that is, rule of derivation which gives us the form of the argument or how the propositions in the argument are linked. The form of logical thought processes helps to direct our basic beliefs, ideas and concepts and also determine how these elements help us connect to the world around us by thinking. Thinking can be described as a mental act or process. It implies the generating of ideas or concepts through reflection. Reflection is a product of the human mind. The mind is capable of different kinds of thinking or mental processes. Not all mental processes are of interest to the logician. Some thinking may be fragmentary, episodic, momentary or disconnected. However, logic focuses on a systematic, rigorous and methodical thinking especially of an intellectual kind. Reflection is that kind of thinking that the philosopher is interested in. Logical thinking involves the use of arguments. Logic is thus the study of arguments, particularly the ways by which we can separate good arguments from bad arguments. An argument is a piece of discussion in which a point is made and other points are made in support of the first point that was made.

Inductive arguments only render their conclusions probable. One inductive argument may be strong while another can be weak. An inductive argument cannot be referred to as valid or invalid. It has been popularly stated by other prominent logicians that 'it is possible for all the premises of an inductive argument to be true while the conclusion is false.' An inductive argument moves from specific examples or instances to a general conclusion. There is inductive analogy and inductive generalization. Induction by analogy moves from specific examples to a specific conclusion that has not yet been established. An inductive generalization moves from specific examples to a universal conclusion or statement about all other cases. It may be important to draw attention to some important areas of life that logic can be useful to us. There is the area of logic and Ontology which focuses on the link between metaphysics and logic. The basic question is to examine what exists or what is. Are there things that exist? If yes, how do these things exist? We can use logic to study the nature of abstract entities such as axions and photinos, fictional entities such as Pegasus, unicorns and Minotaurs, non-physical entities such as God and Spirits among others.[23] The basic question here is to decide in what sense(s) we can appropriately speak of these types of entities as existing. This raises other deeper questions: By what modalities can we refer to these different beings as objects? Are these entities postulates? Can any of these entities be subject to the process of reification or the fallacy of hypostasis which attributes existence to things that do not exist? Do we have an equivocation in the term or idea of 'exist'? How many senses of 'exist' do we have? Are reason and sense experience the only ways of determining that something exists? How do objects of fiction exist? What effects do they have on real life? Can existence be said to be a predicate? Should there be objects or existent that logic should not discuss? Is the use of both the universal quantifier and the existential quantifier adequate to assert the existence of all objects?[24] Is there a similarity between the logic that guides machines and those that human beings employ? Is the capacity for logic connection to the nature of a culture? These are some of the very important questions to which logicians have devoted themselves in the past.

How can an inductive argument be proved or justified? Is this even an appropriate question to be asked? In any case, one orientation that sought to answer some of the above questions was Logical Positivism. It was among so many other things, a way of reasoning,

looking at knowledge, a way of doubting some claims to knowing, especially the knowledge of metaphysical things. Logical positivism was that approach to philosophy that set two dominant conceptual frameworks for knowing if something was the case or not. It was anti-metaphysical in nature and disposition. Specifically, it sought for, and seemed to devise a method of truth. First, it upheld the distinction made between the analytical truth or knowledge and the synthetic truth or knowledge. The former was true on the basis of the logical link or causal connection between the words used in the analytical sentence. For instance, "an unmarried man is an unmarried man." Or "a bachelor when female, is a spinster." The synthetic truth or knowledge was based on investigation or verification or checking and cross-checking of facts or ideas. The synthetic was subject to an extra proof or an evidence to support or deny the knowledge of something. Something is synthetic when we can increase or decrease the knowledge of that thing. Logical positivism proceeded to establish the principle of verification in both a direct and indirect sense as well as, a strong and weak sense. To verify a statement metaphysical or otherwise becomes in itself an epistemological issue, whose sole purpose is to establish the truth or falsity of that statement and also to show whether the statement can be verified actually or in principle, or whether that statement is true by virtue of being analytic in nature. For Ayer, any statement that fails to adhere to the standard of verification is nonsensical in nature. Put simply, Ayer rejects the metaphysical statement as meaningful because even though it claims to express a genuine proposition, yet, it does not express an analytical truth tautology nor a synthetic truth verifiable claim. And so such a statement is nonsensical. The idea of verification that Ayer pushes for is the one that says that only the analytical or empirical statement is verifiable. Ayer is of the opinion that language should communicate facts when they contain some relationship that should be definite and dependable on one another which will make language meaningful, such that the meaningfulness of a proposition should correspond to the state of affairs. Hence, he brings to our awareness that "the criterion which we use to test the genuineness of apparent statement of fact is the criterion of verifiability." [25] To ascertain these kinds of propositions, he distinguished between "practical verifiability", and "verifiability in principle" thereby exposing us to different senses of the verification principle, "it is necessary to draw a line between practical verifiability, and verifiability in principle." [26]

A point to note concerning logic is the seeming emphasis on a formal rule or formal system, which allows us to easily establish that procedures and sequences are being followed appropriately or not. Considered analytically, the rationality question is a concern about human conduct or behavior. It affects the Africans and raises concerns about the way Africans can attain self-definition and live according to the dictates of their own conception of reality. These conception of reality will need to blend with the modern scientific experiences without compromising the Africans human dignity and freedom as rational and responsible beings. The study of rationality presupposes a study of the dynamics of a logical mind set of the Africans, their modes of causality and pursuit of ultimate reality in a way that interact and interconnect with other belief system. The rationality question focuses on African beliefs, ideas and values so as to situate the African traditions, cultures and belief systems within a relational view of reality which encourages a critical, logical and analytical approach to human life. In logic and philosophy of science, philosophers teach and apply induction. For instance, we move from known cases to statements about a particular unknown case (inductive analogy) or any other unknown case 'X' (inductive generalization). These are valid forms of reasoning. In science, the world is so vast and complicated that it would be impossible and out rightly unproductive to desire to observe all known cases

before a universal law is made. So a universal law of science is made on the basis of an induction that every other unobserved case which appears like the observed and tested case, will be the same as the observed fact. Hence, we have a law of a regularity and uniformity in nature. Yet, it is proper to ask: Will the future always be like the past? Does the fact that the sun rose in the past, mean that the sun will rise in the future? How can we be sure of the regularity (factual or logical) of things in nature? Can nature or science itself be predicted and controlled? John Stuart Mill quoted in Michael Lessnoff, holds that social science as a whole is scientific because the disciplines in it are by and large, an off shoot of the natural sciences and is subordinate to the natural sciences.[27]. Both share in the core qualities of scientific method. Key features of the natural science include:

i. Deals largely with inanimate except zoology, etc.
ii. Focus on facts.
iii. Makes universal claims
iv. Uses the empirical method.
v. Materialist, physicalist conception of the universe

Then if there are laws of nature and man is a part of nature then there are laws affecting human beings as natural things. This makes perfect sense, though some issues can be brought up about the claims of the predictability and reliability of a purely materialist (economic or biological) view of human nature. Issues will also arise about the 'laws' of the evolution and operation of human society. The diversity and complexity that we experience in human and societal behaviour causes us to raise questions. Can there be a science of social life? The grave doubt about whether we can truly have a science of social life given the primordially and complexity of human nature.

Conclusion

The problem of induction was raised by Hume and some other philosophers who rejected induction as a valid mode of inference. Hume asked how we knew the future would resemble the past? There was no relationship between the cause and effect so we could not ascertain the future. The relationship between the cause and effect, according to Hume was ascertained via a posteriori knowledge. Given the arguments against inductive reasoning we employed viable warrants and ensured the importance of induction. Given David Hume's critique of cause and effect as related to induction we demonstrated how induction was employed in our day to day activities and in the scientific domain. This work was analytical and critical and it showed that we could have a comprehensive understanding of induction, if we were patient and careful when we examined all aspects of inductive reasoning.

Endnotes

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AN EXAMINATION OF AFRICAN ONTOLOGICAL PERCEPTION OF BEING IN RELATION TO DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
This paper examines the African ontological perception of being and its relationship with development. Ontology as a branch of philosophy studies the nature of reality and existence. In the African philosophical tradition, being is not understood as an isolated or purely individual reality. Rather, the totality of existence is seen as relational and communal. This view further holds that a person exists through relationships with other persons, nature, and the spiritual realm. This idea is often expressed in the principle that a person is a person through other persons. Unlike many Western ontological views that emphasize individuality and personal autonomy, African ontology stresses interconnectedness, harmony, and communal life among beings. Human beings, ancestors, nature, and the spiritual world are understood as parts of a unified order of reality. Within this framework, the meaning of development goes beyond material growth or economic advancement. Development is understood as the holistic well-being of the community, moral progress, social harmony, and in cooperation with nature and the spiritual order. This research adopts the analytic philosophical method. Through textual analysis of selected works of African philosophers, the study examines how African metaphysical ideas shape the understanding of social life and development. Thus, the analysis shows that African ontological thought provides a broader and more human-centered conception of development. The study concludes that African ontological perspectives can offer valuable philosophical insights for sustainable and community-oriented development in Africa. By emphasizing communal well-being, moral responsibility, and harmony with nature, African ontology presents an alternative framework for understanding development in contemporary African societies.

Keywords: African Ontology, Being, Development, African philosophy, Communalism.

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Introduction

Ontology is a fundamental branch of metaphysics that studies the nature of being or existence. It seeks to understand what it means for something to exist and how reality is structured. Philosophers of ontology are concerned with questions such as: What is being? What kinds of things exist? How do things that exist relate to one another? In Martin Heidegger's understanding, ontology investigates into the meaning of being because "the question of Being is the most fundamental and the most basic question of philosophy" (21). Heidegger argues that before humans can understand knowledge, ethics, or science, they must first understand the meaning of existence itself. In African philosophy, ontology occupies a very central place because African cultures traditionally interpret reality through relationships that exist between human beings, nature, ancestors, and spiritual forces. Africans believe that reality is not limited to what can be seen physically. Rather, reality includes visible and invisible dimensions that work together to influence human life. As a result, African ontology presents a holistic understanding of existence. Placide Tempels (44), one of the early scholars who studied African metaphysics, explains that African ontology is built on the idea of vital force. According to Tempels, "force is the nature of being, force is being, being is force" (44). This means, in African thought, existence is understood as a dynamic force rather than a static substance. Everything that exists possesses a certain level of life force, and these forces interact with one another within the universe.

African ontology presents a worldview in which existence is deeply interconnected. The universe is understood as a network of relationships that links humans, ancestors, spirits, animals, plants, and the natural environment. African thinkers emphasize that individuals cannot exist in isolation from the community. John Mbiti (108), famously expresses this communal understanding of existence when he declares: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am". This statement clearly shows that in African thought, personal identity and existence are rooted in communal relationships. Similarly, Ifeanyi A. Menkiti (172), argues that the African understanding of personhood is fundamentally communal. Furthermore, African ontology does not strictly separate the physical world from the spiritual world. Instead, both dimensions are believed to interact continuously. Ancestors are considered active members of the community even after death, and spiritual forces are believed to influence daily human experiences. Kwame Gyekye (1995:69), explains that the African worldview recognizes both material and spiritual aspects of reality, arguing that "the African metaphysical outlook is essentially a spiritual one but not in denial of the physical world". This balanced understanding of reality reflects the holistic nature of African metaphysics. Contemporary African philosophers have also continued to develop these ontological ideas. For instance, Innocent Asouzu (52), proposes the concept of complementary reflection, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings. According to Asouzu, "to be is to be in mutual complementary relationship with others". This means that existence is meaningful only when beings cooperate and support one another within the larger system of reality. Similarly, Iroegbu (349), explains that African ontology focuses strongly on the idea of belongingness. He argues that "being is belonging," meaning that every entity exists within a network of relationships that gives it meaning and identity. In this way, African metaphysics emphasizes harmony, unity, and balance among all aspects of existence.

African ontology, therefore, has the prospects and a philosophical framework for understanding development in Africa. Since African metaphysics views reality as an interconnected system, development must aim at maintaining harmony between humans,

society, nature, and the spiritual order. Development that ignores these relationships may lead to social imbalance, cultural loss, and moral crisis. This paper therefore examines the African ontological understanding of being and explores how this worldview shapes African ideas of development. By analyzing the philosophical insights of both classical and contemporary African thinkers, the study aims to show that African ontology offers valuable perspectives for redefining development in ways that promote communal well-being, cultural identity, and holistic human flourishing. To properly understand African ontology, it is important to first of all clarify the meaning of ontology itself and how it is interpreted within the African philosophical tradition. Ontology, in general philosophical discourse, refers to the study of being, existence, and reality. It attempts to explain what kinds of things exist and how they relate to one another. Aristotle (45), one of the earliest philosophers to systematically discuss ontology, described metaphysics as the study of "being qua being," meaning the study of being as being. Placide Tempels (61), also emphasizes the dynamic nature of being in African metaphysics. He argues that African ontology is based on the concept of vital force, where every being possesses a certain level of life energy. According to Tempels (61), "all beings are forces and exist in a hierarchy of forces". In this hierarchy, God occupies the highest level, followed by divinities, ancestors, human beings, animals, plants, and inanimate objects. Another important aspect of African ontology is the communal understanding of existence. African thought emphasizes that human beings exist within a community and derive their identity from social relationships. He writes that "the community plays a vital role in defining the person as a person" (172). This means that a person becomes fully human through moral participation and social relationships within the community.

According to Asouzu (98), reality is structured in such a way that every being complements the existence of another. He therefore states that "anything that exists serves as a missing link in the network of reality". Mogobe Ramose (324), explains that African philosophy, particularly the concept of ubuntu, emphasizes harmony and interconnectedness. According to him, "ubuntu expresses the fundamental interdependence of all human beings". This philosophy encourages compassion, solidarity, and mutual care within society. In this sense, African ontology promotes a holistic understanding of reality where spiritual, social, and natural dimensions are integrated. The universe is seen as an interconnected system in which every being plays a significant role. Understanding African ontology is therefore essential for understanding African approaches to social organization, morality, and development. Since African ontology emphasizes relationships, harmony, and communal well-being, these principles also influence African ideas about progress and development.

Overview of African Ontology and Development

Africa has a very long history and is one of the earliest regions of human civilization. Ancient societies such as Egypt, Nubia, Ghana, Mali, and Songhai developed important systems of government, trade, religion, education, and culture. However, the history of Africa was later affected by the transatlantic slave trade and European colonialism. Colonial rule changed many African political, economic, and social institutions. After the Second World War, African nationalist movements became stronger, leading to the independence of many African states. Independence created new hopes for political freedom and development. However, colonial legacies, economic dependence, inequality, and other challenges continued to affect African development. Prosperetti (26), reveals that development in West Africa was also connected with the desire for freedom and human dignity. She argues that

African development increasingly placed importance on the human mind and education rather than the colonial exploitation of the African body. As she states: “An original understanding of development” connected economic productivity with human dignity". This shows that African development should not be understood only in terms of economic growth. It should also consider human dignity, freedom, education, culture, and the African understanding of human existence.

Ontology is a branch of metaphysics that studies the nature of being or existence. It asks fundamental philosophical questions such as: What does it mean to exist? What kinds of things truly exist? What is the nature of reality? Ontology therefore deals with the most basic structure of reality and the meaning of being. The term ontology comes from the Greek words “*ontos*” meaning being and “*logos*” meaning study or discourse. Thus, ontology literally means the study of being (Gyekye, 1995). The German philosopher, Martin Heidegger gives us one of the most influential explanations of ontology in modern philosophy. He argues that philosophy must return to the fundamental question of being. According to Heidegger (21), the main task of philosophy is to investigate what it means for something to exist. Heidegger writes that ontology is the attempt “to think being and beings as such”. By this he means that philosophers must examine both being itself and the things that exist. Heidegger further explains that human beings have a special role in the question of being because humans are capable of reflecting on their own existence. For him, understanding being is not only a theoretical activity but also an existential experience of human life.

In this study, ontology refers to the philosophical understanding of existence. It includes not only physical life but also meaning, purpose, relationships, and the structure of reality. African ontology understands being in a relational and communal way. In many African philosophical traditions, existence is not seen as an isolated individual reality. Rather, being understood as a shared experience that connects individuals with the community, ancestors, nature, and the spiritual world. The Kenyan philosopher, John S. Mbiti (108), clearly expresses this idea when he writes: “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am”. This statement shows that in African thought, the identity and existence of a person are deeply connected with the community. A person becomes fully human only through relationships with others. Similarly, the Ghanaian philosopher, Kwame Gyekye explains that the individual and the community are inseparable. According to Gyekye (45), “The person is not an isolated being but one whose existence is defined by relationships within the community”. This means that African ontology sees being as communal rather than purely individual. A person exists not only as a biological individual but also as a member of a family, a society, and a cultural tradition.

In addition, African ontology recognizes the presence of the spiritual dimension of reality. The world is often understood as consisting of several interconnected levels such as the living, the ancestors, the spirits, and the unborn. These different levels form a unified structure of existence (Mbiti, 1969). Many contemporary African philosophers have continued to analyze and defend African ontological ideas within modern philosophical discussions. The Beninese philosopher, Paulin J. Hountondji, in his work entitled: *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1996), criticizes the idea of regarding African thought merely as a traditional folklore. Instead, he argues that African philosophy is a serious intellectual activity that involves critical reflection and rational argument. According to him, African philosophy should be understood as “a body of texts produced by Africans and described as

philosophical" (14). This argument shows that African ontological ideas are not merely cultural beliefs but also philosophically structured reflections about existence and reality.

Another important contemporary thinker is the South African philosopher, Thaddeus Metz. Metz explains that African philosophy often links the concept of being with moral relationships and human dignity. He argues that a person becomes fully human through respectful relationships with others. According to Metz, "Personhood is realized through relationships of mutual respect and shared humanity" (7). This view shows that African ontology connects existence with ethical responsibility. Similarly, the Kenyan philosopher, Henry Odera Oruka introduces the concept of Sage Philosophy. The African worldview sees reality as holistic and interconnected. The physical world, the spiritual world, nature, ancestors, and human society are all understood as parts of one unified reality. The Eritrean philosopher, Tsenay Serequeberhan explains that African existence involves constant dialogue with both the living community and the ancestors. According to him, African philosophy involves "a dialogue with tradition, community, and ancestors in order to understand the meaning of life" (38). In this worldview, death is not seen as the absolute end of existence. Instead, it is often understood as a transition from physical life to ancestral existence within the community. Therefore, African ontology emphasizes continuity between the living and the dead, as well as the unity of the physical and spiritual dimensions of reality.

What is Development?

Development generally refers to progress, improvement, and growth within society. In many Western theories, development is often measured through economic indicators such as industrial growth, technological advancement, and material wealth. However, several African thinkers argue that development should have a broader meaning that includes social, moral, and cultural well-being. The Tanzanian philosopher and political leader, Julius Nyerere explains that development must focus on human dignity and social progress. According to him, "Development is about people. It is the expansion of people's choices and opportunities" (30). This view suggests that development should not be limited to economic wealth alone. Instead, it should include education, moral growth, social justice, and cultural dignity. Similarly, the Nigerian philosopher, Ifeanyi A. Menkiti argues that personhood in African thought develops gradually through participation in community life. He writes that "Personhood is something which has to be achieved through active participation in communal life" (173). Thus, development should help individuals become morally responsible and socially integrated members of society. African ontology is the philosophical understanding of being and existence within the African worldview. It explains how Africans understand reality, human life, community, nature, and the spiritual world. When African ontology is connected with development, it produces a holistic understanding of social progress. Development, from this perspective, is not limited to economic growth, industrialization, or technological advancement. Instead, it includes the moral, social, cultural, and spiritual well-being of human beings and the community.

African ontology therefore emphasizes that true development should promote harmony, cooperation, and social balance. One important feature of African ontology is that being is relational rather than isolated. In many African cultures, a person becomes fully human through relationships with others. The famous African idea often expressed as "I am because we are" shows that a person's existence is tied to the community. Michael Onyebuchi Eze explains that African communal philosophy teaches that human identity grows through interaction with others and through participation in community life (20).

According to Gyekye, morality in African thought is deeply connected with communal life and the promotion of the common good. This means that development must include ethical leadership, social justice, and responsible governance. Another important aspect of African ontology is the belief that spiritual and material realities are interconnected. In many African traditions, the physical world cannot be separated from the spiritual world. The living, the ancestors, and the spiritual forces are believed to influence human life and social order. Because of this belief, development must also respect spiritual values, cultural traditions, and religious practices. Ignoring these elements may lead to development policies that do not align with the values and identity of African communities (15). Metz explains that African moral philosophy places great importance on harmonious relationships. According to Metz, "A good society is one that promotes harmonious relationships and shared flourishing among persons" (15). This statement shows that development in Africa should aim at creating conditions where people can live together peacefully, support one another, and pursue collective well-being. In other words, development should encourage cooperation, mutual respect, justice, and communal welfare. In a similar way:

> Wiredu argues that African societies should build development on shared human values rather than purely Western models of modernization. Wiredu emphasizes that African thought promotes "human well-being, communal harmony, and the common good" (Wiredu, 67).

This means that African development should not focus only on economic indicators such as wealth, production, or infrastructure. Instead, it should also consider human dignity, cultural identity, and social solidarity. Development should empower communities, strengthen local institutions, and encourage participation in decision-making processes. Furthermore, African ontology encourages a balanced relationship between humans and nature. Traditional African societies often see nature as sacred and worthy of respect. Land, forests, rivers, and animals are not merely resources to exploit but part of a larger system of life. Because of this understanding, sustainable development in Africa should promote environmental responsibility and the protection of natural resources. African ontology offers an important philosophical foundation for understanding development in Africa. It teaches that development should not only focus on economic growth but also on communal harmony, moral responsibility, cultural identity, spiritual values, and environmental balance. When these elements are combined, development becomes truly meaningful because it promotes the holistic flourishing of both individuals and the community.

African Ontological Perception of Being and Development

The African ontological perception of being and development represents a unique philosophical worldview that deeply intertwines existence, morality, community, and progress. Unlike Western perspectives, which often prioritize individualism, abstract reasoning, or material achievement, African ontology is relational and holistic, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all beings (Mbiti, 106). In this view, a human being is not a solitary entity but is defined through relationships with family, community, nature, and the spiritual realm. A person's identity, meaning, and purpose are inseparable from these relationships. As Mbiti famously asserted, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (108). Being in African thought is therefore multidimensional. It is not only physical existence but also ethical, spiritual, social, and communal. Moral conduct, social responsibility, and spiritual awareness are essential components of existence. The quality of a person's being is measured not only by personal success but by how well they contribute to the collective

good (Gyekye, 1995: 72). Consequently, development is not reduced to economic growth or technological advancement alone; it encompasses the cultivation of ethical virtues, social harmony, and spiritual well-being.

African ontology underscores the interdependence between individuals and the community. As Wiredu explained, humans realize their true potential through participation in communal life, fulfilling obligations to others, and maintaining harmony with the natural and spiritual worlds (49). This interconnectedness forms the foundation for African development. Societal progress is achieved when communities are strengthened morally, socially, culturally, and ecologically. Development is thus a process of nurturing relationships, respecting traditions, and fostering solidarity among members of the community (Hountondji, 24). Furthermore, African ontology recognizes the significance of the past, the present, and the future. Ancestors and spiritual entities are considered part of the community, guiding ethical behavior and influencing social development (Appiah, 87). The present generation has responsibilities toward both the living and the dead. Ethical and sustainable development, therefore, is inseparable from a sense of historical consciousness, cultural continuity, and intergenerational responsibility. This worldview emphasizes that development is meaningful only when it preserves cultural identity, ecological balance, and communal well-being.

Gyekye (1995) further elaborates on this when he observes that African development must integrate moral and communal dimensions, where individuals achieve fulfillment by contributing to the collective welfare (74). Hountondji critiques purely materialist conceptions of progress, insisting that development should reflect African epistemologies and social realities rather than imposed Western models (25). Ramose emphasizes the fact human solidarity, ethical responsibility, and shared destiny as central to understanding being and societal development (1999: 65). These perspectives collectively reinforce that in Africa, existence and development are inseparable; to develop ethically, socially, and economically is also to actualize the full potential of being. The African ontological perception of being and development presents a holistic and relational framework. Human existence is understood through relationships with the community, nature, and the spiritual realm, while development is measured by ethical, social, and spiritual flourishing rather than only material progress. This worldview encourages a philosophy of life that integrates moral, communal, and ecological dimensions, fostering a vision of human progress that is both ethical and sustainable.

Development as Holistic Growth

In African ontology, development is understood as holistic growth rather than just economic or technological progress. True development involves the full flourishing of the individual within the community, morally, spiritually, and socially. (Gyekye 1995: 72), emphasizes that "development is meaningful when it enhances the life of the community and strengthens moral and ethical values." This means that personal achievements are valued only if they contribute to the welfare of others. Development in African thought is relational and ethical. Since being is relational, as Mbiti explains, the progress of one person impacts the community, and vice versa (108). Therefore, a society achieves genuine development when its members act responsibly, honor traditions, and uphold moral norms. Individual success is inseparable from communal wellbeing. For example, the Akan and Igbo communities prioritize achievements that promote family, lineage, and societal harmony (Gyekye, 1995: 74). The spiritual dimension also underpins holistic development. Life is guided by forces beyond the physical, including ancestors, destiny, and cosmic laws (Hountondji, 45). For the

Igbo, according to Omeregbe, aligning with one's *Chi* ensures that personal and communal growth occurs in harmony with spiritual principles. Similarly, the Yoruba concept of *Ori* emphasizes that development must honor the inner spiritual essence, ensuring ethical conduct and universal balance (87-88). Thus, the African concept of development is multi-layered: it includes moral integrity, social responsibility, and spiritual alignment. Wiredu (87), argues that practical ethics and collective wellbeing form the foundation of any authentic developmental process. In essence, to be fully developed in African thought is to be ethically responsible, spiritually attuned, and socially integrated. This holistic view challenges narrower definitions of development that focus only on material wealth or technology. African ontology teaches that growth is meaningful only when it nurtures human potential, strengthens community bonds, and maintains harmony with the spiritual and cosmic order. As Mbiti (112) noted, "Man cannot be fully himself except through others". Development, therefore, is inseparable from relational being and ethical living.

Relational Being: A central idea in African ontology is that being is relational. Unlike Western individualism, the African understanding of existence emphasizes that the self is never independent. Identity and existence are formed and understood through interactions with family, community, and the cosmos. As Mbiti has already stated, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (108). This expresses that individual life is inseparable from the life of the community. Decisions, actions, and moral behavior affect the larger society. Among the Akan of Ghana, a person's achievements are valued in relation to their contributions to the family and lineage (Gyekye, 1995: 74). Similarly, in the Igbo worldview, the concept of *Umunna* emphasizes that the extended family defines one's responsibilities, duties, and identity. No individual exists in isolation; each person's life is meaningful only when it benefits the group (Mbiti, 110). Being is not only social but also moral. African ontology asserts that an individual is fully human only when they act ethically, respect traditions, and contribute positively to communal life. Ethical behavior, communal engagement, and moral integrity are markers of true existence (Wiredu, 87). In this view, human existence is inseparable from communal welfare and collective moral responsibility.

The Spiritual Dimension of Being: African ontology places strong emphasis on the spiritual dimension of being. Life is not only material; it is influenced by ancestors, spiritual forces, and cosmic laws (Hountondji, 45). Human existence is intertwined with the spiritual realm, which guides ethical behavior, decision-making, and communal harmony. For example, the Igbo concept of *Chi* refers to a personal god spiritual guide or destiny that accompanies every individual. One's life decisions must align with the *Chi* to ensure moral and spiritual fulfillment (Omoregbe, 87). Among the Yoruba, *Ori* represents the inner consciousness or spiritual essence of a person, guiding ethical conduct and ensuring harmony with universal principles (Omoregbe, 88). "African thought integrates ethical, social, and spiritual dimensions into a coherent understanding of being" (Hountondji, 45). This holistic integration ensures that existence is meaningful, balanced, and aligned with moral and cosmic order. Life is understood as a journey of ethical and spiritual growth rather than mere physical survival. As Gyekye (1995: 72) observed, human development is realized when life is enriched by moral, social, and spiritual growth.

In African ontology, development is not solely economic or technological; it is holistic. True development encompasses moral, social, and spiritual dimensions. Personal achievements are meaningful only if they contribute to the welfare of the community (Gyekye, 1995: 72). The well-being of one individual is intimately tied to the well-being of

others, reinforcing the relational nature of being. As Mbiti (108) explained, since humans are interdependent, the growth of one person affects the growth of the entire community. Therefore, societal development is measured not by wealth alone but by ethical behavior, communal engagement, and social responsibility. The Akan and Igbo communities, for example, celebrate individuals whose achievements strengthen family and societal welfare.

The spiritual dimension further guides development. Aligning life with one's *Chi* or *Ori* ensures that growth occurs in harmony with moral and cosmic principles (Omoregbe, 87–88) emphasizes that practical ethics and collective well-being are essential for authentic development. Hountondji (134) critiques the adoption of Western development models in Africa, arguing that genuine progress must emerge from African ontological realities, which integrate relational, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. Thus, development in African thought is multi-layered. It requires moral integrity, communal solidarity, spiritual alignment, and ethical growth. Material progress alone is insufficient. As Mbiti (112) noted, "Man cannot be fully himself except through others". Human flourishing, therefore, is inseparable from relational existence and ethical living. Understanding African ontology has significant implications for modern development policies in Africa. Programs that focus solely on economic metrics, such as Gross Demistic Products may fail to capture human and social well-being. Integrating communal ethics, moral responsibility, and spiritual values into development planning ensures that growth benefits the individual and the collective. African ontology encourages development approaches that strengthen community cohesion, promote ethical leadership, and respect cultural and spiritual values (Wiredu, 87).

The Principle of Harmony with Nature: Harmony with nature in African ontology stems from the relational conception of being. Gyekye (1995) asserts that "The African sees life as a network of relationships where disrupting one element affects the whole" (68). This philosophy promotes environmental stewardship because any harm to nature is considered harm to the community and to oneself. Cheikh Anta Diop also stresses that African traditional societies regarded the earth as sacred: "Nature is not separate from humanity; it is humanity's partner in the cycle of life" (52). Through rituals, taboos, and communal regulations, Africans historically managed natural resources sustainably. Sacred groves, seasonal hunting restrictions, and water taboos are examples of how indigenous knowledge systems preserved biodiversity and ecological balance (Asante, 56). The principle of *Ubuntu*, as articulated by Eze, reinforces this interconnectedness: "I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am" (102). *Ubuntu* teaches that the well-being of humans is inseparable from the well-being of the natural and spiritual environment. This philosophy also forms the ethical foundation for resource use, community decisions, and development strategies.

Sustainable Development in African Ontology: According to Wiredu, in Africa, sustainable development goes beyond economic growth to include social cohesion, environmental balance, and spiritual integrity. In fact, Wiredu observes that "True development in African thought cannot occur at the expense of nature, for the community's survival is entwined with the health of the environment" (45). Development is therefore assessed by its ability to maintain harmony between humans, nature, and the spiritual world. Valentin Mudimbe underscores this relational approach, noting that "Knowledge is inseparable from responsibility; to know the land is to care for it" (203). This understanding is crucial in a world facing climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. African philosophical frameworks suggest that development policies must integrate communal ethics, spiritual respect, and ecological preservation to be meaningful and sustainable. Contemporary

African philosophers, such as Olúfémi Táíwò argued that modern development must reconcile technological advancement with traditional ecological wisdom. Táíwò warns that ignoring communal and ecological ethics leads to crises: “Development without reflection on communal and ecological values is a development that destroys life itself” (78). This position aligns with the African ontological view that humans cannot exist independently of nature, and that sustainable development is feasible only within a framework of relational responsibility (Taiwo, 78).

Indigenous Knowledge and Environmental Ethics: African ontology is further expressed through indigenous knowledge systems that guide sustainable practices. Communities have long relied on methods such as rotational farming, controlled bush burning, water rituals, and the protection of sacred forests to maintain ecological balance (Asante, 60). These practices reflect a sophisticated understanding of environmental sustainability, long before modern scientific discourse. Thus, Appiah argues that moral responsibility in African thought extends beyond humans to include all forms of life: “Ethics in African cosmology encompasses the non-human, acknowledging the moral significance of rivers, forests, and animals” (Appiah, 132). Additionally, contemporary scholars like Ramose, emphasize that African philosophy’s ecological principles are grounded in metaphysical beliefs: “To live rightly is to maintain balance with all living and non-living elements of creation” (Ramosa, 2002: 114). This implies that sustainable development is not only practical but spiritual, requiring humans to respect the sacredness of the natural world.

Contemporary Implications for Policy and Development: African philosophical insights have practical implications for contemporary sustainable development. Community-based resource management, environmental protection laws, and participatory governance models reflect African principles of harmony and relationality. For instance, community forest management initiatives in Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa show how integrating local knowledge and communal ethics promotes ecological sustainability while supporting livelihoods (Asante, 61). Moreover, African cosmology and eco-spirituality can inform global environmental ethics. Thinkers like Ramose and Táíwò argue that policies must consider the moral, cultural, and ecological interconnectedness of communities. Failure to do so leads to ecological degradation, social fragmentation, and spiritual disconnection. Harmony with nature is central to African ontology and provides a philosophical basis for sustainable development. African thought teaches that humans are inseparable from nature and that development is meaningful only when it preserves relational balance, ecological integrity, and communal well-being. African ontology thus offers a holistic framework for addressing modern environmental and developmental challenges.

An Examination of African Ontological Perception of Being in Relation to Development

The African ontological perception of being in relation to development has become an important subject in contemporary African philosophy. African ontology attempts to explain the nature of reality, the meaning of existence, and the relationship between human beings, the community, nature, and the spiritual world. In many African philosophical traditions, being is understood as relational, communal, and spiritual rather than individualistic and purely material. For instance, in Tempel's influential work, *Bantu Philosophy,* he argues that African metaphysics is based fundamentally on the idea of vital force, which structures the hierarchy of beings in the universe. Similarly, Mbiti explains that African understanding of being is deeply rooted in religion, communal life, and the living relationship between the visible and invisible worlds. However, despite its philosophical richness, the concept of

African ontological perception of being and development has attracted serious criticisms from many contemporary philosophers. These critiques question its methodological foundation, its tendency toward cultural generalization, its metaphysical assumptions, and its practical relevance to modern social and economic development.

The Problem of Cultural Generalization: One major critique of African ontology is that it often presents African thought as if it were a single unified worldview shared by all Africans. Africa is a continent of enormous cultural, linguistic, and philosophical diversity. Therefore, critics argue that the idea of one common African ontology may oversimplify the complexity of African intellectual traditions. Hountondji strongly criticizes what he calls ethnophilosophy. According to him, ethnophilosophy treats African philosophy as a collective cultural belief rather than as a critical intellectual discipline. He argues that philosophy must involve systematic argument and rational analysis. Hountondji is of the opinion that "Ethnophilosophy presents African philosophy as a collective world-view implicitly shared by all Africans without critical reflection" (56). In the same vein, Towa argues that philosophy should challenge traditional beliefs rather than simply defend them. "The task of African philosophy is not to glorify tradition but to subject it to critical examination" (42). This position suggests that African ontology must avoid presenting tradition as unquestionable truth (Ozumba and John, 186). Etta and Mogu (186), observe that the basic features of African culture can no more be said to be hidden. It is not a hidden thing, but an obvious spiritual culture in which the law, religion, ethics, politics and the entire gamut of African world-view finds expression. Thus, the African is conscious of his spiritual culture in the sense that it is intensely religious and ethnically oriented and elevated to the point of superstition or fanaticism, at times. It has a philosophy characterized by self-reliance and collective egoism in which religion, politics, commerce and life itself are in total consonance with its spiritual reality.

Communalism and the Question of Individual Freedom: Another important issue concerns the strong emphasis on communalism in African ontology. Many African philosophers argue that the individual exists primarily within the community. This idea is famously expressed by Mbiti: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am" (108). This statement emphasizes that human identity and existence are deeply rooted in social relationships. However, critics argue that this interpretation may undermine individual autonomy and freedom. Kwame Anthony Appiah questions the romantic portrayal of African communalism. He argues that modern African societies are complex and cannot be reduced to simple communal identities. "The belief that African societies are essentially communal ignores the diversity and individuality that characterize contemporary African life" (72). Appiah's critique suggests that African ontology must recognize both communal responsibility and individual rights. In response to this criticism, Kwame Gyekye proposes the idea of moderate communitarianism. He therefore observes that African philosophy should maintain communal values while also protecting personal autonomy. In his very words, Gyekye states: "Communal values are important in African societies, but they do not eliminate the significance of individual rights and responsibilities" (1997: 37).

Metaphysical Assumptions: African ontology often includes belief in spiritual forces, ancestors, and invisible powers that influence human existence and development. Some scholars question whether these metaphysical assumptions can serve as a rational philosophical foundation for modern development. Wiredu emphasizes the need for critical reflection on traditional metaphysical beliefs. He argues that African philosophy should

reinterpret traditional ideas in ways that are compatible with rational inquiry. “The future of African philosophy lies in the critical reconstruction of traditional thought through rational analysis” (45). Wiredu does not reject African traditions entirely. Instead, he encourages philosophers to distinguish between valuable cultural insights and beliefs that may hinder intellectual progress. Another contemporary philosopher, Sophie B. Oluwole, offers a different perspective when she argues that African metaphysical traditions contain deep philosophical insights comparable to Western philosophy. She explicitly observed: “African traditional thought contains rational and systematic philosophical ideas that deserve serious intellectual recognition” (68). As a matter of fact, her position challenges the assumption that African ontology is merely mythological or uncritical.

Application of African Ontology to Development: This issue concerns the relationship between African ontology and practical development. African ontology emphasizes harmony, moral responsibility, and cpommunal solidarity. While these values are important, critics question whether they provide clear strategies for economic and technological development. Peter O. Bodunrin observes that African philosophy must address contemporary social problems such as poverty, governance, and political instability. In Bodunrin's very words, “African philosophy must move beyond the mere description of traditional beliefs and engage the realities of modern African societies” (4). Similarly, Mbembe critiques the tendency to idealize African traditions without addressing the structural challenges facing African societies. In his influential book: *On the Postcolony,* Mbembe argues that philosophical reflections on African identity must engage with globalization, political power, and economic transformation. His work emphasizes that development cannot be understood only in cultural or metaphysical terms but must also involve institutional and structural reforms.

Contemporary Philosophical Reinterpretations: In recent decades, several contemporary African philosophers have attempted to reinterpret African ontology in ways that address these criticisms. Ramose develops the concept of Ubuntu philosophy as an ontological framework for understanding African existence. Ramose explains that Ubuntu emphasizes relational humanity and ethical responsibility. “Ubuntu expresses the fundamental African belief that to be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognizing the humanity of others” (1999: 324). Another thinker, Thaddeus Metz, expands Ubuntu philosophy into a moral theory that can guide modern social and political development. Metz argues that African relational ethics can contribute to global debates on justice and human dignity. These contemporary interpretations demonstrate that African ontology continues to evolve and adapt to modern philosophical challenges. The examination of African ontological perception of being in relation to development reveals important philosophical debates within African thought. Critics argue that the concept sometimes overgeneralizes African traditions, romanticizes communalism, and lacks clear application to modern development challenges. However, defenders maintain that African ontology provides valuable insights into relational existence, communal ethics, and harmony with nature. Through critical reflection and philosophical reconstruction, African ontology can continue to contribute meaningfully to discussions about identity, ethics, and sustainable development in Africa and beyond.

Challenges of African Ontology in Relation to Development

African ontology is the philosophical study of being, existence, and reality in African world. It explains how Africans understand life, the human person, nature, and the spiritual world. In

African philosophy, existence is usually seen as relational and communal. This means that a person does not exist alone but exists in relation with the community, nature, ancestors, and spiritual forces. African ontology also gives a broad understanding of development. Development is not only about economic growth or technological progress. It also includes moral growth, social harmony, cultural stability, and spiritual wellbeing. However, many scholars have observed that African ontology faces several challenges when applied to modern development. These challenges appear in education, economics, culture, religion, and environmental management.

Educational Challenges and the Neglect of African Philosophy: One important challenge is the limited teaching of African philosophy in many African educational systems. Many schools and universities still focus more on Western philosophy than on African philosophical traditions. As a result, many African students know more about European philosophers than African thinkers. This situation creates a gap in intellectual development. African students may grow up without understanding the philosophical foundations of their own culture and worldview. Kwame Nkrumah explains that colonial education systems were designed mainly to promote European knowledge and culture. According to him: “The colonial system of education was directed at the assimilation of Africans into the culture of the colonizer” (78). Because of this historical influence, African philosophy was not given enough attention in formal education. Henry Odera Oruka also emphasizes that African philosophy must be taught as a serious intellectual discipline. He argues that African philosophy should involve critical thinking and rational discussion, not only the description of cultural beliefs. Oruka states: “African philosophy must be a critical and reflective activity carried out by African thinkers themselves” (3). Without strong philosophical education, it becomes difficult to apply African ontological ideas to modern development.

Economic Dependency and External Development Models: Another challenge facing African ontology and development is economic dependency. Many African countries depend heavily on foreign aid, international loans, and external economic policies. Because of this dependency, development strategies in many African states are influenced by international organizations and foreign governments. These development models often focus mainly on economic growth and industrialization. However, African ontology emphasizes a broader understanding of development. It stresses communal wellbeing, social justice, and moral responsibility. Claude Ake argues that development strategies in Africa are often imposed from outside and therefore do not always reflect African social realities. He explains: “Development strategies in Africa have often been externally determined and therefore fail to address the real needs of African societies” (68). When development policies ignore African philosophical ideas, they may fail to improve the lives of ordinary people.

Crisis of Cultural Identity: Modernization and globalization have also created a crisis of cultural identity in many African societies. Igwe (27), argues that "identity has to do with a person's mental mode of him or herself". Urbanization, modern education, and global media have introduced new lifestyles and cultural values. For Ozumba and John, culture refers to the:

> Totality of the pattern of behaviour of a particular group of people. It includes everything that makes them distinct from any other group of people for instance, their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passage from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philsophical beliefs (307).

Many young Africans now find themselves between traditional cultural values and modern global influences. This situation sometimes creates confusion about identity and cultural belonging. African philosophy emphasizes the importance of community and shared human existence. Ramose explains this idea through the African concept of Ubuntu. According to Ramose: "*Ubuntu* expresses the idea that a person becomes a person through other persons" (2002: 52). *Ubuntu* teaches that human beings are connected and dependent on one another. However, modern individualism sometimes weakens these communal values. When societies lose their cultural identity, it becomes difficult to apply traditional philosophical ideas to social and political development.However, the application of African ontology in relation to modern development faces several challenges. These include colonial influence on education, economic dependency, cultural identity crises, environmental problems, religious tensions, and philosophical misunderstandings. Despite these challenges, African ontology remains an important intellectual resource. With deeper study and critical reflection, it can contribute meaningfully to discussions about sustainable development, cultural identity, and human flourishing in Africa.

Environmental Challenges and the Relationship with Nature: African ontology traditionally promotes harmony between human beings and nature. Many African cultures believe that nature is sacred and that human beings have a moral duty to protect the environment. However, modern development activities such as industrialization, mining, and deforestation have created serious environmental problems in many African countries. Segun Gbadegesin explains that traditional African ethics recognizes the moral relationship between humans and the natural world. He writes: "African traditional thought recognizes the moral responsibility of humans toward nature and the environment" (56). Despite this traditional ecological wisdom, many modern development projects ignore environmental sustainability. As a result, problems such as desertification, pollution, and climate change continue to threaten the wellbeing of many African communities.

Religious and Metaphysical Tensions: Religion also plays an important role in African ontology. Traditional African thought often includes belief in ancestors, spiritual forces, and sacred cosmology. However, the spread of Christianity and Islam in Africa has sometimes created tensions between traditional African beliefs and new religious systems. Mbiti explains that religion occupies a central place in African life and thought. According to him: "Religion permeates all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it" (1). Because religion is deeply connected to African ontology, changes in religious belief may also affect traditional philosophical ideas about reality and existence. Nevertheless, some scholars believe that dialogue between traditional African religion and modern religious traditions can create new philosophical insights.

The Problem of Misinterpreting African Philosophy: Another challenge is the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of African philosophy by some scholars. In the past, some Western writers described African thought as mystical, irrational, or unscientific. These interpretations ignored the logical and philosophical depth found in many African intellectual traditions. Sophie Oluwole argues that African philosophy contains sophisticated systems of reasoning that deserve serious academic attention. In her study of Yoruba philosophy, she explains: "African indigenous philosophy contains complex systems of thought that are often ignored because of the assumption that philosophy is purely Western" (34). Such misunderstandings can prevent scholars from recognizing the philosophical value of African ontology. African ontology offers a rich philosophical

understanding of human existence, community life, and development. It emphasizes relational existence, communal responsibility, spirituality, and harmony with nature.

The Relevance of African Ontological Perception of Being in Relation to Development

The study of African ontological perception of being and development is very important. It helps us understand human life, society, and development in Africa based on African values and philosophy. African ontology focuses on the idea that human beings exist in relation to others, the community, nature, and the spiritual world. People are not fully independent; they are connected to everyone and everything around them. Mbiti (108) explains: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am". This shows that a person's identity cannot be separated from the community. Understanding this idea is very important for education, government policies, and development programs in Africa.

Social and Moral Relevance: African ontology teaches that people are moral beings. Our actions affect others, and we have responsibilities to our community. Wiredu (45) says: "The African ethical system is fundamentally relational, insisting that moral responsibility comes from being connected to others." This means moral and ethical development is very important for society. When people follow these values, communities are stronger, and social problems like corruption and injustice can be reduced. Ake (23) emphasizes that development must be based on social justice and collective well-being, not only on money and material wealth.

Holistic View of Development: African ontology sees development in a broad way. It is not only about money or technology but also about social, spiritual, and environmental well-being. Gyekye (1995: 63) says: "True development brings together social, spiritual, and ecological well-being, not just wealth." This shows that economic growth alone is not enough. Communities need programs that respect culture, the environment, and social life. Ramose in A*frican Philosophy Through Ubuntu* (1999: 85) explains that Ubuntu teaches that people become fully human through others: "*Ubuntu* is both a truth about being and a guide for justice and solidarity in society" (1999: 87).

Environmental Relevance: African ontology also teaches respect for nature. Humans are part of a larger system that includes plants, animals, ancestors, and spirits. Shutte (78), u ambiguously states that: "The community of life includes humans and nature; harming the environment is harming relational being." This idea can help Africa create development policies that protect the environment while improving people's lives.

Contribution to Global Philosophy: African ontology also matters for global philosophy. It challenges Western ideas that separate ethics, nature, and community from individual existence. Hountondji (27) argues that "African philosophy has original ideas that can help the world understand existence and human life better. To him, therefore, also show that African ways of thinking can help address issues of freedom, identity, and development in the modern world".

Education and Policy: African ontology can guide education and government policies by teaching young people about relational being, morality, and community, schools can create responsible and ethical citizens. Letseka (15), explains that "Ubuntu education teaches empathy, collaboration, and social responsibility, which are key for development". Governments can also use African philosophical ideas to create policies that include everyone, protect the environment, and respect culture. Policies based on *Ubuntu* principles encourage participation, fairness, and social harmony. Studying African ontological

perception of being and development is very important. It helps us understand human life, ethics, society, and sustainable development in Africa. African ontology shows that people are connected to each other, to the community, and to nature. This perspective guides social, moral, environmental, and economic development. It also enriches global philosophy by offering African ideas about being, ethics, and human flourishing.

Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive analysis of African philosophical thought on the nature of being and its implications for societal development. It agrees with Mbiti (108) that African ontology emphasizes that human existence is relational, interconnected with the community, nature, and spiritual realities. This relational understanding challenges Western individualistic notions of being and offers a unique framework for understanding development in African societies. A key strength of the work is its emphasis on relational being. The study successfully shows how African ontological thought positions human development within a holistic framework, integrating physical, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Another important contribution is the discussion on harmony with nature. African ontology treats the environment not as an external resource but as a relational partner in existence. The work also succeeds in critiquing reductionist development models. In line with the perception of Akinyemi (45), Western development approaches often emphasize individual achievement, profit, and technological advancement without adequately addressing communal welfare or cultural values. By highlighting African ontology, the study challenges such models, suggesting that genuine development is multidimensionalencompassing social, moral, spiritual, and ecological well-being. The African view of being in relation to development shows that life is all about relationships, community, and spirituality. People are not separate from others; who we are depends on our family, community, and nature. True development is not just about money or technology but about the well-being of people and peaceful harmony in the world around us.

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SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES AND POLITICAL PARTY LOYALTY IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract
This study examined the relationship between social media messages and political party loyalty among residents of Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, it sought to ascertain the frequency of exposure to political party messages, identify the social media platforms most used to access such messages, examine residents' perceptions of the messages, and determine their influence on political party loyalty. The study was anchored on Agenda-Setting Theory and Social Identity Theory. The survey research design was adopted, with 400 respondents selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire, with 396 valid copies retrieved and analysed using frequency, percentage and weighted mean. Findings showed frequent exposure to political party messages, with exposure increasing during election periods. Facebook (31%) and WhatsApp (22%) were the most used platforms. Respondents considered social media politically informative but also perceived political messages as exaggerated, biased and misleading. Findings further indicated that social media messages reinforced existing political party loyalty through positive information, repeated exposure and online discussions, while negative messages could reduce loyalty. The study concluded that social media constitutes an important channel for reinforcing partisan attachment. It recommended targeted voter education, factual and mobile-friendly political messaging, avoidance of inflammatory claims, and sustained constructive online political engagement.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Messages, Political Party Loyalty, Political Communication, Social Media Exposure, Akwa Ibom State.

Introduction
The rise of social media in the 21st century has transformed the speed, format and structure through which information is circulated and accessed across the globe. These platforms have moved beyond simple networking sites to become influential channels for communication, personal expression and political engagement. In Nigeria, WhatsApp is the most widely used

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social media platform, accounting for 40% of users, followed by Facebook (21%), Instagram (20%), TikTok (12%) and Twitter (8%). The number of social media users increased from more than 31.6 million in 2023 to 36.75 million in January 2024 (Dasu, 2024; Kemp, 2024). Social media have consequently become influential in both private and public spaces, shaping personal communication, mass media relations and political interaction (Gibbs, 2024). Unlike traditional outlets, these platforms connect people across geographic boundaries and provide access to much broader audiences (Jingnan, 2024). Their growing presence in everyday life is particularly evident in politics, where they inform, educate and shape attitudes towards political parties (Miller, 2023). In political contexts, social media provide citizens with immediate access to partisan debates, commentary and direct engagement with party leaders, candidates and influencers. Such exposure can deepen connections with political parties and strengthen affiliations, particularly among digital natives who rely heavily on social media for political updates (Rita, António and Afonso, 2023). During both election and non-election periods, these platforms provide instant updates, amplify marginalised voices and allow candidates and supporters to circulate messages without traditional gatekeeping (Jingnan, 2024). Their significance was particularly evident during the 2023 general elections, when social media became central to political discourse and partisan alignment alongside print and electronic media.

The expanding Nigerian user base, especially among young people aged 18–24, further demonstrates the importance of social media as sources of news and political information (Dasu, 2024). In Akwa Ibom State, social media prevalence has similarly increased, with many residents relying on one or more platforms as important sources of information. Among party faithful, social media use has reportedly reinforced political attachment (Statistica, 2024), reflecting the broader movement of political discourse towards digital spaces. Within Akwa Ibom State, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter have become important channels for political information dissemination. Facebook and Twitter help frame party narratives and ideologies, WhatsApp supports mobilisation through group communication, while Instagram and Twitter provide visual and real-time messages that can sustain political enthusiasm and party loyalty (Umoh, Ibanga and Atakpa, 2023). Through these platforms, citizens encounter party manifestos, candidate affiliations, campaign appeals and regular political updates that may reinforce their alignment with political parties. During the 2023 election season, for instance, social media also enabled voters to access party visions and ideological positions directly from political actors, reducing reliance on traditional gatekeepers (Bassey, 2020). Twitter and Facebook facilitated interactive partisan discussions, while Instagram presented rallies and political events in visually engaging forms (Carney, 2022). Collectively, these platforms created a multimedia environment for political affiliation and party support in Akwa Ibom State (Umoh, Ibanga and Atakpa, 2023).

Political party loyalty remains an important feature of Nigerian politics, as citizens may maintain existing affiliations, switch allegiances or mobilise support for preferred parties (Belcastro et al., 2022). As major sources of news and opinion, social media may influence such decisions through continued exposure to campaign messages, partisan debates and changing political sentiments. However, party loyalty cannot be attributed to social media alone. Partisan attachment is also shaped by personal, political and communal considerations, including ethnic ties, policy priorities, economic concerns and community traditions (Fujiwara, Müller and Schwarz, 2024). While some citizens maintain long-standing affiliations, others may change allegiance in response to ideology or issues of immediate

concern. This presents an important problem for empirical inquiry. Although social media have become prominent spaces for political communication in Akwa Ibom State, the extent to which exposure to political party messages translates into or reinforces party loyalty among residents requires closer examination. Existing evidence points to the growing political role of social media, but it does not sufficiently establish how frequently residents encounter party messages, which platforms provide the dominant exposure, how such messages are perceived, and whether this exposure influences political party loyalty. Understanding these dimensions is particularly important because digital political communication operates alongside the wider socio-political factors that shape partisan attachment (Alhaimer, 2023). This study is, therefore, an empirical examination of how social media messages and political party loyalty among residents of Akwa Ibom State are related, focusing on residents' exposure to political party messages, the platforms through which they encounter them, their perceptions of such messages, and the influence of these messages on political party loyalty.

Statement of the Research Problem

Researchers' observations indicate widespread use of Facebook, X, Instagram and WhatsApp for political communication in Akwa Ibom State, where citizens, opinion leaders and party actors share manifestoes, campaign narratives, ideological positions and other partisan content. Facebook groups and WhatsApp fora facilitate information sharing, debate, mobilisation and reaffirmation of support, while X enables real-time political responses and interaction, and Instagram circulates visually engaging campaign and rally content. Through repeated exposure, persuasive and emotional messages, together with likes, comments, shares and direct interactions, social media may reinforce existing loyalties or encourage shifts in allegiance through persuasion and online social influence. However, the extent of this influence remains insufficiently established, creating a gap this study addresses. The central question, therefore, is: To what extent do social media messages influence political party loyalty among residents of Akwa Ibom State? In addressing this question, the study sought to: ascertain how frequently residents of Akwa Ibom State are exposed to social media messages relating to political parties; identify the social media platforms most commonly used by residents of Akwa Ibom State to access political party messages; examine residents' perceptions of social media messages about political parties; and determine the influence of social media messages on political party loyalty among residents of Akwa Ibom State.

Literature Review

Social Media Messaging and Political Communication: Social media are internet-based platforms that enable users to create, share and exchange information through interactive and user-generated communication. Unlike traditional media, they facilitate two-way communication in which audiences can simultaneously consume, produce and circulate content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Obar and Wildman, 2019). Their participatory structure has expanded communication beyond institutional gatekeeping, allowing individuals, political actors and groups to engage directly with one another. Bengtsson and Johansson (2022) further emphasise the interactive characteristics of social media, including participation, sharing, visibility and information circulation. Social media messages comprise digital content created, shared or circulated through social networking platforms. Heiss, Nanz and Matthes (2019) describe social media information in terms of user-generated content that facilitates interactive exchanges, while Obar and Wildman (2019) emphasise its

collaborative and participatory character. Such messages may include political posts, comments, campaign advertisements, party manifestoes, photographs, videos, hashtags, news updates and discussions. Within political communication, social media messages constitute an important means through which political actors communicate with citizens and citizens engage with political issues. Bennett and Segerberg (2019) associate political information with communication concerning political actors, institutions and issues, while Chaffee and Metzger (2021) emphasise its capacity to inform and influence political attitudes and behaviour. Social media therefore make political information more immediate and interactive, but the same openness facilitates the circulation of partisan narratives and misinformation. Vosoughi, Roy and Aral (2018) particularly draw attention to the rapid spread of misinformation online, making credibility an important consideration in interpreting political messages.

The political significance of these platforms derives from their capacity to provide immediate access to political information, facilitate interaction and enable the rapid circulation of political narratives. In Nigeria, platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and X have become important spaces for political communication, particularly during elections. They allow parties, candidates and supporters to disseminate manifestos, campaign messages and political commentary while enabling citizens to respond, share and discuss such content. This development has consequently expanded opportunities for political participation and partisan communication (Gibbs, 2024; Jingnan, 2024).

Exposure to Social Media Political Messages and Dominant Platforms

Exposure to political messages on social media has become increasingly frequent because platforms provide continuous streams of posts, forwarded messages, videos and discussions. Ajaegbu (2024) notes the pervasive nature of digital political exposure among Nigerians, while Okunola and Ojebuyi (2020) demonstrate the widespread use of Facebook and WhatsApp for political communication during the 2019 elections. Exposure is further intensified by the circulation of identical or modified messages through sharing and reposting, creating repeated encounters with partisan narratives (Olayiwola, 2020). The extent and nature of this exposure are closely related to the platforms through which political messages are encountered. Facebook facilitates political groups, discussions and multimedia campaign communication (Ezeah, Asogwa and Obiorah, 2020), while WhatsApp enables rapid circulation of political content through personal and group networks and has been used for both political mobilisation and misinformation (Olorunnisola and Martin, 2020). X supports real-time political discussion, activism and agenda formation, as demonstrated during the #EndSARS protests (Iwilade, 2021). Instagram and TikTok increasingly support visual, influencer-driven and youth-oriented political communication (Okorie and Salawu, 2022; Bosch, 2022).

These platforms should not, however, be viewed independently because political content frequently moves from one platform to another. A message originating on one platform may subsequently circulate through WhatsApp, Facebook, X or other channels, creating a connected communication environment (Smyth and Best, 2019). Thus, understanding political exposure requires attention not only to the frequency with which residents encounter political messages but also to the platforms through which such messages are accessed and circulated. However, frequent exposure does not necessarily produce acceptance. Apuke and Omar (2021) observe that repeated political content may also generate scepticism or fatigue, particularly where users perceive messages as misleading or propagandistic. Exposure should therefore be considered alongside the

platforms through which messages are encountered and the ways users interpret their credibility and relevance.

Social Media Political Messages, Perceptions and Political Party Loyalty

Residents' perceptions of political messages are shaped by their assessment of usefulness, credibility, relevance and possible bias. Social media may provide direct access to political actors and party information, reducing dependence on traditional gatekeepers. However, the prevalence of misinformation, exaggerated claims and partisan narratives also creates scepticism about online political content (Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe, 2019; Ojebuyi and Salawu, 2022). Citizens may therefore find social media useful for understanding political parties while simultaneously questioning the credibility of the information encountered. Ojebode and Akinwale (2023) and Ajaegbu (2024) indicate that Nigerians may cross-check political information obtained online through traditional media. Perception of social media political messages consequently involves both engagement with their informational value and critical assessment of their reliability. These perceptions are relevant to political party loyalty because social media messages can reinforce existing partisan attachment through repeated exposure to party narratives, campaign appeals and political discussions. In Akwa Ibom State, Umoh, Ibanga and Atakpa (2023) found that platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and X facilitate political information dissemination and engagement. Social media can consequently provide parties and supporters with opportunities to maintain political visibility and strengthen existing affiliations. At the same time, exposure may also challenge loyalty when citizens encounter competing narratives, criticism or information about alternative political actors. Apuke and Omar (2021) note that online political environments can contribute to shifts in political attachment, particularly among younger users. Political party loyalty may therefore be reinforced or challenged by social media messages rather than uniformly strengthened by them.

Responsiveness to political messages also depends on factors beyond exposure. Suleiman and Peter (2025) identify accessibility, relevance and immediacy as important influences on digital political engagement, while Mabillard and Zumofen (2025) emphasise the importance of active interaction with online content. Message credibility and alignment with voters' political and social interests are also significant (Zulfauzan and Untung, 2025). Offline relationships remain relevant because political communication on social media often operates through existing family, peer and community networks. Chiluwa and Ifukor (2015) demonstrate the importance of trusted social relationships in interpreting political communication, while Apuke and Omar (2021) show that competing narratives and social influences can affect political responsiveness. Residents' responses to political messages therefore reflect an interaction between digital exposure, message characteristics, personal interpretation and broader sociopolitical influences. Political party loyalty refers to sustained identification, attachment and commitment to a political party, expressed through behaviours such as consistent support, voting and participation in party-related activities. It may reflect psychological attachment as well as perceived social, political or material benefits (Greene, 2011; Dalton, 2016). In Nigeria, however, party loyalty may also be influenced by factors such as ethnicity, religion, candidate personality, socioeconomic interests and community relationships (Mustapha, 2020; Ishaq, 2022; Fujiwara, Müller and Schwarz, 2024). Consequently, social media should be understood as one influence within a wider political and sociocultural environment rather than the sole determinant of party loyalty.

Review of Studies

Umoh, Ibanga and Atakpa (2023) examined social media's role in democratic governance in Akwa Ibom State (2015–2023), focusing on human-rights protection and civic political engagement. Using a descriptive survey combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, they studied 400 residents across the three senatorial districts, using questionnaires and secondary sources, with simple linear regression for analysis. Findings showed that Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp supported reporting abuses, amplifying marginalised voices, mobilising support, political debate and interaction with political actors. The study concluded that social media strengthened democratic governance but also enabled misinformation and manipulation, recommending a state human-rights protection board. It identified limited attention to exposure, platform preference, message framing and party loyalty. Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024) examined how social media transformed communication and mobilised support for Nigeria's Obidient Movement, particularly outside established party structures. Guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory, the qualitative study relied on secondary evidence from literature, media reports, books and online sources rather than respondents, questionnaires or statistical analysis. Findings showed that social media enabled alliance-building, crowdfunding, interaction, grassroots activism and political visibility despite misinformation and fake news, allowing non-mainstream actors to challenge structures and influence discourse. The study concluded that digital platforms expanded political participation and recommended digital literacy and recognition of opportunities and risks. It provides context for examining social media's relationship with political behaviour and loyalty.

Akinyetun (2022) studied the relationships among social media use, political efficacy and political participation in Nigeria. Using web-survey design, snowball sampling and 3,407 respondents recruited through Facebook and Twitter, the study analysed data with descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. Findings showed that users were male, young, educated and unemployed; social media use significantly enhanced internal and external political efficacy, while higher efficacy was associated with political participation. The study concluded that social media functions as a catalyst for engagement and empowerment, while noting structural challenges affecting digitally active citizens. Its relevance lies in showing how social media can shape political perceptions, participation and behaviour, providing grounding for examining party loyalty. Chukwu (2025) comparatively reviewed social-media political communication during Nigeria's 2015, 2019 and 2023 election campaigns, examining campaign roles, candidate–voter communication, mobilisation, engagement, misinformation and polarisation. As a comparative review, it analysed existing records, media content and campaign materials rather than primary respondents, sampling or statistical procedures. Findings indicated that Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter/X and Instagram enabled communication, feedback, youth mobilisation and public-opinion formation, while also facilitating misinformation, propaganda and polarisation. The study concluded that social media both democratises political communication and creates electoral risks, recommending digital literacy, regulatory measures and transparency. It did not empirically measure party loyalty, attachment, sustained support or changes in affiliation, leaving issues for the present study. Hutomo, Syahril, Priatna and Rafiq (2025) explored how political influencers and digital campaigners build voter loyalty among young Indonesian voters after the 2024 election. Using a qualitative case-study design and digital content analysis, researchers examined influencers' social-media posts through thematic analysis of narratives, communication styles and loyalty-building strategies. Findings showed

that educational, interactive and consistent content could foster emotional attachment, trust and connection, with loyalty influenced more by influencer credibility and communication consistency than party or ideology alone. The study concluded that digital campaigning is important to sustained loyalty and recommended political literacy and authentic communication. However, it lacked voter surveys, longitudinal evidence, and statistical generalisability, leaving loyalty measurement open.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on two theories: Agenda-Setting Theory and Social Identity Theory. The Agenda-Setting Theory developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) from their study of the 1968 U.S. presidential election, proposes that media influence what people think about by selecting and emphasising issues, rather than directly determining what they think. Its assumptions are that media attention gives issues greater public salience, repeated emphasis increases perceived importance, and media influence is particularly relevant during elections, crises and periods of heightened public interest. For this study, the theory explains how repeated exposure to political issues, candidates and party messages on social media may shape residents' priorities and consequently influence political party loyalty. Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) propounded Social Identity Theory, which explains how individuals derive identity, belonging and self-worth from membership of social groups, including political, ethnic and religious groups. Its assumptions are that people categorise themselves and others into groups, seek positive social identities through favourable in-group comparisons, derive self-esteem from group membership, and may allow salient group identities to influence attitudes and behaviour more strongly than individual identity, producing loyalty, conformity and in-group bias. In the digital environment, social media can reinforce group identities through online communities, echo chambers and content aligned with users' perceived affiliations, while political actors may employ party, ethnic, regional or ideological identities to mobilise audiences. The theory is relevant to this study because political party support can function as group identity: social-media messages may strengthen belonging, in-group favourability and attachment, thereby helping explain sustained party loyalty among residents of Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design because it was considered appropriate for obtaining data on the opinions, perceptions and experiences of a large population through a selected sample in Akwa Ibom State. The population comprised residents of Akwa Ibom State aged 18 years and above who are eligible to vote. Based on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC's) 2025 report in Punch, the population of registered voters was 76,534. This constituted the population from which the sample was drawn. A sample of 400 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% margin of error: $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$. Multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. First, cluster sampling divided the state into the three senatorial districts: Akwa Ibom North-West, Akwa Ibom North-East and Akwa Ibom South. Second, proportionate sampling was used to allocate respondents to the districts according to their population. Third, two Local Government Areas were purposively selected from each senatorial district based on population and urban setting. Fourth, purposive sampling identified eligible respondents who were registered voters, residents of Akwa Ibom State and exposed to political messages on social media. Finally, convenience sampling was used to administer the questionnaire to eligible respondents in their homes, offices, churches, malls and other public places.

Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire containing 19 items and designed in line with the study's four objectives. The instrument covered respondents' exposure to social media political messages, the dominant platforms through which they encountered such messages, their perceptions of the messages and political party loyalty. Most items employed a four-point Likert scale, while others were structured as single-response questions. The questionnaire was subjected to face validation by communication research experts at the University of Uyo, who assessed the clarity, simplicity, conciseness and appropriateness of the items in measuring the variables addressed by the study. Reliability of 0.82 was estimated using the test-retest method. A pre-test was conducted among 15 residents of Uyo Metropolis who were excluded from the main study. The questionnaire was administered twice at an interval of one week, and the responses were correlated to determine the stability and consistency of the instrument over time. The questionnaire copies were administered physically to eligible respondents. The researchers recruited and trained two research assistants on the administration and retrieval procedures, with specific instructions provided to ensure consistency in data collection. The exercise lasted 30 working days and covered respondents in their homes, offices and other selected locations. Respondents were informed of the academic purpose of the study, their anonymity and their right to withdraw from participation. Participation was voluntary, and no respondent was coerced into taking part.

Returned questionnaires were sorted, coded and organised for analysis. Data were presented in frequency tables and analysed using simple percentages and weighted mean in accordance with the four research objectives. Percentages were used for relevant categorical responses, while weighted mean was used to summarise responses to four-point Likert-scale items. Ethical considerations included informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and privacy. Respondents' identities were protected, and participation was free from coercion. The researcher maintained the authenticity and integrity of the data, avoided distortion or manipulation of findings, and acknowledged materials used in accordance with copyright requirements. Objectivity and honesty were maintained throughout data collection, analysis and reporting.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Residents' Exposure to Social Media Messages Relating to Political Parties

Item	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	WMS	Decision
I come across political party messages on social media almost every day.	134	158	67	37	396	3.0	Agree
I frequently receive forwarded political party messages on WhatsApp.	121	149	83	43	396	2.9	Agree
I often see political party posts, hashtags, or discussions while scrolling through my social media timelines.	118	162	79	37	396	2.9	Agree
During election seasons, I am exposed to increased political party content on social media.	187	163	31	15	396	3.3	Agree

Note: *WMS = Weighted Mean Score; criterion mean = 2.50.*

Table 1 shows that exposure was generally high, with election periods generating the strongest reported exposure (WMS = 3.3).

Table 2: Social Media Platforms Used to Access Political Party Messages

Social Media Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	121	31
WhatsApp	89	22
Instagram	54	14
X (Twitter)	43	11
TikTok	38	10
YouTube	21	5
Telegram	17	4
Snapchat	7	2
Blogs/News Websites	6	1
Others	0	0
Total	**396**	**100**

Table 2 indicates that Facebook and WhatsApp were the most commonly reported platforms for accessing political party messages.

Table 3: Residents' Perceptions of Social Media Messages about Political Parties

Item	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	WMS	Decision
I believe social media messages provide useful information about political parties.	102	171	83	40	396	2.8	Agree
Political party messages on social media are often exaggerated or biased.	163	157	51	25	396	3.2	Agree
I think social media makes it easier to understand the activities and intentions of political parties.	97	168	89	42	396	2.8	Agree
I feel that many political messages on social media are misleading.	158	161	54	23	396	3.1	Agree
Social media political messages influence how I perceive political parties.	111	174	71	40	396	2.9	Agree
I trust social media more than traditional media for political party information.	71	119	131	75	396	2.4	Disagree

Note: *WMS = Weighted Mean Score; criterion mean = 2.50.*

Table 3 suggests that respondents viewed social media as informative but also expressed substantial concerns about exaggeration and misleading political content.

Table 4: Influence of Social Media Messages on Political Party Loyalty

Item	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	WMS	Decision
Social media messages make me more committed to a political party I already support.	108	162	85	41	396	2.9	Agree
Positive information about a political party on social media increases my loyalty to that party.	119	168	72	37	396	2.9	Agree
Negative messages about a political party reduce my loyalty to that party.	91	143	109	53	396	2.7	Agree
Consistent exposure to political party messages strengthens my long-term support for a party.	97	152	101	46	396	2.8	Agree
I am more likely to defend a political party online because of the content I see on social media.	83	127	118	68	396	2.6	Agree
Social media discussions influence my decision to remain loyal to a particular political party.	88	141	112	55	396	2.7	Agree

Note: WMS = Weighted Mean Score; criterion mean = 2.50.

In Table 4, the responses indicate that social media messages were associated with continued political-party loyalty, particularly through positive party information and sustained exposure.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: How frequently are residents of Akwa Ibom State exposed to social media messages relating to political parties?

Table 1, which provided insights to addressing this research question, indicates that residents of Akwa Ibom State experience frequent and sustained exposure to political party messages on social media. Daily exposure recorded a WMS of 3.0, while receiving forwarded political messages on WhatsApp and encountering political posts, hashtags and discussions while scrolling each recorded 2.9. Exposure was highest during election seasons (WMS = 3.3). The findings, thus, suggest that political communication is not confined to formal campaign periods but forms part of residents' routine social media experience, with election periods intensifying an already regular flow of content. The frequency of daily exposure points to an increasingly ambient political environment in which residents may encounter party messages even when political information is not their primary purpose for using social media. The WhatsApp finding is particularly important because forwarding places political messages within interpersonal networks of family, friends, colleagues and community contacts. Such relational circulation may give messages additional social significance and credibility. This is consistent with Okunola and Ojebuyi (2020) and Olorunnisola and Martin (2020), who identify WhatsApp as an important channel for political communication in Nigeria and highlight the persuasive implications of personalised message circulation. At the same time, Apuke and Omar (2021) associate such networked circulation with risks of misinformation where messages are insufficiently verified.

The finding on political posts encountered while scrolling further indicates that exposure is not entirely deliberate. Political content may enter users' timelines alongside entertainment, personal communication and commercial material. This incidental exposure is relevant to Pariser's (2011) account of algorithmic personalisation and Stroud's (2017) discussion of incidental political exposure, although claims about algorithmic amplification should be treated cautiously where the present survey did not directly measure platform algorithms. The result nonetheless suggests that social media architecture and users' browsing practices contribute to the persistence of political visibility. The high election-season score confirms that electoral periods intensify this communication environment. Ojebode and Akinwale (2023) and Olayiwola (2020) similarly document heightened and repeated political messaging during Nigerian elections. From an agenda-setting perspective (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), sustained and repeated exposure increases the salience of political actors, issues and narratives. Thus, the findings establish that residents encounter political party messages frequently through both interpersonal and incidental channels, with election periods producing the greatest concentration of exposure.

Research Question 2: Which social media platforms are most commonly used by residents of Akwa Ibom State to access political party messages?

In addressing the above research question, Table 4.5 shows that Facebook (31%) and WhatsApp (22%) were the most commonly reported platforms for accessing political party messages, followed by Instagram (14%), X (11%) and TikTok (10%). YouTube (5%), Telegram (4%), Snapchat (2%) and blogs/news websites (1%) accounted for substantially smaller

proportions. The finding, thus, points to a multi-platform political communication environment, although usage is concentrated around a relatively small number of platforms. The prominence of WhatsApp and Facebook is consistent with the relational and networked character of political communication in Nigeria. WhatsApp facilitates circulation through family, community, professional and other interpersonal groups, while Facebook provides wider public visibility through pages, groups, live broadcasts and other forms of political content. Olorunnisola and Martin (2020) associate WhatsApp's political relevance with affordability, data efficiency and interpersonal trust, while Apuke and Omar (2021) highlight the corresponding vulnerability to misinformation. Ezeah et al. (2020) similarly identify Facebook as an important platform for political mobilisation and partisan communication, while Umoh et al. (2023) report its relevance to political engagement in Akwa Ibom State.

The middle-tier platforms demonstrate that political communication is not restricted to the two dominant channels. Instagram's visual orientation, X's concentration of journalists, activists and opinion formers, and TikTok's short-form, humorous and highly shareable content provide different routes into political communication. The findings therefore support the view of a diversified political information environment in which messages are adapted to different platform cultures. Iwilade (2021) illustrates the wider political significance of X, while Okorie and Salawu (2022) and Bosch (2022) provide context for the increasing relevance of Instagram and TikTok respectively. The lower figures for YouTube, Telegram, Snapchat and blogs/news websites suggest that these platforms were less likely to be residents' primary sources of political party messages, although this should not be interpreted as evidence that they have no political influence. Content can move across platforms, with material originating on one platform subsequently circulated through another, as noted by Ekeanyanwu (2021) and Smyth and Best (2019). The relatively low proportion selecting professional news websites also indicates the importance of social platforms in residents' direct access to political-party communication. The pattern is further explained through Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 2003), which emphasises interpersonal networks and social systems in the spread of information. The prominence of WhatsApp is compatible with this perspective because political messages can move through established social relationships. The finding therefore establishes a platform-diverse but concentrated digital political environment in Akwa Ibom, with WhatsApp and Facebook occupying prominent positions.

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of residents of Akwa Ibom State regarding social media messages about political parties?

Table 3 (in addressing the research question) reveals a dual perception of social media political messages: residents recognise their informational value and influence while simultaneously expressing considerable reservations about their credibility. Respondents agreed that social media provide useful information about political parties (WMS = 2.8), facilitate understanding of party activities and intentions (2.8), and influence their perception of political parties (2.9). At the same time, they agreed that political messages are often exaggerated or biased (3.2) and misleading (3.1). They did not agree that they trust social media more than traditional media for political party information, with the WMS at the 2.50 benchmark. This combination suggests that usefulness and trust are not synonymous. Residents may use social media to observe party positions, activities, personalities and responses to political issues while recognising that such content may be strategically framed. This reflects the double-edged character of social media identified in Nigerian political communication literature, where access and participation coexist with

misinformation and propaganda concerns (Ekeanyanwu & Obianigwe, 2019; Okolo & Uche, 2021). The strong perception of bias and misleading content also accords with Ojebuyi and Salawu (2022), Apuke and Omar (2021), and Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024), who identify scepticism, misinformation and partisan manipulation as important features of Nigeria's social media political environment.

The finding that social media facilitates understanding despite perceived bias is particularly important. Political content can reveal what parties prioritise, how they present themselves and how they respond to opponents even when the content is promotional. Thus, residents appear to exercise some interpretive agency rather than simply accepting or rejecting political messages wholesale. The finding is consistent with Umoh et al. (2023), who associate social media with greater awareness of political activities in Akwa Ibom, and with Akinbobola (2020), who highlights its role in widening access to political information. The influence finding (WMS = 2.9) further indicates that usefulness does not prevent social media from shaping political perceptions. Akinyetun (2022) similarly connects social media exposure with political efficacy and participation, while Hutomo et al. (2025) associate sustained exposure with cognitive and emotional attachments to political actors. The refusal to place greater trust in social media than traditional media provides an important qualification. It suggests that residents operate within a hybrid information environment in which social media may dominate exposure but traditional media retain comparative credibility. Ojebode and Akinwale (2023) and Ajaegbu (2024) similarly identify traditional media as an important source for validating digital political claims. Agenda-setting theory explains how repeated exposure can increase political salience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), while Social Identity Theory helps explain why existing affiliations may shape the interpretation of partisan messages. The overall finding is therefore one of usefulness and influence alongside scepticism and retained reliance on traditional-media credibility.

Research Question 4: In what ways do social media messages influence political party loyalty among residents of Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4 indicates that social media influences political party loyalty through several interconnected pathways, although the strength of agreement varies. Respondents agreed that social media messages reinforce commitment to an already-supported party (WMS = 2.9), that positive party information increases loyalty (2.9), that negative messages can reduce loyalty (2.7), and that consistent exposure strengthens long-term support (2.8). They also agreed that social media discussions influence continued loyalty (2.7). Agreement was weakest on defending a party online (2.6), suggesting that internal partisan commitment does not necessarily translate into visible online advocacy. The strongest pattern is therefore reinforcement rather than conversion. Social media appear capable of consolidating existing attachments by repeatedly presenting supportive information and affirming partisan identities. This is consistent with Okolie and Ochei (2021), who associate online communication with strengthened party attachment, and extends Chukwu's (2025) broader account of social media mobilisation by providing evidence of perceived loyalty reinforcement at the subnational level. Positive information may strengthen loyalty through cognitive and affective reinforcement, although the disagreement recorded by a substantial minority shows that favourable messages do not automatically produce loyalty. Ojebuyi and Salawu (2022) similarly emphasise audience scepticism. Negative information also produces an effect, but the lower WMS and substantial disagreement indicate greater resistance. Existing attachments may therefore filter threatening information. Mustapha (2020) and Ishaq (2022) highlight the importance of ethnic and religious identities in Nigerian political

loyalty, offering possible explanations for resistance to negative partisan messages. These factors, however, were not directly measured in the present study and should therefore be treated as interpretive possibilities rather than established causes.

The finding on consistent exposure corresponds with the cumulative salience mechanism associated with agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and with Olayiwola's (2020) observation of repeated campaign messages during Nigerian elections. At the same time, Apuke and Omar's (2021) warning that repeated exposure may generate fatigue introduces an important qualification: repetition may reinforce some audiences while producing resistance among others. Bene and Dobos (2025) further suggest that locally relevant and community-focused communication may enhance responsiveness. The relatively weak score for online defence distinguishes loyalty from public advocacy. Residents may hold partisan commitments without being willing to engage in confrontational online behaviour. This contrasts, in some respects, with Benaiah and Osuntoki's (2024) account of highly active support around the Obidient Movement, although differences in movement structure and political context may explain the variation. Finally, social media discussions provide an interactive route through which loyalty is maintained, consistent with Apuke and Omar (2021) and Uwalaka (2022), although echo-chamber dynamics may limit exposure to opposing views (Pariser, 2011). Collectively, the findings show that social media loyalty effects operate through reinforcement, positive and negative message valence, repeated exposure and interpersonal discussion, while the translation of loyalty into active online defence is comparatively limited. Agenda-setting theory explains the salience effects of repetition, while Social Identity Theory helps explain reinforcement of existing partisan attachment and resistance to threatening information.

Conclusion

The study established that social media have become a significant channel of political communication in Akwa Ibom State, particularly through WhatsApp and Facebook, where political messages intensify during elections. Although residents rely on these platforms for political information, they remain conscious of exaggerated, biased and misleading content, indicating active rather than passive interpretation. The study further establishes that social media primarily reinforces existing political loyalties through repeated exposure, positive portrayals and online interaction, while source credibility, emotional appeal, political interest and prior beliefs shape susceptibility. Thus, social media influence political behaviour through trust, identity and emotional connection, shaping political perceptions, partisan identity and democratic participation.

Recommendations

i. INEC, NOA and civic organisations should provide targeted voter education to help residents identify false, manipulated and emotionally exploitative political content.
ii. Political parties and civic educators should utilise WhatsApp and Facebook with concise, factual and mobile-friendly political messages.
iii. Political parties should avoid exaggerated and inflammatory claims and provide evidence-based information and clear policy explanations.
iv. Political parties should sustain constructive online engagement through policy discussions, civic activities and community-centred communication.

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Test of Reliability: Test–retest scores for 15 respondents

Respondent	First test (X)	Retest (Y)	(X^2)	(Y^2)	(XY)
1	48	50	2,304	2,500	2,400
2	52	46	2,704	2,116	2,392
3	55	60	3,025	3,600	3,300
4	58	64	3,364	4,096	3,712
5	61	49	3,721	2,401	2,989
6	64	56	4,096	3,136	3,584
7	67	68	4,489	4,624	4,556
8	70	68	4,900	4,624	4,760
9	73	73	5,329	5,329	5,329
10	76	71	5,776	5,041	5,396
11	50	55	2,500	3,025	2,750
12	57	62	3,249	3,844	3,534
13	63	63	3,969	3,969	3,969
14	69	76	4,761	5,776	5,244
15	74	77	5,476	5,929	5,698
Total	**937**	**938**	**59,663**	**60,010**	**59,613**

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

$$r = \frac{15(59{,}613) - (937)(938)}{\sqrt{[15(59{,}663) - 937^2][15(60{,}010) - 938^2]}}$$

$$r = \frac{894{,}195 - 878{,}906}{\sqrt{(894{,}945{,} - 877969)(900{,}150{,} - 879844)}}$$

$$r = \frac{15{,}289}{\sqrt{(16{,}976)(20{,}306)}}$$

$$r = \frac{15{,}289}{18{,}566.493}$$

$$r = 0.82347 \quad r = 0.82$$

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SCHOOL MANAGEMENT RESOURCES AND STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAYELSA CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT AND BAYELSA EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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Abstract
This study examined school management resources and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District and Bayelsa East Senatorial District. A correlational research design was employed, and two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the investigation. The population of the study consisted of 3001 teachers, comprising 2116 teachers in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District and 885 teachers in Bayelsa East Senatorial District. The Taro Yamane formula was used to derive a sample size of 351 teachers, however, 348 responses were retrieved and used in the study. Data were collected using a researcher-designed instrument titled School Management Resources and Students Academic Performance Questionnaire (SMRSAPPQ), structured on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Management from Niger Delta University and tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.81, confirming a high level of internal consistency. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyze the responses, with a criterion mean of 2.50 set for interpretation, while PPMC Statistics was used as the method of data analysis. Findings revealed a significant relationship between physical facilities and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa East Senatorial District. The study concluded that availability of physical facilities and usefulness of teacher qualification positively impacts students' academic performance. The study recommended that adequate school physical facilities should be provided by the school authorities to ensure effective teaching and learning activities.

Keywords: Management Resources; Physical Facilities; Qualified Teachers; Students' Academic Performance; Bayelsa State.

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Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving educational environment, the influence of school management resources in shaping teaching/learning climate has become increasingly recognized as an important mechanism for student well-being and their academic success. It consists of well-designed curriculum, effective management of human resources, adequate provision and maintenance of facilities and accountable streamflow of finances, as well as viable social interactions with students, teachers, parents and the community. A productive school environment encourages students to inculcate desirable knowledge, skills and values to improve their daily lives. Class rooms, chalk boards, tables, desks, laboratories and libraries, are physical facilities found within the school environment and important components that enhances learning outcomes (Onyebuenyi Promise *et al.,* 2022). School physical facilities are essential tools that facilitate and stimulate learning programmes (Sam-Kalagbor, 2021), because teachers need them in an ideal working environment and if they are made available and adequate, it stimulates students' interest and increase their performance-level (Agbor *et al.,* 2022).

The physical facilities in schools enhance quality education and significantly influence the quality of education (Ndege *et al.,* 2021). A school environment is termed conducive enough for teaching and learning if the physical facilities are available and also adequate (Ihekoronye, 2020). Likewise, physical facilities have significant role in the academic performance of students. Teacher's qualification relates to the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills, competence and creativity needed for quality productive engagement in the teaching profession, (Agbor *et al.,* 2023). In secondary schools, there are teachers who are academically qualified (but not professionally qualified) and those who are professionally qualified but not well experienced but are involved in teaching and instructional processes (Ukah *et al.,* 2024). Likewise Imonsili and Nwali (2024), emphasized that teachers that are academically qualified earn their qualification from an institution of learning such as a secondary school, polytechnic, college of education, and university, with attendant certificate of learning to show for it, while the professional qualified teachers are those teachers who belong to professional bodies of education such as Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and several others. Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating school management resources and student academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary education is very important and unique in the Nigerian education system. The effective management of public secondary schools is a basic requirement within the educational landscape of Nigeria. The quality of education and attention given to students, as well as the overall functioning secondary of schools are influenced directly by the competence of their management. Ensuring a productive environment for learning environment is an essential element of successful school management especially in secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District. However, a lot of public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District experience lack of physical facilities to drive the goals of teaching and learning and in most cases, physical facilities in secondary schools are left to rot away without adequate maintenance culture in place. Another pressing issue, is the inadequacy of qualified or well experienced teachers which has led to lower educational standards and diminished learning outcomes. The above-mentioned problems motivated the researcher to investigate school management resources

and student academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate school management resources and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District. Specifically, the study;

i. Evaluated how availability of physical facilities influences students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.
ii. Investigated how usefulness of qualified teachers' influences students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. To what extent do availability of physical facilities influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District?
ii. To what extent do usefulness of qualified teachers' influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of statistical significance:

i. There is no significant relationship between availability of physical facilities and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.
ii. There is no significant relationship between usefulness of qualified teachers' and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.

Review of Related Literature

School Management: School management is a process of consciously planning, organizing, mobilizing and supervising school programmes of activities and it is carried out to determine and achieve the set goals using available resources. Tanjung (2020), stated that management as the art of getting work done through people. It is as the efficient use of resources to achieve goals (Pratama & Defrizal, 2024). It includes matters such as the management of the curriculum, human resources, facilities and finances, as well as interactions with all relevant parties, including students, teachers, parents and the community. School management is an activity or effort carried out to achieve goals by using or coordinating the activities of workers in a school to achieve set goals. There are three important elements in management, namely the existence of more than one person, the existence of goals to be achieved and people who are responsible for achieving these goals (Aziwantoro, 2024). A comprehensive school management approach, includes planning, organizing, implementing and monitoring the use of physical facilities and deployment of qualified teachers to help enhance the quality of learning and improve students' academic performance, especially in public senior secondary schools.

Physical facilities

School physical facilities entail the process of synchronizing the physical work environment with the personnel and tasks of the company (Nweke, 2021). It acts as veritable tools for educational delivery. The facilities provide a physical environment that is comfortable, safe, secure, accessible, well illuminated, well ventilated, and aesthetically pleasing for the achievement of educational goals (Esekobor *et al.,* 2024). The success of the entire education depends on the quality of availability of physical facilities. School facilities are physical resources that facilitate effective teaching and learning process. These include blocks of classrooms, laboratories, workshops, libraries, equipment/apparatus and consumables, power supply and water, among others (Boh, 2024). Physical facilities refer to the school plant, movable and immovable items like buildings, classrooms, library, laboratories, toilets facilities, offices, furniture and other materials and infrastructures that are likely to motivate students towards learning. Physical facilities enhance effective teaching and learning through the interaction of the learner within the teaching environment (Olanrewaju *et al.,* 2024).

Qualified Teachers

A successful educational system depends heavily on teachers, who are at the centre of designing and arranging engaging teaching and learning activities (Amie-Ogan & Etuk, 2020). Teacher educational qualification is a term that refers to the academic and professional credentials that a teacher must possess to teach in a specific level or subject (Ntarmah & Yaro, 2024). Teachers' qualification pertains to the formal education and training undergone by educators to acquire the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge essential for effective practice by societal needs. The qualification obtained could help the teacher in terms of pedagogical skill and communication skill in promoting quality education and efficient understanding of concepts taught in a particular subject or course (Ugorji & Kagbaranen, 2022). Teachers subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, motivation, and passion largely determine the success of the teaching and learning process (Oloruntegbe *et al.,* 2019). A critical aspect that influences the educational outcomes is the qualification and experience of teachers of teachers (Esom *et al.,* 2024).

Academic Performance

Academic performance is an important identification tool which can measure the learning assessment of each student and as such can be regarded as a measure of success in learning (Obi-Nwosu *et al.,* 2023). Academic performance is the rate at which those admitted in school systems complete and achieve their educational objectives (Okoye *et al.,* 2021). It is measured by score in school examinations. Academic performance is usually assessed by transcripts or standardized national tests (Smith *et al.,* 2023). The academic performance that emerged from students' efforts demonstrates the degree to which an individual has accomplished the objectives set (Aboderin & Govender, 2023). The academic performance of any student cannot be separated from the family in which the child is raised (Obi-Nwosu *et al.,* 2023).

Methodology

The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 3001 teachers, comprising 2116 teachers in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District and 885 teachers in Bayelsa East Senatorial District, source Bayelsa State Ministry of Education; EMIS, 2025). The Taro Yamane formula was used to derive a sample size of 351 teachers, however, 348 responses were retrieved and used in the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The instrument for data collection was

developed by the researchers named "The Relationship Between Management Resources and Students Academic Performance Questionnaire (CCMSTJPQ)" formatted in four-point rating scale of VHE, HE, LE and VLE, with 24 items. The variables are measured as VHE (3.35 – 4.0) 4-points; HE (2.6 – 3.25) 3-points; LE (1.85 – 2.5) 2-points and VLE (1 – 1.75) 1-point. The instrument was validated by experts in educational management and measurement and evaluation, all in the department of Educational Management in the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State. The internal consistency (reliability) of the instrument was determined by using the Cronbach's alpha analysis procedure, producing a reliability coefficient of 0.81 for all the variables within the instrument. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answering the research questions, a criterion mean of 2.50 (1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10/4 = 2.50) was used as a decision-making threshold for accepting or rejecting the responses to the items. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This section focuses on the empirical presentation of data, data analysis, summary of findings and discussion of findings.

Table 1: **Descriptive Statistics of Availability of Physical Facilities**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Availability of Physical Facilities 1	348	3.34	.720
Availability of Physical Facilities 2	348	3.27	.740
Availability of Physical Facilities 3	348	3.39	.760
Availability of Physical Facilities 4	348	3.15	.892

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

As shown in Table 1, the mean score of availability of physical facilities 1 was 3.34 (std = .720). Availability of physical facilities 2 (*X*= 3.27, std = .740). Availability of physical facilities 3 (*X*= 3.39, std = .760). Availability of physical facilities 4 (*X*= 3.15, std = .892).

Table 2: **Descriptive Statistics of Availability of Qualified Teachers**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Usefulness of Qualified Teachers 1	348	3.14	.903
Usefulness of Qualified Teachers 2	348	3.04	.924
Usefulness of Qualified Teachers 3	348	3.04	.873
Usefulness of Qualified Teachers 4	348	3.17	.938

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

As shown in Table 2, the mean score of usefulness of qualified teachers 1 was 3.14 (std = .903). Usefulness of qualified teachers 2 (*X*= 3.04, std = .924). Usefulness of qualified teachers 3 (*X*= 3.04, std = .873). Usefulness of qualified teachers 4 (*X*= 3.17, std = .938).

Table 3: **Descriptive Statistics of Students Academic Performance Due to Availability of Physical Facilities**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' Academic Performance	348	3.18	.400
Availability of Physical Facilities	348	3.07	.503

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

As shown in Table 3, the descriptive statistic indicated the mean score of students' academic performance (IV) was (*X*= 3.18, std = .400). This showed that students' academic performance score of 3.18, indicated strong agreement of High Extent (HE). Similarly, the mean score of availability of physical facilities (DV) was (*X*= 3.07, std = .503). This showed that availability of physical facilities score of 3.07, indicated strong agreement of High Extent (HE).

Table 4: **Descriptive Statistics of Students Academic Performance Due to Usefulness of Qualified Teachers'**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' Academic Performance	348	3.18	.400
Usefulness of Qualified Teachers'	348	3.10	.519

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

As shown in Table 4, the descriptive statistic indicated the mean score of students' academic performance (IV) was (*X*= 3.18, std = .400). This showed that students' academic performance score of 3.18, indicated strong agreement of High Extent (HE). Likewise, the mean score of usefulness of qualified teachers' (DV) was (*X*= 3.10, std = .519). This showed that usefulness of qualified teachers' score of 3.10, indicated strong agreement of High Extent (HE).

Research Question One: To what extent do availability of physical facilities influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.

Table 5: Mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) scores of responses on availability of physical facilities and students' academic performance.

S/N	Variables	Items	X	SD	Remark
1.		My school is equipped with good recreational facilities	3.34	.720	High Extent
2.	Availability of Physical Facilities	My school has enough seat and desks in all classroom.	3.27	.740	High Extent
3.		My school has clean tap water for drinking/washing	3.39	.760	High Extent
4.		My school has well-equipped laboratories	3.15	.892	High Extent
5.	Students' Academic Performance	School environment influence students learning outcomes	3.33	.850	High Extent
6.		Irregular class attendance makes students perform poorly	3.23	.881	High Extent
7.		Classroom management is critical to students' success	3.18	.902	High Extent
8.		Poor seating arrangement affects students' comprehension	3.20	.952	High Extent
9.		Teachers' quality influence students' academic life	3.05	.974	High Extent
10.		Students' success is based on availability of learning resources	3.15	.901	High Extent
11.		Peer pressure affects students' academic life	3.11	.849	High Extent
12.		Students who abuse substance experience poor academic life	3.23	.900	High Extent
	Grand Mean /Standard Deviation		3.22	.860	High Extent

Criterion mean = 2.50; N = 348

As shown in Table 5, availability of physical facilities consisted of my school has clean tap water for drinking/washing which received the highest mean rating of 3.39 (std = .760). This was followed by my school is equipped with good recreational facilities funding (*X*= 3.34, std = .720). This was closely trailed by my school has enough seat and desks in all classroom (*X*= 3.27, std = .740). Next in order of magnitude was my school has well-equipped laboratories (*X*= 3.15, std = .892).

Students' academic performance comprised of school environment influence students learning outcomes which received the highest mean rating of (*X*= 3.33, std = .850). This was jointly followed by irregular class attendance makes students perform poorly and students who abuse substance experience poor academic life (*X*= 3.23, std = .881/.900). This was closely trailed by poor seating arrangement affects students' comprehension (*X*= 3.20, std = .952). Next in order of magnitude was classroom management is critical to students' success (*X*= 3.18, std = .902). This was followed by students' success is based on availability of learning resources (*X*= 3.15, std = .901). Next was peer pressure affects students' academic life (*X*= 3.11, std = .849). This was promptly followed by teachers' quality influence students' academic life (*X*= 3.05, std = .974). The grand mean of 3.22 with a standard deviation of .860 confirmed that availability of physical facilities influences students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.

Research Question Two: To what extent do usefulness of qualified teachers' influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.

Table 6: Mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) scores of responses on usefulness of qualified teachers' and students' academic performance.

S/N	Variables	Items	X	SD	Remark
1.		Qualified teachers are effective in undertaking tasks.	3.14	.903	High Extent
2.	Usefulness of Qualified Teachers	Students taught by qualified teachers have positive academic outcome	3.04	.924	High Extent
3.		Qualified teachers exhibit productive relationship with their students	3.04	.873	High Extent
4.		Qualified teachers use help students develop positive attitude to learning	3.17	.938	High Extent
5.	Students' Academic Performance	School environment influence students learning outcomes	3.33	.850	High Extent
6.		Irregular class attendance makes students perform poorly	3.23	.881	High Extent
7.		Classroom management is critical to students' success	3.18	.902	High Extent
8.		Poor seating arrangement affects students' comprehension	3.20	.952	High Extent
9.		Teachers' quality influence students' academic life	3.05	.974	High Extent
10.		Students' success is based on availability of learning resources	3.15	.901	High Extent
11.		Peer pressure affects students' academic life	3.11	.849	High Extent
12.		Students who abuse substance experience poor academic life	3.23	.900	High Extent
	Grand Mean /Standard Deviation		3.16	.904	High Extent

Criterion mean = 2.50; N = 348

As shown in Table 6, usefulness of qualified teachers consisted of qualified teachers use help students develop positive attitude to learning which received the highest mean rating of 3.17 (std = .938). This was immediately followed by qualified teachers are effective in undertaking tasks (*X*= 3.14, std = .903). This was jointly followed by students taught by qualified teachers have positive academic outcome and qualified teachers exhibit productive relationship with their students (*X*= 3.04, std = .924/873).

Students' academic performance comprised of school environment influence students learning outcomes which received the highest mean rating of (*X*= 3.33, std = .850). This was jointly followed by irregular class attendance makes students perform poorly and students who abuse substance experience poor academic life (*X*= 3.23, std = .881/.900). This was closely trailed by poor seating arrangement affects students' comprehension (*X*= 3.20, std = .952). Next in order of magnitude was classroom management is critical to students' success (*X*= 3.18, std = .902). This was followed by students' success is based on availability of learning resources (*X*= 3.15, std = .901). Next was peer pressure affects students' academic life (*X*= 3.11, std = .849). This was promptly followed by Teachers' quality influence students' academic life (*X*= 3.05, std = .974). The grand mean of 3.16 with a standard deviation of .904 confirmed that usefulness of qualified teachers' influences students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and East Senatorial District.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant relationship between availability of physical facilities and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa East Senatorial District.

Table 7: Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (PPMC) analysis of the relationship between availability of physical facilities and students' academic performance

		Availability of physical facilities	Students' academic performance
Availability of physical facilities	Pearson Correlation	1	.260**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	348	348
Students' academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.260**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	348	348

* =. Significant at 0.05 alpha level; Degree of Freedom (df) = 346; N =348

The data presented in Table 7 revealed that a positive correlation (r = 0.260) between availability of physical facilities and students' academic performance in Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa East Senatorial District. This correlation contradicted the initial hypothesis ($H_0$1), which assumed that there is no significant relationship between availability of physical facilities and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa East Senatorial District. Furthermore, the study affirmed that there is a strong relationship between availability of physical facilities and students' academic performance.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant relationship between usefulness of qualified teachers and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa East Senatorial District.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (PPMC) analysis of the relationship between usefulness of qualified teachers and students' academic performance

		Usefulness qualified teachers	Students' academic performance
Usefulness of qualified teachers	Pearson Correlation	1	.210**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	348	348

Students' academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.210**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	348	348

* =. Significant at 0.05 alpha level; Degree of Freedom (df) = 346; N =348

The data presented in Table 4 revealed that a positive correlation (r = 0.210) between usefulness of qualified teachers and students' academic performance in Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa East Senatorial District. This correlation contradicted the initial hypothesis ($H_0$1), which assumed that there is no significant relationship between usefulness of qualified teachers and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa East Senatorial District. Consequently, the study maintained that a positive correlation existed between usefulness of qualified teachers and students' academic performance.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between availability of physical facilities and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa East Senatorial District. This is in agreement with the works of Esekobor, Onyekwe, Maha and Okonta (2024), who stated that facilities provide a physical environment that is comfortable, safe, secure, accessible, well illuminated, well ventilated, and aesthetically pleasing for the achievement of educational goals. The findings of the study also revealed that usefulness of qualified teachers influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa East Senatorial District. This is agreement with the works of Amie-Ogan and Etuk (2020), who affirmed that a successful educational system depends heavily on teachers, who are at the centre of designing and arranging engaging teaching and learning activities.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that educational system is hinged on the availability of school physical facilities, especially as it pertains to effective teaching and learning. The appearance and maintenance of physical facilities influence most parents and convince them to make judgment about the qualities and effectiveness educational activities in the school. The study also showed that usefulness of teacher qualification "certification and subject-matter knowledge" is directly linked to student academic performance. The quality, adequacy, and competency of teachers in undertaking their pedagogical practices and mastery of the curriculum and subject content are important indicators for students' success.

Recommendations

i. Adequate school physical facilities should be provided by the school authorities to ensure effective teaching and learning activities.
ii. Government should ensure that there is recreational facilities like table tennis, volley ball and net ball in public secondary schools hence they help to facilitate learning and enhance academic performance of students.
iii. There is need to increase the educational qualifications of teachers, especially in subjects that require specialized knowledge to improve the overall teaching quality, leading to better student outcomes.
iv. School management should ensure that teachers yet to register as professionals should be encouraged to do so, as teachers' quality improves students' academic performance.

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DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: A CULTURAL MODEL FOR TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND SOCIETAL INCLUSIVITY

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Abstract
Democracy and good governance are indispensable socio-cultural values designed to safeguard individual liberty and overcome exclusive mindsets that hinder societal development. Despite these ideals, Africa faces persistent challenges—including civil unrest, systemic corruption, political manipulation, and technological stagnation—which many falsely attribute to an inherent incompatibility between democracy and African values. This paper aims to correct the misconception that democracy is alien to Africa, investigate the root causes of democratic failure and lawlessness in governance (particularly in Nigeria), and propose a cultural model to foster technological innovation, good governance, and societal inclusivity. The study adopts complementarity—a philosophical framework of inclusivity, dependence, and interdependence emphasizing that realities cannot thrive without a mutual appreciation of other entities. The paper in its analysis reveals that the failure of democracy in Africa is not caused by the concept itself, but rather by institutionalized exclusive mindsets, self-serving leadership, compromised legal/judicial systems, and polarized ethnic ideologies. Applying the principle of complementarity bridges these divides, dismantling the "nearer is better" syndrome and resolving socio-political friction. Democracy remains a viable and dynamic framework for economic, social, and technological advancement. By re-educating the populace, embracing complementary thinking, and adhering strictly to democratic norms and the rule of law, African nations can eliminate political chauvinism, curb corruption, and drive sustainable nation-building and technological innovation.

Keywords: Democracy, Good Governance, Technological Innovation, Inclusivity, aValues.

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Introduction

Democracy may be defined as a system of government in which the people exercise their governing power either directly or through representatives. It draws strength and legitimacy from the fact that it is the ultimate safeguard of individual liberty, creates maximum opportunities for political participation, and guarantees equality and the expression of diverse interests. For many, however, democracy is not worthy of such accolades. In fact, it is presumptive to think in that direction. According to Metala (2007), to say that democracy is good in all ramifications is to operate on a surface level that is superficially acceptable, but in practice, it is known to be impossible to realize. These qualities were true in the Athenian-Greek sense, when citizens gathered to vote directly on issues of public policy and concern. However, with the historical evolution of democracy into representative governance—owing to larger populations, the cumbersomeness of decision-making on issues requiring speedy action, and administrative convenience—there is no doubt that the basic assumptions on which it was founded can no longer be realized with the same vigor as in the past Greek experience. In support of this view, Appadorai, quoting Cole, states, "no man … can represent another; at best, one can represent only a function." This core dilemma defines the question of democracy in Africa, where leaders (representatives) are elected, but in the final analysis, self-interest becomes the order of the day, leading to the neglect of leadership duties and obligations, and occasionally resulting in the recycling of failed leaders. Moreover, following this argument, it can be deduced that representative democracy often allows for the selection of leaders based on sentiment, charisma, wealth, and identity issues such as ethnic nationality. This brand of politics destroys the underlying values of democracy and erodes good governance. Ake (1981) aligned with this thought when he observed that the struggle for power, viewing politics primarily as a source of matrial enrichment, intensifies political competition and obstructs the democratic process. Despite the outright denigration of democracy by Appadorai and his contemporaries, and the critical treatment it received from Ake, it is important to note that democracy embodies many responsive principles. These include, but are not limited to, the equality of all individuals, fundamental human rights, majority rule and minority rights, the separation of powers, and the rule of law. With these in mind, democracy can be defined as a system that regards the dignity and worth of each individual as sacred and inviolable.

It is against this backdrop that we advocate for a democratic system of government that accommodates ordinary citizens and fosters reciprocal relationships among realities. To achieve this, the paper proposes complementarity—an inclusive method of thinking aimed at enhancing leadership and attracting good governance in alignment with societal expectations. Conclusively, the paper argues that there is nothing inherently wrong with democracy; rather, our problems stem from an approach driven by selfishness and bifurcated objectives. This paper is divided into four parts. The first part examines the historical development of democracy, highlighting its origin, aims, and objectives to demonstrate that it was originally birthed for equality, inclusivity, and freedom. The second part addresses lawlessness amidst the rule of law, explaining why the judiciary and legal practitioners entrusted with upholding the rule of law sometimes misinterpret it or allow opportunistic ruling parties to subvert it. The third part provides an exposition on what democracy is and what it is not, guiding us to recognize when we deviate from democratic principles. Finally, the fourth part introduces complementarity as a cultural model for democracy, good governance, and technological innovation, demonstrating how integrating

democracy and good governance in a complementary order can end the exclusivity that threatens growth and technology in African societies.

Historical Development of Democracy

The notion of democracy originally came from the Greeks. However, the idea that democracy originated exclusively in Greece does not sit well with many scholars because, long before the imported term "democracy" was introduced, African societies possessed indigenous systems for electing leaders and ensuring that individuals were treated equally as free agents. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) supported this position, observing that while the Greeks may have invented the word "democracy," the fundamental democratic practice wherein rulers seek consent from a council arose independently across a broad spectrum of human societies. This debate mirrors the philosophical controversy surrounding the origin of philosophy itself. It was long argued that philosophy originated in a specific place, by a particular person, at a specific time. According to Stumpf (1973), the birthplace of philosophy is traceable to the seaport town of Miletus in Asia Minor, initiated by Thales of Miletus. However, this claim is contested; as Ezugwu (2023) notes, philosophy started across all cultures at a non-specific time. Claiming that democracy or philosophy started in one location by a specific individual denies the existence and intellectual contributions of other cultures - or, put differently, denies the rationality and cognitive agency of others. In other words, the term "democracy" is a human creation, much like any other linguistic term; it is as old as humanity and has been practiced across different cultures in diverse forms. In a democratic setting, the will of the majority prevails (Okere, 2006). This shows that democracy inherently embodies justice, peace, equity, happiness, freedom, and equality. Despite these overwhelming hallmarks, there are lacunae in both Greek democratic theory and African democratic practice. The Greeks, despite formulating democratic ideals, excluded enslaved people from their democratic processes. Conversely, Africans who adopted modern democratic frameworks have frequently failed to get it right due to systemic corruption. This corruption often fosters the illusion that existence is isolated rather than relational—a mindset that views realities as opposites with no meeting point or complementation. This mindset lies at the root of Africa's democratic struggles and explains why Nigeria and Africa at large continue to underperform in democratic governance.

Lawlessness Amidst the Rule of Law

The premise that Nigeria has a nominal rule of law that is not operational implies that the nation functions as a lawless state with a dormant judiciary. The term "not operational" arises due to pervasive corruption, ethnic and religious divisions, herder-farmer conflicts, intense partisan rivalry, and self-serving leadership. Although difficult to define precisely, the rule of law exists and is operational "when all citizens are equal before the law, which is fairly and consistently applied to all by an independent judiciary, and the laws themselves are clear, publicly known, universal, stable, and nonretroactive" (Diamond & Morlino, 2004: 25–26). A legal system is democratic when it operates within a democratic state, upholds citizens' political and civil rights, and ensures accountability and responsibility. This ideal does not reflect the reality of the rule of law in Nigeria. There is incessant abuse of power and office by elected leaders, alongside arbitrary impeachments that severely compromise judicial processes. These actions have fuelled insecurity, political assassinations, terrorism, religious extremism, the marginalization of the vulnerable, and the elevation of the wealthy and influential. As Thrasymachus argued, "might is right," and only the weak complain of injustice; justice is merely the interest of the stronger (Stumpf, 1973). Evidently, justice often

favors the rich and powerful, leaving the poor as subjugated victims. These challenges persist because key institutions—such as legal practitioners, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the police, and the armed forces—have frequently compromised their mandates. Instead of protecting helpless citizens and fighting corruption, they have failed woefully due to bribery and misplaced allegiance to government officials over the rule of law. Furthermore, the Nigerian Bar Association has struggled to effectively correct these anomalies despite annual conferences and summits. The Nigerian public remains sceptical of the legal profession, even with the continuous elevation of lawyers to the rank of Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs). Hence, the legal system and its elite practitioners have been exceedingly slow in defending citizens' political, civil, and moral rights.

What Democracy is and What it is Not

The culture of democracy has been misunderstood by many, particularly in Africa, as a mystified foreign legacy that destroys indigenous cultural heritage and creativity. This is incorrect; democracy remains a viable political option with a proven historical record. Nonetheless, African development has been severely stunted by ideological disorientation and value crises. Misinterpretations of democracy persist because it was introduced under the influence of foreign paradigms. However, democracy is fundamentally a dialogic medium for electing representatives to serve societal interests. This perspective is supported by John Dewey and Émile Durkheim, who viewed democracy through a pragmatic lens—rooted in the everyday experiences of neighbors and friends conversing freely. As Depo (1998: 14) notes, interactions can sometimes involve tension, name-calling, or intolerance due to differences in religion, politics, wealth, or tribal affiliation. For Dewey, such behavior amounts to treason in a democratic setup; anything that obstructs open dialogue fosters antagonistic factions and undermines democracy.

Democracy thrives only in an environment characterized by the unconstrained participation of all citizens in free and rational debate (Michael & Iwokwagh, 2007). For this reason, John Rawls (1971: 22) defined democracy as an "overlapping consensus"—an agreement on central political, social, and economic issues among individuals or groups subscribing to diverse moral and political views, made possible only through a high spirit of tolerance. Furthermore, Barrow (1983) identified that democracy possesses both descriptive and prescriptive dimensions, neither of which can exist without the other. This implies that democracy operates at the intersection of "ought" and "is" propositions. The inability of African leaders to operate within the praxis of "ought" accounts for many contemporary governance challenges. It explains why leaders expend resources to secure extended tenures while neglecting the foundational duties of democratic stewardship. This mentality represents the core quagmire of modern democratic parlance. Today, the social contract theories of John Locke are treated with levity, and the principle that power emanates from the people is frequently viewed as an obstacle to political ambition. True inclusive democracy can only be achieved when this self-serving mindset is recognized as antithetical to good governance.

Complementarity as a Cultural Model for Democracy, Good Governance and Technological Innovation

African democracy continues to falter due to the inability of African nations to align with ideological frameworks that harmonize indigenous values with sustainable development. Despite global scientific advancements and the evolution of the world into a global village,

polarized and exclusivist mindsets regarding reality persist, even though different dimensions of reality naturally complement one another. This fragmented approach to reality fosters emotional attachments to ethnic ideologies, resistance to the rational synthesis of diversity, and an inability to evolve harmonious national values. The consequences include value crises, low self-esteem, disillusionment, diminished enterprise, underdevelopment, cultural bastardization, and technological regression in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. This paper calls for the harmonization of ideologies and the rebuilding of value systems for intercultural and democratic engagement. This is achievable through the implementation of our proposed framework, complementarity. Complementarity is the notion that "to be is not to be alone" "*ka so mu di*" but "so that I may not be alone" *ka so mu adina*". It is a philosophical model maintaining that everything that exists serves as a missing link of reality (Asouzu, 2007). To "exist or be" entails the existence of other entities and vice versa; entities are meant to complement one another, as each remains incomplete without the rest. Mbiti (1969) was right to say that an individual derives his personhood from the cultural community. "Whatever happens to the individual happens to the society. This implies that the concept of "self" in African thought system is given by the community. And that individual is said to be virtuous when he lives his life in relation to the community.

It is on this strength that Mbiti came up with his dictum "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am. Following this, it is obvious that as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories (Menkiti,1984; Gyekye, 1984; Ramose, 2002). In view of the above, one ought to associate with the others knowing fully well that s/he remains incomplete unless completed by the same others around him. In all, complementarity which depicts strength in togetherness, fundamentally rejects the narrow maxim that "nearer is better and safer." Prioritizing a complementary mode of thinking will address the leadership crises that have truncated good governance and technological progress in Nigeria, paving the way for inclusive, formative, future-oriented, and responsive leadership centered on the common good.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that the problems facing democracy lie neither in the concept itself nor in its foreign origins, but rather in the stalling attitudes of African leaders and citizens alike. Democracy is dynamic and capable of advancing economic, social, and technological spheres. To foster political harmonization within and beyond Africa, the populace must be re-educated on the value of democracy and its intercultural applications in governance. Ultimately, democracy is not the root cause of our problems; rather, societal challenges stem from the systemic corruption of leaders who mistakenly equate existence with personal accumulation and self-aggrandizement. This research aims to inspire African leaders to build societies characterized by free and fair elections, equity, and quality representation. It provides an intellectual framework where individuals across Africa can appreciate the democratic culture in their daily interactions, thereby checking unnecessary bickering, violence, and conflict. Consequently, the paper addresses religious bigotry, political cleavages, and chauvinism that hinder good governance, guiding nations toward fairness, justice, and complementarity. Adhering to these doctrines will foster economic development, technological innovation, nation-building, and robust democratization processes.

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THE ONTOLOGY OF OIL: PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON RESOURCE CURSE AND HUMAN FLOURISHING IN THE NIGER-DELTA, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Oil has shaped the modern world as both the engine of progress and the emblem of decline. Nigeria embodies this paradox most acutely, in the sense that, while it powers development, at the same time, it corrodes the moral, ecological, and social fabric of the nation. This paper interrogates oil beyond its economic or political dimensions to its ontological and ethical meanings. It argued that the so-called "resource curse" is not merely a failure of governance but a distortion of being: a rupture in humanity's relationship with the earth. Drawing from African metaphysics, particularly Samuel Bassey's concept of anthropoholism, the study reinterpreted oil as a participant in the web of life rather than a mere commodity. Anthropoholism situates humans within the life-whole, affirming coexistence and reciprocity as the moral logic of development. Through dialogue with Heidegger's notion of enframing and Asouzu's complementary reflection, the paper demonstrated the fact that ecological devastation and social violence in the Niger Delta reflect a metaphysical crisis, which manifest in the collapse of relational balance. By extending anthropoholism to global sustainability discourse, the study proposes an ontology of co-flourishing that unites environmental stewardship, social justice, and intergenerational responsibility. It concluded that overcoming the resource curse requires a transformation from extractive modernity to participatory being, where human flourishing and ecological vitality converge in a renewed moral rhythm of coexistence.

Keywords: Anthropoholism; Ecology; Oil; Philosophy; reflection; Resource Curse; Niger-Delta.

Introduction

Oil has long been viewed as a sign of wealth and progress. It fuels economies, supports industries, and offers growth to nations that have it. However, for many countries in the

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Global South, oil has also become a source of significant suffering. Nigeria exemplifies this contradiction. As Africa's top oil producer, Nigeria is central to global energy debates, yet it continues to struggle with poverty, corruption, environmental damage, and social conflict. The persistent paradox of abundant natural resources coexisting with widespread poverty, and deprivation. Human suffering is commonly conceptualised in development literature as the "resource curse" (Narh, 2025; Asiegbu *et al.,* 2024). Scholars like Schmoll and Swenson (2024) and Asongu *et al.* (2024), have examined this phenomenon primarily through the lenses of institutional weakness, governance failures, rent-seeking behaviour, and political-economic structures. Although these perspectives offer valuable explanations for the persistence of underdevelopment in resource-rich societies, they leave considerable room for a deeper philosophical interrogation of the moral contradictions inherent in resource abundance amid human deprivation. This study raises a fundamental question: what is the nature of oil, and how does its existence impact human well-being? The issue of oil in Nigeria goes beyond simply managing resources. It involves questions of existence and identity. Oil has transformed the social, moral, and ecological landscape of Nigeria. It has shifted how communities connect to the land and how they define wealth, worth, and purpose. The violence in the Niger-Delta, the pollution of farmland and rivers, and the disruption of local livelihoods highlight a deeper philosophical imbalance. The wealth generated from beneath the ground has upset the harmony between people and their surroundings. What was once regarded as the lifeblood of the earth has turned into a source of alienation. This distortion calls for philosophical reflection that goes beyond economics or governance.

The ontology of oil refers to how oil exists and how its existence influences human experience. Oil is not merely a material taken from the earth; it is a dynamic force that reshapes relationships, values, and ways of living. As oil flows, it creates a unique social and moral reality, one that can both support life and undermine it. To grasp the resource curse, we must investigate how oil influences humans and their environment. This is because Oil's significance lies not only in its physical properties but also in its symbolic and moral impact on those who rely on it. On one hand, It promises wealth while creating dependency, and on the other hand, it stimulates growth while causing decline. In global discussions, two main ethical frameworks have emerged around this paradox. The first is cosmopolitan climate justice, which asserts that all nations share a duty to tackle climate change through collective responsibility and fair resource management (Shue, 2019; Caney, 2020). This viewpoint emphasises that countries like Nigeria must engage in global efforts to reduce emissions while seeking fairness from industrialised nations that have historically profited from fossil fuels. The second framework is nationalist developmentalism, which focuses on sovereignty and the right to pursue development. Advocates of this perspective argue that Nigeria's natural resources belong to its citizens and that exploiting fossil fuels is a valid means to achieve growth and eliminate poverty (Okereke, 2021; Sachs, 2016). Both perspectives provide important insights, but they fall short when evaluated solely from external moral viewpoints. This paper proposes a third lens from African philosophy, particularly Samuel Bassey's idea of anthropoholism. Anthropoholism arises from recognizing that human life and the natural environment are interconnected. It rejects the divide that places humans above nature, suggesting that both are essential parts of a unified whole (Bassey, 2019; 2020). Within this framework, ethics is about collaboration and mutual respect, not dominance or conservation. Humans are not mere owners of nature but caretakers within it. When applied to oil, anthropoholism encourages a profound reevaluation of resource use. It

questions whether oil extraction supports both human and ecological well-being, or whether it disrupts the harmony of the life systems that sustain existence.

Anthropoholism reframes the resource curse as an ontological crisis rather than simply a developmental failure. The curse is not a result of oil itself but of the broken bond between humans and their environment that oil extraction reveals. In this way, the curse is metaphysical; it reflects a disruption in the moral order of being. Oil becomes a curse when harvested without respect for the interconnectedness of all life. The relentless pursuit of profit at the cost of ecological integrity and community welfare leads to a loss of balance. To break the curse, Nigeria must redefine development as co-flourishing, which is a way of living that aligns human needs with ecological health. This paper explore oil's ontology from a philosophical perspective that merges metaphysics, ethics, and social critique. It argues that oil embodies a dual nature, revealing both the constructive and destructive forces of human civilisation. By viewing oil through the lens of anthropoholism, we can transcend the binaries of global justice and national sovereignty to formulate a framework of ontological sustainability. This new framework redefines human flourishing as a relational achievement grounded in respect for the interconnectedness of all life forms. The true measure of Nigeria's development should not lie in the wealth extracted from its soil but in the moral and ecological balance restored to its being.

Oil and the Metaphysics of Extraction

The story of oil is not just an economic tale about natural resources. It is fundamentally a story about transformation. Oil illustrates how humanity connects to the earth, to each other, and to the sources of life. Extracting oil is a metaphysical act that reshapes existence. It uncovers not only a substance beneath the ground but also the spiritual and moral framework of human desire. In this context, oil extraction serves both as a technological process and as a revelation of humanity's place in the universe. Martin Heidegger, in his well-known essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, warns that the modern view of nature turns it into a "standing-reserve," a collection of resources waiting to be used (Heidegger, 1977, p. 17). Nature stops being a home and becomes an object for manipulation. In the Niger Delta oil fields, this metaphysical transformation is starkly illustrated. The land, once honoured as ancestral territory, is now seen as a financial tool. Rivers that used to sustain communities have become channels for industrial waste. This shift represents what Heidegger calls enframing (*Gestell*), a way of revealing that "challenges forth" nature into production and control (Heidegger, 1977, p. 19). Oil extraction, then, is not just an economic endeavor; it is a reflection of how modernity frames being as something to be governed, managed, and utilized.

African philosophy offers a different perspective on this relationship. In *Bantu Philosophy,* Placide Tempels notes that many African cultures see being not as a fixed essence but as a vital force (Tempels, 1959, p. 30). All that exists is part of a dynamic web of life. The earth, plants, animals, and humans are all connected along a single continuum. To disrupt this interconnectedness is to diminish overall vitality. John Mbiti reinforces this idea in *African Religions and Philosophy*, where he states that African ontology is "deeply religious and communal," and "to be is to belong" (Mbiti, 1990, p. 45). This belonging includes the land and its resources. The earth is not lifeless matter but a living participant in the community of existence. When viewed through this lens, oil extraction in Nigeria represents more than just environmental harm; it signifies a crisis of existence. The act of removing oil from the earth without consideration for the life it supports severs the link between humans and their environment. The balance between the visible and invisible

realms—between surface life and what lies beneath the earth is shattered. This break results in what could be called an ontological wound, where the equilibrium of existence is disrupted. The violence of oil extraction manifests both physically and spiritually. The earth bleeds crude oil, and communities bleed meaning. Samuel Bassey's theory of anthropoholism provides a philosophical framework for understanding this wound. Bassey contends that while humans are distinct, they are not separate from nature. Humanity's ethical responsibility lies in maintaining the balance of the ecological whole (Bassey, 2020, p. 8). He describes this as a "live and let live" ethic, positioning humans as caretakers of the life system rather than its conquerors (Bassey, 2019, p. 163). Anthropoholism challenges both anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. It does not deny human agency, but it places it within a network of moral give-and-take. Extraction, therefore, is acceptable only when it sustains the vitality of the whole. When it harms ecosystems or communities, it stops being an act of participation and turns into an act of violence against existence itself.

In the Niger Delta, the lack of anthropoholistic awareness is evident. The relentless quest for oil wealth has led to devastated environments such as contaminated rivers, damaged soil, and displaced families. Fishermen and farmers, once able to thrive on the land's bounty, now face scarcity. The metaphysical issue is that oil has lost its relational importance. It is no longer part of the community of existence but a lonely object of greed. This represents the essence of the resource curse, not just poor governance but a disrupted balance of being. In trying to control the earth, humanity has become estranged from the very source of life. Heidegger's insight into *enframing* resonates here. The technological desire for control has relegated both nature and people to mere resources. Heidegger notes, "the essence of modern technology lies in enframing, which challenges man to reveal the real as standing-reserve" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 23). Nigeria's oil industry embodies this challenge. The earth is seen as a repository; human labor as a tool; and governance as the mechanism of extraction. The moral outcome is alienation: the world becomes devoid of reverence, and the sacredness of nature gives way to profit-driven logic. In contrast, African ontology, especially as articulated in anthropoholism, advocates for a different kind of revealing that sees the world as a community of beings rather than a stockpile of resources (Asuquo, 2020; Asuquo, 2021). This perspective does not idealise nature but situates it within an ethical relationship of mutual support. To responsibly extract oil means recognising this relational order. It involves engaging with the earth as a partner, not as a target, and viewing growth as the enhancement of shared vitality rather than the accumulation of isolated wealth.

In this way, oil extraction becomes a moral reflection of human existence. It reveals whether humanity sees itself as part of a living community or as a sovereign force against nature. The present crisis in the Niger Delta highlights that when extraction is disconnected from moral ecology, it leads to self-destruction. True national wealth, as anthropoholism reminds us, does not lie in what is owned but in how one engages with the web of being. Oil, if approached through a holistic ethic, could foster communal renewal. If handled merely as a resource, it will remain a symbol of disintegration in existence. The metaphysics of extraction thus uncovers the deeper causes of Nigeria's development challenges. The issue is not oil itself but the philosophical framework that governs its use. The Western industrial model, rooted in domination and control, has displaced indigenous values centered on relational harmony. Anthropoholism offers another approach: a philosophy of co-flourishing that aligns human ambition with care for the environment. To heal the ontological wound of

extraction, Nigeria must recognise the sacred nature of the earth and reimagine oil not as a product to be exploited but as a participant in the human experience.

The Resource Curse as an Ontological Condition

Economists have long described the "resource curse" as the paradox where countries rich in natural resources often face economic stagnation, corruption, and social decay. The usual explanation focuses on structural and institutional causes like rent-seeking, poor governance, and unpredictable commodity prices (Auty, 1993, p. 12; Sachs & Warner, 2001, p. 830). However, this explanation is not complete because it does not address the moral and metaphysical aspects of the issue. The curse tied to resources, particularly oil, goes beyond political economy. It is an ontological condition reflecting how a society connects with existence, value, and the moral order of life. The ontological aspect of the resource curse appears when we consider how oil changes the meaning of wealth and shapes human desires. In traditional African worldviews, wealth is relational; it signifies not just material possessions but also how well one participates in the community (Asuquo & Musa, 2023). Mbiti (1990) notes that African morality is based on communal interdependence, where "whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual" (p.106). This moral understanding assumes that prosperity is valid only when it improves the well-being of the community and maintains harmony with nature. Conversely, the arrival of oil in Nigeria brought an extractive mindset that redefined wealth as accumulation instead of participation. This shift resulted in a moral reversal, where possession replaced belonging as the standard of existence.

This change resonates with what the philosopher Innocent Asouzu describes as the "crisis of missing links." In *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection*, Asouzu (2004) argues that modernity often splits reality by dividing what should remain together (p.53). When complementarity disappears, existence becomes reduced to isolated parts vying for control. Oil encapsulates this fragmentation. It severs the bond between material wealth and moral responsibility, leading to a situation where human and ecological health no longer support each other. Thus, the curse of oil represents the breakdown of complementarity between the economic and ethical aspects of existence. At its core, this ontological crisis shows the victory of instrumental reasoning over relational reasoning. Oil symbolises a worldview that sees nature as an object to be exploited rather than a partner in life's journey. The language of extraction, control, and profit replaces respect, care, and balance. As Heidegger (1977) warns, when technology "challenges forth" nature as standing-reserve, the world appears only through the lens of utility (p.27). In Nigeria, the dominance of oil has cemented this utilitarian mindset in the collective consciousness. Rivers, forests, and even human lives are evaluated based on their contribution to the oil economy. In this reality, the sacred aspect of existence is overshadowed by the production logic. The moral implications are significant. The resource curse leads not only to political corruption but also to spiritual corruption. It creates a culture of extraction where human relationships reflect the exploitative treatment of the environment. Communities vie for access to oil rents; public services turn into means of appropriation; and the nation's identity fractures along ethnic and regional lines. This is why scholars like Michael Watts characterise Nigeria's oil politics as a form of "petro-violence," a system of domination extending from the physical to the metaphysical (Watts, 2021, p.472). Violence in the Niger Delta is not just a political rebellion; it represents a violation of being, a collective outcry against ontological disintegration.

Anthropoholism offers a philosophical approach to understand and address this situation. Samuel Bassey emphasises that humanity's moral duty is to preserve the balance of the ecological whole. He defines anthropoholism as "a holistic philosophy of life that acknowledges the interconnectedness of all beings and the moral necessity of coexistence" (Bassey, 2020, p. 5). In this context, the resource curse arises when people disrupt the moral rhythm of coexistence and turn resources into tools of domination. Oil becomes a curse not due to its existence but because of how it is misused. Extraction without reciprocity contradicts the anthropoholistic principle of "live and let live" (Bassey, 2019, p. 165). The curse is therefore relational: it reflects the disordered relationship between human agency and ecological belonging. Anthropoholism also sheds light on the psychological and spiritual aspects of the resource curse. The relentless chase for oil wealth leads to alienation from oneself and from the community. In "Technology, Environmental Sustainability and the Ethics of Anthropoholism", Bassey (2020) argues that technological civilisation has created a "crisis of meaning" by disconnecting human progress from ecological balance (p.9). This observation directly relates to Nigeria, where oil-driven modernisation often worsens poverty and moral decay. The ontological imbalance is visible in environmental damage and the decline of communal values like moderation, sharing, and stewardship. The more oil is extracted, the more the moral fabric of society seems to fray. From a global standpoint, the resource curse also highlights a moral imbalance. Nigeria's oil wealth supports industrial economies in the Global North while leaving local communities in poverty. This unequal dynamic reflects what political theorist Thomas Pogge refers to as "institutional complicity," where global trade systems sustain structural injustice (Pogge, 2004, p. 114). However, an anthropoholistic perspective goes further by viewing this imbalance as an ontological disorder, which is a scenario whereby humanity's shared life system is exploited without reciprocity. The ethical challenge is not just redistribution but the restoration of the moral ecology that supports global coexistence.

Ontological Rift and Co-flourishing

To heal this ontological rift, Nigeria needs to develop a philosophy of co-flourishing that connects material development with moral and ecological renewal. This vision requires a re-education of desire. Development should be seen as enhancing the overall vitality of life rather than merely extracting isolated wealth. This means promoting what Bassey (2020) calls an "ethics of responsibility toward being" (p.12). Policies, institutions, and technologies should be evaluated not just on their efficiency but based on how they contribute to the balance of human and environmental life. Ending oil's curse will not come through technical reforms alone but through changing how Nigerians and the global community perceive wealth, humanity, and their relationship with the earth. Ultimately, the resource curse endures because oil exposes a deeper truth about modern life. It demonstrates that humanity's greatest wealth can turn into its greatest poverty when it is separated from moral ecology. The dilemma of Nigeria's oil era is thus philosophical: to rediscover the sacredness of existence in a world obsessed with ownership. Anthropoholism provides a path toward this rediscovery. It reminds us that true flourishing cannot happen in isolation. To thrive is to engage in the web of life with respect and restraint. The curse will only be lifted when Nigeria learns to live not above the earth, but with it.

Oil, Violence, and the Disintegration of Human Flourishing

Violence in oil regions rarely begins with a gunshot. It often starts when people's livelihoods are quietly taken away, water is contaminated, and governance prioritises extraction over

care. In Nigeria's Niger Delta, the daily reality is rewritten by spills, fires, displacement, and the normalisation of risk. What may look like "security" or "order" from the viewpoint of the state or corporations can seem like the slow destruction of a world from the perspective of fishing communities and small farmers. This section looks at how oil triggers various forms of violence both material, institutional, and epistemic; how these fractures undermine conditions for human flourishing. Let's dovetail into this violence and the condition they enabled in Nigeria. The material violence is clearly documented. The United Nations Environment Programme's assessment of Ogoniland found that oil contamination is "widespread and severely impacting many components of the environment," and that "the Ogoni people live with this pollution every day" (UNEP, 2011, p. 2). The report identified drinking water in Nisisioken Ogale contaminated with benzene levels "over 900 times above the World Health Organisation guideline," requiring "emergency action" (UNEP, 2011, p. 4). These are not abstract statistics; they translate to lost crops, chronic disease, and a breakdown of trust in shared resources like wells, creeks, and mangroves. Recent public health data continues to show paths of hydrocarbon exposure in Ogoni communities and the cascading social harms that result from them (Sam et al., 2024).

Institutional violence appears when legal and bureaucratic systems fail to protect those who bear the brunt of the costs. Litigation against multinational companies has increased, and global venues have gained importance. In January 2021, the Hague Court of Appeal found Shell Nigeria responsible for pipeline leaks, ordering damages and better leak detection—an essential precedent that opens international avenues for environmental justice (Reuters, 2021). In the UK, the Alame & Others v. Shell case highlights the scale and complexity of claims: "The Bille and Ogale peoples are among a number of local communities in the Niger Delta that have been affected by oil mining and refining in that region since the 1950s" (High Court of Justice, 2025, p. 5). The ruling details years of procedural disputes, but it also illustrates how community claims are pushing courts to acknowledge combined harms and the limits of traditional causation tests in cases of widespread pollution (High Court of Justice, 2025, pp. 17–19, 60). The quest for remedy is part of the larger struggle against the ontological disintegration driven by extractive regimes. Structural and livelihood violence where poverty, exclusion, and degraded ecosystems create unstable survival economies. Illegal refining ("kpofire") is a sign of this system and results in recurrent mass-casualty events. Associated Press reports document deadly refinery explosions in 2023–2024 in Rivers State, with casualties in the dozens and oil theft losses estimated at US$3 billion in 2021–2022 (AP, 2023; AP, 2024). Even when the market is calm, the danger remains. People take these risks because the oil economy has undermined traditional livelihoods while failing to offer resilient alternatives. Here, violence is not just about crime; it is a political ecology of instability.

Climate change now heightens these vulnerabilities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment emphasises that West Africa has already suffered "widespread losses and damages" due to human-induced climate change (IPCC/CDKN, 2022, p. 1). Lagos is among the coastal African cities facing sea-level rise, with projected costs between US$3.7 and 9.4 billion by 2050 (IPCC/CDKN, 2022, p. 10). Heatwaves, extreme rainfall, and flooding are on the rise, affecting health, food systems, and infrastructure (IPCC/CDKN, 2022, pp. 1, 3–5, 7). In oil-affected deltas, climate threats combine with damaged wetlands, compromised mangroves, and polluted aquifers, creating intertwined risks that are not just environmental but existential. When ecosystems that support fisheries and agriculture are weakened, the possibility for a dignified life diminishes. Watts (2021)

have identified this pattern as petro-violence, a system where the political economy of oil fosters coercion, dispossession, and ongoing insecurity. More so, Babatunde (2025) links oil economies to gendered harms, including the added burdens on women in resource-rich communities, increased risks of exploitation, and the weakening of social protections. This implies that resource frontier alters social dynamics: it redirects youth labour to riskier extractive jobs and pulls community authority into rent-seeking networks. As a result, the ethical foundations of daily life shift. Extraction becomes a model for human relationships, and the logic of "taking" replaces reciprocal practices.

From the perspective of anthropoholism, these dynamics indicate a rupture in life's wholeness. The anthropoholistic ethic of "live and let live" sees humans and ecosystems as co-participants in shared vitality. When oil operations poison aquifers or strip mangroves, they do not only diminish natural resources, they sever relationships. In Bassey's view, technological civilization generates a "crisis of meaning" when human progress is disconnected from ecological balance (Bassey, 2020, p. 9). The UNEP Ogoniland assessment captured this relational fracture with stark clarity: contamination had reached groundwater at levels exceeding legal limits at 41 sites, and cleanup delays allowed oil to spread across farmland and into creeks, where "crops…experience stress and can die" (UNEP, 2011, pp. 3, 2). The material facts and moral understanding converge. Globally, this ethic converges with the United Nations Environment Programme's notion of a "regenerative economy," which emphasizes that prosperity should "restore, rather than deplete, the natural systems that support life" (UNEP, 2024, p. 7). Anthropoholism provides the ontological foundation for such regeneration. It regards the biosphere not as a stock of capital but as the living condition of being itself. Sustainable use, therefore, is an act of self-preservation.

Anthropoholism and Nigeria's Pathway Beyond the Resource Curse

Reimagining Nigeria's trajectory beyond the resource curse requires a philosophical framework capable of addressing the deeper moral and ontological fractures that oil dependency has produced. Anthropoholism offers such a framework by grounding development in the relational ethics of coexistence. Rather than viewing resources as isolated commodities, anthropoholism situates human flourishing within a broader ecological and social web. This orientation is crucial for Nigeria, where decades of extractive governance have undermined communal bonds, degraded ecosystems, and entrenched economic precarity (Obi, 2010; Watts, 2021). The first anthropoholistic principle relevant to Nigeria's future is reciprocal development. Scholars such as Okereke (2021) argue that sustainable transitions in Africa must be relational, privileging policies that strengthen community resilience and environmental stewardship over extractive rent-seeking. Anthropoholism reinforces this view by demanding development pathways that enhance the vitality of human–environment relations rather than exploit them. In a post-oil economy, Nigeria's prosperity must therefore arise from practices that regenerate both social and ecological systems.

The second principle, intergenerational continuity, is essential for reforming Nigeria's governance ethos. Shue's (2019) insistence on protecting the "vulnerable present and future" illuminates the ethical failure of policies that mortgage ecological integrity for short-term gains. By rooting responsibility within an ontological continuity that links present Nigerians to future generations, anthropoholism reframes climate and energy decisions as moral commitments to sustaining the life-whole over time. The third principle, ontological equity, challenges the hierarchical logic that has historically placed economic interests above human and environmental dignity. This idea resonates with African metaphysics, particularly

Asouzu's (2004) complementary reflection, which teaches that beings attain meaning only in relation to others. For Nigeria, ontological equity demands policies that honor the intrinsic worth of communities, especially Niger Delta populations whose lives have been disproportionately burdened by oil extraction. Together, these principles outline a pathway in which Nigeria's movement beyond the resource curse becomes not merely an economic transition but a philosophical reorientation. Anthropoholism thus provides Nigeria with a coherent moral and ontological foundation for building a post-oil future anchored in justice, balance, and co-flourishing.

Conclusion

The ontology of oil reveals a profound tension between human ingenuity and moral responsibility. Oil has powered modern civilisation but also fractured the moral and ecological foundations of life. In Nigeria and beyond, the resource curse is not merely an economic failure; it is an ontological dislocation, a rupture in humanity's relationship with the earth and with itself. The violence of extraction, the corrosion of governance, and the loss of communal meaning expose a civilization that has forgotten its place within the living whole. Samuel Bassey's philosophy of anthropoholism provides a moral and metaphysical compass for restoration. By affirming that humans and nature share an indivisible life system, anthropoholism reframes sustainability as an ethical obligation to preserve the vitality of being. This insight extends beyond Nigeria's oil fields to the global arena of climate justice and resource governance. It converges with cosmopolitan ethics and the principle of complementarity articulated by Innocent Asouzu, offering a relational foundation for global sustainability. As a theoretical framework, anthropoholism invites a radical rethinking of development and human flourishing. It calls for transitions that are not only technological but moral; not only national but planetary. To sustain the world is to sustain ourselves. The path toward a just and livable future lies in rediscovering the sacred bond that unites all existence, which this paper sees as the moral rhythm of coexistence. While oil may have revealed the fractures of being, however, through an anthropoholistic philosophy, humanity can begin the work of healing, restoring balance, and reclaiming the ethics of co-flourishing which is at the heart of true sustainability.

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EFFECTS OF TERRORISM ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: A PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
Despite government counter-terrorism expenditure and other efforts, terrorism remains a serious security concern in Northern Nigeria. This study examines the perceived effects of terrorism on democratic governance, focusing on accountability, good governance and representative governance. It adopts a descriptive survey design and uses a structured questionnaire to obtain respondents' views. The respondent table reports 378 respondents; this figure is used as the reported sample size in this working copy, pending confirmation against the original dataset. The manuscript states that the data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), including a model examining the relationship between terrorism (TERR) and the combined governance variable (ReAG). The results presented suggest that respondents perceive terrorism as detrimental to good governance. However, the model summary alone does not establish the direction or statistical significance of the relationship. The paper recommends strengthening social equity and inclusion, the rule of law, transparent and accountable governance, and the delivery of essential public services as part of broader efforts to address conditions that may be exploited by terrorist groups. The study concludes that addressing terrorism in Northern Nigeria requires an integrated approach that combines effective security measures with accountable institutions, inclusive political participation and improved public-service delivery. Strengthening these dimensions of democratic governance may help reduce institutional vulnerabilities and build public confidence, although the empirical strength of the relationship between terrorism and governance requires confirmation through complete statistical results.

Keywords: Terrorism, Democratic Governance, Frustration–Aggression Theory, Accountability, Good Governance, Representative Governance.

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Introduction

Political violence has been a persistent challenge to Nigeria's democracy since independence. Political violence contributed to instability during the First, Second and Third Republics (Jawondo, 2011, p. 175), while the Fourth Republic has continued to face different forms of political violence that threaten internal security. Some longstanding security threats have persisted or intensified, while others have emerged. These include the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), piracy, armed robbery, assassination, human trafficking, kidnapping and ethno-religious conflict (Onuoha, 2011). The repression of the Ogoni protest and the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) activists in November 1995 provide an example of the military government's suppression of resistance (Agara & Ibebunjo, 2022). Democracy is associated with popular participation, individual rights, freedom of speech and freedom of association. These principles create opportunities for individuals and groups, including ethnic and religious communities, to express their views about government. Agbaenyi and Ibebunjo (2021) identify structural constraints on democratic participation. Where demands and expectations are not met, tensions may arise; in some circumstances, these tensions are accompanied by intimidation, violence or threats of violence. Such outcomes should be analysed in their political and social contexts rather than treated as inevitable consequences of dissatisfaction.

Nigeria has experienced different forms of political violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta and Northern Nigeria, particularly the North-East. In the oil-rich Niger Delta, militancy has been associated with demands concerning resource control, perceived marginalisation and state responses to local grievances. Reported activities have included pipeline vandalism, hostage-taking and kidnapping, contributing to fear and insecurity (Osawe & Ibebunjo, 2010). In Northern Nigeria, violent extremism became more prominent in the post-1999 period, including the emergence and expansion of Boko Haram. These developments differ in their actors, aims and forms of violence; they should not be treated as identical phenomena. Explanations of terrorism in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa often consider domestic political-economic conditions alongside international dynamics. Domestic factors discussed in the literature include poor governance, corruption, poverty, unemployment, inequality, weak social services and inadequate infrastructure (Omotola, 2006). Other factors include competition over political power and resources, porous borders, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and weaknesses in security institutions. Ibebunjo and Abubakar (2021) discuss the Almajiri system and recruitment strategies associated with Boko Haram. These factors may help explain the environment in which violent groups operate, but they should not be interpreted as proving that poverty, religious identity or educational disadvantage inevitably leads to terrorism. Terrorism has significant implications for Nigeria's socioeconomic and political development, with particularly serious consequences for Northern Nigeria. Beyond loss of life and damage to property, terrorist violence can disrupt economic activity, displace communities, weaken public institutions and constrain democratic participation. Security responses therefore need to protect citizens while maintaining accountability, legality and respect for human rights. The main objective of this study is to assess the effects of terrorism on democratic governance in Northern Nigeria, with particular attention to accountability, good governance and representative governance.

Research Questions

i. What are the effects of terrorism on accountability in Northern Nigeria?

ii. What is the relationship between terrorism and good governance in Northern Nigeria?
iii. How does terrorism affect representative governance in Northern Nigeria?

Conceptual Framework

Terrorism: There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. Definitions differ according to the actors involved, the purpose of the violence, the targets selected and the legal or political framework used. Kegley (1990, pp. 1–26) notes that terrorism raises semantic, epistemological and evaluative difficulties. Adekanye (2003, pp. 8–9) similarly cautions against stereotypical explanations that portray terrorism as the product of a particular culture or region. Such generalisations obscure the political, social and historical contexts in which terrorist violence develops. After the Cold War and the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, some public discussions increasingly associated terrorism with Islamic fundamentalism. Adekanye (2003, pp. 8–9) examines this framing and its implications. A careful analysis should avoid equating Islam or Muslim communities generally with terrorism. The term is politically contested, and its application should be supported by clear criteria rather than stereotypes. Terrorism is commonly understood as the use or threat of violence intended to intimidate a population or coerce a government or other actor in pursuit of political, ideological or religious objectives. Albert (2005, p. 386) discusses terrorism in the African context, drawing on earlier definitions, while Shultz (1978) emphasises the political objectives associated with extraordinary forms of violence. Commonly discussed tactics include bombings, kidnapping, hostage-taking, assassinations, sabotage and intimidation. These tactics are not, by themselves, sufficient to classify an act as terrorism; the purpose, target and context also matter.

The United States Department of State has used a definition of terrorism centred on premeditated, politically motivated violence against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, generally intended to influence an audience (as cited in Mejabi, 2012, p. 284). The New York City Police Department has also described terrorism in terms of the calculated use or threat of violence for political, religious or ideological ends. These definitions highlight the role of intimidation and the intention to influence audiences beyond the immediate victims (Laqueur, 1999, pp. 22–30). Because legal and scholarly definitions vary, the study should state the working definition used in its analysis. The definitions reviewed show that the meaning of terrorism remains contested and is shaped by analytical perspective, political context and legal standards. Applying the label to a person or organisation can have significant consequences; therefore, the term should be used carefully and consistently. The present study uses terrorism to refer to politically or ideologically motivated violence, or the threat of such violence, intended to intimidate a wider audience or coerce public authorities, while recognising that the classification of particular events requires evidence (Eselebor, 2011, p. 88).

The Political Economy of Terrorism in Nigeria

The political economy of terrorism in Nigeria involves debates about political competition, resource distribution, social exclusion, institutional capacity and the mobilisation of armed groups. The manuscript's earlier numerical claim that Nigeria ranked second globally for terrorist attacks between 2000 and 2013, including a figure of more than 750 attacks, requires a traceable source and should not be retained as a verified fact without that source. Terrorism-related violence has occurred in different forms across Nigeria, and the drivers and characteristics of these episodes vary. Terrorism-related violence in Nigeria has been associated in the literature with competing political and religious claims, ethnic

fragmentation and struggles over resources. In the Niger Delta, demands have included resource control and changes to fiscal federalism; in the North, violent extremist groups have pursued different ideological and political aims. These contexts should be analysed distinctly, rather than assuming a single explanation for all forms of armed violence. Boko Haram's links with transnational extremist networks, including its pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State, have contributed to the international dimensions of the insurgency. The group's development raises questions about local grievances, organisational strategy, external linkages and the effectiveness and consequences of counter-terrorism responses. Explanations that attribute terrorism exclusively to elite manipulation or poverty remain contested and require empirical support. Political leadership and changes in the distribution of power have sometimes been used to explain the changing geography of violence in Nigeria. However, a temporal association between the party or region of a president and the location of insurgency does not by itself demonstrate causation. Claims about changes in militancy or terrorism across administrations should therefore be supported by reliable data and analysed alongside other political, security and socioeconomic factors.

Democratic Governance

The phrase commonly attributed to Abraham Lincoln describes democracy as government 'of the people, by the people, for the people'. It expresses the principle that political authority should derive from the people and be exercised in the public interest. In a democratic system, citizens should be able to participate in decisions affecting them and hold public officials accountable (Ojuade, 2011, p. 103). Governance concerns the exercise of political authority and the management of public affairs, including the shaping of economic and social conditions in pursuit of public objectives (Omotoso, 2010, p. 146). The World Bank (1992) and UNDP (1997) also discuss governance in relation to how authority is exercised and how public resources and institutions are managed. Governance may support or undermine development depending on the transparency, accountability, effectiveness and inclusiveness of institutions. Good governance is commonly associated with the rule of law, accountability, participation, transparency and respect for human and civil rights. These principles are central to democratic governance because they constrain the arbitrary exercise of power and enable citizens to scrutinise public institutions. The World Bank's governance work provides a relevant institutional perspective, although the precise indicators used in an empirical study must be specified clearly (World Bank, 1989). Bello-Imam and Obadan (2004, pp. 2–3) describe democratic governance as the exercise of state power with the consent of the people, directly or through elected representatives. It requires institutions and processes that translate public preferences into policy, promote social cohesion and enable peaceful management of disagreement. Economic equality, social solidarity and political liberty may influence the extent to which citizens can exercise their democratic rights.

Appadorai (1975) identifies institutional features associated with democratic governance, including equal voting rights for eligible adults, periodic elections, eligibility for public office subject to relevant qualifications, and freedom of speech, publication and association. These principles establish formal opportunities for participation, although the extent to which citizens can exercise them also depends on social conditions, economic resources and the protection of rights. These rights provide citizens with opportunities to choose representatives and influence policy through elections, public debate and political programmes (Bello-Imam & Obadan, 2004, pp. 2–3). The practical enjoyment of democratic rights may nevertheless be constrained by poverty, insecurity, unequal access to

information and institutional barriers. Formal equality in voting is therefore important but does not, by itself, guarantee equal political influence. UNDP (2005) presents governance as involving the structures, processes and traditions through which power is exercised, decisions are made and citizens express their interests. These mechanisms enable people to articulate interests, mediate differences and exercise rights and obligations. Democratic governance can therefore be understood as the capacity of institutions and society to formulate policies and resolve conflicts peacefully within an established legal order (UNDP, 2009).

Nexus between Terrorism and Accountability

Terrorism may undermine accountability by creating fear, disrupting public institutions and making investigations or prosecutions more difficult. It may also encourage emergency measures and shifts in public spending that place pressure on oversight mechanisms. These are plausible pathways, not automatic outcomes: the extent of the effect depends on institutional safeguards, the conduct of security agencies and the protection of due process. This study's survey findings should be used to assess respondents' perceptions of these relationships.

Relationship between Terrorism and Good Governance

A relationship between terrorism and good governance may operate in both directions. Weak, exclusionary or unaccountable institutions can create conditions that armed groups exploit, while terrorist violence can further weaken institutions, restrict participation and divert public resources. This reciprocal relationship should be treated as a conceptual proposition unless the research design and data establish the direction and strength of the association.

Theoretical Review

Frustration-Aggression Theory: Frustration–Aggression Theory offers one possible explanation for how perceived deprivation, blocked goals or experiences of injustice may increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviour. Dollard et al. (1939) developed the original formulation, which later scholarship has qualified: frustration does not inevitably produce aggression, and aggression may arise from multiple causes. Applied to this study, the theory helps frame how perceived governance failures, socioeconomic deprivation, exclusion and limited access to public goods may contribute to grievances that extremist groups can exploit. The theory does not, by itself, establish that these conditions cause terrorism; that relationship must be assessed against the study's evidence. The concept of frustration is relevant to explanations of social conflict because perceived deprivation, alienation and anomie may shape how people interpret their circumstances (Robert, 1963, as cited in Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1981, pp. 158–159, 267). Some accounts of terrorism in Nigeria connect insecurity with perceived governance failures and the inability of public institutions to provide essential services, including water, electricity, roads, healthcare, employment opportunities and security. Long-term unemployment and poverty may increase vulnerability to recruitment by criminal or extremist organisations, but these factors are neither sufficient nor universal explanations for participation in violence (Onuoha, 2010, pp. 115–136). Atiku (2011) is cited as arguing that poor governance contributes to insecurity and that urgent attention should be given to fairness, equity and the protection of vulnerable people. This position is consistent with arguments about leadership and institutional capacity in the Nigerian state (Achebe, 1983; Okolo, 2011; Lamorde & Ibebunjo, 2022).

These sources provide context for the theoretical discussion; they do not substitute for empirical evidence about the specific respondents and variables examined in this study.

Empirical Review

The empirical review is organised around two issues: the growth of terrorism in Northern Nigeria and the limited evidence directly examining how terrorism affects democratic governance. These issues provide the rationale for examining accountability, good governance and representative governance together. Terrorism has become a major security concern in Northern Nigeria. The literature identifies several contextual factors, including extremist ideologies, religious and ethnic tensions, political instability and competition over authority and territory (Alfa-Wali et al., 2015; Fazel, 2013). Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and al-Shabaab in Somalia illustrate that violent extremist organisations operate in different national and regional contexts. Claims about the scale or growth of terrorism should be supported by current, comparable evidence and should avoid portraying any religion or population as inherently violent. Much of the literature considers how governance may mitigate terrorism, while fewer studies directly examine the effects of terrorism on governance outcomes. The relationship remains contested: governance quality may influence the conditions in which terrorism emerges, and terrorist violence may in turn affect institutional performance, accountability and political participation (Lee, 2013). This study addresses the latter relationship through respondents' views, while recognising the limits of a descriptive survey for establishing causation. A further issue concerns the measurement of governance. Broad labels such as 'political governance' require clearly specified indicators. If governance is represented through voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness or related dimensions, the study should explain how each indicator is operationalised and whether the variables are combined into a composite measure. Without this explanation, the meaning of the dependent variable remains uncertain. The manuscript's discussion of terrorism and governance indicators requires clarification. It should identify the terrorism measures and governance dimensions actually used in the present survey, explain their operational definitions and show how any composite variable was constructed. Indicators such as domestic or transnational terrorism should not be presented as having been analysed unless the relevant data and procedures are documented.

Methodology

The study reports using qualitative and quantitative data within a descriptive survey design. A structured questionnaire was administered to respondents selected purposively from states and local government areas in Northern Nigeria. The respondent table reports 378 cases; this is treated here as the number of respondents represented in Table 1, but it should be confirmed against the original dataset and the number of valid questionnaires. The manuscript refers to state capitals and local government areas but does not provide sufficient detail about the states covered, the sampling frame, eligibility criteria or the recruitment process. These details should be supplied from the fieldwork records. The study reports that data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Any qualitative analysis should also be described, including the source of qualitative data and the method used to analyse it. Table 1 presents respondents' reported levels of experience. The manuscript does not define the categories 'entry level', 'intermediate level' and 'supervisory level', or explain whether they refer to employment grade, professional

experience or another characteristic. The definitions and coding should be checked against the original questionnaire before the categories are interpreted.

Table 1. Respondents' Reported Level of Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	entry level	122	32.3	32.3	32.3
	intermediate level	220	58.2	58.2	90.5
	supervisory level	36	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	378	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS 23 (Fieldwork, 2026)

Table 1 indicates that 58.2% of respondents were classified as intermediate-level, 32.3% as entry-level and 9.5% as supervisory-level, based on the 378 cases reported. The percentages sum to 100%. Their substantive meaning cannot be assessed until the categories and their relevance to the study are defined.

Data Presentation

Table 2. Respondents' ratings of the relationship between terrorism and good governance

STRONG POINT	NOT STRONG POINT	VERY STRONG POINT	NO IDEA	NOT VERY STRONG POINT
26.3%	21.1%	36.8%	10.5%	5.3%
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Source: Fieldwork 2026

The percentages originally recorded for Table 2 (25%, 20%, 35%, 10% and 5%) sum to 95%, not 100%. Proportional normalisation produces approximately 26.3%, 21.1%, 36.8%, 10.5% and 5.3%, respectively. These adjusted percentages are mathematical estimates, not verified observations, and should not replace the original data in a final empirical report. The original response frequencies and questionnaire labels must be checked. In particular, the labels 'strong point', 'not strong point', 'very strong point' and 'not very strong point' are ambiguous and should be replaced only after confirming the actual response options.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted RSquare	Std. Error of theEstimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.710[a]	.672	.661	1.10818	2.242

a. **Predictors: (Constant), TERR**

b. **Dependent Variable: ReAG**

Source: SPSS 23 (Fieldwork, 2026)

The model summary is transcribed as R = .710, R^2 = .672, adjusted R^2 = .661, standard error of the estimate = 1.10818 and Durbin–Watson = 2.242. These values must be checked against the original SPSS output because the table's formatting is unclear. If the values are correct, R^2 suggests that the model accounts for 67.2% of the observed variance in the dependent variable (ReAG) in the analysed sample, while adjusted R^2 is 66.1%. These statistics alone do not establish statistical significance or the direction of the relationship. The regression coefficients, model F-statistic and p-value, sample size used in the model, and

variable coding must be checked before drawing a conclusion about the relationship between terrorism and governance.

Discussions of Findings

Research Question 1 - Effects of Terrorism on Accountability in Northern Nigeria: Terrorism may weaken accountability by disrupting public administration, limiting civic engagement and making it more difficult for citizens to scrutinise government decisions. This interpretation is consistent with Adinoyi, Ouma, and Nzau (2023), whose study of Boko Haram and government budgeting in Nigeria found that terrorism disrupted stakeholder participation in budget processes, access to budget information and budget performance. Similarly, Suleiman and Karim (2015) linked poor governance and corruption in Northern Nigeria to the conditions that facilitated Boko Haram's rise. However, these studies do not establish that terrorism independently caused every accountability deficit. In the present study, the absence of a separately verified accountability table or coefficient means that these explanations should be treated as literature-informed interpretations rather than statistically established findings.

Research Question 2: Relationship between Terrorism and Good Governance in Northern Nigeria

The manuscript reports that respondents perceived terrorism as detrimental to good governance and presents a model summary linking terrorism (TERR) with the combined governance variable (ReAG). This general interpretation agrees with Adinoyi et al. (2023), who reported that Boko Haram activities disrupted budgeting processes and accounted for substantial variation in budget execution. Nevertheless, the present study's reported R-squared value alone cannot establish causation, the direction of the relationship or its statistical significance. These claims require the regression coefficients and model-significance results to be confirmed. The literature therefore supports the plausibility of the relationship, but does not substitute for verification of the study's own statistical evidence.

Research Question 3: Effects of Terrorism on Representative Governance in Northern Nigeria

Representative governance requires citizens to participate in public affairs and elected officials to remain accessible and responsive to their constituents. Terrorism may undermine these processes through fear, displacement and restrictions on movement. This interpretation is supported by Omoragbon and Okhadeb (2022), who examined elections, constituency consultation and political representation in Boko Haram-affected areas and argued that the insurgency had constrained participatory democracy. Their study provides relevant evidence that insecurity can weaken the connection between elected representatives and affected communities. However, because the present manuscript does not provide a separately verified measure of political participation, electoral access or representative responsiveness, it cannot establish the magnitude of these effects among its respondents.

Conclusions

This study examines the relationship between terrorism and democratic governance in Northern Nigeria, with particular attention to accountability, good governance and representative governance. Table 1 reports 378 respondents, although this figure should be confirmed against the original dataset. The results presented suggest that respondents perceive terrorism as detrimental to good governance. Nevertheless, the available model

summary does not establish the direction or statistical significance of the regression relationship, and it cannot support causal claims. The conclusions should therefore remain proportionate to the verified evidence. Conceptually, accountable, inclusive and effective governance may help address grievances and reduce conditions that terrorist groups can exploit. Conversely, terrorist violence may constrain participation, weaken institutions and divert public resources. The strength and direction of these relationships in the present study must be established from verified data and complete statistical output.

Recommendations

i. Government institutions should promote social equity and inclusion and address legitimate grievances through fair, accessible and peaceful channels. These measures should be informed by evidence about the specific grievances and communities concerned.
ii. The rule of law should be strengthened through fair and impartial justice systems, due process and effective protection of citizens' rights. These safeguards provide lawful alternatives for resolving disputes and help maintain public confidence in institutions.
iii. Public institutions should strengthen transparency, accountability and meaningful citizen participation. Accessible information, independent oversight and responsive public services can help build trust and institutional resilience.
iv. Government should ensure that public resources are used transparently and effectively to deliver essential services, including education, healthcare and economic opportunities. These measures may help reduce poverty and inequality, but they should form part of a broader, evidence-informed strategy rather than be presented as a guaranteed means of preventing radicalisation.

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COMPLEMENTARY ONTOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF INNOCENT ASOUZU AND THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONAL UNITY

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Abstract
Nigeria's diversity has posed compelling challenges than envisaged. The diversity unlike in other climes has become problematic rather than advantageous. The implications on national unity are glaring and worrisome. This unfortunate situation has birthed mutual distrust and acrimony between diverse groups that make up the Nigerian federation. Divisions in all strata of national life is palpable; allegiance and loyalty are more emphasized around sectional and ethnic inclinations rather than national identity. National unity has become far-fetched. It becomes therefore, pertinent to ask certain questions: what are the militating challenges of our diversity? Why is it so problematic? Where did we get it wrong? Can we still be able to forge a common front as a nation despite our diversity? Innocent Asouzu in his complementary ontology/ibuanyidanda conceived the idea of "being" from an African perspective as been complementary and relational rather than bifurcated and exclusivist as is the case with some Western philosophers. He emphasized "being" as missing links without which the whole cannot be complete. In spite of our diversity, we share a common bond that unites rather than divides us. This new complementary ontology becomes imperative in our understanding and quest to achieving national unity. This study examines the challenges of national unity in Nigeria and sees Asouzu's complementary ontology/ibuanyidanda as a panacea for achieving this unity. Relying on the hermeneutic as well as expository and evaluative methods in its investigation, the study reveals that, a proper understanding of what being entails will mitigate the acrimonious and divisive proclivities and usher in an atmosphere of unity.

Keywords: Ontology, National Unity, Complementary, Ibuanyidanda, Challenge.

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Introduction

Any discourse on the concept of ontology connotes an attempt to describe as well as explain the nature of being. The question of "being" is prominently a metaphysical one, which transvers philosophical epochs from ancient to the present. "Being" generally understood as "that which is" and which real entities possesses, is variously construed by philosophers. Ontology is generally conceived as the study of being. It is understood as the subdivision of metaphysics concerned with the most general features of reality. As one of the most basic concepts, "being" includes all of reality and everything within it. To address the basic notion of "being", ontology looks at the common things that characterize all things and inquire into their classification into basic types. Many classical philosophical problems stem from ontology: the question concerning the existence of a god, or the issues around the existence of universals. These issues underlie ontology in the sense that they are concerned with certain things or more broadly entities exist. However, ontology is normally construed to entail problems about the most general features and relations of the things which are. Complementary ontology is generally conceived by Innocent Asouzu, an African philosopher as a concrete and an existential perspective. Asouzu's complementary ontology springs from an "Ibuanyidanda" (complementary) imperative, that conceives everything as a component of reality. In this sense, "being" cannot be understood in isolation, there is a mutual complementary link that underlie reality. The tripartite notions of being, reality and existence can only be understood from a complementary perspective. Hence. It is to be noted that, Asouzu is interested in human social relations, this informed his criticism of Aristotle's substance metaphysics and his emphasis on restoring metaphysics to its relevance and practicality, unlike the abstract and abstruse conception that historically characterize the study of ontology.

Nigeria as a country is characterized by a multiplicity of ethnic nationalities. This multiplicity has become more problematic with profound implications for the unity of Nigeria. There is mutual distrust, suspicion and outright hostilities among the various ethnic nationalities. Marked clannish and ethnic preferences are projected at the detriment of national cohesion and identity. A cursory look at the prevailing scenario elicits some concern and a critical interrogation of the prevailing situation. It is noteworthy that this situation of affairs in Nigeria is responsible to a large extent in dividing and driving the wedge of disunity among the people, creating a sense of suspicion instead of collaboration. From the standpoint of complementarity, it is worthy of note that a basic unity underlies and characterize our diversity as a people. If everything in existence is a component of "being" then each an everyone of us complements each other in a special way than otherwise. Asouzu's complementary ontology then galvanizes us towards solidarity. There is more that unite us than divide us, we are not just a people parceled together but rather our existence should be viewed from the perspective of the unity of being as canvassed by Asouzu. Our notion of being as a people should lean mainly on Asouzu's ontology which is devoid of bifurcation or division in being, but rather unites entities or beings that seem to be diametrically opposed. It is the contention of this study that the basic tenets of Asouzu's complementary ontology can be harnessed to foster that much desired national unity.

Ontology in the Greek Classical Tradition

The perennial ontological problem that characterized the Greek philosophical tradition was the question of unity and multiplicity (change and permanence). In this regard, Parmenides

is acknowledged as the founder of Western metaphysics/ontology[1], yet within the background of the preceding philosophers who attempted to provide an explanation for the origin of the cosmos or the fundamental stuff that constitutes reality. Accordingly, Perl observed that, there are two questions in Greek classical ontology that constitute our thinking of "being", or proper ontology. They include: a. What is "being"? b. Why are there "beings" rather than nothing? Parmenides (c. 515-450 BC) in his attempt to resolve the question of unity and multiplicity, particularly the question "what is being", asserted that, "…for one thing are thinking and Being"[2]. This assertion is the foundation of Parmenides' ontology. It follows, according to Parmenides that, if "thought" and "being" are inseparable, then to think is to think "being". Consequently, if to think is to think being (that which is), then to think nothing is not to think at all, since it is impossible to think nothing[3]. This means for Parmenides, being is a unity, and since all that is thought is, then there is no time when it is not. Moreover, that which is cannot be non "being", and that which is not cannot be "being". With these assertions, Parmenides established metaphysics as the thinking of "being"; in other words, to think "being" as being is to do metaphysics/ontology.

For Plato (c 428-348 BC), ontology should center around the concept of "form"[4]. This is the earliest vivid and comprehensively clear attempt to resolve the issue of permanence and change, or sameness and difference in being. Plato was perplexed about how things can be the same (like beautiful) yet different. According to Plato, their sameness is explained by their form[5] a more proper meaning of the Greek word εἶδοζ or ἰδεα inadequately defined as form, is something like "look" or "appearance" of something. It has more to do with seeing (through the mind) than knowing. In this line of thought, to identify a thing is to identify its "look". Hence, to be something is to have identity or a "look". In essence, forms make things what they are, without which they will be nothing.[6] Furthermore, without the forms, which are different in themselves (yet not isolated) from sensible entities, there would be no intelligible sensible things. For instance, there could be many shapes but none of them is the form of shape itself.

Aristotle (384-422 BC) by continuing with this Greek tradition supplied a more elaborate definition of change, by introducing the concept of "potency" and "act", and by emphasizing the essential differences of things. While not saying anything substantially different from that of Plato, (that is, in regards the intelligibility of being as εἶδος), Aristotle emphasized the fact that the forms are intrinsically part of what constitute a thing. For him we should see the forms more through their presence in sensible things rather than as something transcended from sensible things.[7] He also introduced through his doctrine of Hylemorphism, the concept of matter as constitutive of sensible things. While matter underlies change, even substantial change, the forms determine the nature of a thing. In this light, matter is the potency to be something, while form is the act of being something.[8] The most controversial aspect of Aristotle's ontology today is his definition of "being" as substance. Substance he defined as "that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject".[9]

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[1] Charles H. Kahn, Essays on Being, (New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 2009), 143
[2] Thomas Davidson (ed) Fragments of Parmenides, (St. Louis: E. P. Gray, 1869), 5
[3] Davidson, the fragments of Parmenides, 5
[4] Perl, Thinking Being, 22
[5] Plato, Meno, 72c.
[6] Perl, Thinking Being, 24
[7] Aristotle, Physics, B.II, 19ba-194a
[8] Aristotle, Physics, B.II, 193A32-193B6
[9] Aristotle, Categories, B.V, 2a13-2a18

This definition sets "beings" as subsistent and independent entities with no prior ontological relations. Hence, without substance there would be no being at all. However, James Filler raised a relevant point, that, if there would be relations in being then it must be ontologically prior to the entities in order to ground and afford their "being" harmoniously and intelligibly. This would make beings relational and not independent entities.[10] In answering the question, why there are beings rather nothing, Aristotle pointed to the "unmoved mover" or "prime mover" which is Actus Purus (Pure Actuality). The unmoved mover is responsible for all that exists since it sets all things in motion, while it is itself not moved by anything but it is itself pure motion. However, defining the "Pure Mover" as substance or Pure Form (thought thinking itself), raises the question of how the ground of being is fully determinate, unlike the Good of Plato which is indeterminate.[11]

African Ontology

The African notion of ontology implies the African traditional metaphysical conceptions of the structure of beings that constitute the African cosmos. The African worldview is commonly anchored on this ontology. Ogugua maintained that, in Igbo-African cosmos, "reality can be categorized under seven categories: Spirit, human, animals, things, place, time and modality".[12] All things that exist must subsume themselves within any of these categories, and is not seen as substance but as force. Accordingly for the African therefore, force constitute being. Nwala opined that, the categories fall into three: spirits and forces, human beings and things.[13] Though Nwala's view mirrored the Igbo-African perspective, however, the idea is common to Africa. Suffice it to note that, African ontology is hierarchical in nature and this has implications and informs organizational structure in the African cosmos. In spite of this arrangement, it is pertinent to note that there is interface and relationship between all beings and forces. The notion of bifurcation is strange to African ontology. Temple illustrated this interdependence with the idea of the spider web when he observed that: "the world of force is held like a spider web of which no single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole network"[14]

Mogobe Ramose, conceived "being" within the lens of Ubuntu ontology, which sees reality as "be-ing-becoming". This is seen as process perspective of reality, which explains the traditional belief system of African people. Ramose's work arguably reflects the African notion of reality in the sense of its affinity with the popular complementary character of African traditional worldview[15]. Maris concurred with the reality of the Ubuntu ontology by Ramose as aggregating more profoundly the African view of reality when he posited that it "demonstrates African rationality, and thus confirms an authentic African identity that was systematically suppressed during the colonial past and apartheid"[16]. According to Ramose, "ubu" concisely mirrows the idea of "be-ing", generally or universally, before its

[10] James Filler, Heidegger, Neoplatonism and the History of Being: Relations as Ontological Ground (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2023), 189

[11] Filler, Heidegger, Neoplatonism and the History of Being, 188

[12] I.N. Ogugua, African Philosophy and Authentic Development of Africa, in Odumegwu, I. (Ed), Philosophy and Africa, (Abia: Lumos Nig. Ltd. 2006), 68

[13] T.U. Nwala, Igbo Philosophy, (Lagos: Lantern Books, 1985),

[14] Placide Temples, Bantu Philosophy, (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1969), p60

[15] Anthony Chimankpam Ojimba, Ubuntu's Ontological Account in African Philosophy and its Cross-Tradition Engagement on the Issue of Being versus Becoming, Journal of Comparative Philosophy Vol.14, No1, 2023, pp98-115

[16] C.W. Maris, "Philosophical Racism and Ubuntu: In Dialogue with Mogobe Ramose", South African Journal of Philosophy, vol.39. No 3, p308-326

manifestation in actual terms of reality or in particular beings-"ntu". In his conception, there is no strict and literal ontological dichotomy between "ubu" and "ntu" as "ubu" is always progressing towards "ntu"[17]. Alexis Kagame built his ontology on Placide Tempels' concept of being, however, he went much further. Kagame used four categories that succinctly explains entities of anything or form. These four categories include: "Muntu", "Kintu", "Hantu" and "Kuntu".[18] Force underlies these categories according to Kagame. This force is known as Ntu, which interfaces among these four categories of "being". Unah stressed thus: "Everything there is must necessarily belong to one of these categories and must be conceived of, not as substance, but force. Forces are also related to one another. The relationship of forces is expressed by the stem "Ntu". This explains according to Kagame, the relationship and interaction of forces in Bantu worldview".[19]

Innocent Asouzu's Complementary Ontology

Innocent Izuchukwu Asouzu is a Nigerian philosopher and a Catholic priest. He had his studies in Nigeria and Austria and was ordained to the Catholic priesthood in 1979. He was deeply influenced by German philosophers whose ideas are reflected in his works especially the thoughts and ideas of Paul Tillich's method of correlation. He was greatly interested in social relations and worked assiduously in the course of his life to produce a social theory aimed at regulating and mitigating conflicts, which metamorphosed into his Ibuanyidanda philosophy of complementary reflection. Innocent Asouzu observed with dismay the way ontology is done both in the West and even in some quarters in Africa. He contended that this way of conceiving ontology makes it elitist, exclusivist, bifurcating and far removed from reality. These views conceived reality as ultimately or fundamentally comprising of independent entities. This motivated his criticism of Aristotle's substance metaphysics and his quest to restore ontology's relevance and practical import.

Substance Metaphysics and Rationale for Ibuanyidanda/Complementarity

It is pertinent to note from the beginning that, Asouzu was interested in human social relationship. This informed his criticism of substance metaphysics as canvassed by Aristotle. He emphasized the need for ontology to be practical and relevant. He believed that with the proper complementary mindset for an articulation of "being", human beings will take charge of all their ambivalent vicissitudes of life and overcome any form of unintended ethno-centric/ethno-philosophic commitment. According to him, his work is an attempt to propose a "…..noetic propaedeutic or the pre-pedagogy of the mind or human reason itself as the condition of possibility for all rational and ethical discourses, and for authentic human action".[20] Asouzu criticized Aristotle's articulation of being as essentially polarized, exclusivist, non-complementary and elitist.[21] This standpoint encapsulate all metaphysics done under the prism of bifurcation that characterize all substance metaphysics or philosophy of essence. Asouzu submitted that, Aristotle's definition of "being" as substance

[17] Ramose Magobe, B. African Philosophy Through Ubuntu, (Harare: Mond Books, 1999), p50

[18] Jim Unah, On Being: Discourse on the Ontology of Man, Lagos: Fadec, 2002, p265

[19] Jim Unah, Ontologico-Epistemological Background to Authentic African Socio-Economic and Political Institutions, Footmarks to Landmarks on African Philosophy, Andrew Uduigwomen (ed)),(Lagos: O.O.P, 2009), P264-278

[20] Innocent I Asouzu, "Ibuanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology; Beyond World-Immanentism, Ethnocentric Reduction and Imposition" (Zurich: Lit Verlag GmbH & CO, KG Wien, 2007), 80-85

[21] Innocent I Asouzu, "Ibuanyidanda and the Philosophy of Essence" Filosofia Theoretica vol 1 no.1, 2011, 106

with the capacity of independence or subsistence in relation to accidents is a fundamental bifurcation of being.[22]

In Asouzu's analysis, Aristotle's conception of being is reminiscent of Plato, especially his elitist approach to interpersonal relationship. He maintained that the view by Aristotle is an attempt to project metaphysics over other sciences, and averred that, "with such approach, Aristotle merely cemented Plato's ideal of the Philosopher King, and gave it a folk ideological scientific connotation and forcefulness. He pursued this idea consistently with such intensity that Plato's idealism turns out to be no match to the polarizing antagonistic type dualism which he unfortunately understands as realism".[23] Asouzu maintains therefore that, Aristotle has dispensed with principle for ideology due to the utilitarian interests that characterize his thought in spite of his underlying motive which was scientific. This standpoint he emphasizes in his metaphysics characterized how science is done today.

Being as Missing Links

The notion of component parts (missing links), is essentially traced to Asouzu's, and very crucial in his ontology. This sets the stage for understanding Asouzu;s theory of "being", as he posited: "For this reason, under missing links, within the framework of the totality, I have in mind all conceivable relational modes of self-expression of "being" in history".[24] The idea of missing links was conceived by Asouzu in his quest to define being when he maintained that, "….being is that on account of which anything that exist serve a missing link of reality.[25] Within this complementary framework, being is essentially construed as missing links of reality that are in a mutually complementary relationship with the whole. Asouzu conceived missing links thus:

> Diverse units that make up an entity within the framework of the whole and as they are complementarily related. They are all the imaginable, fragments, units, components and combinations that enter into our understanding of any aspect of our world. They are also all the units and combinations necessary in a conceptualization of an entity or of the whole. Thus, missing links are, for example thoughts and the thoughts of thoughts. They are diverse modes of manifestation of being in history. They are categories and the categories of categories. They are the units and the units of units, entities and the entities of entities, things and the things of things. They are ideas and the ideas of ideas, as these possibly can be abstracted and related to each other as conditions of possibility of their perfectibility in a harmonious systemic manner.[26]

It is hard to miss the emphasis on fragmentation of "being" as missing links. This is precisely emphasized by Asouzu in his postulation that fragmentation is one of the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness. It is pertinent to note that, Asouzu's discourse on missing links evokes a sense that identities or entities are fundamentally subsumed into being as parts or aspects of reality. Being as missing links expresses the conditions for true and meaningful existence, as all missing links in kind and in differences, participate in a mutual complementary -relationship as they seek harmony in the whole or the joy of

[22] Asouzu, "Ibuanyidanda and the Philosophy of Essence" p 83-84

[23] Asouzu. "Ibuanyidanda" 145

[24] Asouzu, Ibuanyidanda, 266

[25] Asouzu, "Ibuanyidanda Philosophy and the Philosophy of Essence", 103

[26] Innocent I Asouzu, "The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection: In and Beyond African Philosophy" (Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2004), p273

being.[27] It is pertinent to note that missing links are in a dynamic process of integration within the context of the whole. The future referentiality, historicity and relativity of missing links sets the prism for viewing its essential dynamism. For the fact that being is conceived as that which has head and tail-end "ihe di, nwere isi na odu", the multidimensionality of being in its dynamism is expressed.[28] The head which is most important and the tail-end which is important are in a dynamic complementary relationship, towards the joy of being.

Complementary Ontology and the Challenge of National Unity

The issue of national unity has become a perennial decimal in national discourses. This is imperative as many Nigerians align more with their regional and tribal affiliations and enclaves than the country. This has birthed an acrimonius atmosphere of mutual suspicion among the various entities that characterize Nigeria. The country is polarized along ethnic lines creating an atmosphere of disunity with deep seated implications. Before 1914, the geographical entity called Nigeria was non-existent. It was a hugely an assemblage of tribes and communities scattered all over the landscape, some whose territories overlapped the boundaries of present-day Nigeria. These diverse groups with their social institutions were coalesced to form a nation under British rule. While the Western world regarded them all as "Nigerians", they considered themselves as members of whichever tribe from which they originated. In spite of its federal status, Nigeria is usually characterized as a deeply divided state in which major political issues are vigorously and sometimes violently contested along the lines of the complex ethnic, religious and regional divisions in the country.[29]

Unity is a crucial variable in any society. A society that is divided without a sense of purpose lacks the impetus to meaningfully make impressionable advances in terms of growth and development. It is pertinent to note that, this crucial element has remained illusive in our national life. This sad state of affairs is brought about by a series of factors that constitute the structure the country was bequeathed at independence and the collective failure over time to aggregate a common and sustainable unity and development of the country. The incidence of mutual distrust and disunity culminated in the unfortunate events that led to the avoidable Nigerian civil war between 1967-1970. In the first Republic, Nigeria was structured along regional lines. In as much as this encouraged healthy competition and even development, it also strengthened the seed of ethnic and sectional proclivities in our people. Political leaders took advantage of this to mobilize and consolidate power in the regions, emerging as regional and ethnic power brokers. [30] The general elections of 1965 necessitated alliances and coalitions that produced political parties with national spread that intersected the regions. Such complications fostered the already ethnic discord, mutual suspicion and palpable fear domination and other incidental issues among the regions. The build-up of events led to the collapse of the first Republic and the civil war that came in its wake. In spite of the foregoing, there emerged a crop of national elites as evidence during the second republic and beyond. However, Nigeria seems to be more divided than it has ever been in its over sixty years of nationhood especially in the last administration whose actions and inactions were seen as nepotistic and divisive.

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[27] Asouzu, 'Ibuanyidanda" 267

[28] Asouzu, "Ibuanyidanda" in Johnmary Marabayi, "An Analysis of Innocent I Asouzu's Theory Being"(Abuja: Veritas university, unpublished project work, 2024)

[29] Joseph Aye, *The Metaphysical Problem of Unity and Diversity and its Implications for National Unity*, Amamihe Journal of Applied Philosophy, vol.19, no.4, 2021, p123

[30] Abubakar Atiku, *The Challenge of Unity, Diversity and National Development: Nigeria at a Crossroad*, 2017, p23, http://newsonline, accessed 9/9/2025

Some Factors that Sustain Disunity in Nigeria

An Unbalanced Federal Structure: The structure of the country has become incidental to lack national unity. Our federal structure is fundamentally flawed, hence calls in different quarters for restructuring and renegotiation of the terms of our unity as a country. The centre is seen to have retained so much power at the expense of the federating units that have become increasingly unviable. Abubakar avers: "We therefore have an almighty federal government that has assumed so much powers and responsibilities that it does virtually everything either alone or in tandem with the federating units. In the end, very little gets down both at the federal and state level". [31] This state of affairs usually leaves the people disillusioned, and in frustration, they imbibe and harbour all sorts of views and ideas that suggests that people from other ethnic group, religion or other regional block are responsible for their problems. This no doubt fans the embers of disunity.

Leadership

The role of credible leadership in the socio-economic and political development of any country cannot be over emphasized. However, the challenge of leadership has always been a perennial problem in the complexities of national unity and development. Scholars and opinion leaders have consistently decried the near absence of credible political leadership in the country.[32] The leadership deficit is visible in all our socio-political, and economic strata as well as the prevalence of ethnic, communal and religious crisis with general insecurity which now and then characterize our national discourse. These have negative implications on national development and unity. The escalating wave of violence, insecurity, crime rate, economic issues together with the near breakdown of law and order in some parts of the country are also indices of a dysfunctional leadership. Ribadu avers, "We laugh and hug in public and plot against each other when we retire to our ethno-religious enclaves".[33] There is a link between national unity and the inadequacies of leadership at many levels of governance. The consequence is that, the already tensed and precarious state of affairs in the country is stretched to the limit thereby re-enforcing the gulf of divisions among Nigerians. The country is still groping in the dark for a leader of a nationalistic mould that will aggregate the collective aspirations of the people and rally them for national unity and development. At best we still have regional and tribal leaders that have continued to nurture and sustain these regional and sectional sentiments at the expense of our unity and development.

Socio-Economic and Political Inbalance

Socio-economic and political inequalities is a critical variable in the quest for national unity. Common citizenship is crucial component in national unity. However, this seems far- fetched when inequalities are so glaring. Nigerians most basic rights are still trampled upon and where there is a semblance of these rights, there are glaring variations in according them to Nigerians.[34] For example, the actions and inactions of the immediate past administration of late former president Muhammadu Buhari concerning the herder-farmer crisis in the country has fueled the perception that some citizens were more equal than others in country that belongs to all. Other "primordial" identities and sentiments that have gained

[31] Abubakar, p23

[32] Business Day, "Bad Political Leadership is the Bane of Nigeria" October 14 2025

[33] Nuhu Ribadu, "Leadership and National Unity in Nigeria" www.saharareporters.com, 2017. P6, accessed 10/9/2025

[34] Aye "The Metaphysical Problem of Unity and Diversity and its Implications for National Unity"-, p125

wide currency and greater political significance, especially in contestations over citizenship, are those of indigenes, non-indigenes, migrants and settlers. These categorizations have ethnic, communal, religious and regional conotations and have evolved from entrenched system of discriminatory practices in which non-indigenes, migrants and settlers are denied certain opportunities and privileges in their place of abode, community or state while preference is given to supposed indigenes who are accorded unfettered privileges. The system promotes and encourages a biased system of citizenship that fans the embers of resentment and conflicts within the country and which is at the front burner of national discourse

Religion

The role of religion as a critical variable in the geo-political dynamics of Nigerian cannot be over emphasized. Religion has situated itself as a very important and potent factor in the geo-political development of Nigeria. This is because, the average Nigerian is said to be very religious. It is however sad to note that, religion has been misapplied and deployed negatively in Nigeria. This has resulted in unfortunate situations of crisis rather than peace. It is pertinent to note that, inter-religious conflicts have become incidental identity politics in Nigeria. The political class has negatively manipulated this for political milage during electoral processes. It was glaring that in the events leading up to 2015 and 2023 general elections, religion played a pivotal role in the electoral process. This does not augur well for peace and unity. This politicization of religious identities during electoral contests lacks any ideological decency. Consequently, religion is elevated to a dangerous level.

Ibuanyidanda/Complementary Ontology and the Quest for National Unity

Ibuanydanda/Complementary ontology is a follow up of a prior work by Asouzu developed as a proper horizon for the articulation and conceptualization of being. In his work "Method and Principle of Complementary Reflection: In and Beyond African Philosophy", Asouzu conceived the complementary mode of reflection as his unique presentation of what the traditional African anonymous Igbo philosophers reflected on.[35] Crucial to this ambience for legitimate reflection is the principle of complementary reflection which has a dyad variant and the imperative of complementary reflection. This variant address both the metaphysical and practical dimension of the complementary imperative. "The imperative of integration" which is the metaphysical type of the principle of complementarity states that, "anything that exist serves a missing link of reality within the framework of the totality". On the other hand, the principle of "progressive transformation" which is the practical variant is formulated thus, "all forms of human activities are geared towards harmonious living.[36] While the metaphysical variant outlines the metaphysical implications of the principle of complementary reflection, the practical variant addresses the practical relevance of the principle.[37] Complementary reflection is therefore a conception of reality that emphasize the unity of opposites and the harmony of fragments. It sets the grounds for understanding "being" in all its modes and self-expression in history, and in its essential complementary rationality, in a dynamic and future referential manner. Furthermore, it stresses the fact that, units/existents in "being" are in a mutual complementary relationship, which is necessary for their alignment with "being", and their intentionality towards the joy of being.

[35] Johnmary Marabayi, P25
[36] Asouzu, "Ibuanyidanda" p306
[37] Asouzu, "Method and Principle of Complementary Reflection….p273

The heterogeneity of Nigeria is unfortunately more problematic than advantageous especially in the quest to forge national unity. The imperative of integration is given lip service by Nigerian leadership. We seem to lack or abandon the need for progressive transformation towards nationhood. People are therefore aligned on tribal and regional affiliations than national identity. In view of this disturbing trend, Asouzu's complementary ontology/Ibuanyidanda becomes imperative. To make progress as a nation, it is imperative to deemphasize our primordial affiliation and other divisive proclivities. Where sectional identities are negatively projected, unity becomes a mirage, the idea of unity will become illusive. There is the need to emphasize collective aspirations, unity and other factors that binds us to the National project, over narrow ethnic and sectional considerations that are in most cases divisive. Over the centuries, Philosophers have continued to be intrigued concerning the reality of apparent unity in the midst of glaring diversity. This implication of this is that, unity and diversity are constitutive elements of the universe. In spite of the differences visible in the cosmos, there is still a sublime unity that underlie these differences.[38] As a nation, it is imperative to rise above differences especially those that impact us negatively, and promote rather what unites us despite our diversity. Plato prefigured this fundamental unity in his world of forms and ideas. He emphasized the essence of things as being stable and immutable in his world of forms, and every individual thing participating in these universal concepts.[39] Conceptually as individual human beings, we are part of this universal humanity which underlie our common bond. Our social differences do not define our essence.

In line with the Heraclitean point of view, in spite of our differences, we cannot deny the fact that, we descend from one human family. Our differences therefore, implies a bond that can never be erased. Ewelu buttressed this when he argued that: "the oneness of nature is the form of unity, unity implies plurality, there is unity only when there are diversities".[40] In unity, all the components are organized into one. Unity acknowledges every member in a mutual relationship of respect and every member respects the other in all their differences and enables them the latitude to contribute their quota towards the aspirations of the union. The beauty of nature is encapsulated in its diversity, in the same vein, our worth as a nation lies in our diversity. It is beyond us to strive to be one in terms of tribe, language, religion, culture/tradition etc. rather, it is incumbent on us to leverage the advantages of our diversity for unity, peace and national development. Asouzu's notion of being as crucial links of the whole aligns perfectly with the foregoing. It is pertinent to note that Asouzu is against fragmentation of being and treating the fragments as independent of the whole. It is in the unity of the fragments that being is realized, this is complementarity. The African conception of being and reality is complementary which ensures strength and unity. Consequently, it is noteworthy that, our shared humanity reflected in our diversity should be seen from the point of view of strength. We are missing links without which the whole cannot be complete. We are strong when we are together, we complement one another, we are not independent of one another in the sense we portray ourselves. This is the point Asouzu is making in his complementary ontology/ibuanyidanda.

[38] Aye, "The Metaphysical Problem of Unity and Diversity…" p127
[39] C. Rowe, "Plato Republic (London: Penguin Books, 2012), p24
[40] B.I.Ewelu, "Philosophical Reflections on the Common Good in Africa" Enugu: Delta Publications, Nig. Ltd,2011, p214

Conclusion

Life can be seen as the mutual relationship of all living entities obeying the natural laws. It is not easy to simultaneously conceive things as one and diverse. The structure of the rainbow illustrates this succinctly. Each colour can clearly be independently, however, in the colour spectrum, they all coalesce to form a unity. Without any of the colours, that unity will no longer be there and there will be no rainbow to talk about. The colours complement each other to form the perfect rainbow. This underlies the central essence of the unity of life, a system embodies a unity that is not equal to the sum of its parts. All components within a system are important. Some of the components within a system are crucial, others are valuable, but none of them operates in isolation of the structure. Asouzu's conception of "being" as missing links becomes imperative in understanding our shared ontologically identity as a nation. The absence of even one link from the whole renders the whole incomplete and no longer complementary. Nigeria has had its fair share of crisis occasioned by a variety of factors including disunity. It is imperative to note that, the unity we envisage should be founded on the principles of equity, fairness and openness, these factors are crucial to this unity. As noted earlier, our variety is derived from the common bond we share as human beings, this is the essential basis of our commonality and it is difficult to shy away from this fact. Diversity continue to constrain us and our dreams of attaining and realizing our full potentialities as a nation will remain a mirage. Complementary ontology/ibuanyidanda becomes a constant reminder in our quest for national unity, and for "progressive transformation, a balanced federal structure; responsible and accountable leadership; socio-economic and political 7equality as well as the prohibition of a state religion should be ensured.

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Article **Open Access**

THE ETHICS OF POWER AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA

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Abstract
Political leadership in Africa brings up some deep ethical dilemmas regarding how power is gained, exercised, and held accountable. While we often justify political authority by its ability to serve the common good, the ongoing issues of corruption, misuse of power, political exclusion, inequality, and weak institutional accountability raise serious questions about the moral duties of our leaders. This article delves into the ethical underpinnings of political leadership in modern African nations. It posited that we cannot judge legitimate political leadership just by looking at electoral wins, holding a constitutional position, or maintaining political stability. Instead, with political power comes a set of moral responsibilities to safeguard human dignity, foster justice, uphold institutional integrity, and be answerable to the people. The article outlined an ethical framework for political leadership based on four key principles: public responsibility, justice, integrity, and accountability. It also emphasized that the state of our institutions is crucial because, while individual moral character is significant, it alone cannot ensure ethical governance. Political institutions need to limit arbitrary power and create an environment where leaders can be held accountable for their actions. In conclusion, transforming political leadership in Africa ethically requires not just leaders who act responsibly but also institutions that can curb power abuses. Political leadership is deemed legitimate not just when leaders have authority, but when that authority is wielded for the public good, grounded in justice, accountability, and respect for citizens. The paper adopts a qualitative conceptual methodology, using critical analysis of political-philosophical literature and selected scholarship on governance, corruption, accountability, and ethical leadership in African states. It interprets these sources normatively to develop an ethical framework based on public responsibility, justice,

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integrity, and accountability.

Keywords: Political Ethics, Political Leadership, Power, Corruption, Justice, Accountability, Africa, Political Authority.

Introduction

Political power stands out as one of the most significant forms of social influence. The choices made by political leaders shape how public resources are allocated, how laws are upheld, how institutions function, and ultimately, how citizens experience their freedom, security, and justice. Thus, political leadership goes beyond mere administration; it embodies an ethical practice that carries responsibilities toward individuals and communities. This ethical dimension becomes particularly crucial in today's African states, where political institutions often grapple with issues like corruption, patronage, inequality, electoral manipulation, political exclusion, weak accountability, and the misuse of public office. While these challenges are not unique to Africa, their ongoing presence in many African contexts highlights the need for a thorough ethical assessment of political power. The key question this article seeks to address is: What makes the exercise of political power ethically legitimate in contemporary African states? The argument presented here is that political leadership cannot be morally justified solely by holding a constitutional office or winning an election. Political authority comes with obligations. In Rawls opinion, leaders are given power that isn't just their own to wield; they have a duty to use that power for the public good and within moral and institutional boundaries. For him, there are four key principles that stand out: public responsibility, justice, integrity, and accountability. Public responsibility means that leaders should view their political roles as a trust rather than a personal privilege. Justice emphasizes the need for fair treatment of all citizens and ensuring everyone has equal access to political and social opportunities. Integrity calls for a harmony between what leaders are expected to do publicly and how they conduct themselves privately. Lastly, accountability insists that leaders must be answerable for how they wield political power. (Rawls, 1999). The article also points out that ethical political leadership isn't solely reliant on the character of individual leaders. Even those with strong moral convictions operate within systems that can either promote or hinder corruption and misconduct. Therefore, ethical leadership must also involve fostering ethical institutions.

Political Power as a Moral Trust

Political power stands apart from many other types of power because it is exercised over a community with claims of public authority. For instance, a business owner has authority over a company due to ownership or contractual agreements. In contrast, a political leader holds authority over citizens who are not their personal property. This difference carries a significant ethical message: political power is, at its core, a public trust. The concept of political office as a trust suggests that those in power hold it temporarily and for reasons that go beyond their own interests. According to Locke, public resources shouldn't be treated like personal assets. Likewise, public institutions shouldn't be turned into tools for personal gain. Political authority shouldn't be used just to reward friends, family, supporters, or political allies. (Locke, 1988). The idea of public trust is particularly crucial when discussing corruption. Corruption isn't just about financial misconduct; it signifies a moral shift where public power is misused for private gain. When an official misappropriates public resources for their own benefit, they break the trust that is essential for political authority to function. The ethical dilemma here runs deeper than just financial loss. Corruption erodes the moral significance of holding public office. A political leader who views their role as a trust should

be asking not just, "What can I gain from this position?" but rather, "What responsibilities come with this role?" This shift in mindset is key to ethical leadership.

Locke further stated that a leader who truly cares about ethics needs to think about how their political choices impact various groups in society. This is especially crucial in places where there are significant inequalities and a mix of different cultures and beliefs. If political leadership only serves those who are well-connected while ignoring the needs of the most vulnerable, it falls short of what justice demands. Justice doesn't mean that every person has to end up with the exact same material wealth. Instead, it calls for fair institutions and sound principles that guide how political and social benefits and burdens are shared. John Rawls's idea of justice as fairness offers a valuable framework for this discussion. His focus on ensuring equal opportunities and safeguarding basic freedoms highlights the need for political systems that don't just cater to those who are already privileged. However, applying these principles in an African context requires a deep understanding of local histories and institutions. Justice can't just be a one-size-fits-all concept. African societies are rich with diverse cultural traditions, have faced colonial histories, and experience various forms of ethnic and religious diversity, economic disparities, and unique paths of state development. The real ethical challenge lies in creating institutions that can adapt universal ideas of human dignity and fairness into political practices that resonate with local realities. An ethical political leader is one who makes decisions that prioritize the common good over the interests of a select few. This is especially crucial because political leaders often have access to opportunities that regular citizens simply don't. They might have control over public appointments, government contracts, security agencies, and various public resources. This is why Gyeke opined that the more power someone holds, the more significant the potential fallout from their moral missteps. Integrity, then, is all about self-restraint. (Gyekye, 1997). A leader who chooses not to wield every tool at their disposal just because they can legally or politically shows a vital ethical quality. An ethical leader understands that what's legal isn't always what's right. A decision might technically fall within the authority of an officeholder, yet still be ethically questionable if it's driven by personal gain, political vendettas, discrimination, or the undermining of legitimate institutional checks. Thus, political integrity demands that leaders recognize moral limits that go beyond just meeting the bare minimum of legal standards.

Accountability and the Limit of Political Power

No understanding of ethical leadership is truly complete without accountability. Political power can become perilous when leaders are beyond effective questioning, investigation, or removal. Rawls defines accountability as the ability of political leaders to be responsible for the choices and actions they take while in public office. It encompasses transparency, institutional oversight, legal accountability, public scrutiny, and ultimately, the possibility of facing political consequences. Democratic elections are a crucial way to hold leaders accountable, but they're not the whole picture. While elections happen at set intervals, political power is in play all the time. A leader can't just be held accountable when their term ends; that wouldn't be fair. That's where independent courts, legislatures, audit institutions, investigative bodies, free media, civil society organizations, and other forms of public oversight come into play. They're essential in keeping political power in check. The need for accountability becomes even more apparent when political institutions are weak. If these institutions can't effectively investigate public officials, tackle corruption, or uphold constitutional limits, political power can easily become concentrated in the hands of a few. When power becomes personalized, it creates a troubling ethical situation. This therefore

strongly affirms the words of Petit which says that the line between what's good for the public and what benefits the ruler personally starts to blur when power becomes personalized. (Petit, 1997) This is why we need more than just leaders with good intentions to build an ethical state. We need robust institutions that can stand up to leaders when they overstep their bounds.

The Problem of Patronage and Political Loyalty

One of the toughest ethical dilemmas that political leaders face is balancing their loyalty to supporters with the need for fair public administration. It's only natural for political leaders to form bonds with their supporters, allies, friends, and community members. Yet, holding public office comes with responsibilities that go beyond these personal connections. Patronage becomes a real ethical issue when access to public resources, jobs, contracts, or political opportunities hinges more on personal loyalty than on relevant public standards. The moral concern isn't just about a few individuals reaping the benefits. Patronage can erode the equal standing of all citizens. Those who aren't part of the political inner circle may find themselves treated as second-class members of their own community. This issue can also diminish the effectiveness of institutions. When appointments are based on loyalty instead of skill, public institutions may struggle to meet their obligations. For ethical leadership to thrive, it's crucial to draw a line between political support and public entitlement. Supporting a political leader doesn't automatically grant someone a moral right to public resources or positions. The leader's job is to make sure that political institutions are there for citizens as individuals, not just as supporters of a cause. This idea is crucial for building public trust.

Political Leadership and the Moral Meaning of Corruption

Corruption is perhaps the most glaring example of how political power can be misused. For Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, corruption happens when public authority is turned into a tool for private or group gain. The ethical fallout goes beyond just losing money. Corruption can rob citizens of essential services, weaken institutions, skew political competition, widen inequality, and erode trust in government. From a philosophical standpoint, corruption can be seen as a breach of justice and public trust. (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Fighting corruption isn't just the job of anti-corruption agencies; political leaders must also show a real commitment to transparent governance. A government can't honestly expect integrity from its citizens while turning a blind eye to corruption among those in power. This leads to a key principle of ethical leadership: leaders should be ready to hold themselves to the same standards they expect from others. Corruption also highlights the need for moral character and strong institutional design to work hand in hand. A dishonest leader can take advantage of weak institutions, but robust institutions can make it harder for corruption to thrive, even if leaders lack integrity. The most effective solution, therefore, requires a combination of moral education and institutional reform.

Political Leadership, Human Dignity and Political Violence

The responsible exercise of political power hinges on a deep respect for human dignity. Citizens aren't just tools for achieving political goals; they have inherent moral value that stands apart from their usefulness in politics. Rawls opines that principle carries weighty implications for how states wield coercive power. While governments need the ability to enforce laws and safeguard citizens, coercion crosses an ethical line when it's arbitrary, excessive, discriminatory, or aimed at punishing those who dare to voice criticism against those in charge. In this light, political opposition plays a crucial role. In a democracy, simply

disagreeing with the government isn't an act of betrayal. It's vital for political leaders to differentiate between real threats to public order and valid political dissent. An ethical leader understands that disagreement is a natural part of political life. Moreover, respecting dignity means leaders must resist the urge to view political opponents as enemies whose rights can be ignored. When political rivalry turns into a battle between those who deserve rights and those who don't, it undermines the very moral foundations of democratic governance. Instead, political leadership should aim to channel political disagreements into healthy institutional competition.

Beyond Individual Leaders: Ethics of Institution

It's easy to point fingers at individual political leaders when governance goes awry, but that would be a mistake. The truth is, political institutions play a huge role in shaping behavior. These institutions set the stage by establishing incentives, distributing authority, outlining procedures, and determining how abuses can be addressed. When an institution allows for unchecked discretion without proper oversight, it opens the door for abuse, even if the leaders involved start off with the best intentions. This is why ethical political leadership hinges on having ethical institutional frameworks in place. Such frameworks include constitutional limits on power, independent judicial bodies, transparent public finances, professional public administration, trustworthy electoral processes, effective legislative oversight, and ways for citizens to hold the government accountable. Understanding the institutional aspect also sheds light on why simply swapping one political leader for another often doesn't change the game. If the foundational structures are still prone to patronage, corruption, and arbitrary power, new leaders might just fall into the same old patterns. Political ethics, therefore, needs to go beyond just asking, "Are our leaders good people?" It should also consider, "What kind of institutions foster good governance and make bad governance harder to achieve?" Finding the answer involves blending virtue with structure. To having moral character without institutional checks can lead to well-meaning fragile governance. On the flip side, institutions that lack ethical leadership might be technically sound but morally hollow. For political ethics to be truly sustainable, we need both elements working together.

Toward an Ethical Model of Political Leadership in Africa

When we think about a solid ethical framework for political leadership in today's African nations, Rawls maintained that it should be built on four key principles that are all connected. The first is public responsibility: Political leaders need to see their roles as a trust. The main goal of holding political power should be to serve the public, not to enlarge their own pockets. Next is justice: Political choices should honour the equal moral worth of all citizens. Resources and opportunities should be allocated based on fair principles, not on personal favours or loyalty to specific groups. The third principle is integrity: Leaders must show a consistent alignment between what they promise publicly and how they act privately. Integrity also means exercising self-control and acknowledging moral boundaries. (Rawls, 1999). Finally, is the principle accountability: Those in power must be open to scrutiny from both institutions and the public. Leaders should be held responsible for the outcomes of their decisions. These principles work together. If you have responsibility without accountability, it can lead to a paternalistic approach. On the flip side, accountability without integrity can turn into a mere formality. Integrity that lacks justice might result in leaders who are personally honest but politically unfair. And justice that isn't backed by strong institutions can remain just a dream rather than a reality. So, ethical leadership really hinges

on weaving these principles together. In the African context, Gyekye believes that it's crucial that ethical political theory pays attention to local experiences. (Gyekye, 1997). The goal shouldn't be to blindly copy a foreign model but to create political institutions that can embody universal ethical principles while being rooted in specific historical and social realities. This approach acknowledges both the universal nature of human dignity and the significance of the institutional environment.

Conclusion

Political power comes with a hefty dose of moral responsibility because it directly impacts the rights, opportunities, security, and overall well-being of citizens. So, when we evaluate political leadership, it shouldn't just be about who has the constitutional authority or who won the election; it should also consider how that power is wielded. In this article, we've highlighted four key principles that are essential for a truly ethical approach to political leadership: public responsibility, justice, integrity, and accountability. These principles remind us that holding a political office is more about serving the public than claiming a personal entitlement. In the African context, this ethical dilemma is especially pressing. Ongoing issues like corruption, patronage, inequality, weak institutions, and political exclusion can erode public trust in government. However, it's crucial to see these challenges not just as signs of individual moral failings but as indicators of the need for stronger institutional frameworks. The takeaway here is that ethical political leadership hinges on both virtuous individuals and robust institutions. Leaders need to have the moral compass to exercise restraint, respect their citizens, and prioritize the public good over personal gain. At the same time, institutions must be designed to curb arbitrary power, shine a light on misconduct, and ensure effective accountability. In the end, the true measure of ethical political leadership lies not in how much power a leader can amass, but in how responsibly that power is used. A morally responsible political leader understands that authority is temporary, public resources are held in trust, citizens have inherent dignity, and political power must always be accountable to those it affects. For Africa to cultivate an ethical political landscape, it won't be enough to simply seek out better leaders. We need to build political institutions that frame leadership as a responsible stewardship of public power.

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