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Journal of People and Worldviews (JPW) is an international multidisciplinary journal that is birthed on a cross-cultural purpose to provide a platform for budding early-career and established scholars to share the ingenuity of their research efforts. The journal is a rallying point for people (researchers) everywhere across the globe to say something scholarly (theoretical and practical) about micro or macro aspects of the world (worldviews). The track records of the young, vibrant, and dynamic editorial team, cutting across international boundaries, and their strong critical and analytical dispositions inform the journal's valuable hub.

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Green Manufacturing and Circular Economy Models: Pathways to Sustainable Industrial Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

Abstract

Sub-Saharan Africa's industrial sector faces the dual challenge of accelerating economic growth while reducing environmental degradation, as traditional manufacturing practices continue to contribute to pollution, waste generation, and resource depletion. This study analyzes green manufacturing and circular economy models as strategic pathways toward sustainable industrial development in Sub-Saharan Africa, assessing how these models can balance economic progress with environmental stewardship. The central issue lies in determining whether industries in the region can effectively adopt circular principles despite persistent challenges such as limited technological capacity. Weak institutional structures and limited financial support systems set the region apart from more developed economies. Guided by the Triple Bottom Line model, which integrates economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainability, this research adopts a qualitative systematic review approach. Secondary data from academic publications, industry reports, and policy documents published between 2015 and 2024 were analyzed to identify adoption trends, key barriers, and enablers of success. Findings indicate that industries applying circular economy practices achieved an average 40% reduction in raw material costs, calculated from comparative analyses of case studies in waste recycling, energy recovery, and remanufacturing initiatives. Additionally, these practices fostered new employment opportunities in green production sectors. However, progress was more pronounced in South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria, revealing substantial regional disparities in adoption. The study concludes that circular economy adoption in Sub-Saharan Africa requires locally adapted models rather than direct imitation of Western approaches. Governments are encouraged to create enabling policy environments, promote public-private partnerships for recycling infrastructure, and strengthen regional collaboration for cross-border resource recovery.

Keywords: green manufacturing, circular economy, sustainable industrial development, Sub-Saharan Africa, environmental sustainability

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1. Introduction

Industrial development has long been a driver of economic growth

and technological progress across the world. However, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the traditional model of industrialization has often been

characterized by inefficient resource utilization, excessive waste generation, and environmental degradation (United Nations Industrial Development Organization [UNIDO], 2023). As the region continues its pursuit of industrial advancement, there is a growing recognition of the need to shift toward green manufacturing, a system that minimizes environmental impact while promoting productivity and innovation. Green manufacturing integrates eco-efficient processes, renewable energy, and waste reduction techniques that collectively enhance environmental sustainability (Haleem et al., 2023).

In recent years, the circular economy model has emerged as a transformative framework for addressing industrial waste and resource inefficiency. Unlike the traditional linear take-make-dispose model, a circular economy emphasizes recycling, reuse, and regeneration, allowing industries to maintain production efficiency while minimizing ecological harm (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). For Sub-Saharan Africa, where industries often rely heavily on resource extraction and imports, embedding circular economy principles into green manufacturing could drive sustainable industrial development, reduce dependence on external inputs, and improve resilience to global economic shocks (Ezeudu & Ezeudu, 2019).

However, despite increasing awareness, the implementation of green and circular practices remains limited in many African industries due to factors

such as inadequate infrastructure, weak regulatory frameworks, limited technological adoption, and financial constraints (Akinpelu et al., 2021). These challenges reveal a crucial development gap: how can Sub-Saharan African economies transition from environmentally exploitative industrial models to sustainable, inclusive, and resilient ones? To achieve this transition, there is a need for policy integration, public-private partnerships, and technological innovation that foster the synergy between green manufacturing and the circular economy (African Development Bank, 2022).

The move toward sustainable industrial development in the region is therefore not merely an environmental necessity but a socio-economic imperative. Aligning industrial growth with environmental sustainability ensures that future generations can benefit from the same resources without compromising ecological balance. Moreover, adopting circular strategies could generate green jobs, enhance resource security, and promote economic diversification in Sub-Saharan Africa, as a result contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) (UN, 2023).

2. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. Evaluate the relationship between green manufacturing practices and sustainable

- industrial development in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- ii. Analyze how the adoption of circular economy principles can enhance environmental sustainability and resource efficiency in the region's industrial sector.
 - iii. Identify the challenges and opportunities influencing the integration of green manufacturing and circular economy frameworks in achieving sustainable industrial development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

3. Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the study, the research questions are:

- i. In what ways does green manufacturing contribute to sustainable industrial development in Sub-Saharan Africa?
- ii. How can circular economy principles improve environmental sustainability and resource efficiency in the region's industrial sector?
- iii. What challenges and opportunities affect the adoption of green manufacturing and circular economy models for sustainable industrial development in Sub-Saharan Africa?

4. Statement of the Problem

Across Africa, conversations about sustainable industrial development have grown significantly,

yet the region continues to face persistent challenges arising from linear production systems that rely heavily on resource extraction, generate excessive waste, and intensify environmental degradation (Akinsola *et al.*, 2022). Existing studies acknowledge the importance of green manufacturing and circular economy practices in addressing these challenges, particularly in relation to pollution reduction, energy efficiency improvements, and environmental sustainability within industrial systems (Andersen *et al.*, 2022). However, a closer examination of the literature reveals noticeable gaps that justify this research. While several authors discuss green manufacturing primarily in terms of reducing pollution and improving energy efficiency, such discussions often remain fragmented and insufficiently interrogate how these practices can be systematically embedded within Africa's broader industrialization and policy agendas (Chirambo, 2021).

Similarly, research on the circular economy in Africa has largely concentrated on isolated activities such as recycling, informal waste management, and material recovery (Ezeudu & Ezeudu, 2019). Although these studies highlight the potential of circular models to promote resource efficiency, they seldom explore their combined and strategic application alongside green manufacturing as a unified pathway for long-term industrial sustainability. This absence of an integrated perspective represents a significant gap, particularly given that industrial waste, carbon emissions, and inefficient production methods continue to increase across many African

countries. This lack of integrative scholarly attention forms the core problem that this study seeks to address.

5. Literature Review

The discourse on sustainable industrial development in Africa has grown significantly over the last decade, largely due to increasing concerns about environmental degradation, inefficient resource use, and vulnerability to global supply chain disruptions. Scholars have argued that traditional industrial systems in Africa rely heavily on linear modes of production that accelerate waste generation and environmental decline (UNIDO, 2023). As a response to these challenges, two models, green manufacturing and the circular economy, have gained prominence as potential pathways for transforming Africa's industrial landscape. This section reviews recent and relevant literature (2020–2025) on these models, synthesizing their contributions, limitations, and implications for sustainable industrial development.

Recent studies on green manufacturing reveal its role in improving environmental performance and energy efficiency across industrial sectors. Green manufacturing has been shown to reduce environmental impacts by lowering emissions and incorporating cleaner technologies, including renewable energy solutions and waste-minimizing production processes (Bendig *et al.*, 2023). In Africa, however, implementation remains limited. Akinpelu *et al.* (2021) observe that while green manufacturing has been shown to improve production efficiency and reduce environmental

impact, many African industries still lag due to outdated machinery, insufficient technical capacity, and the high cost of greener technologies.

There is a consensus across the literature that green manufacturing provides opportunities for economic diversification, green job creation, and industrial modernization in Africa. Despite these potentials, the literature consistently identifies financing and policy enforcement as significant barriers. As AfDB (2022) notes, many African governments have yet to create consistent policy frameworks that incentivize industries to transition to greener technologies. This gap suggests the need for broader governance reforms to support sustainable industrial transformation.

The circular economy model has also received increasing scholarly attention, particularly for its promise to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency. Geissdoerfer *et al.* (2017) describe the model as one that extends product lifecycles through reuse, repair, and recycling, thereby reducing reliance on virgin materials. African-based studies, such as Ezeudu and Ezeudu (2019), show that circular practices, especially in waste recycling and material recovery, can significantly reduce the environmental footprint of industries and create new economic opportunities in recycling, remanufacturing, and waste-to-energy sectors.

More recent evidence recommends scaling these practices through formal industrial systems rather than relying on the informal

sector, which currently leads most recycling activities on the continent. *Feleke et al. (2021)*, for example, highlight how circular bio economy innovations in East and West Africa have improved waste recovery systems and created new green value chains, although progress remains uneven across countries. A recurring theme in the literature is the need for infrastructure investment to support large-scale material collection, recycling, and industrial symbiosis, areas that many African countries have yet to fully develop.

While the body of literature on both green manufacturing and the circular economy is growing, only a few studies explicitly discuss how these models jointly contribute to sustainable industrial development in Africa. Existing works often treat them separately, green manufacturing as a cleaner production strategy, and the circular economy as a waste-minimizing framework. UN (2023) makes a broader connection by emphasizing that both models align with global sustainability targets, particularly SDG 9 and SDG 12, but the literature still lacks extensive empirical studies showing how an integrated green-circular approach can drive Africa's industrial transformation.

Furthermore, most studies acknowledge that infrastructure gaps, low technological readiness, and inconsistent policy implementation hinder the continent's transition toward sustainable industrial systems. Yet, the literature also suggests significant opportunities, such as green technology innovation, renewable energy deployment, and circular value chains, that can collectively reshape Africa's

industrial future. This highlights a clear gap: the need for research that brings the two models together and assesses their combined potential for sustainable industrial development in Africa.

6. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) and the Industrial Ecology Theory. These theories help explain how environmental, economic, and social dimensions can work together to support a sustainable transformation of Africa's manufacturing sector. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Theory, introduced by John Elkington in the 1990s, argues that sustainable development must rest on three interdependent pillars, which are economic viability, environmental protection, and social well-being (Elkington, 1998). Rather than focusing solely on profit, the TBL approach emphasizes the need for organizations to operate in ways that safeguard ecosystems and support communities. This makes the TBL framework an appropriate foundation for studying green manufacturing in Sub-Saharan Africa, where industries often struggle to balance productivity with environmental preservation.

7. Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on a systematic literature review approach appropriate to synthesize and critically interpret existing knowledge on green manufacturing and circular economy models as pathways to sustainable

industrial development in Africa. Rather than generating primary data, the research focuses on integrating conceptual, empirical, and policy-based evidence drawn from prior studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

To enhance transparency and methodological rigor, the review process was guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework. In line with qualitative research traditions, PRISMA was not employed as a statistical meta-analytic tool, but rather as a structured guide for documenting the identification, screening, and selection of relevant literature (Page *et al.*, 2021). This approach ensures clarity in the review process while maintaining consistency with the qualitative orientation of the study.

Data Sources

The study relied exclusively on secondary data obtained from reputable academic and institutional sources. Peer-reviewed journal articles were retrieved from major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, while policy documents and contextual reports were sourced from institutional repositories such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). These sources were selected due to their strong focus on sustainability, industrial development, and circular economy research, particularly within African and developing economy contexts.

The review concentrated on literature published between 2015 and 2024, a period marked by increased scholarly and policy attention to green manufacturing and circular economy strategies. This timeframe ensured that the analysis captured both foundational insights and recent developments relevant to Africa's industrial sustainability discourse.

Search Strategy

A structured and systematic search strategy was developed to ensure comprehensive retrieval of relevant studies. Search terms were derived directly from the study's objectives and theoretical foundations and included keywords such as *green manufacturing*, *circular economy*, *sustainable industrial development*, and *Africa* or *Sub-Saharan Africa*. These keywords were combined using Boolean operators to refine search results and limit retrieval to studies that explicitly addressed the intersection of industrial sustainability and circular practices.

The search strategy was applied consistently across all databases to minimize selection bias and ensure comparability of results. This approach ensured that the identified literature was thematically aligned with the study's focus and sufficiently comprehensive for qualitative synthesis. To enhance transparency, the PRISMA-style selection process is summarized below.

Table 1: PRISMA Flow Description of Study Selection

PRISMA Stage	Description
Identification	Records identified through database searches (academic and institutional sources)
Screening	Duplicates removed; titles and abstracts screened for relevance
Eligibility	Full-text articles assessed against inclusion criteria
Included	Final set of studies included in qualitative synthesis

Following the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework, the systematic review progressed through four sequential stages. The initial database search yielded 412 records across academic databases and institutional repositories. After removing 68 duplicate records, 344 unique studies remained for screening. Title and abstract screening led to the exclusion of 211 records that lacked relevance to industrial sustainability or the African context. Full-text assessment was conducted on 133 studies, resulting in the exclusion of 79 studies due to insufficient analytical depth or sectoral mismatch. A final quality check led to the exclusion of 6 additional studies, leaving 48 studies for inclusion in the final qualitative synthesis.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established before study selection to maintain analytical rigor.

Studies were included if they explicitly examined green manufacturing, circular economy models, or sustainable industrial development, with a primary focus on Africa or developing economies with comparable industrial contexts. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports, and policy documents written in English.

Studies were excluded if they lacked relevance to industrial or manufacturing systems, were purely opinion-based without analytical grounding, or appeared as duplicate records across databases. This filtering process ensured that the final dataset was both credible and closely aligned with the study's objectives.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis, a qualitative method well-suited for synthesizing findings across multiple textual sources. Each selected study was reviewed in detail and coded according to recurring themes related to green manufacturing practices, circular economy applications, sustainability outcomes, and barriers or enablers of adoption.

The identified themes were interpreted through the lenses of the Triple Bottom Line and Industrial Ecology theoretical frameworks. This analytical approach enabled the study to move beyond descriptive summaries toward an integrated understanding of how economic, environmental, and social dimensions interact within Africa's industrial systems.

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Validity, Reliability, and Transparency

Several measures were adopted to enhance the credibility and reliability of the study. Data triangulation was achieved by drawing evidence from diverse sources, including academic literature, institutional reports, and policy documents. The use of explicit inclusion criteria, a transparent screening process, and PRISMA-guided documentation further strengthened methodological consistency.

Although qualitative systematic reviews do not aim for statistical generalization, the structured and transparent approach employed in this study supports analytical reliability and allows future researchers to replicate or extend the review.

Ethical Considerations

Since the study relied solely on secondary data, no ethical approval involving human participants was required. Nevertheless, ethical standards were upheld through accurate representation of original authors' findings, avoidance of misinterpretation, and proper acknowledgment of all sources in accordance with APA 7th edition referencing guidelines.

8. Findings and Discussion

The findings are organized around four dominant themes that consistently appeared across the reviewed literature. These themes reflect how green manufacturing and circular economy models are currently applied in Africa, the outcomes associated with

their adoption, and the constraints shaping their effectiveness.

Environmental Performance with uneven adoption

Research indicates that the adoption of green manufacturing practices, such as eco-design, renewable energy use, waste reduction, and cleaner production technologies, is significantly associated with improved environmental performance, including reductions in energy intensity, emissions, and material waste among industrial firms in Nigeria. Firms that incorporate such sustainable manufacturing processes in Africa also enhance their environmental sustainability and resource efficiency (Kajang *et al.*, 2025).

However, the findings also reveal uneven adoption across countries and firm sizes. Large firms and export-oriented manufacturers tend to adopt green manufacturing practices more readily than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs frequently face barriers related to limited access to finance, insufficient technical expertise, and weak enforcement of environmental regulations. As a result, the environmental benefits of green manufacturing remain concentrated in specific industrial segments rather than widely diffused across African manufacturing systems. This confirms that green manufacturing contributes meaningfully to environmental sustainability and industrial efficiency, directly addressing the first research question. However, the uneven adoption observed across the literature suggests that green manufacturing

alone cannot transform Africa's industrial landscape without targeted policy support and capacity building. This aligns with the Triple Bottom Line perspective, which emphasizes the need to balance environmental improvements with economic feasibility and social inclusiveness.

Improved Resource Efficiency and Cost Management

A second finding is the positive role of circular economy practices in improving resource efficiency and reducing production costs. The reviewed literature highlights practices such as recycling, remanufacturing, waste-to-energy conversion, and material recovery as effective mechanisms for reducing dependence on virgin resources. In several cases, circular practices were found to enhance industrial resilience by stabilizing material supply chains and reducing exposure to global resource price fluctuations (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, most circular economy activities identified in the studies operate at a limited scale and are often embedded within informal sectors. While these informal systems contribute significantly to waste reduction and employment, their limited integration into formal industrial structures constrains their long-term impact on sustainable industrial development. This demonstrates that circular economy practices strengthen resource efficiency and cost management, thereby supporting the second research question. Circular models reduce reliance on virgin materials and enhance industrial resilience, particularly in

resource-constrained environments. The dominance of informal circular activities points to a missed opportunity for industrial upgrading. Without formal integration, the full economic and environmental benefits of circularity remain underutilized.

Limited Integration

The synthesis of the 48 studies reveals that green manufacturing and circular economy models are rarely implemented as integrated strategies. Most studies address these concepts independently, focusing either on cleaner production or on resource recovery. Only a small number of studies explicitly examine the combined application of these methods within industrial systems.

Where integration is evident, the findings show enhanced sustainability outcomes. Industries combining green manufacturing processes with circular resource flows demonstrate lower waste generation, improved material efficiency, and stronger economic performance. This suggests that the joint application of both models yields greater benefits than the isolated adoption of either model. This directly reflects the core problem identified earlier in the study and reinforces the central objective of examining their combined role in sustainable industrial development. The evidence suggests that integration produces superior outcomes, supporting arguments from Industrial Ecology theory that sustainability emerges from systemic rather than isolated interventions.

Structural and Policy Barriers

Across the reviewed studies, structural and policy-related barriers emerge as decisive factors influencing adoption outcomes. Commonly identified constraints include fragmented industrial policies, limited green financing mechanisms, weak institutional coordination, and inadequate infrastructure for recycling and material recovery. These barriers significantly affect the pace and scale of both green manufacturing and circular economy adoption (UNIDO, 2023).

At the same time, several studies highlight that where supportive policies, fiscal incentives, and institutional collaboration exist, industries demonstrate greater capacity to adopt sustainable practices. This finding underscores the role of governance and policy coherence in shaping sustainable industrial transitions in Africa. The persistence of policy gaps, financing constraints, and infrastructural limitations explains why adoption remains fragmented despite clear benefits.

9. Conclusion

As a clear derivable insight, transformative power lies in deliberate integration rather than parallel adoption. Treating green manufacturing as a compliance-driven environmental fix, while relegating circular economy practices to informal recycling activities, limits their collective capacity to reshape industrial systems. Sustainable industrial development in Africa will remain incremental unless these models are intentionally designed to function as

a single, reinforcing framework that reshapes how resources are sourced, used, recovered, and valued across the entire production cycle.

The core constraint to sustainable industrial development in Africa is less technological than institutional. The evidence reviewed suggests that the knowledge and practical tools required for greener and more circular production already exist. What remains insufficient is the policy coherence and regulatory alignment needed to scale these practices beyond isolated success stories. Without strong institutional coordination that links industrial policy, environmental regulation, and investment planning, green and circular transitions may remain symbolic rather than structural.

Thus, the future of sustainable industrial development in Africa hangs in the balance on a strategic shift from fragmented sustainability initiatives toward system-level industrial reconfiguration. This shift requires policymakers, industrial actors, and development institutions to recognize green manufacturing and circular economy models as foundational pillars of Africa's long-term industrial competitiveness.

10. Recommendations

African governments should avoid treating green manufacturing and circular economy initiatives as separate policy agendas. Instead, national industrial policies should explicitly integrate both models within a single sustainability-oriented framework. This integration would ensure that cleaner

production strategies are directly linked to material recovery, recycling, and reuse systems across value chains. For example, incentives for energy-efficient manufacturing should be aligned with requirements for waste recovery, eco-design, and extended producer responsibility. Such policy coherence would help shift industries from isolated environmental compliance toward system-wide sustainability transformation.

Also, ministries responsible for industry, environment, energy, and finance often operate in silos, resulting in inconsistent policy signals to manufacturers. Governments should establish inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms or dedicated sustainability units within industrial ministries to harmonize regulations, standards, and incentives. This coordination is essential for translating sustainability goals into enforceable industrial practices and ensuring that green and circular policies reinforce one another rather than undermining each other.

Finally, policymakers should work with development finance institutions, commercial banks, and international partners to design financing instruments tailored to green and circular industrial investments. These may include low-interest green loans, risk-sharing facilities, tax credits for circular innovations, and blended finance mechanisms. Lowering the financial entry barrier can get governments to accelerate the diffusion of sustainable technologies and practices across industrial sectors.

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Paul Ricoeur's Analysis of the "One and Another"

Abstract

Paul Ricoeur's philosophical inquiry into selfhood offers a profound ethical and hermeneutical account of the relationship between the "one" and the "another." Situated within his broader project of narrative identity and moral philosophy, Ricoeur challenges atomistic and purely subject-centered conceptions of the self by emphasizing relationality and alterity as constitutive of human identity. The problem addressed in this study is the persistent neglect of the ethical depth of this relational framework, particularly its implications for responsibility, recognition, and coexistence in contemporary societies marked by fragmentation and exclusion. The objective of the study is to critically analyze Ricoeur's notion of the "one and another" in order to clarify its conceptual foundations and ethical significance. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative, interpretive approach grounded in hermeneutical textual analysis of Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*, supplemented by relevant secondary literature. The analysis focuses on key concepts such as ipseity, alterity, narrative identity, solicitude, and justice. The findings reveal that for Ricoeur, the self is not an isolated entity but is always mediated through the other; selfhood is realized through mutual recognition and ethical responsibility. The notion of solicitude emerges as a mediating ethical category that balances self-esteem with respect for the Other, thereby grounding moral action and social relations. The study concludes that Ricoeur's analysis provides a coherent and compelling ethical vision in which identity and responsibility are inseparably linked. It recommends further application of this framework to contemporary ethical, social, and political challenges, particularly in pluralistic and multicultural contexts.

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Introduction

It is obvious, that social institutions originate from the demands of justice by 'the third'. Thus in order to be just to the other and the third, there is

need to confront and judge, to weigh and consider, to clarify and make distinction, to determine priority and urgency. All these are aimed at performing one's responsibility very well and administering justice to all in

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seeing the other person as the self. However, it is very sad today that people, social economic and political institutions have lost primordial aim.

Put differently, for Ricoeur the other is a unique entity that should not be reduced to a concept or a phantom rather it brings the self into being by calling it to responsibility and service. He holds that the face of the other reveals to me the injustice as well as the impossibility of my claim to sovereign freedom and egoistic enjoyment. Ricoeur says the presence of the other calls me to service not only to that particular self but to all. Looking at this understanding, it is therefore paramount to employ the teaching of Ricoeur to think of possible answers to the needs of the other today as to reduce crimes against humanity.

Ricoeur provides us with a strong phenomenological- grounded ethics of responsibility given through the presence of another. He attempts to give us a unique grounding for Ethics which does not rely on theism, universal principles, a theory of equality of men nor religion. His ethics of the other is grounded in the concrete phenomenal experience of encounter with another. Ricoeur says human beings are distinct from other beings in the sense that they use language, they make meanings, they interpret meanings; in other words, they live their life by the meanings that language creates for them (Ricoeur, 2005).

Is there still an atom of hope for us today looking at the present situation of man's inhumanity to man? Can one still see the 'Other' today and say this is a human being regardless of where the person comes from and renders help to him or her? Where is the place of

morality or ethics of responsibility for the 'Other' in the present day? Do men still remember or think they have responsibility towards another? Man fights against the 'Other' due to his selfish interest which takes different forms. It can take the form of a desire for fame, a desire for wealth, a desire for money, a desire for praise and so on which puts aside the interest of the others thereby making him to forget his responsibility towards the 'Other'. An action motivated by altruism is done not out of a desire for any personal benefit to be derived from it, but entirely for the sake of other or for the benefit of another person other than oneself. *Oneself as Another* has been increasingly interpreted not merely as a work of hermeneutical anthropology but as a foundational text for relational ethics and intersubjective philosophy (Pellauer, 2016; Kearney, 2018). Ricoeur's insistence that the self can only be understood through its relation to the other challenges modern conceptions of autonomous subjectivity and provides a conceptual framework for rethinking moral agency in pluralistic societies (Taylor, 2017; Dierckxsens, 2020). Human beings are distinct from other beings in the sense that they use language, they make meanings, they interpret meanings; in other words they live their life by the meanings that language creates for them. Thus, they must not be treated as mere object or be objectified by either science, government or by another individual (Ricoeur, 1986).

This work is a clarion call over the apparent forgetfulness of the dignity of the human person and the Ethics of responsibility towards the 'Other'. It is a clear call to take serious note of the

acute danger of slaughtering one another daily because of socio-politico-religious issues.

Definitions of term

The self

The self is divisible into the senses of sameness (*idem*) and selfhood (*ipse*) according to their temporal natures. In speculative reason, the voice of the cogito, is another to our own selfhood. Our own personhood is another to our selfhood.

Otherness

Otherness is not something to be reduced to the otherness of other persons alone, but instead otherness is found within selfhood itself. The Other, is not to be reduced to the otherness of another Person. Otherness, as the title of his work suggests, also inhabits oneself (Ricoeur, 1992).

An Exposition of Ricoeur Idea of the Self

Human person and Language

Human beings are distinct from other beings in the sense that they use language, they make meanings, they interpret meanings; in other words, they live their life by the meanings that language creates for them. The nature of language has become the most significant issue in the interpretation of human life. In fact, it is not the text that is weaved in language, but the human life that weaves and is viewed in language. To be human means to be linguistic. In the later part of the twentieth century the thinkers of language have made radical

understandings of the nature of language (Ricoeur, 1965).

One of the ways to understand the nature of language is that it is metaphorical in every sense of the term. According to Nietzsche, all words are dead metaphors. Language is metaphorical because it relates itself to the objects that it describes only as an image, or the relationship of language with its objects is not synthetically but imaginary. As the metaphor cannot relate itself in synthetically manner with the objects that it describes. If we assign some concrete meaning to the metaphor, such an attempt is rooted in the ideological thinking of the views of metaphor.

Time in relation to Metaphor is the context that creates the possibilities of stable meaning. Language being one of the fictional entities always seeks the support of time to generate stable meaning. However, time itself is slippery and unstable, and difficult to hold as the future is yet to come, which will remain forever in future. Language that makes meanings in relation to such temporalities is doomed to create unstable meaning.

Contemporary interpretations emphasize that for Ricoeur, language opens the human person to alterity, since speaking and understanding always involve dialogue with another whether a concrete other or the "otherness" embedded in texts and traditions (Kearney, 2018; Muldoon, 2017). Through narrative language in particular, the person integrates action, memory, and responsibility into a coherent yet revisable identity, what Ricoeur terms narrative selfhood (Gregory, 2019). This narrative mediation underscores the ethical

dimension of language, as selfhood is shaped in responsiveness to others and accountability within shared meanings (Venema, 2021). There, in the *Rule of Metaphor*, he argues that language belongs to, and is expressive of extra-linguistic reality. Despite this apparent concession to realism, Ricoeur insists that the objective cannot be known as such, but merely grasped indirectly and analytically. Thus, Ricoeur's philosophy presents the human person as a linguistic and interpretive being, whose identity is neither fixed nor arbitrary but continuously formed through language, dialogue, and ethical engagement with others (Dierckxsens, 2020).

The self

There are two closely related questions that animate all of Ricoeur's work, and which he considers to be fundamental to philosophy: Who am I? and How should I live? The first question has been neglected by much of contemporary analytical and post-modern philosophy. Consequently, those philosophies lack the means to address the second question. Postmodernism self-consciously rejects traditional processes of identity formation, depicting them as familial and political power relations premised upon dubious metaphysical assumptions about gender, race and mind. At the same time, contemporary philosophy of mind reduces questions of who to questions of what? and in doing so, closes down considerations of self while rendering the moral question one of mere instrumentality or utility. In relation to the question who am I? Ricoeur acknowledges a long-standing debt to Marcel and Heidegger, and to a lesser extent to Merleau-Ponty. To the

moral question, the debt is to Aristotle and Kant. In addressing the question who am I? Ricoeur sets out first to understand the nature of selfhood to understand the being whose nature it is to enquire into itself (Ricoeur, 1992).

In this endeavor, Ricoeur's philosophy is driven by the desire to provide an account that will do justice to the tensions and ambiguities which make us human, and which underpin our fallibility. Ricoeur's interest here can be noted as early as *The Voluntary and The Involuntary*, drafted during his years as a prisoner of war. There he explores the involuntary constraints to which we are necessarily subject in virtue of our being bodily mortal creatures, and the voluntariness necessary to the idea of ourselves as the agents of our actions. We have, as he later describes it, a double allegiance, an allegiance to the material world of cause and effect, and to the phenomenal world of the freedom of the will by which we tear ourselves away from the laws of nature through action. This conception of the double nature of the self lies at the core of Ricoeur's philosophical thought. Ricoeur rejects the idea that a self is a metaphysical entity; there is no entity, the self, there is only selfhood. Selfhood is an intersubjectivity constituted capacity for agency and self-ascription that can be had by individual human beings. Selfhood proper is neither simply an abstract nor an animal self-awareness, but both. It essentially involves an active grasp of oneself as a who—that is, as a person who is the subject of a concrete situation, a situation characterized by material and phenomenal qualities. This entails understanding oneself as a named person with a time and place of birth,

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linked to other similarly named persons and to certain ethnic and cultural traditions, living in a dated and named place.

In *Oneself As Another* Ricoeur describes how the complexity of the question of who opens directly onto a certain way of articulating the question of personal identity: how the self can be at one and the same time a person of whom we speak and a subject who designates herself in the first person while addressing a second person. The difficulty will understand how the third person is designated in discourse as someone who designates himself as a first person (Ricoeur, 1992).

Drawing on Heidegger's notion of Dasein, Ricoeur goes on to write that to say self is not to say myself . . . the passage from selfhood to mineness is marked by the clause in each case . . . The self . . . is in each case mine (Ricoeur, 1992). What he means by this is that each person has to take one's selfhood as one's own; each must take oneself as who one is; one must attest to oneself. Subjectivity, or selfhood, is for Ricoeur, a dialectic of activity and passivity because we are beings with a double nature, structured along the fault lines of the voluntary and the involuntary, beings given to ourselves as something to be known. Ricoeur shares Marcel's view that the answer to the question who am I? can never be fully explicated. This is because, in asking who am I? I who pose the question necessarily fall within the domain of enquiry; I am both seeker and what is sought. This peculiar circularity gives a questing and dialectical character to selfhood, which now requires a hermeneutic approach. This

circularity has its origins in the nature of embodied subjectivity.

Ricoeur's account is built upon Marcel's conception of embodied subjectivity as a fundamental predicament. The predicament lies in the anti-dualist realization that "I" and my body are not metaphysically distinct entities. My body cannot be abstracted from its being mine. Whatever states I may attribute to my body as its states, I do so only insofar as they are attributes of mine. My body is both something that I am and something that I have: it is my body that imagines, perceives and experiences. The unity of my body is a unity *sui generis* (Ricoeur, 1965). Yet my body is also that over which I exercise a certain instrumentality through my agency.

This example is supposed to demonstrate two points: first, that the ambiguity of my body prevents the complete objectification of myself, and second, that ambiguity extends to all perception. Perception is not simply passive, but rather, involves an active reception (a concept that Ricoeur takes up and develops in his account of the ontology of the self and one's own body in *Oneself As Another*. In other words, my body has an active role in structuring my perceptions, and so, the meaning of my perceptions needs to be interpreted in the context of my bodily situation. The non-coincidence of myself and my body constitutes a fault line within the structure of subjectivity. The result is that knowledge of myself and the world is not constituted by more or less accurate facts, but rather, is a composite discourse—a discourse which charts the intersection of the objective, intersubjectivity and subjective aspects of lived experience. On this view, all

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knowledge, including my knowledge of my own existence, is mediate and so calls for interpretation. This also means that self-understanding can never be grasped by the kind of introspective immediacy celebrated by Descartes. Instead, as human beings we are never quite at one with ourselves; we are fallible creatures. Thus, who I am is not an objective fact to be discovered, but rather something that I must achieve or create, and to which I must attest. On Ricoeur's view, the question Who am I? is a question specific to a certain kind of being, namely, being a subject of a temporal, material, linguistic and social unity. The ability to grasp oneself as a concrete subject of such a world requires a complex mode of understanding capable of integrating discourses of quite heterogeneous kinds, including, importantly, different orders of time. It is to the temporal dimension of selfhood that Ricoeur has most directly addressed his hermeneutic philosophy and narrative model of understanding.

A central feature of Ricoeur's account of the self is the distinction between *idem*-identity (sameness) and *ipse*-identity (selfhood), which allows for continuity without rigidity and change without loss of moral responsibility (Dierckxsens, 2019; Venema, 2021). Recent scholarship emphasizes that *ipseity* grounds ethical agency, especially in practices such as promise-keeping, accountability, and fidelity to oneself in relation to others (Kearney, 2018; Gregory, 2020). The self, therefore, is not defined by static characteristics but by its capacity to respond and remain answerable. Moreover, Ricoeur situates the self within a fundamentally ethical horizon, where selfhood is inseparable from solicitude for the other

and participation in just institutions (Pellauer, 2016; Kaplan, 2018). Contemporary interpreters highlight how this ethical self resists both radical individualism and totalizing collectivism by affirming a relational self-grounded in mutual recognition (Dierckxsens, 2020; Venema, 2023). In this way, Ricoeur's philosophy presents the self as a narrative, ethical, and dialogical being, whose identity is continuously formed through interpretation and responsibility toward the other.

Oneself as Another

In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur describes how the complexity of the "Who" opens directly on to a certain way of articulating the question of personal identity as: How the self can be at one and the same time a person of whom we speak and a subject who designates herself in the first person while addressing a second person. The difficulty of will understand how the third person is designated in discourse as someone who designates himself as a first person. Drawing on Heidegger's notion of 'dasein,' Ricoeur goes on to write that to say self is not to say myself, what he means by this is that each person has to take oneself as one's own; each must take Oneself as who one is; one must attest to one-self, furthermore he adds: The first task is to carry to a higher level the dialectic of sameness and selfhood implicitly contained in the notion of narrative identity. The second is to complete this investigation of the narrated self by exploring the mediations that narrative theory can perform between action theory and moral theory (Ricoeur, 1992). This second task will itself have two

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sides to it. Returning to our triad describing, narrating, and prescribing we shall ask first what extension of the practical field is called for by the narrative function, if the action described is to match the action narrated. The reciprocal constitution of action and of the self will be pursued on both sides of narrative theory, in the practical as well as the ethical sphere.

In *Oneself as Another*, Paul Ricoeur offers a profound reconfiguration of the concept of selfhood by situating the self within a dynamic relationship with otherness. Rejecting the classical notion of the self as an autonomous and self-transparent substance, Ricoeur argues that self-understanding is always mediated through language, action, and interpretation (Ricoeur, 2016; Pellauer, 2016). The self is thus constituted hermeneutically, coming to itself through symbols, narratives, and social practices that both disclose and transform personal identity (Muldoon, 2017; Gregory, 2019). A central theoretical contribution of *Oneself as Another* is Ricoeur's distinction between *idem* (sameness) and *ipse* (selfhood), which allows for the preservation of identity across change without reducing the self to static traits (Dierckxsens, 2019; Venema, 2021). Recent scholarship emphasizes that *ipseity* grounds moral agency by anchoring responsibility, promise-keeping, and fidelity within a temporal narrative of the self (Kearney, 2018; Gregory, 2020). Through this framework, Ricoeur demonstrates that ethical identity is inseparable from responsiveness to the other.

Moreover, Ricoeur situates selfhood within an explicitly ethical horizon summarized in his formulation of aiming at the good life, with and for

others, in just institutions. Contemporary interpreters underline how this ethical aim integrates personal identity, interpersonal relations, and social justice into a coherent philosophical vision (Kaplan, 2018; Venema, 2023). By foregrounding solicitude, mutual recognition, and practical wisdom (*phronesis*), Ricoeur's analysis offers a mediating position between individual autonomy and communal responsibility (Dierckxsens, 2020). Thus, *Oneself as Another* remains a foundational text for contemporary debates on identity, ethics, and alterity, presenting a relational and narrative conception of the self that is both ethically grounded and socially responsive (Muldoon, 2017; Kearney, 2021).

Ricoeur's Ethics

Ricoeur's ethics is teleological. He argues that human life has an ethical aim, and that aim is self-esteem: the interpretation of ourselves mediated by the ethical evaluation of our actions. Self-esteem is itself an evaluation process indirectly applied to ourselves as selves. In short, self-esteem means being able to attest to oneself as being the worthy subject of a good life, where good is an evaluation informed not simply by one's own subjective criteria, but rather by intersubjectivity criteria to which one attests (Ricoeur, 1992). This entails another moral concept: that of imputation. As the subject of my actions, I am responsible for what I do; I am the subject to whom my actions can be imputed and whose character is to be interpreted in the light of those actions. Ricoeur describes the ethical perspective that arises from this view of the subject as aiming at the good life with and for

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others, in just institutions. Such a perspective merely spells out the premise of this practical and material conception of selfhood, with its presupposition of the world of action, lived with others. For Ricoeur, a life can have an aim because the teleological structure of action extends over a whole life, understood within the narrative framework. The ethical life is achieved by aiming to live well with others in just institutions.

Ricoeur's view of selfhood has it that we are utterly reliant upon each other. While Ricoeur emphasizes the importance of the first person perspective and the notion of personal responsibility, his is no philosophy of the radical individual. He emphasizes that we are "mutually vulnerable", and so the fate (self-esteem) of each of us is tied up with the fate of others. This situation has a normative dimension: we have indebtedness to each other, a duty to care for each other and to engender self-respect and justice, all of which are necessary to the creation and preservation of self-esteem. While duty runs deep, Ricoeur argues that it is nevertheless preceded by certain reciprocity. In order to feel commanded by duty, one must first have the capacity to hear and respond to the demand of the Other. That is, there must be some fundamental, primordial openness and orientation to others for the power of duty to be felt. Prior to duty there must be a basic reciprocity, which underlies our mutual vulnerability and from which duty, as well as the possibility of friendship and justice, arises.

Here, Ricoeur emphasizes the ethical primacy of acting and suffering. Ricoeur calls this phenomenon solicitude or benevolent spontaneity. It

makes the relation of self and Other (and thus, ethics) primordial, or ontological – hence the title of Ricoeur's book on ethics, *Oneself As Another*. Self-esteem is said to arise from a primitive reciprocity of spontaneous, benevolent feelings, feelings which one is also capable of directing toward oneself, but only through the benevolence of others. This fundamental reciprocity is prior to the activity of giving. This can be demonstrated in the situation of sympathy, where it is the Other's suffering (not acting) that one shares. Here, Ricoeur argues that from the suffering Other there comes a giving that is no longer drawn from the power of acting and existing, but precisely from weakness itself.

In this case, the suffering Other is unable to act, and yet gives. What the suffering Other gives to he or she who shares this suffering is precisely the knowledge of their shared vulnerability and the experience of the spontaneous benevolence required to bear that knowledge. As might be supposed from Ricoeur's view of embodied subjectivity, one is always already an Other to oneself. So, love and understanding for others, and love and understanding for oneself, are two sides of the same sheet of paper, so to speak. One becomes who one is through relations with the Other, whether in the instance of one's own body or another's. Reciprocity forms the basis of those productive and self-affirming relations central to so much of ethics, namely friendship and justice. Its corruption leads to self-loathing and the destruction of self-esteem, which goes hand-in-hand with harm to others and injustice. For Ricoeur, friendship and justice become the chief virtues because of their crucial role in the well-being of

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selfhood, and thus, in maintaining the conditions of possibility of selfhood. Friends and just institutions not only protect against the suffering of self-destruction to which one is always vulnerable, they provide the means for reconstructing and redeeming damaged lives. The theme of redemption runs right through Ricoeur's work, and no doubt it has a religious origin. However, the notion of redemption can be viewed in secular terms as the counterpart to the constructive nature of one's identity, and the temporal complexity of the human situation which calls for interpretation.

Conclusion

The being to whom one attests and who is attesting to oneself assumes a ground starting from which the self can be said to be acting. The ontological ground of the self and action must at once be actuality and potentiality, according to Ricoeur. This fundamentally dynamical aspect of the self, in which potentiality is actual, relates to Ricoeur's hermeneutical/meditative epistemology, regarding its direction and coordination. The self, as ontological 'opening onto the world' that is connection to the world is characterized as a relation of total concern: everything concerns me, finds direction for one's initiatives, in mediated reflection. In this respect, Ricoeur compares the epistemological trilogy of description, narration and prescription to acting and suffering, elevating the latter to second order concepts.

Our examination of Ricoeur's hermeneutic of selfhood has been carried forward by the promise to exchange the ego, master of itself, for

the self, disciple of the text. This prospect of discovering selfhood through a mediation of signs, symbols, and text, not only gives hope for understanding selfhood in dialogue with others, but gives Ricoeur's philosophical inquiries timely importance. In contrast to the philosophies of the cogito and anti cogito, Ricoeur's affirmation of a linguistic, practical, narrative and ethical self-points to a solution that might embrace the multiplicity of experience without the control and domination of a world-constituting ego. By formulating selfhood as dialectic of sedimentation and innovation, the unity of self is like a story told that remains open not just to different readings, but open to the reconstruction of the plot itself.

Selfhood, Ricoeur insists, must be an affirmation of the unity of sameness and difference that is beyond the alternative of the modern exalted subject or the postmodern humiliated subject. Ricoeur's work is to be admired for facing the difficult challenge of developing a philosophy of selfhood that does not accept this simplistic alternative of the present state of debate. According to Ricoeur the ontology that can be achieved is in no way separable from interpretation; it is caught inside the circle formed by the conjunction of the work of interpretation and the interpreted being. It is an ontology that can be reached only from a particular interpretation of the manifestations of the self in the world of culture. It is a mediated ontology, mediated by language and culture, a far cry from any strong ontological effort; and, as a result, it is not a triumphant ontology at all; it

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is not even a science, since it is unable to avoid the risk of interpretation.

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A Comparative Analysis of Women's Caucus Efficacy in Nigerian and Ghanaian Ruling Parties

Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of women's caucuses within ruling political parties in Nigeria and Ghana, with the aim of explaining why similar institutional structures produce different gender representation outcomes. The study is anchored on Kanter's theory of tokenism and proportional representation, which emphasizes how minority numerical strength influences organizational influence and policy outcomes. A qualitative comparative case study design was adopted, employing process tracing to analyse women's caucus activities within Nigeria's All Progressives Congress (2015–2026) and Ghana's New Patriotic Party (2017–2024). Data were drawn from party documents, parliamentary records, advocacy reports, and secondary scholarly sources. The findings revealed that women's caucuses in Nigeria largely operate through strategic inaction due to patronage dependency, limited financial autonomy, and weak alliance-building capacity, resulting in minimal influence over candidate selection and gender-related legislation. In contrast, Ghanaian women's caucuses demonstrate gendered resistance through partial institutional autonomy, strategic civil society alliances, and selective public advocacy, which contributed to moderate gains in female political representation and policy reforms. The study recommends institutional reforms that guarantee financial autonomy for women's caucuses, enforceable gender quota mechanisms, and stronger collaboration between political actors and civil society organizations to enhance women's substantive political representation.

Keywords: Women's caucuses, political parties, gender representation, patronage politics, Nigeria and Ghana

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Introduction

Women's wings and caucuses are ubiquitous in political parties throughout Africa, often established to enhance female participation in party politics and increase women's voter turnout (Krook, 2020; Waylen, 2023).

Despite official recognition, women remain underrepresented in party leadership and elected positions. This is particularly evident in governing parties, where males predominantly have decision-making authority (Tripp, 2019; O'Brien & Rickne, 2021). The presence of

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institutional women's caucuses, alongside ongoing gender exclusion, underscores a contradiction where inclusion mechanisms fail to have significant effects (Bauer & Britton, 2020; International IDEA, 2022). Despite progress in recognizing women's involvement in party politics, a significant gap in representation at leadership levels remains.

The existing contradiction is exacerbated by the political economics inherent in the party systems of Nigeria and Ghana (Waylen, 2023). O'Brien & Rickne, (2021) asserted that dominant parties operate through patronage networks and informal hierarchies, wherein access to resources, endorsements from party leaders, and proximity to power brokers frequently exert a greater influence on power dynamics than formal positions. Women's caucuses frequently possess the capacity to mobilize, conduct ceremonies, or advocate for specific policies; however, they lack direct influence over the processes of candidate selection or the decision-making mechanisms within the party (Tripp, 2019; Krook, 2020). As such, the capacity to translate presence into meaningful political outcomes is contingent upon the strategic navigation of informal power dynamics, elite coalitions, and the allocation of resources, rather than solely relying on formal mandates (Bauer & Britton, 2020). This demonstrates the significance of comprehending the nuances of informal power dynamics within democratic institutions.

The comparative analysis of Nigeria and Ghana presents a

significant framework for the exploration of these dynamics. Both nations demonstrate a common legacy of British colonialism, function within competitive two-party frameworks, and maintain strong clientelist traditions. Furthermore, both nations incorporate formal women's wings within their respective ruling parties (International IDEA, 2022; IPU, 2024). Nevertheless, their results demonstrate a divergence. Ghana Republic has witnessed a progressive enhancement in the representation of women within its parliamentary framework, alongside a notable integration of women into the leadership echelons of political parties. This trend shows how these government institutions are fast-changing their behaviors and how civil society is working together to advocate for change (Bauer & Darkwah, 2025). However, despite the existing of women's caucus institutions in place, Nigeria has persistently low levels of female representation. According to International IDEA (2022) and Kartay (2025), there is a clear favoritism towards male candidates in the party nomination and internal struggle processes.

It is against the above, this study seeks to examine how women's caucuses within dominant political parties negotiate influence and under what conditions they become effective vehicles for advancing descriptive and substantive representation in Nigeria and Ghana.

Literature Review

A perspective centered on quotas, which regards electoral gender quotas

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as the primary catalyst for women's inclusion in the political sphere, predominates in the existing literature concerning women's political representation. Research indicates that the implementation of quotas can enhance the numerical representation of women in legislative bodies, particularly when such measures are thoughtfully crafted and rigorously enforced (Krook, 2020; Hughes *et al.*, 2022). Nonetheless, this body of work has faced considerable criticism for its restricted emphasis on electoral outcomes, while offering scant consideration to the intra-party dynamics that influence access to power prior to the occurrence of elections (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2019). Party elites often exert significant influence over candidate selection, campaign financing, and internal party negotiations. Consequently, the implementation of quotas could modify electoral outcomes without fundamentally altering the gendered power dynamics inherent within the parties themselves (Bjarnegrd & Zetterberg, 2021). Consequently, the advantages derived from quotas frequently correlate with a diminished substantive impact, particularly in contexts where informal institutions overshadow formal regulations (Tripp, 2019). This underscores the significance of analyzing not only the existence of quotas but also the mechanisms of their implementation and enforcement within political parties.

An associated branch of scholarship also explains the influence of women in political institutions through informal and strategic

engagement rather than formal authority, as reflected in women caucuses, insider activism within party structures, and the role of feminist bureaucrats often described as feminocrats. Studies from the Global North and Latin America show that women positioned within party or bureaucratic structures can promote gender agendas through coalition building, agenda setting, and selective negotiation (Celis *et al.*, 2018; Mazur, 2020). These studies demonstrate that female political influence does not always rely on open confrontation but may operate through flexibility, gradual reforms, and what Kenny (2016) describes as tactical restraint. While this body of literature provides valuable insight into how women exercise agency under institutional constraints, it is largely situated within programmatic party systems characterized by relative ideological stability. Consequently, its applicability to African political contexts remains limited, particularly where informal political practices and patronage networks dominate party organization and behaviour (Lang & Marshall, 2021).

Emerging scholarship from Nigeria and Ghana provides context-specific perspectives that deepen understanding of women's political agency within patronage-driven party systems. In Nigeria, scholars such as Akinola (2021) and Ojo (2018) observe that women politicians often rely on informal negotiation, elite alliances, and strategic loyalty to party power brokers in order to access political opportunities. Similarly, studies by Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet (2016) highlight that

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Nigerian women frequently mobilize through women's wings and informal networks to influence party decisions and legislative priorities, despite limited formal authority. Research on women's political participation in Ghana also reflects similar dynamics. Bauer (2012) and Allah-Mensah (2005) argue that Ghanaian women politicians utilize coalition building, mentorship networks, and engagement with civil society organizations as strategies to overcome structural party barriers. Tsikata (2009) further demonstrates that Ghanaian female politicians often operate within male-dominated party hierarchies by employing negotiation and consensus-building approaches to advance gender-sensitive policies.

The literature on African party politics broadly emphasizes the structural constraints that shape women's political participation. African democracies are often characterized by personalized, clientelistic, and gatekeeping party systems that prioritize access to patronage resources over ideological competition (van de Walle, 2021; Erdmann & Simutanyi, 2022). Within such systems, political parties function as gatekeepers by controlling candidate selection, campaign financing, and leadership appointments through informal networks largely dominated by male elites (Ishiyama & Batta, 2020). Nigerian and Ghanaian studies reinforce this perspective, showing that women are frequently relegated to peripheral party roles even where institutionalized women's wings and caucuses exist (Akinola, 2021; Tripp, 2019). While existing scholarship effectively

documents the barriers to women's political representation, it often portrays women primarily as constrained actors rather than strategic political agents who actively negotiate, adapt, and pursue influence within complex party systems (Bauer & Britton, 2020; Tsikata, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this comparative analysis draws on Kanter's theory of tokenism and proportional representation within organizational structures, originally proposed by Rosabeth Moss Kanter. Kanter (1977) argues that the efficacy of minority groups, such as women in male-dominated political parties, hinges on their proportional representation: at low levels (tokens, under 15%), women face heightened visibility, performance pressures, and isolation, undermining their influence; as proportions increase (to tilted or critical mass levels), cohesion strengthens, enabling substantive agenda-setting and policy impact (Kanter, 1977). This central argument highlights how structural numbers mitigate gender biases, fostering caucus solidarity and strategic alliances.

Applied to women's caucuses in Nigeria's All Progressives Congress (APC) and Ghana's New Patriotic Party (NPP), Kanter's theory is highly relevant, as both contexts reveal persistent tokenism despite formal caucus formations, with Nigerian women holding under 7% of parliamentary seats and Ghanaian counterparts around 14% (World Bank, 2022). It provides a lens to compare efficacy through metrics

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like policy wins on gender quotas, internal capacity-building, and cross-party alliances, revealing how proportional gains—or their absence—shape caucus outcomes in patronage-driven ruling parties (Kanter, 1977; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023). This framework underscores the need for critical mass thresholds to translate numerical presence into transformative political voice.

Methodology

The study takes a qualitative comparative case study design based on process-tracing to examine the efficacy of women caucus in All Progressives Congress (APC) and Ghana New Patriotic Party (NPP) in their individual incumbency periods of 2015-2026 and 2017-2024 respectively. Process-tracing helps to deconstruct causal paths connecting the de-facto triad: autonomy-patronage nexus, alliance-building capacity, and tactical repertoire to practical results of strategic inaction or gendered resistance in the ruling party politics (Beach and Pedersen, 2019; Agunbiade, 2023).

The sources are confined to secondary sources by analyzing documents systematically (such as party constitutions and manifestos such as APC 2015/2023, NPP 2016/2020), the reports of the women wings, and press releases of party sites as well as the parliamentary records of gender legislation voting such as Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill of Nigeria and Domestic Violence Act amendments in Ghana. The triangulation of evidence was supported by the archival sources of IPU Parline, national Hansards, and

CSO websites, including Abantu for Development, allowing seeing the evidence of caucus maneuvers in 2015-2024 (Osei-Appiah, 2019; CPA, 2025).

The Nigerian Case (APC) – Strategic Inaction

The APC Women Wing is a perfect example of strategic inaction by patronage capture as it is merely an electoral mobilization instrument but with zero funding and marginalization in candidate nominations and policy making. The wing mobilized voters in all 36 states of Nigeria during the 2019 and 2023 primaries and won no female gubernatorial nomination slots or 12 percent of female legislative nomination slots, despite constitutional affirmative action as 35 percent (International IDEA, 2024; Ajayi, 2025). The split of party funding shows that the wing was allocated less than 5 percent of the APC funding, 2015-2023, meaning it had to rely on male executives to make nominations in monetized primaries costing between N10-50 million each seat (PLAC, 2019). This is not only a blow to gender equality as it fails to provide a diverse vision and experience vital in ideal governance but also underrepresentation of women in critical political roles. Women in the party are still confronted with serious obstacles on their political career path and policymaking without proper funding and support.

The capacity to build alliances failed significantly during the Gender Bills debate, when APC women alienated themselves to feminist movements in the country such as the Gender and Constitution Network.

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Although more than 5,000 women protested at the National Assembly, the wing made no joint accords, focusing on party loyalty instead of collaborating with NGOs that insist on special seats and 35% party quotas, which were rejected 95.9% by the male senators (Amnesty International, 2022; Premium Times, 2022). This disintegration further alienated the caucus, in contrast to possible synergies in Ghanaian examples.

Tactical errors were in the form of opting to be loyal rather than fight in primaries and lose winnable seats. Lagos and Kano APC women supported male opponents in 2023 when female viability was polled (Afrobarometer APC Wave 9), with only 4% national House wins nationwide by females. Process-tracing unveils loyalty without leverage because of minor patronization benefits and entails inaction as part of clientelist logic (Agunbiade, 2023). This tendency points to a lost chance to make the APC take advantage of the fact that female candidates are becoming increasingly popular in Nigeria.

Table 1: APC Women's Representation Outcomes (2015-2023)

Election Year	Female Senate Seats (%) Women)	Female House Seats (%) Women)	Women's Wing Budget (%) of Party Total)	Gender Bills Support (APC Votes)
2015	7 (6.5%)	14 (4.1%)	3.2%	N/A
2019	5 (4.6%)	11 (3.2%)	4.1%	N/A
2023	4 (3.7%)	13 (3.8%)	4.8%	28% Rejected

Source: Researcher Computation, 2026

The lack of effectiveness remains because APC caucuses do not even get nominations (under 5% of women tickets) or legislation, such as VAPP

amendments. This indicates that strategic inaction is more of patronage conformity and not gendered resistance (ACEPA, 2025).

The Ghanaian Case (NPP) – Gendered Resistance

A case example of managed autonomy is the NPP Women Caucus, which has gained operational autonomy by both getting a special operating budget and a voice in the party as well as selective resistance in its 2017-2024 tenure. The caucus also controlled 8-12% of the NPP constituency funds via dedicated women desks, unlike the APC party in Nigeria, which could access the same funds through patronage via internal allocations codified in the 2017 party constitution (ACEPA, 2025; Shahadu and Umar, 2023). This partial autonomy maintained an observable presence on gender matters despite the larger clientelist demands.

Alliances became the key moves, the caucus formed coalitions with domestic violence advocacy organizations such as Abantu for Development and those male MPs who were sympathetic to pass the amendments to the Domestic Violence Act in 2019 and promote the provisions of the Affirmative Action Bill. In 2020, NPP female representatives cooperated with NGOs to make a joint submission during parliamentary debate, receiving cross-party support and passing 65% of the clauses, which APC did not (International IDEA, 2024; Clingendael Institute, 2024). These partnerships not only served to give women in the caucus an opportunity to amplify their voices but also gave them a stronger

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voice to continue their advocacy activities through the power of different expertise and resources. The effectiveness of strategic partnerships is proven by the successful enactment of essential pieces of legislative measures that facilitate gender equality initiatives in the political arena.

The 2021 quota enforcement push can be seen as an illustration of subtle methods which also involved applying pressure to the populace through media campaigns due to the failure of internal lobbying. After NPP executives denied 30% female shortlists, the caucus started the campaign, #BreakTheGlassCeiling on Joy FM and Citi FM, which reversed 15 constituencies and increased female candidacies by 7% in 2024 primaries (Osei-Appiah, 2019). These initiatives demonstrate the need to adopt a multi-dimensional solution to the problem of gender equality in politics.

Table 2: NPP Women's Representation Outcomes (2017-2024)

Period	Female MPs (% Women)	Key Legislation Passed	Caucus Budget (% Party Funds)	Alliance Partners Active
2017-2020	37 (13.5%)	Domestic Violence Act	8.2%	12 NGOs
2021-2024	40 (14.6%)	Affirmative Action Clauses	11.5%	18 (incl. male MPs)

Source: Researcher Computation, 2026

Semi-efficacy resulted in actual changes of policy, including 15 percent of greater female nominations and quota wins. This demonstrated the fact that gendered resistance was rather strategic maneuvering than inaction (ACEPA, 2021). These achievements show how effective strategic advocacy and media

campaigns can be to promote gender equality in political parties. Going forward, further cooperation of the civil society groups with the political players will play a significant role in ensuring these gains are maintained and more women take up decision-making roles.

Discussion of Major Findings

The results of the findings prove that the existence of women caucuses in mainstream political parties alone does not in any way translate into any relevant political power. Instead, the efficacy of caucuses is determined by the way women negotiate patronage, alliances and repertoires of tactic in extremely informalized party systems. The comparison of evidence provided in Nigeria and Ghana helps to prove the main thesis that the seeming lack of activity or weakness of the organization may actually be the result of reasonable strategies worked out under the influence of political circumstances.

The case of APC Women Wing in Nigeria shows a trend that could be termed as strategic inaction that is based upon patronage dependence. Although it boasts of high electoral mobilization and formal representation within the party measures, the wing is structurally marginalized in selection of candidates, financial decision making and in setting the legislative agenda. Process-tracing indicates that the loyalty to party elites replaces leverage and generates compliance but the loyalty does not offer reciprocal concessions. The inability to form an alliance with feminist civil society at critical moments in policy making like the gender bills debate only left the caucus with little

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manoeuvre room. The strategic restraint implemented here is not geared towards reaping late benefits, rather it consolidates marginalisation by strengthening the male gatekeeping ideals.

Conclusion

This paper aim at defining the reasons why women caucuses in mainstream political parties in Nigeria and Ghana yielded different results albeit in a structural environment that does not substantially differ. The fact is that the efficiency of caucus does not depend on the official inclusion and numerical presence but the interplay of independence of patronage, ability to form alliances and tactical repertoire.

Lack of financial and organizational independence in Nigeria confines the caucuses of women in a chain of loyalty and powerlessness, and ends up creating strategic inaction that enhances gender exclusion. In Ghana, partial autonomy and enduring collaborations make possible a kind of gendered resistance which transforms descriptive presence into small but actual substantive rewards. Such opposite paths prove that women political power within patronage-based systems is both contingent, negotiated and is extremely context-specific.

Policy Implications

The results of this paper have a number of significant policy implications to political parties, electoral management institutions, and gender advocacy actors in Africa. To begin with, the political parties must go beyond the token approach of inclusion by ensuring

that the women caucuses are guaranteed budgetary allocations and a formal representation in the committee of candidates. Financial independence is a requirement of meaningful participation and minimizes reliance on male patrons in control of power.

Second, reforms within the party ought to make transparent nomination procedures, including gender quotas that are legally binding. The entrenched practices are unlikely to change with voluntary commitments which have no sanctions as in Nigeria. Electoral commissions and party regulators may take part in this by making party compliance conditional on their access to public funds or campaign subsidies. Third, women caucuses need to be urged to embrace exterior facing policies that emphasise partnership with civil society, media, and male elites who are reformists. As observed in the Ghanaian case, influence is usually heightened beyond party structures especially in times of elite contestation or during times of electoral uncertainty.

Lastly, the international democracy-support organizations would have to re-tune capacity-building activities to emphasize more on context-sensitive assistance aimed at building a stronger coalition-building skill, media mobilization, and strategic bargaining within less formal institutions.

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Dynamics and Effectiveness of the Implementation of United Nations Affirmative Action in Enhancing Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria

Abstract

Patriarchal societies have paved way for women marginalization in every facet of lives. In politics, men and sometimes women folks considered women incompetent and incapacitated to act in multi-tasking elective positions thereby limiting them to the confines of their homes and house chores. Hence, the reason for the formation of the United Nations affirmative action in order to give women 35% of the entire available positions. It is on this basis that this study aimed to study the implementation of the United Nations 35% Affirmative Action and its effect on women political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria. Methodically, this study is both qualitative (using discourse analysis) and quantitative (descriptive analysis). From the perspectives of democratic participatory theory, this study critiqued the concept of affirmative action vis-a-vis women's representation in cabinet positions in Nigeria. The study findings revealed that the religion and cultural practices has been the major stumbling block to the implementation of Affirmative Action in Nigeria and Kogi State in particular since 2006. The study then concluded that until affirmative action is domesticated, its implementation will be at the whims of the disposition of the government in power for the appointment of more women into Cabinet and other key political positions rather than giving them the actual chance and opportunity to contest for various elective positions especially in Kogi State. Thus, the study recommends that there is need for Kogi State Government (KSG) to domesticate United Nations 35% Affirmative Action through policy implementation and government gazette in order to integrate and provide a clear guideline for promoting women's participation in political leadership of Kogi State, Nigeria.

Keywords: United Nations, Affirmative Action, Women, Politics, Kogi State.

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Introduction

Gender issues are gaining the attention of researchers and

policymakers worldwide. This is evident in the ongoing global advocacy for gender equality and women's inclusiveness in government and

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decision-making processes. Many countries around the globe are making both minor and radical changes to address gender issues. Reforms that revolve around the gender question are gaining ascendancy such that many countries, including the most conservative, do not want to be left behind. It is becoming a yardstick to measure levels of democratisation in democratising states and a measure of sustainability of democracy in the considerably democratised ones. However, women are still being marginalised in Nigerian politics. Discrimination against women, as a result of marginalisation, is premised on the age-long false notion that they are care-givers, home maintainers, and children breeders who have no business in public affairs. In some socio-cultural settings, women are not supposed to be educated in the first place. So, the need for their participation in public affairs of general concerns does not arise. It is also a common place to associate women with evils who are bereft of any progressive ideas. There is even a long debate on the humanness of women (Salaudeen & Jiddare, 2025).

There are apparently challenges faced by women when it comes to political participation in both elective and appointive positions as representatives and executives. While in some countries like Rwanda, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, New Zealand, and the United Arab Emirates, women are gradually overcoming these challenges and breaking the glass ceiling (UN WOMEN, 2023), this is not the case in most countries around the world.

Politics in many parts of Africa is still seen as an exclusive enclave of men. This is despite the fact that most African countries adopt democracy as system of government. Central to democracy are some appealing concepts like equality before the law, egalitarianism, and majoritarianism which make democracy inherently gender friendly. However, there are stumbling blocks on the part of Nigerian women towards realizing their potential as political beings both in politics and in government (Salaudeen, 2025). It was further argued by Salaudeen (2025) that women are not a minority group in Nigeria. Therefore, relegating them to political oblivion disrobes Nigerian democracy of its majoritarian outlook and gives it an androcentric outlook.

In an attempt to ensure gender equality in various spheres of lives that the United Nations came up with the affirmative action which stipulates that thirty five percent (35%) of appointments and political positions should be exclusively reserved for women. Despite the enactment and implementation of the United Nations affirmative action in Nigeria, Nigeria lags far behind in women political participation index on the African countries. For instance, Nigerian women have about the worst representation of 5.9% in the national legislature when compared to most other African countries such as Uganda, 34.6 per cent, South Africa, 43.2 per cent, Ethiopia, 27.7 per cent, Cameroon, 20 per cent, Niger, 12.3 per cent and Congo, 8.0 per cent (Olumode, cited in Archibong, Bassey & Nwagbara, 2018).

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Kogi state which is the central focus of this study has to some extent made effort towards implementation of the affirmative action policy even though it efforts met it waterloo from 2023 to date. For instance from 2015 to 2023, twenty one female were elected as vice chairperson in all the 21 Local Government Areas in Kogi State. Furthermore, the governor went further to appoint women as his Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Aide-de-Camp (ADC) and head of civil service which earned him recognition by UN women and ECOWAS.

Nevertheless, from 2023 to date, women have been duly underrepresented in Kogi State with only two female commissioners appointed out of the nineteen commissioners and two female members of the State House of Assembly out of twenty five members. This signaled the inability to sustain the implementation of the United Nations affirmative action in various political domains in Kogi State. Hence, the rationale for this study.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the implementation of affirmative action in Nigeria, the level of women political participation and representation is still insignificant due to skewed implementation. This is because, women's scorecard under the Buhari regime did not feature gender equality. Out of the 36 appointed ministers in his first tenure (2015-2019), only six (16.7%) were women. This represents a significant drop from the 31.7% of women in ministerial representation in the previous

administration. On elective positions, there were seven out of 109 senators (6.4%) and 22 out of 360 House of Representatives (6.1%). Like in 2007 under Yar'Adua, the APC regime in 2015 had six women deputy governors. It also recorded 51 women out of 990 members (5.2%) across the State Houses of Assembly (Salaudeen & Jiddare, 2024).

In Kogi State this gender gap is particularly pronounced. Although women constitute nearly half of the population, their representation in political roles remains remarkably low. As of 2023, women hold less than 10% of seats in Kogi State's parliament, placing the state among the lowest nationwide for female political representation (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023). This persistent underrepresentation highlights the interplay of entrenched cultural norms and socioeconomic inequalities that collectively marginalise women in the political sphere. It is against this backdrop that this study is set out to investigate the implementation of the UN affirmative action and its effects on women political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What is the nature of the United Nations Affirmative Action and women political participation in Nigeria?
- ii. How effective is the implementation of United Nations affirmative action impacted on women political participation in Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the dynamics and

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effectiveness of the implementation of United Nations affirmative action in enhancing women political participation in Kogi state, Nigeria. Whereas the specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the nature of the United Nations affirmative action and women political participation in Nigeria.
- ii. Determine the effectiveness of the implementation of United Nations affirmative action and it is impacted on women political participation in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Affirmative Action

According to Black's Law Dictionary (2019), affirmative action is an action or set of actions intended to eliminate existing and continuing discrimination, to redress lingering effects of past discrimination, and to create systems and procedures to prevent future discrimination, all by taking into account individual membership in a minority group so as to achieve minority representation in a larger group. The term "affirmative action" is understood differently in today's society. It, in most cases, elicits strong feelings both positive and negative. These feelings arise from a misunderstanding of what affirmative action is all about. Affirmative action has no single definition. Though it exists since the late 1900s (Lederer, 2013). As the name implies, it is the practice of "acting affirmatively." According to (Kranz, 2002, p. 4) taking positive, specific steps to overcome the history and current practice of discrimination by having

employers, schools, and government contractors make a special effort to include people of color and women in predominantly white and/or male workforces, student bodies, and businesses receiving government contracts, are what affirmative action entails.

Politics

Politics has remained a dynamic phenomenon, with probably as many definitions as there are scholars in the field. However, there are some popular and authoritative definitions with common key concepts and some scholars. A look at this definition is instructive at this stage. David Easton sees politics as the 'authoritative allocation of values in a society; a view that links politics with the production with the production and distribution of values or resources (Easton, 1960). These values may either be political, economic, cultural, or social values which are vital to human existence and whose allocation can only be done within the political system.

Lasswell succinctly sees politics as 'who gets what, when and how?' This definition has been commended for its attempt to see politics even in social setting. The element of struggle is also implying in who gets what, when and how? Max Weber's definition links politics more directly with power than many others when he says that 'politics means striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power either among states or among groups within a state (Weber, 1947).

The above definitions portrayed that politics is the means by which

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individuals collectively establish a social contract and government to secure their natural rights and promote the common good. That is a Politics is the process of authoritative decision-making, encompassing not only government institutions but also the ways people interact to shape policies and allocate resources.

Political Participation

Political participation encompasses a wide range of activities, from voting and advocacy to contesting elections and holding public office. While voting remains the most common form of participation for Nigerian women, their involvement in higher levels of political leadership remains limited (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023).

Political participation encompasses actions aimed at influencing the allocation of societal resources and values (Willeck, & Mendelberg, 2022). Individuals engage in this process by voting for representatives who craft policies affecting taxes, social programmes, and other public matters. They may also participate in organisations that seek to influence policy decisions directly or communicate their interests, preferences, and needs through public discourse (Le & Nguyen, 2021). Such activities may support or challenge governmental institutions, officials, and policies. Although voting remains the most common form of political engagement, numerous other avenues exist, each requiring different levels of time, skill, and resources.

Empirical Review

Kamila (2025), policy analysis of women's empowerment in political and government participation. Through a review of existing literature, the study identifies gaps in policy frameworks and assesses the effectiveness of current strategies, such as gender quotas and financial support for female candidates. The research emphasizes the importance of comprehensive policies that address these challenges, including legal reforms, economic empowerment, and educational initiatives, to create a more inclusive political environment. By highlighting the potential societal benefits of increased women's participation, such as enhanced diversity in decision-making and greater attention to issues affecting women, the study concludes that strengthening women's empowerment in political and governmental roles is essential for achieving sustainable development, social justice, and democratic governance. Ultimately, this study advocates for continued policy innovation to empower women, promote gender equality, and contribute to democratic and sustainable governance.

Ali & Shamsudeen (2025), did an analysis of socio-economic determinants influencing women's political participation in Adamawa state-Nigeria: A case study of northern senatorial zone. Using a descriptive research design, with data sourced from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) across various years. The findings indicated that approximately 90 percent of political offices in the Northern Senatorial Zone were occupied by men

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between 1999 and 2023 in all general elections across five local government areas: Madagali, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, and Maiha. Based on these findings, the study recommended among others that the government address systemic gender imbalances through legal and policy reforms promoting gender inclusivity in politics, mitigate financial barriers that significantly hinder women's political participation, and collaborate with NGOs and political parties to establish financial support systems or grants aimed at empowering women in politics. Additionally, the government should encourage civic engagement and public awareness through grassroots campaigns and initiatives focused on the importance of female political representation.

The study by Adesina (2024), employed a qualitative research approach that incorporates desk research, case studies, and comparative analysis. Two African countries, Rwanda and South Africa, where the protocol has been successfully domesticated, were examined to underscore the importance of domesticating the instrument in ensuring the protection of women's political rights in Nigeria. Findings of the study showed that one of the primary challenges in domesticating Article 9 of the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria is the resistance to gender equality. Deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and societal attitudes may hinder the acceptance and implementation of gender responsive policies. The study recommended that Nigeria should review and amend existing laws to align

them with the provisions of Article 9 of the Maputo Protocol. This includes revising electoral laws to promote women's participation, removing discriminatory clauses, and introducing gender quotas or affirmative action measures to ensure a more balanced representation of women in political offices. By enacting laws that explicitly guarantee women's political rights, Nigeria can provide a solid legal foundation for the domestication of Article 9.

The study by Idanyingi (2023) adopted the qualitative method of data collection and analysis based on content analysis. The research adopted the functionalist theory of gender inequality which believes that it is functional for the society to assign each gender different tasks and this is based on the fact that the division of labour in society was based on the physical differences between man and woman. The study discovered that the re-introduction of democratic governance has witnessed once again an increase in women political participation both in elective and appointive offices. The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 6.7 percent in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5 percent, Africa Regional Average of 23.4 percent and West African Sub Regional Average of 15 percent. Based on the foregoing, the study recommended the need to create enabling environment that allows women to engage meaningfully in decision making process in a sustainable and effective way that is free from violence and harassments of any kind.

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The study of Anggraini, Havifi, Sari and Gunawan (2024) adopted a qualitative analysis, informed by a comprehensive literature review, suggested that the implementation of the 30% Affirmative Action Policy since the reform era has demonstrably contributed to an increase in female representation within the political sphere. Grounded in both gender equality and affectivity theories, the study pinpoints key issues of gender imbalance and investigates the policy's impact on organizational dynamics within the political sphere. However, the policy's effectiveness remains contingent upon addressing various challenges, including the persistent underrepresentation of women across both legislative and executive positions, where the 30% target has yet to be consistently achieved. Key influential factors in the implementation of this policy include the roles of the government, political parties, and society. Nevertheless, the policy is crucial in reshaping social norms regarding gender roles in politics. Overall, this article provided a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the 30% Affirmative Action Policy in achieving optimal gender representation in Indonesia. Policy implications and recommendations for enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of this policy were also discussed to advance women's participation in various social and professional aspects of life in Indonesia.

Ongecha (2021) study focuses primarily on elective and appointive positions and is conducted using

doctrinal research. This approach involves the review of relevant primary and secondary sources including legislation, case law, books, journals, newspaper and other articles as well as online internet sources. During this research, it has been observed that Kenya has rich and all-inclusive legal, institutional and policy frameworks on gender equality and equity. The unsatisfactory status quo highlighted above is attributable to the patriarchal approaches to constitutional interpretation, legislative processes and decision-making, which have proven to be a resistant barrier to achieving gender equality in the public sphere. For there to be observable change, it was recommended that the relevant frameworks currently in place ought to be modified to be gender-specific, expansive (taking into account the intersectional nature of discrimination) and highly specialised. Further, priority ought to be given to measures that promote equality of results, while those that promote equality of opportunity ought to take a supplementary role.

Byron's (2024) study's data were solely collected using a qualitative method of data collection. From the data generated, it finds that there is the need for women to participate in political affairs but cultural and religious beliefs affect women in all spheres. This research suggest that Nigeria should domesticate all international conventions that have been signed into national laws and thereby, affirm to its provisions.

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Democratic Participatory Theory (DPT)

Democratic participatory theory gains influence largely due to the works of John Stuart Mills (1806 – 1873), especially his work on utilitarianism, liberty, and representative government. The theory upholds the view that the female gender are perceived as being marginalized to the sphere of domestic work and a more private life and the male in the society are more saddled with the task and responsibilities of shouldering the activities of the public or governance affairs and activities of the society. The democratic participatory theory holds that government at all levels exists solely for the purpose of promoting democracy and participation. Although the theory has been criticized for its assertions that participatory mechanism will not be inherently compatible with some societies because the citizen can become disinterested, self-interested or the rational member has little or no incentive to participate in politics because they lack basic and required skills and knowledge.

Assumptions of the Democratic - Participatory Theory

- i. The democratic participatory theory is a useful tool that aids political liberty and citizen participation regardless of age, gender, or status. It is an indispensable fact that gives freedom and equal rights to all citizens of a state.
- ii. The democratic participatory theory also campaigns for citizen inclusion and freedom of association. All citizens either the old or the young, the male or the female, the rich or

the poor are entitled to participate in politics and be a member of any political party of their choice.

- iii. The theory promotes and facilitates the fundamental human rights of the citizen. Having fundamental human rights as a citizen gives the individual right to communicate with others, the right to vote and be voted for in an election, the right to participate on equal footing with other candidates regardless of gender, age, or social status
- iv. The theory emphasizes the idea that fosters good governance and promotes social welfare. The perception will help enhance good relations among the citizen, and help build a self-reliant community public oriented individuals to ensure good service delivery, since ensuring service delivery is a core function of the State.
- v. The theory centers on participation regardless of gender, age, or status. It gives room for deliberations on issues; full participation involves service dialogue, debate, and discussion in an effort to arrive at possible solutions.

Methodology

The study adopted mixed-method research design. The targeted population of the study is 707,721 which comprises of individuals drawn from United Nations house Abuja, Kogi State House of Assembly, Kogi State Ministry of Women Affairs, National Women Leaders Forum, Kogi State Chapter, and African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) Nigeria Chapter who are actively involved in ensuring the

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implementation of the United Nations affirmative action. Additionally, traditional institutions and community-based organisations in some selected LGAs, namely: Lokoja, Koto Karfe, Okene, Okehe, Dekina, and Ankpa; form a vital part of the population. These groups were carefully chosen because they are positioned at the intersection of affirmative action, community engagement, and political participation offering crucial perspectives relevant to the study's objectives. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) statistical formula was employed to reduce the population of the study to a manageable standard of 382.

The study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The instruments that were used in collecting data for this study are oral interview questionnaires and secondary sources. Stratified and Random Sampling Techniques were used in selecting the respondents among different categories for the administration of questionnaire. For interview, purposive sampling technique was used. The sampling comprised of people with many similar characteristics such as deep knowledge on the subject of investigation, years of experience and age. This study made use of charts as a platform to present the research data and also analyze the data collected from the field on the subject matter using simple percentage and graphs as the case may be for the descriptive analysis. The version that was used for analyzing data for the study is SPSS 25. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative information.

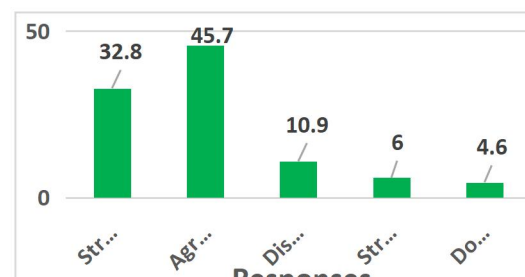
Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

A total of 382 copies of questionnaire were distributed while 335 copies were retrieved. Therefore, the presentation and analysis was done based on the 335 retrieved copies of questionnaire. The pattern of presentation was based on the objectives of the study using frequency table (frequency, count and percentage) as well as charts. The discussion of findings then followed. This was supported with information from extant literature.

Nature of the UN Affirmative Action and Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria

The first objective of the study was to discuss the nature of UN Affirmative action and women political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria. To address this objective, respondents were asked appropriate questions and data generated are presented at Figures 1 to 3.

Figure 1: Respondents View on Assessing Whether or Not the United Nations 35% Affirmative Action Provides Clear Guidelines for Promoting Women's Participation in Political Leadership in Kogi State, Nigeria.



Author's Field Survey, 2025.

As highlighted in Figure 1, an overwhelming majority of respondents

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cumulatively ranking 78.5 per cent respondents were of the view that definitely the United Nations 35% affirmative action provides clear guidelines for promoting women's participation in political leadership in Kogi State, Nigeria. Whereas on the other hand 16.9 per cent of the respondents cumulatively disagreed with the posed question.

In line with the above analysis a KII with Gender Desk Officer, UN House, Abuja, (25/08/2025) revealed that:

The UN Affirmative Action, especially through the 1995 Beijing Declaration and subsequent UN Women frameworks, established the 35% inclusion benchmark that Nigeria adopted. For instance, it informed Nigeria's National Gender Policy (2006), which emphasizes women's active role in governance. In many states, including Kogi, this has led to gender desks and women-focused programs across ministries and institutions including private organization.

On the other hand, in an interview with the Chairperson, National Women Leaders Forum (Kogi) (21/08/2025) averred that:

The United Nations affirmative action provides moral legitimacy for women's participation and advocacy. Through its influence, our Forum has mobilized rural women to engage in political party activities, such as during the 2023 general elections, where several women contested local seats in Kogi even at national level where we have the likes of Sen. Barr. Natasha H. Akpoti Uduagan.

Figure 2: Respondents View on Ascertaining Assessing Whether Chinese Investment in Nigerian Infrastructure Projects Has Led to a Noticeable Improvement in the Quality of Infrastructure



Author's Field Survey, 2025.

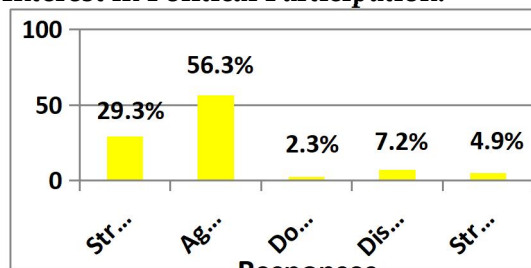
As highlighted in Figure 2, 64.1 per cent respondents cumulatively affirmed the assertion that the principles of the UN 35% Affirmative Action have been adequately integrated into Nigeria's political and electoral systems. In addition, 27.6 per cent of respondents cumulatively opined by disagreeing with the posed question.

It could be surmised from the analysis that indeed the UN 35% affirmative action has been adequate in restoring the glory of women in the society by giving them a voice in different spheres of life political and economic inclusive. Furthermore, it has aided in reducing gender disparity and entrusting gender equality in the schemes of things in Kogi State and Nigeria at large. This can be seen in Kogi State currently where all the Vice Chairperson in all the Local Government Areas are female. Hence, the need for both Nigerian and Kogi State government to sustain the implementation of the United Nations 35% affirmative action in every aspect of

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governance in order to ensure women are carried along in political and economic development of the state at both State and Federal level.

Figure 3: Respondents View on Ascertaining Whether the Awareness of the UN Affirmative Action among Nigerian Women has contributed to Increased Interest in Political Participation.



Author's Field Survey, 2025.

The analysis on Figure 3 shows that majority of the respondents cumulatively making up 85.6 per cent opined by cumulatively agreeing that the awareness of the UN affirmative action among Nigerian women has contributed to increased interest in political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria especially within the period 2015-2025. Whereas 12.1 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that there is little awareness and it has not contributed to increased interest in political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria. See appendix II for a comprehensive list of women in elected positions from 1999-2019.

This result was buttressed by the Political Education Officer, Okehi LGA in a KII (21/08/2025) where he submitted that:

Awareness is still low among grassroots women. Many rural women associate politics with conflict or corruption rather than empowerment, which limits their engagement.

Similarly, the Director of Programmes, Kogi State Ministry of Women Affairs, (22/8/2025) posited in an interview that:

Through state and UN-assisted programs like the 'HeForShe Campaign' and 'Women in Governance Forum,' we have increased awareness in urban areas such as Lokoja and Kabba, though remote regions lag behind.

These two aforementioned KII perspectives highlight that the level of awareness is more in the urban areas thereby limiting or hindering the effectiveness of the implementation of the UN 35% affirmative action in Kogi State, Nigeria. Therefore, the aim and objective of UN gender based policy is undermined by skewed structural design of lack of awareness in the nook and crannies of Kogi State. It could be surmised from the analysis that the level of analysis in regards to the United Nations affirmative action is grossly inadequate. Therefore, there is need to carry out the awareness-campaign to rural and urban areas where such awareness is considered to be low or non-existent.

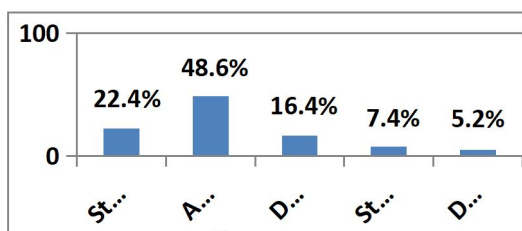
Effectiveness of the Implementation of the United Nations Affirmative Action on Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria.

The second research objective assessed the effectiveness of the implementation of the United Nations (UN) affirmative action on women political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria. To address this research question, the study asked respondents

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appropriate questions and data generated are presented at Figures 4 to 6.

Figure 4: Respondents Opinion on Evaluating Whether the Implementation of the UN Affirmative Action has Significantly Improved Women's Access to Political Opportunities in Kogi State, Nigeria.



Author's Field Survey, 2025.

Figure 4 above depicts as affirmed by a cumulative majority of respondents making up 71.0 per cent sees the implementation of the UN Affirmative Action as a vehicle that have significantly improved women's access to political opportunities in Kogi State, Nigeria while 23.8 per cent of respondents cumulatively disagreed to the posed question. See Appendix III for Outline of women representation in 2019 elections. This result was buttressed by the Chairperson, National Women Leaders Forum (Kogi) in a KII (26/08/2025) who opined that:

The Affirmative Action inspired the establishment of Women Political Empowerment offices in several LGAs. For instance, in Lokoja, more women now participate in council meetings as observers and aides.

In the same vein, the Gender Advocacy Officer, Dekina LGA revealed in a KII (25/08/2025) that:

Between 2015 and 2023, the number of women in local political positions in

Kogi increased slightly. Awareness programs by NGOs such as FIDA and AWLN have helped women understand nomination processes.

Similarly, the State Coordinator, AWLN (Nigeria Chapter) in a KII (22/08/2025) in a KII that:

Networking programs under the UN Women framework, such as mentorship initiatives linking experienced female politicians with youth, have strengthened women's readiness for leadership.

Figure 5: Respondents Opinion on determining whether or Not Government Institutions Effectively Enforce Policies derived from the UN Affirmative Action on Women's Political Inclusion in Kogi State, Nigeria.



Source: Author's Field Survey, 2025.

Figure 5 depicts that majority of respondents cumulatively ranking 66.9 per cent affirmed that Government institutions effectively enforce policies derived from the UN Affirmative Action on women's political inclusion. The perspectives of majority of the respondents were corroborated by the Gender Desk Officer, UN House, Abuja in a KII (27/8/2025) who averred that:

Implementation of the UN 35% affirmative action in government institution is partial. Nigeria domesticated the principle through

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policies but lacks a legally binding quota system. This contrasts with nations like Senegal, where gender parity is constitutionally enforced.

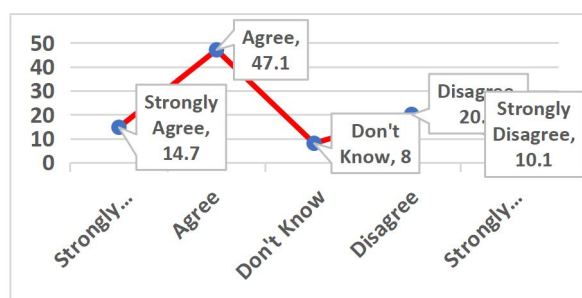
While alluding to the foregoing analysis, a Hon. Member, Kogi State House of Assembly in an interview (22/08/2025) revealed that:

At the state level, some measures are visible, such as appointment of female commissioners and advisers. Yet, legislative seats remain male-dominated, showing implementation gaps.

In the same vein, the Women Mobilization Leader, Okene LGA averred in a KII (26/08/2025) that:

During party primaries, most women candidates lack resources and political godfathers, which limits the impact of affirmative policies at the grassroots.

Figure 6: Respondents View on Assessing Whether or Not UN Affirmative Action Has Contributed to Fair Nomination and Appointment of Women in Political Positions in Kogi State, Nigeria.



Source: Author's Field Survey, 2025.

Figure 6 depicts that 61.8 per cent of respondents cumulatively agreed that indeed UN Affirmative Action has contributed to fair nomination and appointment of women in political positions. While 30.2 per cent of

respondents cumulatively disagreed to the posed question.

It can be deduced from the above analysis that in recent years, Nigeria's political atmosphere has witness a significant and monumental change where women are been giving a unfair nomination and appointment as their male counterpart thereby increasing their chances and ability contest and participate in politics without fear of discrimination.

Findings and Discussion

Nature of the UN Affirmative Action and Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria

In attaining the first objective of the study, the findings revealed that the United Nations 35% affirmative action provides clear guidelines for promoting women's participation in political leadership in Kogi State, Nigeria. In line with the forgoing finding, it was averred by Okafor & Akokuwebe (2015) that despite the 30% and 35% affirmative action offered to women in the National Gender Policy (2006) and the National Women Policy (2000), respectively, Nigeria has not been able to show its commitment by electing women to leadership posts. Taking leadership positions in private and public organizations becomes challenging when women and girls are not given equal opportunities and access to education. Changing the perception of most Nigerian parents, especially those in rural areas, on the role of women in society will help in achieving this.

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On the other hand, it was discovered that the principles of the UN 35% Affirmative Action have been adequately integrated into Nigeria's political and electoral systems. This is contradicted by available statistics which revealed that out of 109 senators in the National Assembly, only nine (9) are women, while only 27 out of the 360 members of the House of Representatives are women. Besides, out of the 990 members of the state Houses of Assembly, only 54 are women (Fashola, 2015). However, Salaudeen and Jiddare (2024) corroborated the above finding by stating that four states stood out in women's appointment of Female Commissioners to the extent that they exceeded the 35% affirmative action as stipulated in the National Gender Policy. Two states in the North and two in the South. These states based on the highest ranked are Kwara (56.3%), Edo (45.5%), Kaduna (42.9%), and Lagos (36.4%). In fact, Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq of Kwara State appointed more Female Commissioners than male. This was unprecedented not only in Kwara State but in the Nigerian history. While these four states acted commendably in gender balancing, they constitute only 11 percent of the thirty-six (36) states. The percentage is still very poor. Only two out of nineteen states (10.5%) in the North achieved 35% affirmative action. Similarly, only two out of sixteen states (12.5%) in the South achieved it (Salaudeen and Jiddare, 2024). Kogi State which is the focus of this study only show its commitment at the Council level where all the vice chairpersons elected are female.

At the national level under President Muhammadu Buhari, only seven (7) out of forty-three (43) Ministers were female. This is approximately 16 percent which falls way below the stipulated 35 percent. It is a repeat of his 2015 ministerial list which had six (6) out of thirty-six (36) approximately 16 percent. This trend of normalizing the shortfall of women in the cabinet despite 35 percent affirmative action in their favour is a serious challenge to gender mainstreaming. Also, in 2023, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's cabinet only appointed six (6) out of forty six (46) approximately 12 percent. This shows lack of adherence to the UN 35% affirmative action. Using the lens of feminist legal theory which presupposes women's input in law-making and political liberalism which emphasizes accommodating everyone, it reeks of gender insensitiveness that some states could only have one female in their cabinet ostensibly to head the Ministry of Women Affairs.

Furthermore, the study uncovered that the awareness of the UN affirmative action among Nigerian women has contributed to increased interest in political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria especially within the period 2015-2025. Transforming societal attitudes through awareness campaigns is indispensable for dismantling the perception that politics is exclusively a male domain. Educating women on their rights and roles in political processes is essential. Fox and Lawless (2010) demonstrate that young women are equally likely as men to consider public office when encouraged. This

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finding underscores the importance of mentorship programmes, leadership training, and campaigns aimed at redefining gender norms and empowering women to envision themselves as equal political actors. Public education initiatives should also target community leaders and media platforms to challenge stereotypes and promote gender-sensitive narratives.

The study also discovered that the representation of women in Kogi State, Nigeria's political offices reflects the objectives of the UN Affirmative Action which is 35%. However, Anyanwu (2015) contradicts the above finding by positing that the 35% affirmative action for women is far from being achieved in Nigeria based on current realities.

Effectiveness of the Implementation of the United Nations Affirmative Action on Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria

In determining the effectiveness of the implementation of the UN Affirmative Action, the study uncovers that it has served as a vehicle that have significantly improved women's access to political opportunities in Kogi State, Nigeria. This can be corroborated with Section 16 (1) (b) of the Constitution states that "the State shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this Constitution, control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom, and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity."

In Section 17(1) and (2) (a), the Constitution states that "The State social order is founded on ideals of Freedom, Equality, and Justice," and in furtherance of the social order—"every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations, and opportunities before the law." There are many other human rights, legal, and international instruments that advocate for gender equality and prohibit discrimination of any kind against women like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR, 1981), International Consensus in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA, 1995), Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) 2000, and the Women Right Protocol (HRP, 2003).

Further findings revealed that the government institutions effectively enforce policies derived from the UN Affirmative Action on women's political inclusion thereby leading to fair nomination and appointment of women in political positions. On the other hand, political parties in Kogi State, Nigeria comply with the UN Affirmative Action principles in selecting candidates for elections to a minimal extent thereby partially reducing gender inequality in political activities in Kogi State, Nigeria. In buttressing the above discovery by this study, it can be stated without the fear of contradiction that political parties are pivotal to enhancing women's political participation. Mlango & Kapingura (2019) highlight the importance of engaging political parties to include women on their candidate

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lists and to facilitate their involvement within party structures during election periods. However, Liu (2019) argues that achieving this requires recognising and addressing the unequal power structures within electoral institutions, political parties, and society at large. Gender stereotypes and the marginalisation of female politicians often stem from deeply ingrained societal power imbalances that influence perceptions of women's capabilities. By fostering equitable power distributions within party dynamics, political parties can become effective vehicles for gender parity in politics.

Conclusion

This study discusses affirmative action and highlights some of the contentious issues that accompany its implementation. Whether one agrees with it or not, the reality is that it is a universal and age-long concept that aims at addressing age-long discrimination of women in political activities in Kogi State and Nigeria at large. Nigeria has a pool of meritorious women who are well-qualified for public roles, which the state can draw from. On the question of discrimination, it must be acknowledged that there is a symbiotic relationship between affirmative action and discrimination. While religion is said to be a factor that debars women from making it to cabinet offices and other high-ranking positions in government in Kogi State, this is not always the case in other religious dominated states like Kaduna and Kwara. Violence is another factor often cited for women's poor representation in politics. While it is true that violence

steers women away from politics (especially the core power struggle), it has nothing to do with their representation in cabinet offices. When women, against all odds, eventually participate in politics, they are most relevant on the fringe of the political arena as mobilizers, dancers, and voters. Political campaigns are often populated by women of different categories and age brackets where they sing and dance to boost the ego of male political office seekers. Their visibility becomes very important and adds colors to campaign activities. But ironically, their usefulness ends as soon as elections are won. This has mostly been the case with the women in Kogi State politics.

It is worthy of note at this juncture that the 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria has not been achieved for over 17 years since the formulation of the National Gender Policy, even though several African countries have made progress. For instance, countries like Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, DRC, Kenya, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo (all in Africa) are among those that have passed legislation and adopted national policies mandating gender parity in executive, legislative, and judicial branches, using legislative quotas. The study then concludes that until affirmative action is domesticated, its implementation will be at the mercy of the disposition of the government in power for the appointment of more women into Cabinet and other key political positions rather than giving them the actual chance and opportunity to contest for various elective positions.

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in Enhancing Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria*

Recommendations

- i. The Kogi State Government should domesticate the United Nations 35% Affirmative Action policy through a binding state law mandating a minimum of 35% women's representation in elective and appointive political positions, with clear implementation responsibilities assigned to relevant MDAs and enforceable monitoring and sanction mechanisms.
- ii. Political parties and electoral bodies should institutionalize the 35% gender quota in candidate selection and party leadership structures, with INEC enforcing compliance as a condition for candidate nomination and participation in elections

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Approaches to Educational Drama as a Creative Field of Learning for Young Learners in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

Abstract

This paper examined the three different approaches to educational drama which are: Creative Drama and Play-making, Drama-in-Education and the integrated approach. These combined approaches provide creative learning avenues or sources for young learners. The objective of Creative Drama and Playmaking is to give each child an avenue for self-expression, creative imagination and the aptitude for a controlled emotional outlet. This paper employed a qualitative methodology using a practice-led experiments with selected pupils in selected schools in Akwa Ibom State as a means of applying this knowledge. The findings from this research revealed the relevance of using educational drama in educating Akwa Ibom children on the values of Ibibio Indigenous materials/culture as a viable learning process for children in the 21st Century.

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Introduction

Existing literature on drama suggest that as a medium of learning and as a powerful transformational tool, Drama has been discovered to be a useful tool of learning especially with children in early childhood because it engages learners using their personal thoughts, feelings, and ideas in the learning processes, either curriculum wise or in informal processes (Cecily O'Neill, 2006; Dragović & Balić, 2013; Lin, 2010; McCaslin, 2006; Victoria Brown, 2017). The creative processes identified with using drama touches not only on the physical aspect of the

learners but also the cognitive, social, and psychological aspects and brings transformation in various ways (Dawson & Lee, 2018; Goldbogen, 2020; Johnson, 2019; Lorenzetti & Kruger, 2020).

Carrol as cited in Henry, 2000:50, opines that "drama expands the 'parameters of what can be seen as legitimate knowledge', giving freedom to experience and explore the issues of human concern and intellectual inquiry." Using drama as an approach to knowledge sharing especially with young learners involves actions in the form of play, which is the language that

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children understand. It allows a space for making inquiries, exploring, and engaging at personal levels (Ozbek, 2014). Drama could be described as an activity that has already been a natural part of most young children's lives before formal education begins. Drama gives children the opportunity to step into a make-believe and fictional space to understand their environment. Farmer (2011:1), posits that drama:

Gives children the opportunity to explore, discuss and deal with difficult issues and to express their emotions in a supportive environment. It enables them to explore their own cultural values and those of others, past and present. Drama allows learners to think and act creatively thus developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills that can be applied in all areas of learning.

There are numerous practitioners in the field of creative drama and educational drama, but it is expedient to consider the praxis of the three pioneers (Ward, Slade, and Heathcote). I will look at their creative approaches from a constructivist point of view that is adaptable for the use of drama in the context of this paper.

Educational Drama as a field of study

Educational drama as a field of study and practice is said to have arisen from and depends upon several underlying and interwoven constructions of children, women, and theatre arts established during the Victorian and Progressive Era (Woodson, 1999:1). The eighteenth-century enlightenment according to Woodson brought a change in the way society constructed both childhood and the child. Alice Minnie Herts-Heniger is

reported to be the early founder of the field of study, and she wrote a book on child drama, *The Kingdom of the Child* with connections to Christian religion. Thus, the field of child drama was founded as a spiritual, socializing, democratic, and educational force, endorsed and adopted the construct of the child as holy and sacred (Woodson, 1998:2).

Educational drama became characterized as a "new" discipline that related more to education than to classic theatre practices. Child drama practitioners, teachers, and advocates were highly influenced by the prevailing construction of theatre as a democratic, patriotic, and positive social influence in this era (Clark, 2020; Lloyd, 2014; Pañares & Cabangon, 2016).

Educational drama grew in a complex climate of gendered and classist practices, patriotism, and progressive social reforms. That is why the women (Emma Sheridan Fry, Alice Minnie Herts, and Constance D'Arcy Mackay) who founded the child drama movement gave democratic and educative principles primacy over artistic principles of theatre. Woodson (1998:6) notes that Herts had characterized child drama as a "new" educational discipline as early as 1911. In 1930 Winifred Ward wrote that improvisational theatre with children was the "new subject-one that has a valuable contribution to give to education".

Educational drama is different from adult drama because it is purely used as a creative activity for children to learn (Nda, 2012). It is through the creative process of engagement that consciousness is impacted, understood, and experienced. Educational drama is a

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participatory activity because participants are given the free space to create, express ideas and explore situations that are imaginary but impactful. Children's learning is already full of discovery because it is natural for them to be inquisitive, inventive, and explorative. Discovery is an important aspect of child drama because through imaginary situations learning occurs by role-play, dramatizing and improvising situations.

The interest in using drama as an educational and learning medium began in early 1900 in Britain and spread across the world. The person to first experiment with drama by encouraging pupils to write and perform their own plays was Harriet Finlay-Johnson. Johnson felt that the value placed on the product, which was the result, should not be by adults' standards, but should be valued in terms of the pupils' experience and needs. Henry Caldwell Cook (1886-1937) also adopted this approach and termed it The Play Way (1919). Cook saw dramatic activity as a method of teaching. To him, play was a natural way of learning for the young child.

Though drama was first recognized in 1921 in Britain, its existence in different parts of the world, including Africa, cannot be denied. The child-centered drama approach to education became prominent in the 1960s. It became a norm in education and Peter Slade came into prominence with what he called child drama. He saw this art form to be different from adult performance in the theatre. It was a state of being (Online Drama, 2020). In this way child drama becomes a form of expression of the self, realization and actualization.

Urian (2011:143) notes that "recognition of drama as an active educational field, distinct and unique, only began in the 1940s with Peter Slade and "child drama", aimed at an educational concept with the child at its center.

"Development through drama" was the next step, in which a dramatic program began to coalesce, aimed at assisting and supporting the development of the child. This approach structured dramatic creativity as an organized process, beginning with relaxation techniques and ending in improvisation of dramatic situations (David & Way, 1981). In the 1970s attention was diverted by Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote, from the "child at the center" concept back to the 1920s approach of Harriet Finlay-Johnson, who had attempted to teach many subjects by means of dramatic activity (Bolton, cited in Urian 2011:142).

The new practice was labeled with different terms based on different arts or practice. 'Dramatic approach', 'creative learning', 'creative drama', 'creative dramatics', 'developmental drama', 'curricular drama', 'improvisational drama', 'education drama', 'informal drama', 'drama in education' or simply 'drama' are terms that have been used or are still in use (Woodson, 1999). "Existing literature suggests that drama offers several opportunities for educators to promote learning and development such as engaging, motivating and empowering learners to be active agents in educational settings" (Yule, 2017:278). Research in Educational drama evolved with the work of Ward (1930), Peter Slade (1954), Brian Way (1967), Gavin Bolton (1986), and Dorothy Heathcote

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(1995). Ward sees child drama as a playmaking and a learning process. Slade sees child drama as play and Heathcote regards child drama as a creative and educational group activity. The work of these practitioners has been, and continues to be, instrumental and influential around the world in how drama can be used as a cross-curricular approach and in an informal context (Ewing, Hristofski, Gibson, Campbell & Robertson, 2011; Faux, 2017).

Different Approaches to Educational Drama

Educational drama is an umbrella term for a wide range of strategies and approaches to the use of dramatic activities as a learning tool. The application of different approaches, according to subjects, discipline and context could result in different purposes and outcomes of creativity (Pinciotti, 1993; Tam, 2016). Drama has been valued as a learning medium since 1930 with its emphasis on development and learning according to Lin (2010:109).

There are three different approaches to education drama. Creative drama proposes the development and support of self-actualization of learners. Drama-in-education uses drama as learning medium that involves the creation of a dramatic environment where children learn by playing roles and using dramatic techniques. The integrative approach is an integration of the first and second approach to educational drama.

Practitioners of creative drama focus on the development of the whole person through drama. Winifred Ward, Peter Slade, Brian Way, Nellie McCaslin, and Blatner are the prominent

practitioners of this approach (Collins & Maxwell, 2017; Ozbek, 2014). Ozbek (2014:51) identifies the objective of this approach as “to give each child an avenue of self-expression, guide his creative imagination, provide for controlled emotional outlet, help him in the building of fine attitudes and appreciations and give him opportunities to grow in social cooperation.”

The second approach, Drama-in-education, uses drama as a teaching and learning medium. Nda (2012) states that “the formulation of the basic idea of employing dramatic activity as an effective method can also be attributed to Cook’s approach as stated in *The Play way dramatic Method*”. Others prominent practitioners of this approach include David Farmer, Joe Norris, Cecilia O’Neill and Dorothy Heathcote. Heathcote for example used the concept of drama as a means of exploring and learning for young learners. Drama-in-education seeks to deepen children’s understanding of themselves, others, and the world they live in as they build an improvised drama through a process of group interactions and self-explorations (Kukla, 1987:73). Dorothy Heathcote is observed to be the pioneer because her practices and theory distinguishes her from using drama as an art form.

The third approach, the integrative method combines both the first and second approaches as a method of engagement. Bolton has been identified as a forerunner in this field. This approach has two goals:

The first one, as in drama in education, is that the objectives of chosen curricular subject are the centre, the goal becomes the outcome at the end of

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the lesson while the second kind of goal is related to personal development, such as improving empathetic understanding and critical skills, reinforcing positive self-concept, increasing self-awareness and awareness towards others and promoting communication skills and the ability to work cooperatively. (Ozbek, 2014:53)

Prominent Practitioners and Approaches

Creative Drama and Playmaking: Winifred Ward

Winifred Louise Ward began her career by directing plays, teaching, reading, drama and literature and physical education in the public school of Adrian, Michigan from 1908-1916. She received her Ph.D. in Education from the University of Chicago in 1918 and accepted an appointment in the Faculty of North-western School of Oratory (Communication) where she settled and built the rest of her career (Collins, and Maxwell 2017, Ozbek 2014, Johnson 2019).

Collins & Maxwell, (2017:23) categorize Ward as one of the progressive education movement writers who had been influenced by the writings of John Dewey, Kilpatrick, Rugg, Shumaker and Hughes Mearns who promoted the education of the whole child. This influenced her to seek for more engaging ways of reaching young learners. Being surrounded by stories from a young age would prove to have an effect on Ward's own teaching philosophies.

She is known as one of the pioneers of Creative Drama, a teaching and learning approach that encourages creativity, speechmaking, dramatic activities, and literary appreciation. In

1924, she was appointed as supervisor of the creative dramatic curricula of the Evanston public schools. She later founded the Children's Theatre of Evanston and the National children's theatre conference in 1944. Ward retired as an assistant professor from North-western University in 1950. Her outstanding publications including *Creative Dramatics* (1930) and *Playmaking* (1947) and has attended and presented at many conferences both locally and internationally. She anchored two programmes; creative drama in schools for the purpose of encouraging creativity and speech and literature appreciation, and the Children's theatre of Evanston for the purpose of entertainment and appreciation of theatrical arts.

Her theories and philosophy are rooted in the progressive education movement of the 1930s. She believed in the education of a whole child; understanding himself/herself as well as the society to which they belong. Ward's method emphasized storytelling with dramatic elements that grow from non-verbal movement, pantomime, and tableaux into reflective activities. She told stories from poems, literature, fairy tales and folklore, myths and epic sources from American India and Irish stock. She guided the children to develop plays out of their own thoughts, imagination and emotions for personal experiences and reflective learning. After sharing a story first, the students would take on roles from the story to portray the characters. She focused on reflections through play as an approach for learning (Online 2012, Wiginton 2012). Ward trusted that story dramatization offered plentiful opportunities for creative expression

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through analysis, interpretation, and structuring of the story into a dramatic form. Creating a drama based on a work that contained literary merit and important moral values held greater educational potential. Analyzing and dramatizing stories that featured characters whose experience and perception differed from their own fostered empathy in her learners (Collins & Maxwell, 2017:26).

Ward's method relies heavily on the dramatization of linear stories, fables, and legend with an emphasis on both process and product. The importance of "playmaking in education" is seen as a progressive manifesto for modern education, the call to encourage playmaking in any progressive classroom (Wiginton, 2012:154). Her crusade was for an educational theory that promoted freethinking and creativity in children are fostered by the progressive educational goal to educate the whole child. Ward described the process of playmaking as having both personal and social values. It unites intellect and emotions, and it has curative opportunities and values.

To Winifred Ward, allowing children to express themselves is an important factor in their everyday life. Hence, in her book, *Playmaking with Children from Kindergarten through Junior High School* (Ward, 1957:1), she begins Chapter One, The Art of Playmaking with this sentence: "What children do is more significant to them than what they see and hear". She uses 'playmaking' as a term interchangeably with creative dramatics, which she defines as an inclusive expression designating all forms - story dramatization, impromptu work in pantomime, shadow and

puppet plays, and all other extemporaneous drama (Ward 1957:3).

Playmaking is an informal drama created by the learners themselves. She further shares that "playmaking has dynamic potentials for use in education for children" (Ward 1947:26). To Winifred Ward the following processes are considered as the principles of working with children: Children should work under guidance, not dictation of the teacher, the children democratically choose the play, develop the scenes, and improvise dialogues. Through drama, children learn by what John Dewey calls "meaningful experience". Children are encouraged to think independently and creatively. Children are educated for social living through their submergence in, and sympathy for the characters in the play. Drama helps children to grow in emotional control, as well as in intellectual and physical efficiency.

She clearly listed the objectives of playmaking as avenues of the child's personal experiences in the process as follows:

- i. To provide for a controlled emotional outlet,
- ii. To provide each child with an avenue of self-expression in one of the arts,
- iii. To encourage and guide the child's creative imagination,
- iv. To give young people opportunities to grow in social understanding and co-operation,
- v. To give children experience in thinking on their feet and expressing ideas fearlessly (Ward (1957:3).

According to Wiginton, (2012:153), Ward posited "playmaking

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as a distinct art form, different in both theory and practice from conventional theatre training and dramatic appreciation". Ward saw drama as a tool to create knowledge and through her work with children shared her experiences and dedicated her life to children and learning. She was convinced of the power of drama to create new ideas and knowledge.

Child Drama: Peter Slade

Peter Slade's (1912-2004) motivation for child drama and play was driven by observing children on the street with keen interest, concentration, and fulfilment as they played in their spaces with different objects. This formed the foundation for his philosophy on child drama (Casson, Online 2020). He is one of the early practitioners in the field of child drama and has been one of the leading pioneers of educational drama and drama therapy (Dodds, 2004; Jackson, 2012; Lloyd, 2014; Pitruzzella, 2017; Slade, 1999). He has been recognized for his book, *Child Drama*, published in 1971. He played a significant role in championing the cause of child-centered learning and is seen as one of educational drama's pioneers.

Jackson (1988:153) describes Slade as a tireless practitioner and campaigner on behalf of educational drama, children's theatre, and drama therapy. According to Jackson, Slade is recognized as one of the first to recognize that a child's instinct for dramatic play is a vital part of the process of "becoming a person" and for that reason to be nurtured and not patronized.

Slade further began using drama as a therapy to build confidence in

adults as well as in children and young people. He took drama to schools and developed drama training in colleges for teachers. From his observation of children playing freely, he developed his approach on projected play that involves children playing with objects as a way of helping to develop concentration in a child while playing. He also observed personal play that involved children playing with their whole body, which helps to develop confidence in what they are doing.

Slade believed that it is through play that each child's social awareness begins to develop. He further noted that the two early forms of play have an important part in building the personality of a child, and his ability to fit within the society. (Slade, 1971:35). The early forms of play develop into what he calls dramatic play, as the children develop when schooling begins. From his analysis and observations, he argues that "play is an inborn and vital part of a young life" (Slade, 1971:41). To him, play is the child's way of thinking, proving, relaxing, working, remembering, daring, testing, creating and observing (Slade, 1971:41)." He emphasizes that "it may well prove in future years that if play is the actual manner of a child's way of life, then play may be the correct approach to all forms of education." (Slade, 1971:42). This is the case currently as researchers in the field of drama, psychology and education are placing emphasis on incorporating play into learning methods for young learners (Connors, 2016; Nicolopoulou, McDowell & Brockmeyer, 2006; Singer, 2006; Water *et al.*, 2015).

Slade's main ideas about play learning and drama are "The full

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understanding of the difference between personal and projected play. Consideration that drama, properly regulated and understood, should be the basis of all education for the balance of a confident, expressive and healthy personality" (Slade 1999:254). He had much influence in setting up activities and programs that encouraged the use of drama as an educational medium. His focus was on allowing children to have the experiences of learning through a familiar way which is play, in play and through play. Emotional and expressive child's play is central to the new perspective on progressive education that focusses on child-centered learning. His influence is still felt in drama-in-education even in the 21st century because his theories are still relevant.

Drama-in-Education: Dorothy Heathcote

Dorothy grew up within a loving and supportive environment – one populated mainly by older women, who influenced her childhood (Davis, 2013; Johnson, 2019; NJ: Drama Australia Journal, 2011; Saxton & Miller, 2012). Heathcote is described as an ardent and avid learner who loved to read books because she was inquisitive about the world. Her interest areas were English, Geography and History including literature which became her dramatic source later in her career (Davis, 2013; Kipling, 2018; Klein, 2016). In 1945 at the age of 19, Heathcote began her actor-training and met Rudolf Laban and Esme Church who became an influence in her life. She studied Drama under the mentorship of Esme Church. She was a world-renowned teacher who revolutionized the use of Drama in Education through a variety of pioneering techniques. By the age of 24

she had become a lecturer at the Newcastle-upon-Tyne campus of Durham University, beginning a career that was to span 60 years. In that time, she became the inspiration and role model for generations of teachers across the world who recognised in her unique approach how to profoundly engage students and young people with their learning (NJ Drama Australia Journal, 2011:6).

Her approach include drama for learning, process drama and teacher-in-role which is an approach to teaching across curriculum in schools and other settings. This all began with her co-construction drama experience of working with a variety of students when she began her career as a teacher. In 1960s, Dorothy and Gavin Bolton developed the Mantle of Expert (MoE) approach that treated children as responsible experts to build their engagement and confidence in the learning process. They trained teachers who did not understand the concept of using drama in a learning process. She is said to be the pioneer of drama-in-education, an approach which was unorthodox yet an empowering approach to educational drama that inspires the use of the imagination by children and teachers working with children and young audiences. The NJ: Drama Australia Journal (2011:7) summarizes Dorothy Heathcote's strategies:

Dorothy created a whole school of drama practice based around the teacher shifting her pedagogy from that of an instructor to inductor, coach, facilitator, and fellow artist, recognising the potency for learning of a co-creative process in which learners are empowered. She created a vocabulary of

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terminology such as drama for learning, drama conventions, teacher in and out of role, secondary role, Rolling Role, Chamber Theatre, Frame, Signing, Mantle of the Expert and Commissioning that is now in the canon of world-wide dramatic teaching expertise and curriculum models pioneered by her deeply held mission to bring joy and challenge into learning.

Davis (2013:28) describes Dorothy Heathcote “an inspirational teacher who developed ways of working dramatically and collaboratively that demonstrated the ideals of many educational theories in practice. Her influence and legacy are particularly impressive when you consider her humble beginnings”.

She has been recognized as a central figure in international drama-in-education since 1970 and she is acknowledged by many as one of the great pedagogical innovators of the twentieth century. Heathcote has been a pioneer in developing ways to encourage learning through drama. Fulton, (2015:1) describes her as “a remarkable educator whose theory and practice have had a vital influence on the development of drama in education”. She has influenced many practitioners and theorists such as Gavin Bolton and Cecily O'Neill in the field of drama-in-education (Saxton & Miller, 2012:7). In the last thirty years, she has centered her practice on using drama as a learning process for learners of different categories. In her practice, drama became a context in which children were able to express themselves, but also gain knowledge to help find solutions.

Fulton (2015:3) categorizes Heathcote's work in the field into three overlapping phases. She states that Heathcote believed that

Experience without reflection was unlikely to lead to learning and students are most engaged when they have a real voice in the work and when they co-construct the content. Her aim according to O'Neill was to build on the students' knowledge and experience and to bring their existing understandings into awareness so that they became engaged in real learning.

Fulton (2015) describes the phases of her work as follows: In phase one, her practice was described as 'living-through' focused more on a double consciousness of immersion in the experience and self-spectatorship, combining engagement and distancing within the same context. Phase two was more curriculum focused which showed the use of depiction. It also includes the most important of her writing on the use of conventions. Phase three focused on the Mantle of the Expert, an integrative approach to the materials of the curriculum which is to prove the most innovative and influential of her contributions to drama and to education.

Over the years she has designed drama strategies and conventions called *Teacher in role* and *Mantle of the Expert* (Allern, 2008:321). Heathcote defines her Expert of Mantle (cited in Miller 1995:36) as, “sociological and anthropological systems of education (that) enables teaching and learning at all levels of the curriculum and integrates all areas through the contextual use of a dramatic metaphor. These elaborate systems of learning were developed based on

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artistic structures and conventions of the theatre. She introduced an important theory in the field of drama-in-education, known as *Teacher in role*, an important factor during process drama who guides the whole creative process by taking a role in an improvised world. Her use of “frame” and “mantle of the expert” are both strategies to bring about new perspectives (O'Neill, 1989:538).

Heathcote's work is described by Bolton (1985:5), as “prismatic.” Her approach challenges the simplicity of context and allows for a state of mind which is both reflective and engaged in a dramatic process. Bolton (cited in Fulton, 2015:6) further says that Heathcote's practice was:

Deeply drawn from her own philosophy of life, her intuitive understanding of the meaning of people's behaviour, her astonishing skill in 'reading' other people's behaviour, the meaning of their beliefs and the rules of their culture. Her creativity was drawn from the meaning of arts, literature and of education and indeed, of life.

Furthermore, O'Neill (1989:538) observes that the use of drama and teaching in role transforms the creative space into a space where something happens. As Heathcote puts it “the child enters the zone of circumstance permitted by the drama situation, and in shaping the circumstance's future, the child's future is shaped, ready to be available in the real society” (O'Neill 1989:538).

Cotton & Toft (2018:18) say that “Mantle of the expert was developed by Dorothy Heathcote and is described as a dramatic-inquiry based approach to teaching and learning”. This becomes a

creative approach in engaging learners in the curriculum using fiction roles to handle the subjects. When engaging in this process developed by Heathcote, learners take on fictional roles to engage in activities with the teacher. They interact among themselves while playing expert roles, imagining they are interacting with the fictional roles. Here learners are positioned by teachers as being knowledgeable and competent colleagues in the process of learning which allows them to inquire, wonder, explore and think about the subject of a lesson.

Allern (2008: 331) states, “Heathcote makes a decisive break in her 'living through drama', from Man-in-a-Mess to Mantle of the Expert which combines theoretical and scientific investigation with a performance”. She describes this as a type of role play where the entire class has collective roles. Booth (in Saxton and Miller, 2011:14) reports that Heathcote's custom was to involve all the participants all the time in the creative process of roleplaying, reflecting, observing, listening, and building the drama together. It was her way of building the learning process around what created interest on the level of the learners and something that would challenge their young minds (Eriksson in Saxton and Miller 2011:25).

For Heathcote authenticity is the key to learning as the variance in her theory was that she believed that the experience should be a collective one and that an end performance was not necessary with drama but that using drama as a tool would promote holistic learning (Heston 2013). She acknowledged drama as a foundation of human knowledge that is personal,

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cultural, and universal. She sees the involvement of the participants in the making of the activity as more important than the result which is the product of the creative process. Her work still presides as a great influence in the world of drama- in-education because although some details of her practice may have been modified over the years, but what has not changed according to O'Neil (1989:539) is her commitment to drama as a medium of learning. The key purposes and essential characteristics of her approach to education have remained constant throughout her remarkable career (O'Neill 2015:6). Nonetheless, the pedagogy that Heathcote had been promoting since the middle of twentieth century resonates with the vision of twenty-first-century education in which critical thinking, collaboration, and cross-curriculum problem-solving are essential skills for future citizens (O'Neill 2015:5).

Furthermore, Heston (2013:79) says that Heathcote used drama as a tool to promote holistic learning in schools. Her approach provides children with 'keys' for learning, life and decision making.

Process Drama (Heathcote, Slade, Bolton, Way and O'Neill)

Process drama has its foundation on social-constructivist theories of learning. It developed under the influence of a number of practitioners in the field of educational drama. It emerged strongly in the United Kingdom through Dorothy Heathcote's innovative teaching and was further developed by Peter Slade, Brian Way, Gavin Bolton, and Cecily O'Neill among others (Dias, 2013:31).

Bolton (cited in Dias, 2013:31) defines process drama as "engaging with something outside oneself using 'as if' mental set-in order to activate, sustain, or intensify that engagement."

Process drama is a method of teaching and learning that involves students in imaginary, unscripted, and spontaneous scenes (Schneider and Jackson 2000: 38). Learners from the process of discussion and engagement create ideas during the creative process based on a topic or issue. It is an experience that allows the learners to use language, movement and role-play to create pictures from the ideas they have created via the creative space or drama. "A process drama is primarily based on improvisation, where participants take on roles within the fictional world that has been created out of issues and themes generated by the group" (Weltsek, 2005:76). The characteristics or features of process drama are:

- i. Emphasis is on students or learners experiencing new ideas through using different strategies within the dramatic or creative experience.
- ii. The themes or topics are explored through improvisation.
- iii. Participants and facilitator together develop, share and analyse the drama process.

Dias (2013:31) says:

Process drama is distinct from the theatre where students are cast in roles, often with a pre-existing script, and taught the craft of acting, script analysis, and play production. In process drama, by contrast, students co-create and collaborate through improvisation both in and

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out of role to explore problems, situations, or ideas.

Process drama is guided by four principles as outlined by Dias (2013:31), namely:

- i. Collaboration and co-creation; Collaboration involves working together, while co-creation elevates this by jointly developing something new, deeply involving diverse learners sharing the same learning process from concept to creation, shifting power, and focusing on shared value and the importance of networking.
- ii. Role-playing and positioning; Role-playing is a learning or training techniques where participants act out scenarios in a safe, simulated environment to develop skills, gain experience, and understand different perspectives. Role-playing and positioning refers to two related concepts primarily used in training, education, psychology, and sports to describe how individuals assume and operate within specific characters or physical/social locations.
- iii. Improvisation and emergence; Improvisation is a spontaneous creation, while emergence is the process where complex patterns or structures arise from simple interactions with activities at hand. They are deeply related; improvisation generates emergence, especially in dynamic settings like music, art, drama or business, as unplanned actions

build into novel outcomes, revealing new strategies or collaborative possibilities not set by a master plan, moving beyond traditional rigid models.

- iv. Feedback and reflection; Feedback and reflection are crucial, interconnected processes for learning where feedback provides external insights and reflection is the internal analysis of experiences to understand learning, change understanding, and plan improvements, turning information into actionable steps for development.

The teacher co-creates dramatic situations with learners using improvisation and a reflective process to explore and construct ideas. "Process drama advocates learning about life through dramatic methods and it is participant -oriented with the group being co-collaborators with the facilitator to help shape the drama" as described by Water, McAvoy, and Hunt (2015:50). Process drama focuses on participant learning as its cores process of co-constructing and collaborating new life skills and lessons in the process of exchange.

In process drama, the learners or participants learn via the fictional or creative process and it is a participatory process that involves individual learner's contribution to the process. It is described by Yule (2017:278) "as a tool that explores a problem, a situation, theme or series of related ideas or themes using the artistic medium of unscripted drama." Process drama is seen to have its roots in dramatic play, which is a dynamic way of learning for

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developing children in every culture in the world (Allern, 2008). This creates an environment for learning new knowledge and skill based on the experience of the learners via the creative process and environment created (Yule 2017).

Burke (cited in Yule 2013:278) observes that process drama's distinguishing factors (from theatre) are its use of role-play to include participants/ learners in the educational environment by having them act as if they are someone else in a given situation with a "particular focus and purpose. Process drama opens the possibilities of learning through imagined experience according to Neelands (cited in Hulse & Owens, 2019:19). It offers a rich opportunity for dramatic creations between the learners and the teacher or facilitator of the process.

Creative and dramatic tools applied in the Experiment

My practice-led sessions incorporated storytelling, improvisation, role-playing and process drama as part of its creative tools in the process of play-crafting from Ibibio indigenous knowledge materials with participants in this paper for a period of three months with children aged 9-12 years old. I will classify it under the integrated approach because it was a combination of both formal and informal streams as described in the third approach to drama engagement. The focus of the practice-led sessions was not the end-product but rather the process itself.

Lin (2010:109) says that drama offers a dynamic and safe learning context that nurtures possibility of thinking qualities such as innovation,

play, depth, development, and self-determination. The learning process is dynamic in three ways: physically, consciously, and interpersonally. In contrast to traditional learning, involving sitting, listening, and copying, for example, the drama process requires frequent body movement.

Being an observer participating in the creative process along with the participants guided me to agree with the assertion by Lin (2010). It became a personal experience of observing the children in an informal creative learning context that differed from their formal learning, and enabled them to express their hidden talents, thoughts and idea during the practice-led sessions. Taking participants through the processes of working with other participants, sharing ideas, and creating new knowledge in a playful atmosphere while learning about indigenous knowledge of their social context was imperative. The opportunity for participants to exercise their talents within an informal setting and drawing from their experiences provided the opportunity to interact with their social circumstance and indigenous language.

Applying Ward's theories of using warm up exercises, and planning and playing out scenes gave learners the opportunity for self-expression and helped to guide their creative imagination. Through play-crafting the participants could express their ideas and emotions. Slade proposes that children can create new ideas through play which is natural to a child. This allowed participants the free space to create new ideas of stories and role-play the characters from the stories. Participants were guided to create dramatic activities from Ibibio

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indigenous materials. Heathcote's theories and praxis of asking questions, solving problems, and sharing ideas using their own imagination came in handy during the role-play and improvisational sessions. By practically applying dramatic activities using indigenous materials offered an opportunity of reflecting about real life situations as guided by the facilitator. Using creative and dramatic activities in engaging young learners allows for the exercise of cognitive, physical, and emotional being of participants because drama gives an opportunity of using the whole being in a practical context for expression and learning.

This paper identifies the following outstanding dramatic tools: storytelling, role-play, improvisation, teacher-in-role, warm-up exercises and dramatic activities, which allow participants to construct new ideas and knowledge from Ibibio indigenous materials. Participants can create with confidence, express themselves, socially interact and problem solve in a creative way in a dramatic environment.

Storytelling

Storytelling is an old art form that has existed for a long time (Hasey, 2016; Marunda-Piki, 2018). This allows for learning in a constructivist way because it involves cooperation and collaboration of all involved in the process (Barton & Baguley, 2014; Law, Lam, Law & Tam, 2017; Stinson & Freebody, 2006; Tam, 2016). Story telling serves as a powerful communicative medium that reflects the history, culture, origin, social, beliefs, religion, and ancestral wisdom of a people. It provides an interactive forum between the young and old and should be encouraged to continue as Nsereka

and Iyall (2018:520) recognizes that "folktales are a medium of instruction in Nigeria". Stories specific to child audiences have always been used as character molding lessons to promote the social, moral, and cultural values of a society. Stories have been told to children in various ways and it helps them to learn about different themes, social issues, and the world (Walan & Enochsson, 2019) its roots in oral culture and is common to every culture, including that of the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. McNaughton (2006:56) states that different cultures engage in storytelling as a form of teaching, learning, and understanding important happenings in society. Storytelling is a collaborative art in the social context which is constructivist in nature because it involves the storyteller, the listeners, and the social context in which it takes place (Halliss).

Storytelling allows participants to personally experience the creative process, constructing the experience and is shaped by the social and shared context with other participants. During the story telling sessions participants in this study were able to personally engage with the whole creative process of learning for three months. Participants could identify the moral lessons in the folktales. They demonstrated their understanding of the themes by creating new stories with the same themes. They also role-played the characters from their own stories using Ibibio language (though not fluent). This brought a new dimension of interpretation and interaction between the participants and I.

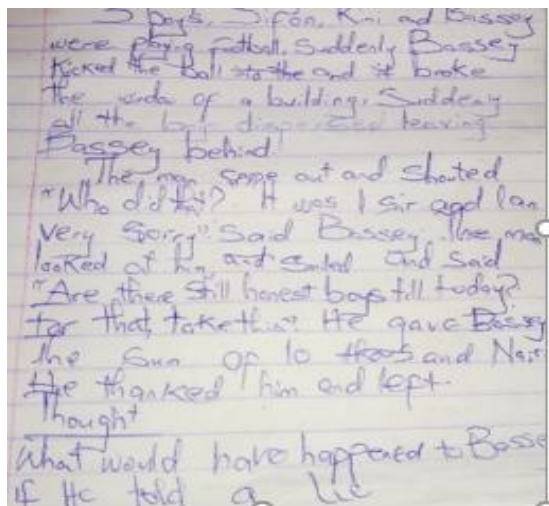
Participants were able to use Ibibio indigenous knowledge materials to construct new knowledge. They

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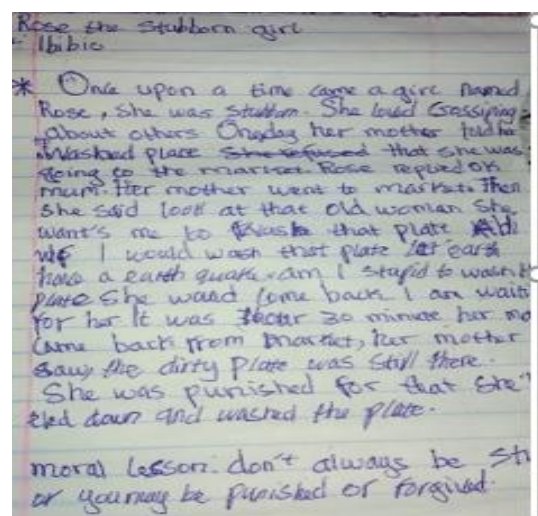
could recall themes, re-imagine the scenes from the old folktales and retell a new story, using their own words, experiences, knowledge, interest, language, and cultural contents. This indicates the importance of symbols and cultural experiences extracted from their own experience.

These are samples of stories written by participants in three groups as divided by the facilitator during the practice-led session on story writing:

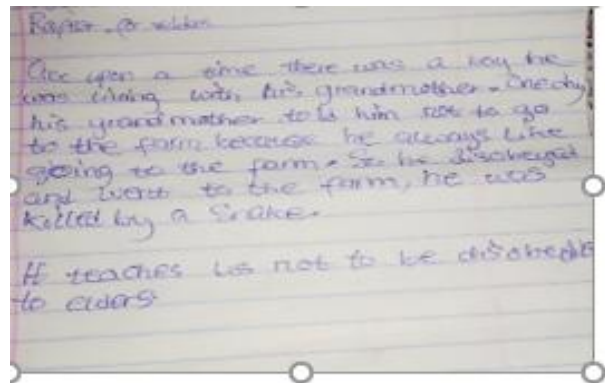
Sample 1 for group: Reward for honesty



Sample 2 from group 2: Title: Rose the stubborn girl



Sample 3 for group 3: Title: Respect for elders



Social constructivism views learning as an interactive activity where learning and meaning comes from interacting with other people and your social environment. Social constructivism assumes children as active and able to construct subjective meaning through interaction with others and engagement with their social and cultural context (Tam 2016:31). Storytelling allowed for this interaction between the participants in the same social context, to learn and understand from Ibibio indigenous knowledge materials or resources for the period of the research. They could identify and pick-up cultural symbols and words that speaks of Ibibio cultural values in the society.

Improvisation

Improvisation is often associated with "liveness or the experience and aesthetic of 'being in the moment'" (Sajnani, 2012:79). Sajnani (2012:80) further explains that:

Popular definitions of improvisation associate it with extemporaneous creation: an invention, performance or composition that is distinguished by the fact that it emerges without premeditation or rehearsals. It is in

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this way seen as a primary skill often used by an artist to push against boundaries of their own knowledge to generate insight and to create new works.

The play-crafting scenes brought out new ideas and actions from the participants which I found creative for 9-12-year-old. They took the risk of attempting to create beyond their imagination and everyday experiences. Improvisation means taking risks and pushing the boundaries to discover new capabilities and knowledge you never knew could exist. It is a highly creative process that delivers new ideas and knowledge for different purposes, especially in a creative space. (Holdhus, *et al* (2016:7) reiterates the definition of improvisation as “a process that unfolds while being invented”. It is a creative process focused not on the product but on the process as it unfolds. Most of such creations are unrepeatable or irreversible. It is a process that cannot be repeated in exactly the same way because it is created in the spur of the moment.

Improvisation is a collaborative effort in which participants create dialogue, action, and a story based on a concept or topic of interest or focus using movement and gestures as forms of communication in a fictional way. The description of the process of improvisation aligns with the result of the practice-led sessions on improvisations. Bertinetto (2011:95) describes improvisation as:

A process in which the invention is performed while the performance is invented. He identifies the following characteristics of improvisation as follows:
Irreversibility: The creation process

cannot be corrected. Singularity: It occurs here and now and vanishes while it is occurring. Self-construction and self-reference: The subsequent actions affect and implement the significance of current actions. It leads to a process of feedback and reflection for the interpretation of already taken actions which creates a context of meaning.

It is propelled by reactions from previous actions to create meaning. Play-crafting produces spur of the moment scenes by participants during the improvisation session. Replaying the scenes brought out new ideas.

Participants had the opportunity of creating and co-creating improvisations from some Ibibio proverbs, games, and folksongs. They took turns to play the characters in the folksongs and proverbs. They could identify the symbols relating to Ibibio culture in the folksongs and enact the roles as guided by the facilitator. For instance, one of the folksongs meaning cockroaches do not dance before chicken because they become their meal if they fall into their trap, illustrating the theme of not being careless:

*Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro,
Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro
Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro
Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro
mfim isiyoroke ke obio unen*

The lesson decoded from the song is always being on guard to avoid being abused or getting into trouble. Participants shared the knowledge of why it was dangerous for cockroaches (*mfem*) to be around chickens (*unen*). Applied to our daily lives it stresses the need to be careful and to avoid falling

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into wrong traps or company. They could relate with the cultural symbol of Ibibio and the need for safety in their own ways.

We also used the traditional game “*Nkpok Eto*”. This game illustrates the need for teamwork and cooperation among peers. They observed that each time one participant missed the opportunity of passing his stick used in the game the whole process was delayed. Participants were able to share the need to work together for progress in school, at home or wherever they work with others.

Ase owo inua okop se etang is one of the proverbs that we used. It is a proverb saying that when one pays rapt attention to a speaker you can hear clearly and obey instructions given. This proverb advocates the need to be attentive and focused.

Role-playing

Role-play allowed participants to experience the story. They personally experience the characters they played. By role-playing the characters from their story, participants had the opportunity to express their views and ideas about what happens around them using Ibibio as a language. Speaking Ibibio was a challenge but they could identify and understand the importance of expressing themselves in their own cultural context. While creating the scenes from the songs, games, proverbs, and stories they also learned to work with, tolerate and accommodate other participants by working together. As Way (cited in David & Way, 1981:358) states:

Drama is about being articulate, developing our senses, drama is about feelings, one’s and those of

others. Drama is about learning about oneself and others so that one can respect oneself and others. Drama, linked with other forms of creative expression, allows youngsters to use the whole of themselves; senses, imagination, language, emotions, intellect to deal with those things which are necessary and mandatory in school.

Being able to create dialogue and movement from their experience was a way of co-constructing new knowledge. These improvisations from indigenous materials (proverbs, folktales and folksongs) were not scripted and there were no rehearsals, and they were able to create spontaneous actions and dialogues. They had a theme and had to invent stories from the themes through imagination and fantasy. The improvisation and role-play helped the participants to discover what they could do, imagine and create. It was done in a place where they were free to express themselves without fear because improvisation is about making discoveries spontaneously.

The play-crafting sessions became an experience that was rich and impactful because participants independently contributed by applying their imagination and reflecting on some values (teamwork, respect, hard work, honesty) identified in Ibibio society to create a story that reflected their concept of these values.

Feedback and Reflection

By giving participants the opportunity to co-construct new knowledge from Ibibio indigenous knowledge means giving children the space to express themselves freely and make contributions to their society.

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Weltsek (2005: 81) calls this action, “Freeing students’ voices”. The process of co-constructing, improvisation, and role-play in a collaborative way was central to the practice-led sessions. The feedback session was also a moment of allowing participants to express their opinion and it was a learning process for both the facilitator and participants.

The following lessons stood out for them:

Participant A: *Ku usung iwot* (Do not be stubborn).

Participant B: *Ekpu kpan nke nkpo ku unam aba* (If you are corrected for being wrong, learn the lesson).

Participant C: *Ekpu dung utom ka* (If you are sent on an errand, obey).

Participant D: *Wana se anie ye owo mfem* (Share what you have with others).

Participant E: *Afid nnyin iminie se n ante inam ke idung nnyin* (Everyone is important in society).

Participant F: *Wam mme owo ke ini nfana. Kpono yong nie ime ye mme owo nko* (Help people when they are in trouble and always cooperate with and tolerate others).

Hornbrook (1991:9) posits that:

Drama is one of the keyways in which children can gain an understanding of themselves and of others, can gain confidence in themselves as decision-makers and problem-solvers, can learn to function collaboratively, and can explore- within supportive framework- not only a range of human feelings, but also a whole

spectrum of social situations and/or moral dilemmas.

Listening to the feedback and discussions of participants during the practice-led sessions agrees with the assertion above because they expressed how working in groups during the games, role-play and improvisation taught them the importance of sharing ideas and learning from one another. There is an Ibibio proverb *Eto kiet idaha ikpong ikapa akai*, meaning one tree cannot make a forest. We need collaboration, tolerance to learn from others.

Conclusion

This paper considered the dramatic approaches to drama as an educational method. It also examined key practitioners in the field of educational drama who are viewed as pioneers of using creative approaches in engaging learners in both a formal and informal context. Drama has been found to be a powerful engaging tool that allows for learning as reflected in the theories and practices of leading practitioners. These theories are relevant to this study as they are basic, core and foundational theories in the field of child drama and drama for young learners. Through drama, we learn what it is to be a human being in a specific social and cultural context (Fulton, 2015).

In using drama as a learning medium, the focus and objective is allowing learners or participants to be completely engaged in the creative process. The creative process is based on dramatic activities that apply the learners’ physical and mental involvement through role-play, games, and improvisation that allow for

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personal experiences in lessons they co-construct around issues identified for the learning process. Allowing them take ownership of what they are learning enhances their commitment to the process. "Through drama learners are encouraged to take responsible roles and make choices to participate in and guide their own learning" (Farmer 2011:1).

Drama as a medium of learning helps to develop some capacities and skills in the learners. It gives learners the opportunity to create or co-construct with the facilitator meaningful situations. They make use of their inner talents and it is a positive, joyful, and fulfilling learning process. Water, McAvoy and Hunts (2015:3) note that "drama is active learning. We learn through doing, exploring, and trying out, and by interacting with peers and our environment. The act of doing is what makes us lifelong learners."

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African Union's Role in the Promotion of Good Governance and Political Development in Nigeria

Abstract

The African Union (AU) has been pursuing one of its primary objectives of promoting democratic principles and institutions by ensuring good governance through the curbing of corruption, ensuring free and fair elections through monitoring of elections in order to ensure sustainable political development. It is uncertain whether the democratic approach has rubbed off on its anti-corruption initiatives, given the recent performance of most AU member states especially Nigeria on many global surveys of corruption, development and governance evaluation indexes. The paper, therefore, examined the extent to which the AU's stance on democratic promotion has impacted on political development in Nigeria. The integration theory was adopted as the framework of analysis for the paper. The paper is both qualitative and quantitative which relied on data sourced from questionnaires and interviews as well as secondary sources, while content analysis was adopted for data analysis. The findings acknowledged AU's efforts in promoting political development in Nigeria through its different anti-corruption and election monitoring frameworks. But in spite of the slight improvements of Nigeria on different corruption perception indexes, and fragile democratic system, corruption and electoral fraud still persists in the governance of Nigeria and many AU member states. The paper further shows inter alia that the AU's anti-corruption initiatives have not effectively reflected the adopted measures due to uncommon democratic practices in Nigeria. The paper contended that Nigerian government in collaboration with African Union should endeavour to uphold democracy in its purest form in order to ensure and sustain political development in the country

Keywords: Politics, Development, Governance, African Union, Nigeria.

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Introduction

The trajectory of African development since its decade of independence tends to be a contradictory admixture of hope and despair. Undoubtedly, political

independence came with great expectations which were hinged on the dialectical permutation that the collapse of colonialism would usher in an epoch of unhindered national development. But that hope was quickly transformed into despair as African states became

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embroiled in all manner of socio-economic and political contradictions, thus occupying the “bottom of global development and poverty scale, with human conditions largely moving backwards” (Odukoya, 2018). The early attempt at institutionalising African unity was under the auspices of the Organisation of African unity (OAU) (now African Union, AU). Scholars are of the opinion that OAU was successful in actualizing the dismantling of colonialism and apartheid but ineffective in motorising the integration of African states and steering them to sustainable development (Nwozor, 2018).

Nigeria's neo-conservatism and commitment to promoting a democratic ethos in Africa have been subsumed under certain guidelines, under the Constitutive Act of the AU. Among these are, on the one hand, a strong repudiation of unconstitutional changes of governments, and, on the other hand, financial and technical assistance to transitional states, and a commitment to peace and conflict management in Africa (Bakare, 2019).

On the other hand, the African Union (AU) has affirmed its seven aspirations for the future of the African continent through the “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want” framework (Agenda 2063), which was adopted in 2015.¹ Aspiration 4 of Agenda 2063 is “a peaceful and secure Africa”, and the goals for this aspiration are “preservation of peace, security and stability” (goal 13), “a stable and peaceful Africa” (goal 14), and “a fully functional peace and security architecture” (goal 15). It is significant that the AU included Aspiration 4 in Agenda 2063, in view of the scourge of

conflicts and unconstitutional changes of government (UCG) through military coups, all of which have a detrimental effect on the socio-economic development of the continent (Mushoriwa, 2023).

There is no iota of doubt that Nigeria has made significant contributions towards the emergence, development and sustainability of African Union. Nevertheless, it cannot be debunked that the AU in its own capacity as a regional organization has also made a significant contribution in the political development of Nigeria through various ways such as electoral observation to ensure free fair and credible election, human rights policies and anticorruption policies as highlighted in the subsequent section of this paper.

Since the transition from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU) on 9 July 2002, several governance institutions and mechanisms have been devised to accelerate democratic development and socio-economic good governance in Africa. These commitments are spelt out not only in the AU Constitutive Act itself, but also in the declaration on unconstitutional changes of government; the declaration governing democratic elections; and the declaration on observing and monitoring elections. The institutionalisation of these instruments suggests that African leaders have come to attach a reasonable measure of importance to democracy and good political governance as prerequisites for the development and stability of Africa (Omotola, 2014). It is against this backdrop that this paper is set out to investigate the African Union and the promotion of good governance and

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enhancement of political development in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What is the role of African Union in Promoting good governance in Nigeria?
- ii. What impact do African Union's policies and initiatives have on the fight against corruption in Nigeria?

Research Objectives

- i. To examine the role of the African Union in promoting good governance in Nigeria.
- ii. To assess the impact of the African Union's policies and initiatives on the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Ayodeji, Kolade, and Abiodun, (2023), carried out a paper on African Union, Promotion of Democracy and Anti-Corruption Initiatives in Africa. The paper is qualitative and relied on data sourced from secondary sources, while content analysis was adopted for data analysis. The findings acknowledge AU's committed advancement of democracy in Africa through its different anti-corruption frameworks. But in spite of the slight improvements of some African counties on different corruption perception indexes, corruption persists in the governance of many AU member states. The paper contends that AU's anti-corruption bodies should ensure and encourage member states to internalise and uphold existing governance norms and accountability measures, while implementation mechanisms should be strengthened.

Mustapha (2020), in a paper on Nigeria and the African Union (2002–2019) the qualitative and descriptive historical methods were adopted in analyzing the primary sources. The paper employed the role theory to reveal, develop, and validate the correlation between the role of Nigeria in the African Union and in the regional integration for economic and political realization. The paper therefore recommends among others that the regionalization of economic activities will enable national economies to build capacities in all critical areas via the absorption and generation of new production and marketing technologies as a starting point for a more meaningful participation in the world economy.

Umezurike, Iwu, Asuelime, and Umezurike (2017), empirically investigated the phenomenon of re-examining Nigeria's contributions to the African Union and the domestic socio-economic ramifications. This paper depended on a desk-top review of secondary data and documentary analysis methodology in the review where it was found that there is a serious misalignment between Nigeria's diplomacy and support for the African Union on one hand and positive socio-economic development in Nigeria on the other. While there have been scholarly studies that address Nigeria's diplomacy and contribution to the African Union (AU), many of them have failed to compare and contrast how those have added to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. The paper concludes that Nigeria has not been able to transform its role under AU to its national benefit, therefore, the paper recommends among others that for

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Nigeria's role in the AU to be meaningful, the country needs to simultaneously revive its internal socio-economic condition.

Aniekwe & Atuobi (2016), did a paper on two decades of election observation by the African Union: A Review. The paper utilized the secondary source of data collection and content method of analysis. The paper observed that between 1989 and 2013, the African Union (AU) observed 423 elections in Africa. However, these election observation missions were inconsistent at best in terms of approach, methodology, framework and status. The first, which was in Namibia in 1989, was deployed within the framework of the United Nations (UN) statute in terms of which the UN invited the AU. The subsequent election observation missions have to date been deployed either as diplomatic or mediation missions or a combination of diplomatic and independent technical missions.

This article shows that the election observation journey of the AU has passed through several stages and regimes. While we recognise the challenges, we also point towards improvement, and identify the missing links by recommending that the AU needs to complete to become a truly independent actor in its election observation missions.

Theoretical Framework

Integration Theory

International integration refers to the process by which supernatural institutions replace national ones-the gradual shifting upward of sovereignty from state to regional or global structures. The ultimate expression of this is the merger of many states into a

single state or ultimately into a single world government (Goldstein, 2003). It is further seen by Haas (1958) as the "process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states."

The integration theory is seen as having originated from functionalism. Functionalism according to Diego (2006) is a theory of international relations that arose principally from the experience of the Second World War and a strong concern about the obsolescence of the state as a form of social organization. Functionalists instead of agreeing with the realist view of self-interest of nation states as a motivating factor, rather focus on common interests and the needs shared by states and non-state actors in a process of global integration, triggered by the erosion of state sovereignty and the increasing weight of knowledge and hence of scientists and experts in the process of policy making. In the functionalism theory, international integration, the collective governance and interdependence between states develops its own internal dynamics as states integrate in limited functional, technical and economic areas. The functional theory was later modified by scholars to be able to explain developments in Europe. This is referred to as neo functionalism.

Neo functionalism argue that economic integration (functionalism) generates a political dynamic that drives integration further. Close economic ties require more political coordination in order to operate effectively and eventually lead to political integration

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as well- a process called spill over (Goldstein 2003). Sinnot (1993) believes the theory of integration has gone through three phases. These are Trans-nationalism and neo functionalism, a second short-lived phase characterized by an intense revisionism in the late 1960s and early 1970's and the third contemporary phase or revival. In the first phase, sense of community was an essential element, thus explaining why integration was defined as a matter of mutual consideration of partial identification in terms of semi-images and interests, of mutually successful predictions of behaviours and of cooperative actions in accordance with it (Deutsch 1957). The twelve conditions that were seen as essential to the process of integration include: mutual compatibility of main values; a distinctive way of life; we values, institutions and habits of action that mark the area off from major neighbours, unbroken links of social communication both across territories and across strata; broadening of political elite, both in regard to recruitment from wider strata and in regard to connections between strata, mobility of persons and a multiplicity of ranges of communication and transition; and mutual predictability of behaviour (Sinnot 1993).

The neo functionalists on their own restricted the main motives for integration to integrationist elites, without according much weight or importance to public opinion. This led to the second phase which was revisionist, where a lot of importance was accorded public opinion in the process of integration, which (Sinnot, 1993) believes "the key concept in this regard and one of particular

contemporary relevance is politicization" which involves "a broadening of the arena of participants, in which political legitimizing decision-makers and broad political opinion became more heavily involved as integration decisions make heavier] incursions upon national sovereignty and the identitive functions of the states".

The third phase which is quite recent involves different strands but also incorporates a core concern for public opinion especially in this era of democratization all over the world.

Methodology

The paper adopted mixed-method research design. The targeted population of the paper is 4,572 which comprises of individuals drawn from some selected staff of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), AU Secretariat in Nigeria, National Electoral Commission (INEC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission; form a vital part of the population. These groups were carefully chosen because they are positioned at the intersection of political development affairs, community engagement, and socio-economic planning, offering crucial perspectives relevant to the paper's objectives. Using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) statistical method of sample size determination, the sample size of the paper is derived at three hundred and fifty four (354).

The paper employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The instruments that were used in collecting data for this paper are oral interview questionnaires and secondary sources. Stratified and Random Sampling Techniques were

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used in selecting the respondents among different categories for the administration of questionnaire. For interview, purposive sampling technique was used. The sampling comprised of people with many similar characteristics such as deep knowledge on the subject of investigation, years of experience and age. This paper made use of charts as a platform to present the research data and also analyze the data collected from the field on the subject matter using simple percentage and graphs as the case may be for the descriptive analysis. The version that was used for analyzing data for the paper is SPSS 25. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative information.

Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

A total of 342 copies of questionnaire were distributed while 325 copies were retrieved. Therefore, the presentation and analysis was done based on the 325 retrieved copies of questionnaire. The pattern of presentation was based on the objectives of the paper using charts (pie and bar charts). 12 KII responses were collated, transcribed, coded and analyzed. The discussion of findings then followed. This was supported with information from extant literature.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Role of African Union in Promoting Good Governance in Nigeria

The first research question was to determine the role of role of African union in promoting good governance in Nigeria. To address this research question, the paper asked respondents appropriate

questions. The data generated are presented in Figures 1 to 3.

Figure 1: Respondents view on the Assessment of whether or not African Union Effectively Collaborates with Nigerian Government Institutions to Promote Good Governance in the Country.



Source: Author's Field Survey (2024)

The analysis in Figure 1 shows that majority of respondents cumulatively ranking 297 (91.4 per cent) respondents assessed the role of African Union effectively collaborates with Nigerian government institutions to promote good governance in the country. Only 8.6 per cent of respondents cumulatively opined that African Union effectively collaborates with Nigerian government institutions to promote good governance in the country. It could be surmised from the analysis that the African Union has aided in effectively collaborating with Nigerian government institutions to promote good governance in the country. Hence, the need for Nigeria to always paved way and provide a solid ground for smooth running and execution of African Union policies, programmes and initiatives in order to promote good governance and encourage political development in the country.

In a KII (3/01/24) with Assistant Principal Officer, Election and Monitoring Unit, INEC, Abuja, he

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averred that yes, African union effectively collaborates with Nigerian government and institutions such as INEC in order to ensure free fair and credible election as well as good governance.

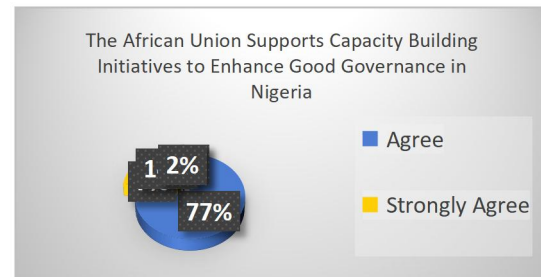
On the other hand an Executive Officer Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja, opined in a KII (4/01/24) that yes, the African Union effectively collaborates with Nigerian government institutions to promote good governance in the country through its policies and programmes like the electoral observer missions, the anticorruption programmes, the campaign for human rights, etc.

In the same vein, Director Voter Registry INEC, Abuja, submitted in a KII (3/01/24) that the organization (African Union) assist in terms of security and other matters that will promote good governance.

According to a Deputy Director African Union Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja, (4/01/24), he opined that Nigeria Collaborates with the African union to achieve its goals especially agenda 2063 to ensure good governance and democracy as well as human right and rule of law.

In another interview a Principal Administrative Officer, EFCC, Abuja, opined in a KII (5/01/24) that the Nigerian government has been part of the union from its formation, it has promoted unity amongst states, Nigerian state had benefitted from trades, economic values and bilateral relation.

Figure 2: Respondents view Ascertaining African Union Supports Capacity Building Initiatives to Enhance Good Governance in Nigeria.



Source: Author's Field Survey (2024).

The analysis in Figure 2 shows that majority of respondents cumulatively ranking 84 per cent respondents ascertained that the African Union supports capacity building initiatives to enhance good governance in Nigeria. Only 16 per cent of respondents cumulatively disagreed that African Union supports capacity building initiatives to enhance good governance in Nigeria. It could be surmised from the analysis that indeed African Union has on various occasion embarked on capacity building initiatives to enhance good governance in Nigeria.

Figure 3: Respondents view on African Union's Strategies and Programs have Effectively Strengthened Transparency and Accountability in Nigerian Governance Structures.



Source: Author's Field Survey (2024).

The analysis in Figure 3 shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents making up 56.9 per cent

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(185) of respondents agreed by opining that African Union's strategies and programs have effectively strengthened transparency and accountability in Nigerian governance structures. Whereas 5.8 percent (19) strongly agreed with the posed question. However, only 37.3 per cent (121 respondents) cumulatively disagreed with the posed question. This implies that there is need to solidify, strengthen and sustain African Union's strategies and programs in order effectively strengthened transparency and accountability in Nigerian governance structures.

In corroborating the forgoing analysis, an executive officer Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja, averred in a KII (4/01/24) that the African Union's strategies and programs have not effectively strengthened transparency and accountability in Nigerian governance structures hence, the need to improve it a bit.

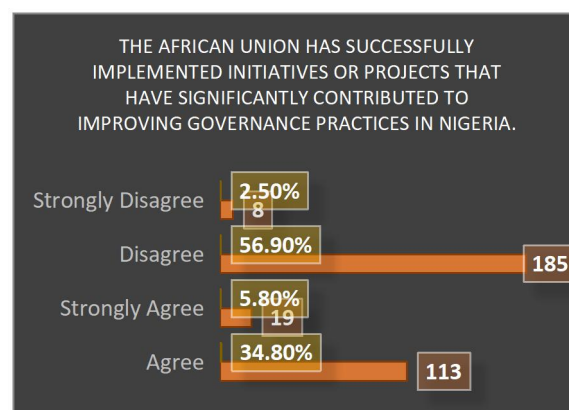
On the other hand, Director Voter Registry INEC, Abuja confirmed in a KII (3/01/24) that the African union through collaboration with other agencies contributed greatly in bringing transparency and accountability in the governance of Nigeria.

In the same vein a Deputy Director AU Division MFA, Abuja, averred in a KII (4/01/24) that yes, the African union has effectively strengthened the institutions responsible for transparency and accountability in Nigeria by supporting the EFCC, ICPC, Transparency International Code of Conduct Bureau etc. as well as implementing the AU convention on anti-corruption.

In another interview conducted with Principal Administrative Officer INEC,

Abuja, (3/01/24), he stated that his opinion is perceived on that the idea behind its formation is yet to be attained the unity is in disarray mainly due to political and economic instability. However, Nigeria is steadily achieving its objectives.

Figure 4: Respondents view on the African Union has Successfully Implemented Initiatives or Projects that have Significantly Contributed to Improving Governance Practices in Nigeria.



Source: Author's Field Survey (2024).

The responses contained in Figure 4 revealed that 113 (34.8 per cent) and 19 (5.8 percent) respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that African Union has successfully implemented initiatives or projects that have significantly contributed to improving governance practices in Nigeria. Another category of respondents ranking 185 (56.9 per cent) and 8 (2.5 percent) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively by opining that African Union did not successfully implemented initiatives or projects and have not significantly contributed to improving governance practices in Nigeria.

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In respect to the forgoing response and an analysis from the questionnaire above, the Assistant Principal Officer, Election and Monitoring Unit, INEC, Abuja, confirmed in a KII (3/01/24) that Yes, the African Union has successfully implemented initiatives or projects that have significantly contributed to improving governance practices in Nigeria through stabilization programmes in returning democratic values in some African countries such as Niger Republic, Chad Republic among others which is still ongoing.

Whereas an Executive Officer Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja averred in a KII (4/01/24), that some of the protocols and charters of the African Union to which Nigeria is a party to has helped improved governance.

In the same vein a Deputy Director AU Division MFA, Abuja, (4/01/23) is of the opinion that yes, the African union through AUDA-NEPAD has being implementing projects and coordinating MDA's to effectively enhance good governance, Nigeria has completed its second peer review and submitted it country report as at 2023. All programs of MDA's are geared towards achieving the goals and aspirations of agenda 2023 of the African union.

A Principal Administrative Officer from EFCC, Abuja, submitted in a KII (5/01/24) that to some extent yes, and reason is one of the African objectives is to sustain democracy across member states and Nigeria has gradually made the transition and on the verge of ensuring it credibility and sustainability.

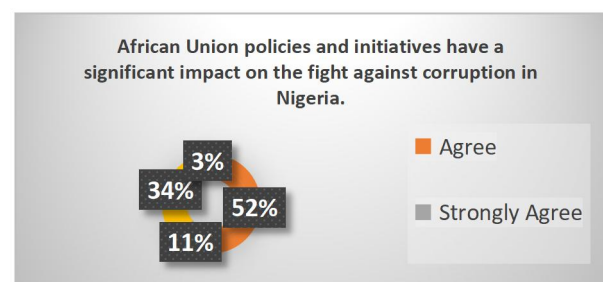
The analysis infers that the Nigerian government need to emplace institutional mechanisms in addressing

the loopholes in its democratic practice and protection of human right as well as in other African countries and beyond in order to ensure that the globe is safe and free for everyone to do what they deem fit in accordance to the provisions of the laid down rules and regulations of the state and international system and to promote political development in the country.

Impacts African Union Policies and Initiatives have on the Fight against Corruption in Nigeria

The second research question was to determine the impact African Union policies and initiatives have on the fight against corruption in Nigeria. To address this research question, the paper asked respondents appropriate questions. The data generated are presented from figure 5 to 7.

Figure 5: Respondents view on Whether African Union Policies and Initiatives have a Significant Impact on the Fight against Corruption in Nigeria.



Source: Author's Field Survey (2024).

The responses contained in Figure 5 shows that cumulatively 63 per cent of respondents were of the view that African Union policies and initiatives have a significant impact on the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Only a cumulative of 37 per cent of respondents opined by disagreeing with the assertion that African Union policies

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and initiatives have a significant impact on the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

In corroborating the forgoing analysis, the Executive Officer Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja, averred in a KII (4/01/24) that there is a convention that was signed by Nigeria and members of the African Union which is the African convention on preventing and combating corruption in Africa which has to some extent aided in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

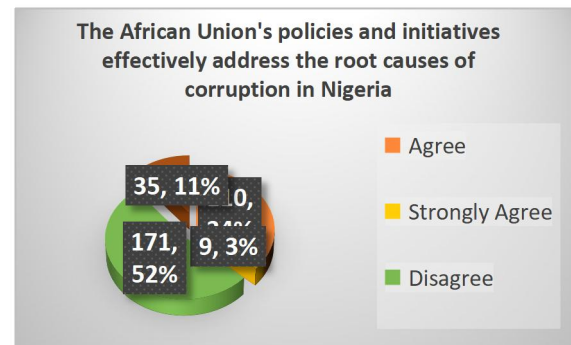
On the other hand, a Director Voter Registry INEC, Abuja, submitted in a KII (3/01/24) that African Union in conjunction with other development patterns has a great impact in fighting corruption in Nigeria.

In the same vein, a Deputy Director AU Division MFA, Abuja, observed in a KII (4/01/24) that the African Union's board for anti-corruption monitors the various institution of anti-corruption in Nigeria and a robust reporting system from Nigeria's agencies to the AUBAC is maintained annually. This keeps Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies on it toes.

In another interview, a Principal Administrative Officer EFCC, Abuja, observed in a KII (5/01/24) that despite the formation of inter-governmental action group against laundering in west only but small had been achieved due to our porous security system in Nigeria.

On the other hand, a Principal Administrative Officer INEC, Abuja, (3/01/24) averred that, the AU anti-corruption impact on Nigeria has to do with the discouragement on bribery domestic or foreign, diversion of public property as regard to Nigeria and other countries in Africa.

Figure 6: Respondents view Ascertaining whether African Union's Policies and Initiatives Effectively Address the Root Causes of Corruption in Nigeria.



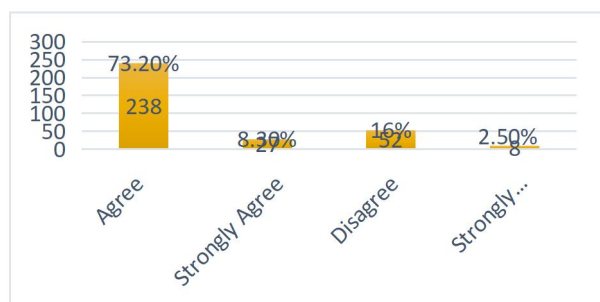
Source: Author's Field Survey (2024).

Figure 6 above depicts that, 119 respondents representing 43 per cent cumulatively opined that the African Union's policies and initiatives effectively address the root causes of corruption in Nigeria. In addition, 52 per cent and 11 per cent of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that African Union's policies and initiatives effectively address the root causes of corruption in Nigeria.

It is, therefore, imperative for the Nigerian government and stakeholders involved to ensure that their actions and inactions towards fighting and addressing the root causes of corruption are in tandem with the ideas and initiatives of African Union in the fight against corruption especially the resolution of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) as well as the AU Agenda 2063.

Figure 7: Respondents view the African Union Actively Collaborates with Nigerian Government Institutions to Combat Corruption in the Country.

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Source: Author's Field Survey (2024).

The responses on Figure 7 depicts that a cumulative of 265 (81.5 per cent) respondents were of the view that the African Union actively collaborates with Nigerian government institutions to combat corruption in the country. Another category of respondents ranking 60 (18.5 per cent) respondents cumulatively disagreed that the African Union actively collaborates with Nigerian government institutions to combat corruption in the country.

In respect to the forgoing analysis, an Executive Officer Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja, submitted in a KII (4/01/24), that yes, African Union actively collaborates with Nigerian government institutions to combat corruption in the country. This is done through a department in the African Union called the African Union advisory board against corruption and Nigerian institutions like EFCC, ICPC, and PACAC.

On the other hand, a Director Voter Registry INEC, Abuja, opined in a KII (3/01/24) that yes, the African Union is participating in activities with the government institution to combat corruption in Nigeria.

In the same vein a Deputy Director AU Division MFA, Abuja, averred in a KII (4/01/24), that yes, the African union board for anti-corruption collaborates with the anti-corruption agencies in

Nigeria, in 2022. Nigeria's president Muhammadu Buhari was named Africa's champion for Anti-corruption.

In another interview, a Principal Administrative Officer INEC, Abuja, observed in a KII (3/01/24) that the union anti-corruption policies are only by paper and rhetoric whenever there is a meeting but the objectives had always been a mere statement.

Findings and Discussion

Role of African Union in Promoting Good Governance in Nigeria

The paper found that the African Union effectively collaborates with Nigerian government institutions to promote good governance in the country through its policies and programmes like the electoral observer missions (AUEOM), the anticorruption programmes, the campaign for human rights, among others. In corroborating the above finding, it was averred by Mangu (2014) that democracy and good political governance are prominently mentioned in the AU Constitutive Act and are the first thematic areas under the African Peer-Review Mechanism (APRM), through which AU has undoubtedly made substantial efforts to promote democracy. AU also enacted a number of other instruments, including the African Charter for Democracy, Elections, and Governance (ACDEG) to encourage democracy and sound political governance among its member states.

The paper further discovered that the African union has effectively strengthened the institutions responsible for transparency and accountability in Nigeria by supporting the EFCC, ICPC, Transparency

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International and Code of Conduct Bureau among others. As well as implementing the AU convention on anti-corruption. AU's persistence and demand for better democratic governance, including peaceful and credible transfers of power, anti-corruption department, transparent and accountable exercise of power, the progressive realization of the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in national and international legal frameworks, are causing a significant number of African countries to democratize against all odds (Aniekwe, Oette & Vandeginste, 2019). Also, AU's African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), which was established in 2007, requires state parties to establish and strengthen democratic institutions, the rule of law, human rights and independent electoral systems (Kioko, 2019).

Furthermore, the paper observed that the African union through AUDA-NEPAD has been implementing projects and coordinating MDA's to effectively enhance good governance, Nigeria has completed its second peer review and submitted its country report as at 2023. All programs of MDA's are geared towards achieving the goals and aspirations of agenda 2023 of the African Union. Many African countries have made significant progress toward establishing stable and accountable multiparty democratic systems as a result of AU's and other African regional organisations' focused engagement in defending democracy (Campbell & Quinn, 2021).

Impact of African Union Policies and Initiatives have on the Fight against Corruption in Nigeria

The paper discovered that the African Union's board for anti-corruption monitors the various institution of anti-corruption in Nigeria and a robust reporting system from Nigeria's agencies to the AUBAC is maintained annually. This keeps Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies on it toes. It is not surprising that the AU has continued to promote anti-corruption programmes among its member states, having acknowledged that the maintenance of democracy in Africa would be challenging without significant reduction in governance corruption. In order to tackle the pervasive corruption on the African continent, AU enacted the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) in 2003 (Ayodeji, Kolade & Abiodun, 2023). The paper further unveiled that African Union actively collaborates with Nigerian government institutions to combat corruption in the country. This is done through a department in the African Union called the African Union advisory board against corruption and Nigerian institutions like EFCC, ICPC, and PACAC. The AUCPCC vis-à-vis the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) has been assisting in the enforcement and implementation of anti-corruption measures, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the 2018 African Anti-Corruption Year, who are the flagbearers of the AU anti-corruption initiatives (Action Aid Nigeria, 2019; Campbell & Quinn, 2021).

AU established the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) in 2009 as an autonomous organ in

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accordance with Article 22 of the convention to ensure that the AU convention was properly implemented. In order to prevent, detect, punish, and eradicate corruption and related offenses in Africa, it is crucial that state parties to the AUCPCC adopt measures and actions (Duri, 2020).

Conclusion

The paper examines African Union's efforts to promote political development in Nigeria and how they have affected its anti-corruption initiatives, good governance, democratic consolidation and the challenges faced by the union. It acknowledges that AU's commitment to advancing political development in Nigeria through its various frameworks has brought about some progress. However, the organisation's anti-corruption initiatives have clearly not effectively reflected its measures. As a result, despite minor improvements in various corruption perception indices reported by TI and other associated global anti-corruption organisations, corruption persists in many member countries and Nigeria in particular. Hence, a lack of common democratic ideals and the fact that Nigeria is failing to uphold its obligations under the AU's anti-corruption convention have all served to limit and undermine AU's effort in ensuring political development within and beyond Nigeria. Thus, lack of implementation drive, and insufficient resources are just a few of the major challenges confronting AU's anti-corruption initiatives on money laundering, illicit enrichment, political party funding, lack of expertise and tools, bad governance and limited autonomy of justice authorities.

Recommendations

- i. Nigerian government, Economic and Financial Crime Commission, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and Code of Conduct Bureau should as a matter of urgency endeavor to implement the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) resolution in order to effectively combat corruption in the country.
- ii. The Nigerian government needs to put into cognizance the reports of AUEOM observers in order to improve quality and credibility of elections in the country.

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Artificial Intelligence Algorithm, Default Settings and Effective Translation

Abstract

The internet is a super highway for accessing all kinds of information as uploaded therein. Artificial intelligence on the other hand has made it easier for this information to be accessed, processed and deployed because of algorithm. Algorithm has to do with a precise step-by-step plan for a computational procedure that begins with an input value and yields an output value in a finite number of steps. The information available on the internet can be accessed through artificial intelligence via apps or search engines and can pass as default settings because that is the information that is available there. Artificial intelligence has become the new normal in technology shaping every aspects of human life. This paper explored some major computational tools such as Python and Voyant for textual analysis. It further appraised some of the features of these tools through graphical illustrations. Additionally, the paper identified the major problem with default settings regarding information available on the internet with efforts to understand how they aid or make it impossible to translate from Sources Texts (ST) to Target Texts (TT). The findings of the paper impressed upon translators to access new and faster technologies at their disposal while also understanding the limitations of same in carrying translation activity.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Algorithms, Settings, Default, Computational, Tools, Translation.

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionises the way we access, process, and utilise information. Central to this evolution are algorithms which are a set of rules followed by computers to solve problems and make decisions (Russell and Norving 2021:26). These algorithms leverage massive datasets and computational power to empower AI systems that are transforming industries from healthcare to

transportation. However, some AI systems reflect hidden biases present in their underlying data or algorithms, raising concerns about fairness, accountability, and transparency (Mathias, 2004). This issue is compounded by the fact that many AI system operate as "black boxes", making it difficult to understand their internal logic. One key are impacted in the AI revolution is language processing and translation. The internet and

computational linguistics tools like python and Voyant provide extensive corpora and analytic capabilities. The textual data used to train natural language processing (NLP) models and the design choices underlying tools like Python and Voyant similarly embed assumptions that shape analysis outcomes. Over-reliance on these default settings risks perpetuating biases regarding which texts are valuable for preservation and translation and this calls for caution in usage.

Effective translation requires understanding how these AI systems operate on textual data. Benjamin (1992:79) argues that, “the translator should move beyond surface content to wrestle with a text’s deeper meaning, situating it within a socio-cultural context”. This enables identifying problematic biases in corpora used to train NLP models. It also facilitates leveraging tools like Python and Voyant more critically, establishing customised rather than default settings attuned to the unique context of source and target languages. Achieving these goals requires updating translator training programs. Translators should develop data literacy skills for interrogating biases in corpora and understanding how tools like Python privilege certain interpretations. Combining these competencies with humanistic sensibilities equips translators to balance automation with ethical judgment. This facilitates harnessing AI responsibly to enhance translation quality while avoiding the perpetuation of hidden biases. Ongoing interdisciplinary collaboration between fields like computational linguistics and comparative literature can strengthen

this multifaceted skill alongside translation studies.

What is Translation?

Translation is simply the process of conveying meaning from one language to another. It involves more than just replacing words, as it requires a deep understanding of the intricacies and nuances of language. A translator must carefully unravel the threads of meaning woven into the original language and skillfully reweave them into a new linguistic tapestry. This requires not only linguistic expertise, but also a thorough understanding of cultural nuances, historical contexts, and even literacy techniques. Translation then is about effectively communicating meaning in texts or in words. Jeremy Munday (2016) opines that translation involves changing a written text in one language (the source language) into a written text in a different language (the target language). However, achieving true fidelity to meaning is a complex task that involves navigating cultural and linguistic variations.

Language is much more than a collection of words as it carries cultural values, social norms, and historical echoes. A skilled translator must be aware of these nuances and avoid cultural pitfalls. For instance, translating a joke literally may result in an unintentional offensive statement in the target language. It is crucial to understand the cultural context behind the humor to create an equivalent that resonates with the target audience. In addition to cultural awareness, a translator must also have a deep understanding of both the sources and target languages. This goes beyond vocabulary and grammar and involves

delving into syntax, idioms, and figurative language. A literal translation of a metaphor, for example, may result in a nonsensical or confusing statement in the target language. A translator must be able to accurately convey the intended meaning in a way that makes sense in the target language. The translator's task involves identifying the figurative element and effectively conveying its intended meaning by using an equivalent expression that resonates with the target audience.

Literary translation presents a unique set of obstacles, as it requires not only conveying the literal meaning, but also capturing the style, rhythm and emotional impact of the original work. Translating poetry for instance, demands maintaining the author's distinct voice, imagery, and poetic form while ensuring the content flows naturally in the target language. This often involves employing creative solutions and possessing a deep understanding of literary techniques (Venuti 1995: 23). Although machine translation has made great advancements in recent years, it is essential to recognize its limitations. While it can handle simple texts, machine translation often struggle with delicacy, context and cultural references. For complex or high-quality translation, human translators are still indispensable (GU *et al.* 2019:245).

Translation is not a mere transfer of words, but a complex process of reconstructing meaning across cultural and linguistic barriers. It requires a combination of language proficiency, cultural awareness, and creativity. From navigating the intricacies of humor to preserving the essence of literary masterpieces, translators play a crucial

role in promoting communication and understanding between cultures. Lawrence Venuti (1995: 16) asserts along this line that, "translation is not only a means of communication, but also a cultural and political act". By bridging the divide between languages and cultures, translators contribute to a more interconnected and inclusive world.

What is Default Setting?

Default setting refers to the predefined options automatically set on a device, software, or system (Schneier 2007: 1). Rather than requiring users to manually configure every parameter, defaults allow immediate easy use based on predictions of what most people want. For instances, word processors default to common font types/sizes like 12 pt Time New Roman to suit typical needs. By relying on these defaults, users avoid complex setup choices. However, default settings embed value judgments about what constitutes "normal". The predefined options represent particular cultural assumptions and ideological positions coded into technical systems. For example, software programs have frequently defaulted to English language interfaces and employed imagery favouring white identity. Such biased programming equates dominant groups with being "average" or "mainstream" while further marginalizing minorities. Users often accept default settings without conscious thought. The principles of "choice architecture" highlights how default leverage status quo bias where people passively accept given options (hartmann and Siegrist 2017:25). Consequently, biased defaults risk

perpetuating inequality through “menu-driven identities”.

Translation tools likewise contain default setting that privilege certain texts, languages, and representation styles. Hunston (2002:12) emphasizes how corpora composition embeds value judgments on the “worthiness” of inclusion that advantage majority groups. Natural language processing models trained on such data then reproduce those biases. Meanwhile, computational analysis software utilizes algorithmic procedure optimized for particular research paradigms like English textual traditions. Over-reliance on those defaults erases marginalized voices. Achieving ethical, effective translation requires consciously assessing and customizing default settings in AI systems and language resources and this entails pursuing “algorithmic equity” by continually auditing these technologies for bias along axes like race, gender and language (Dawson 2022:88). It also means constructing and analyzing corpora to better represent diverse linguistic and cultural traditions. Thoughtful modification of defaults, automated tools can assist human translators rather than inadvertently constrain understanding and progress in that regards.

Computational Tools and Algorithms

Algorithms and computational tools are central to the development and application of artificial intelligence (AI) systems. More specifically, machine learning algorithms allow AI systems to improve their performance by detecting patterns in data to “learn” how to classify information or make predictions (Russell and Norving 2021: 31). A key

consideration around developing and applying algorithms is avoiding or mitigating unintended biases. When left unchecked, biases can become amplified and embedded within AI systems. Researchers are studying techniques like using more representative data sets for training algorithms as one way to promote fairness.

Effective translation of languages and texts depends heavily on algorithms as well. This is because, “The encoder-decoder with gating and attention mechanisms has become a de facto standard for deep learning approaches to sequences-to-sequence problems” (Bahdanau, Dzmitry *et al* 2015:13). This includes neutral machine translation to convert text common languages. However, there are still many challenges to effectively handling less common languages or informal dialects. Further innovations in algorithms are needed to support robust translation capabilities in the ever-evolving landscape of artificial intelligence. The advancement of algorithms and computational tools is essential for its diverse applications, from predicting outcomes to deciphering language. However, as the stride continues to enhance its capabilities, developers must also be careful to address potential biases and unexpected scenarios. It is imperative for researchers to continuously refine techniques while also prioritizing fairness.

Python for Textual Analysis with Graphics Features

Python is a versatile programming language used across many artificial intelligence applications, including textual analysis, Russell and Norving (2021:63) states that, “Python is one of the most popular languages for

implementing AI systems, thanks to its simplicity, a vast collection of libraries and vibrant community". Specific Python libraries like Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) and Spacy provide functionality for processing human language data. For textual analysis, Python enables both quantitative methods like counting word frequencies as well as qualitative approaches like sentiment analysis. Gupta and Lehal (2009: 60) notes that, "Text mining analysis involves information retrieval, lexical analysis to study word frequency distributions, patterns recognition, tagging/annotation, information extraction, data mining techniques including link and association analysis, visualization, and predictive analytics" Python packages like matplotlib, seaborn and plotly can generate graphics for data visualization and exploratory analysis.

When handling translations of text, Python's string processing capabilities allow for detailed comparisons. Techniques like BLEU "compute the geometric mean of n-gram precisions and a brevity penalty to evaluate translation quality" (Bahdanau, Dzmitry *et al* 2015:49). Custom Python functions can then output color-coded heat maps showing differences between the source text and translated text. However, there are still limitations in capability and interpretability since current NLP systems can be opaque in how they work and remarkably brittle when applied beyond the domains they were designed for. Python provides a flexible programming environment to utilize AI and NLP algorithms for textual analysis tasks ranging from statistics to translations. Continued open source development and accessible

educational resources have fueled Python's rise as a top choice for implementing applied AI solutions.

Python Library dl-translate

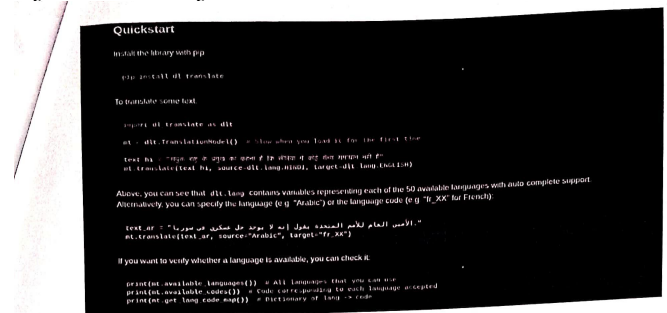


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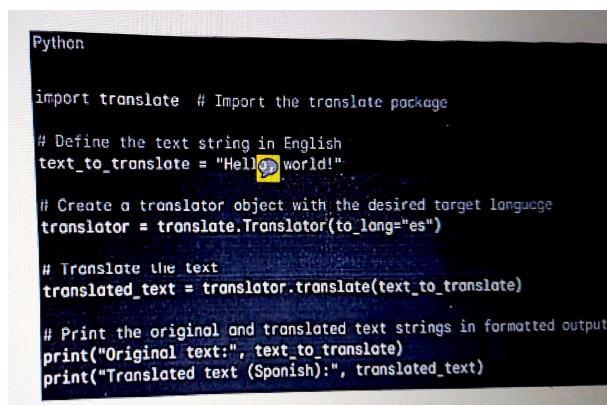
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This code snippet clearly demonstrates how to use Python for text translation. The Python library dl-translate utilises deep learning technology to facilitate the translation of text across 50 different languages. Despite being a relatively new library, it offers distinct advantages over other well-known translation libraries such as the Google Translate API and NLTK. One of the main benefits of dl-translate is its user-friendly interface. Its API is simple and intuitive, allowing users to easily translate text with just a few lines of code. This makes it a convenient option for those who are new to using translation libraries.

Furthermore, dl-translate is capable of functioning offline without the need for an internet connection. This is particularly useful for applications where internet access may be unreliable or unavailable. Users can still rely on dl-translate to achieve accurate translations without being hindered by connectivity issues. Another advantage of dl-translate is its high level of accuracy. This is due to its utilisation of deep learning models, which are generally

more precise than traditional statistical machine translation models. As a result, users can expect more accurate translations when using *di-translate*. One of the standout features of *dl-translate* is its extensive language support. It can translate text between 50 different languages, which is more than what most other translation libraries offer. This makes it a versatile option for users who need to translate text across multiple languages.

DL-translate is free and open-source software, meaning that it can be used for any purpose without incurring any fees. This makes it an accessible option for users who may have budget constraints or simply prefer open-source solutions. It is a powerful and versatile library for textual translation in Python. Its user-friendly interface, offline capabilities, accuracy, and wide language support make it a compelling choice for anyone in need of a reliable translation solution. Whether for personal or professional use, *dl-translate* is an excellent option for those looking to translate text between multiple languages.



```
Python

import translate # Import the translate package

# Define the text string in English
text_to_translate = "Hello world!"

# Create a translator object with the desired target language
translator = translate.Translator(to_lang="es")

# Translate the text
translated_text = translator.translate(text_to_translate)

# Print the original and translated text strings in formatted output
print("Original text:", text_to_translate)
print("Translated text (Spanish):", translated_text)
```

Image Source: <https://bit.ly/4hxWEx6>

The above snippet depicts a Python program that translates text from English to Spanish. Explanation:

1. Import the translated package.
 - i. Import *translate* brings in the necessary functionality for translation.
2. Define text string:
 - ii. *text_to_translate* "Hello, world!" stores the text you want to translate
3. Create translator object
 - iii. '*translator = translate.Translator* (to_lang="es")' creates a translator instance specifically for translating to Spanish
4. Translate text:
 - iv. '*Translated_text = translator.translate* (text_to_translate)' performs the translation and stores the result.
5. Print output:
 - v. '*Print* ("Original text:", text_to_translate)' displays the original text.
 - vi. '*Print* ("Translated text (Spanish)", translated_text)' displays the translated text in Spanish.

To use this code:

- iv. Install the *translate* package:
- iii. Open a terminal or command prompt and run '*pip install translate*'
- v. Save the code:
- iv. Put the code in a Python file (eg '*translate example.py*')
 - vi. Run the code:
 - v. Execute the file using '*python translate example.py*'

This will produce the following output:

Original text Hello, world!

Translated text (Spanish): ¡Hola Mundo!

Voyant Tools for Textual Analysis

Voyant Tool is a web-based suite of text analysis tools that can provide graphical visualizations for exploring

corpora. Sinclair and Rockwell (2023) states that, Voyant offers "data mining tools and quantitative analyses that are enhanced by graphical representations and can reveal patterns not otherwise noticeable". Specific capabilities include generating word frequency lists, keyword-in-context views, and correspondence analysis scatter pilots. When analysing translations, Voyant enables comparative analysis between source text and translated – 'translator = translate Translator (to-lang="es")' create to translator instance specifically for translating to Spanish.

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However, there are some key limitations to Voyant's capabilities as more advanced text mining approaches involve "information extraction, data mining techniques including link and association analysis, visualisation, and predictive analytics" (Gupta and Lehal 2009: 2). So while helpful for exploration, Voyant lacks built-in natural language processing for tasks like sentiment analysis or named entity recognition. Voyant offers an open development platform to incorporate new widgets for textual analysis Voyant Tools is very much an open source and open development project such that users can "add new features and tools" (Sinclair and Rockwell 2023). This enables customisation for project-specific needs. Voyant provides an interactive environment for preliminary textual analysis tasks to understand linguistic

patterns across corpora. It complements other applications that offer more advanced analytics and NLP capabilities

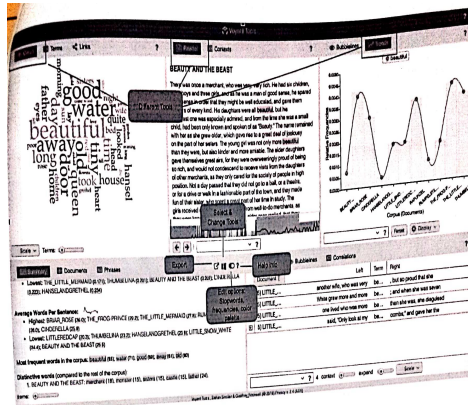


Image Source:

<https://bit.ly/3UwmAml>

The image displayed above showcases the interface of Voyant Tools, a powerful text analysis tool with a variety of features. Here's a breakdown of how it works:

- i. Upload your text: On the left side of the screen, you have the option to upload a text file, such as a document or article, by either clicking Browse or dragging and dropping the file
- ii. View your text: In the middle of the screen, your text will be displayed. Different colors may highlight specific parts of speech or named entities, such as people or places.
- iii. Explore different analyses. On the right side of the screen, there are various tools available for analyzing your text. The image shows a few of these tools:
- iv. Word Trends: This graph displays the frequency of certain words throughout your text, essentially creating a 'popularity contest for words

- v. **Word Cloud:** This feature showcases the most commonly used words in your test, with larger words indicating higher frequency. It serves as a visual summary of your text's vocabulary.

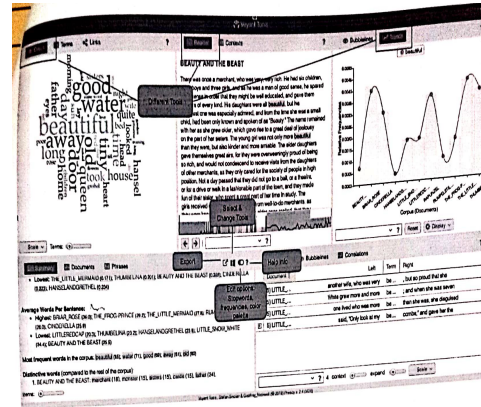


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essentially creating a popularity contest for words.

5. **Word Cloud:** This feature showcases the most commonly used words in your text, with larger words indicating higher frequency. It serves as a visual summary of your text's vocabulary.
7. **Keywords:** This list presents the most significant words in your text, taking into account factors like frequency and dispersion.

Aside from these tools, Voyant Tools also offers other useful features, including

- i. **Topic Modeling:** This tool helps identify the main themes or topics discussed in your text.
- ii. **Collocations:** By showing which words frequently appear together, this feature provides insights into how language is used in your text
- iii. **Network Analysis:** This creates a map of how different words are interconnected, revealing relationships between ideas

sections, each offering a unique way to explore the text. On the left side of the dashboard is the 'Cirrus' tool, which presents a word cloud visualising the most frequently used words in the text.

The size of each word in the cloud is proportional to its frequency, making it a useful tool for quickly identifying the main topics discussed in the text. On the right side of the dashboard is the 'Terms' tool, which displays a comprehensive list of all the words in the text, along with their frequency and other relevant information. This tool is particularly helpful for determining the usage of a specific word and its common word associations. The remaining sections of the dashboard offer various ways to examine the text, such as analyzing word relationships or tracking the usage of specific words over time. Voyant Tools is a powerful application that provides a deeper understanding of the text in a document or collection of documents. It is a user-friendly option for textual analysis and does not require prior knowledge in linguistics or computer science.

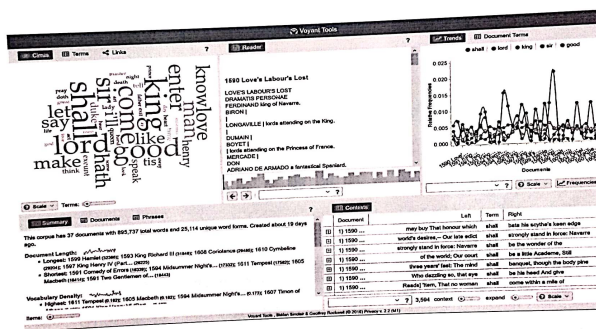


Image Source:

<https://bit.ly/3UwmAml>

The screenshot above displays the user interface of Voyant Tools, a versatile tool used for analyzing text documents or collections of documents. The dashboard is divided into multiple

Enhancing Translation through Textual Artificial Intelligence

In today's globalised world, effective communication is crucial for businesses, governments, and individuals. With the rise of technology, the need for accurate translation has become more important than ever. However, traditional methods of translation, such as human translators, can be time-consuming and costly. This is where Artificial Intelligence (AI) comes in through its advanced algorithms and default settings. One of

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the most significant advantages of using AI for translation is its speed and efficiency. Traditional translation methods are often time-consuming, as they rely on human translators to accurately convey the meaning of the source text. AI, on the other hand, can process large amounts of data in a fraction of the time, making it an effective tool for translation. AI translation can be up to three times faster than traditional methods (Sangeetha 2018). This increased speed allows for quicker and more efficient communication, which is crucial in today's fast-paced world.

Another benefit of using AI for translation is its accuracy. Human translators are prone to errors, as they can only translate based on their knowledge and understanding of the source and target languages. They may also make mistakes due to fatigue or lack of concentration. AI, on the other hand, uses algorithms and default settings to analyze the language and context, resulting in more accurate translations. Conjecturally, AI translations can have an accuracy rate of 63%, compared to human translations whose accuracy rate many not be more than 52%. This shows that AI can produce more precise translations, reducing the risk of miscommunication. Moreover, AI translation also has the potential to bridge language barriers. With the rise of the internet and globalisation, businesses and individuals often need to communicate with people from different linguistic backgrounds. AI translation can help break down these barriers by providing real-time translation services. For example, Google Translate uses AI to translate text and speech in over 100

languages, making it easier for people to communicate with each other. This can have a significant impact on businesses, as it allows them to expand their market to non-English speaking countries and communicate with clients and partners from different parts of the world.

However, AI translation is not without its limitations. One of the main challenges in textual translation is the ability to understand and interpret the context of the text. This is where Natural Language Processing (NLP) comes into play; NLP is a branch of AI that focuses on the interaction between computers and human language. With the use of NLP, machines can analyse and understand the context of a text, which is crucial for accurate translation. NLP technologies such as machine learning and deep learning algorithms have been utilised to improve the effectiveness of textual translation (Cui *et al.* 2017:315)

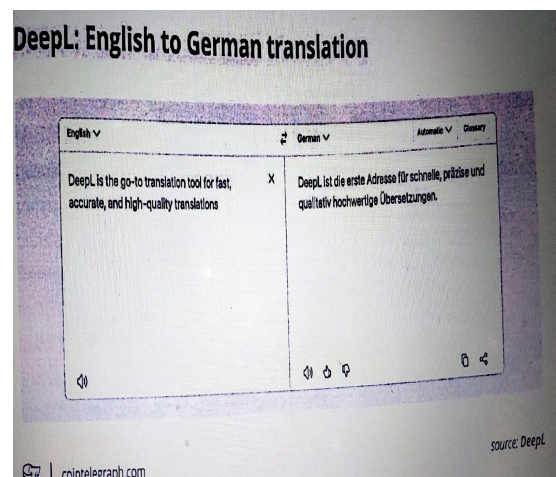


Image Source: <https://bit.ly/49t3v98>

Machine Translation (MT) is another AI tool that has greatly improved the accuracy of textual translation. MT for short is the use of computer software to translate text from one language to another. With advancements in AI, MT has become

more sophisticated and is now able to produce translations that are comparable to those of human translators. MT systems use a combination of rule-based, statistical, and neural machine translation techniques to achieve accurate translations (Koehn *et al.* 2017:3). These systems are constantly learning and improving, which makes them more effective in handling complex texts.

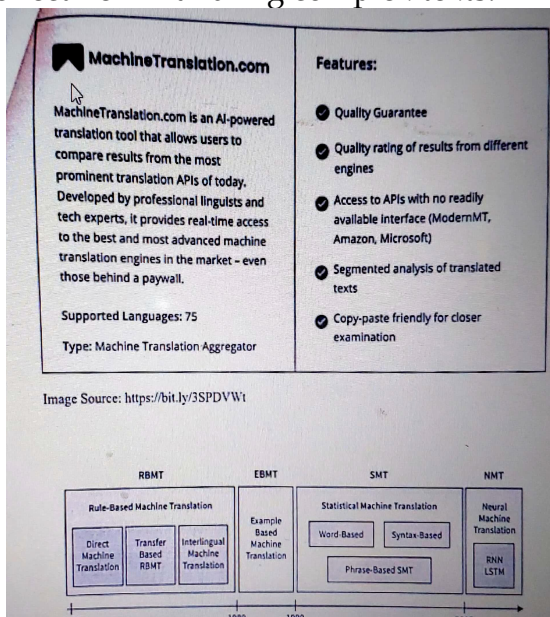


Image sources: <https://bit.ly/3SPDVWt>

Image sources: <https://bit.ly/3OzF81L>

The image above is a diagram that shows the evolution of machine translation (MT) from the early 1900s to the present day. It includes four main categories of MT, namely: rule-based machine translation (RBMT), example-based machine translation (EBMT), statistical machine translation (SMT), and neural machine translation (NMT).

- Rule-based machine translation (RBMT) was the first type of MT to be developed. It uses a set of rules to translate text from one language to another. These rules are typically based on linguistic

knowledge, such as grammar and syntax. However, RBMT systems can be complex and time-consuming to develop alongside unnatural sounding translation.

- Example-based machine translation (EBMT) is a type of MT that uses a database of bilingual text pairs to translate new text. When a new text is entered, the EBMT system finds the most similar text pair in its database and then uses the translation of the source text in that pair to translate the new text. EBMT systems can be more accurate than RBMT systems, but they are limited by the size and quality of their database.
- Statistical machine translation (SMT) is a type of MT that uses statistical methods to translate text. SMT systems train on a large corpus of bilingual text, and they use statistical models to predict the most likely translation of a given sentence. SMT systems can be more accurate than RBMT and EBMT systems, and they are able to translate a wider range of text types. However, SMT systems can still produce errors, especially when translating complex or idiomatic language.
- Neural machine translation (NMT) is the latest type of MT to be developed. NMT systems use neural networks to translate text. Neural networks are a type of artificial intelligence that can learn from data. NMT systems are trained on a large corpus of bilingual text, and they use the neural network to learn the relationships between the source

and target languages. NMT systems are currently the most accurate type of MT, and they are able to produce more natural-sounding translations than other types.

The image also shows the development of different approaches within each category of MT. For example, in SMT, there are phrase-based and syntax-based approaches. Phrase-based SMT breaks down sentences into phrases and then translates each phrase individually. Syntax-based SMT takes into account the grammatical structure of the sentence when translating.



Image source:

<https://translatepress.com/microsoft-translator-vs-google-translate/>

The image above is a screenshot of the Bing Translator webpage. Bing Translator is a machine translation tool that uses neural machine translation (NMT) to translate text between over 70 languages. Neural networks are a type of artificial intelligence that can learn from data. NMT systems are trained on a large corpus of bilingual text, and they use the neural network to learn the relationships between the source and target languages. NMT systems are currently the most accurate type of MT, and they are able to produce more natural-sounding translations than other types of MT.

One of the challenges of textual translation is dealing with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. These are phrases or expressions that are unique to a particular language or culture and cannot be translated literally. However, with the use of AI, this challenge can be overcome. Some MT systems utilize sentiment analysis to identify and translate idiomatic expressions accurately (Bender *et al.* 2017:17). Sentiment analysis is a technique that uses AI to identify and interpret the emotions and attitudes expressed in a text. By understanding the tone and context of a text, machines can produce more accurate translations of idiomatic expressions. Another AI tool that has been integrated into textual translation is named entity recognition (NER). NER is the process of identifying and categorizing named entities such as people, places, and organizations in a text. This is particularly useful in legal and technical texts where specific terminology is used. With NER, machines can accurately identify and translate these entities, leading to more precise translations (Bender *et al.* 2017:19).

Recently, there has been a significant development in the field of neural machine translation (NMT). NMT is a type of MT that uses artificial neural networks to translate text. These networks are trained on large amounts of data, which enables them to learn the structure, grammar, and syntax of a language. NMT systems have been shown to produce more accurate translations compared to traditional MT systems (Cui *et al.* 2017:320). This is because they can understand the context of a text and produce translations that are more natural and fluent. In addition

to the aforementioned AI tools, there has also been a rise in the use of chatbots for textual translation. Chatbots are computer programs that use AI to simulate conversations with human users. These chatbots can be integrated into translation software and can assist in real-time translation. They are especially useful for businesses that need to communicate with clients or customers in different languages. Chatbots use AI to understand and respond to user queries, making the translation process more efficient and effective (Bender *et al.* 2017:22).

Evaluation

The intersection of artificial intelligence (AI), algorithms and default settings holds enormous implications for effective translation which presents a complex and fascinating landscape with significant outcomes for communication, understanding, and global collaboration. AI-powered translation tools have revolutionized the field, offering previously unimaginable speed and accessibility. Machine translation (MT) algorithms like those employed by Google Translate and DeepL, leverage vast datasets of text and code to decipher and reproduce textual content across languages. These tools have undoubtedly broken down communication barriers, facilitating real-time conversations and information exchange across geographies.

The development of artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms has led to major advances in translation technology. Tools like Google Translate and DeepL now rely on complex neural network models trained on massive datasets to automatically translate text between

languages. This represents a revolutionary shift whereas translation was previously a time-intensive task restricted to those with specialized linguistic skills, now anyone with an internet connection can access decent quality automated translations instantly and for free. So these AI-powered translation tools have tremendous potential to facilitate communication and collaboration across language barriers at a global scale. However, there are also risks and limitations to relying too heavily on them. Neural machine translation systems depend heavily on the data they are trained on, meaning they encode any biases or flaws present in those datasets as default settings. And while translations may seem accurate on the surface, often key nuances, context, and cultural references can get lost or distorted.

Companies invest minimal effort in evaluating or correcting systemic issues with their translation tools, including potentially introducing or reinforcing harm, due to misalignment with their business incentives and optimizing solely for volume and speed. So critics argue that more oversight and accountability mechanisms are needed given their rapidly expanding influence. More so, some argue that machine translation risks diminishing or devaluing human linguistic expertise and intercultural understanding - even as it empowers more people to access and make use of translations independently. It is the position of this author that these technologies should complement rather than fully replace human translators and interpreters. However, concerns arise regarding the inherent biases and limitations of these algorithms. Default settings within AI

models can be unwittingly influenced by training data, potentially perpetuating cultural stereotypes or gender biases. In the context of translation, this can lead to skewed representations, particularly in sensitive domains like news or legal documents. A major concern with relying on AI for translation is that these systems inherently reflect the biases and flaws in the data they are trained on. Translation models depend on having massive datasets of texts to learn linguistic patterns from. But inevitably, human biases, stereotypes, and representation issues get encoded within those training datasets. Machine models can frequently encode and amplify societal biases around race, gender, culture and power dynamics from the training data they learn from. To this end, gender-bias language is widespread in many texts that AI translation tools draw from. As a result, the default settings these systems operate on can unwittingly perpetuate or amplify gender biases in the translations they produce. Issues like cultural stereotyping or underrepresentation of minority ethnic groups can also emerge in skewed or damaging ways.

Google Translate has exhibited gender biases, such as disproportionately associating gendered words like "doctor" with males and "nurse" with females across languages. Studies also confirm issues like Eurocentric bias-translation models perform better when handling European languages and contexts versus non-European ones. This connects to a broader issue with complex neural network models that power AI translation tools-their decision-making processes are obscured within billions of

numeric parameters, making them largely "black boxes" lacking interpretability or transparency. Researchers cannot easily trace how or why they arrive at particular translations. This lack of transparency becomes especially problematic when translations introduce or spread misinformation, reflect unfair biases, or violate ethical norms. Yet, companies offering these AI translation services often evade accountability for fixing systemic flaws or harms because the inner workings of their systems are inscrutable. Without adequate oversight and understanding of how these models operate, inaccurate or misleading translations will continue flowing unchecked. Subtle details around context, rhetoric, politics and history inevitably get lost in translation by AI systems lacking human-level comprehension or judgment. So while AI speed and scale enabled is transformative, ethical risks around bias, unfairness and misinformation abound with AI translation if governance and accountability are not prioritized.

Conclusion

Conclusion The integration of AI in textual translation has greatly improved the accuracy and effectiveness of translations. With the use of NLP, MT, sentiment analysis, NER, NMT, and chatbots, machines can understand and interpret the context of a text, identify and translate idiomatic expressions, and produce more natural and fluent translations. As AI continues to develop, we can expect even more advancements in the field of textual translation, making it easier for people to communicate and understand each other in different languages. This

analysis uncovers the vital connection between artificial intelligence, algorithms, default settings, and effective translation. The use of AI and computational tools such as Python and Voyant has made it easier to access large amounts of textual data and generate new insights

To achieve ethical and high-quality translation, it is crucial to exercise human judgment in evaluating and modifying these defaults. As Benjamin (1992:81) suggests, translators must grapple with the cultural and ideological contexts that shape the meaning of texts. Developing data literacy can enhance the ability to identify excluded voices and recognize the underlying interests in corpus creation or algorithm design. It is essential to customize settings that align with commitments to diversity, inclusion, and intercultural understanding. At the same time, the vast amount of multilingual Big Data requires a balance between human judgment and automated efficiency. The thoughtful use of AI can aid translators in pattern recognition and initial drafting. This aligns with Venuti's (1995:317) concept of an ambivalent methodology that utilizes technology while prioritizing humanistic reasoning. To sustain this approach, translator training programs must be updated to cultivate both computational and critical thinking skills.

Interdisciplinary collaboration can further the ongoing evolution of AI in translation through open communication and innovation. Expanding the definition of what constitutes a valuable text may lead to more diverse corpora and inclusive default settings. Additionally,

collaboration between linguists and computer scientists can help in auditing algorithms and promoting accountability. With technology rapidly changing the landscape of communication, it is vital to maintain a focus on the ethical aspects of language work. Computational tools hold the potential to expand understanding across barriers of geography and language via translation. However, it is human community, care and courage to challenge the status quo that enables moving towards this vision.

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Examining the Abuse of Alcohol Intake in Ebonyi State: A Study of Ohaukwu LGA

Abstract

This study investigated the socio-religious dimensions influencing the use and misuse of alcohol among Ohaukwu people of Ebonyi State using the Social Learning Theory, the study aimed at examining the cultural and social factors that promote alcohol consumption, religious doctrines surrounding its use, the extent and patterns of abuse, and the consequences, it also went further to examined the process of mitigating alcohol-related problems. The research adopted a descriptive survey design. A structured questionnaire based on a 4-point Likert scale was administered to a sample of 400 respondents, selected through multi-stage sampling. Data were analyzed using mean scores. The findings revealed that alcohol consumption is strongly linked to cultural traditions and social norms, including peer influence and hospitality practices. Religious institutions also discourage alcohol misuse and play significant roles in creating awareness, though with rehabilitation efforts remaining limited. The study concluded that the abuse of alcohol in the area is a product of cultural permissiveness and inadequate intervention and recommended a stronger collaboration between religious bodies, health agencies, and the government to curb the trend.

Keywords: Alcohol, Abuse, Rehabilitation, Survey, Consumption.

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1. Introduction

The intake of alcohol has long been a significant part of social and cultural life in many African communities, including those in Nigeria. It serves multiple roles from its use in traditional ceremonies and religious rituals to its consumption as a leisure and socializing substance. In Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, alcohol is widely available and socially accepted, especially in the form of locally brewed drinks like palm

wine. Despite its cultural embeddedness, the misuse of alcohol has increasingly become a public health and moral concern in the area, leading to issues such as domestic violence, health complications, road accidents, and moral decay (Okeke and Obi, 2021).

At the heart of this concern lies a tension between societal acceptance of alcohol and people's condemnation of its abuse. Religion plays a central role in shaping moral conduct in Nigerian

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communities, often serving as the ethical compass for individual and collective behaviour. The major religions in the area Christianity and traditional belief systems present varied perspectives on alcohol consumption. While some denominations promote moderation, others advocate for total abstinence, particularly in response to the social problems associated with misuse (Nwachukwu, 2023).

Alcohol has historically held both functional and symbolic roles in African societies. It is widely used in social ceremonies, religious rites, and as a symbol of hospitality and masculinity. In many Nigerian communities, including those in Ebonyi State, alcohol particularly in its locally brewed forms such as palm wine, burukutu, and ogogoro is considered part of the cultural heritage and is used in libation, marriage ceremonies, funerals, and festivals (Adelekan et al., 2020). The communal acceptance of alcohol in these contexts has normalized its use, often blurring the line between responsible consumption and harmful misuse.

In Ohaukwu Local Government Area, alcohol consumption among adults is pervasive and socially ingrained. The traditional and social acceptance of alcohol in the community has contributed to its widespread availability and consumption across age, gender, and socio-economic classes. However, there is growing concern over the increasing misuse of alcohol, which is often manifested in forms such as binge drinking, alcohol dependence, and involvement in alcohol-related accidents and violence. Health professionals and community leaders alike have observed rising cases of liver

disease, family neglect, youth delinquencies, and gender-based violence associated with excessive alcohol intake (Ebonyi Health Report, 2025; Okeke and Obi, 2021).

While societal norms appear to tolerate alcohol use, religious institutions in the area have consistently expressed concern over its misuse. Christianity, the predominant religion in Ohaukwu LGA, generally discourages drunkenness and moral laxity, emphasizing self-control and righteous living (Nwachukwu, 2023). Different denominations hold varying interpretations regarding moderate consumption, with Pentecostal churches advocating total abstinence, while some Catholic and Anglican communities allow moderate use. Despite these religious teachings, many adherents continue to consume alcohol, some covertly, suggesting a gap between religious doctrine and individual behaviour.

Moreover, the intersection of social approval and religious disapproval presents a complex dilemma for communities and policymakers. While some view alcohol as a harmless aspect of culture, others argue that its misuse poses a direct threat to social cohesion, spiritual wellbeing, and public health. This tension underscores the need for a socio-religious investigation into how adults in Ohaukwu LGA perceive, use, and misuse alcohol. There is a need to understand the motivations behind alcohol use, the societal and religious reactions to misuse, and the roles of religious institutions in mitigating its harmful effects.

Despite the cultural significance of alcohol in many African communities,

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including Ohaukwu Local Government Area, its abuse has become a pressing social and public health issue. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the harmful consumption of alcohol, especially among adults, leading to a wide range of consequences such as domestic violence, road accidents, health deterioration, marital breakdowns, and decline in moral standards (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023; Chukwuma and Odo, 2022). These problems not only strain families and communities but also increase the burden on the healthcare and security systems.

What makes the issue more complex is the seeming contradiction between societal tolerance and religious condemnation of alcohol misuse. In Ohaukwu LGA, alcohol is widely used in traditional ceremonies, festivals, and social gatherings, thus reinforcing its acceptance. However, religious institutions—especially churches—preach against excess and often view alcohol misuse as a sin and a sign of spiritual decline (Nwachukwu, 2023). Despite this, many professed adherents of Christianity in the area continue to misuse alcohol, raising questions about the effectiveness of religious teachings and the socio-cultural pressures influencing behaviour.

Furthermore, existing studies on alcohol use in Nigeria have often focused on youth or urban populations, neglecting the adult rural demographic that is equally, if not more, affected. Little attention has been given to how religious beliefs and social norms interact to influence attitudes and practices related to alcohol consumption in specific local contexts such as Ohaukwu LGA. Without a clear

understanding of these socio-religious dynamics, interventions remain superficial and culturally disconnected. Therefore, this study seeks to interrogate the socio-religious factors that shape the use and misuse of alcohol among adults in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. It aims to uncover the underlying contradictions, belief systems, and societal practices that sustain harmful drinking behaviours, despite the presence of religious teachings against them.

Conceptual Framework

Alcohol use is a widespread social practice that serves diverse functions across cultures and communities. It is often associated with leisure, social bonding, religious ceremonies, and rites of passage (World Health Organization 2023). In many African societies, including communities in Nigeria, alcohol consumption is deeply embedded in traditional and social events such as festivals, marriages, burials, and conflict resolution (Olanrewaju et al., 2022). Moderate alcohol use in such settings is often culturally acceptable and may even symbolize hospitality and maturity. However, this cultural normalization may obscure the transition from use to misuse, particularly in communities where regulation and awareness are limited.

Alcohol misuse, on the other hand, refers to patterns of consumption that pose risks to an individual's health, social relationships, or economic well-being. It includes binge drinking, chronic dependency, and drinking that results in physical, psychological, or social harm (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

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[NIAAA], 2022). According to WHO (2023), alcohol misuse is a major global health concern, contributing to over 3 million deaths annually and exacerbating conditions such as liver disease, mental disorders, domestic violence, and road traffic accidents. In Nigeria, studies have shown an increasing trend in alcohol abuse, particularly among adults in both urban and rural communities (Okonkwo and Abah, 2021).

The distinction between alcohol use and misuse is not always clear-cut, especially in communities where excessive drinking is normalized or even valorized. Cultural practices and peer influence play a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward alcohol. For example, men are often encouraged to drink as a symbol of masculinity, while women who consume alcohol may face stigma (Adediran and Okoye, 2023). Additionally, economic hardship, unemployment, and psychological stress are known drivers of alcohol misuse, especially in low-income settings.

Religious beliefs and institutions also significantly influence perceptions of alcohol use. In Christian communities across Nigeria, alcohol consumption is generally discouraged, especially among devout members and clergy. While some denominations allow moderate drinking (e.g., wine during Eucharist), others condemn it entirely as sinful (Iheanacho, 2022). Despite this, alcohol misuse persists among some adherents, indicating a gap between doctrine and practice. Religious institutions, therefore, play a dual role: they can either provide spiritual support for those battling addiction or contribute to silence and denial around the issue due to fear of

stigma.

The socio-religious perspective on alcohol use and misuse provides a comprehensive lens through which to understand the complex interplay of cultural norms, social expectations, and religious doctrines that influence individuals' behaviors concerning alcohol consumption. In many African societies, including Ebonyi State, alcohol occupies a dual role: it is both a socially accepted substance used in communal and traditional rites and a subject of moral concern within religious teachings (Okonkwo and Abah, 2021). This duality often creates tension between cultural heritage and religious obligations, shaping individual and community attitudes toward alcohol.

Socially, alcohol use in Ebonyi communities is closely tied to cultural identity, status expression, and social cohesion. It is common during ceremonies such as marriages, festivals, funerals, and traditional meetings, where offering alcohol is considered a symbol of respect and hospitality (Olanrewaju et al., 2022). Peer influence and community norms further reinforce the acceptability of drinking, especially among men. However, these social dynamics also contribute to patterns of excessive consumption and normalization of misuse, especially in contexts where regulatory mechanisms are weak or non-existent.

From a religious standpoint, most Christian denominations dominant in Ohaukwu Local Government Area including Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Pentecostalism discourage excessive drinking and interpret alcohol misuse as morally and spiritually harmful. While moderate use (e.g., sacramental wine) may be tolerated in some churches,

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many religious leaders preach total abstinence based on biblical injunctions such as Ephesians 5:18, which warns against drunkenness (Iheanacho, 2022). Religious teachings often associate alcohol abuse with sin, moral decay, and spiritual weakness. Consequently, devout Christians may refrain from drinking entirely or do so in secrecy, leading to underreporting and hidden patterns of misuse within religious communities.

Moreover, religious institutions in the area serve as important agents of socialization, rehabilitation, and moral guidance. Through sermons, counseling, youth programs, and community outreach, churches attempt to shape public morality and promote healthy lifestyles (Adediran and Okoye, 2023). However, their effectiveness in curbing alcohol misuse varies depending on their level of engagement with social realities such as poverty, unemployment, and trauma, which are underlying factors in substance abuse. Some scholars have argued that the religious condemnation of alcohol, while morally grounded, may sometimes lead to stigmatization rather than supportive interventions (Eze and Chukwuma, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) as propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977 posits that behavior is learned through the observation, imitation, and modeling of others within a social environment. According to Bandura (1977), individuals especially children and adolescents—acquire new behaviors not only through direct

experience but also by watching others, especially those they regard as role models, such as parents, peers, religious leaders, and community figures.

In the context of alcohol use and misuse, Social Learning Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area may adopt drinking behaviors based on what they observe in their immediate social and cultural environment. When individuals see respected community members or elders consuming alcohol during cultural events or family gatherings, they may begin to associate alcohol with social acceptance, adulthood, or prestige. This modeling effect is reinforced when such behaviors are met with positive social outcomes, such as praise, attention, or inclusion in community circles (Cheng and Lo, 2021).

Furthermore, peer influence plays a significant role in shaping drinking behavior, especially among adults in rural and semi-urban settings. Social Learning Theory explains how individuals, through social interaction, may learn and internalize norms that either condone or discourage excessive alcohol consumption (Elek et al., 2020). In communities where alcohol use is normalized or even glorified, individuals are less likely to perceive drinking especially in excess as harmful. Conversely, if the dominant group exhibits abstinence or moderation, others may adopt those behaviors to maintain social alignment.

Social Learning Theory also helps to explain the potential impact of religious institutions in modifying behavior. Religious leaders who model abstinence or preach against the misuse of alcohol can influence their followers

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through verbal persuasion and moral example. When these teachings are reinforced through communal practices—such as counseling, public testimonies, or support groups—they can contribute to behavior change by altering the perceived rewards and consequences associated with alcohol misuse (Beck et al., 2022).

Thus, Social Learning Theory is particularly relevant for a socio-religious analysis of alcohol use because it bridges the social and religious dimensions of behavioral acquisition and transformation. It provides a theoretical foundation for exploring how observed behaviors, reinforced by cultural and religious norms, shape individual choices regarding alcohol. The theory also offers practical implications for designing interventions that use positive role modeling, community engagement, and faith-based programs to reduce alcohol misuse in Ebonyi Local Government Area.

Empirical Review

In the year 2021, Agbo conducted a study titled “Cultural Beliefs and Alcohol Consumption Patterns Among Adult Males in Nsukka, Enugu State.” The research adopted a descriptive survey design involving 250 adult male respondents selected using simple random sampling. The findings showed that alcohol consumption was deeply entrenched in cultural practices such as traditional marriages and burial rites. The study concluded that cultural norms significantly influence the initiation and continuation of alcohol use. The researcher recommended culturally sensitive interventions that respect traditions while discouraging

misuse.

Okafor and Nwankwo (2020) examined “Religious Influence on Alcohol Use Among Adults in Southeast Nigeria.” The study employed a mixed-method design with a sample size of 300 adults drawn purposively from churches and mosques across Ebonyi and Anambra States. Findings revealed that individuals with higher religious commitment especially in Pentecostal and Catholic settings were significantly less likely to misuse alcohol. The study recommended that religious institutions play a more proactive role in substance misuse education.

Ifeanyi and Okoye (2022) carried out a study on “Alcohol Misuse and Social Dysfunction Among Married Adults in Abakaliki Urban.” Using a cross-sectional survey approach, the study sampled 200 participants through stratified random sampling. Results indicated that alcohol misuse was closely linked to domestic violence, marital discord, and economic instability. The researchers recommended integrating alcohol counseling services into community health programs.

Adebayo and Yusuf (2023) explored “Faith-Based Interventions and Alcohol Addiction Recovery in Southwest Nigeria.” This qualitative study involved 30 recovering alcoholics enrolled in religious rehabilitation centers. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that spiritual discipline, moral teachings, and religious fellowship played a crucial role in relapse prevention. The study recommended government partnerships with faith-based organizations for more holistic alcohol abuse recovery

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programs.

Chukwu and Okorie (2021) investigated “Peer Pressure and Alcohol Misuse Among Youth and Young Adults in Ebonyi State.” The study used a correlational research design and involved 350 participants between the ages of 18 and 35, selected through multistage sampling. The results confirmed that peer influence was a significant predictor of alcohol misuse, particularly among those with weak family or religious support. The authors advocated for youth mentoring programs anchored in religious and cultural institutions.

Mbah and Okonkwo (2022) studied “The Role of Religion in Reducing Substance Abuse in Rural Communities in Nigeria.” Using a descriptive survey design, 280 adult respondents from four rural communities in Southeast Nigeria were selected through cluster sampling. Findings indicated that regular religious attendance, pastoral counseling, and community prayer sessions reduced the incidence of alcohol and other substance misuse. The study recommended increased government funding for religious-based health promotion initiatives.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The design is suitable for studies that aim to collect detailed information about existing phenomena from a large population. It enables the researcher to systematically describe the current socio-religious dynamics influencing alcohol use and misuse among adults in Ohaukwu Local Government Area without manipulating variables (Creswell and

Creswell, 2018).

The study is situated in Ohaukwu Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The area is predominantly rural with emerging urban settlements and is characterized by strong traditional customs and vibrant religious institutions including Catholic, Pentecostal, Anglican, and indigenous churches. These socio-religious contexts provide a unique environment for understanding the factors influencing alcohol consumption among adults.

The target population for the study comprises all adults aged 18 years and above residing in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. According to projections from the National Population Commission (NPC, 2023), the adult population in the area is estimated to be 64,000.

A sample size of 400 adults was determined using Taro Yamane’s formula for finite population:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (64,000)

e = margin of error (0.05)

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{64000}{1 + 64000(0.05)^2} \\ &= 398.76 \\ &= 400 \end{aligned}$$

A multi-stage sampling technique was used: Stratified sampling to categorize the area into urban and rural zones. Cluster sampling to select wards from each stratum. Simple random sampling to select individual respondents from households within each cluster.

The main instrument for data

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collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Socio-Religio Alcohol Use and Misuse Questionnaire (SRAUMQ)”. The instrument comprised two sections: Section A contained the demographic data of the respondents while Section B contained the main items on use and misuse of alcohol. The questionnaire utilized a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Data were collected through trained research assistants who administered the questionnaires in person. Assistance was provided to respondents with low literacy levels by translating the items into the local dialect. Ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality were strictly observed. Data collected were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive statistics such as means were used to summarize demographic information and item responses.

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Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive statistics such as means were used to summarize demographic information and item responses.

Findings and Analysis

The table below contains the responses generated in the answer to the research questions:

Research Question1: Cultural and Social Factors Promoting Alcohol Consumption

Table 1 presents respondents’ responses on the cultural and social factors promoting alcohol consumption.

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Alcohol is used in cultural/social events	180	120	60	40	3.1
Peer influence contributes to drinking	160	130	70	40	3.0
Alcohol is used to show hospitality	150	140	70	40	3.0
Alcohol consumption is more accepted for men	130	150	80	40	2.9

The mean scores indicate that cultural and social factors such as cultural ceremonies and peer pressure are key promoters of alcohol consumption. The high mean score for cultural events (3.1) and peer influence (3.0) suggests that alcohol use is deeply embedded in social norms. Gender norms also play a role, though slightly less strongly (2.9), pointing to gendered perceptions of drinking.

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Research Question2: Religious Perspectives and Doctrines Concerning Alcohol Use

Table 2 shows respondents' responses on the religious perspectives and doctrines concerning alcohol use

Item	SA	A	D	S D	Mean
My religion discourages alcohol use	200	110	60	30	3.2
Religious leaders preach against alcohol misuse	180	120	70	30	3.1
Some religious groups allow moderate drinking	100	120	100	80	2.6
My religious beliefs influence my view on alcohol	190	130	50		3.2

Most respondents affirmed that their religions discourage alcohol use and that their personal views are influenced by religious teachings (Mean=3.2). However, theme an score for moderate alcohol use being allowed by some denominations (2.6) shows moderate variability in religious stances, indicating that while abstinence is dominant, some denominations may tolerate limited alcohol use.

Research Question 3: Extent and Patterns of Alcohol Abuse

Table3: shows respondents' responses on the extent and patterns of alcohol misuse

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Alcohol is excessively consumed in this area	160	140	60	40	3.0

Daily alcohol consumption is common	150	130	70	50	2.9
There is a problem of alcohol dependency	140	130	80	50	2.9
Binge drinking is a frequent practice	155	135	70	40	3.0

The responses point to a noticeable level of alcohol is use in Ebonyi LGA. All items have means around or slightly below 3.0, indicating that a significant portion of adults regularly engage in harmful drinking patterns including dependency and binge drinking, though some respondents remain neutral or disagree slightly.

Research Question 4: Social Consequences of Alcohol Abuse

Table 4 presents respondents' responses on the social and religious consequences of alcohol misuse

Item	S A	A	D	SD	Me an
Alcohol misuse leads to family conflict	170	130	60	40	3.1
It causes job loss or poor performance	160	130	70	40	3.0
It affects religious participation	165	130	70	35	3.1
It brings about social stigma	175	130	60	35	3.1

Respondents agreed that alcohol misuse has serious social and religious consequences. The highest mean (3.1) reflects that many people associate alcohol misuse with social stigma, while family conflicts and reduced religious participation are also

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widely acknowledged problems. These findings reinforce the negative impact of alcohol on community wellbeing.

Research Question 5: Role of Religious Institutions in Mitigating Alcohol Misuse

Table 5 presents respondents' responses on the role of religious institutions in mitigating alcohol misuse

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Religious institutions organize awareness campaigns	180	130	60	30	3.1
They offer counseling services	160	140	60	40	3.0
They run faith-based rehabilitation programmes	150	130	70	50	2.9
They collaborate with health agencies	160	140	60	40	3.0

The data shows that religious institutions play an active role in curbing alcohol misuse. With a meanscore of 3.1, organizing awareness campaigns is the most recognized effort. Other role such as offering counseling and collaborating with health institutions are also moderately affirmed, though support for rehabilitation efforts (2.95) is slightly lower, suggesting room for growth in direct intervention services.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the socio-religious dynamics surrounding alcohol consumption and misuse among adults in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

The analysis was guided by five research questions and responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale.

The findings revealed that cultural and social elements strongly influence alcohol consumption in the area. Respondents generally agreed that alcohol is used during social and cultural events such as traditional marriages, funerals, and community festivals (Mean = 3.1). Peer influence was also highlighted as a strong factor (Mean = 3.0), affirming Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory which emphasizes that behaviors are learned through observation and imitation. The use of alcohol to express hospitality (Mean = 3.0) and the societal norm that views alcohol consumption as more acceptable for men (Mean = 2.9) further reveal the entrenched social norms that perpetuate drinking habits.

Respondents agreed that most religious doctrines in the area discourage alcohol consumption (Mean = 3.2) and that religious leaders often preach against its misuse (Mean = 3.1). However, there was some neutrality in responses regarding the allowance of moderate alcohol consumption by some denominations (Mean = 2.6), indicating a theological variance in alcohol-related doctrines. Most respondents affirmed that their religious convictions shape their views on alcohol (Mean = 3.2), supporting the Religious Commitment Theory (Worthington et al., 2003), which posits that religious teachings significantly influence individual behavior and lifestyle choices.

The study found that alcohol misuse is prevalent in the area, with mean scores ranging from 2.9 to 3.0. Respondents acknowledged excessive consumption (Mean = 3.0), daily use

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(Mean = 2.95), dependency (Mean = 2.9), and binge drinking (Mean = 3.0). These patterns align with previous studies such as Agbo and Okoye (2022), which report an increase in habitual and problematic alcohol use in rural and peri-urban Nigerian communities. These patterns indicate a public health concern that needs targeted interventions.

Findings showed high levels of agreement on the negative consequences of alcohol misuse. Most respondents strongly agreed that alcohol abuse leads to family conflict (Mean = 3.08), job loss or underperformance (Mean = 3.03), diminished religious participation (Mean = 3.06), and social stigma (Mean = 3.11). These consequences point to the disruptive nature of alcohol misuse on personal, family, and communal life. This confirms earlier empirical work by Eze and Nwankwo (2021), which showed that alcohol misuse in local communities contributes significantly to household dysfunction and moral decline.

The findings reveal that religious institutions are actively involved in reducing alcohol misuse. Respondents indicated that these institutions organize awareness campaigns (Mean = 3.15), offer counseling (Mean = 3.05), run rehabilitation programmes (Mean = 2.95), and collaborate with health agencies (Mean = 3.05). These interventions show a strong institutional commitment to addressing the issue from both moral and psychosocial standpoints. The active participation of religious organizations is crucial for reinforcing abstinence and recovery programs, especially in deeply religious societies like Ebonyi.

Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive socio-religious exploration into the factors influencing alcohol consumption and misuse among adults in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The findings show that alcohol use is not only a personal choice but also a cultural and social practice entrenched in community traditions and events. While the use of alcohol is often normalized in social contexts, its misuse has resulted in adverse outcomes, including family disintegration, poor job performance, diminished religious involvement, and social stigmatization.

Importantly, the study highlights the role of religious belief systems in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol. While many religious doctrines condemn alcohol misuse, their effectiveness in influencing behavior varies across denominations. Religious institutions, however, have emerged as vital agents in promoting behavioral change through awareness campaigns, counseling, and spiritual guidance, even though their capacity in providing structured rehabilitation remains limited.

The study concludes that addressing alcohol misuse in Ohaukwu LGA requires a multi-dimensional approach one that recognizes the influence of cultural norms, strengthens religious institutional involvement, and incorporates public health strategies. A collaborative effort among families, religious leaders, community heads, and policy-makers is essential for reducing the prevalence and impact of alcohol misuse in the area.

Examining the Abuse of Alcohol Intake in Ebonyi State :A Study of Ohaukwu LGA

Recommendations

Community leaders and cultural custodians should initiate awareness programs that re-evaluate traditional practices which promote alcohol consumption during events such as burials, marriages, and festivals. These practices should be redesigned to emphasize moderation or alternatives to alcohol use.

Religious bodies should intensify their efforts in addressing alcohol misuse by incorporating structured rehabilitation support, regular sermons against excessive drinking, and setting up faith-based counseling centers that can offer both spiritual and psychological support.

Local health authorities and Ebonyi State Ministry of Health should work collaboratively with religious institutions to implement public health campaigns on the dangers of alcohol misuse. Mobile sensitization units and community seminars could be effective in reaching adults in rural and urban parts of the LGA.

The local government should regulate the sale and distribution of alcohol, especially in proximity to schools, churches, and residential areas. Age restrictions, operating hours for bars, and licensing enforcement should be strictly upheld.

Schools and community development associations should design and implement life-skills programs targeted at young adults to equip them with decision-making skills that discourage substance abuse. This will help break the cycle of early exposure to alcohol consumption.

Community-based peer support groups should be established to help individuals struggling with alcohol

dependency. These groups can offer a safe space for sharing experiences, encouraging sobriety, and reintegrating into the community.

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Challenges and Prospects of ECOWAS and Political Stability in West Africa

Abstract

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is developed with the sole aim of promoting economic and regional integration in Africa. However, the organization is fraught with challenges ranging from lack of funds, policy gaps and political instability in the region. The main objective of this study was to investigate the challenges and prospects of ECOWAS in ensuring political stability in West Africa. The mixed method of data collection was utilized to elicit data and to give credence to the findings of the study. The theory of democratic consolidation developed by Juan Linz was adopted as the theoretical pedestal of the study. Findings of the study revealed that ECOWAS military and security capabilities have significantly impacted its ability to influence responses to regional crises. Further discovery shows that West African internal political instability hinders ECOWAS ability to effectively lead and coordinate regional development initiatives within the region. It was concluded that the limited collaboration between ECOWAS member states constrained the scalability of ECOWAS interventions and efforts towards sustaining the development of West Africa. This exposed the necessity for structured partnerships and institutional support to amplify ECOWAS reach and effectiveness. The study recommended that ECOWAS should establish a mandatory regional stabilization fund financed through enforceable member-state contributions and a fixed levy on intra-regional trade, with strict compliance monitoring and sanctions for defaulting states.

Keywords: ECOWAS, politics, stability, West Africa, governance, Regional Coordination.

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Introduction

The norms and values of ECOWAS emphasize the promotion of democratic practices thereby military coups and military governments are considered unconstitutional. Consequently, ECOWAS immediately released official

statements to out-rightly condemn the coup in the Sahelian region and this public condemnation is intended as a form of diplomatic pressure aimed at delegitimizing military regimes and emphasizing the commitment of the

regional organization to democratic values (Onapajo & Babalola, 2024).

In order to ensure and sustain political stability in West Africa, Onapajo & Babalola (2024) noted that ECOWAS has imposed a number of sanctions (both economic and diplomatic) against the military juntas in Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso following the refusal of coup leaders to heed the regional body's call for a return to civilian rule or formulate a workable transition plan. The membership of these states were suspended and different economic sanctions have been imposed.

Furthermore, the failure of democracy enabled the military arrogated itself as a corrective regime with necessary professionalism to become justifiable alternative to the unenviable leadership deficit confronting the region thereby brought about unfortunate military coups with dire consequences in many West African states (Oluyemi, 2024). In the fight against the spread of military governments in the region, the ECOWAS under the leadership of the Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, threatened to intervene by force after the imposition of several sanctions against the military juntas' of Mali (Assimi Goïta, 2021), Burkina Faso (Ibrahim Traoré, 2022) and Niger (Abdourahamane Tchiani, 2023). Consequently, the three military regimes of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger decided to establish a new regional organization, the Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance des États du Sahel, AES) to defend themselves (Kohnert, 2024). According to Haruna (2024), the formation of the alliance represents a broader shift in regional dynamics, it

challenges the hegemony of ECOWAS and it signifies the rise of a new axis of power rooted in military-led government in competition with the traditional norms of democracy championed by ECOWAS in the region. This constitutes the rise of ideological rivalry between military system of government and democracy in West Africa depicting the resurgence of the Cold War ideological division in the region.

Despite the fact that these military actions were primarily prompted by instability and economic hardship, all of these activities ultimately weakened the sub-region's democratic governance and democratisation process.

According to Abubakar & Hakeem (2023), Nigeria is concerned about the need and objective of ensuring that other countries in the West African sub-region embrace democratic forms of governance in order to attain relative peace and growth. However, the paper examined how ECOWAS contributed to democratising member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), especially Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Gambia. The contributions included diplomatic mediation and coercive measures, peacekeeping and conflict resolutions, and support and technical assistance. It is against this background that this study is set out to investigate the role of ECOWAS in political stability in West Africa.

Statement of the Problem

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has a strong record of setting regional norms on governance and democracy (Musah, 2023). Yet the organization now faces

significant challenges in how to reorient its role and credibility amid a rise in the military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and most recently, Niger. The two (constitutional coup or civilian coup”) refer to how civilian rulers act in a way that is so military that it undermines democratic procedures. In this instance, the political leaders, who are civilians, are hesitant to permit an easy political transition and are manipulating the laws of the state to abuse their position of authority (Dagia, 2022).

The lifting of sanctions on Niger after the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS) undermines ECOWAS' credibility as a forceful advocate for democracy. Similarly, the regional solidarity of Mali, and Burkina Faso, with Niger forming their alliance (ASS) weakens economic pressure and hinders ECOWAS' ability to achieve its goals and enforce its demands (Zambakari, 2023). Beyond the immediate challenges of sanctions, ECOWAS faced internal divisions and regional rivalries that undermined its ability to respond to the Niger's coups. The formation of the ASS and the inability of regional powers like Nigeria to commit its military, in the long run, to forcefully remove the junta highlight the lack of consensus on how to handle coups. Additionally, the involvement of external actors like France with its interests in the region adds another layer of complexity, making it difficult for ECOWAS to present a unified front on issues like the Niger coup. This emboldens those who defy the organisation and undermines its overall influence (Zambakari, 2023).

Research Questions

- i. To what extent do internal and external factors constrain ECOWAS's effectiveness in conflict prevention and peace-building in West Africa?
- ii. How effective is ECOWAS's response to the compounding issues of political instability in West Africa?

Objectives of the Study

- vii. To ascertain the extent to which internal and external factors constrain ECOWAS's effectiveness in conflict prevention and peace-building in West Africa.
- viii. To examine the effectiveness of ECOWAS's response to the compounding issues of political instability in West Africa.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Regional Integration

As a result of the need for security and self-preservation, people with common language and culture used to come together to form communities. Such is imperative for security, self-preservation and other issues makes communities to integrate, and nations emerge for achieving their goal and development (Thomas, 2010, p.47). The idea of regional integration of European Union inspired West African Heads of States and government to consider the idea and apply it to their region in order to solve their problems of security, political, economic and social issues. Regional integration in West Africa was motivated by the integration processes in Western Europe due to much

commitment of E.U towards integration (Ogbeidi, 2010). According to Ogbonna & Ogundiwin, (2013, p.221), the emergence of the ECOWAS in 1975 by West African leaders through the signing of its treaty is a great achievement and success in the region and entire Africa. The region is heterogeneous in terms of historical background, colonialism and other complexities. By formation of ECOWAS, West Africa will achieve economic, security and political integration as well as cooperation.

Politics

Politics has remained a dynamic phenomenon, with probably as many definitions as there are scholars in the field. However, there are some popular and authoritative definitions with common key concepts and some scholars. A look at this definition is instructive at this stage. David Easton sees politics as the 'authoritative allocation of values in a society; a view that links politics with the production and distribution of values or resources' (Easton, 1960). These values may either be political, economic, cultural, or social values which are vital to human existence and whose allocation can only be done within the political system.

Lasswell succinctly sees politics as 'who gets what, when and how?' This definition has been commended for its attempt to see politics even in social setting. The element of struggle is also implying in who gets what, when and how? Max Weber's definition links politics more directly with power than many others when he says that 'politics means striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of

power either among states or among groups within a state (Weber1947).

According to Toluhi (1997; p.2); "differences in human roles and values, arising from different social, ethnic, economic, cultural, religious etc. goals and heights often precipitate political actions for redistribution of opportunities and facilitate development".

The attempt to reconcile these differences and prevent society from degenerating into anarchy, which is inimical to development and peaceful coexistence, underscores the need for politics as a forum for some authoritative reconciliations among contending interests and groups since no meaningful development could be achieved in atmosphere characterized with rancour. Thus, politics must be seen beyond mere conflict and power struggle to a forum of reconciliation and cooperation through which peaceful coexistence among diverse people could be achieved. Toluhi (1997) notes thus; politics should be seen as the process or forum through which decisions are reached within an entity in an attempt to solve common problems (ethnicity inclusive) and bring about development.

Political Stability

The concept of political stability is highly relevant within the remit of political science. The main reason is that it can serve to evaluate given political phenomena, while having at the same time a significant predictive power. Moreover, in empirical research on stability, it is possible to distinguish certain indices that can be used for heuristic purposes. Khan, Siddiqui, Bukhari, and Iqbal, (2020) sees political stability in a nation or region, or sub-

region such as West Africa can be determined on the basis of important reports such as, say, Human Development Index, which is strictly related to human rights issues. Rule of law and democratization are other fields of research calling for the studies on stability (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020). These examples mentioned above evince the relevance of the concept of political stability. This category should be recognized as a crucial one that is necessary in analysing political systems their structure and functions as well as their functioning in given environment.

A theoretical approach that is very helpful in clearing up the concept of stability is to be found in Sven Hansson and Gert Helgesson's theoretical approach. The authors distinguish three types of stability: a) constancy; b) robustness; c) resilience. As we can read in their article: "It turned out that all or nearly all of the references that we found to the concept of stability belong to three major categories, that we have chosen to call constancy, robustness, and resilience". By constancy is meant that some variable or aspect is not changed or is not changed much. By robustness is meant that some variable or aspect does not tend to change, or does not tend to change much, when exposed to certain disturbances. "By resilience is meant that if a variable or aspect changes due to certain disturbances, then it returns to the original state or to some state close to it" (Hansson & Helgesson, 2003, p. 220). This typology reveals the multidimensional character of stability and underlines the fact that the crucial category for grasping stability is a change. It is precisely the reaction towards the change that determines the

type of stability that could be used for the explanation of particular cases. Moreover, the constancy is presented as one of the several aspects of stability. Robustness and resilience are, on the other hand, the features of the object that is dynamic and responsive. Examples of such an object can be found in a political system. Its main principle of functioning consists in transforming and managing changes and not in avoiding those changes by all means.

In a bid to ensure political stability in the Africa's sub-region, ECOWAS and Nigeria are committed to the democratisation of all African nations, with a focus on the West African sub-region. However, over ten years of excessive military intervention in political and administrative affairs, most African countries have been forced into an ecliptic democratic trial of leadership and governance, in addition to other forms of political instability caused by internal conflicts and violence. Today, most of the world's military takeovers take place over the entire African continent. In recent years, military control has been in place in Sudan, Mali, Chad, Niger, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Gabon (Mohanasakthivel, 2023).

Empirical Review

Using a qualitative research approach, data were obtained through expert interviews and an extensive review of secondary sources, including reports from international organizations, policy briefs, and conflict databases. Ogwuche, Ahmed and Attah's (2025) findings indicated that economic deprivation, resource mismanagement, and weak governance structures are critical drivers of instability, exacerbating

terrorism and organized crime. Additionally, the recent withdrawals of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger from the G5 Sahel highlight internal fractures and shifting geopolitical alignments, further complicating regional security efforts. It recommended a comprehensive approach that combines military strategies with socioeconomic development initiatives, alongside stronger political will and regional cooperation through ECOWAS.

In another study on the resurgence of military coups in West Africa: effects on efforts at establishing resilient democratic order. The study is purely qualitative in nature. Drawing on analytical research method, the study explores two key theoretical perspectives, praetorian and conflict theories, to explain the resurgence of military coups in West Africa. By examining recent cases of military coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger, Shehu, Bamidele and Yusuf (2024) study highlighted the political instability, security challenges, and dissatisfaction with governance that have fueled these coups. The analysis revealed a complex interplay of factors such as weak political institutions, military independence, conflict situations, corruption, bad governance, and economic problems as underlying causes of recurring military coups in West Africa. The study recommended among others that efforts should be made by West African countries to address insecurity plaguing the region. Increased regional cooperation in the area of security should be encouraged, in addition to strengthening the security architectures of various West African countries to improve their abilities to

respond to security threats from within and outside.

With the adoption of qualitative research method, depending mainly on secondary sources, Adisa's (2025), study titled "the cold war resurgence: a discourse on the rivalry between ECOWAS and AES in West. Africa". However, this research argued on the possible continuation of the old Cold War in the present contemporary era using the recent unfolding rivalry within the West African region as a case study. Recently, the Sahel region in West Africa has been confronted with political instability and security challenges, marked by the rise of insurgent movements, military coups and deteriorating state governance. The Alliance of Sahel States (AES) was created in September 2023 by the three military juntas of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso as a counterweight to ECOWAS and the postcolonial influence of France and other Western allies.

Uvere (2025), did a study on the role of external actors in fueling separatist conflicts in parts of West Africa and ECOWAS response. Employing a qualitative research methodology and secondary data, the study draws on case studies, policy reviews, and conflict analysis. It is anchored in dependency theory and regional security theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of how external influences intertwine with local dynamics. Findings revealed that external actors often exploit separatist grievances for geopolitical advantage, resource extraction, or destabilization strategies, exacerbating conflicts and undermining ECOWAS's integration efforts. ECOWAS's interventions, though notable, frequently lack the

coordination and capacity to address the multifaceted nature of external involvement. The research recommended robust policies aimed at curbing illicit external influences and fostering inclusive governance within member states to address the root causes of separatist movements. By doing so, ECOWAS can safeguard regional stability and advance its vision of unity and development.

In a study titled effectiveness of ECOWAS in countering coups in West Africa: A Case Study of Niger Republic, Abdulrahman, Taiwo and Nazifi (2025) employed secondary data sources and utilised liberalist theoretical framework. The study finds that ECOWAS' sanctions on Niger Republic established a regional precedent, influencing actions by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and sending a message of deterrence. However, inconsistencies in applying sanctions hampered its effectiveness in restoring President Bazoum to power. Additionally, ECOWAS faced challenges in securing unanimous support for military intervention. These weaknesses significantly hampered ECOWAS' ability to achieve its goals in Niger Republic. To strengthen its response to coups, the study recommended that ECOWAS must ensure uniform and robust enforcement of sanctions and other measures against all coup perpetrators in the region. By implementing these multi-pronged approaches, ECOWAS can become a more effective force for lasting stability and democracy in West Africa. This reviewed study focused on the effectiveness in countering coups in West Africa without exploring other areas and role ECOWAS played in

ensuring political stability in the sub-region. This constitute the gap that need to be filled by the current study.

In evaluating the effectiveness of the ECOWAS protocol on democracy and good governance in preventing the resurgence of military coups in West Africa, Williams & Sunjo's (2024) study is primarily qualitative. For this research, the researcher used the qualitative research method by reviewing books, articles, and online interviews. Considering the reasons, which include diminishing optimism, growing levels of insecurity, falling economies, and persistently low performance in human development, the research study concludes with these findings. It is therefore recommended that the Economic Community of West African States and other relevant stakeholders that are interested in reducing military coups should invest more in finance. Rather than trying to employ coercive tactics to end the ongoing military coups in West Africa. In the same vein, they should also focus on resolving the root causes of conflicts and investing in local communities, rather than sacrificing them for hidden geo-strategic interests or agendas.

While investigating potency of ECOWAS mission strategy in resolving electoral conflict in West Africa: A case of Côte d'Ivoire, an in depth interview research design was adopted, that is, both primary (structured interviews) and secondary (contextual review) techniques of data collection were used. Through a qualitative approach, a total number of 15 key-informants were interviewed using the cluster sampling method. The results showed that ECOWAS adopted the mechanisms of mediation, peace enforcement,

peacekeeping, diplomacy, negotiation, election observation and litigation to bring about peace in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010. Furthermore, Daniel & Enweremadu (2020), observed that internal identity based conflict, lack of structural and strategic election management strategy, border insecurity, not being proactive, lack of stable military force and politics among its member states were discovered as factors militating ECOWAS in its efforts to bring about peace in the sub region, while proper funding, emphasis on education sector, legislature actions, use of sanctions and regional cooperation were recommended. The study concluded that lack of financial and technical resources has limited the intervention of ECOWAS in conflict resolutions to only political and diplomatic approaches.

Theoretical Framework

Democratic Consolidation Theory

Theory of democratic consolidation was developed by Juan Linz in 1978, in his book "The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Re-equilibration. Other scholars that wrote about the theory of democratic consolidation are Adams Przeworski and Samuel Huntington. The theory argued that there are four factors that contribute to the consolidation of democracy, namely, strong economy, strong civil society, rule of law, and shared commitment to democratic values. It further contends that democracy is not just about creating institutions and practices that allow democracy to thrive and that it takes time for democracy to consolidate, with period of instability and crisis.

The theory of democratic consolidation examines how well democracies are able to survive and thrive. What factors make democracy survive or fail. It also helps to look at how coup d'etat in West Africa has affected the democratic processes in various countries. It will also enable us to find out policies that could be implemented to help ensure that democracy remains strong that democratic consolidation requires a strong commitment to rule of law. Which means that citizens must believe that their government is accountable to the law and that no one is above the law?

However, the theory of democratic consolidation has been criticised on the following grounds; that it focuses too much on institutions and not on the role of individuals in shaping a democracy. It is also criticised that it failed to take into account the role of culture and tradition in shaping a country's political system. Another criticism levelled against the theory of democratic consolidation is that it is too simplistic and does not take into account the complexities of real world politics and lastly, that it is too idealistic not considering the challenges of implementing democracy in real life situation.

In application to this study, the theory of democratic consolidation becomes relevant because it helps to analyse and understand how resurgence of coup d'etat in West Africa will impact the democratic governance and its dividends in the region. This so due to that fact is helps to comprehend and examine how well democracies are able to survive and thrive under certain conditions or factors. That is what factors make democracy survive or fail.

For instance, the 2020 military coup in Mali was partly traced to the crisis resulting from frustration over flawed legislative elections in 2020 when results for 31 legislative seats were overturned in favour of President Keïta, as well the problem of insecurity through increasing violent extremism and accusations of corruption which later led to popular protests against President Keïta and are believed to be the main triggers for the coup in the country. It also helps to look at how coup d'etat in West Africa has affected the democratic processes in various countries. It is equally important to note that the theory of democratic consolidation is relevant to this dissertation because it will also enable us to find out policies that could be implemented to help ensure that democracy remains strong (James, 2020).

Methodology

The study adopted mixed-method research design. The targeted population of the study is 24,730 which comprises of individuals drawn from Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Abuja, Central Bank of Nigeria, Abuja Headquarters, Federal Ministry of Finance, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), Federal Ministry of Works, Niger Embassy, Chadian Embassy and the National Assembly who are actively involved in the activities of ECOWAS. These groups were carefully chosen because they are positioned at the intersection of democratic consolidation and political stability, community engagement, and political participation offering crucial perspectives relevant to the study's

objectives. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) statistical formula was employed to reduce the population of the study to a manageable standard of 377.

The study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The instruments that were used in collecting data for this study are questionnaires and secondary sources. Stratified and Random Sampling Techniques were used in selecting the respondents among different categories for the administration of questionnaire. This study made use of charts as a platform to present the research data and also analyze the data collected from the field on the subject matter using simple percentage and graphs as the case may be for the descriptive analysis. The version that was used for analyzing data for the study is SPSS 25. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative information.

Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

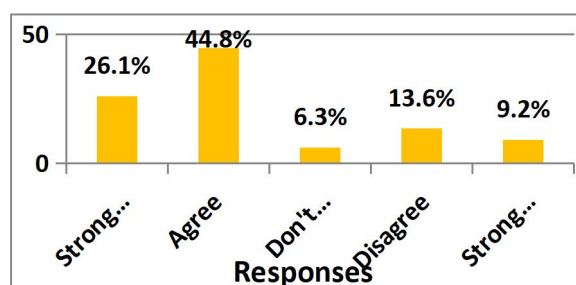
A total of 377 copies of questionnaire were distributed while 337 copies were retrieved. Therefore, the presentation and analysis was done based on the 337 retrieved copies of questionnaire. The pattern of presentation was based on the objectives of the study using frequency table (frequency, count and percentage) as well as charts. The discussion of findings then followed. This was supported with information from extant literature.

Internal and External Factors Constraining ECOWAS's Effectiveness in Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building in West Africa

The first research question posed by the study was to evaluate the internal and

external factors that constrain ECOWAS's effectiveness in conflict prevention and peace-building in West Africa. In addressing the research question, the survey asked respondents appropriate questions and data generated are presented at Figures 1 to 4.

Figure 1: Respondents View on Assessing Whether or Not West Africa's Internal Political Instability Hinders ECOWAS Ability to Effectively Lead and Coordinate Regional Development Initiatives Within the region.

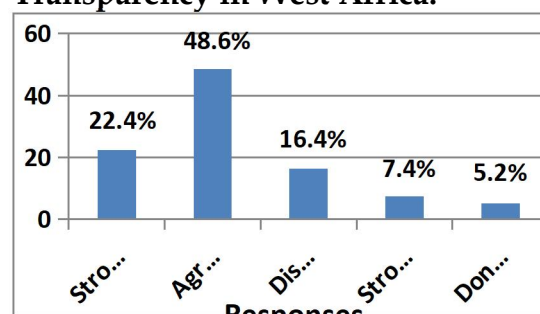


Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 1 depicts that a cumulative majority of respondents totaling 70.9 per cent agreed that West Africa's internal political instability hinders ECOWAS ability to effectively lead and coordinate regional development initiatives within the region. This can be seen in ECOWAS led by Nigeria's president failure to sustain and reinstate democracy in Niger Republic when the military overthrew a democratically elected president in 2023. Only, 13.6 per cent of respondents disagreed and 9.2 per cent strongly disagreed respectively with the posed question. It could be inferred from the analysis that Nigeria a member of ECOWAS and a key actor is battling with numerous challenges such as corruption, ethno-religious conflict, electoral violence, Boko haram, banditry,

Independent People of Biafra, Niger Delta Avengers, which has resulted in an unending political instability that has contributed in posing hindrance in ECOWAS ability to effectively lead and coordinate regional development initiatives within West Africa.

Figure 2: Respondents Opinion on Ascertaining Whether or Not Weak Governance and Corruption within ECOWAS Member States Undermine its Credibility and Effectiveness in Promoting Good Governance and Transparency in West Africa.

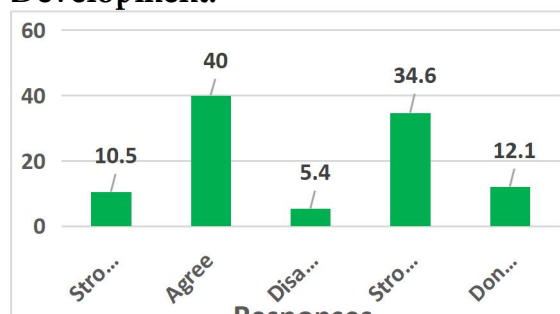


Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 2 above depicts as affirmed by a cumulative majority of respondents making up 71.0 per cent that weak governance and corruption within ECOWAS member states undermine its credibility and effectiveness in promoting good governance and transparency within ECOWAS, while 23.8 per cent of respondents cumulatively disagreed to the posed question. The result of the analysis shows that corruption and bad governance in Nigeria has to a large extent undermine its credibility and effectiveness in promoting good governance and transparency within ECOWAS.

Figure 3: Respondents Assessment on Whether Resistance from other ECOWAS Member States to ECOWAS Leadership Due to Perceived Dominance or Hegemony Prevents

Collaborative Efforts for Sustainable Development.

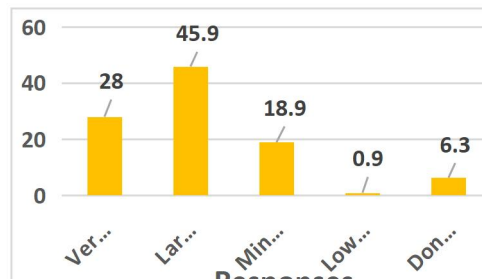


Source: Field Survey (2025).

The analysis on Figure 3 shows that 50.5 per cent of respondents cumulatively agreed that resistance from other ECOWAS member states to ECOWAS leadership due to perceived dominance or hegemony prevents collaborative efforts for sustainable development. In addition, 40 per cent of respondents cumulatively disagreed to the posed question. It could be deduced from the analysis that there is no clearly stated public opposition to Nigeria's leadership in ECOWAS by any West African state which may prevents collaborative efforts for sustainable development. However, there are numerous factors such as political rivalries between Nigeria and nations like the Cameroon republic, tension related to interventions as a result of military incursions in place like Gambia, Mali and Guinea and recently Niger republic and economic disparities between Nigeria and other small West African states which will likely prevents collaborative efforts for sustainable development due to the fear of domination and hegemony that may emanate from Nigeria being the largest financier of ECOWAS.

Figure 4: Respondents View on Assessing Whether or Not External Factors, Such as Global Economic

Shocks and Geopolitical Instability, Significantly Constrain ECOWAS Ability to Effectively Support Sustainable Development within ECOWAS Member States.



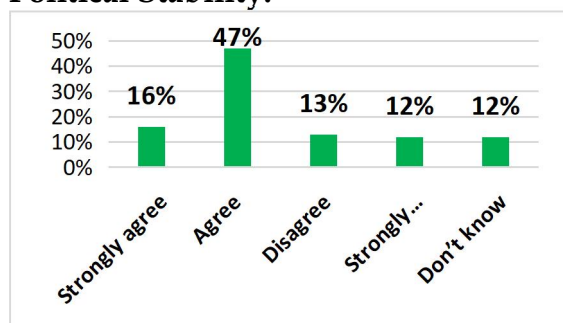
Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 4 depicts that a high number of respondents ranking 28.0 per cent and 45.9 per cent opined that external factors, such as global economic shocks and geopolitical instability, significantly constrain ECOWAS ability to effectively support sustainable development within ECOWAS member states to a 'considerable extent' and 'large extent', respectively. Additionally, 18.9 per cent of respondents indicated that the external factors, such as global economic shocks and geopolitical instability has to a minimal extent significantly constrain Nigeria's ability to effectively support sustainable development within ECOWAS. It could be inferred from the analysis that indeed global economic shocks such as the global economic meltdown witnessed in 2009 and the one caused by Covid19 in 2020 and geopolitical instability like terrorism, military incursion in politics, failed states among others have significantly constrain ECOWAS ability to effectively support sustainable development within ECOWAS member states and beyond.

Effectiveness of ECOWAS's Response to the Compounding Issues of Political Instability in West Africa.

The second research question analyzed the effectiveness of ECOWAS response to the compounding issues of political instability in West Africa. To address this research question, the study asked respondents appropriate questions and data generated are presented at Figure 5 to 8.

Figure 5: Respondents View Assessing Whether Strengthening Regional Security through ECOWAS Collaborations Will Aid in Improving West Africa's Internal Security and Political Stability.

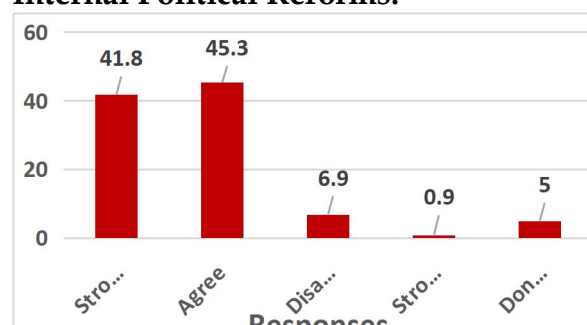


Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 5 indicates a significant perception that the strengthening of regional security through ECOWAS collaborations will aid in improving West Africa's internal security and political stability, as 63 per cent of respondents express agreement. However, the presence of 25 per cent of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree with the posed question. This discrepancy highlights a need for reforms and strengthening of regional security whose absence has contributed in the deterioration of internal security and political stability in Nigeria. This can be seen in the proliferation of Small Arms, Light Weapons (SALWs) and the emergence of Boko Haram, bandits and Lakurawa terrorists organizations

which is inextricably linked to the political instability in Libya and Somalia which trickled down to West African states of Mali, Chad, Niger and Cameroon with devastating effect on Nigeria thereby causing a serious internal security and political instability. Therefore, the strengthening of regional security through ECOWAS collaborations will aid in improving Nigeria's internal security and political stability.

Figure 6: Respondents View on Determining the Extent to Which Promoting Democratic Governance and Good Governance Practices within ECOWAS Will Serve as a Model and Exert Positive Pressure on ECOWAS Internal Political Reforms.

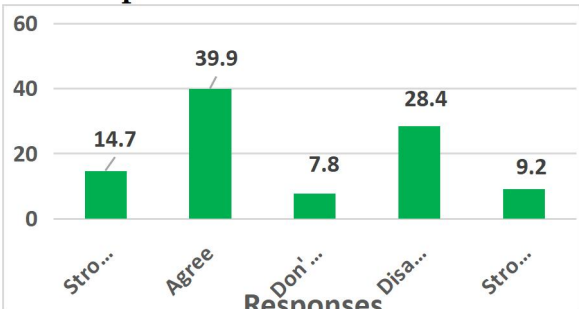


Source: Field Survey (2025).

The analysis on Figure 6 depicts that an overwhelming majority of respondents cumulatively ranking 87.1 per cent were of the view that promoting democratic governance and good governance practices within ECOWAS will serve as a model and exert positive pressure on ECOWAS internal political reforms. On the other hand, a small fraction of the respondents ranking 7.8 per cent disagreed with the posed question. Hence, the need for the Nigerian governments to sustain existing mechanisms on promoting democratic governance and good governance

practices within ECOWAS member states and use such effort as a model strengthen Nigeria's internal political reforms.

Figure 7: Respondents View on Ascertaining Whether or Not Facilitating Regional Economic Integration through ECOWAS Will Lead to Improved Economic Conditions in West Africa, Thus Positively Impacting its Political Landscape.

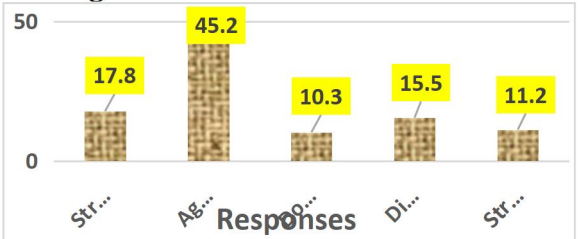


Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 7 shows that a high number of respondents cumulatively representing 54.6 per cent indicated facilitating regional economic integration through ECOWAS will lead to improved economic conditions in West Africa, thus positively impacting its political landscape. From another perspective, 39.6 per cent of respondents were of the view that facilitating regional economic integration through ECOWAS will not in any way lead to improved economic conditions in West Africa, nor positively impacting its political landscape. It could be inferred from the analysis that indeed facilitating regional economic integration through ECOWAS will significantly lead to improved economic conditions in West Africa thereby positively impacting its political landscape and enhancing the overall

political landscape of the West African region.

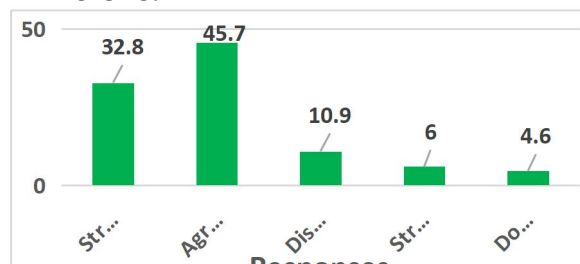
Figure 8: Respondents View on Whether or Not Ascertaining whether or Not Active Participation in ECOWAS's Conflict Resolution Mechanisms will Provide West African States with Valuable Experience and Expertise Transferable to its Own Domestic Conflict Management Strategies.



Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 8 depicts that a high number of respondents cumulatively ranking 63.0 per cent hold the view that active participation in ECOWAS's conflict resolution mechanisms will provide Nigeria with valuable experience and expertise transferable to its own domestic conflict management strategies. In addition, a cumulative 26.7 per cent of respondents disagreed to the posed question. It is evident from the analysis that indeed Nigeria has learnt a lot from active participation in ECOWAS's conflict resolution mechanisms and peace keeping operation under the auspices of ECOMOG been the security organ of ECOWAS. This has to a greater extent provided Nigeria and its security forces with valuable insights, experience and expertise that have been transferred and efficiently implemented in managing Nigeria's domestic conflict challenges such as Boko Haram, banditry, IPOB and MASSOB among others.

Figure 9: Respondents View on Determining whether or Not Leveraging ECOWAS Platforms to Foster Dialogue and Consensus-Building on Regional Issues will Strengthen West Africa's Diplomatic Skills and Enhance Member States' Ability to Manage Internal Political Divisions.



Source: Field Survey (2025).

As highlighted in Figure 9, an overwhelming majority of respondents cumulatively ranking 78.5 per cent respondents were of the view that leveraging ECOWAS platforms to foster dialogue and consensus-building on regional issues will strengthen West African governments' diplomatic skills and enhance its ability to manage internal political divisions. On the other hand, 16.9 per cent of the respondents cumulatively disagreed with the posed question. It could be surmised from the analysis that if West Africa leverages on ECOWAS platforms to foster dialogue and consensus-building on regional issues, it will in return strengthen member state's diplomatic skills and enhance its ability to manage internal political divisions.

Discussion of Findings

Internal and External Factors Constraining ECOWAS's Effectiveness in Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building in West Africa

No doubt, ECOWAS faces numerous challenges in effectively leveraging its position within West Africa to drive sustainable development in the region. Among the challenges faced by ECOWAS activities, the study findings revealed that Nigeria's internal political instability hinders its ability to effectively lead and coordinate regional development initiatives within ECOWAS. In buttressing the findings of the study, Fadakinte (2014) argues that Nigeria state lacks the capacity to provide effective management of economy and resources, cannot conduct accurate census, free and fair election, provide for its citizen's welfare in terms of adequate infrastructure and security. In further corroborating the findings of the study, Bakare (2019), submitted that Nigeria might be caught again in withdrawing its troops from Guinea-Bissau, a possibility that was connected to the country's internal security challenges and economic crisis. According to the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria has spent \$75,000,000 in Guinea Bissau since 2011. It also contributed US\$63,000,000 to the ECOWAS fund for the Defence and Security Sector reform in 2011 and US\$10,000,000 to enable the Interim Government to function effectively in 2012 (The Scoop, 2017). Nigerian military intervention in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) was able to return the country to a democratic government under José Mario Vaz in May 2014 for a five-year term (ECOWAS, 2017).

The findings further indicated that weak governance and corruption within West African states undermine ECOWAS credibility and effectiveness in promoting good governance and transparency among member states. In

corroborating the above findings, Ogbaji and Lorhen (2023), observed that Nigeria is faced with numerous challenges, ranging from huge governance problems which affects its national image such as political incompetence, corruption, disregard for the rule of law, policy inconsistency, insecurity and poor conducive environment for doing business. These challenges are in tandem with the findings of Yusuf and Abdullahi (2020) who conducted a study on the role of Nigeria in the ECOWAS and its support towards the common proposed currency eco that loyalty to colonialism and the francophone country's long-existing monetary cooperation towards France was the strong blockade of the proposal of the single currency as well as ECOWAS member nations were unable to reach-up to the set of convergence, which resulted in the shift and delays on the establishment of the common currency date. This finding also agrees with the views of Udeh (2011); Yusuf, Ahmad and Wali (2018) on the influence of France over francophone member states.

The study highlighted that external factors, such as global economic shocks and geopolitical instability, significantly constrain ECOWAS ability to effectively support sustainable development among member states. In line with the forgoing findings, Ikechi, Chinedum, and Nwokoro (2022), observed that trade relations amongst the ECOWAS member nations aren't blossoming as it should. A review of 2019 trade data indicates that the average total imports from the ECOWAS trading bloc stood at 20.10%. Again, the average total exports from within the trading bloc stood at 7.51%.

These figures are considered not good enough. They are far from being pleasant and obviously require an intense assessment of the trade relationships amongst the ECOWAS member countries. It might be recalled that out of the 15 member nations, it was only the trading positions of nine member states that we could lay our hands on. The trading positions of the other 6 member nations were not available for assessment. These states include Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali and Niger. Perhaps, this is a pointer to the fact that; some of the ECOWAS member nations are yet to pay heed to the idea of trade liberalization and trade enthronelement within the sub region.

The findings revealed that promoting democratic governance and good governance practices within ECOWAS will serve as a model and exert positive pressure on member state's internal political reforms. In buttressing the above findings, it is worthy of note that there exist an ECOWAS protocol tailored towards such direction with the title Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. The above protocol was signed on the December 21, 2001 in Dakar, Senegal. Ibrahim, Obiageli and Bibi (2017) stated that the rationale behind its signing was that if change of governments in member countries are based on constitutional means rather than violence people of the region will enjoy the dividends of integration as wars will be reduced.

The recent ECOWAS' intervention in the restoration of democracy in Gambia has been a success story. This is a claim which is associated with the long-accumulated wealth of experience of the regional bloc, which proved valuable in successfully mediating The Gambia's post-election impasse (Khadiagala, 2018). The Gambia's post-election crisis presented Nigeria an ample opportunity to convince the international community of its regional influence to mediate in political and security issues after eighteen years of stable internal. The disputed December 2016 presidential elections in The Gambia was the first case where Nigerian-led ECOWAS intervention successfully managed to "restore democracy" in the country by using the threat of force but without any use of direct physical violence (Hartmann, 2017). Nigeria's previous peacekeeping operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau had constantly involved both the use of threat of force and direct physical violence; however, the restoration of democracy in the country underscores an external intervention anchored on a collective mandate of the ECOWAS and the principle of multilateralism which embraced the collective participation of other regional blocs beyond West Africa. These regional blocs comprise the UN and AU.

The study established that active participation in ECOWAS's conflict resolution mechanisms will provide member states with valuable experience and expertise transferable to its own domestic conflict management strategies. In corroborating the forgoing findings, Akolga (2024), observed that during the Liberian war, the lack of security

mechanisms at the time was both an 'opportunity' for Nigeria to manifest hegemonic leadership through ECOWAS, but more importantly, the sub-region stood to benefit more. In other words, a successful Nigerian leadership was intended to raise Nigeria's leadership credentials both within the sub-region and beyond, but it was also going to simultaneously bring about stability in Liberia and the sub-region. Critically, that had the potential to prevent subsequent conflicts in the sub region because of the fear of a united and effective West African reaction or deterrence by the unity of purpose. It also had the potential to bring an end to external interference in West African security governance in the long run.

Conclusion

This study has provided an in-depth examination of the roles and impacts of ECOWAS in the political stability of West Africa. Focusing on the activities of ECOWAS and leadership role exhibited as well as the huge financial contribution made in ensuring the sustenance of political stability in the region. The research explored the contributions of ECOWAS towards resolving the compounding challenges bedeviling member states and resistance faced by the organization in fulfilling its mandate in order to ensure sub-regional growth and development, social cohesion and economic stability. A critical evaluation of the findings underscores the need for strategic realignment of ECOWAS efforts to maximise her gains and developmental impacts in West Africa.

Consequently, the researcher opined that a combination of strategic planning, enhanced collaboration, and

resource optimisation is essential for ECOWAS to sustain and expand their contributions to member states for more nuanced socio-economic and political development in West Africa. There is therefore the need for ECOWAS as a regional organization to focus on integrating innovative approaches, such as digital platforms to be used in advocating for good governance, economic and socio-political development and capacity-building programmes, to address evolving challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities in the West African sub-region.

Recommendations

- i. ECOWAS should establish a mandatory regional stabilization fund financed through enforceable member-state contributions and a fixed levy on intra-regional trade, with strict compliance monitoring and sanctions for defaulting states.
- ii. ECOWAS should operationalize a binding early warning-early action framework by strengthening its Early Warning Directorate, integrating civil society intelligence networks, and mandating automatic diplomatic and mediation deployment once predefined instability indicators are triggered.
- iii. ECOWAS should adopt a uniform enforcement protocol under its democratic governance instruments (including the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance) that ensures consistent application of sanctions, mediation timelines, and post-conflict reconstruction

benchmarks across all member states.

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Nigeria's Reliance on Chinese Investments and its Impact on Infrastructural Development

Abstract

In spite of the decades of uninterrupted bilateral relations that ensued between Nigeria and China with the aim of boosting the overall economic development in Nigeria, there are still challenges of infrastructural development in Nigerian. It is on the basis of the identified problem that this research is focused on Nigeria's reliance on Chinese investments and its impact on infrastructural development. It focused on the relevance of China's interest in Nigeria being her strategic partner in Africa and how such relation has aided in enhancing infrastructural development and sustainability through the massive infrastructural projects funded and executed by Chinese firms. The research was conducted using the complex interdependence theory as well as the survey method of data collection. Findings of the study revealed that bilateral relations between Nigeria and China have played a significant role in addressing key economic challenges such as infrastructural deficit, poverty, unemployment and economic development. The findings further highlighted the potential prospects of these bilateral relations. On the basis of the above findings, the study concluded that a combination of strategic planning, enhanced collaboration, and resource optimisation is essential for Nigeria to sustain and enhance the contributions of Sino-Nigeria's relations to the development of its infrastructure. Furthermore, the research recommended that there is need for Nigeria to reduce its overreliance on China for financing its infrastructure projects in order to enhance its economic development and foreign policy autonomy as African hegemon.

Keywords: Bilateral Relation, Nigeria, China, Infrastructure, Development, Economic Challenge

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Introduction

Several companies with headquarters in Hong Kong have made investments in Nigeria since the country's independence. The Lee Group

manufactures steel, ceramics, plastic bags, shoes, and bread. Western Metal Products Company Limited (WEMPCO), the second company, is involved in ceramics, building materials, and

hospitality. The Tung family founded Africa's largest cold-rolled steel mill in 2015. In their quest for resources and their bilateral relations with African countries, China has engaged in what is tagged "resources for infrastructure." Implying the provision of infrastructure such as, airport terminals, roads, bridges, and rails in payment for resources acquired from Africa. It is true that China's bilateral relationship with Nigeria is getting better by the day unlike the situation during the immediate post-colonial era. China through the Belt and road initiative has helped develop the transport sector aiding the reduction of infrastructural deficit in Nigeria. In the energy context, most pro Chinese writers agree on the active role of Chinese companies in Africa's power sector, both in terms of magnitude and impact on new electricity capacity additions, mostly coming from renewable energy including large hydroelectric plants. More efforts have been intensified towards securing more financial aids from China to finance Nigerian infrastructural projects. In line with this drive, the former President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari in his first visit to China in 2016 sought and obtained aids from China for the development of some projects in Nigeria. And the current president of Nigeria President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is not left out of the visit to China to solicit for aids and infrastructural development (Umar, 2025).

However, the allusion that Chinese projects and financial support contribute to power sector development, extending energy access and facilitating

economic growth in Nigeria are questionable when compared to the volume of generators that are imported into the Nigerian market (Igbokwe, 2020). On paper, China's activities are expected to contribute to power sector development in emerging countries through construction of new generation capacity and new grids but Nigeria for example is still battling with an unending problem of electricity generation transmission and distribution. The functionality and viability of infrastructure aids in determining a country's progress and another's failure in attracting investments, expanding trade, coping with population growth, reducing poverty, or improving environmental conditions (Ezeani & Igboka, 2022). It is against this backdrop this paper is set out to investigate whether Nigeria's reliance on Chinese investments has truly paved way for the attainment of infrastructural development in Nigeria and also to interrogate whether the relationship is mutually beneficial or one sided benefit.

Statement of the Problem

China provided loans to Nigeria to help it complete 11 projects. The USD 3.121 billion Chinese loans are project-related loans. Among the projects are the Nigerian Railway Modernization Project (Idu-Kaduna section), the Abuja Light Rail Project, and the Nigerian Four Airport Terminals Expansion Project for Abuja, Kano, Lagos, and Port Harcourt. The Nigerian Railway Modernization Project (Lagos-Ibadan section) and the Abuja-Keffi-Makurdi Road Rehabilitation and Upgrading Project

are two other projects. External borrowings in Nigeria have both positive and negative consequences (Agah & Ikenga (2023).

Agah & Ikenga (2023) alluded that while resource-for-infrastructure agreements have increased access to hard infrastructure such as roads, dams, and railways, they have done little to aid Nigeria's economic diversification and transition from resource dependency to resource-based industrialisation. Nigeria relies more on Chinese loans for critical infrastructure development, prompting widespread condemnation of the debt burden and the political consequences of the loan's impact. The success level of the trade relations can be seen in massive construction of infrastructural projects in Nigeria ranging from railway to road infrastructures. It is on this note of the existing problem that this study investigates Nigeria's reliance on Chinese investments and its impact on infrastructural development.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent does Nigeria's reliance on Chinese investments and infrastructural projects contributed to sustainable development in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the outcomes of Nigeria-China trade relations in the context of infrastructural development in Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the Nigeria's reliance on Chinese investments and its impact on

infrastructural development. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine whether Nigeria's reliance on Chinese investments and infrastructural projects contributed to sustainable development in Nigeria.
- ii. Identify the outcomes of Nigeria-China trade relations in the context of infrastructural development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Bilateral Trade Relations

On Bilateral trade, Kagan (2019) sees it as exchange of goods between two countries promoting trade and investment. Unlike multilateral trade agreements, bilateral trade agreements are easily negotiated, because only two nations are party to the agreement. Two nations will come together to reduce or eliminate tariffs and other trade barriers. Kagan (2019) gave example of United States by stating that, in March 2016, the U.S. government and the government of Peru reached an agreement removing barriers for U.S. beef exports that had been in effect since 2003. The agreement opened one of the fastest growing markets in Latin America. Bilateral trade agreements help to eliminate trade barriers between two countries. Economics help (2019) sees Bilateral Trade as an agreement where two countries agree to have equal amounts of trade between each other. It means, if one country has trade deficit, it has to be made up so that the trade levels meet.

Development

Development as a concept has myriad of definitions. For Rodney (1972), it is a

many-sided process. At the level of individual it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing. One thing which could be deduced from this definition is that development goes beyond economic growth and man is at the center of development. In other words, development is about the improvement of people's lives and not solely about increment in things.

Todaro (2009) asserts development is a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system. This involves in addition to improvement of income and output radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitude, customs and beliefs. The main argument of Todaro is that development is both a physical process and or state of the mind. The transformation of institutions is one aspect. The other aspect is that the thinking of the people must change. Again, according to Todaro (2009), the concept of development implies improvement in productivity, income, attitudes, customs and belief and putting in place better institutional structures. This improvement is necessary condition for improving mass living standard. So, development is about improvement in every aspect of man in relation to his environment.

In his contributions to the debate on the meaning of development, Seers (1969) observed that the questions to ask about a country's development are therefore: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to

unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, there has been period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development, even if per capital income doubled. Seers' definition is important for the understanding of development because it is concerned with the improvement in the living condition of the people. The implication of his argument is that the economy could grow without development.

Infrastructural Development

For Mawere & Mubaya (2019), infrastructural development refers to the process of constructing, maintaining, and improving physical structures and facilities that support economic activities, social well-being, and sustainable development within a region or country. They emphasize the importance of infrastructure in enhancing connectivity, promoting industrialization, and improving living standards for the population. In a study by Ghebreyesus & Gebreegziabher (2018), infrastructural development is defined as the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of physical assets such as roads, bridges, water supply systems, and energy networks to support economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. They highlight the role of infrastructure in creating employment opportunities, reducing poverty, and improving overall quality of life.

Empirical Review

Combining qualitative methods of narrative and content analysis, Okere & Okeyika (2019), posits that challenges of corruption, improper feasibility studies and monitoring have reduced the potency of Chinese infrastructure development finance. This paper argued that "institutions matter" just as much as provision of infrastructure finance. The paper concluded that institutional development combined with Chinese infrastructure development finance can bring a new system and (or) thinking to south-south cooperation and infrastructure development.

Shishi, Udochukwu and Tenong (2020), studied Sino-Nigeria relations since 1945: asking what it hold for Nigeria's quest for development? Drawing our analysis from historical perspective, the paper examines the dynamics of Chinese Foreign Policy, taking into cognizance how it has shaped its behavior and attitude since 1945. As such, the paper finds it cogent to predicate its central argument and conclusion by relying on the Marxist and liberal theory of development. The research revealed that the end of the Second World War necessitated China to pursue a foreign policy of domestic growth, economic expansion and global recognition which lends credence to the fact that national interest is paramount in the making and execution of any foreign policy. Such a foreign policy posture is what Nigeria requires to enable her address her developmental challenges. The paper concluded that a framework of cooperative relationship between Nigeria and China at the

present is that between an industrial power and a developing country, its full scope is yet to be completely explored. Empirically, Nigeria's bilateral deficits and debts cannot be easily resolved without China's cooperation. The study recommended among others that The Nigerian people should use every opportunity to acquire the technical know-how of the Chinese through the transfer of technology. In that regard, the foundations and processes that transformed China from a rural to an industrial economy should be adopted and implemented by the Nigerian government and policy makers, as it suits our internal idiosyncrasy.

Eneze, Clement, Chibuike, Anthony, Stephen (2022), examined China's foreign aid and its impact on poverty, unemployment, infrastructure, economic development, and bilateral trade in Nigeria: Using a regression model. For statistical analysis, the study employed the multiple linear regression model and ANOVA test to establish the significant impact of the explanatory variables on economic development and bilateral trade relations. The study did a thorough investigation to determine the impact of each variable on economic development and bilateral trade relation.

Ocholi & Okonkwo (2022), carried out an analysis of Chinese Transport infrastructure loans and investment in ICT in Nigeria. Since the thrust of the paper is an enquiry after the fact, the Ex-Post-Facto research design was adopted for data collection while the theory of absolute and relative gains was applied as a theoretical framework. This raised questions of transparency in the loan packaging

process. The paper also discovered that in the other African and Asian countries where China had given out such infrastructure loans in the past, a high level of hidden cost was attached. The undisclosed hidden cost attached to Chinese infrastructure loans and the concessions given to private Chinese companies to do business at will in Nigeria has created a high level of balance of trade deficit in favour of China. The possibility of debt insolvency has serious implications for national security and socio-economic development the future. The paper discovered that the exact terms and conditions embedded in the performance and implementation frameworks were not disclosed. It is against this backdrop that the paper concluded that the Chinese infrastructure loans and ICT investments are potential debt traps foisted on Nigeria with grave negative implications for the future. A major pitfall in the supposedly, low-interest Chinese infrastructure concessions loans and FDI inflow into Nigeria is the absence of full disclosure and concealment of the loan performance framework, terms of agreement and condition of payment from the public domain.

Abimiku & Umearokwu (2023), investigated the political economy of Chinese investment in Nigeria: A study of Lagos/ Ogun Guangdong Free Trade Zones. The work employs a secondary source of data collection and adopts content analysis, with a theoretical framework anchored on Dependency Theory by Andre Gunder Frank, to examine the issues in discourse.

Findings revealed that the Chinese investment in Guangdong Free Trade Zones is not a sure ticket for national development, as it has not substantially led to the creation of job opportunities, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) transfer of technology, and encouragement of Foreign Exchange Earnings as envisaged.

Ekemam & Nwachi (2018), did a reflections on Sino-Nigerian economic relations and the regime of currency swap. Materials for the study are from secondary sources while analysis is descriptive and historical. This research adopts a medley of two theories for analysis of this complex phenomenon namely, the Dependency theories and the Modernization theories. The bilateral relations between the duo countries was made official in 1971, Sino-Nigeria bilateral ties have been sustained through mutual exchanges and cooperation especially in the area of trade. To Nigeria, this partnership is of strategic importance in the light of the derivable benefits from Chinese advancement in technological know-how. For China on the other hand, Nigeria's large market and huge deposits of natural resources have been tantalizing for its industrial/manufacturing sector. In spite of these, there has been a growing ambivalence on the part of analysts over the growing inequality and imbalance that has characterizing this economic relationship since its inception owing to the fact that Nigeria has been negotiating from a position of disadvantage. The paper examined the complexities of this relationship by interrogating and highlighting some of

the domestic variables working against Nigeria, and also to examine the implications of the Currency Swap regime between Nigeria and China needed to bring about a favorable balance of trade for Nigeria in her trade relations with China. It was discovered that poverty in Nigeria among other factors, is reinforcing Chinese dominance of the bilateral ties while the paper recommend, amongst others, boosting of local production of imported Chinese products and to institute an aggressive and proper consumption reorientation along the line of "buy Nigeria" rather than Chinese goods.

Abimiku & Umearokwu, (2022), investigated domesticating the Chinese development model of Free Trade Zones in Nigeria. It is in view of this that the researcher utilized secondary source of information and content analysis, with theoretical framework anchored on statist theory, to examine the issues in discourse. Findings revealed that, due to various issues of bad governance, characterized by corruption, infrastructural deficit, poor management system and weak institutions, the Chinese constructed and operated FTZs of Lekki and Ogun-Guangdong has not substantially led to job opportunities, FDI, transfer of technology and Foreign Exchange Earnings as envisaged. Findings further revealed that the successful implementation of Free Trade Zones in China does not take place haphazardly, but was carefully implemented through the adoption of various measures such as policy experimentation, monitoring and evaluation and good location.

Samson & Imosu (2021), carried out a study on Nigeria's foreign trade policy and economic relations with China under president Buhari's administration from 2015-2020. The methodology adopted was secondary and data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis whereas the Dependency theory was adopted as the basis of analysis. Available evidence reveals that China is gradually taking over economic activities in Africa and Nigeria in particular. China is seriously competing with the United States of America in terms of the volume of goods and services imported to Nigeria. It is therefore not surprising that a Nigeria-China relation has improved tremendously in recent times. This has spurred a renewed interest in Nigeria-China economic relations. The study revealed that, Nigeria economic relations with China has not been consistent with Nigeria's foreign trade policy; China's trade investment in Nigeria has risen to about 13 billion dollars in 2018 from 2 billion dollars in 2015, and is still increasing exponentially even in the year 2019; China has overtaken the United States of America as the largest foreign investor in electronic gadgets in Nigeria; Nigeria currently sells 30% of its oil to China, since, Nigeria's oil is so vital to China's economy, China has deepened interest in oil exploration in Nigeria.

Haruna & Kura (2021), investigated validating perception on trade and economic governance: the case of Nigeria-China trade interest in Kano state markets, Nigeria. The study used qualitative method of data collection and engaged the instrument

of semi-structured interviews to gather information from various respondents. Nine respondents were selected from both the policy institutions (Ministry of Commerce) and Kano State markets particularly Kwari market via purposive sampling technique as its sample size. The data collected for the study were thematically content analysed. This study, using world system and dependency theories, investigates perception of trade and economic governance in Kano State Markets between the two countries making emphases to the China's trade interest in Kwari market Kano. It also assesses how China's interest influences the Nigerian trade policy mechanism and dependence on China using Kwari market as a reference point. The finding revealed that the impacts of Chinese trade interest to dominate the Nigeria's markets, especially Kwari, influences its trade dependence on China. Similarly, China's overbearing political influence over the Nigeria's policy institutions and lack of structural policy mechanism by the Ministry of Commerce promote China's intense trade interest in Kwari market.

Theoretical Framework

The complex interdependence theorists perceived that the different and complex transnational connections and interdependencies among nations and social orders were expanding, while the utilization of military power and power balancing are diminishing yet stay significant. In utilizing the concept of interdependencies, Keohane and Nye (1997) additionally separated among interdependence and dependence in

analyzing the role of power in politics and relations between global actors. The assumptions of the complex interdependence are as follows:

- i. The utilization of different channels of actions between social orders in interstates, trans governmental and transnational relations.
- ii. The absence of hierarchy of importance of issues with changing agendas and linkages between issues prioritized.
- iii. Bringing about a decrease in the utilization of military and coercive power in relations among sovereign states.

Respectively, complex interdependence depends on explicit attributes that evaluate the implicit and explicit assumptions of conventional global politics; (that is the prevalence of the state and a hierarchy of issues with military force and power, the most significant influence in global relations which generally characterizes political realism in Political Science). Nye & Keohane (1977) in this manner contend that the decline of military force as a policy apparatus and the increase in economic and different types of independence should increase the likelihood of collaboration among states. The work of the scholars surfaced during the 1970s to turn into a huge test to political realist theory in global politics and become fundamental to current theories that have been categorized as liberalism, neo-liberalism and liberal institutionalism. Conventional investigates of liberalism are regularly defined alongside critique

of political realism, essentially that the two of them overlook the social nature of relations among states and the social fabric of international society. The importance of this theory to the study of China Nigeria economic cooperation is that it demonstrates the substances of inconsistent gains from trade among at least two interacting countries. Nigeria-China trade relations are a result of the way that none of the two nations possesses totally the means of their reality. Henceforth they need to go into some type of relationship upon each other to secure unevenly naturally endowed assets.

There exists a type of complementarities between the two nations. For example, China as an industrializing economy requires the services of the energy that originates from (oil) and Nigeria then again as an underdeveloped economy requires the products that originate from these Chinese companies so as to fulfill the requests of its populace. It in this way imperative that the two nations communicate and transact across borders. Be that as it may, since these two nations invest and trade on commodities of different nature and quality (one completed and the other primary item and crude material) it ends up clear that the gains from this trade must at one point be tilted to the advantage of one against the other dependent on the exigencies of the market forces of supply and demand of these tradable products. The basic implications of this theory to the study is that since in absolute terms the bilateral relations will in general favour China more than Nigeria, there exist the

requirement for the latter to review the lopsidedness through renegotiation and improvement in the latter's productive possibilities.

Methodology

The study adopted mixed-method research design. The targeted population of the study is 11,245 which comprises of individuals drawn from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Central Bank of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Finance, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment among others who are actively involved in foreign policy development, as well as bilateral trade relations coordination. These groups were carefully chosen because they are positioned at the intersection of bilateral relations, community engagement, infrastructural development and socio-economic planning, offering crucial perspectives relevant to the study's objectives. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) statistical formula was employed to reduce the population of the study to a manageable standard of 375.

The study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The instruments that were used in collecting data for this study are oral interview questionnaires and secondary sources. Stratified and Random Sampling Techniques were used in selecting the respondents among different categories for the administration of questionnaire. For interview, purposive sampling technique was used. The sampling comprised of people with many similar characteristics such as deep knowledge on the subject of investigation, years of

experience and age. This study made use of tables as a platform to present the research data and also analyze the data collected from the field on the subject matter using simple percentage and graphs as the case may be for the descriptive analysis. The version that was used for analyzing data for the study is SPSS 25. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative information.

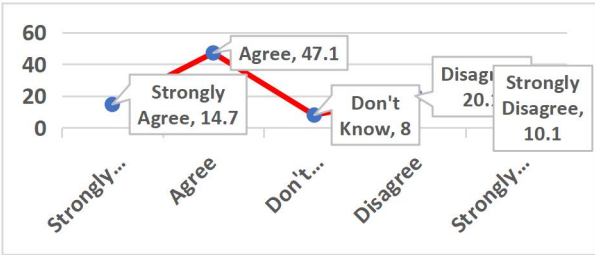
Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

A total of 375 copies of questionnaire were distributed while 347 copies were retrieved. Therefore, the presentation and analysis was done based on the 347 retrieved copies of questionnaire. The pattern of presentation was based on the objectives of the study using frequency table (frequency, count and percentage) as well as chats. The discussion of findings then followed. This was supported with information from extant literature.

Extent of Nigeria's Reliance on Chinese Investments and Infrastructural Projects Contribution to Sustainable Development

The first research objective is to assess the extent to which Nigeria's reliance on Chinese investments and infrastructural projects contributed to sustainable development. To address this research question, the study asked respondents appropriate questions and data generated are presented at Figures 1 to 4 below.

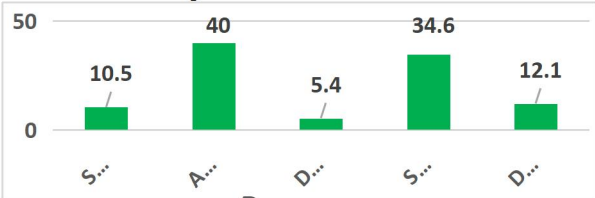
Figure 1: Respondents View on Assessing Whether or Not Chinese Investment Significantly Contributes to Nigeria's Infrastructure Development Goals.



Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 1 depicts that 61.8 per cent of respondents cumulatively agreed that indeed Chinese investment significantly contributes to Nigeria's infrastructure development goals. While 30.2 per cent of respondents cumulatively disagreed to the posed question. It can be deduced from the above analysis that Chinese investment in the last two decades in Nigeria has significantly contributed to Nigeria’s infrastructural development goals and drastically reduced infrastructural deficit. Hence, the need for Nigerian government to intensify Sino-Nigeria’s trade relations in order to enhance and infrastructural development in Nigeria as well as promote economic stability.

Figure 2: Respondents’ Opinions on Ascertaining Whether or Not Infrastructure Projects Funded by China Are Implemented with Sufficient Consideration for Environmental Sustainability



Source: Field Survey (2025).

The analysis on Figure 2 shows that 50.5 per cent of respondents cumulatively agreed that there are concerns about environmental and social impacts of

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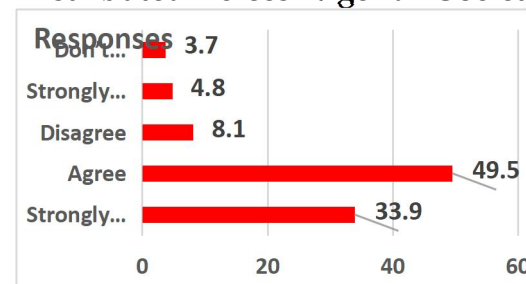
Chinese-funded projects in Nigeria which have led to domestic and international criticism by scholars and analyst alike thereby affecting Nigeria's foreign policy image. In addition, 40 per cent of respondents cumulatively disagreed to the posed question. In corroborating the above analysis, an interview conducted with a senior staff Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (19/11/25) where he alluded that:

We acknowledge that some Chinese-funded projects have faced criticism regarding environmental and social impacts. Concerns about inadequate environmental impact assessments, displacement of communities, and insufficient local content have been raised. Strengthening regulatory frameworks and ensuring rigorous environmental and social safeguards are crucial. While we value the economic contributions of these projects, addressing these concerns is essential to ensure long-term sustainability and avoid reputational damage. This requires collaborative efforts between Nigeria and China, coupled with increased transparency and accountability.

It could be deduced from the analysis that most of the projects executed by Chinese companies in Nigeria always breed concerns about environmental and social impacts ranging from land degradation and health hazard which have led to domestic and international criticism and

this has dented the image of Nigeria in the international system as being insensitive and un-strategic to the plight of its citizens in its diplomatic relations with China and the attendant consequences that emanate thereof.

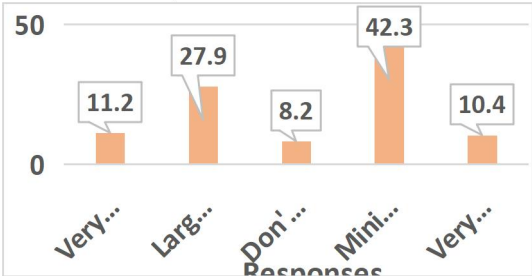
Figure 3: Respondents Opinion on Examining Whether the Economic Benefits Generated by Chinese Infrastructure Projects Are Broadly Distributed Across Nigerian Society



Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 3 depicts that a cumulative majority of respondents ranking 83.4 per cent agreed that economic benefits generated by Chinese infrastructure projects are broadly distributed across Nigerian Society. On the other hand, 12.9 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the assertion by positing that economic benefits generated by Chinese infrastructure projects are not in any way broadly distributed across Nigerian Society. It could be inferred from the analysis therefore, that, there has been a drastic and commendable equitable distribution of the proceeds generated by Chinese infrastructure projects across Nigerian Society. This has to a large extent paved way for even development across the geopolitical zones and states in Nigeria.

Figure 4: Respondents Views on Determining the Extent to Which Nigeria's Reliance on China for Infrastructure Development Creates a Long-Term Dependency That Hinders Sustainable, Self-Reliant Growth



Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 4 illustrates that 42.3 per cent of respondents opined that Nigeria's reliance on China for infrastructure development creates a long-term dependency that hinders sustainable and self-reliant growth to a minimal extent. Also, 10.4 per cent of the respondents indicated that the impact of Nigeria's reliance on China for infrastructure development creates a long-term dependency that hinders sustainable and self-reliant growth has been to a very low extent. In addition, a cumulative 39.1 per cent of respondents were of the view that Nigeria's reliance on China for infrastructure development creates a long-term dependency that hinders sustainable and self-reliant growth to a large extent, thereby potentially annihilating and retrogressing Nigeria’s economy and foreign policy.

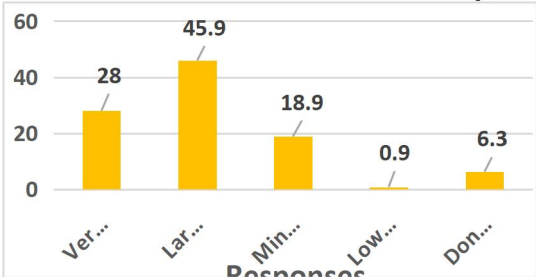
It could be inferred from the analysis that in order to attract more FDI in Nigeria through bilateral relations that ensued between Nigeria and China, there is need for proper and meaningful diversification of Nigeria’s economy coupled with the political will to sustain it in order to reduce Nigeria's reliance on China for

infrastructural development and refrain from long-term dependency that would enhance sustainable and self-reliant growth.

Roles Government Policy Plays in Shaping the Outcomes of Nigeria-China Trade Relations in the Context of Infrastructural Development

The second research objective posed by the study was to evaluate the roles government policy plays in shaping the outcomes of Nigeria-China trade relations in the context of infrastructural development. In addressing the research question, the survey asked respondents appropriate questions and data generated are presented at Figures 5 to 8.

Figure 5: Respondents View on Determining the Extent Government Policies in Nigeria Effectively Facilitate and Regulate Chinese Investment in Infrastructure Projects



Source: Field Survey (2025).

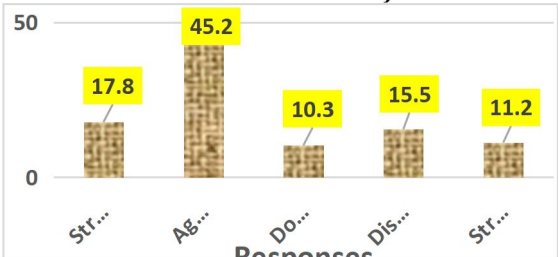
Figure 5 depicts that a high number of respondents ranking 28.0 per cent and 45.9 per cent opined that government policies in Nigeria effectively facilitate and regulate Chinese investment in infrastructure projects to a 'considerable extent' and 'large extent', respectively. Additionally, 18.9 per cent of respondents indicated that government policies in Nigeria has to a minimal

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extent contributed effectively in facilitating and regulating Chinese investment in infrastructure projects. It could be inferred from the analysis that although Nigeria already has had a significant and undisputed influence in formulating and implementing foreign policies in Nigeria with the sole aim of facilitate and regulate Chinese investment in infrastructure projects at the greater advantage of Nigeria and its citizens. Hence, the need for a closer policy regulated trade diplomatic cooperation with China which would contribute in in enhancing and promoting infrastructural development.

Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) or loans secured through its Exim bank. In addition, a cumulative 26.7 per cent of respondents disagreed to the posed question. It is evident from the analysis that Nigeria is among the highest center of attraction of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which has contributed and is still contributing significantly towards the development and sustainability of Nigeria’s economy and foreign policy which aid it to maintain its position of African hegemon and diplomatic leverage in Africa. Despite the strategic importance of China to Nigeria in international affairs, it can be deduced that Nigerian government policies still prioritizes local content and participation in Chinese-funded infrastructure projects.

Figure 6: Respondents Opinion on Ascertaining Whether or Not Nigerian Government Policies Prioritize Local Content and Participation in Chinese-Funded Infrastructure Projects



Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 6 depicts that a high number of respondents cumulatively ranking 63.0 per cent hold the view that Nigerian government policies prioritize local content and participation in Chinese-funded infrastructure projects. This can be seen in the incorporation of Nigerian skilled and unskilled labour in the execution of the infrastructural development projects sponsored by Chinese government either through its

Figure 7: Respondents’ Opinions on Assessing Whether or Not Government Regulations Adequately Address Potential Environmental and Social Risks Associated With Chinese Infrastructure Projects.



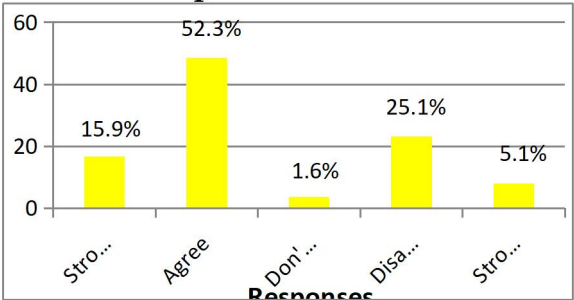
Source: Field Survey (2025).

The analysis on Figure 7 shows that 50.5 per cent of respondents cumulatively agreed that there are concerns about environmental and social impacts of Chinese-funded projects in Nigeria which have led to formation of policies geared towards ensuring the careful consideration of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in order to address

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potential environmental and social risks associated with Chinese infrastructure projects. In addition, 40 per cent of respondents cumulatively disagreed to the posed question. It could be deduced from the analysis that to a considerable extent, Nigerian government failed to set practical and feasible regulations to adequately address potential environmental and social risks associated with Chinese infrastructure projects. On situation where such regulations are set, they become dead-on-arrival as they appeared to be symbolic policies. It is worthy of note that most of the projects executed by Chinese companies in Nigeria always breed concerns about environmental and social impacts ranging from land degradation and health hazard.

Figure 8: Respondents View on Assessing Whether or Not the Nigerian Government's Policy Framework Effectively Balances the benefits of Chinese Investment with the Need to Protect National Interests and Long-Term Development Goals.



Source: Field Survey (2025).

Figure 4.8 shows that a large percent of the respondents ranking 68.2 per cent cumulatively agreed that deepening relationship with China prompted Nigerian government to develop policy framework that effectively balances the benefits of Chinese investment with the

need to protect national interests and long-term development goals. Another category of respondents cumulatively ranking 30.2 per cent disagreed to the posed question.

In buttressing the above response from questionnaire, an interview conducted with a Deputy Director bilateral Affairs Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja (21/11/25) shows that:

Nigeria's foreign policy is guided by the principles of non-alignment and multilateralism. He further alluded that Nigeria's relationship with China is an important part of our overall strategy but doesn't supersede our existing relationships and commitments. We maintain active engagement with a wide range of countries and international bodies, driven by a commitment to national interests and international cooperation. Our relationships are multifaceted and serve different, often complementary, purposes.

It could be surmised from the analysis that the deepening relationship with China did not actually result in decline in Nigeria's foreign policy formulation that carefully factor its national interest while effectively balances the benefits of Chinese Investment and long-term development goals.

Discussion of Findings

Extent of Nigeria's Reliance on Chinese Investments and Infrastructural Projects Contribution to Sustainable Development

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The first research objective evaluated the extent of Nigeria's reliance on Chinese investments and infrastructural projects contribution to sustainable development. Findings from the study revealed that Chinese investment in the last two decades in Nigeria has significantly contributed to Nigeria's infrastructural development goals and drastically reduced infrastructural deficit. This was buttressed by an empirical study where it revealed that China provided loans to Nigeria to help it complete 11 projects. The USD 3.121 billion Chinese loans, according to Ding, et al, cited in Agah & Ikenga (2023) are project-related loans. Among the projects are the Nigerian Railway Modernization Project (Idu-Kaduna section), the Abuja Light Rail Project, and the Nigerian Four Airport Terminals Expansion Project for Abuja, Kano, Lagos, and Port Harcourt. The Nigerian Railway Modernization Project (Lagos-Ibadan section) and the Abuja-Keffi-Makurdi Road Rehabilitation and Upgrading Project are two other projects. External borrowings in Nigeria have both positive and negative consequences. Scholars believe that the advantages of Nigeria China relations have become clearer, and that African countries have found development partnerships with China to be more concretely beneficial and satisfying than their experiences with Western donor countries.

Oloyede (2019) elaborated on this, revealing that African countries are much more comfortable with Chinese lendings because China's approach to its aid and trade relationship with Africa is viewed as offering far more practical

and concrete types of support, such as infrastructure development, which is critical for Africa's development but has been neglected by traditional donors. Apart from the fact that China fulfills aid promises faster than Western countries, he revealed that China funds or undertakes projects selected by African countries rather than dictating priorities. However, as previously stated, the bilateral relationship between China and Nigeria is fraught with complexities and complexities. Domestic savings in Nigeria are currently insufficient to ensure development (Ogbeifun, 2017).

The study unveiled that there has been a drastic and commendable equitable distribution of the proceeds generated by Chinese infrastructure projects across Nigerian Society as well as the projects execution. For instance, the government of Nigeria has also begun three rail and port projects worth \$3.2billion after a syndicate of Chinese financiers agreed to put up \$2.7billion for them, 85% of the funding required. The projects are the rehabilitation of a narrow gauge railway between Port Harcourt and Maiduguri, near Nigeria's border with Chad Lagos - Jebba 480 km line, Jebba - Kano 624 km line, Kuru - Bauchi - Gombe - Maiduguri 640 km line, Makurdi - Kafanchan - Kaduna Junction - Kuru line; the Bonny Deep Sea Port on Bonny Island; and the Railway Industrial Park in Port Harcourt. The projects, which are intended to complement each other, are being carried out by the Nigerian arm of the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) (Global Construction Review, 2021).

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Roles Government Policy Plays in Shaping the Outcomes of Nigeria-China Trade Relations in the Context of Infrastructural Development

The second research objective examined roles government policy plays in shaping the outcomes of Nigeria-China trade relations in the context of infrastructural development. Findings from the study revealed that Nigerian government policies does not ensure transparency and accountability in the procurement and implementation of Chinese-funded infrastructure projects. The foregoing findings are consistent with Ogulana (2020), where his study showed that the Chinese determined the cost of the projects, provided loans tied to the projects, and required that the projects be completed solely by Chinese firms, with no say from the government other than loan repayment. "That's how the Chinese calculated the \$500 million price tag for the Lagos-Ibadan railway," he says. According to the agreement reached between Nigeria and China, it is being carried out by a Chinese company. As a result, they needed to bring in a lot of equipment and people for the project. China is clearly using such loans to boost its goods and services exports at the expense of Nigeria. They know what they're doing when they charge 2.5 percent interest.

Agah & Ikenga (2023) further stated that the truth is that by opening up the contract and hiring the best contractors, Nigeria will be able to complete these projects at a lower cost while maintaining quality. They calculate the costs of projects financed with Chinese loans, which are typically exorbitant. This is a violation of

Nigerian procurement law. Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria 2020 has a debt-free revenue of 96 percent. This means that 96 kobos are used to repay loans for every naira of revenue earned by the country. Similarly, Nigeria's Chinese borrowings have a high agreed debt-revenue ratio, with N 943.12 billion spent on debt servicing in Q1 2020, with remaining revenue estimated at N 950.56 billion (Ojeme, 2020). It claimed that with debt servicing accounting for a quarter of Nigeria's proposed N10.3 trillion (2020) budget and capital spending accounting for N 2.5 trillion, the country's debt servicing capacity was already severely strained, with interest payments exceeding capital spending since 2014. Indeed, the group agrees that the majority of funds distributed are returned to China in the form of supplies and construction contracts, with all equipment imported from China (Agah & Ikeng, 2023).

In another findings of the study, it is clear that the deepening relationship with China prompted Nigerian government to develop policy framework that effectively balances the benefits of Chinese investment with the need to protect national interests and long-term development goals. This is buttressed by empirical studies which revealed that more efforts have been intensified towards securing more financial aids from China to finance Nigerian infrastructural projects. In line with this drive, President Buhari in his first visit to China in 2016 sought and obtained aids from China for the development of some projects in Nigeria. These include the West Africa's first

Urban rail system valued at \$500million in Abuja; the 180km rail line connecting Abuja and Kaduna which was commissioned in 2016. While others like upgrading of airport terminals, the Lagos-Kano rail line, the Zungeru hydroelectric power project, and the Fibre Cable for the internet infrastructure are at various stages of completion (Premium Times, 2015). Similarly, during his September, 2018 visit to China, the President sought China's financial aids for the construction of 3,050 megawatts Mambilla hydroelectric power project and signed a \$328 million deal on Information and Communication Technology Project (Olowolagba, 2018).

However, findings of Samson and Imosu (2021) opposed findings of the study where it stated that, there is underperformance of the country's foreign trade policies which have failed to support its economic relations instrument for directing the attracted foreign capital (more particularly FDI) towards boosting the industrial and manufacturing sector and sub-sector of the economy. These critical sector and sub-sector have the highest likelihood of expanding the country's foreign revenue sources through the manufacture of unique products and goods in which Nigeria has comparative advantage in the international market. It is this failure of Nigeria's trade policy to aid in re-directing all attracted foreign capital inflows via balance of trade that has created decades of imbalance (Akin, 2013), which is still the case under the Tinubu administration.

Conclusion

This study has provided an in-depth examination of the Nigeria's reliance on Chinese investment's impact on infrastructural development. The research explored the contributions of the Sino-Nigeria's trade relations to Nigeria's infrastructural development while addressing challenges and limitations encountered during this period. A critical evaluation of the findings underscores the need for strategic realignment of the bilateral trade relations between Nigeria and China's efforts to maximise their economic and developmental impacts. However, the limited collaboration between Nigeria and Chinese government in the area of industrialization constrained the scalability of their interventions. This reveals the necessity for structured partnerships and institutional support to amplify their reach and effectiveness in enhancing Nigeria's economic diplomacy and foreign policy. Future strategies in this regard should include establishing frameworks for more robust and strategic collaboration with local and international stakeholders to bolster resource mobilisation and economic development programme delivery.

Consequently, the study concludes that a combination of strategic planning, enhanced collaboration, and resource optimisation is essential for Nigeria to sustain and enhance the contributions of economic diplomacy to the development of its foreign policy. There is therefore the need for Nigeria to focus on integrating innovative approaches such as digital

platforms for the formation of foreign policy and capacity-building programmes, to address evolving challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities in the economic diplomatic landscape.

Recommendations

- i. FGN should endeavour to reduce its overreliance on China for financing its infrastructure projects in order to enhance its economic development and foreign policy autonomy.
- ii. Nigerian government should develop feasible and stringent policies to ensure transparency and accountability in the procurement and implementation of Chinese-funded infrastructure projects. This would aid in reducing corruption and wastages incurred in the execution of Chinese funded infrastructural projects in Nigeria.

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Cultural Beliefs, Gender Roles, and Patriarchal Narratives of the Ibibio/Annang, Fulani and the Zulus

Abstract

Patriarchy and gender roles have long shaped social life in many African societies through cultural beliefs, religious traditions, and historical narratives. These belief systems often define expectations for men and women, influencing authority, family structure, inheritance, and social participation. Despite social change, many patriarchal narratives remain deeply embedded in traditional worldviews. The problem this study addressed is the limited comparative understanding of how different African cultures construct and sustain patriarchal gender roles through shared and distinct cultural narratives. Existing studies often focus on single societies, leaving gaps in cross-cultural analysis. The aim of this study was to examine and compare how cultural beliefs shape gender roles and patriarchal narratives among the Ibibio/Annang of South-South Nigeria, the Fulani of Sudan, and the Zulu of South Africa. The objectives were to identify dominant gender norms, analyse cultural and religious narratives that support patriarchy, and highlight similarities and differences across the three societies. The study adopted a qualitative, comparative, and historical ethnographic approach, relying on secondary sources such as ethnographic records, oral traditions, proverbs, and historical texts. The findings are expected to reveal both shared patriarchal patterns and culturally specific expressions shaped by history, religion, and social organization. This study is significant as it contributed to African cultural, historical, and religious scholarship by offering a balanced comparative perspective on gender and tradition, while promoting deeper understanding of continuity and change in African societies.

Keywords: Cultural beliefs, Gender roles, Patriarchy, African traditions, Ibibio/Annang, Fulani, Zulu.

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Résumé : Le patriarcat et les rôles de genre ont longtemps structuré la vie sociale dans de nombreuses sociétés africaines à travers les croyances culturelles, les traditions religieuses et les récits historiques. Ces systèmes de croyances définissent souvent les attentes envers les hommes et les femmes, influençant l'autorité, la famille,

l'héritage et la participation sociale. Malgré les transformations sociales, de nombreux récits patriarcaux demeurent profondément enracinés dans les traditions. Le problème abordé par cette étude est le manque d'analyses comparatives montrant comment différentes cultures africaines construisent et maintiennent les rôles de

genre patriarcaux à travers leurs récits culturels. La majorité des études existantes se limitent à une seule société, ce qui laisse des lacunes importantes. L'objectif de cette recherche est d'examiner et de comparer l'influence des croyances culturelles sur les rôles de genre et les récits patriarcaux chez les Ibibio/Annang du Sud-Sud du Nigeria, les Peuls (Fulani) du Soudan et les Zoulous d'Afrique du Sud. Elle vise à identifier les normes de genre dominantes, à analyser les récits culturels et religieux qui soutiennent le patriarcat, et à mettre en évidence les similitudes et les différences entre ces sociétés. L'étude adopte une approche qualitative, comparative et historico-ethnographique, fondée sur des sources secondaires telles que les traditions orales, les proverbes et les textes historiques. Elle contribue à une meilleure compréhension des traditions africaines et des dynamiques de continuité et de changement.

Mots-clés : Croyances culturelles, Rôles de genre, Patriarcat, Traditions africaines, Ibibio/Annang, Peuls (Fulani), Zoulous.

Introduction

Patriarchy has been a defining feature of many African societies, shaping social structures, governance, and family life. Across the continent, cultural beliefs, traditions, and oral narratives have historically dictated the roles and responsibilities of men and women. These systems often establish hierarchical patterns of authority, where men are associated with leadership, decision-making, and public life, while women are linked to domesticity, caregiving, and moral guidance. Beyond

structuring social organization, belief systems, including indigenous cosmologies, Islam, Christianity, and ancestral traditions, serve as powerful legitimizing frameworks for gender roles. Through stories, proverbs, rituals, and rites of passage, cultural expectations are symbolically encoded and transmitted across generations, thereby sustaining and naturalizing socially constructed norms of masculinity and femininity (Geertz, 1973; Mbiti, 1969).

Mbiti (1969) observes that, Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it, indicating how deeply belief systems shape moral expectations and social conduct. At the same time, African feminist scholarship urges caution against treating these systems as timeless or universally oppressive. Oyèwùmí (1997) argues that what is often described as "gender hierarchy" in Africa has frequently been interpreted through Western categories that obscure indigenous organizing principles, noting that "the social categories that exist in the West are not universal and cannot be uncritically applied to African societies (p. xiii). In this way, gender differentiation is both culturally embedded and historically interpreted, requiring context-sensitive analysis that attends to indigenous epistemologies as well as religious transformation. This interweaving of culture, religion, and tradition ensures that gendered patterns are not only maintained but also internalized by members of the community as part of their worldview.

Despite increasing social change, including education, urbanization, and global influences, patriarchal narratives remain deeply embedded in many African societies. These narratives often continue to influence access to resources, political participation, and social recognition. Most existing studies focus on single societies, with limited attention to comparative analysis across different African cultures. This lack of cross-cultural perspective restricts a fuller understanding of how patriarchy is constructed, maintained, and adapted in diverse African contexts. The analysis sought to examine how cultural beliefs shape gender roles among the Ibibio/Annang, Fulani, and Zulu peoples; to explore the patriarchal narratives embedded within their traditions and practices; and to compare similarities and differences in gender constructions across the three societies.

Accordingly, the inquiry was guided by the following questions: How did cultural belief systems define gender roles in each society? What patriarchal narratives were embedded in customary traditions, rituals, and social practices? In what ways did these narratives converge or diverge across the selected cultural contexts? By adopting a comparative framework, the research contributed to African cultural and historical scholarship through a nuanced examination of patriarchy and gender roles across diverse regions. It enriched ongoing gender discourse by illuminating the ways religious traditions, ecological settings, and social norms shaped authority structures and social organization. A clearer understanding of these dynamics offered valuable insight for

policymakers, educators, and cultural practitioners seeking to engage issues of social transformation and gender equity in culturally grounded ways.

The scope of the analysis focused on the Ibibio/Annang of South-South Nigeria, Fulani pastoral communities in Sudan and the wider Sahel, and the Zulu of South Africa. Emphasis was placed on traditional belief systems, narratives, and ritual practices rather than contemporary political or economic developments. This focus enabled a concentrated exploration of the cultural and historical foundations of gender and patriarchy within distinct African contexts.

Literature Review and Conceptual Clarifications

Culture has long been understood in anthropology as the symbolic framework through which societies interpret existence and organize collective life. Rather than being limited to customs or rituals, culture encompasses systems of meaning that structure social relationships and power arrangements. Clifford Geertz (1973) famously defined culture as “Webs of significance that humans themselves have spun, within which social action becomes intelligible (p. 5).

This interpretive understanding situates culture not merely as behavior but as a system of symbols that gives meaning to authority, kinship, religion, and gender differentiation. Similarly, Mbiti (1969) emphasizes that African societies interpret life communally, grounding social organization in shared cosmologies and ancestral continuity. Thus, gender expectations must be read

within the broader symbolic universe that sustains them.

Culture is therefore not static but historically dynamic. As Hall (1997) argues, cultural systems continuously reproduce meaning through representation, discourse, and institutional practices. Within this process, gender roles become normalized and legitimized through repetition and ritualization.

Gender, unlike biological sex, is a socially constructed category embedded within cultural frameworks. Feminist anthropology has challenged earlier universalist assumptions about women's subordination by demonstrating that gender systems vary significantly across societies (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974). Oyěwùmí (1997), in her critique of Western gender epistemologies, argues that colonial scholarship often imposed binary gender hierarchies on African societies that were previously structured along seniority and lineage rather than sex differentiation. She writes that, "Gender was not an organizing principle in many African societies prior to colonialism; rather, social categories were based on seniority and relationality" (Oyěwùmí, 1997, p. 31). This insight compels scholars to approach African gender systems contextually rather than assuming universal patriarchy.

Connell (1995) further conceptualizes gender as a structure of social relations centred on the reproductive arena but extending into labour, power, and symbolic representation. Gender roles thus shape access to authority, property, ritual participation, and public voice. Gender roles refer to culturally

prescribed expectations assigned to individuals based on perceived sex. These expectations regulate labour division, moral conduct, and participation in decision-making structures. Ortner (1974) proposed that many societies symbolically associate women with nature and men with culture, a distinction that often legitimizes male precedence in political and ritual authority. However, later scholarship critiques such universal claims and emphasizes variability (Nzegwu, 2006).

In African contexts, gender roles are often embedded in kinship systems, marriage arrangements, and initiation rites. Amadiume (1987) ethnography of the Igbo reveals that women could assume socially recognized male roles under certain conditions, demonstrating the flexibility of gender categories. She notes: Gender was not rigidly tied to biological sex; social status and economic power could redefine one's position within the gendered hierarchy (Amadiume, 1987, p. 15). Thus, while structured differentiation exists, it is historically negotiated rather than biologically fixed. Patriarchy is commonly defined as a system of social organization in which men hold primary authority in political leadership, moral governance, and property inheritance. Walby (1990) conceptualizes patriarchy as: a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women (p. 20).

However, African feminist scholars caution against reducing African gender systems to monolithic oppression. Nnaemeka (2004) introduces the concept

of nego-feminism a feminism of negotiation emphasizing relational strategies rather than confrontation. Similarly, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) argues that African women navigate patriarchal systems through agency, spirituality, and communal networks rather than passive subordination.

Patriarchy in African contexts must therefore be understood as historically layered shaped by indigenous traditions, Islamic jurisprudence, Christian missionary influence, colonial administration, and postcolonial state formation (Mama, 1997). It is neither entirely imported nor entirely indigenous but emerges from intersecting forces.

Narratives function as cultural vehicles that transmit norms and legitimize authority. Through myths, folktales, praise poetry, and proverbs, societies encode moral expectations and gender hierarchies. Ricoeur (1984) argues that narrative structures shape collective memory and identity by organizing events into meaningful patterns. In many African societies, oral traditions articulate ideals of masculinity courage, lineage continuity, authority and femininity motherhood, nurturing, moral integrity. These stories are not merely entertainment but pedagogical tools that shape social consciousness. Vansina (1985) observes: Oral traditions are historical sources because they preserve and transmit the values and structures of society across generations (p. 12). Thus, patriarchal narratives endure not only through institutions but through storytelling itself.

Tradition refers to inherited patterns of belief and practice transmitted across

generations. It provides continuity and social cohesion while also legitimizing authority structures. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) caution, however, that traditions may be invented or reshaped to serve political ends. They argue: Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented (p. 1). This insight is crucial when analysing gender hierarchies. What is described as traditional may represent historical adaptation rather than timeless custom. In African religious systems, tradition encompasses ancestral reverence, ritual performance, and communal obligations (Mbiti, 1969). These frameworks embed gendered responsibilities within sacred cosmologies, thereby strengthening their legitimacy. Religion plays a central role in reinforcing or negotiating gender structures. Indigenous cosmologies often associate men with ritual authority and lineage continuity, while women are linked with fertility, mediation, and spiritual power. In Islamic and Christian contexts, scriptural interpretations have historically influenced inheritance laws, marriage norms, and leadership roles (Oduyoye, 2001). Yet religion also provides space for reinterpretation. African women theologians argue that sacred texts can be re-read in ways that affirm equality and partnership rather than hierarchy. As Oduyoye (2001) writes that the task is not to discard tradition but to interrogate it, to uncover within it the life-affirming resources for women and men alike (p. 45).

This dynamic tension between preservation and reinterpretation forms a critical component of contemporary gender discourse. The literature demonstrates that patriarchy in African

societies is neither uniform nor static. It is culturally mediated, religiously interpreted, and historically negotiated. While numerous single-society studies exist, comparative analyses across regions particularly linking West Africa, the Sahel, and Southern Africa remain limited. This study therefore contributed by: Integrating feminist anthropology and cultural hermeneutics, conducting cross-regional comparison, examining narratives, religion, and social organization together highlighting both continuity and change. This study drew from a blended theoretical framework comprising feminist anthropology, cultural hermeneutics, and structural functionalism.

Feminist anthropology critiqued traditional anthropology for its male-centric biases and emphasized understanding how gendered power structures are embedded in cultural practices. Pioneering works such as *Woman, Culture, and Society* challenged earlier interpretations that obscured women's roles and highlighted the need to centre women's experiences in ethnographic research. Cultural hermeneutics provides tools for interpreting cultural symbols, beliefs, and narratives from within their own context rather than imposing external judgments. Scholars such as Baloyi argue for the value of African hermeneutical frameworks to understand indigenous practices, criticizing external models that might misrepresent African gender relations and advocating for interpretive approaches rooted in local meanings. Structural functionalism contributes insight into how gender roles and

patriarchal norms maintain social cohesion and order within societies. Although typically critiqued by feminist scholars for overlooking power inequalities, when combined with feminist perspectives, it helps explain why certain roles and practices persist as mechanisms for social stability.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative and comparative research design. The qualitative approach is appropriate because the study seeks to understand meanings, beliefs, and narratives embedded in cultural practices rather than to measure variables statistically. A comparative framework allows for systematic examination of similarities and differences in gender roles and patriarchal narratives across the Ibibio/Annang of South-South Nigeria, the Fulani of Sudan, and the Zulu of South Africa. This design makes it possible to identify shared cultural patterns as well as context-specific expressions shaped by history, religion, and social organization. Primarily, the study relied on secondary data drawn from reputable academic and historical sources. These include documented oral traditions, myths, proverbs, rituals, and customary practices that convey gender expectations within the selected societies. In addition, historical texts and ethnographic studies produced by anthropologists, historians, and African scholars are consulted to provide contextual depth. Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and edited volumes form the core of the secondary academic literature used to support analysis and interpretation.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic and narrative analysis. Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring ideas, symbols, and patterns related to gender roles and patriarchy across the cultural materials. Narrative analysis was used to examine how stories, myths, and traditions construct and legitimize gender hierarchies. A comparative interpretive method was then applied to highlight convergences and divergences among the three societies, allowing for a nuanced understanding of both common and distinctive patriarchal narratives.

Ethical Considerations

The study was guided by strong ethical principles. Cultural sensitivity was maintained by interpreting beliefs and practices within their historical and social contexts, rather than through external or judgmental lenses. Care was taken to avoid stereotyping or cultural misrepresentation, recognizing the internal diversity and dynamic nature of African societies. The study sought to respect the dignity of all cultural groups while offering critical scholarly analysis. Understanding patriarchal narratives and gender roles requires careful attention to the cultural contexts in which they are produced and sustained. This section examined the social organization, belief systems, and gender expectations of the Ibibio/Annang of South-South Nigeria, the Fulani of Sudan, and the Zulu of South Africa, highlighting how culture, religion, and history shape gender relations in each society.

The Ibibio/Annang of South-South Nigeria

Social Organization

The Ibibio and Annang peoples are closely related ethnic groups located in South-South Nigeria. Their traditional society is largely patrilineal, with descent, inheritance, and family identity traced through the male line. Authority is typically vested in male elders, lineage heads, and community councils, who oversee land ownership, conflict resolution, and communal rituals. Age and gender jointly structure social hierarchy, with older men occupying dominant public positions.

Religious Beliefs

Traditional Ibibio/Annang religion centres on belief in a supreme deity, alongside a network of spirits, deities, and ancestral forces believed to influence daily life. Ancestors are highly revered and seen as custodians of moral order and social stability. Religious rituals and festivals reinforce communal values and legitimize authority structures, including gender roles. Although Christianity has become widespread, traditional beliefs continue to shape cultural practices and moral expectations.

Gender Expectations

Gender roles among the Ibibio/Annang are clearly defined. Men are traditionally associated with leadership, land ownership, and public decision-making, while women are linked to domestic responsibilities, child-rearing, and moral instruction within the family. Women also play significant economic roles through farming and trading, yet

their contributions are often framed as supportive rather than authoritative. Cultural narratives, proverbs, and customs reinforce male authority while emphasizing female obedience, respectability, and nurturing roles.

The Fulani of Sudan

Pastoral Life and Islamic Influence

The Fulani of Sudan are predominantly pastoralists whose social organization is closely tied to cattle herding and mobility. Livelihood patterns influence social relations, with wealth and status often measured in livestock ownership, traditionally controlled by men. Islam plays a central role in Fulani identity, shaping moral values, legal norms, and family structures. Religious teachings are deeply intertwined with customary practices, reinforcing social order and authority.

Gender Norms and Authority

Fulani gender relations are structured around clearly differentiated roles. Men are typically responsible for herding, long-distance movement, and public engagement, while women manage household affairs, dairy production, and child care. Islamic norms concerning modesty, marriage, and inheritance further reinforce male authority within the family. Female virtue is often associated with restraint, obedience, and honour, while male authority is seen as both religiously sanctioned and culturally appropriate. Despite these norms, Fulani women exercise informal influence within households and kinship networks, though such influence rarely translates into formal leadership.

The Zulu of South Africa

Historical Formation of Patriarchy

Zulu society developed strong centralized political structures, particularly during the rise of the Zulu kingdom in the nineteenth century. Military organization, kingship, and age-based regiments reinforced hierarchical authority and male dominance. Political power was historically concentrated in male leadership, with the king and male elders occupying the highest positions of authority.

Ancestral Beliefs and Gendered Roles

Zulu cosmology places great emphasis on ancestors (*amadlozi*), who are believed to guide and protect the living. Ancestral rituals are typically conducted by male heads of households, reinforcing patriarchal authority within both religious and domestic spheres. Gender roles are clearly distinguished: men are associated with leadership, warfare, and cattle ownership, while women are linked to domestic labour, agriculture, and reproduction. Marriage practices and bridewealth (*lobola*) further institutionalize gender hierarchy, symbolizing alliances between families while reinforcing male control over lineage continuity. Across the three societies, patriarchy is not a uniform system but a culturally embedded structure shaped by religion, livelihood, and historical experience. While male authority is consistently emphasized, the forms it takes and the spaces available for female agency vary significantly. These contextual differences provide a foundation for the comparative analysis of patriarchal

narratives and gender roles in subsequent sections.

Patriarchal Narratives and Gender Roles

Patriarchal narratives in African societies are sustained not only through formal structures but also through lived experiences expressed in rituals, proverbs, religious practices, and everyday social expectations. These narratives define masculinity and femininity in culturally specific ways while reinforcing gender hierarchies across generations.

Construction of Masculinity

Leadership, Authority, and Inheritance

Across the Ibibio/Annang, Fulani, and Zulu societies, masculinity is strongly linked to leadership, authority, and control over lineage resources. Men are culturally recognized as household heads, custodians of land or cattle, and intermediaries between the living and ancestral realms. Among the Ibibio/Annang, inheritance traditionally follows the male line, with family land and titles passing from father to son. This practice reinforces the idea that men are the rightful bearers of family continuity and authority. Similarly, in Zulu society, cattle ownership and lineage leadership are central to masculine identity, with men expected to represent the household in communal and ancestral matters.

For the Fulani of Sudan, masculinity is closely associated with cattle ownership and pastoral responsibility. A man's social standing is often measured by the size of his herd, symbolizing wealth, maturity, and leadership capacity. These

examples illustrate how economic control and lineage authority function as key markers of masculine identity across cultures.

Construction of Femininity

Domesticity, Motherhood, and Moral Expectations

Femininity in the selected societies is largely constructed around domestic responsibility, reproductive roles, and moral discipline. Women are culturally positioned as caregivers, nurturers, and transmitters of social values. Among the Ibibio/Annang, womanhood is strongly associated with motherhood and home management, and women gain social respect through successful child-rearing and marital stability. In Zulu culture, women are expected to maintain household harmony and uphold family honour, while marriage rituals and bridewealth practices symbolically reinforce their domestic role. Among the Fulani, ideals of female modesty and restraint are emphasized, influenced by both Islamic teachings and pastoral customs. Women manage dairy production and household affairs, yet their authority is exercised largely within private spaces. These examples show how femininity is idealized in ways that value care and sacrifice while limiting public authority.

Rituals, Proverbs, and Oral Traditions

Narratives that Reinforce Gender Hierarchy

Rituals and oral traditions play a crucial role in reinforcing gender hierarchies by presenting them as ancestral wisdom. Proverbs often portray men as decision-makers and women as supporters, thereby normalizing unequal power relations. For instance, Ibibio and

Annang proverbs frequently celebrate male bravery, endurance, and leadership within the context of cattle herding and communal protection, while ideal womanhood is often portrayed through modesty, loyalty, and dedication to family life. Such narratives function as moral and pedagogical frameworks, instructing younger generations on culturally valued expressions of masculinity and femininity within Fulani society.

Religion and Patriarchal Legitimization

Sacred Justifications of Gender Roles

Religion plays a significant role in legitimizing patriarchal narratives by framing gender roles as divinely or ancestrally ordained. In indigenous belief systems, male ancestors are often regarded as custodians of spiritual authority, reinforcing male dominance in ritual leadership.

Among the Zulu, ancestral rituals are typically led by male heads of households, symbolizing their spiritual authority over family and lineage. For the Fulani, Islamic teachings, interpreted through local cultural lenses, often reinforce male authority in marriage and inheritance, aligning religious doctrine with pre-existing patriarchal norms and social expectations. In Ibibio/Annang traditional religion, priesthood and ritual leadership have historically been male-dominated, although women may serve as priestesses in specific cults. These religious structures lend sacred legitimacy to gender hierarchies, making them appear natural, moral, and resistant to challenge.

Integrative Reflection

The illustrative examples above demonstrate that patriarchal narratives are not abstract ideologies but lived realities embedded in cultural practices, religious beliefs, and everyday social interactions. While these narratives share common themes of male authority and female domesticity, they are shaped by distinct historical experiences, livelihoods, and belief systems. Recognizing these nuances allows for a more balanced and culturally grounded understanding of patriarchy in African societies.

Comparative Analysis

This section compares patriarchal narratives and gender roles across the Ibibio/Annang of South-South Nigeria, the Fulani of Sudan, and the Zulu of South Africa. While these societies differ in history, religion, and livelihood, they share common patterns of male dominance shaped by distinct cultural contexts.

Shared Patriarchal Patterns

Authority Structures and Male Dominance

Across the three societies, patriarchy is expressed through male-centered authority structures that regulate leadership, inheritance, and social decision-making. Men are culturally positioned as household heads, lineage representatives, and custodians of communal and spiritual authority. These roles are reinforced through patrilineal inheritance systems among the Ibibio/Annang and Zulu, and through cattle-based wealth and lineage authority among the Fulani. In all three societies, patriarchal dominance is normalized through traditions and belief systems that portray male

leadership as both natural and essential for maintaining social order. Ritual and spiritual leadership is predominantly male, reinforcing the perception that authority, both social and sacred, reside primarily with men. While women make significant contributions to economic and social life, their authority is often informal and largely confined to domestic or private spaces.

Cultural Variations and Contextual Differences

Influence of Ecology, Religion, and History

Although shared patriarchal patterns are evident across the three societies, significant variations emerge as a result of ecological conditions, religious influences, and historical trajectories. Patriarchy in these contexts is not uniform but shaped by material environments and sociopolitical developments. The pastoral ecology of Fulani communities, particularly in Sudan and the wider Sahelian belt. Prioritizes mobility, livestock ownership, and cattle-centered subsistence. Within this setting, herding responsibilities and control over cattle, which symbolize wealth and lineage continuity, are predominantly associated with men. This ecological foundation contributes to gender expectations that emphasize male guardianship, economic authority, and public decision-making. By contrast, the agrarian contexts of the Ibibio/Annang and the Zulu, grounded in farming and relatively settled communities, structure gender roles around land tenure, lineage systems, and household-based production. While male authority remains prominent, the distribution of labour and social

organization differs according to the economic base.

Religious systems further introduce variation in the construction and legitimation of gender roles. Among Fulani communities, Islamic teachings which are interpreted through local cultural frameworks, intersect with customary norms to structure expectations concerning modesty, inheritance, marital authority, and family governance. In contrast, Ibibio/Annang and Zulu gender systems are historically rooted in indigenous cosmologies centred on ancestral veneration, ritual mediation, and lineage continuity. Although Christianity has significantly reshaped these societies, particularly in the colonial and postcolonial periods, indigenous religious frameworks continue to inform symbolic understandings of authority, fertility, and social obligation.

Historical developments also account for important differences. The centralized political formation of the Zulu kingdom, particularly during the nineteenth century, reinforced militarized models of masculinity and hierarchical governance structures. Leadership, warfare, and royal authority contributed to a public ideal of male strength and command. By contrast, Ibibio/Annang societies traditionally emphasized lineage-based governance and councils of elders, where authority was distributed within kinship networks rather than concentrated in a centralized monarchy. These distinctions demonstrate that patriarchal systems are historically constituted and institutionally mediated

rather than culturally identical across regions. Taken together, these ecological, religious, and historical factors underscore that patriarchy in African societies is not monolithic. Rather, it is contextually configured and socially reproduced within specific material and symbolic environments.

Continuity and Change

Impact of Modernity, Education, and Religion

Across all three societies, patriarchal narratives exhibit both continuity and adaptation in response to modern transformations. Processes such as formal education, urbanization, economic restructuring, and religious reform have contributed to shifts in gender expectations and opportunities. Increased access to literacy, wage labour, and political participation has expanded women's visibility within public spheres, thereby challenging certain traditional limitations. Religious traditions, while historically associated with reinforcing gender differentiation, have also become sites of reinterpretation and negotiation. Within both Christian and Islamic contexts, women movements, theological reinterpretations, and advocacy initiatives have sought to re-examine scriptural and customary assumptions concerning leadership, inheritance, and authority. These developments demonstrate that religious institutions are not static mechanisms of control but dynamic arenas in which gender norms are debated and reshaped.

Nevertheless, longstanding cultural narratives remain resilient. Inheritance customs, marriage rites, kinship

obligations, and expectations surrounding male guardianship continue to influence social relations, even within urban and formally educated settings. Rather than disappearing under modern pressures, patriarchal structures frequently adapt by integrating contemporary discourses such as legal reform or economic participation into existing frameworks of authority. This adaptive capacity highlights the durability of gendered systems while also revealing their susceptibility to gradual transformation. The coexistence of continuity and change illustrates the complexity of gender negotiation in African societies. Transformation is neither linear nor uniform; it unfolds unevenly across generations, regions, and institutional contexts.

Comparative Insight

The comparative analysis suggests that patriarchy in African societies is best understood as a flexible and historically embedded cultural system rather than a rigid or static structure. Although shared patterns of male precedence in leadership, inheritance, and ritual authority are observable, their specific manifestations vary according to ecological organization, religious traditions, and political history. Recognizing both convergences and divergences allows for a more nuanced interpretation of gender relations across the continent. Such an approach avoids homogenizing African societies while acknowledging structural similarities in authority patterns. Ultimately, patriarchy emerges as a dynamic system culturally encoded, institutionally reinforced, yet continually reshaped

through social change and historical experience.

Discussion

This section interpreted the findings of the study in relation to the theoretical frameworks adopted and situated them within broader cultural and historical contexts. The discussion highlights how patriarchal narratives and gender roles are not isolated phenomena but are deeply embedded in African belief systems, social organization, and historical experience.

Interpretation of Findings in Relation to Theory

The findings strongly support the relevance of a blended theoretical framework combining feminist anthropology, cultural hermeneutics, and structural functionalism. From a feminist anthropological perspective, the study revealed how gendered power relations are culturally produced and sustained through everyday practices, rituals, and narratives. Male authority is normalized not simply through coercion but through symbolic systems that present patriarchy as tradition, morality, and order. Cultural hermeneutics allows for an interpretive reading of these practices from within their cultural contexts. Rather than viewing patriarchy solely as oppression, the study shows how gender roles are understood by community members as meaningful, purposeful, and socially stabilizing. This approach helps explain why patriarchal narratives remain resilient even in the face of social change. Structural functionalism, though limited in addressing power inequalities, helps explain the persistence of gender roles by highlighting their perceived role in

maintaining social cohesion. When integrated with feminist critique, it becomes clear that while these structures promote stability, they also reproduce unequal access to power and authority.

Cultural Meanings and Historical Continuity

The study demonstrates that patriarchal narratives derive much of their strength from historical continuity and cultural meaning. Practices such as patrilineal inheritance, male ritual leadership, and gendered division of labour are not random but are rooted in long-standing belief systems that connect the present to ancestral authority. Among the Ibibio/Annang and Zulu, ancestral veneration reinforces the authority of male lineage heads, while among the Fulani, pastoral history and Islamic influence shape gendered expectations. These historical experiences have produced culturally specific expressions of patriarchy, yet they converge around shared ideals of male leadership and female domestic responsibility. Importantly, continuity does not imply rigidity. The findings revealed that patriarchal systems adapt to changing conditions, integrating elements of modernity, formal education, and global religions. This adaptability explains why traditional gender narratives persist even as social contexts evolve.

Implications for Understanding African Traditions

The study has important implications for how African traditions are understood and represented. First, it challenges simplistic or monolithic portrayals of African patriarchy by highlighting internal diversity and

contextual variation. Patriarchy emerges not as a single African system but as a range of culturally grounded practices shaped by ecology, religion, and history. Second, the findings emphasized the importance of interpreting African traditions through indigenous meanings and historical experiences, rather than imposing external analytical categories. Such an approach fosters a more respectful and accurate understanding of African cultures.

Finally, the study has contributed to ongoing debates on gender and social transformation in Africa. By showing how patriarchal narratives are culturally embedded yet dynamic, it opens space for dialogue on reform and reinterpretation that respects tradition while addressing gender inequality. Understanding these dynamics is essential for scholars, religious leaders, and policymakers seeking culturally informed approaches to social change. Overall, the discussion underscored that patriarchal narratives in African societies function as complex cultural systems that both sustain social order and reproduce gendered inequalities. Recognizing this dual role is key to advancing scholarship on African culture, history, and gender relations.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine cultural beliefs, gender roles, and patriarchal narratives through a comparative analysis of the Ibibio/Annang of South-South Nigeria, the Fulani of Sudan, and the Zulu of South Africa. By situating gender relations within their cultural, religious, and historical contexts, the study provides a nuanced understanding of patriarchy as a lived

and meaning-laden social system rather than a static or uniform structure. The findings indicate that patriarchy continues to function as a central organizing principle across the Ibibio/Annang, Fulani, and Zulu societies, albeit in contextually distinct forms. In each case, gender relations are structured around male-centered authority systems, patrilineal inheritance patterns, and differentiated divisions of labor. Masculinity is consistently associated with leadership, control over economic and symbolic resources, and ritual or ancestral authority. Femininity, by contrast, is predominantly constructed through domestic responsibility, motherhood, moral stewardship, and the maintenance of household cohesion. These gendered expectations are not merely social conventions but are embedded within broader cultural and cosmological frameworks.

At the same time, the study underscored significant contextual variations shaped by ecology, religion, and historical development. Among Fulani pastoral communities, mobility, livestock ownership, and Islamic jurisprudential influence contribute to specific configurations of marital authority, inheritance norms, and public leadership. In contrast, Ibibio/Annang and Zulu patriarchal systems are historically rooted in indigenous cosmologies centered on ancestral veneration and lineage continuity, further shaped by differing political formations, decentralized lineage governance in the former and centralized state structures in the latter. These variations demonstrate that while patriarchal structures share broad

similarities, their institutional expressions are historically and culturally mediated.

Across all three societies, patriarchal narratives are sustained through rituals, oral traditions, proverbs, and religious interpretations that frame gender hierarchy as culturally legitimate and morally sanctioned. Such symbolic systems contribute to the normalization of male precedence in both public and spiritual domains. Finally, the study revealed that patriarchy exhibits both continuity and adaptive transformation. Processes associated with modernity including formal education, urbanization, legal reform, and religious reinterpretation have expanded opportunities for women's participation in economic, religious, and civic spheres. Nevertheless, traditional gender narratives remain resilient, often adjusting to contemporary realities rather than disappearing altogether. Patriarchal systems therefore persist not as static remnants of the past but as evolving cultural formations that negotiate continuity and change within shifting social contexts.

This study made several significant contributions to scholarship. First, it enriches African cultural and historical studies by offering a multi-regional comparative analysis that moves beyond single-case approaches. Second, it contributes to gender and religious studies by demonstrating how belief systems and narratives serve as powerful tools for sustaining social order and gender hierarchies. The integration of feminist anthropology, cultural hermeneutics, and structural functionalism provided a balanced

analytical framework that respects indigenous meanings while critically examining power relations. By foregrounding cultural context and historical continuity, the study challenges reductionist interpretations of African patriarchy and promotes a more nuanced and respectful understanding of African traditions. In conclusion, patriarchy in African societies emerges as a complex and dynamic cultural system deeply rooted in history and belief, yet responsive to change. Understanding this complexity is essential for meaningful dialogue on gender, tradition, and social transformation in Africa.

Recommendations

Future research should expand comparative studies across additional African societies to further explore regional variations and shared patterns of patriarchy, including the voices and lived experiences of women and younger generations. Cultural custodians, religious leaders, and educators are encouraged to engage critically with traditional narratives, identifying spaces within indigenous and religious traditions that allow for more inclusive interpretations of gender roles. Policymakers and development practitioners should adopt culturally informed approaches to gender equality that respect tradition while promoting social justice, rather than imposing external models that may provoke resistance.

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Perceived Risk and Customer Online Buying Behavior of Fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State

Abstract

This research was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, this study addressed the various dimensions of perceived risk and its relationship on customer online buying behaviour of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. The researcher adopted survey research design and employed questionnaire as the instrument of inquiry. The study was conducted in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of online customers who patronizes fabrics shops in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The study utilized data collected from three hundred and eighty-three (383) customers. The random sampling technique was employed in view of its merits in easing access to test units. Simple linear regression was used to analyse the data from the field. The result revealed a positive significant relationship between the independents variables and the dependent variable. The researcher concluded that financial risk, psychological risk and security risk are the key variables that influence the respondents in their choice of online buying behaviour of fabrics in Akwa Ibom State. The researcher further recommended that fabrics vendors who wishes to enhance the online buying behaviour of their customer should endeavour to develop and implement strategies to address the financial, psychological, and security risks as well as educate their customers about safe online shopping practices and provide information on how risks are managed can enhance trust and reduce perceived risk.

Keywords: Perceived Risk, Customer Online Buying Behavior, Financial Risk, Psychological Risk, Security Risk and Fabrics.

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Introduction

Since technology was developed, the entire world has become a little community. The Internet has grown over time into a substantial global marketplace for the exchange of products and services (Adjaino, *et al.*, 2018). The development of internet has

provided opportunities for firms to use the internet as an impressive marketing tool. People not only meet and greet on a daily basis, but they also work from home and exchange goods and services with each other almost every day. The internet has drastically transformed the way we buy, and we now do it more

regularly than ever. Purchasing through the internet is said to be safer and quicker. People spend a good time buying things on the internet and these has increased tremendously, because people now feel safe and secure buying online, and they also think that their time savings will also change the way people communicate. Customers are using online buying more and more since it's flexible and allows them to shop whenever and wherever they choose (Goa, 2019). Businesses must have a thorough understanding of clients' preferred online buying techniques in order to effectively market and sell products online (Islam *et al*, 2019). Over the past 20 years, customer purchasing habits have seen a noticeable shift, with internet shopping becoming more and more common despite consumers' persistent preference for brick-and-mortar stores (Lo *et al*, 2016). Nowadays, most developing countries choose to shop online because of the growth and development of computer-aided technology (Turhan, 2022). Internet development has been a major factor in the growth of digital marketplaces.

Entrepreneurs, manufacturers, marketers, companies, and people can all directly sell goods and services to consumers through online buying portals by utilizing social media platforms, online marketplaces, and virtual storefronts. AOL, Google, Facebook, Yahoo, LinkedIn, blogs, Instagram, YouTube and Jumia are a few examples. Despite these benefits, customers still experience uncertainty when purchasing products online, primarily due to perceived risk.

Perceived risk refers to customer's perception of the uncertainty

and adverse consequences of engaging in a purchase activity. It also refers to a subjective expectations of a loss. (Lăzăroiu, *et al*, 2020). According to Siamagka and Balabanis (2018), perceived risk encompasses financial, social, and psychological risks, reflecting customer subjective expectations of loss or harm. In Nigeria's economy, in which Akwa Ibom State is included as while as Uyo Metropolis, customers need assurance that their orders will be fulfilled accurately before making a purchase. Studies on perceived risk in customer behavior suggest that the level of risk customers perceive in a purchase situation influences their attitude and behavior (Aboobucker, (2019). Unlike offline buying, where buyers and sellers interact physically, digital marketplaces operate virtually, heightening uncertainties for potential and actual customers. Customers worry about the security of personal and financial information, product quality, timely delivery, and the ease of returns and refunds. They also concern themselves with how online retailers collect, use, and share personal information. The types of risks customers perceive include financial, psychological, product, security, privacy, delivery, time, and social risks (Adjaino, *et al*, 2018). These risks impact customer patronage, and customers make purchases only when assured that such risks will be minimized. Companies and customers employ strategies to mitigate the uncertainty aspect of perceived risks, rather than avoiding potential adverse consequences altogether. Hence, this research tailor on perceived risk and customer's online buying behavior of

fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of Problem

The rise of online shopping has revolutionized the way customers purchase fabrics, offering unparalleled convenience, accessibility, and a vast array of choices. However, this shift has also introduced new challenges, particularly with regards to perceived risk of various kinds. Customers shopping for fabrics online face some degrees of doubt, which led to uncertainty, mistrust, and sometimes, abandonment of online transactions, as they are unable to physically inspect the product, assess its quality, and ensure that it meets their need.

Despite the potential benefits of online shopping, businesses struggle to attract and retain customers by introducing measures to enhance their trust, satisfaction in the online marketplace. Study indicated that few scholars have written on perceived risk and customer online buying behavior but little have been made in the context of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. These lapses spurred the researchers to see how the proxies of perceived risk (financial risk, psychological risk and security risk) Influence customer online buying behavior in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives were;

- i. To examine the relationship between financial risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. To determine the relationship between psychological risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. To examine the relationship between security risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the study, the research poised the questions:

- i. What is the relationship between financial risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. What is the relationship between psychological risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. What is the relationship between security risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State?

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between financial risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between psychological risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship Security risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Literature Review

The Concept of Perceived Risk

Perceived risk is a consumer's belief in the negative uncertainty of online shopping (Wu *et al.*, 2020). Sharma and Kurien (2017) defined perceived risk as an acceptable risk for uncertainty in consuming a product. This may stem from people's mistrust of internet retailers. Perceived risk is a measurement of unanticipated dissatisfaction and disappointment with purchase decisions based on the purchase target. This mistrust could manifest as a fear of credit card theft, unwillingness to provide personal information, delayed availability of product offers, lacking in-person communication, not having documentation of online transactions (such as a receipt), and being afraid of defective goods delivery to homes (Hoffman *et al.*, 2018). Online buying is associated with a number of perceived risk factors.

Companies and consumers employ various strategies to mitigate the uncertainty aspect of perceived risks, rather than avoiding potential adverse consequences altogether. Research has identified several strategies that consumers use to reduce perceived risk, including; relying on established brand reputation and image, endorsements, brand loyalty, private testing, store image, free samples, special offers, money-back guarantees.

Perceived Risk Factors

i. Financial Risk: Users of credit cards may be concerned about internet security and safety while sharing personal information online. Consequently, even when consumers place an order online, the majority of them would rather not use credit cards and would rather use other payment options like cash on delivery, online or offline banking transfers, or third-party protected payment systems like PayPal. According to earlier studies (Abrar, 2017), one of the most common concerns while making purchases online is the fear of credit card fraud. When deciding whether or not to make an online purchase, financial risk is a major consideration for shoppers. This is because financial dangers become more serious, creating unfavorable perceptions and having an impact on customer's behavior (Haider, 2016).

ii. Psychological Risk: The threat of health crisis, scarcity of products, fear of unknown, negative emotions and uncertainty leads to psychological risk (Wu *et al.*, 2020). According to Aboobucker (2019), the biggest risk that might occur when customers shop online is the psychological risk. This is due to the fact that psychological risk and confidence and self-esteem are related. People who are insecure and think that their ordered goods will not be accepted by their peers are viewed as having a high psychological risk (Han and Kim, 2017).

ii. Security Risk: Security risk is the likelihood of having confidential information divulged because of online transactions. Despite the rise in online customers this risk however stays as the

highest feared risk while buying online, customers concerned with the risk of their credit card and personal information being shared with third parties after purchasing online. Furthermore, Security risk is the risk that payment information, and private details might be shared, and that errors might ensue when purchasing the product. Such risks ensue in both online and offline shopping (Cunningham, 2015).

Customer Online Buying Behavior

The consumer's purchase behavior is one of the stages in the consumer decision making process. The consumer decision-making process consists of five stages which are: need recognition, information search, evaluations of alternatives, purchase behavior/decision and post-purchase behavior. After alternatives have been evaluated, purchase behavior become the next stage in the consumer decision-making process. This is mainly influenced by the previous stages of the consumer decision-making process (Etuk & Udonde, 2024). Consumer buying behavior refers to the processes and factors that influence individuals' decision and actions of a consumer when purchasing products (Sampson, *et al* 2025).

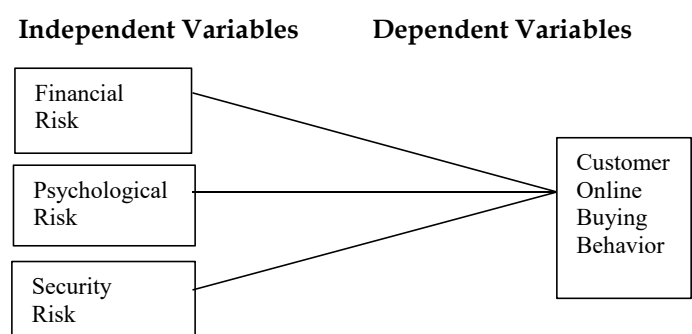
Online buying behavior refers to the process of purchasing products or services via the Internet (Adjaino, *et al*, 2018). The dynamic interaction of emotions, cognition, behavior, and environmental factors plays a crucial role in how individuals exchange various aspects of their lives (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). Customer buying behavior encompasses the thoughts,

emotions, decisions, and actions individuals engage in before and during the purchase of products, services, or ideas (Singh, 2020).

The Fabric Industry

Fabric is a crucial aspect of customer life, with fashion trends and social status heavily influencing their buying decisions (Cunningham, 2015). The fabric industry is divided into four key sectors: leather goods, clothing, footwear, and textiles, with clothing leading in revenue generation, followed by footwear, leather goods, and textiles. Purchasing fabric is a basic necessity that shapes customer behavior, with some individuals frequently purchasing luxury items, while others are more budget-conscious (Cunningham, 2015). Fabric is often viewed as a high-risk purchase by consumers, who prefer to physically inspect and try on items to assess color, size, and quality. Nonetheless, innovative consumers are more willing to take risks by shopping for fabric online.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model for Perceived Risk on Customer's Online Buying Behavior



Source: Researcher Construct (2025).

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Planned Behavior (Icek Ajzen, 1991)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991 as an attempt to predict human behavior. He asserted that an individual's behavior is not spontaneous but rather is influenced and determined by various factors, such as intention, social norm and perceived control over certain phenomena. According to Indiani and Fahik (2020), TPB is a useful theory for predicting how people will behave in a variety of situations. With three crucial components: perceived behavioral control (PBC), attitude, and subjective norms. Subjective norms are an individual's perception of the social pressure they perceive to be in place, reflecting the influence of others on their decision-making; attitude is an individual's assessment of their likes or dislikes towards performing a particular behavior; and PBC is an individual's assessment of the difficulty of performing a particular behavior, reflecting their awareness of the behavior that either facilitates or impedes its performance. In a variety of human behavior research scenarios, the TPB has received strong support. TPB is a fundamental theory used to analyze marketing initiatives, particularly the online buying habits of consumers. As an illustration, D'Souza (2022) uses TPB to describe customer behavior about game meat purchases and intentions to make purchases.

The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989)

This model, developed by Davis in 1989 was designed to predict information technology acceptance and usage, with a particular focus on the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of technology. The model is primarily concerned with how an individual perceives the benefits of using a particular technology and how it can simplify their tasks. However, it does not account for the social psychological factors that influence customer perceptions. While the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) addresses key factors like perceived user resources and perceived behavioural control, it overlooks the broader context of social influences

TAM, as an information systems theory, outlines various factors that influence a user's decision to adopt and use technology. It delves into when and how users will engage with a particular technology, focusing on technology acceptance. Factors such as perceived risk and enjoyment are also associated with technology acceptance. The primary goal of TAM is to explain how users come to accept a specific technology.

Empirical Framework

Udonde and Eke (2023) examined the interplay of consumer perception on consumer patronage of made in Nigeria fabric in Akwa Ibom State. The main objective of the study was to assess the effect of consumer perception on consumer patronage of made in Nigeria fabric in Akwa Ibom State. The researcher adopted survey research design and employed questionnaire as

the instrument of inquiry. The study was conducted in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised customers who patronizes fabrics shops in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The study utilized data collected from three hundred and fifty-four (354) customers. The accidental sampling technique was employed in view of its merits in easing access to test units. Simple linear regression was used to analyze the data from the field. The result revealed a positive significant relationship between the independents variables and the dependent variable. The researcher concluded that perceived risk and perceived quality are the key variables that influence the respondents in the choice of fabrics Akwa Ibom State. The researcher further recommended that fabrics vendors wishing to enhance their customer patronage should pay attention to the dimensions of consumer perception.

Adjaino, *et al* (2018) examined perceived risk and online purchase behavior amongst undergraduates. A total of 400 respondents were purposively selected from among University of Benin students to represent the population. Of the 400 questionnaires that were administered, 396 were retrieved representing a 99% response rate. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages and mean) and regression technique. The result shows that although product risk was found to be the most crucial of all the perceived risks, only delivery risk was found to significantly affect online purchase behavior amongst undergraduates.

Etuk and Udonde (2022) studied the effect of country of origin on

consumer purchase behavior of imported fashion wears among the Nigerian elites. The independent variables for the study which were Technology Sophistication, Brand Effects and Country Image while the dependent variable was Consumer Purchase Behavior. The population was the consumers of imported fashion wears in Uyo, the capital of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria belonging to the social class. Using Top-man formula, a sample size of 358 employees was considered for the study. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The hypotheses stated were tested using simple linear regression model at a 5% level of significance. From the data analysis, the major findings revealed that country of origin had a significant effect on consumer purchase behavior of imported fashion wears in Uyo. From the findings, In line with this, it was recommended that international companies should aim at influencing their consumer' purchase behavior by making their country-of-origin an important component of international marketing strategy.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a survey research design. The design involved the researcher collecting valuable information from a representative sample.

Area of the Study

Uyo Metropolis, the capital city of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, is a thriving economic centre with a rich cultural heritage.

Population of the Study

The population of this study was made up of users of fabrics within Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. These were persons who carry out their transaction of fabrics online. The population of the study was deemed to be infinite due to the fact that the exact number of fabrics users and operators cannot be determined by the researcher and there was currently no known record of these persons who actually do online shopping.

Sample Size

Given the nature of the population, the Topman formula was used to determine the sample size for the study. It is presented below:

$$n = z^2pq / e^2$$

$$p = 0.5$$

$$q = 0.5$$

$$e = 5\%$$

Where;

n: Number of sample size to be determined.

z: 1.96% standard deviation for the 95% level of confidence.

p: Percentage of positive response.

q: The complementary probability to P ($q = 1 - p$). In this case, $q = 1 - 0.5 = 0.5$.

e: The desired margin of error as a decimal. Let us assume a margin of error of 0.05 (5%)

Mathematically,

$$n = z^2pq / e^2$$

$$n = [(1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5) / (0.05)^2]$$

$$n = [(3.8416 \times 0.25) / 0.0025]$$

$$n = 0.9604 / 0.0025$$

$$n = 384.16$$

$$n = 384$$

Sampling Techniques

Random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondent. This method allowed the researcher to reach out to respondents. A total of 384 operators were selected using simple random techniques for the study.

Source of the Data

Data was obtained from primary sources, with the use of questionnaire. The use of the questionnaire was to enable the researchers obtain a firsthand information for the study.

Method of Data Collection

The data collection tool was copies of questionnaire. This was designed on the basis of Likert 5 Point Scale, which was filled and completed by 384 respondents. It comprised information relevant to the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collated were analyzed using simple linear regression to determine the degree of relationship between perceived risks and customer online buying behavior.

Decision Rule

The decision rule that was used in the study is stated thus; Reject the null hypotheses if the probability value (p-value) is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). Alternatively, accept the null hypotheses if the probability value (p-value) is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). This can be started equationally as:

$$\text{Accept } H_0 \text{ if } P_c < P_t$$

$$\text{Reject } H_0 \text{ if } P_c > P_t$$

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Data Presentation

A total of 384 copies of questionnaire were distributed to customers who buys fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State and 383 copies were retrieved and found usable, giving a response rate of 98%. The responses were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 20.0).

Test of Hypotheses

Test of Hypothesis One

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between financial risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4.1: Result of Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Relationship Between Financial Risk and Customer Online Buying Behavior of Fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State (n = 383)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
1 Regression	5652.299	1	5652.29	23.09	.000 ^b
Residual	935.011	38	2.448		
Total	6587.310	39			

a. Dependent Variable: customer online buying behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), financial risk

Source: Researcher's Data Analysis (2025)

The result in Table 4.1 shows that the computed F-value as 2309.225 with 1 and 382 degrees of freedom as well as the p-value of .000. Since the proportionate value (p-value) is less than the alpha value ($\alpha = .05$), that is ($p < .05$), the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between financial risk and customers online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State is rejected, while the alternative is retained. It can therefore be concluded that there is a significant relationship between financial risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis Two

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between psychological risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4.2: Result of Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Psychological Risk and Customer Online Buying Behavior of Fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State (n = 383)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
1 Regression	5551.221	1	5551.22	2046.1	.000 ^b
Residual	1036.089	38	2.712		
Total	6587.310	39			

- a. Dependent Variable: customer online buying behavior
 b. Predictors: (Constant), psychological risk

Source: Researcher's Data Analysis (2025).

The result in Table 4.2 shows that the computed F-value as 2046.703 with 1 and 382 degrees of freedom as well as the p-value of .000. Since the proportionate value (p-value) is less than the alpha value ($\alpha = .05$), that is ($p < .05$), the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between psychological risk and customers online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State is rejected, while the alternative is retained. It can therefore be concluded that there is a significant relationship between psychological risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis Three

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship security risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4.3: Result of Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Security Risk and Customer Online Buying Behavior of Fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State (n = 383)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value	A
1 Regression	5579.718	1	5579.718	2115.393	.000 ^b	.05
Residual	1007.592	382	2.638			
Total	6587.310	383				

- a. Dependent Variable: customer online buying behavior

- b. Predictors: (Constant), security risk

Source: Researcher's Data Analysis (2025).

The result in Table 4.3 shows that the computed F-value 2115.393 with 1 and 382 degrees of freedom as well as the p-value of .000. Since the proportionate value (p-value) is less than the alpha value ($\alpha = .05$), that is ($p < .05$), the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between security risk and customers online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State is rejected, while the alternative is retained. It can therefore be concluded that there is a significant relationship between security risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of research question one revealed that the relationship between financial risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State is 85.8 percent. Hypothesis one also indicate that there is a significant relationship between financial risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. This necessitates the rejection of the null hypothesis and the retention of the alternate hypothesis. The finding is supported by Adnan (2014) who reported that the fear of losing money has a negative impact on online purchasing, while Aboobucker (2019) found that the financial risk is the most

significant risk that might develop when consumers shop online.

The finding of research question two revealed that the relationship between the relationship between psychological risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State is 84.3 percent. Hypothesis two also indicated that there is a significant relationship between psychological risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. This necessitates the rejection of the null hypothesis and the retention of the alternate hypothesis. The findings of this study agreed with Wu *et al.*, (2020) who reported that the threat of health crisis, scarcity of products, fear of unknown, negative emotions and uncertainty leads to psychological risk. A person's ability to accept or embrace the new shopping medium is linked to psychological risk.

The finding of research question three revealed that the relationship between the relationship between security risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State is 84.7 percent. Hypothesis three also revealed that there is a significant relationship between security risk and customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. The finding is supported by Han and Kim (2017) who observed that there is no denying that certain online retailers might not adhere to security regulations (such encryption or authentication), which could lead to customers losing faith in the ability of online retailers to safeguard their personal data. Consequently, Arshad *et al.* (2015) found

that online purchase behavior is more active the lower the security risk. This is so that users will not have to worry about anything thanks to a very secure platform (Folarin and Ogundare, 2016).

Conclusion

The study effectively demonstrated that financial risk, psychological risk, and security risk significantly impacted customer online buying behavior of fabrics in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. The use of simple linear regression for data analysis confirmed that these risks influenced purchasing decisions and behaviors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

- i. Develop Risk Mitigation Strategies: Online fabric retailers should develop and implement strategies to address financial, psychological, and security risks. This may include better website security, comprehensive product descriptions, and flexible return policies.
- ii. Improve Customer Education: Educating customers about safe online shopping practices and providing information on how risks are managed can enhance trust and reduce perceived risk.
- iii. Leverage Customer Feedback: Retailers should actively seek and utilize customer feedback to continuously improve risk management strategies and address emerging concerns.

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Regional Socio-Economic Cooperation and Leadership Deficit in Southeast Nigeria

Abstract

The Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria, comprising five states with a population exceeding twenty million, possesses significant economic, natural, and human resources that could drive regional prosperity. Despite this potential, the region faces severe challenges including persistent insecurity, leadership deficit, and weak inter-state cooperation that have paralyzed economic activities and undermined governance. As at 2025, the Southeast has lost an estimated ₦7.6 trillion since 2021 due to enforced sit-at-home orders, violence, and security operations, while the broader Nigerian economy continues to grapple with inflation exceeding 20 percent and rising poverty rates estimated at 46 percent. This paper examined the contemporary state of socio-economic cooperation and leadership challenges in Southeast Nigeria, analyzing how governance failures have impacted regional development. Using the Developmental State theory as an analytical framework and employing explorative research design with secondary data analysis, the study revealed that disunity among political leadership, escalating insecurity involving multiple armed groups, and the absence of effective regional cooperation mechanisms remain the primary barriers to development. The paper recommended the emergence of unified regional leadership, implementation of comprehensive security reforms including state police, enhanced regional economic cooperation frameworks, and governance policies oriented toward sustainable development to unlock the region's immense potential.

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1. Introduction

Leadership remains the cornerstone of societal transformation and progress, serving as the engine that drives political stability, economic advancement, and social cohesion. The

capacity to lead and influence populations toward the actualization of collective goals distinguishes thriving societies from those mired in underdevelopment. In the Nigerian context, the leadership question has been particularly acute, with the

nation's history marked by frequent governmental changes, institutional weakness, and poor governance that have shaped how citizens perceive politics and nation-building.

Since independence in 1960 to the restoration of democracy in 1999, Nigeria had seven military and three civilian heads of government. Coups and changes in government have caused the development of this instability trend which has made it impossible to breed democratic values and caused institutional vulnerability and institutionalized corruption (Ofoche, 2012). The development strategies that have ensued have been ineffective as they are more concerned with national needs instead of basic needs, which has created the inevitable inequality in development, inequality in terms of regions, and ethno-centric politics (Raheem, *et al.*, 2024).

By 2025, the economic trend of Nigeria is promising as well as threatening. After radical reforms that started in 2023, such as the abolition of fuel subsidies and liberalization of the foreign exchange market, there are already indications of economic stabilization, and GDP growth is estimated at 3.2-3.4 percent. Nevertheless, the inflation is still high and persistent (more than 20 percent) and the food inflation is over 40 percent, pushing the poverty level at 46 percent (IMF, 2025; World Bank, 2025). Although the reforms are required to achieve macroeconomic stability, this has led to the escalation of the cost-of-living crisis, and about 31 million Nigerians are food insecure.

Southeast geopolitical zone comprising of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States with eighty-five Local Governments Areas is illustrative of these national predicaments and has regional-specific impediments. The area, which has a population of more than twenty million people living in various commercial towns and cities, has been facing a very sharp decline in the living standards. Majority of the basic goods have been hiked out of the financial capability of the low-income earners with an abhorring security crisis crippling trade and living standards.

Since August 2021, forced sit-at-home orders by the pro-Biafran separatist groups, mostly the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its military arm, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), led to schools, markets and businesses shutting on Monday across big cities such as Onitsha, Aba, and Enugu. These disruptions have at least cost the Southeast ₦7.6 trillion of economic activity since 2021 according to recent estimates (Madueke, 2025). This economic bleed happens in the context of rampant violence with Amnesty International recording over 1,844 killings between January 2021 and December 2024 involving armed gunmen, criminal gangs, separatist groups, state-backed paramilitaries and security forces (Amnesty International, 2025).

According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), Nigeria ranks the fifth most dangerous country in the world regarding the extremity of the conflict as of December 2024 (NOI Polls, 2024;

ACLED, 2024). In May 2025, Nigeria alone documented 365 violent cases, more than any other African national that month with 635 killed and 182 abducted cases (Madueke, 2025).

Nonetheless, the Southeast has huge economic potential. The region is blessed with a variety of economic, natural and human resources, industrial zones, government and privately owned enterprises that form significant sources of revenue and rich entrepreneurial culture. Presence of such resources should have constituted good bases of economic collaboration among the states. Regrettably, the fact that there are few leaders with the capacity, compassion and ability to effect change has been the cog in the eye of development in the region.

This paper examines how leadership deficit has impacted socio-economic cooperation in Southeast Nigeria, with particular attention to contemporary realities as at 2025. Methodologically, the research employs an explorative design with data generated from secondary sources, including recent reports from international organizations, human rights bodies, economic analyses, and scholarly publications. The descriptive analytical style guides our assessment, anchored in the Developmental State theory framework.

2. Conceptual and Review of Related Literature

2.1 Economic Cooperation

Economic cooperation is one of the essential elements of international and regional integration that is focused on

the creation of the conditions that will help to promote trade and financial integration. In contrast to the conventional development assistance, economic cooperation focuses on the mutual benefits, joint expenses and the strategic role of both the state and business in the process of achieving economic objectives (O'Farrill, Fierro, Moraga, Perez & Vallejos, 1999).

The concept has developed tremendously following the issues of globalization and commercial integration. States have always been exchange partners and interdependent, economically speaking, on the basis of trade and investment. Modern economic cooperation is however not restricted to commercial exchanges but rather harmonization of regulations, standards in technical and even policies that will produce a conducive equilibrium in trade and competition (O'Farrill, *et al.*, 1999).

The main characteristics of economic cooperation are: economic gains connected with trade and capital flows; the orientation on mutually advantageous cooperation of cooperating actors; active involvement of the private sector because direct connection with the integration of the economy is conducted; the changing government role as facilitator and spokesman and not as an independent implementer; the orientation on the actions that should be aimed at achieving indirect short and medium-term economic objectives with the help of conditions that contribute to enhancing the competitiveness (O'Farrill, *et al.*, 1999).

The concept of regional economic cooperation has become specifically popular in Africa. Despite the recent obstacles such as the pullout of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali in 2024-2025, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is still working towards economic integration, freedom of movement of people, and stability (ECOWAS, 2025). In the same vein, the fact that Nigeria is part of the BRICS partnership mechanism as of 2024 is an indication of increased South-South cooperation and other avenues through which the country can pursue economic development (Valori, 2025).

The conceptual base of regional cooperation has focused on the fact that trade, investment, transfer of technology, infrastructure development, and ICT cooperation have a direct positive impact on growth and development. Financial collaboration helps towards macroeconomic stability by lessening the effect of the unstable markets. Research, training, and academic exchange cooperation builds human resource capacity whose effects are positive in terms of infrastructure, ICT and energy development. Socio-economic cooperation, particularly, health and education enhance development, whereas political and security cooperation leads to institutional stability (ESCAP, 2018).

2.2 Leadership and Governance

Leadership is the capacity to lead, influence as well as motivate people or groups towards the realisation of shared goals and objectives. Governance In the governance context, leadership entails the ability to design and put policies in

place, which meet the societal needs, enhance justice, guarantee security, and economic prosperity. Leadership needs the ability to see the vision, have integrity, competence, and the willingness to serve the greater good (Etebom, Odekunle, Aminu & Olatunji, 2020).

The issue of leadership has been contentious in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria. The process of recruiting political leaders in the country has also been criticized as focusing on wealth, political affiliations and ethnic factors at the expense of competency and capacity (Oklobia & Maikasuwa, 2022). Such a faulty recruitment process has resulted in leaders that are not always visionary, committed and capable of transformative governance.

These are some of the issues that the 2022 Electoral Act was intended to cover through electoral reforms targeted at increasing transparency and credibility in the electoral process (Oklobia & Maikasuwa, 2022). Nonetheless, the emergence of quality leadership in any of the levels of government is still being hampered by implementation issues and the deep rooted political interests.

2.3 Leadership Deficit

Leadership deficit is the lack or insufficiency of strong leadership in terms of vision, competence, integrity and commitment to the wellbeing of the people. It is in many forms such as corruption, inconsistency in policies, lack of accountability, ethnic favoritism, and failure to deal with critical developmental issues (Lawal, Imokhuede & Johnson, 2012).

Leadership deficit in the case of southeast of Nigeria goes through lack of unified regional stand on key matters, failure to adequately tackle the security issues, failure to coordinate economic policies, poor mechanisms of inter-state cooperation and the prioritization of the partisan politics over the regional development (Elechi, Etea & Mbanusi, 2023).

3. Theoretical Framework: Developmental State Theory

Our discourse in this paper is anchored on the 'Developmental State' theory propounded by Johnson (1982) and popularised by Peter Evans (1995), Linda Weiss (2000) and Adrian Leftwich (1998). This theory argued that for any country to become industrialization, the State must not only be involve but must instigate and propel this venture because in most cases, the process of industrialisation has always been the driving force of the developmental objectives of the country. The theory of the developmental state has four essential propositions such as; development-oriented political leadership; an autonomous and effective bureaucracy; a production-oriented private sector, and performance-oriented governance. A developmental state to exist when the state possesses the vision, leadership and capacity to bring about a positive transformation of society within a condensed period of time. The developmental state was associated with rapid processes of industrialisation and/or the adoption of new technologies – that is, moving into higher value-added activities relative to

the starting point. Typically, there was a shift from subsistence agriculture to more commercial, export-oriented farming, or to textile processing, or to tourism, or a mixture of these.

In applying this theory to our study, we observed that the Nigeria state has it as its cardinal duty to not only provides the enabling environment for development, but to also be the instigator of the development trajectory, especially when it has to do with regional economic cooperation, integration and development. Therefore the government of the South-eastern states must not only make policies and plans for development, they must also be the instigator, implementer and executioner of the policies and plans.

4. Challenges of Regional Economic Cooperation in Southeast Nigeria

The Southeast geopolitical region experiences complex challenges, which have had a devastating effect on the economic cooperation and growth in the region. The challenges that are growing more and more difficult in the recent years can be divided into security dimension, economic dimension, infrastructural dimension, political dimension and institutional dimension.

4.1 Security Crisis and Insurgency

Since 2015, the security situation in Southeast Nigeria has become deplorable, and the crisis is at an unprecedented level in 2024-2025. It is a complex conflict environment with humanitarian and economic catastrophic effects that are caused by numerous actors such as IPOB/ESN, unknown gunmen, criminal gangs,

cultists, state-supported paramilitants such as Ebube Agu, and security forces (Amnesty International, 2025; ImpACT International, 2025).

According to Amnesty International records, at least 1,844 individuals were killed during this time, January 2021 to December 2024 in the Southeast region, however, it is estimated that the number is probably much higher since many have died without being reported or even considered part of the missing population (Amnesty International, 2025). The violence victims are varied and include farmers, students, commuters, traditional rulers, political figures, security personnel and the common civilians.

The sit-at-home enforcement, which started on August 9, 2021 has produced disastrous economic effects. Businesses are closed, schools are closed, transport is stopped and economic activities in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States are stalled every Monday, or even other days. Individuals are flogged or murdered in case they disobey these commands and this has led to an atmosphere of fear that has paralyzed the area. Since 2021, cumulative economic loss has been 7.6 trillion or billions of dollars of potential economic activity (Madueke, 2025).

There are various aspects to the security crisis. To begin with, the insurgency of IPOB/ESN, which began to claim the independence of Biafran, as well as protests against apparent marginalization of the Igbo, has developed into armed conflict with the security forces in Nigeria. Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the IPOB, who has been in

detention since 2021, even after a Court of Appeal ruling in October 2022 said he should be released, has become a key point of contention. His persistence in remaining in detention, despite the court orders, is also a source of violence and a negation of the rule of law, according to many stakeholders (Nwanguma, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2025).

Second, the war has left room to criminal aspects. The Truth, Justice and Peace Commission, which was instituted by Anambra State Government, established that the main sources of insecurity are cultism, political thuggery and organized crimes, which politicians finance or protect, rather than simplistic beliefs that all violence is perpetrated by IPOB (Nwanguma, 2025). The discovery stresses that the issue of security is intricate and requires a delicate approach.

Third, in their attempts to restore the order, the security force activities have been associated with human rights violations such as killing people illegally, making arbitrary arrests, tortures, and forced disappearances among other, which complicates the relationship between the citizens and the state (Amnesty International, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2025).

The lack of security has had far-reaching impacts that are not directly violent. There are a lot of individuals who have not visited their hometowns in recent years because of their fear of being attacked or kidnapped. The traditional ceremonies such as marriages and burials that are usually held in the

ancestral houses would now be held outside the southeast. It disrupts the educational activities and students can no longer attend school on a regular basis. The result has been flight of investment in the region, loss of already existing businesses, and an increase in unemployment (Nwagbo & Ofoke, 2025).

4.2 Economic Challenges

The economic issues of the Southeast are closely interconnected as well as not restricted to matters of security. Although the region has a tradition of entrepreneurship and business, there are a number of economic factors limiting the development and regional integration. The level of poverty and unemployment is still high, which is complemented by national economic policies as well as the insecurity in the region. Since the poverty rate in Nigeria is 46 percent, and 31 million people are impacted by food insecurity in the country, the situation in the Southeast is especially severe because it is accompanied by the economic losses associated with the conflict (IMF, 2025).

Purchasing power has been lost drastically due to inflation. Inflation is abnormal, more than 20 percent in the country, and the food inflation is over 40 percent, which implies that essential goods are beyond affordability. These national trends are exacerbated by the disruption of supply chains in the Southeast because of insecurity, sit-at-home, and low agricultural productivity, as farmers are not able to access their farmlands (World Bank, 2025).

Low industrial production and business shutdowns are experienced in the region. The industries, which were earlier flourishing in cities such as Aba, Onitsha and Nnewi, have been facing insecurity, extortion, multi taxation, inadequate infrastructure and poor business environment. The well known Ariaria International Market in Aba and Main Market in Onitsha which were once vibrant business hubs have been hit hard by the downturn of activity.

The finance continues to be an issue. The borrowing cost is now prohibitively high given the high interest rate which the Central Bank of Nigeria has been keeping to curb inflation and the small and medium enterprises which constitute the main part of the Southeast economy makes it prohibitive to borrow (CBN, 2024). The drastic depreciation of the naira by 95.6 percent in 2023 after the exchange rate was floated has further reduced the cost of conducting business that depends on imported raw materials and equipment as well as limiting productive activities (African Development Bank, 2024). The state level generation of revenues, though enhanced by the increment in federal allocation in light of the withdrawal of subsidy and devaluation of the naira, is insufficient to cover the colossal infrastructure and security projects. The state government has conflicting needs that demand scarce resources limiting their ability to facilitate developmental efforts.

4.3 Infrastructure Deficit

Poor infrastructure is a severe limitation of the economic collaboration and growth in the region. The state of road

infrastructure, specifically the interstate highways and rural road is in an appalling state. Although the federal government in December 2024 declared intentions to complete the Second Niger Bridge and other roads in the Southeast, the process has been slow and there still exist insufficient road network in general (Federal Ministry of Works, 2024). Bad roads add to the transportation expenses, market accessibility, and limit inter-state trade.

Electricity supply is still unstable even though the nation is doing its level best to enhance the state of electricity production and distribution. The Southeast is a place that experiences frequent blackouts which inhibit the industrial production, augment the costs of running a business by the reliance on costly generators that use diesel and limits economic activity. The Dangote Refinery commencement of operation in 2024 which is predicted to enhance availability of fuel has failed to be converted to stable power supply in the region (World Bank, 2025). Water and sanitation infrastructure is inadequate, with many communities lacking access to clean water and proper sewage systems. This deficit affects public health, quality of life, and the investment climate. Digital infrastructure, while improving nationally through initiatives like the National Broadband Plan (2020-2025) aiming for 70 percent penetration and projects like Google's Equiano Subsea Cable, remains uneven across the Southeast (Infrastructure Projects Database, 2025). Rural areas particularly lack connectivity, constraining participation in the digital economy.

4.4 Political and Institutional Challenges

Political fragmentation and institutional weakness constitute major obstacles to regional cooperation in the Southeast. Unlike other geopolitical zones that have developed strong regional cooperation frameworks, the Southeast lacks effective mechanisms for coordinated action. Political disunity among Southeast governors and leaders undermines collective bargaining and regional advocacy. While other zones present united fronts on issues affecting their regions, Southeast leaders often pursue individual state interests or align with different national political camps, weakening the region's voice and influence (Elechi, Etea & Mbanusi, 2023).

The absence of a functional regional economic cooperation body has left coordination to ad hoc arrangements. While the South East Nigeria Economic Commission (SENEC) was established to promote regional economic integration, it has been largely ineffective due to inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, and lack of political commitment (Nwogbaga, 2011). Partisan politics often supersedes regional interests. Competition among political parties and individual ambitions prevent consensus-building on critical issues. This fragmentation extends to civil society, traditional institutions, and business communities, further weakening collective action capacity. Inter-state rivalries over economic advantages, political prominence, and federal resource allocation create tensions that undermine cooperation. States

sometimes pursue competitive rather than complementary economic strategies, resulting in duplication of efforts and missed opportunities for synergy.

Institutional weakness characterizes both state and regional bodies. Bureaucracies lack the capacity, autonomy, and professionalism necessary for effective policy formulation and implementation. Corruption, political interference, and weak accountability mechanisms undermine institutional performance. The absence of strong, merit-based civil services means that policy continuity and technical expertise are lacking.

4.5 Marginalization Perceptions and National Integration Challenges

The Southeast's development challenges are compounded by perceptions and realities of political and economic marginalization within the Nigerian federation. These grievances, whether fully justified or not, influence regional attitudes, political behavior, and cooperation prospects. Igbo people and the Southeast region are perceived to have been marginalized in federal appointments, resource allocation, and national decision-making since the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970. This perception fuels separatist agitations and undermines commitment to national projects (Nsoedo, 2019; Ikerionwu, 2013).

The quest for an Igbo presidency, unfulfilled despite rotating power to other regions, reinforces feelings of exclusion. In the 2023 presidential election, the Southeast supported

Labour Party candidate Peter Obi, who won the region convincingly but lost nationally, further deepening frustration. Infrastructure projects in the Southeast have historically lagged behind other regions, though recent federal initiatives show some improvement. The Second Niger Bridge, under construction for years, symbolizes both the region's infrastructure needs and the slow pace of addressing them. These marginalization narratives, whether perceived or real, affect the Southeast's integration into national development frameworks and influence local leaders' willingness to cooperate with federal authorities, complicating governance and development efforts.

5. Leadership Deficit as the Bane of Regional Economic Cooperation

Leadership deficit stands as the fundamental obstacle to effective regional economic cooperation and development in Southeast Nigeria. This deficit manifests across multiple dimensions: vision and strategic planning, unity and cohesion, institutional capacity, accountability and transparency, and responsiveness to citizen needs.

5.1 Lack of Visionary Leadership

Southeast leadership has largely failed to articulate and pursue a compelling regional development vision. Unlike East Asian developmental states where leaders championed clear industrialization and modernization agendas, or even compared to other Nigerian regions that have developed strategic development plans, Southeast leadership has not coalesced around

shared long-term goals. Individual state governors pursue separate agendas without coordination or complementarity. There is no regional master plan for industrial development, agricultural modernization, tourism promotion, or human capital development that commands buy-in across all five states. This absence of vision means opportunities for economies of scale, complementary investments, and collective bargaining are lost.

The lack of vision extends to addressing the security crisis. Rather than developing a comprehensive regional security strategy involving dialogue, community engagement, economic interventions, and security sector reform, responses have been fragmented, reactive, and often counterproductive. The establishment of Ebube Agu, a regional security outfit, was announced with fanfare but has not been effectively operationalized or coordinated across states.

5.2 Political Disunity and Factional Conflicts

Political disunity among Southeast leaders represents perhaps the most visible manifestation of leadership deficit. Governors belong to different political parties (All Progressives Congress, Labour Party, and formerly People's Democratic Party), and partisan considerations often trump regional interests. During critical moments requiring collective action, such as responding to security challenges, advocating for federal projects, or negotiating resource allocations, Southeast leaders have presented

discordant positions. This disunity weakens the region's bargaining power and allows external actors to exploit divisions.

The relationship between political leaders and separatist agitators is particularly problematic. While some leaders have called for dialogue and release of Nnamdi Kanu, others have taken hard-line positions or remained silent. This inconsistency confuses both the federal government and local populations, making resolution more difficult. Traditional and religious leaders, who could provide unifying voices, have also been divided along political and ideological lines. The absence of credible, neutral regional leadership figures who can convene stakeholders, mediate conflicts, and articulate collective positions has been sorely felt.

5.3 Weak Institutional Capacity

Leadership deficit is inseparable from institutional weakness. Southeast states generally lack strong, capable, autonomous bureaucracies that can drive development regardless of political transitions. Civil services suffer from politicization, with appointments based on political loyalty rather than competence. This undermines policy continuity and technical expertise.

Planning and economic management institutions within states are often weak, poorly staffed, and inadequately funded. Strategic plans, where they exist, are not seriously implemented or monitored. Data collection and analysis capacity is limited, meaning policies are often formulated without solid empirical

foundations. Regional institutions like SENEK lack the authority, resources, and political backing necessary for effective operation. Unlike the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), which despite its challenges has a federal mandate and substantial funding, Southeast regional bodies operate on goodwill and minimal resources. Corruption and lack of accountability further undermine institutions. Public resources are diverted, projects are awarded to political associates, and performance measurement is weak. This institutional weakness makes sustainable development nearly impossible even when leadership changes.

5.4 Short-term Political Calculations

Southeast leadership has been characterized by short-term political calculations rather than long-term developmental thinking. Electoral cycles drive decision-making, with leaders prioritizing projects that yield immediate political returns over investments with longer gestation periods. Infrastructure projects are often started with fanfare before elections but abandoned after, resulting in numerous uncompleted projects across the region. Agricultural and industrial development programs, which require sustained commitment, are neglected in favor of conspicuous consumption and politically visible but less impactful interventions. The competition for 2027 elections already influences current governance, with leaders positioning for higher offices or party nominations rather than focusing on delivering development. This political distraction

diverts attention and resources from pressing regional challenges.

5.5 Failure to Engage Citizens and Build Social Capital

Leadership deficit is also evident in the failure to genuinely engage citizens, civil society, and private sector actors in development planning and implementation. Governance remains largely top-down, with limited meaningful participation by stakeholders who should be development partners. Youth, who constitute a majority of the population and are most affected by unemployment and insecurity, are not effectively mobilized for productive activities. Rather than channeling youthful energy into entrepreneurship, innovation, and community development, leadership failures have left many young people vulnerable to recruitment by criminal gangs or radical groups.

Women, despite their significant role in commerce and social cohesion, are marginalized in decision-making. Traditional institutions and community organizations that could serve as bridges between government and citizens are not adequately engaged in governance processes. The private sector, which should be a key partner in economic development, faces an uncertain business environment characterized by insecurity, multiple taxation, extortion, and policy inconsistency. Rather than creating enabling environments for business growth, leadership failures have driven investment away from the region.

6. Areas of Potential Regional Socio-Economic Cooperation

Despite formidable challenges, the Southeast possesses significant potential for enhanced regional cooperation that could transform its economic trajectory and improve citizens' welfare. Identifying and pursuing these cooperation opportunities requires overcoming leadership deficits and institutional weaknesses.

6.1 Trade and Commerce

The Southeast's historical strength in trade and commerce provides a foundation for regional cooperation. Major markets including Onitsha Main Market, Ariaria International Market Aba, Ogige Market Nsukka, and others serve populations across Nigeria and beyond. Coordinated efforts to enhance market infrastructure, security, and regulatory harmonization could boost commerce. Inter-state trade facilitation through removal of multiple checkpoints, standardization of taxes and levies, and joint marketing initiatives for regional products could increase trade volumes and reduce transaction costs. Establishing a Southeast Trade Zone with harmonized commercial regulations could enhance competitiveness and attract investment.

6.2 Industrial Development

The Southeast's industrial heritage, particularly in manufacturing, light industries, and crafts, offers cooperation potential. Cities like Aba, Nnewi, and Onitsha have industrial clusters in footwear, automobile parts, plastics, and other sectors. Regional cooperation could focus on: Establishing industrial

parks with shared infrastructure and services across states; developing value chains that leverage each state's comparative advantages; coordinating skills training programs to build industrial workforce capacity; pooling resources to attract large-scale industrial investments requiring regional markets; promoting technology transfer and innovation through regional research centers; and developing regional industrial policies that provide coherent incentives and support systems.

6.3 Agriculture and Food Security

Agriculture remains fundamental to the Southeast economy, with each state possessing agricultural potentials in different crops and livestock. Regional cooperation could enhance agricultural productivity and food security through: Coordinated agricultural extension services sharing best practices and technologies; establishment of regional commodity marketing systems to ensure better prices for farmers; joint procurement of inputs like fertilizers and improved seeds to reduce costs; development of regional processing and storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses; coordinated research on crop varieties suited to regional conditions and climate change adaptation; and establishment of regional agricultural colleges and training centers.

6.4 Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development offers significant cooperation opportunities given that transportation networks, power generation and distribution, water systems, and digital connectivity transcend state boundaries. The

Southeast could benefit from coordinated infrastructure planning and financing, including: regional transportation masterplan integrating roads, railways, and airports; power generation and distribution initiatives that pool resources for independent power projects; water resource management cooperation, particularly for interstate rivers; broadband infrastructure deployment through joint public-private partnerships; and coordinated urban planning for metropolitan areas spanning multiple states like the Enugu-Onitsha corridor.

6.5 Security and Peace-Building

Addressing the security crisis requires regional cooperation beyond current fragmented efforts. Effective strategies should include: Joint security operations with unified command and intelligence sharing; community-based peace-building initiatives engaging youth, traditional leaders, and civil society across states; coordinated dialogue with aggrieved groups including structured engagement on legitimate grievances; establishment of regional peace and reconciliation commission to address historical grievances and promote healing; youth employment and empowerment programs to provide alternatives to violence; and harmonized security sector reform including advocacy for state police with regional coordination mechanisms.

6.6 Education and Human Capital Development

The Southeast's tradition of valuing education provides a foundation for regional cooperation in human capital

development: Establishment of centres of excellence in higher education with each state specializing in particular fields; student exchange programs promoting cross-state educational experiences; coordinated scholarship schemes for needy but brilliant students; joint vocational and technical education initiatives aligned with regional economic needs; research collaboration among regional universities on development challenges; and harmonization of curricula and quality standards to enhance educational outcomes.

6.7 Health and Social Services

Healthcare cooperation could improve access and quality while reducing costs:

Establishment of regional specialist hospitals and diagnostic centers that serve multiple states; coordination of disease surveillance and epidemic response; joint procurement of medicines and medical equipment to reduce costs; healthcare professional exchange programs and training; coordinated response to public health emergencies; and establishment of regional health insurance schemes.

6.8 Tourism and Cultural Promotion

The Southeast's rich cultural heritage, historical sites, and natural attractions offer tourism cooperation opportunities: Development of regional tourism circuits linking attractions across states; joint marketing of Southeast tourism destinations nationally and internationally; standardization of tourism regulations and hospitality standards; establishment of regional tourism training institutions;

organization of regional cultural festivals promoting Igbo heritage; and investment in tourism infrastructure including hotels, transportation, and attractions.

6.9 Technology and Innovation

Leveraging the Southeast's growing technology ecosystem, particularly in cities like Enugu, Aba, and Owerri: Establishment of regional technology hubs and innovation centers; coordinated ICT infrastructure development; support for technology startups through regional venture capital funds; promotion of digital skills training aligned with market demands; and development of e-governance platforms promoting transparency and efficiency.

7. Lessons from Successful Regional Cooperation Models

The Southeast can learn from successful regional cooperation experiences both within Nigeria and internationally.

7.1 The Lagos-Ogun Development Experience

Lagos and Ogun States have demonstrated effective cooperation in infrastructure development, particularly the Lagos-Badagry-Seme Expressway and light rail projects. This cooperation has been facilitated by geographic contiguity, economic complementarity, and political leadership commitment. The Southeast could adapt this model for the Enugu-Onitsha-Owerri corridor development.

7.2 The Asian Developmental State Model

While full replication may be impossible, the Southeast can adapt certain elements:

Long-term strategic planning focused on industrialization and economic transformation; merit-based bureaucracy with technical competence and autonomy; strategic public-private partnerships in development; investment in education and technical skills aligned with economic needs; and coordinated regional economic policies.

7.3 African Examples: Mauritius and Botswana

These African developmental state successes demonstrate that small states can achieve transformation through visionary leadership, institutional strength, strategic economic policies, good governance and rule of law, and long-term developmental orientation (Ofoma & Ibietan, 2025).

7.4 ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol

Despite current challenges, ECOWAS's facilitation of free movement of persons and goods within West Africa offers lessons for intra-regional mobility and trade facilitation that the Southeast could implement at the zone level.

8. Recommendations

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are proposed for enhancing regional socio-economic cooperation and addressing leadership deficit in Southeast Nigeria:

8.1 Leadership and Institutional Reforms

Establishment of a Southeast Leadership Summit comprising all five governors, national assembly members from the

zone, traditional rulers, religious leaders, and civil society representatives meeting quarterly to coordinate regional positions and policies. This summit should have a permanent secretariat with technical capacity for policy analysis and planning. Creation of a revitalized and empowered Southeast Development Commission with federal government support, modeled on successful development commissions but with stronger governance structures, adequate funding, clear mandate, and measurable performance indicators.

Institutionalization of merit-based appointments in civil services across Southeast states, with coordinated efforts to build professional, competent bureaucracies capable of driving development regardless of political transitions. Development of a 20-year Southeast Regional Development Plan with input from diverse stakeholders, covering infrastructure, industrialization, agriculture, human capital, and social development, with clear milestones and accountability mechanisms.

8.2 Security and Peace-Building

Intensification of dialogue with all stakeholders including IPOB leadership, security agencies, federal government, and affected communities, with the goal of addressing legitimate grievances while maintaining rule of law. The continued detention of Nnamdi Kanu despite court orders should be resolved as it has become a major obstacle to peace. Implementation of comprehensive security sector reforms including advocacy for state police with constitutional and legal backing,

professionalizing existing security agencies and holding them accountable for human rights abuses, and establishing community policing mechanisms with genuine local participation.

Launch of large-scale youth employment and empowerment programs targeting unemployed youth vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups. Programs should focus on skills training, entrepreneurship support, and job creation in growth sectors. Establishment of a Southeast Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission to investigate human rights violations by all parties, provide justice for victims, and promote healing and reconciliation.

8.3 Economic Cooperation and Development

Creation of a Southeast Economic Cooperation Framework harmonizing commercial regulations, removing internal trade barriers, and facilitating business operations across state boundaries. Establishment of regional industrial parks and special economic zones with coordinated incentives, shared infrastructure, and governance structures attractive to investors. Development of regional agricultural value chains leveraging each state's comparative advantages, with joint investment in processing facilities, storage systems, and marketing platforms. Coordination of infrastructure development through a Regional Infrastructure Development Fund pooling resources from states, federal allocations, and private sector participation for transformative projects.

8.4 Social Development and Human Capital

Expansion of education cooperation through regional universities collaboration, student exchange programs, coordinated scholarship schemes, and vocational training aligned with regional economic needs. Strengthening healthcare systems through regional specialist centers, joint procurement systems, coordinated epidemic response, and health professional training programs. Implementation of comprehensive social protection programs cushioning the most vulnerable from economic hardships while building human capital for long-term development.

8.5 Governance and Accountability

Strengthening transparency and accountability through adoption of open governance platforms, publication of budgets and expenditure reports, citizen engagement in policy-making and monitoring, and independent performance evaluations. Combating corruption through regional anti-corruption initiatives, harmonized procurement procedures, protection of whistleblowers, and prosecution of corrupt officials. Promoting civic education to build citizens' understanding of rights, responsibilities, and mechanisms for holding leaders accountable.

8.6 External Engagement and Advocacy

Coordinated engagement with the federal government on issues affecting the Southeast, presenting united positions on appointments, projects, and resource allocation. Active participation

in national economic forums and development initiatives ensuring the Southeast's interests are adequately represented. Engagement with international development partners, private sector investors, and diaspora communities to mobilize resources and expertise for regional development.

9. Conclusion

The Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria stands at a critical juncture. Endowed with abundant human and natural resources, entrepreneurial energy, and significant economic potential, the region has paradoxically experienced profound development setbacks due primarily to leadership deficit and weak regional cooperation. As of 2025, the security crisis, economic hardships, infrastructure inadequacies, and political fragmentation have reached levels that threaten the region's future prosperity and social cohesion.

The estimated ₦7.6 trillion economic loss since 2021 due to insecurity and sit-at-home enforcement represents not just financial costs but shattered dreams, truncated education, disrupted businesses, and immense human suffering. The over 1,844 documented killings, countless disappearances, and pervasive fear have created a humanitarian crisis demanding urgent attention.

Yet the situation, however dire, is not irreversible. The Southeast has demonstrated throughout history its resilience, entrepreneurial spirit, and capacity for self-organization. The challenge lies in channeling these strengths through effective leadership,

robust institutions, and coordinated regional cooperation toward sustainable development.

The Developmental State theory, while derived from East Asian experiences, offers valuable insights for the Southeast. It emphasizes that development is neither automatic nor inevitable but results from deliberate choices, strategic policies, capable institutions, and sustained commitment by visionary leadership. The theory highlights that market forces alone cannot drive transformation in developing contexts; strategic state intervention, guided by long-term developmental vision rather than short-term political calculations, is essential.

For the Southeast to realize its potential, several transformations must occur. First, political leadership must transcend partisan divisions, personal ambitions, and short-term calculations to embrace a shared regional developmental vision. This requires establishing effective coordination mechanisms, developing long-term plans with broad stakeholder buy-in, and building institutions capable of sustained implementation.

Second, the security crisis must be addressed comprehensively through dialogue, justice, security sector reform, youth empowerment, and addressing legitimate grievances while maintaining rule of law. Military operations alone cannot bring peace; political solutions involving all stakeholders are necessary.

Third, regional economic cooperation must move beyond rhetoric to concrete initiatives in trade facilitation, industrial

development, agricultural modernization, infrastructure development, and human capital investment. This requires pooling resources, harmonizing policies, and creating enabling environments for private sector participation.

Fourth, governance must become more transparent, accountable, and responsive to citizen needs. Corruption must be combated vigorously, public resources must be used efficiently for development purposes, and citizens must be genuinely engaged as partners in development rather than passive recipients of government services.

Fifth, the Southeast must engage constructively with the federal government and other regions while advocating for its fair share of national resources and political representation. This requires presenting united positions and demonstrating capacity to utilize resources effectively for development.

The path forward will not be easy. Entrenched interests benefiting from the status quo will resist change. Political calculations will tempt leaders to prioritize short-term gains over long-term development. Ethnic and partisan divisions will continue to pose challenges. Security threats will not disappear overnight. However, the alternative to concerted action is continued decline, deepening crisis, and the squandering of the Southeast's immense potential.

Nigeria's emergence as a BRICS partner country in 2024 signals new opportunities for economic cooperation

and development financing through South-South frameworks (Valori, 2025). The African Development Bank's commitment of \$2.95 billion to Nigeria (2025-2030) with focus on infrastructure, youth employment, and agricultural transformation offers resources the Southeast can access through strategic positioning (AfDB, 2025). National economic reforms, despite their painful short-term impacts, are creating fiscal space for development investments if well utilized.

The Southeast must seize this moment to transform its trajectory. The region that once drove Nigeria's industrialization, produced renowned entrepreneurs and intellectuals, and demonstrated remarkable resilience can do so again. But this requires leadership that rises above mediocrity, institutions that function with competence and integrity, citizens that demand accountability while fulfilling civic responsibilities, and regional cooperation that turns potential into reality.

As Nigeria navigates its development challenges in 2025 and beyond, the Southeast's success or failure will significantly impact the nation's trajectory. A transformed, prosperous, and peaceful Southeast would contribute immensely to national development, demonstrate the possibility of regional cooperation, and provide a model for other regions. Conversely, continued crisis would drag down national progress and potentially destabilize the entire country.

The choice ultimately lies with Southeast leaders and citizens: continue

on the path of division, insecurity, and underdevelopment, or embrace the difficult but rewarding journey of unity, peace, and sustainable development. The resources, human capital, and potential exist. What is required is the will to act decisively, the wisdom to prioritize collective welfare over narrow interests, and the courage to make difficult but necessary changes. The time for action is now.

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AI-Assisted Creation of Educational Contents for Children with Special Needs

Abstract

Creating specialized educational materials for children with diverse cognitive, sensory, or developmental needs is often a resource-intensive process that can be difficult for educators to sustain through traditional manual methods. AI-assisted content creation provides a transformative approach by automating the generation of personalized visual, auditory, and linguistic supports, thereby reducing systemic barriers to learning. This study explored the effectiveness of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in reshaping educational content for children with special needs. It was grounded in the principle of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Social Constructivism/Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which advocates for multiple means of representation. Adopting a qualitative thematic analysis, the research investigated the perceptions and lived experiences of educators as they transition from manual "retrofitting" to AI-supported content adaptation. Findings indicated that AI-driven tools, such as automated text simplifiers, social story generators, and high-interest visual aids, enhance pedagogical interest and learner engagement. Beyond efficiency gains, the study captured how AI-assisted strategies, when guided by human expertise, can transform instruction into a more responsive and equitable experience. The study concluded with recommendations for a "Human-in-the-Loop" framework to integrate AI-assisted content meaningfully, ensuring technology serves as a bridge to active participation for all diverse learners.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence, Inclusive Education, Special Educational Needs, Universal Design for Learning

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Introduction

Fundamentally, this study is the concept of AI-assisted personalization for inclusive education. It is the belief that technology can help schools to deliver the individualized learning that inclusive policies have long promised

but everyday classroom realities often prevent. Across the globe, inclusive education is understood as both a human right and a developmental necessity. Frameworks such as UNESCO Sustainable Development Goal 4 call on nations to "ensure

inclusive and equitable quality education for all,” emphasizing not only access to schooling but meaningful participation and achievement for every learner (UNESCO, 2020). Within this commitment, children with special educational needs (SEN), including those with autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia, ADHD, and visual or hearing impairments, represent a richly diverse population whose learning profiles require individualized instruction, flexible pacing, and accessible formats.

Despite these global aspirations, the daily practice of schooling still reflects largely standardized and one-size-fits-all content creation. Most instructional materials are designed around the hypothetical “average learner,” with adaptations added later for those who fall outside this norm. Florian and Spratt (2013) explain that when curricula are built for sameness and retrofitted for diversity, inclusion becomes reactive rather than proactive. Teachers frequently find themselves rewriting passages, modifying worksheets, or redesigning activities after lessons have already been prepared. In such settings, inclusive education can become an accommodation strategy rather than a design principle. Consequently, the promise of equitable learning remains uneven, as the system itself was not originally constructed with learner diversity at its center.

This structural challenge gives rise to what many practitioners describe as the manual burden problem. Special educators, in particular, shoulder disproportionate workloads that include documentation, individualized

education plan preparation, and continuous material adaptation. Data from the OECD (2023) show that preparation and administrative demands occupy a significant share of teachers’ working hours, limiting time for direct instruction and meaningful student interaction. Tomlinson (2017) further notes that genuine differentiation requires constant, deliberate adjustment of content, process, and assessment work that becomes overwhelming when performed manually across diverse classrooms. The outcome is both professional fatigue and reduced responsiveness to learners’ needs. Teachers become content modifiers rather than facilitators of learning, and inclusion becomes constrained by time rather than by intention.

Against this backdrop, artificial intelligence presents a practical and pedagogical opportunity. Rather than replacing teachers, AI can function as a “supercharged assistant,” automating repetitive tasks while supporting rapid, data-informed personalization. Contemporary tools enable text-to-speech and speech-to-text functions for learners with visual or writing impairments, adaptive reading levels for students with dyslexia, social narrative generation for autistic learners, and real-time difficulty adjustments based on learner performance. Holmes and Tuomi (2022) describe such systems as enabling personalization “at a scale previously unattainable for individual teachers”. By generating accessible and adaptable content efficiently, AI has the potential to free educators to focus on mentorship, creativity, and relational

teaching the human dimensions that remain central to inclusive education. From this perspective, technology becomes not a substitute for teachers but an amplifier of their capacity to respond meaningfully to each learner.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Explore the perceptions of educators regarding the effectiveness of AI-generated multimodal content in addressing the diverse sensory and cognitive needs of children.
- ii. Examine how the transition from manual modification to AI-assisted content creation influences the professional identity and pedagogical agency of special education teachers.
- iii. Identify the qualitative benefits and ethical tensions educators experience when utilizing generative AI to "translate" standardized curricula into accessible formats.
- iv. Capture the lived experiences of educators regarding student engagement and classroom belonging when using AI-personalized educational assets.

Research Questions

- i. How do educators describe the change in their creative process when moving from manual "retrofitting" to AI-supported proactive content design?
- ii. In what ways do AI-generated personalized materials (e.g., social stories, simplified text, or high-interest visuals) alter the perceived learning experience of children with special needs?

iii. What are the primary qualitative barriers, such as technical literacy, data ethics, or "algorithmic coldness", that educators encounter when integrating AI-assisted content into their practice?

iv. How does the immediate availability of AI-personalized resources influence the student's sense of academic agency and participation within an inclusive classroom setting?

Statement of the Problem

Inclusive education, as imagined through Universal Design for Learning, seeks meaningful participation where lessons resonate with each child's unique cognitive and sensory profile. While global mandates emphasize equitable and inclusive learning for all (UNESCO, 2020), standardized materials often produce intellectual alienation, as learners with autism or dyslexia encounter content that does not reflect how they learn. Teachers experience this as pedagogical fatigue, spending excessive hours manually 'force-fitting' rigid curricula to diverse needs (OECD, 2023). Although AI tools offer potentials for automated personalization, little is known about whether AI-assisted content creation preserves the necessary empathy or results in impersonal learning experiences. This absence of qualitative insight creates a critical gap in understanding how AI-generated materials reshape the lived learning relationship between the teacher and the child.

Literature Review

Contemporary discourse on inclusive education reflects a global shift from integration toward full participation,

where schools are expected to adapt systems, curricula, and environments to learner diversity rather than requiring learners to conform to standardized norms. International policy frameworks led by UNESCO emphasize that inclusion entails meaningful engagement and equitable learning outcomes, not merely physical placement within mainstream classrooms (UNESCO, 2020). This reconceptualization positions accessibility, flexibility, and responsiveness as defining features of quality education. However, research indicates that instructional design has not kept pace with these policy commitments. Ainscow (2020) observes that despite inclusive rhetoric, many classrooms continue to rely on standardized curricular structures that privilege normative cognitive profiles. Similarly, Waitoller and Artiles (2013) argue that inequities persist when teaching materials assume uniform ways of learning, marginalizing students with disabilities within nominally inclusive settings. From a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) perspective, Meyer *et al.* (2014) contend that limited modalities particularly text-heavy or linguistically dense formats, create disengagement rather than empowerment for learners who process information differently. Thus, an “inclusion gap” persists between policy aspirations and classroom realities.

While differentiation is widely recognized as essential to inclusive pedagogy, responsibility for adapting materials typically rests with individual teachers. This reliance on manual modification generates significant

workload pressures that shape instructional quality. OECD data show that teachers devote substantial time to preparation, documentation, and resource adaptation, often at the expense of direct student interaction (OECD, 2023). Tomlinson (2017) notes that authentic differentiation requires continuous adjustments to content complexity, pacing, and assessment demands that become overwhelming when enacted manually across diverse classrooms. The emotional consequences are equally pronounced. Hargreaves (2018) links excessive preparatory demands to professional exhaustion, while Florian (2014) describes how reactive adaptation can position teachers in a “coping mode,” limiting creativity and innovation. This dynamic, here conceptualized as pedagogical fatigue, underscores the structural limitations of manual personalization in achieving equitable participation.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence provide potential solutions to this scalability challenge. Generative AI systems, including large language models and multimodal content generators, can rapidly produce simplified texts, visual supports, captions, translations, and interactive resources tailored to diverse learning profiles. The European Commission (2022) highlights AI’s capacity to enhance accessibility through automated adaptation, enabling rapid conversion of materials across modalities. Zawacki-Richter *et al.* (2019) identify personalization and adaptive feedback as key strengths of AI in education, noting that such systems can

adjust complexity in response to learner performance. Luckin (2018) conceptualizes AI as augmenting rather than replacing human intelligence, functioning as a cognitive partner that supports responsive instructional decisions. In special education contexts, these capabilities translate into tools such as social story generators, automated text-to-speech systems, and visual scaffolds applications that align directly with UDL's call for multiple means of representation and engagement. When strategically deployed, AI has the potential to reduce repetitive labor while preserving the relational dimensions of teaching.

Despite these possibilities, AI integration raises significant ethical and pedagogical concerns. Scholars caution that technological efficiency may undermine the relational core of inclusive education. Selwyn (2019) warns that optimization-driven technologies risk producing "algorithmic coldness," detaching learning from empathy and human judgment. Williamson and Eynon (2020) further argue that algorithmic systems can encode biases and diminish teacher agency if adopted uncritically. Akgun and Greenhow (2022) emphasize the need for transparency, accountability, and data protection to mitigate unintended harms. These critiques underscore the necessity of a human-in-the-loop approach in which teachers retain interpretive authority over AI-generated outputs.

Collectively, the literature suggests that inclusive education cannot rely solely on manual differentiation or automated

systems in isolation. Meaningful personalization emerges from the interplay between human expertise and technological support. However, much of the existing research remains technical or policy-oriented, offering limited qualitative insight into how educators experience AI-assisted content creation in everyday classroom practice. Questions persist about whether AI-generated materials feel authentic, empathetic, and pedagogically sound, particularly in contexts where ethical guidelines, structured training, and clear frameworks for use are still evolving. Concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, accessibility, and teacher agency further highlight the need to examine how these tools shape instructional quality and the lived learning experience of the child.

This study responds to that need by exploring whether AI-assisted content creation can address the tension between the demand for individualized learning and the practical limits of teacher time and resources. Through an examination of teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, and classroom practices, it seeks to develop a grounded understanding of how AI can be integrated ethically and pedagogically within inclusive education for children with special needs.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical traditions that explain both why personalization is necessary and how AI-assisted tools can operationalize it in practice. Together, Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

and Social Constructivism/Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), provide a pedagogical blueprint for interpreting how AI-generated materials may reshape teaching, learner engagement, and classroom relationships. These theories shift attention away from deficits within the child and toward the design of instruction and the supports surrounding learning, making them especially suitable for research on AI-assisted content creation for children with special needs.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), developed by Rose and Meyer (2002) and further expanded by Meyer, Rose, and Gordon (2014), provides the main foundation for this study. The central idea of UDL is that many learning difficulties arise not because of the learner, but because of how instruction is designed. When lessons are rigid, some learners are unintentionally excluded. For this reason, UDL emphasizes designing instruction in flexible ways from the beginning, so that it can support a wider range of learners (Meyer et al., 2014). This perspective is important for the present study because AI-assisted tools make it possible to quickly adapt content into different formats, such as simplified text, visuals, or audio. Using UDL as a guide, the study examines whether these AI-generated materials make learning more accessible and responsive to the needs of children with special needs. In this way, UDL helps frame the analysis by focusing on whether AI supports inclusion in practice, not just in theory.

While UDL helps explain how instruction can be designed to support

diverse learners, Social Constructivism explains how learning itself takes place through support and interaction. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that learners progress most effectively when they receive guidance that helps them move beyond what they can do on their own. This idea is reflected in the way AI is used in this study. AI tools can provide prompts, simplified explanations, and structured support that help learners engage with content more independently. At the same time, Social Constructivism reminds us that learning is not shaped by tools alone, but also by human relationships. For this reason, the study pays close attention to the teacher's role in reviewing, adjusting, and meaningfully integrating AI-generated materials. This ensures that AI functions as a support within the learning process, rather than a replacement for the teacher's professional judgment.

Limitations of the Study

The "Human" Perspective Gap

First, this study focuses entirely on the experiences of the educators. While the teachers gave great detail on how they perceived their students' engagement the study did not include direct students' perspectives. Because of this, my findings on "student belonging" are essentially an outside observation. To truly understand if AI makes a child feel more included, future research should aim to capture their own voices directly.

A Specific Group of Participants

The study involved 15 respondents. While this gave a lot of rich, "thick"

description, it is not meant to represent every teacher everywhere. These 15 people had a certain level of comfort with technology. If I had interviewed teachers who were less "tech-savvy" or who worked in schools with fewer resources, the themes might have looked very different, perhaps focusing more on frustration than efficiency.

The "Newness" of the Technology

Because generative AI is so new, there is a bit of a "honeymoon phase" happening. Respondents might be over-reporting the positives because the tools feel exciting and helpful right now. I have to acknowledge the possibility of social desirability bias, where people want to show they are keeping up with modern trends. We don't yet know if these benefits will still be there two or three years from now once the "novelty" wears off.

The Technical Learning Curve

Finally, I assumed that the teachers in this study had the time and skill to audit the AI. The study talks about a "human-in-the-loop," but in a busy, real-world classroom, even a small technical glitch can be a major barrier. This study doesn't fully solve the problem of technical literacy; it just points at what is possible for those who already have it.

Methodology

i. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore educators' experiences with AI-assisted creation of educational content for children with special needs. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the purpose of the

study was to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' perspectives, professional reflections, and classroom practices rather than to measure variables quantitatively. This design allowed the study to capture the meanings educators attach to their transition from manual curriculum adaptation to AI-supported instructional design. The qualitative descriptive approach was particularly suitable because it focuses on producing a rich, straightforward account of participants' experiences grounded in their own words, while still allowing for systematic analysis through thematic interpretation.

ii. Participants and Sampling

Fifteen participants took part in the study, including special education teachers, learning support teachers, and educational technologists. All had direct experience working with learners with special educational needs such as students with dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder, and attention-related learning difficulties and had used, or were actively exploring, generative AI tools in their instructional practice. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that those included possessed relevant experience and insight into AI-assisted instructional adaptation. Recruitment took place through professional educator networks and referrals within inclusive education settings. The sample size was considered sufficient for thematic saturation, as no substantially new ideas emerged during analysis.

iii. Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a qualitative open-ended survey designed to elicit detailed narrative responses. The survey consisted of open-response questions organized around three key areas:

- i. Educators' experiences transitioning from manual adaptation to AI-assisted content creation
- ii. Perceived impact of AI-generated materials on student engagement and learning participation
- iii. Professional reflections, including benefits, challenges, and ethical considerations

Participants were asked to describe specific classroom situations in which they used AI-generated materials, providing concrete examples of the resources created, how these influenced their instructional process, and how learners interacted with and responded to them. The open-ended format allowed participants to freely express their experiences in their own words, which helped preserve the authenticity of their perspectives. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. Responses were detailed and narrative in nature, allowing participants to describe their experiences extensively, which made them suitable for thematic analysis.

iv. Data Analysis Procedure: Reflexive Thematic Analysis**Data Extraction**

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). This method was selected because it provides a systematic yet flexible approach for identifying patterns of meaning within qualitative data.

First, all responses were read several times to allow for familiarization with the data.

Second, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments of text related to instructional practices, teacher roles, student engagement, and ethical reflections.

Third, related codes were grouped together to form preliminary themes.

Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflected the data and were clearly distinct from one another.

Fifth, each theme was defined and named based on its central meaning.

Finally, the themes were organized into a coherent narrative supported by direct participant quotations. This process ensured that the findings remained grounded in participants' actual experiences rather than imposed interpretations.

Thematic Analysis**Theme 1: Transforming Instructional Design Practices**

A dominant pattern across participants' accounts was the shift from manual "retrofitting" to proactive AI-supported instructional design. Educators described their previous approach to differentiation as reactive and time-intensive. One participant reflected,

"Before I started using AI, adapting lessons could take hours. I had to rewrite things myself, and it was really time-consuming." (Participant 3, Special Education Teacher)

This statement captures what several teachers described as a cycle of constant modification rewriting worksheets, simplifying passages, and restructuring tasks only after students encountered difficulty. Although educators were committed to inclusion, the practical burden of manual adaptation often limited how consistently personalization could be implemented. One participant explained that

"Manually adapting the lesson took a lot of time and effort compared to using AI." (Participant 2, Special Education Teacher)

With AI-assisted tools, however, participants reported a fundamental transformation in workflow. As one participant explained,

"Now I can generate simplified materials much faster. Something that used to take me a long time, I can now prepare in minutes." (Participant 1, Learning Support Assistant)

The shift was not merely about speed; it was about anticipation. Rather than responding to breakdowns after they occurred, teachers described embedding accessibility features simplified texts,

visual scaffolds, and structured layouts into lessons from the outset. AI functioned as a cognitive support that reduced repetitive labor and allowed educators to focus more intentionally on planning and student interaction. In this sense, inclusive practice became more sustainable, not because expectations changed, but because the process of differentiation became structurally supported. One participant shared,

"Using AI helped me create adapted materials more efficiently than doing it manually." (Participant 5, Special Education Teacher)

Illustrative Example of AI-Generated Instructional Adaptation

To clarify how AI-assisted content functioned in practice, one participant (Participant 8, Special Education Teacher) described generating a simplified reading passage for a learner with dyslexia during a basic 4 science lesson on the water cycle.

Original Text (a standard curriculum version)

"Evaporation is the process where liquid water becomes water vapor due to heat". It happens when water in rivers, lakes, and oceans gains heat from the sun and turns into an invisible gas called water vapor. As this water vapor rises into the atmosphere, it enters cooler air. The vapor loses heat and changes back into tiny liquid water droplets. These millions of tiny droplets gather together to form clouds."

AI-Generated Simplified Version

"When the sun heats water, the water changes into gas. This change is called evaporation. The gas goes up into the sky. When it cools down, it turns back into tiny drops of water. This is called condensation. These tiny drops join together to form clouds."

How the Learner Makes Sense of It

The participant explained that the student previously disengaged when confronted with dense scientific vocabulary such as "evaporation," "condensation," and "atmosphere."

With the AI-simplified version:

- i. The syntactic complexity of the original sentence was reduced.
- ii. Abstract vocabulary was replaced with concrete language.
- iii. The steps were sequentially structured.
- iv. A visual scaffold supported verbal explanation.

The learner was able to:

- i. Read the passage independently.
- ii. Retell the process orally.
- iii. Match the steps to the diagram.
- iv. Participate in whole-class discussion.

The teacher noted:

"Because the language matched his reading level, he didn't shut down. He started explaining the process in his own words."

Theme 2: Student Empowerment and Agency

The transformation in instructional design was closely connected to changes in students' learning experiences. Participants consistently described improvements in engagement, confidence, and independence when AI-personalized materials were used. One participant shared,

"I noticed one of my students with dyslexia became more confident. When the text was simplified for him, he was more willing to read and participate." (Participant 7, Special Education Teacher)

This comment highlights how personalization extended beyond academic accessibility to emotional affirmation. When learners encountered materials that aligned with their abilities, they approached tasks with greater willingness and self-assurance.

Teachers also observed increased autonomy in classroom participation. As one participant noted,

"Some of my students are now able to follow tasks more on their own. They don't always have to wait for me to explain everything again." (Participant 9, Learning Support Assistant/Paraprofessional)

The availability of simplified instructions, visual supports, and step-by-step formats enabled learners to navigate tasks more independently.

Importantly, participants emphasized that AI allowed these supports to be generated immediately rather than after instructional delays. As one participant explained,

“Now, I can proactively generate materials that match their exact needs before or during class, simplified texts, step-by-step instructions... Because the content is already accessible, students don’t have to wait for help. They can start tasks immediately and work through them at their own pace.”(Participant 5, Special Education Teacher)

This immediacy had direct implications for student agency. When accessible materials were available at the point of instruction, students were less likely to disengage or depend on repeated teacher intervention. Instead, they remained within the flow of classroom activity. Participants described learners initiating tasks more confidently, sustaining attention longer, and participating more actively in shared learning experiences.

Collectively, these accounts suggest that AI-assisted personalization enhances academic agency not only by simplifying content but by ensuring continuity of participation. Support is embedded within the material itself, reducing the temporal and cognitive barriers that often disrupt inclusion.

Theme 3: Professional Repositioning and Ethical Stewardship

Although AI reduced mechanical workload and supported student independence, participants did not describe a loss of professional authority.

Instead, many articulated a subtle shift in identity. One participant summarized this change by stating that:

“AI has made me feel less like I am constantly modifying and more like I am guiding the learning process.” (Participant 1, Learning Support Assistant)

This reflects a movement from content modifier to facilitator. Rather than spending extensive time rewriting materials, educators described focusing more on interpreting, contextualizing, and refining AI outputs within meaningful teaching moments. AI functioned as an assistive partner, but the teacher remained central to pedagogical decision-making.

At the same time, participants acknowledged qualitative tensions. Several described AI-generated materials as technically accurate yet emotionally flat. One participant explained that,

“Sometimes what the AI generates (social stories) are correct, but it doesn’t always sound natural. I still need to adjust it so it feels more appropriate for my students.”(Participant 2, Special Education Teacher)

This concern pinpoints the limitations of automated outputs in relational teaching contexts. Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of review and refinement, with one participant noting that,

“I don’t just use it directly. I always review and edit it before giving it to my

students.” (Participant 5, Special Education Teacher)

These practices demonstrate that AI integration was mediated through professional judgment. An educational technologist described a similar sense of professional responsibility, but from a participant perspective:

“Even though the AI generates the content, I still have to check and make sure it works properly for the intended use. My role is to support the teachers and ensure the technology is used appropriately.” (Participant 10, Educational Technologist / IT Support)

Educators did not adopt outputs uncritically. Instead, they exercised oversight to ensure emotional resonance and contextual appropriateness. In this way, AI-assisted practice was characterized not by replacement, but by augmentation where efficiency gains were balanced by ethical stewardship.

Discussion

These findings matter because they move beyond claiming that AI-assisted personalization is broadly helpful and provide a theoretically grounded and practice-oriented blueprint for how generative AI can be implemented in inclusive classrooms. Rather than positioning AI as a productivity tool, the study demonstrates that its pedagogical value lies in operationalizing proactive accessibility transforming differentiation from reactive retrofitting into anticipatory design. This directly addresses the manual burden described by participants and echoes international concerns that inclusion often collapses

under unsustainable teacher workload (OECD, 2023).

In alignment with the 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report, which cautions that technology must redesign learning systems rather than simply digitize existing inequities (UNESCO, 2023), the findings show that AI-assisted content creation embeds flexibility at the point of lesson design. This shift reflects the foundational logic of Universal Design for Learning (UDL): barriers arise from inflexible curricula, not from learner deficits (Meyer *et al.*, 2014). Participants’ accounts of generating simplified texts, multi-modal explanations, visual schedules, and structured prompts in advance demonstrate how generative AI can scale UDL’s principles of multiple means of representation and engagement without exhausting teacher capacity.

Importantly, the findings extend UDL theory by integrating it with contemporary AI scholarship. Holmes and Tuomi (2022) argue that AI systems enable personalization at a scale previously unattainable. However, this study grounds that claim in lived classroom practice: personalization was not abstract but embedded in real-time instructional flow. Rather than waiting for post-hoc accommodations, students engaged immediately with accessible materials. In this way, AI reduced temporal exclusion where learners with special needs often pause while adaptations are prepared, and instead facilitated continuity of participation.

The discussion also makes an explicit theoretical connection to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). When the learners initiated tasks independently using AI-adjusted materials, they were operating within their optimal developmental range (Vygotsky, 1978). Recent analyses of large language models suggest that generative systems can dynamically calibrate linguistic complexity and provide scaffolded prompts (Kasneji *et al.*, 2023). This study adds qualitative depth to that claim by showing that such scaffolds not only support comprehension but strengthen academic agency. Students were not merely assisted they remained positioned as capable participants within the classroom community. Several educators also linked this immediacy of access to improved classroom belonging, as learners no longer experienced visible delays in receiving adapted materials.

At the same time, the findings reveal that technological scalability must be ethically mediated. Participants consistently described reviewing and humanizing AI-generated outputs, particularly in contexts such as social stories where emotional nuance is critical. This aligns with Akgun and Greenhow's (2022) warning that AI systems can reproduce bias or obscure accountability if adopted uncritically. It also echoes Selwyn's (2019) concern about "algorithmic coldness," where technically accurate outputs may lack relational sensitivity. What emerges from this study is not a narrative of automation, but one of professional repositioning? Teachers described feeling less like constant modifiers and

more like facilitators and ethical curators. In practice, they enacted a "human-in-the-loop" approach consistent with European Commission (2022) guidance emphasizing transparency, oversight, and pedagogical control.

Thus, what is new in this synthesis is the integration of three domains often examined separately: generative AI capability, UDL design principles, and lived teacher mediation. The study moves from asking whether AI supports inclusion to clarifying how it must be implemented, ethically curated, pedagogically aligned, and relationally grounded. AI does not replace professional expertise; rather, it redistributes cognitive labor, enabling educators to devote greater attention to interpretation, emotional attunement, and instructional creativity.

Conclusion

This study examines how educators experience the shift from manual curriculum retrofitting to AI-assisted proactive design in inclusive classrooms. As reflected in participants' accounts of reduced adaptation burden, faster material customization, and increased instructional responsiveness, AI-assisted content creation does more than improve efficiency, it restructures inclusive practice. The central finding is that AI's effectiveness is not inherent in the technology itself but contingent upon intentional, ethically mediated implementation.

When grounded in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which locates barriers in inflexible curricula rather than in

learner deficits (Meyer *et al.*, 2014), AI enables anticipatory accessibility through multimodal supports, simplified representations, and adaptive scaffolds. Consistent with UNESCO's (2023) call for technology to redesign systems rather than reproduce inequities, participants described embedding flexibility at the outset of instruction rather than retrofitting materials after exclusion occurs. This shift reduces the unsustainable workload pressures documented in international education reports (OECD, 2023) while preserving teacher agency.

Interpreted through Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), AI-generated scaffolds functioned as calibrated supports that allowed learners to initiate tasks independently and remain within the instructional flow (Vygotsky, 1978). Importantly, educators also linked this immediacy of access to strengthened classroom belonging, as students were no longer visibly separated through delayed accommodations. Thus, AI-assisted personalization supported not only comprehension but participation and dignity.

However, the findings also reaffirm that inclusive education is fundamentally relational. Participants consistently reviewed and humanized AI outputs, reinforcing concerns raised in recent scholarship about ethical oversight and algorithmic bias (Akgun & Greenhow, 2022). AI did not replace professional expertise; rather, it redistributed cognitive labor, enabling educators to focus more deeply on interpretation,

emotional atonement, and pedagogical creativity.

Recommendations

It is recommended that schools and educational leaders adopt AI-assisted content creation within a clearly defined, human-centered framework. Rather than treating AI as a replacement for teacher expertise, institutions should position it as a supportive design tool that helps educators proactively embed accessibility into lesson planning. Professional development should focus on helping teachers critically evaluate AI-generated materials for clarity, inclusiveness, emotional tone, and alignment with diverse learner needs.

In addition, schools should develop shared guidelines for ethical use, data protection, and quality assurance to ensure that AI integration strengthens equity rather than introducing new forms of bias or exclusion. Collaborative repositories of well-designed, AI-enhanced instructional resources could further reduce duplication of effort and support sustainable inclusive practice.

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A Phenomenological Study of Family and Peer Influences on Emotional Growth and Mental Well-being

Abstract

Although emotional development is influenced by biological predispositions, research usually focuses on the quality of social experiences. This is particularly within family and peer contexts, as they play a central role in tackling resilience, emotional regulation, self-esteem, and overall psychological functioning. This study adopted the qualitative phenomenological design with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, acting as protective or risk-enhancing factors in emotional development. Works published between 2000 and 2025 were systematically sourced from PsycINFO, Scopus, PubMed, ERIC, and Google Scholar and filtered using predefined inclusion criteria emphasizing phenomenological methodologies. Synthesized findings using interviews revealed that nurturing family communication, secure attachment, and supportive peer networks pointedly promote emotional maturity and well-being. Again, environments marked by neglect, inconsistent parenting, peer rejection, and emotional invalidation increase vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and poor coping skills. The study concluded that phenomenological inquiry expands understanding of lived emotional experiences and underscores the need for family and peer-centered mental health interventions that align with contextual realities.

Keywords: Emotional development, phenomenology, family influence, peer relationships, mental well-being

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1. Introduction

Emotional growth and mental well-being are rooted in the experiences that individuals share within their immediate relationships. Family communication and the tone of peer interactions often determine how young people learn to manage feelings, cope with stress, and form a stable sense of self. Recent phenomenological inquiries have shown that emotional development is not only an intrapsychic

process but also a social one informed through relationships of care and recognition. On this note, Ruihua, Che Hassan, and Saharuddin (2025 p.8) observed that "self-worth and emotional confidence emerge through the webs of connection that individuals build with their family and peers". Their finding conveys the point that emotional maturity develops through sustained interpersonal meaning-making within supportive environments.

Within the family system, emotional growth begins through attachment, communication, and shared understanding. Zhang, Huang, and Yang (2023 p.4) found that parents of adolescents with depression viewed resilience as “a collective emotional adjustment process where the family learns to adapt and maintain understanding”. This shows that resilience is nurtured through reciprocal empathy rather than individual toughness. In the same vein, Li, Che Hassan, Saharuddin, and Ouyang (2024 p.11) noted in their interpretative phenomenological study that first-generation students’ emotional balance in college was largely “anchored in the tone of family interactions and the affirmation received from home”. The family, therefore, functions not only as a source of material support but as an emotional covering where feelings are interpreted and validated.

As children grow into adolescence, peers often become mirrors for self-esteem and belonging. Çelik, Kahraman, Kaçmaz, and İçen (2025 p.6) found that refugee children’s happiness in school depended on “the sense of inclusion and the freedom from social exclusion”. In emotionally supportive peer environments, young people learn to express vulnerability without fear of rejection. On the other hand, Iqbal and Ijaz (2025) showed that when peers reinforce stigma or exclusion, emotional instability and low self-worth become pronounced. These findings emphasize that peer relationships can either enhance or undermine emotional development, depending on the quality of interaction and social validation.

Phenomenology provides a particularly rich approach to studying these dynamics because it captures the *lived experience* of emotional formation rather than abstract traits. Sun, Long, Lu, and Lin (2025 p.12) remarked that, “phenomenological understanding opens a window into how young people interpret and endure their emotional struggles within social relationships”. This method recognizes that emotions are not simply felt but *experienced* through the structures of family and peer life. It enables researchers to uncover how individuals make sense of emotional safety, neglect, or empathy within the everyday contexts that shape them. It is on the strength of this that the study situates family and peer relationships as central foundation that shape individual emotional development. The phenomenological approach ensures that this interpretation is explored not as external influences but as lived spaces of feeling and meaning.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine how family communication patterns, attachment styles, and emotional support contribute to the development of emotional and psychological well-being.
- ii. Investigate the role of peer relationships in shaping emotional regulation, self-concept, and coping strategies during critical developmental phases.

- iii. Identify family and peer-related factors that act as protective or risk-enhancing influences on emotional well-being.
- iv. Interpret individuals' lived experiences of emotional growth within their family and peer contexts through phenomenological inquiry.

Research Questions

The questions that inform the focus of the study are:

- 8. How do family relationships shape individuals' emotional growth and mental well-being?
- 9. In what ways do peer interactions influence emotional regulation, resilience, and self-esteem?
- 10. What family and peer-related factors serve as protective or risk-enhancing determinants of emotional development?
- 11. How do individuals describe and interpret their lived emotional experiences within family and peer relationships?

3. Statement of the Problem

Despite increasing recognition of the importance of how family relationships shape individuals' emotional growth and mental well-being, much of the existing research has been dominated by quantitative or survey-based approaches that measure emotional outcomes without adequately capturing the *lived experiences* underlying them. Consequently, there remains a limited understanding of how

individuals subjectively interpret and internalize their emotional journeys within their immediate relational networks. In many cultural settings, family and peer relationships hold deep emotional and moral significance. Families often serve as the first space where emotional patterns are learned, while peer groups become secondary spaces for social validation and identity formation. However, when these relationships are marked by emotional neglect, inconsistent parenting, peer rejection, or invalidation, individuals may internalize distressing emotional patterns that undermine their well-being. These challenges are often masked beneath cultural expectations of endurance and conformity, leaving emotional struggles underreported or misunderstood.

4. Literature Review

Emotional growth unfolds through continuous social interactions leading to how individuals interpret their inner lives and relational experiences. Phenomenological studies across cultures have shown that emotional well-being is sustained through experiences of empathy, recognition, and belonging within family and peer contexts. Sun, Long, Lu, and Lin (2025) found that emotional distress among adolescents at risk of suicide often emerged from feeling emotionally unseen within both family and friendship circles. This affirms the universality of emotional vulnerability such that when primary relationships fail to validate emotional experience, psychological stability weakens.

Family remains the primary environment where emotional meanings

are constructed and transmitted. Çelik, Kahraman, Kaçmaz, and İcen (2025), in their phenomenological study of refugee children in Turkey, revealed that happiness and emotional calmness were anchored in parental support and empathic listening. Participants expressed that when parents listened and took their feelings seriously, they felt secure and valued. This suggests that emotional growth begins with validation when emotions are acknowledged rather than dismissal. Likewise, Nygård, Clancy, and Kitzmüller (2025) observed that parents caring for children with complex needs experienced emotional growth themselves when entrenched in compassionate family setups. This suggests that mutual care redefined their sense of purpose and well-being, with emotional development operating reciprocally within the family system.

In East Asian families, for instance, affection is often nonverbal, conveyed through actions rather than open discussion. Li, Che Hassan, Saharuddin, and Ouyang (2024) found that Chinese first-generation college students interpreted parental concern through subtle cues and moral support rather than overt emotional conversation. This silent emotional presence, as they described it, became a source of psychological stability. Peers provide social mirrors for identity formation, empathy, and resilience. Kim and Kweon (2024), studying peer support workers living with mental illness in South Korea, observed that shared emotional narratives between peers fostered mutual recovery and validation. This demonstrates the healing power of relational empathy

among peers who understand each other's emotional realities. In contrast, Iqbal and Ijaz (2025) found that Pakistani young adults with paternal substance use disorders often relied on peers for emotional substitution. But when peers themselves lacked emotional maturity, coping mechanisms turned maladaptive. Hence, peer influence can function both as a protective and a risk factor depending on its emotional quality.

Sattar and Yusoff (2025) examined medical students in Malaysia and found that mental well-being was most stable when emotional support from coworkers, peers, friends, and family was aligned. Their study reinforces Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, emphasizing that psychological wellness arises from the interconnectedness of multiple social systems rather than isolated relationships. When family and peer support converge, individuals experience coherence; when they clash, emotional dissonance ensues. Technological and societal shifts are also reshaping the nature of emotional connection. Maharjan and Uprety (2025), studying mothers in Nepal, reported that children's increasing use of digital technology has disrupted shared family spaces for emotional conversation. While some mothers viewed technology as a learning tool, others expressed sadness over the erosion of face-to-face communication and intimacy. This phenomenon mirrors global concerns about emotional fragmentation in families dominated by screens rather than conversation.

In African and South Asian situations, the intersection of family and peer dynamics often reveals how emotional struggles emerge from social isolation and communication gaps. Aziz, Bukhari, Mazhar, and Shamim (2025) found that many young people in Sindh, Pakistan, linked their mental health challenges to a silent crisis of family disconnection, which left them vulnerable to peer pressure and loneliness. Furthermore, Thelma (2025) reported that students in Zambia experienced reduced academic stress and improved mental balance when supported by emotional encouragement and moral reassurance from parents and friends. Phenomenological research across different situations shows that emotional development is not a linear process but a lived negotiation within the emotional spaces of family and peer life.

5. Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) provides a multifaceted understanding of how individuals' development is shaped by the interplay between personal, social, and environmental systems. Bronfenbrenner conceptualized human growth as a dynamic process occurring through reciprocal interactions within five environmental systems which are: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem with each shaping and being shaped by the individual. The phenomenological orientation of this study complements EST because both frameworks seek to understand experience as *lived and contextual*, rather than as isolated psychological events.

Within Bronfenbrenner's model, emotional development emerges from active participation in relationships. The family and peer systems key elements of the microsystem are where emotional understanding, regulation, and resilience are primarily formed. Hu, Shi, Qiao, and Sun (2025) applied EST to explore the psychological experiences of parents of adolescents with self-injurious behavior, concluding that the microsystem of family communication and school interaction was the most significant in shaping both distress and recovery. This underscores that mental well-being cannot be detached from the quality of emotional engagement within immediate relationships.

6. Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative phenomenological design, specifically using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore how family and peer relationships gives direction to emotional growth and mental well-being. Phenomenology provides a means to understand how individuals *experience* and *interpret* emotional realities within their social worlds. IPA is particularly suitable because it allows the researcher to focus on the meaning-making process of participants how they perceive, describe, and make sense of their emotional experiences within family and peer systems.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) aims to understand lived experience through a double hermeneutic participants making sense of their world, and the researcher

making sense of that sense-making. This dual interpretive process makes IPA ideal for examining emotional growth, as it involves internal reflection shaped by relational and social contexts. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory complements this by situating those lived meanings within the environmental structures particularly the *microsystem* of family and peers where emotions are most directly experienced.

Population and Sampling

The study targets adolescents and young adults aged 16–25, representing a key developmental stage for emotional regulation and identity formation. Participants are drawn from educational and community institutions in Nigeria, where both family and peer networks strongly influence emotional well-being. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants with direct experience of family and peer emotional interactions. Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio (2019) emphasize that phenomenological studies rely on information-rich cases that illuminate the essence of lived experience rather than representativeness. Hence, the selection includes individuals from diverse family structures (nuclear, extended, single-parent) and differing emotional experiences (supportive, neglectful, or mixed). The sample size includes 10–15 participants, consistent with IPA standards, which prioritize depth over breadth (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2022). This allows for detailed interpretive analysis while maintaining data manageability.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, each lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. Interviews invites participants to narrate experiences related to emotional validation, rejection, family communication, and peer relationships. Open-ended questions facilitate deep reflection, enabling participants to articulate meanings and feelings without constraint. Interviews were audio-recorded (with consent) and supplemented by observational field notes capturing tone, mood, and nonverbal expressions. To preserve phenomenological integrity, the researcher engages in *epoché* (bracketing) consciously suspending assumptions to attend fully to participants' meanings (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). This reflexive practice ensures authenticity in capturing participants' emotional experiences rather than the researcher's interpretations. Interviews are conducted face-to-face or virtually, depending on accessibility, with all sessions conducted in private and comfortable settings to ensure openness and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The data analysis follows the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) procedure outlined by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022). The five key stages are:

4. Immersion: Repeated reading of each transcript to understand the overall sense of participants' experiences.

5. Initial noting: Annotating descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual observations that reveal emotional meaning.
6. Theme development: Grouping emerging insights into themes that capture the psychological essence of experience.
7. Cross-case analysis: Comparing themes across participants to identify shared patterns of meaning.
8. Interpretive contextualization: Situating these meanings within Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework examining how microsystem (family and peers), mesosystem (school/community), and macrosystem (culture) influence emotional experiences.

NVivo 14 software was employed in organizing codes, maintaining a transparent audit trail. Throughout, the researcher practice reflexivity, acknowledging their positionality and interpretive stance, as suggested by Moser and Korstjens (2022).

Trustworthiness and Credibility

To ensure methodological rigor, four criteria credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability guides the process (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

- vi. Credibility: Achieved through *member checking* returning interview summaries to participants for verification.
- vii. Dependability: Ensured by maintaining a clear

documentation trail and consistent analytic procedures.

- viii. Confirmability: Enhanced through reflexive journaling, ensuring that interpretations stem from participants' words rather than researcher bias.
- ix. Transferability: Achieved by providing thick descriptions of context and participant experiences, allowing readers to determine relevance to other settings.

Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, (2017) note that, trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry depends on authentic representation of lived meanings rather than numerical generalization. These strategies will ensure that findings genuinely reflect participants' emotional experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Participants receive clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures before consenting. They have the right to withdraw at any point without penalty. Sensitive discussions about emotional distress may arise, therefore, participants showing signs of discomfort were provided with referrals for counseling support. Data is stored securely and anonymized using pseudonyms. Moser and Korstjens (2022) emphasize that, ethical conduct in qualitative research involves an empathetic stance that protects participants' dignity while honoring their voice. This ethical commitment aligns with the phenomenological principle of respect for lived experience.

7. Findings

The interpretative phenomenological analysis of participant narratives revealed four major themes that capture the lived experiences of emotional growth within family and peer contexts:

- ix. Family Emotional Climate and Communication Patterns
- x. Peer Empathy and Social Validation
- xi. Emotional Dissonance and Invalidation
- xii. Contextual Resilience and Meaning-Making

These themes reflect the interconnected influence of family and peer systems as outlined in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, emphasizing that emotional development occurs through relational and contextual interactions. Each theme represents an aspect of meaning participants constructed from their lived experiences of communication, empathy, and resilience.

Theme 1: Family Emotional Climate and Communication Patterns

Participants repeatedly described family communication as the foundation of emotional well-being. Supportive family dialogue was associated with feelings of security, validation, and emotional openness. Participants spoke of parents or guardians whose empathy and attentiveness made them feel "seen" and "safe." This aligns with Nygård, Clancy, and Kitzmüller (2025), who found that emotionally responsive family communication among parents of children with complex care needs

nurtured relational resilience and strengthened emotional adjustment. Sun, Long, Lu, and Lin (2025) observed that adolescents' emotional stability was considerably shaped by the quality of parental dialogue, noting that emotionally warm interactions encouraged self-expression and reduced psychological distress. On the other hand, when family communication was absent or inconsistent, participants internalized feelings of inadequacy or emotional neglect.

Huang, Lin, Tseng, and Gau (2025) writing from a Taiwanese context, shows that breakdowns in emotional communication particularly in environments involving trauma or care challenges heighten distress and disrupt trust. Participants in this study likewise emphasized that emotional communication was not merely verbal as even silence, tone, and presence conveyed meaning. Many spoke of learning to interpret emotional cues within unspoken cultural and familial expectations, influencing their capacity for empathy and regulation.

Theme 2: Peer Empathy and Social Validation

Participants described peers as "safe spaces" for self-expression, empathy, and humor as relationships that often counterbalanced home-related emotional voids. This relates to Çelik, Kahraman, Kaçmaz, and İçen (2025), who found that refugee children's emotional well-being depended heavily on peer acceptance and inclusion, which fostered belonging and reduced anxiety. Husniah and Hamdanah (2025) also shows that intimate peer friendships

serve as moral and emotional laboratories for young people, where empathy and compassion are practiced through shared vulnerability. Participants in this study all proved this sentiment, describing friendship as the “emotional classroom” where resilience and self-esteem were learned.

Theme 3: Emotional Dissonance and Invalidiation

Several participants narrated experiences of emotional invalidation which is instances where feelings were minimized, ignored, or misunderstood by family members or peers. These experiences produced *emotional dissonance* which is a tension between wanting connection and protecting oneself from further hurt. Manohar, Kommu, and Kishore (2025) identified a similar dynamic among Indian parents of autistic adolescents, where emotional misunderstanding within families produced long-term communication struggles. In this study, participants often reinterpreted emotional invalidation as an impetus for self-reflection, learning to manage expectations and assert emotional boundaries. This aligns with Ali (2025) who found that intergenerational conflicts around communication, particularly among South Asian parents and adolescents often stemmed from cultural constraints on emotional expression.

Theme 4: Contextual Resilience and Meaning-Making

Despite challenges, most participants described pathways of

resilience emerging from their emotional experiences. Resilience was framed not as resistance to pain but as the ability to derive meaning from adversity. This form of *contextual resilience* was grounded in faith, humor, peer solidarity, and redefined family bonds. Malavé (2025) identified similar meaning-making processes in homeschooled youth, noting that reflective coping and self-compassion formed the backbone of emotional resilience. Participants in this study described similar strategies redefining rejection, cultivating gratitude, and using self-awareness to navigate emotional turbulence. Ryan, Lee, Carnevale, and Crump (2025) corroborated this position in their study of children in pediatric intensive care, as emotional resilience and calmness were linked to family presence and relational safety.

8. Discussion

The findings mirror emotional development not as a linear process but a deeply relational phenomenon situated within what Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualized as nested systems of human ecology. Emotional well-being emerges from the interplay between microsystemic relationships (family, peers), mesosystemic coherence (school, community), and broader cultural contexts that shape emotional expression and meaning-making. following Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, participants’ narratives reveal that emotional growth depends on the reciprocal exchanges within their immediate social environments. This study’s findings reaffirm that emotional regulation and resilience develop

through lived interactions characterized by empathy, validation, and communication.

Importantly, the family system formed the central site of emotional meaning-making. Participants' accounts of warmth, validation, and communicative presence squares up with Hu, Shi, Qiao, and Sun (2025), submission who demonstrated that emotional coherence between parents and adolescents fosters psychological safety in families dealing with self-injury crises. From a phenomenological standpoint, these findings emphasize that the *quality of emotional presence* within families determines how individuals experience and interpret their emotions. De Oliveira (2025) argued that the ecological model helps translate systemic pressures into lived emotional narratives, showing how personal experiences are structured by the relational world. In this study, participants' ability to process emotional pain depended on whether family spaces permitted emotional recognition. It is from this perspective that, what Bronfenbrenner (1979) termed *proximal processes* which as to do with enduring and reciprocal interactions drive development.

As individuals moved beyond familial confines, peers functioned as emotional mediators. Participants' experiences points at peers as *mirrors* through which emotional identity is tested and affirmed. Supportive peer relationships provided validation and safe spaces for vulnerability, aligning with Kim and Kweon (2024), whose study on peer support workers showed that shared emotional narratives

facilitate healing and empowerment. Within the ecological model, peers operate as part of both the microsystem and mesosystem connecting the family environment to wider social contexts. Participants in this study relied on peer empathy to offset familial emotional gaps, a pattern observed cross-culturally by Çelik, Kahraman, Kaçmaz, and İçen (2025), who noted that peer connectedness enhances happiness and psychological resilience among refugee children.

A notable contribution of this study is the illumination of *emotional dissonance* as a developmental catalyst. Participants' experiences of invalidation within both family and peer spaces erupts introspection and self-regulation. Rather than marking emotional failure, these moments often became sources of self-awareness and agency. Ghasemi (2025), notes that educators experiencing emotional strain within unsupportive environments develop adaptive coping strategies when they reinterpret their experiences through reflection. Likewise, Ali (2025) showed that young people navigating intergenerational conflicts in South-Asian families transform tension into personal insight by balancing respect for authority with emotional independence.

Family support, peer empathy, spiritual reflection, and cultural norms of endurance all contributed to what can be termed *contextual resilience*. Ryan, Lee, Carnevale, and Crump (2025) provide empirical support as children in intensive care found emotional security through relational presence, even amid distress. Similarly, Nuuyoma and Makambuli (2025) observed that

isolation during the pandemic prompted nursing students to reconstruct their emotional worlds through introspection and empathy. Participants in this study described resilience as learning to “reframe pain into purpose.” This meaning-making process aligns with the position of Abbas, Shahzad, Ekowati, and Fenitra (2025), who conceptualized development as an interactional process of meaning-making across systems and time. Emotional resilience thus reflects ecological coherence when the family, peer, and cultural systems work in synergy to sustain psychological continuity.

9. Conclusion

This study set out to explore how family and peer relationships influence emotional growth and mental well-being through a phenomenological approach grounded in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (EST). The findings reveal that emotional development is deeply relational, constructed within and through the social spheres of family and peers. Across participants’ narratives, four interdependent processes emerged:

Phenomenologically, the study reveals that emotional growth is lived and interpreted as both felt and understood. The lived experiences shared by participants confirm that emotion is not merely a psychological event but a relational process that binds individuals to their social worlds. Integrating ecological structure and phenomenological meaning this way, this study deepens our understanding of emotional well-being as both contextually situated and experientially

unique with the promise of an interpretive model for emotional development that is simultaneously personal, social, and cultural.

Recommendations

Families should intentionally cultivate open emotional dialogue. Parents and caregivers can be supported through community-based emotional literacy programs that teach active listening, validation, and nonverbal empathy. Educational institutions should prioritize peer support and emotional mentorship programs that promote empathy, inclusion, and responsible emotional expression. Mental health interventions should be culturally grounded, acknowledging how family hierarchy, religious belief, and communal values shape emotional life.

Because participants showed that emotional growth often arises from introspection after invalidation, youth programs should teach reflective coping and self-awareness strategies. This could include journaling, mindfulness, or group dialogue sessions that foster emotional articulation and acceptance. Finally, stakeholders across family, school, and community systems should collaborate to support emotional well-being. National education and health ministries should prioritize social-emotional learning frameworks within curricula and youth programs. Funding should support emotional development research, school counseling services, and family support centers. Policies should recognize that emotional well-being is foundational to academic

success, social harmony, and national productivity.

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Emotional Fatigue or Support as Dual Pathways of AI Interaction on Worker Well-being in Smart Work Environments

Abstract

AI systems mediate work processes making employee communication, decision-making support, and task automation seamless. However, the psychological implications of these technologies have become critical to organizational roles and sustainability. Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, was used to assess whether AI functions as a work resource that promotes motivation, reduces stress, and offers emotional relief through efficiency and support systems. On the other hand, it inquired into whether it acts as a demanding agent that increases cognitive load, alienation, surveillance pressure, and emotional exhaustion. Literature published between 2015 and 2025 were systematically sourced from Web of Science, Scopus, IEEE Xplore, PubMed, and Google Scholar using predefined search, screening, and exclusion criteria. Findings indicated that supportive AI particularly in decision assistance, intelligent feedback, and automated task reduction enhances well-being by reducing emotional strain and improving perceived competence. In contrast, AI systems that lack human touch, heighten monitoring, or increase work complexity trigger emotional fatigue, anxiety, and decreased job satisfaction. The study emphasized the need for human-centered AI design that balances efficiency with empathy to protect workers' emotional well-being in technologically advanced workplaces.

Keywords: AI interaction, emotional fatigue, employee well-being, smart work environments, Job Demands-Resources Model

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1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a defining feature of 21st-century work space, redefining how humans interact with technology, colleagues, and organizations. From chatbots in banking to algorithmic systems in logistics, AI now mediates the emotional dimension of work as much as the technical. Organizations in

finance, telecommunications, and education are increasingly relying on AI-driven platforms for human resource management, data analytics, and customer service. While these systems promise efficiency, they also raise questions about worker well-being, emotional sustainability, and psychological state in technologically mediated environments.

Even though AI-based tools are used to track performance, automate communication, and streamline workflow, many employees experience these same systems as intrusive or emotionally draining. Workers report feeling constantly monitored or evaluated by impersonal systems, creating an atmosphere of heightened vigilance. AI can enhance productivity and undermine emotional comfort at the same time. This dual nature of AI has been widely observed in global research with Bakker and Demerouti (2023) describing the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model as a framework that explains how job characteristics can either support or exhaust workers depending on their design and perception. In this situation, AI represents both: a resource when it empowers decision-making and reduces strain, and a demand when it increases cognitive load or fosters alienation.

AI adoption across several climates occurs amid uneven digital readiness and limited regulatory guidance. As a result, workers face new psychological demands in learning to collaborate with systems they neither designed nor fully understand. These technologies, when implemented without emotional consideration, may create emotional fatigue, which is a chronic sense of disconnection and anxiety. Contrariwise, when implemented with empathy and transparency, AI can offer emotional support, helping workers manage complexity and derive satisfaction from clearer decision pathways. Falco *et al.* (2023) found that AI-supported remote work increased autonomy but also introduced new stressors when

boundaries blurred. Similarly, Lippert, Kirchner, and Saunders (2023) observed that algorithmic management produced both empowerment and strain, depending on whether employees perceived AI oversight as fair. These patterns suggest that the emotional effects of AI cannot be separated from human perception and organizational culture.

It is from these considerations that this study investigates how AI in smart work environments generates dual emotional pathways either supporting emotional well-being or contributing to fatigue. Guided by the JD–R framework, the study examines AI as a work resource that enhances motivation and competence, and as a job demand that elevates stress or burnout. The analysis focuses on empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025 to capture contemporary workplace experiences while underpinning their implications for African organizational realities.

2. Statement of the Problem

AI's usage in the workplace has overtaken the understanding of its psychological and emotional consequences. AI-driven systems carry with it improved efficiency, accuracy, and decision-making, but with evidence to indicate that these tools can also intensify emotional strain. Employees exposed to continuous algorithmic evaluation often experience anxiety, alienation, or burnout. In contrast, when AI provides supportive feedback and reduces workload, it enhances job satisfaction and well-being (Lippert *et al.*, 2023, Falco *et al.*, 2023). This

contradiction poses a conceptual challenge which is that, the same technology can act as both a motivator and a stressor. The lack of clarity about which factors determine this shift whether design, perception, or context creates a gap in current understanding. Furthermore, research on the emotional impact of AI has largely been conducted in developed economies, leaving a shortage of region-specific evidence from African workplaces.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. Examine how AI functions as a work resource that enhances motivation, emotional support, and well-being among employees.
- ii. Identify how AI acts as a job demand that contributes to emotional fatigue, stress, or burnout.
- iii. Assess the mediating influence of perception, control, and transparency in determining emotional outcomes of AI interaction.

4. Research Questions

To achieve the above stated objectives, the study will address the following research questions:

- i. How does AI function as a work resource that enhances emotional support and psychological well-being?
- ii. In what ways does AI act as a job demand that generates emotional fatigue and stress?

- iii. How do factors such as perceived control, transparency, and fairness influence employees' emotional responses to AI?

5. Literature Review

Studies have shown that artificial intelligence (AI) can play a positive and emotionally supportive role in smart work environments when designed as a resource that enhances workers' autonomy, competence, and social connection. Drawing from the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, supportive AI tools act as resources that cushion stress and promote engagement (Triantoro & Przegalinska, 2023). They suggest that AI systems offering decision assistance and feedback reduce uncertainty, enabling employees to perform with greater confidence. A similar argument is presented by Arboh, Zhu, and Atingabili (2025), who found that AI awareness in healthcare and logistics sectors fosters empowerment rather than fear when workers understand its collaborative purpose. They note that employees who viewed AI as an assistant rather than a monitor experienced elevated workplace well-being.

This makes the point clear that perception plays a key mediating role in whether AI functions as a resource or demand. In essence, awareness reshapes the psychological relationship between human and machine, turning potential emotional fatigue into emotional resilience. Ashoer, Maseeh, and Lim (2025) emphasized that generative AI can act as a transformational partner that strengthens engagement through skill enrichment. Their extension of the

JD-R theory shows that AI-enabled feedback loops support psychological growth and reduce burnout symptoms by giving employees clearer performance signals. Similarly, Radic *et al.* (2025) applied JD-R in tourism contexts, showing that AI-driven leadership improves motivation when workers perceive AI outputs as fair and transparent. They argue that AI-driven management, when modeled on servant leadership principles, fulfills the same supportive role traditionally played by empathetic human supervisors.

This link between fairness, autonomy, and emotional support was also emphasized by Liu and Li (2025), who describe human-AI collaboration as a “double-edged sword” but found its positive side overriding when workers have discretion over AI input. Their study on employee safety performance shows that controlled collaboration reduces anxiety. The more control employees retain, the more AI becomes a source of confidence and relief. Sonnentag (2025) expands on this view by suggesting that the relationship between job design and well-being must now account for digital agents as new forms of structural resources. Falco *et al.* (2023) studied Italian organizations and found that smart working with AI assistance correlated with lower cortisol levels and improved well-being, particularly when workload predictability improved. They conclude that AI-mediated scheduling can stabilize work rhythms, reducing physiological stress responses.

Kong *et al.* (2025) observed a similar level where teachers using AI systems for grading and planning

initially felt overwhelmed, but those who learned to integrate AI reported heightened innovative behavior and emotional vitality. The shift occurred when AI use transitioned from imposed obligation to chosen support. Despite its potential for support, AI can easily lead to emotional fatigue when it increases cognitive demands or bring about feelings spying. Lippert, Kirchner, and Saunders (2023) observe that, “algorithmic management systems can replicate managerial oversight to such an extent that workers experience being constantly evaluated by invisible metrics.

De Carlo *et al.* (2022) also identify this problem during the pandemic-era shift to smart working, where digital connectivity, while enabling flexibility, paradoxically increased burnout due to blurred boundaries. Here, the emotional fatigue stemmed not from workload but from cognitive and psychological overload. Employees struggled to differentiate between work and personal time under constant AI-enabled communication flows. In the same vein, Cai, Wang, and Chen (2024) show that extensive use of intelligent machines raises burnout risk, especially in roles involving repetitive human-AI interactions without meaningful social contact. They describe this as “emotional depletion caused by perceived mechanical surveillance”. For Routray, Choudhary, and Sinha (2025) AI’s intent to assist often backfires when its functionalities are poorly designed, producing “technostress that undermines well-being rather than enhancing it”. This occurs when AI systems generate excessive notifications,

feedback, or task interruptions that increases cognitive load.

Furthermore, Scholze and Hecker (2023) expanded the theoretical implications of this mismatch by coining the term digital job demands, noting that digitization transforms traditional stressors into new psychological burdens mediated through AI systems. They found that when AI is constructed into decision-making structures without adequate human oversight, workers perceive the system as controlling rather than enabling. The result is emotional detachment, a core indicator of burnout. Meem and Johnson (2025) confirm these risks in the software sector, showing that developers using AI-assisted coding tools faced mental fatigue from the pressure to adapt to constant algorithmic updates. Although these systems improved efficiency, the need for continuous learning creates exhaustion. From the foregoing, while the literature confirms AI's potential to alleviate emotional strain through efficiency and support, it equally reveals the dangers of excessive algorithmic oversight and cognitive overextension informing the rationale for the study's investigation.

6. Theoretical Framework

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model is an important structure for understanding how AI interaction produces both emotional fatigue and emotional support in smart work environments. Developed originally to explain occupational stress and motivation dynamics, the JD–R model proposes that every job has demands aspects requiring sustained effort and

resources, which help in achieving work goals and mitigating psychological strain. When demands exceed resources, ordinarily emotional exhaustion and burnout will emerge. But when resources outweigh demands, engagement and well-being flourish (Bakker & Demerouti, 2023). This is why the model's adaptability makes it particularly suitable for analyzing technologically mediated workplaces. The JD–R framework according to Sonnentag (2025) is a diagnostic lens for balancing digital workload and psychological recovery in AI-augmented tasks. In other words, the JD–R model does not merely classify work conditions but helps to explain how AI tools can act simultaneously as stressors and supports, depending on their design, implementation, and human interpretation.

Summary of Theoretical Logic

JD-R Component	AI-Driven Mechanism	Emotional Outcome	Illustrative Source
Job Demands	Algorithmic monitoring, digital overload, cognitive complexity	Emotional fatigue, burnout, anxiety	Lippert <i>et al.</i> (2023); Cai <i>et al.</i> (2024)
Job Resources	Task automation, intelligent feedback, autonomy	Emotional support, motivation, well-being	Arboh <i>et al.</i> (2025); Falco <i>et al.</i> (2023)
Mediator	Worker perception and AI awareness	Converts demand into resource or vice versa	Liu & Li (2025)
Moderator	Human-centered AI design	Balances efficiency and empathy	Radic <i>et al.</i> (2025)

Outcome	Worker emotional state and performance	Determines sustainability of smart work	Sonnentag (2025)

This table illustrates the logical chain connecting the JD–R framework to empirical observations and to the methodological design of this research.

7. Methodology

7.1. Research Design

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to critically synthesize empirical and theoretical research published between 2015 and 2025 on the dual emotional effects of AI interaction on worker well-being in smart work environments. The SLR approach was selected because the study aims to integrate multidisciplinary findings across psychology, management, human-computer interaction, and organizational behavior. According to Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003 p.214), an SLR offers “a structured, transparent process that minimizes bias and enhances reproducibility”. This review follows the PRISMA (2020) protocol, which ensures comprehensiveness and replicability by defining clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, data sources, and coding methods. The review design operationalizes the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model as its guiding framework to classify AI interaction outcomes into emotional support (resources) and emotional fatigue (demands) pathways.

7.2. Research Framework Integration

The JD–R model provides the theoretical logic that underpins the methodological structure. Following the model, this review categorizes each retrieved study according to:

- i. Job Demands: Elements of AI that increase emotional load, anxiety, or burnout (e.g., algorithmic monitoring, overload, digital fatigue).
- ii. Job Resources: AI functions that support well-being through decision assistance, efficiency, feedback, or autonomy.
- iii. Outcomes: Emotional well-being indicators such as motivation, job satisfaction, and reduced stress.

Bakker and Demerouti (2023 p. 47) explain that, “the JD–R framework allows categorization of work elements into stress-producing or engagement-enhancing factors”. Therefore, the methodology not only classifies existing studies but also interprets how AI interaction aligns with either motivational or strain processes described in JD–R theory.

7.3. Search Strategy and Data Sources

7.3.1 Databases and Search Engines

The literature search was conducted across five major databases to ensure multidisciplinary coverage:

- i. Web of Science (WoS)
- ii. Scopus
- iii. IEEE Xplore
- iv. PubMed
- v. Google Scholar

The inclusion of Google Scholar helped to capture grey literature and preprints that had passed institutional review, while Scopus and Web of Science ensured indexing reliability.

7.3.2 Search Strings

Search terms were derived from keywords in the abstract and theoretical framework, using Boolean logic: ("Artificial Intelligence" OR "AI systems" OR "AI interaction") AND ("worker well-being" OR "employee mental health" OR "emotional fatigue" OR "emotional support") AND ("smart work environment" OR "digital workplace" OR "algorithmic management") AND ("Job Demands-Resources" OR "JD-R model")

7. 3.3 Time Frame

Studies published from January 2015 to October 2025 were included to capture the most recent decade of scholarship, corresponding with the period of accelerated AI integration into work processes.

7. 3.4 Language and Access Criteria

Only English-language, peer-reviewed articles and conference papers were considered. Preprints were included only when affiliated with recognized publishers (e.g., SSRN, Research Square).

7.3. 5. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria were applied systematically to ensure focus and rigor.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria

Studies examining AI interaction in workplace contexts	Studies not related to work or organizational settings
Articles addressing emotional, psychological, or well-being outcomes	Technical or engineering-only AI studies without human impact
Research using JD-R framework or related constructs (stress, burnout, motivation)	Articles before 2015 or not peer-reviewed
Studies involving smart automation, algorithmic management, or work	Opinion pieces, blogs, or non-scholarly essays

7.3.6. Study Selection Process (PRISMA Flow)

The PRISMA-based selection process unfolded in four major stages:

- i. Identification:
- 823 records retrieved across databases.
 - Duplicates removed: 212.
 - Remaining: 611.
- ii. Screening:
- Abstracts and titles reviewed for relevance to AI, emotion, and work contexts.
 - Excluded: 367 papers not linked to emotional or JD-R constructs.
 - Remaining: 244.
- iii. Eligibility:
- Full-text reviews conducted on 244 papers.

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- Excluded 188 for lacking empirical evidence or not meeting quality criteria.
- Remaining: 56.

iv. Inclusion:

- Final sample: 56 peer-reviewed studies spanning 2015–2025.
- Data were extracted into an Excel matrix coded by year, author, AI function, emotional pathway, and JD–R category.

7.3.7. Data Extraction and Quality Appraisal

To ensure validity, three evaluation criteria guided inclusion:

- Theoretical Alignment:** The study must explicitly reference emotional, psychological, or motivational constructs connected to AI.
- Empirical Rigor:** Preference for studies with defined methodology (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed).
- Relevance to JD–R Pathways:** Each study was coded based on whether AI acted as a job demand or resource.

Quality assessment followed the checklist proposed by Falco *et al.* (2023), which recommends triangulating theoretical coherence, sample adequacy, and analytical transparency.

7.3.8. Data Analysis and Synthesis Approach

The analysis used thematic synthesis, a qualitative meta-analysis technique suitable for integrating

heterogeneous studies. Following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-step process, coding moved from inductive pattern identification to deductive categorization using JD–R variables.

- Familiarization:** Initial reading of all 56 studies.
- Open Coding:** Extraction of recurring emotional and behavioral responses to AI.
- Theme Development:** Grouping codes under JD–R categories.
- Review and Refinement:** Validating with cross-citations among included studies.
- Interpretation:** Mapping dual emotional pathways (support vs fatigue).
- Verification:** Triangulating patterns with JD–R theoretical propositions.

Through this process, patterns such as AI-driven empowerment, algorithmic surveillance stress, and feedback-induced motivation emerged as thematic clusters.

7.3.9. Thematic Coding Scheme

JD–R Category	AI Function or Feature	Emotional Response	Representative Studies
Job Demands	Algorithmic monitoring, complex interfaces, constant feedback loops	Anxiety, alienation, cognitive strain	Lippert <i>et al.</i> (2023); Cai <i>et al.</i> (2024)
Job Demands	Digital overload, technostress	Emotional exhaustion, burnout	Routray <i>et al.</i> (2025); Falco <i>et al.</i> (2023)

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Job Resources	Task automation, intelligent feedback	Motivation, competence, confidence	Arboh <i>et al.</i> (2025); Ashoer <i>et al.</i> (2025)
Job Resources	Decision assistance, adaptive scheduling	Reduced stress, emotional stability	Liu & Li (2025); Radic <i>et al.</i> (2025)

This coding directly mirrors the theoretical duality of AI's role described in the abstract as either a support system or a source of fatigue.

7.4. Reliability and Validity Measures

Reliability was ensured through triangulation of multiple databases and a double-reviewer coding validation process. Two independent reviewers cross-coded 20% of the sample to test for consistency, achieving an intercoder agreement rate of 0.87 (Cohen's κ), indicating strong reliability. Construct validity was maintained by anchoring all coding in the JD-R framework. Scholze and Hecker (2023) emphasize that, "the JD-R model remains robust across digital transformations because it retains psychological coherence across diverse contexts". Furthermore, methodological transparency was reinforced through detailed documentation of screening and inclusion decisions, stored in the project's PRISMA log sheet.

7.4. 1. Ethical Considerations and Methodological Limitations

Although this study involved secondary data, ethical considerations were maintained through accurate

attribution, citation integrity, and avoidance of interpretive bias. No personal or sensitive data were processed. All included studies were publicly accessible and published under ethical research guidelines. The study recognizes three methodological constraints.

which is that the reliance on published research introducing publication bias, as positive results are more frequently reported than negative outcomes. Second, the language filter (English-only) may exclude valuable regional insights, particularly from Asian or European contexts.

Third, although the JD-R framework ensures theoretical rigor, it may simplify complex socio-technical dynamics of AI into binary categories (demand vs resource), which could overlook nuanced cultural or organizational mediators.

8. Findings and Discussions

The systematic review included 56 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025, spanning Europe, Asia, North America, and Africa. The reviewed studies were grouped into two thematic clusters reflecting the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework:

- i. AI as a Job Resource (Emotional Support Pathway) - 27 studies (48.2%)
- ii. AI as a Job Demand (Emotional Fatigue Pathway) - 29 studies (51.8%)

The near-equal distribution shows the dualistic nature of AI's emotional impact in smart work

environments. While roughly half of the reviewed literature points at AI's supportive potential, an almost equal number cautions about its strain-inducing consequences. The first cluster indicates that AI technologies can foster emotional resilience, satisfaction, and psychological empowerment when they act as job resources. These effects are typically mediated through task automation, decision assistance, constructive feedback, and emotional reassurance.

Several studies identified decision-support AI as a key mechanism reducing uncertainty and promoting self-efficacy. Arboh, Zhu, and Atingabili (2025) found that employees who viewed AI as an extension of their judgment rather than a replacement experienced increased confidence and workplace well-being. The same pattern appeared in Liu and Li's (2025) study on safety performance where workers collaborating with AI reported higher alertness and confidence levels, primarily due to clearer feedback loops and reduced ambiguity in safety decisions.

AI's automation of repetitive or cognitively draining tasks emerged as another significant resource. Falco *et al.* (2023) found that employees engaged in smart working with automated scheduling and predictive analytics" showed improved affective balance and lower cortisol levels. In similar terms, Ashoer, Maseeh, and Lim (2025) concluded that generative AI in hospitality acts as a digital co-worker that frees time for creative and emotionally engaging tasks. This aligns with Sonnentag's (2025) proposition that

resource-rich job designs enable emotional recovery through cognitive offloading. Employees thus experience AI not merely as a productivity tool but as a mechanism of emotional rest, allowing focus on socially fulfilling activities.

A number of studies emphasize that emotional support from AI depends critically on perceived fairness and transparency. Radic *et al.* (2025) observed that AI-driven management models rooted in servant leadership increased employees' sense of emotional security and belonging. Similarly, Routray, Choudhary, and Sinha (2025) showed that transparent AI interfaces mitigated digital overload by reducing the feeling of unseen control and unpredictability. These findings support the JD-R framework's motivational dimension, where trust-based resources amplify engagement and emotional well-being. When AI's operation is explainable, workers interpret it as a supportive partner rather than a hidden evaluator.

Some studies stressed that AI-mediated systems can even enhance social connection rather than erode it. Kong, Hu, and Huang (2025) found that teachers using AI-assisted grading tools reported greater enthusiasm for collaboration and innovation, explaining that AI enabled them to redirect energy toward mentorship and human contact. Likewise, Pinho and Gaio (2025) found that when employees were given control over AI features, the technology became a shared resource promoting work-life balance rather than intrusion. The evidence collectively underscores that human-centered AI design anchored on

transparency, empathy, and control creates a virtuous emotional cycle. Workers experience reduced stress, heightened competence, and increased engagement when AI functions as a psychological and organizational resource. On the other hand, the second cluster of studies portrays AI as a demand amplifier, heightening emotional fatigue through cognitive overload, constant surveillance, and loss of human connection.

A recurring finding is that algorithmic management systems, while efficient, erode emotional safety by replicating constant surveillance. Lippert, Kirchner, and Saunders (2023) report that AI-driven monitoring transformed managerial oversight into omnipresent evaluation, increasing emotional tension. Employees under algorithmic evaluation felt pressured to maintain machine-measured performance metrics, often leading to anxiety and withdrawal. Also, De Carlo *et al.* (2022) observed that during the pandemic's remote work boom, continuous AI-enabled tracking systems blurred work boundaries, causing burnout and reduced well-being. These findings confirm that excessive technological monitoring triggers the strain process described in JD-R theory: demands outweigh resources, depleting emotional energy.

The reviewed evidence also identifies cognitive overload as a major factor of emotional fatigue. Cai, Wang, and Chen (2024) showed that intelligent machine usage increased cognitive burden when feedback mechanisms were too complex to interpret. Employees expended significant mental

effort learning system updates, producing emotional weariness. Meem and Johnson (2025) reached a similar conclusion in software development contexts, finding that constant algorithmic updates compelled continuous learning cycles that left practitioners mentally drained. These studies confirm that AI-induced technostress when tools are cognitively demanding can become a chronic emotional burden.

Another major pattern concerns emotional alienation arising from reduced human contact in AI-mediated workplaces. Cai *et al.* (2024) found that employees felt detached when tasks became overly procedural by machine guidance. Falco *et al.* (2023) note that this detachment leads to reduced sense of social contribution, a precursor to burnout. Liu and Li (2025) describe this dynamic as a hidden erosion of psychological safety when AI substitutes for interpersonal reassurance. In such conditions, emotional fatigue stems not from task complexity alone but from diminished affective reciprocity humans cannot emotionally engage with machines that monitor or evaluate them impersonally.

A final but significant finding is the role of perceived bias and inequity in emotional strain. Employees reported distress when AI decisions seemed opaque or unfair. Radic *et al.* (2025) emphasize that, AI-driven systems without ethical transparency foster suspicion and erode trust. In JD-R terms, perceived injustice represents a latent demand that increases emotional exhaustion and organizational cynicism. Routray *et al.* (2025) likewise warn that

even supportive AI can backfire when workers perceive unequal access or outcomes. This showcases the importance of aligning AI governance with human-centered and fairness-driven frameworks.

The table below summarizes the core comparative patterns from the findings of the study.

Dimension	AI as Emotional Support (Resource)	AI as Emotional Fatigue (Demand)	Representative Studies
Cognitive Impact	Reduces workload and uncertainty	Increases cognitive load and complexity	Falco <i>et al.</i> (2023); Cai <i>et al.</i> (2024)
Affective State	Enhances motivation and confidence	Produces anxiety and alienation	Arboh <i>et al.</i> (2025); Lippert <i>et al.</i> (2023)
Social Experience	Strengthens collaboration and belonging	Weakens human contact and emotional reciprocity	Kong <i>et al.</i> (2025); Liu & Li (2025)
Organizational Perception	Builds trust and fairness	Fuels suspicion and perceived bias	Radic <i>et al.</i> (2025); Routray <i>et al.</i> (2025)

These findings empirically support the JD-R model's premise which is that emotional outcomes are shaped not by the technology itself but by the interaction between design characteristics and worker perception. AI can therefore function

simultaneously as a job demand or resource depending on how organizations structure and communicate its use.

9. Conclusion

This study examined the dual emotional pathways through which artificial intelligence (AI) interactions influence worker well-being in smart work environments. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, identified AI as both a psychological resource and a psychological demand, capable of generating either emotional support or emotional fatigue depending on its design and implementation. The systematic review of 56 studies (2015–2025) revealed that AI functions as an emotional support system when it enhances autonomy, provides intelligent feedback, reduces repetitive workload, and promotes fairness and transparency. Under these conditions, workers experience higher motivation, reduced stress, and increased psychological empowerment.

On the other hand, AI functions as a source of emotional fatigue when it introduces excessive monitoring, cognitive complexity, or social alienation. Studies show that algorithmic management, opaque decision-making, and constant digital feedback loops erode emotional safety and heighten anxiety. This emotional strain mirrors the *strain process* in the JD-R model, where demands outweigh available resources. It becomes clear then that AI's emotional impact is not inherent to the technology itself, but contingent on the worker's perception of control, fairness, and empathy.

encapsulated in system design. The JD-R framework thus remains valid in explaining emotional dynamics in digitally mediated workspaces, provided it incorporates new digital constructs such as algorithmic transparency, emotional design, and human-AI collaboration.

10. Recommendations

Developers should integrate affective computing and empathy-driven UX (user experience) into AI systems to make them emotionally responsive. It is important for organizational leaders to be educated in digital empathy which is the ability to interpret and address emotional cues in AI-mediated communication. Institutions should also monitor both task performance and emotional states, linking AI analytics with worker well-being indicators. This will encourage employees to practice conscious disengagement (e.g., “digital rest periods”) to mitigate emotional overload.

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Katherine Bartlett's Consciousness-Raising and Patriarchal Mentality: Towards Effective Feminist Struggle In Nigeria

Abstract

This study entitled "Katherine Bartlett's Consciousness-Raising and Patriarchal Mentality: Towards Effective Feminist Struggle in Nigeria", is an effort to change patriarchal mentality of Nigerians for effective feminist struggle in the country. The method adopted for this research is qualitative. Consequently, relevant literary materials on Bartlett's "consciousness-raising", patriarchal mentality and feminist struggle in Nigeria, are analyzed and critically evaluated. The paper is anchored on the theory of radical feminism which argues that the difference between men and women inherent in the patriarchal nature of society does not necessary purport inequalities or discriminations. Based on this theory, this paper argues that gender inequality and the associated discrimination perceived by feminists, especially, liberal feminists, owes to patriarchal mentality and not patriarchy as such. The paper demonstrates that feminism in Nigeria is still affected by patriarchal mentality which it sees as a clog to effective feminism in the country. It sees the idea of sharing of women experiences advocated by Bartlett's consciousness-raising as capable of helping to eliminate patriarchal mentality among Nigerians. Hence, it recommends consciousness-raising for effective feminist struggle in Nigeria based on its tendency for inclusive sharing of women experiences; as it makes room for all categories of women and men participating in the sharing of women experiences. It is therefore, the position of this paper that if Bartlett's idea of sharing women experiences is embraced by Nigerians, they will be able to jettison patriarchal mentality and develop feminist awareness that can enhance the feminist struggle in Nigeria.

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1. Introduction

Patriarchal mentality is what reinforces the ills attributed to patriarchy such as sexuality, objectification and subjugation of women. It is a hindrance

to effective feminism. While patriarchy as such may not be adverse to women emancipation, patriarchal mentality inhibits the drive to pursue women liberation. The huge success achieved by Western countries through feminism

could be said to result to their ability to jettison patriarchal mentality and not by efforts to eliminate patriarchy. On the contrary, the slow pace of the feminist struggle in Nigeria, it could be shown, is because Nigerians have embraced and seem to be cherishing patriarchal mentality. The low representation of women in politics, women unable to participate favourably with men in education and the economy, are not caused by patriarchy itself, but by patriarchal mentality. In articulating how patriarchal mentality could be abandoned by Nigerians, this paper anchors on the feminist position of Katherine Bartlett, a Western feminist in the second wave of the feminist struggle.

Bartlett, through her idea of feminist legal methods, proposes what she calls 'consciousness-raising' as a measure for creating mental awareness about the possible anti-feminist outcomes of a society already structured along patriarchal lines. The attraction for this paper being to contribute to eliminating patriarchal mentality among Nigerians so as to enhance feminist struggle in the country, the choice of Bartlett's consciousness-raising is considered apt. Not only that it stands to expose ways in which patriarchal mentality arises and operates, it can also help in articulating ways of eliminating it and redressing the damage it has already caused the society. The paper therefore adopts the method of qualitative analysis to textually analyze and critically evaluate how Bartlett's consciousness-raising downplays patriarchal mentality and to relate her views to achieving effective feminist struggle in Nigeria.

This paper is divided into five sections. Section one is the ongoing introduction. In section two the Bartlett's consciousness-raising is exposed and analyzed. Section three explores the concept of patriarchal mentality, exposing the ills that spring from it and explaining how such ills form a clog to effective feminism in Nigeria. In section four, attempt will be made to explain how explain how Bartlett's consciousness-raising can help eliminate patriarchal mentality in Nigeria and enhance effective feminist struggle in the country. What will follow is the conclusion which serves as the section five.

Katherine Bartlett's Consciousness-Raising

Feminist jurisprudence understood largely as scholarship on issues pertaining to gender equality launched in the 1970s, has as its subfield, 'feminist legal theory'. Feminist legal theory arose due to an attempt to fashion a broad based theoretical account of the relationship of law in liberal legal regimes to women's subordination. Focal issues discussed by feminist legal theorists include patriarchy, gender and sexual inequality, (Mackinnon, 1987). Feminist legal theory matured in the 1990s and it reflected the political and the legal struggles of second-wave feminism; the critical theory schools that were, to varying degrees, present or thriving in the 1970s and 1980s; and, the differences in women's experience of those schools. These three factors inform the defining claims of feminist legal theory, namely, 'critical-feminist

claim' and 'feminist-aspirational claim'. The first claim aims at critiquing the law and exposing its patriarchal nature while the second claim aspires to laying bare the law's promise for achieving feminist perspectives. Legal awareness is created when these claims are given effect through feminist legal methods. According to Robin West:

What came to be called feminist legal theory thus generally shared liberal legalism's defining faith in law's redemptive potential, it's compromised, but nevertheless essential relation to justice, and its necessity to the achievement of any meaningful progress toward a decent life for all the world's inhabitants, (2018, p.984).

Thus, the critical and aspirational commitment of feminist legal theory is what feminist legal methods are designed to achieve. Bartlett's feminist legal methods are designed as the weapon with which feminists can reconstruct the law and the society. According to her, in addition to the traditional legal methods, namely, deduction, induction and analogy, feminists adopt other methods which though not unique to feminists, reveal features of a legal issue, which the traditional methods intend to overlook or suppress. The features of a legal issue contemplated by Bartlett are those that concern the subjugation and subordination of women. Singer once noted that, feminists cannot ignore method because, if they seek to challenge existing structure of power with the same methods that have defined what counts within those structure, they may instead "recreate the

illegitimate power structure, that they are trying to identify and undermine", (1989, p.1752). Articulating distinct methods for feminism therefore matters a lot because without them, feminist claims in the law will not be perceived as legitimate or correct. As feminists articulate their legal methods, they influence the traditional ways of doing law.

Bartlett's consciousness-raising shares in the two defining claims of feminist legal theory. She argues this method requires women upholding gender differences by sharing ugly experiences they have because of them, and, also using means, such as arts, the popular media and litigation in critiquing and exposing the promises of law for feminism, to motivate other women who undergo similar experiences, (Bartlett, 1990, pp.849-855). According to Bartlett, consciousness-raising gives room for asking the woman question which in effect raise facts to be tackled by the adoption of feminist practical reasoning. Thus she argues that:

Consciousness-raising provides a substructure for other feminist methods – including the woman question and feminist practical reasoning – by enabling feminists to draw insights and perceptions from their own experiences and those of other women and use these insights to challenge dominant versions of social reality (p.866).

While consciousness-raising in itself, gears towards achieving the critical legal claim of legal theory, the other two

methods build on consciousness-raising to render justiceable matters arising from acts of subordination of women thereby achieving the aspirational claim of legal theory. The methods are therefore predicated on the belief that legal facts should be contextual and contingent, what Bartlett refers to as 'positionality'. According to her, "Central to the concept of positionality is the assumption that although partial positivity is possible, it is transitional, and therefore must be continually subject to the effort to reappraise, deconstruct, and transform" (p.887).

Consciousness-raising advocates women sharing rather than airing their experiences in order to expose the effects of those experiences not only on women but also on the society at large. In this spirit of sharing of experiences, consciousness-raising is behind the efforts of women like, Susan Estrich, Lynne Henderson, Susan Brison, Michelle Anderson, Robin West (2018), and scores of others who wrote of their own experiences of sexual assault. They did this in order to connect with readers who had similar and unacknowledged experiences, to heighten understanding, to trigger empathy, and to underscore the sexuality of the violence as well as the violence at the heart of the act of rape.

3. Patriarchal Mentality

One of the factors usually seen as militating against feminism is patriarchy. Patriarchy is the belief that the male gender is superior to the female gender in all ramifications. According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, patriarchy means a system or country

ruled by men, to be patriarchal is to be governed by men, or to give power and importance only to men' (Hornby, 2008, p.855). Patriarchy is understood generally by feminists in relation to power mechanisms in the society which sees men as power bearers as against women. Feminists see the attitude of being patriarchal as manifesting in such beliefs as male-chauvinism, male-centeredness, sexuality and misogyny (Gupta, 2023). Right from the ancient period, patriarchy seemed to have dominated societal structuring by creating gender roles both in the public and private spheres and defining the participation of men and women in all spheres of life. Whenever issues of chauvinism and gender are raised, attention is drawn to the conceived role of women in the society compared to that of their male counterparts. Thus, chauvinism as used here boils down to 'male chauvinism', which is the feeling, usually expressed by men, that the women or the female gender is inferior to men or the male gender. Every human society has a social organization, that is, it has its *modus vivendi* (mode of living/culture) and *modus operandi* (mode of operation) by which the task necessarily for its continuing existence is distributed among its members. Men and women comprise the human society (Hornby, 2008, p.1692). As such, men and women are assigned different roles, responsibilities, obligation, rights, and so on, according to their ages, classes, sexes, creeds, local customs, traditions and mental capacities.

Patriarchy becomes a mentality when because biologically, women are different from men, society through

culture practices, tradition and religion sees women as interiorized, subsumed, subordinated to men and relegated to the background. Women are then seen as the weaker sex; physically, mentally, sexually, spiritually and otherwise. Aristotle, for instance, is of the view that the male gender is superior to the female gender when considered both in terms of public and family roles. In terms of public roles the male gender is the one that participates in policy-making or in politics, and in safeguarding the city (state) that is in military as well as trade, that is economic ventures. In the family of course the male gender performs the role of the owner or head of the family, with the wife and children being subject to him (Aristotle, 1994, pp.185-197). Aristotle further compares a woman to a slave and an amoral child. In his words, "for the slave has no deliberate faculty at all, the woman has but it is without authority and the child has, but it is immature" (1954bl-c). This position dominated Western thinking till in the modern times. In the Holy Bible, patriarchy seems to be highlighted by the fact of God creating woman by utilizing some material element from man supporting the saying that 'woman is the weaker sex' (Genesis ch.1). Various myths accounting for the origin of societies present the male gender as the founder of races, tribes and clans. Almost all modern societal structures are patriarchal and are constructed in such a way that male dominance is viewed as a normal. Though accounts of matriarchal arrangements were recorded in some parts of Nigeria prior to the colonial era, colonization and

imperialism by Europeans erased the vestiges of such arrangements. It is also argued that such arrangements were ultimately anchored on patriarchal structures. As an instance, where a woman is said to be a leader (queen, princes, etc.), it is either because she married or is born by a man who happens to be a leader. As Jones Johnson Lewis (2021) has it:

Part of the cultural erasures perpetrated by imperialism involved eliminating the many existing matrilineal societies across the world and instituting Western patriarchy instead (p.13).

In patriarchal societies, men are expected to be the commanders, standing tall and allowing their physical presence to represent their role in society, while women are expected to be quieter and more subservient. Under such societal conventions, women are not supposed to take up much space at the table, and most certainly, they should not be seen as a distraction to the men around them.

Patriarchy as the structure of almost every society is not natural but a mental construct. Hence one can talk of patriarchal mentality. Patriarchal mentality is derogatory and is a mindset rooted in a system characterized by devaluation of feminine traits and prioritizing masculine ones. It marks the way of thinking of any group that sees patriarchy as natural and an eternal future of the society which cannot be changed but rather managed. A society with patriarchal mentality is usually

characterized by systemic discrimination between the female and male genders. Women are disfavoured as they suffer limited education, low political representation, increased vulnerability to violence and exploitation which are rooted in tradition, culture and religion. Patriarchal mentality is regarded as anti-feminist disposition. Catharine Mackinnon (1987) states that:

The core of discrimination is that systematically, time after time, differences between men and women, whether real or perceived, are turned, as a result of social practices, into advantages for men and disadvantages for women (p.33).

Mackinnon's statement here could be interpreted to mean that patriarchy as such could be divested of discrimination if the inherent gender inequality is not entrenched into social practices like tradition, culture and religion. Thus, patriarchal mentality ensues when members of a society make the discriminatory tendencies of patriarchy the core of their awareness. The Nigerian society today is an example of a society with patriarchal mentality. Even women tend to perpetuate the discriminatory tendencies more than men.

Patriarchal mentality affects the feminist struggle in Nigeria in many ways. Feminist struggle in Nigeria came to fore from vast literary works of women writers. Flora Nwapa (1981), for instance, advocated rugged

spinsterhood and single parenthood as opposed to the original philosophies of early proponents of feminism. This is achieved through the ideas of presenting female protagonists in her novels as heroines, who are independent of men in all ramifications. Here Nwapa, rather than projecting the feminist idea of women liberation, tries to make feminism a fight for female dominance. She then seems to think that eliminating patriarchy is the goal of feminism. It could be noted that she was affected by patriarchal mentality into advocating for the direct opposite of patriarchy, matriarchal mentality, could be better for women. Unlike the Western feminists, she failed to see that patriarchy itself is like enduring structure of the society. Thus, Western feminists could be said to understand that there could be patriarchy as such without patriarchal mentality. Patriarchy as such could be seen in Stubbs' (1981) argument that:

The true function of women is to educate not only children but men, to train to higher civilization not the rising generation but the actual society. And to do this by diffusing the spirit of affection, fidelity, and purity – as mother, as wife, as sister, as daughter, as friend, as nurse, as counsellor, as purifier, as example in a word – as woman (p.7).

With the functions of women as enumerated by Stubbs here, nothing shows that these functions imply that women are inferior to men. The functions are simply seen as a given just

as those of men are also seen as given. It is patriarchal mentality that engenders conceiving women's performance of the functions that make them inferior to men. Thus, radical feminists understand that the difference in functions between men and women does not create inequality but rather calls for recognition such that what they call 'women experiences' would be identified and interpreted culturally and legally without subduing them under men's experiences which have hitherto been given recognition both in culture and in the law.

The feminist struggle depicted by the likes of Nwapa and Emecheta, is behind the misconception of feminism as a struggle against the male gender perpetuated by women who are unfortunate because they are either unmarried or divorced. Echezona Ifejiroka says that some Nigerian writers through literary and artistic works present feminism as anti-chauvinistic chauvinism or anti-racist racism, referring to their efforts as amounting to what she tags 'myth of feminine superiority' (2021, pp.88-92). She recommends that feminism as a socio-political movement, should be geared towards the recognition of the potentials of women as human beings. Recognizing women as human beings implies seeing them as ontologically placed just like their male counterparts who also exist in the same world. The essence of each gender is marked by the defining characteristics manifest in their character, not mainly in their biological differences. That is why Simone de Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex*, (1949), argues that gender is a social

construct such that whoever sex assumes exhibit the characters essential to any of the genders, could be categorized as belonging to the particular gender. Thus, the wife of a gay marriage, the husband of a lesbian marriage, and transgendered individuals, are all gendered human beings. The emphasis is not on biological differences but on character traits which are function-based. Hence, men and women may not be expected to perform the exact functions. What is important is that whatever the nature of their functions, they stand on equal pedestal as human beings and this gives them equal basis to pursue and realize their aspirations.

In the contemporary Nigerian society, feminist struggle is still affected by patriarchal mentality as majority of women are perpetuating the ills that spring from it. They uncritically adhere to stereotyping norms and practices that emerge as a result of what Mackinnon has defined as the 'core of discrimination' (p.33). Nigerian women tend to blur the difference between male and female gender by placing the male child above the female child thereby rendering the women's experiences insignificance. Women view the birth of a male child as what places a seal on their marriage. They see as taboo, a woman paying bride price or proposing openly to a man. Even when the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria entrenched the fundamental rights thereby abhorring discrimination of all kinds, women in particular, spread the idea of male dominance. Thus, patriarchal mentality of Nigerian women manifests in upholding certain stereotyping norms,

in shying away from competing with their male counterparts even when the opportunity has been created, and persecuting their fellow women who dare to question the stereotyping norms. Contemporary feminists in Nigeria like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2006) and others continue to expose the patriarchal mentality of Nigerians with the view to strengthen the feminist struggle in the country. Yet, only a measure like Bartlett's consciousness-raising is capable of motivating Nigerians to utilize the differences between men and women, such as, 'goal-getting' and 'care giving'; 'ego-driven' and 'empathy-driven'; and, 'might, power' and 'tenderness'. All these already inherent in the patriarchal nature of the universe, explain and interpret women experiences, such as domestic violence, rape, conjugal rights, and others, which stereotyping norms and the legal system tend to overshadow or pay little attention to.

4. Effective Feminist Struggle in Nigeria

Although Bartlett's consciousness-raising is expounded in the Western society where for centuries, social consciousness and legal awareness have reached considerable level, it is not just for such society. Its emphasis on sharing rather than airing women experiences makes it germane for effective feminist struggle in Nigeria. Sharing an experience implies exposing it, not only for the hearer to know that such experience exists, but also for the sharer to join forces with the hearer to seek means of ensuring that such experience occurs if desirable, or not reoccur if

repugnant. However, since for feminists, women experiences are the ill effects of patriarchal mentality, they are always repugnant and sharing them should ultimately result in seeking measures to avert their recurrence. Airing of women experiences on the other hand implies exposing it for others to know that such experience has occurred. It could be argued of Western women, that, in sharing the woman experiences, they are already poised to take legal action to prevent such experiences from reoccurring. This could not be said of the Nigerian women, who, owing to stereotyping norms, may not even share but only air their own experiences. The importance of the interpretation given to consciousness-raising for the purpose of this paper, becomes glaring when we recall that even Nigerian women have in one way or the other attempted sharing their woman experiences but their efforts hardly boasted effective feminist struggle in the country. The famous literary works of Buchi Emecheta (*Second Class Citizen*, 1983), Flora Nwapa, (*One is Enough*, 1981), and lots of other women who in one way or the other have shared their woman experiences, never gave rise to litigations, and little or no conclusively decided cases exist on the woman experiences shared in the Nigerian context. This is in utter contradiction to the situation in Western countries where almost every of such experiences shared automatically lead to litigation.

It is also worthy of note that Bartlett seems not to have contemplated recent developments in area of gender. One may ask if the wife of a guy marriage can have woman experience. Likewise,

it could be asked, 'what kind of woman question could be asked concerning the husband of lesbian marriage?' It could also be asked whether a transgender female can have the woman experience. Notwithstanding Bartlett's silence on these issues, this paper maintains that anybody, male or female, who is subjected to the woman experience, can share such experience. After all, it is no longer in doubt whether men could be raped and whether they could be victims of domestic violence. Perhaps when Bartlett articulated her feminist stands, victims of rape and domestic violence were predominantly women. Hence, experiences of rape and domestic violence were usually categorized by feminists as 'woman experiences'. That men are also subjected to such experiences, however, does not change their status as woman experiences, rather, the situation calls for a synergy between both genders, in order to eliminate the experiences. Consciousness-raising, in advocating for sharing of woman experiences, provides the synergy.

There are facts to show that a patriarchal society without patriarchal mentality could be free from the ills of patriarchy. Plato, for instance, noted that there is nothing significant in the male gender that makes it superior to the female gender. Hence, for him women can also attain the status of the philosopher kings, the highest status in the society, if given equal opportunity of intellectual development with males ((*Republic V*, 459d-e)). Plato's position is attested to given the pace at which Western societies, which are accused of transporting patriarchy to other

societies through colonialism and imperialism, have since been free from the ill effects of patriarchy by embracing effective feminism.

In Western countries, feminists, especially, women in the legal profession have shown that patriarchy could just be a label and could only remain relevant to societies that have formed patriarchal mentality. Legal awareness engenders understanding the double aspects of law in feminism, namely, the patriarchal nature of law and the promise of law in eliminating patriarchal mentality. The attainment of the feminist agenda in other parts of the world, it could be shown, owes much to the legal awareness of women. Though, women's legal awareness became significant when women started becoming lawyers and judges, it was the articulation of feminist legal methods and their application by feminists that boosted the legal awareness of women in those parts of the world which today are regarded as developed owing to the high level of gender equity they have achieved (Aja 2021: pp.75-80). The theme of affirmative action reverberates in Nigeria but the consciousness of Nigerian women still remains in support of the *status quo*.

Feminism in Nigeria at this stage, should take the form of a diplomatic movement aimed at creating awareness and full consciousness for women to regain confidence in themselves, believe in their potentials and their indispensable roles as partners to men. It should also aim at deflating and erasing in men, the god-like ego which religion, like Christianity (creation story in the

Christian Bible) and most world cultures have bestowed on them. This can be achieved if Nigerian feminists will, like their feminist counterparts, articulate feminists legal methods that will suit the Nigerian traditional context. Katherine Bartlett, for instance, contributed immensely to effective feminist struggle in her society through her feminist method of 'consciousness-raising' which advocates women sharing rather than airing the women experiences. The African women are very unique by their culture and location on the continent. Their experience and understanding about life and equality will necessarily be different from American women, or say European women. So when an African woman expresses a strong opinion or share her perspective within the feminism curve, such opinion might be extreme or moderate depending on the story behind it. As Mariam Abdul et al (2011), observe concerning Nigeria:

The feminist's movement after taking the initiative to become a recognized body in Nigeria, there are still concerns about the negative press and societal orientation against feminists. Based on the traditional and cultural stereotypes on the roles of women women especially those who identify as feminists are considered rebels and dissident due to the feminist ideologies that challenges the patriarchal status quo (p.22).

Mariam Abdul et al's observation clearly depicts the fear of Nigerian women, feminists and non-feminists, in fully identifying with the feminist struggle. They may even be penalized for doing so and as a result, the best they could do

was air their women experiences. Thus, changing the Nigerian woman's patriarchal mentality will definitely require methods unique to Nigeria's social contexts. Bartlett's consciousness-raising contemplates the Nigerian society, in that in emphasizing sharing of experiences, it does not limit the avenue or media through which such experiences are to be shared. Most efforts at addressing patriarchal mentality tend to assert that only the education of women can help them do away with such mentality. This may not be effective in a communal society like Nigeria where relationships with numerous uneducated folks make tremendous impact in one's life. Consciousness-raising, though not explicitly, calls for any medium one, the sharer of women experiences may be disposed to deploy. Thus, both the educated and non-educated have the opportunity to share their women experiences.

5. Conclusion

This paper has evaluated Bartlett's feminist method of consciousness-raising, articulating its tendency to eliminate patriarchal mentality and how it can foster effective feminist struggle. It recognizes as important, consciousness-raising emphasizing sharing rather than airing women experiences. The paper depicts patriarchal mentality as a clog to effective feminist struggle in Nigeria because such mentality clouds women experiences by extolling the discriminating tendencies of patriarchy. Sharing of women experiences not only exposes such tendencies but also

ensures that decisive actions, such as policy formulation and litigations are carried out to address damages resulting from the experiences and to prevent their reoccurrence.

Consciousness-raising is recommended for eliminating patriarchal mentality in Nigeria owing to the fact that it creates no boundaries in terms of categorizing women as educated and non-educated in the sharing women experiences. This enhances effective participation of women in the feminist struggle as both educated and non-educated women can effectively share their women experiences. They can adopt any medium they think effective for sharing. Again, in sharing their women experiences, they will be active participants in seeking measures for averting them, thereby jettisoning patriarchal mentality and engaging in effective feminist struggle.

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Non-Formal Education in Promoting Technological Literacy and Lifelong Learning among Adults

Abstract

As digital technology permeates almost every aspect of life, the "Digital Divide" has shifted from a matter of physical access to a challenge of skills and confidence. This paper looks at how Non-Formal Education (NFE) plays a key part in promoting tech literacy and a culture of lifelong learning among adults. While formal education systems often struggle with rigid curricula and slow adaptation to tech shifts, NFE offers a flexible, learner-centred alternative that works for adults who learn in their own way. Using Andragogy as a framework, this study analysed how NFE environments help overcome tech anxiety, replacing it with learning on demand that emphasised practical, immediate use. The paper explored key concepts, including digital tools and the shift toward a gap in digital skills (what some call the Digital Divide), through a qualitative review of recent global trends.

Findings suggested tech literacy works best when instruction is situated within the learner's daily life and supported by peers or mentors. The study concluded that for digital inclusion to be sustainable, policy-makers must move beyond providing hardware and invest in the non-formal sector as a primary engine for continuous adult development. Recommendations included integrating NFE into national education frameworks and promoting intergenerational "tech champion" programs to ensure no adult is left behind.

Keywords: Non-Formal Education, Technological Literacy, Lifelong Learning, Andragogy, Digital Divide, Adult Education

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Introduction

In a fast-changing digital world, being able to navigate technology is essential for getting ahead in life; it is not just a professional advantage. Many adults went through formal education

decades ago, but it didn't prepare them for cloud computing, AI, or even basic digital banking. That is where Non-Formal Education (NFE) comes in-it's flexible and fills a big gap. Unlike traditional schooling which often has a

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fixed approach, NFE meets adults where they are, focusing on the skills they need now.

NFE is flexible and that is its biggest strength. Formal institutions often struggle to update their curricula as fast as technology changes, but NFE programmes- from community workshops to online groups, can adapt quickly to new trends (Rogers, 2014). This agility helps adults become tech-savvy, which is about using digital tools to solve real problems and access information. For adults, this is all about learning throughout life- a continuous, voluntary pursuit (Field, 2006). But a big challenge remains. Many adults, especially in rural or marginalised communities, face a tough time: they lack hardware and feel uncomfortable using technology (Van Dijk, 2020).

Traditional education can feel intimidating or irrelevant to their daily struggles. NFE takes away the classroom fear factor, replacing grades and exams with hands-on experiences. By grounding technology teaching in the learner's life; using Andragogy - NFE turns technology into a tool for empowerment (Knowles et al., 2015). This paper argues that technology literacy needs to be nurtured through NFE as a lifelong habit, not just something you finish at university. By looking at community-based learning and digital fluency, a society can be built where every adult has the tools to participate in the digital age.

Conceptual Clarifications

Non-Formal Education (NFE)

If formal education is a structured path you follow (Primary → Secondary → University), NFE is more like a

flexible network that connects people. It's any organised, intentional learning activity outside traditional school (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). NFE is unique because it puts people first. It doesn't bother with prerequisites or tests; it cares about what the learner needs now. For an adult, this could be a weekend workshop on digital marketing at a local library or a community group teaching older folks how to use government e-services. It's structured with clear goals but flexible enough to fit the participants' pace and context (Rogers, 2014).

Lifelong Learning

We often think of education as something you finish, but Lifelong Learning says it is ongoing, voluntary and driven by you (Field, 2006). In the digital age, lifelong learning is not just a nice-to-have, it's a must. Technology changes fast, so adults need to keep learning. This puts the focus on the individual, not the institution, and says every stage of life is a chance to pick up a new skill (Jarvis, 2007).

Technology

Technology means using human knowledge to solve real problems (Arthur, 2009). For an adult learner, technology is about getting things done in the modern world. It is the bridge between a problem and a solution. Understanding technology means getting the logic behind the tools we use; that is the start of digital independence.

Digital Tools

Technology is the big idea, Digital Tools are the actual things we use like smartphones, laptops, apps, websites. For many adults, these tools can feel

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alien. NFE helps by making them less scary, turning a smartphone into a handy tool or an app into a helpful assistant. These tools are how we use technology in everyday life (Van Dijk, 2020).

Literature Review

The academic conversation around non-formal education (NFE) has shifted from seeing it as a second-class option to recognising it as key to surviving in a technology-driven world. For decades, the "Digital Divide" was all about physical access; who had a computer and who didn't. But now, scholars like Jan van Dijk (2020) and UNESCO (2023) say we are dealing with a "Second-Level Digital Divide". This gap is about skills, how you use technology, and why you bother. Even when adults get the tools, they often stay "digitally excluded" if they do not know how to use them for things that matter, like getting e-health services or spotting online misinformation.

Hamim Islam (2024) notes that formal education is often too stuck in its ways to bridge this gap, but NFE programs are flexible enough to help adults navigate this fast-changing digital world. A big theme in research is the mental block adults hit when facing new technology. Knud Illeris (2007) talked about "non-learning", where adults subconsciously reject stuff that feels scary or too academic.

Many adults have "educational scars" from school, so NFE is a chance to fix that. Research in Khulna (2024) and Nigeria (Somieari-Pepple, 2023) shows NFE takes away the fear. By ditching exams for peer support and hands-on stuff, NFE builds what Albert Bandura (1997) called Self-Efficacy- the learner's

belief they can master the technology. Without this, technology lessons don't stick. Also, traditional education is often "just-in-case", making students learn stuff they might need someday. But adults are different. Stephen Brookfield (1986) and Malcolm Knowles (1980) said adults are "problem-centred" and want to learn what they need now.

Current research says technology sticks best when it's tied to real life. A 2025 study on Adult Education and Sustainable Development (Gogaram, 2026) found adults in rural areas picked up digital skills faster when they could use them straight away, like checking weather forecasts or selling goods online. This fits with Andragogy: adults learn best when it's useful now. Finally, researchers like Peter Jarvis (2007) and John Field (2006) see NFE as central to Lifelong Learning, not a stop-gap. In a world where technology changes every 18 months, "finishing school" is a myth. UNESCO's 2025 International Literacy Day Factsheet says while literacy is improving, digital illiteracy among adults is a big problem for the global economy. Research points to NFE as the way forward (UNESCO, 2023).

Methodology

This study takes a qualitative approach, using secondary sources to look at how non-formal education helps adults become digitally literate and lifelong learners. The research involves a systematic review and analysis of existing writing on non-formal education initiatives, digital literacy programmes, and strategies for lifelong learning in adult education. The data collection involved a thorough review of secondary sources, including academic journals, reports from government

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agencies and NGOs, and case studies on non-formal education programmes for adults. These sources gave insights into how digital literacy initiatives and lifelong learning programmes are designed, implemented, and what they achieve.

The data were analysed thematically, pulling out key themes and patterns about non-formal education's role in boosting digital literacy and promoting lifelong learning among adults. The analysis focused on finding relevant information that shows the impact, challenges, and opportunities of non-formal education in this area.

Findings and Discussion

Based on our theoretical analysis and review of existing research, several critical points come up about how non-formal education (NFE) helps adults become tech-savvy.

Findings

The "Play" Factor as a Bridge: One of the biggest findings is that NFE lets adults experiment with technology without the fear of messing up; something that is often punished in formal schooling. By dropping grades and hierarchies, NFE lets adults learn by trying things out, which is how they really master technology.

Contextual Relevance Over Curriculum: Unlike formal education with its fixed syllabus, NFE is tailored to fit. Adults pick up digital skills faster when they are taught stuff they need right now, like a trader learning digital accounts or a parent learning to video-call their kid abroad.

The Power of Social Capital: Adults getting tech-savvy is not usually a solo

thing. It is social. NFE programmes that use peer mentors work better because they build a support network that lasts.

Discussion

These points suggest we need to rethink "schooling". For adults, formal classrooms are often too rigid and slow for today's fast-changing technology. NFE is not just a backup for those who missed out; it's the best fit for lifelong learning. By following Andragogy, NFE treats adults like experts in their own lives, making technology a tool they control. But there is a big challenge: Funding and Recognition. NFE is often underfunded compared to universities. To bridge the digital divide, community centres and mobile learning need to be seen as just as important as traditional institutions.

Conclusion

Technology is moving fast, and one-time education is not enough anymore. Non-Formal Education (NFE) is the best way to keep adults digitally literate and included. NFE is low-pressure and relevant, so it works for adults. Technology literacy is a journey, not a destination with a diploma. If we rely only on formal institutions, millions will get left behind. Strengthening NFE creates a society where learning is a natural, lifelong thing.

Recommendations

Policy Integration: Governments should fit NFE into education plans, giving community digital literacy programmes stable funding.

Modular "Micro-Learning": Break digital literacy into small, practical bits adults can do at their own pace.

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Incentivise Peer-Mentoring: Create "Tech Champion" programmes where locals are trained to help others with technology.

Intergenerational Initiatives: Get youth to help out in NFE centres, mixing ages and sharing skills.

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Psychological Predictors of Inclination to Sexual-Orientation among Undergraduate Students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Abstract

Sexual orientation development among young adults has increasingly attracted scholarly attention due to its implications for students' psychological wellbeing and identity formation. This study examined how three psychological variables - self-acceptance, interest, and assertiveness predict inclination to sexual orientation among undergraduate students in public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational research design. By that, multistage sample of 1,317 level-200 students from three purposively selected institutions completed the researcher-developed Psychological Variables and Inclination to Sexual Orientation of Students Questionnaire (PVITSOOSQ; $\alpha = .93$). Simple linear regression was used to test each predictor separately. Results showed that self-acceptance significantly predicted inclination to sexual orientation ($R = .598$, $R^2 = .357$, $p < .005$), accounting for 35.7% of variance. Interest was the strongest predictor ($R = .866$, $R^2 = .750$, $p < .005$), accounting for 75.0% of variance. Assertiveness also strongly predicted inclination ($R = .844$, $R^2 = .712$, $p < .005$), accounting for 71.2% of variance. Findings suggested that intrapersonal psychological characteristics, particularly students interest and assertiveness are closely associated with how students form and express sexual-orientation inclinations. Implications for campus counselling, staff training, and family engagement are discussed. The study recommended among other things that counsellors should stimulate genuine interest in identity exploration by curating relevant books, documentaries, and guest lectures on human sexuality and diversity for students.

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Introduction

Sexual orientation is a person's enduring pattern of emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. The sexual orientation is a pressing concern that has received inadequate attention.

It includes sexual attraction, behaviour, and self-identification, and common examples include heterosexual (attraction to the opposite gender). Homosexual (attraction to the same gender), and bisexual (attraction to

more than one gender). Sexual orientation can be a mix of biological, environmental, and psychological factors and can evolve over time (Levy, 2025). Among every other group of human beings, sexual orientation could be mostly observed within students.

As students transition from adolescence to early adulthood, tertiary environments challenge young individuals to explore complex dimensions of who they are and how they relate to the world around them. The period spent in higher institutions coincides with one of the most sensitive phases of psychological and emotional development, marked by identity questioning, social exploration, and personal decision-making. In this transitional phase, many students begin to consolidate aspects of their sexual orientation, often influenced by factors such as psychological, environmental, and socio-cultural variables (Edem, 2021).

In recent times, the inclination to orientation among students in tertiary institutions has become more pronounced and openly discussed. This is due, in part, to greater access to information, increased societal advocacy for sexual rights, and a more liberal campus culture that encourages individual expression. However, not all students develop or express their sexual orientation in the same way, and their psychological makeup plays a crucial role in this regard. The inclination to sexual orientation is often not a spontaneous or isolated process; it is deeply embedded in an individual's psychological variables.

Psychological variables refer to the internal factors that influence an

individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. These include motivation, perception, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, personality traits, and cognitive processes. They shape how people interpret experiences, respond to challenges, and make decisions (Musa, 2021). Understanding these psychological variables helps explain variations in behaviour and mental health among individuals. The present study considered three psychological variables namely self-acceptance, interest and assertiveness.

Self-acceptance is the ability to embrace aspects of oneself, including personal strengths or weaknesses, without self-criticism. In the context of sexual orientation, self-acceptance enables students to come to terms with their identity without guilt or shame. Tertiary institutions, often being more liberal and diverse, may offer students a space where self-acceptance can be nurtured. A student who accepts himself fully, including their sexual identity, is more likely to express that identity openly and confidently. However, in societies or institutional cultures where non-heterosexual orientations are not widely accepted, students may struggle with self-acceptance, leading to internal conflict and psychological distress. The journey toward accepting one's sexual orientation can be significantly hindered if students internalize societal rejection, religious condemnation, or familial disapproval (Eshiet, 2021). Therefore, fostering self-acceptance through psychological support and inclusive education is vital for helping students navigate their sexual orientation

healthily and honestly. Interest is another psychological variable.

Interest is a psychological variable that reflects a person's level of curiosity, attention, and engagement toward a particular subject, activity, or idea. In tertiary institutions, students' interest in topics like sexual orientation can be influenced by personal experiences, academic exposure, or peer discussions. For example, a student with high interest in human rights may actively seek knowledge about sexual diversity, leading to increased empathy and understanding (James, 2020). On the other hand, lack of interest may result in ignorance, indifference, or resistance to learning about issues outside one's comfort zone. As students become more intellectually stimulated and socially aware, their interests can evolve, promoting broader perspectives and acceptance of diverse sexual identities. The state of emotions is another critical psychological factor.

Assertiveness is the ability to express one's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in a direct, honest, and respectful manner. Assertiveness allows students to stand up for themselves, advocate for their rights, and set boundaries without being aggressive or passive. In matters of sexual orientation, assertiveness is crucial for students who wish to express their identity openly, resist peer pressure, and counteract discrimination or stereotyping. A student who is assertive is more likely to communicate their orientation with clarity and dignity, whether it aligns with or deviates from societal expectations. They are also more likely to seek out supportive communities and resources within the institution that affirm their identity. On

the other hand, a lack of assertiveness may result in silence, self-censorship, or even participation in relationships or behaviours that do not align with one's authentic sexual orientation. Tertiary institutions that foster assertive communication through leadership training, counselling, and student activism contribute positively to the development of students' capacity to express their sexual identity without fear or shame (Akpan, 2021).

Many researchers have written about how psychological factors like self-concept and self-efficacy can affect sexual orientation. However, most of these studies were done in Western countries or looked at only one factor at a time. There is little research that focuses on students in Nigerian tertiary institutions, especially in Akwa Ibom State. Therefore, this gap in knowledge motivated the researcher to conduct this study to determine to what extent does psychological variables predicts inclination to sexual orientation of students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Literature Review

The present study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives that illuminate individual and contextual processes shaping sexual-orientation development. Carl Rogers's (1954) Self-Concept Theory foregrounds how congruence between the real and ideal self and the presence of unconditional positive regard facilitate authentic self-acceptance and identity integration, mechanisms plausibly linking self-acceptance, assertiveness, and orientation expression among students. Ilan

Meyer's (2003) Sexual Minority Stress Theory complements this by locating identity outcomes within stress processes generated by stigma, prejudice, and institutional constraints, and by highlighting coping and resilience factors that can buffer minority stress. Hancock's (2016) Intersectionality and Identity Complexity framework further qualifies both approaches by showing that sexuality is co-constituted with other social identities (e.g., religion, ethnicity, class), such that psychological processes operate differently across intersectional positions. Together these theories provide a conceptual scaffold for examining how intrapersonal traits (self-acceptance, interest, assertiveness) interact with social stressors and intersecting identities to shape students' inclination to sexual orientation.

Empirical work reviewed shows consistent associations between self-acceptance and clearer, more openly expressed sexual identities. Studies across Nigerian universities (e.g., Ayodele, 2020; Okon, 2021; Nwankwo, 2022; Musa & Adebajo, 2022; Ezeama, 2023) report that higher self-acceptance correlates with greater willingness to disclose or integrate one's orientation and with reduced internalized stigma and distress. These investigations commonly used validated self-report instruments and regression/correlation techniques, but they vary in sampling frames (different states and institutions), research designs (descriptive, ex post facto, cross-sectional), and operational definitions, limiting direct comparability and local generalizability to Akwa Ibom.

Research on interest and assertiveness similarly suggests

meaningful relationships with sexual-orientation processes but with methodological and contextual gaps. Studies of intellectual or academic interest (Adeyemi, 2019; Ibrahim, 2021; Onwuka, 2021; Umeh, 2021) indicate that curiosity about gender/sexuality topics and broader intellectual engagement associate with greater awareness, exploration, and lower internalized homonegativity. Assertiveness research (Etim, 2020; Adewale, 2020; Eze, 2021; Yakubu, 2022; Nwosu, 2023) finds that higher assertiveness predicts clearer identity expression and resistance to external pressure; experimental work (e.g., Nwosu, 2023) also suggests that training can improve identity clarity. Yet most studies are regionally dispersed, employ differing designs (many descriptive or ex-post facto), and rarely test the three predictors simultaneously within a single, culturally specific sample.

The theoretical and empirical literature establishes plausible links between self-acceptance, interest, assertiveness and sexual-orientation inclination but leaves important gaps: few studies use a focused correlational model to assess the unique and combined predictive power of these psychological variables in the Akwa Ibom context; intersectional dynamics and minority-stress processes are seldom integrated into empirical tests; and measures and sampling strategies vary widely across studies. These lacunae justify the present correlational study, which tests whether self-acceptance, interest, and assertiveness together predict students' inclination to sexual orientation within tertiary institutions in selected public tertiary

institution in Akwa Ibom State, thereby providing locally grounded evidence to inform culturally sensitive counselling and campus support interventions.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal tertiary environment, students would be able to explore and express their sexual identities without fear of judgment, discrimination, or emotional distress; such openness supports personal development, mental health, and inclusive campus communities. However, in many conservative and culturally rigid contexts exemplified in Nigeria by legal and public debates around measures like the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act and related public demonstrations, the reality is markedly different. Globalization and social change have introduced more diverse patterns of identity and behaviour into university settings, and some students report experiencing solicitation or pressure around non-heterosexual relationships, raising questions about how these dynamics play out in campus life.

Efforts by counsellors and mental-health practitioners to support students have sometimes been constrained by systemic barriers and prevailing cultural prejudices, and practices intended to “correct” sexual orientation (e.g., conversion approaches) have been shown to cause harm. Many interventions lack a culturally sensitive, research-based framework that recognizes the complexity of sexual identity development in specific socio-cultural contexts. As a result, students’ academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being may be negatively affected. This

gap motivates the present study to examine whether psychological variables predict inclination to sexual orientation among students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the extent to which psychological variables predict inclination to sexual orientation of students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. examine the extent which self-acceptance predict inclination to sexual orientation of students.
- ii. determine the extent which interest predict inclination to sexual orientation of students.
- iii. assess the extent assertiveness predict inclination to sexual orientation of students.

Research Questions

In line with the stated objectives, the following research questions were raised for this study:

- i. What is the extent to which self-acceptance predict inclination to sexual orientation of students?
- ii. What is the extent to which interest predict inclination to sexual orientation of students?
- iii. What is the extent to which assertiveness predict inclination to sexual orientation of students?

Research Hypotheses

The following null-hypotheses were tested for the study

- i. Self-acceptance does not significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students.

- ii. Interest does not significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students.
- iii. Assertiveness does not significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students.

Research Method

The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study made up of 23,886 level 200 students in the six public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria as at 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 academic sessions. The sample size for the study comprised of 1,606 level 200 students from the three purposively selected public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, namely the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, and Akwa Ibom State College of Education. These institutions were purposively selected because they have actively existed for over 15 years. However, the final analytic sample comprised 1,317 Level-200 students as these were the consenting respondents with fully completed measures. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents in a systematic and unbiased manner.

A researcher developed instrument entitled "Psychological Variables and Inclination to Sexual Orientation of Students Questionnaire" (PVITSOOSQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validity by three experts. Two from the Department of Guidance and Counselling and one expert in the Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Psychological Foundations, University of Uyo. To determine the internal consistency of the

instrument, the researcher randomly selected 35 level 200 students in the public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria who were not part of the study sample to respond to the instrument. Data generated were subjected to Cronbach Alpha Reliability Statistics for determination of the reliability coefficients. The reliability coefficient of PVITSOOSQ was .93.

Data collected was analyzed using Simple Linear Regression Statistics. The R- Value (coefficient) of Simple Regression Statistics was used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using significance value at 0.05 alpha level of significance. In this study, strict ethical protocols were observed throughout the duration of the research to guarantee that the rights of all participating students were fully respected and protected. Firstly, the principle of informed consent was rigorously upheld. Secondly, the researcher ensured that all potential respondents were clearly informed that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and not compulsory in any way. Thirdly, the issue of privacy and confidentiality was treated with the utmost seriousness. In addition to these core ethical principles, the researcher demonstrated cultural sensitivity and respect for the diverse backgrounds of the respondents.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent to which self-acceptance predict inclination to sexual orientation of students?

Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of self-acceptance and Inclination to sexual orientation of students (n=1317)

Variables	R	R ²	Extent of Prediction	Adjusted R ²
Self-acceptance	0.598	0.357	35.7%	0.357
Inclination to sexual orientation				

Source: Researcher's survey (2026)

In Table 1, the R-value of 0.598 indicates positive and moderate extent of prediction, while R² value of 0.357 which is the coefficient of determination show the extent self-acceptance predict inclination to sexual orientation of students. In addition, 35.7% variance in inclination to sexual orientation of students is accounted for by self-acceptance. This means that the extent self-acceptance predict inclination to sexual orientation of students is moderate.

Research Question 2: What is the extent to which interest predict inclination to sexual orientation of students?

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of interest and Inclination to sexual orientation of students (n=1317)

Variables	R	R ²	Extent of Prediction	Adjusted R ²
Interest	0.866	0.750	75.0%	0.75
Inclination to sexual orientation				

Source: Researcher's survey (2026)

In Table 2, the R-value of 0.866 indicates positive and very high extent of prediction, while R² value of 0.750

which is the coefficient of determination show the extent interest predict inclination to sexual orientation of students. In addition, 75.0% variance in inclination to sexual orientation of students is accounted for by interest. This means that the extent interest predict inclination to sexual orientation of students is very high.

Research Question 3: What is the extent to which assertiveness predict inclination to sexual orientation of students?

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of assertiveness and Inclination to sexual orientation of students (n=1317)

Variables	R	R ²	Extent of Prediction	Adjusted R ²
Assertiveness	0.844	0.712	71.2%	0.712
Inclination to sexual orientation				

Source: Researcher's survey (2026)

In Table 3, the R-value of 0.844 indicates positive and moderate extent of prediction, while R² value of 0.712 which is the coefficient of determination show the extent assertiveness predict inclination to sexual orientation of students. In addition, 71.2% variance in inclination to sexual orientation of students is accounted for by assertiveness. This means that the extent assertiveness predict inclination to sexual orientation of students is moderate.

Hypothesis 1: Self-acceptance does not significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students.

Table 4: Simple regression analysis of the prediction of inclination to sexual orientation of students from Self-acceptance (n=1317)

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F-ratio	p-value
Regression	490.086	1	490.086	730.656	.000
Residual	882.034	1315	.671		
Total	1372.120	1316			

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
(Constant)	7.122	.270		26.358	.000
Self-acceptance	.558	.021	.598	27.031	.000

***= Significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance.**

Source: Researcher's survey (2026)

The information in Table 4 shows that self-acceptance is a significant independent predictor of inclination to sexual orientation of students ($F=730.656$; $p=0.000$). Hence, the null hypothesis that self-acceptance does not significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. The table also shows that the prediction of inclination to sexual orientation of students could be done using the following equation:

$$Y = .589 + .844X$$

Where Y = inclination to sexual orientation of students

X = assertiveness.

Hypothesis 2: Interest does not significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students.

Table 5: Simple regression analysis of the prediction of inclination to sexual orientation of students from Interest (n=1317)

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F-ratio	p-value
Regression	1029.701	1	1029.701	3954.394	.000
Residual	342.418	1315	.260		

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
(Constant)	-.141	.232		-.608	.000
Interest	1.105	.018	.866	62.884	.000

***= Significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance.**

Source: Researcher's survey (2026)

The information in Table 5 shows that interest is a significant independent predictor of inclination to sexual orientation of students ($F=3954.394$; $p=0.000$). Hence, the null hypothesis that interest does not significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. The table also shows that the prediction of inclination to sexual orientation of students could be done using the equation below:

Hypothesis 3: Assertiveness does not significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students.

Table 6: Simple regression analysis of the prediction of inclination to sexual orientation of students from Assertiveness (n=1317)

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F-ratio	p-value
Regression	977.546	1	977.546	3257.873	.000
Residual	394.574	1315	.300		
Total	1372.120	1316			

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
(Constant)	.589	.242		2.429	.000
Assertiveness	1.050	.018	.844	57.078	.000

***= Significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Source: Researcher's survey (2026)**

The information in Table 6 shows that interest is a significant independent predictor of inclination to sexual orientation of students ($F=3257.873$; $p=0.000$). Hence, the null hypothesis

that assertiveness does not significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. The table also shows that the prediction of inclination to sexual orientation of students could be done using the following equation:

$$Y = -.141 + .866X$$

Where Y = inclination to sexual orientation of students

X = interest.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from research question one indicates that the extent self-acceptance predict inclination to sexual orientation of students is moderate. Also, the result of the hypothesis one shows that self-acceptance significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students. The findings of this study are in line with the study by Ayodele (2020), which reported that there is a significant positive correlation between self-acceptance and willingness to express one's sexual orientation. This finding also concurs with that of Okon (2021), who reported that students who accepted themselves regardless of societal expectations were more open to discussing or disclosing their sexual orientation. The result may be attributed to the fact that students hide their thoughts, their feelings, their attractions, and even their curiosity. They learn to monitor their own eyes, careful not to look too long at someone they find attractive. They monitor their words, careful not to say anything that might raise suspicion. This hiding is exhausting, and it is built on a foundation of self-rejection, the belief that who they are is fundamentally

unacceptable. Self-acceptance does not usually happen all at once. Once a student begins to accept themselves, their entire relationship with their orientation shifts. It is no longer an enemy to be defeated or a secret to be buried. It becomes simply a fact about who they are, no different from their height or their eye colour. This does not mean they are ready to announce it to the world. It means they are no longer at war with themselves.

The findings from research question two indicates that the extent interest predict inclination to sexual orientation of students is very high. Also, the result of the hypothesis two shows that interest significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students. The findings of this study are in line with the study by Adeyemi (2019), which reported that there is a significant positive relationship between students' academic interest and their willingness to explore and accept their sexual orientation. This finding also concurs with that of Onwuka (2021), who reported that intellectual interest significantly predicted positive sexual identity formation. The result may be attributed to the fact that a student who feels a faint, unexamined attraction toward the same gender may never explore that feeling if their interest is consistently directed elsewhere. They may be deeply engaged in their studies, their sports, their religious activities, or their career ambitions. These are not distractions, they are genuine passions, but they fill the mind so completely that there is little space left for introspection. The question of orientation simply does not rise to the surface because other things feel more urgent or more

rewarding. This is not denial, it is simply the architecture of attention. Conversely, a student whose interest is drawn to questions of identity, human relationships, or social justice may find themselves repeatedly encountering stories and ideas about sexual diversity. They may enrol in a literature course that includes queer authors. They may attend a campus talks on human rights and follow activists on social media who speak openly about their lives. Each exposure builds on the last, gradually transforming a vague curiosity into sustained intellectual and personal engagement.

The findings from research question three indicates that the extent assertiveness predict inclination to sexual orientation of students is very high. Also, the result of the hypothesis three shows that assertiveness significantly predict inclination to sexual orientation of students. The findings of this study agree with the study by Etim (2020), which reported that students with low levels of assertiveness were more susceptible to peer suggestion and societal trends, thereby increasing the likelihood of sexual orientation exploration or ambiguity. This finding also concurs with that of Adewale (2020), who reported that significant inverse relationship between assertiveness and susceptibility to sexual orientation experimentation. The result may be attributed to the fact that students with strong assertiveness are better equipped to navigate the countless moments when their orientation brushes against the expectations of others. A roommate asks why they never seem interested in dating. A classmate makes a joke about

someone being too feminine or too masculine. A family member calls during the weekend and casually asks if there is a boyfriend or girlfriend yet. The passive student deflects, laughs along, or changes the subject. The aggressive student lashes out in defense, which only draws more attention and suspicion. But the assertive student finds the narrow path between silence and attack. They might say, I am not really interested in talking about my dating life right now, or actually, I do not find that kind of joke funny. They do not owe anyone their story but they also do not pretend to be someone they are not.

Conclusion

It was concluded based on the findings that when students possess self-acceptance, interest and assertiveness, their journey toward understanding and embracing their sexual orientation becomes clearer and less burdensome. These psychological variables do not create identity but they empower students to accept it with courage, honesty, and peace. The inner self determines how freely the outer self can live.

Counselling Implications of Findings

The results of this study have counselling implications that extend to students, school administrators, guidance counsellors, parents, and prospective researchers. Interventions that enhance self-acceptance, foster positive intellectual engagement (interest), and develop assertive communication should be given top priority in clinical and psychoeducational practice on campus.

Counsellors should conduct structured group workshops and short skills programs that combine values-clarification, identity exploration (guided reflection, readings, facilitated discussion), and assertiveness training (role plays, boundary setting, communication rehearsal) in light of the significant percentages of variance explained by interest and assertiveness. In order to improve identity clarity and lessen distress without subjecting students to stigma, these programs ought to be strengths-based, non-pathologizing, and customized to the cultural realities of Akwa Ibom students.

Counselling services must move from reactive, one-to-one crisis work to proactive campus outreach and accessible group formats. Services should (a) embed psychoeducation about identity development into orientation and student-development curricula, (b) collaborate with student associations to host safe, confidential forums, and (c) create low-threshold resources (self-help modules, reading lists, referral pathways) that promote healthy curiosity and self-reflection. Training for counsellors and frontline staff is essential so they can recognise their own biases, deliver affirmative care, and apply evidence-based techniques (e.g., assertiveness training, acceptance-focused interventions) shown here to relate to students' orientation-related adjustment.

Parallel prevention strategies should involve family and institutional stakeholders. Counsellors can create quick parent education materials and community talks that highlight emotion coaching, unconditional support, and the importance of family messages in

fostering self-acceptance while honouring regional cultural norms. Systemic barriers to seeking help will be lessened at the institutional level by policies that safeguard confidentiality, increase mental health staffing, and indicate inclusive support (e.g., clear non-discrimination statements and obvious, private counselling access points). Lastly, interventions should be assessed locally using process and outcome measures to make sure they genuinely enhance students' academic performance, psychological health, and sense of self.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i. School management should mandate the establishment of counselling centres where students can process identity related concerns without fear of exposure or punishment in order to boost self-acceptance.
- ii. Counsellors should stimulate genuine interest in identity exploration by curating relevant books, documentaries, and guest lectures on human sexuality and diversity for students.
- iii. University administrators should organize quarterly talk show that teach students how to express their identity boundaries respectfully and confidently.
- iv. Counsellors should adopt an approach that addresses psychological variables simultaneously rather than in isolation since they predict inclination to sexual orientation.

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A Critical Dialectics on Sustainable Economic Development in Mitigating Nigeria's Security Challenges

Abstract

Nigeria's security challenges are dialectically rooted in a cycle of underdevelopment, where poverty, inequality, poor governance, and ineffective leadership fuel violence. This hinders sustainable economic development while destroying infrastructure, and discouraging investment. The country's high rate of security attacks has reached a point where lives and properties are no longer safe. This paper examined how security challenges have impacted sustainable economic development in Nigeria, with kidnapping and destruction of lives and property becoming common, undermining efforts to achieve economic progress. This paper aimed to reflect on some of the key factors of security challenges in Nigeria to ascertain the major implications on sustainable economic development in mitigating Nigeria's security challenges. The paper aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda of 2030 aiming to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Goal 16). It suggested moving beyond military force to holistic reforms that rebuild trust, create jobs, and diversify the economy. This paper is guided by the Social Contract Theory just as the methodology is critical dialectics with findings that revealed that factors like political instability, poverty, corruption, unemployment, ethnic and religious divisions contributed to security challenges. The paper recommended, among other things, that states provide efficient security to respond to crimes and address grievances while uniting groups. This can foster mitigation if not complete eradication of the security challenges in Nigeria.

Keywords: Critical Dialectics, Sustainable Economic Development, Mitigation, Security Challenges and Unemployment

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Introduction

Nigeria faces complex security challenges, ranging from Boko Haram insurgency to banditry and kidnappings,

which threaten its economic development and human well-being (IEP, 2022). Paradoxically, economic development strategies often exacerbate

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these challenges, perpetuating inequality and environmental degradation (Oxfam, 2020). This paper presents a critical analysis of sustainable economic development in mitigating Nigeria's security challenges, exploring how a transformative development approach can address these issues. It argues that sustainable economic development is key to addressing Nigeria's security challenges, requiring a shift from traditional growth-centric models to people-centered, inclusive, and environmentally conscious paradigms. This study aims to examine some of the key factors contributing to security challenges in Nigeria and ascertain their major implications for sustainable economic development in mitigating these challenges. The study aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 16, which promotes peaceful societies and effective institutions.

The Nigerian government has implemented several policies and efforts to address the rising security challenges, including changing security chiefs and equipping them with more sophisticated arms and security weapons. Despite these efforts, security challenges persist in Nigeria. Consequently, multiple ways and techniques have been studied in research literature by various authors to address these security challenges through the lens of Social Contract Theory.

The Concept of Critical Dialectics

Critical Dialectics is a research methodology that analyzes contradictions and conflicts within a system to understand power dynamics

and identify transformative possibilities. It involves:

- (i) Identifying conflicting elements (Contradiction)
- (ii) Understanding how contradictions lead to change (Change)
- (iii) Examining the system as a whole (Totality)
- (iv) Linking analysis to practical action (Praxis)

According to Hegel (in Miller, 2024), Critical Dialectics is a philosophical approach that examines the development of ideas, history, and reality through the interplay of opposing forces or contradictions. Here's a breakdown:

- (a) Thesis: An initial idea or state of reasoning where a formal statement of a point is developed.
- (b) Antithesis: An opposing idea or force, a proposition that's the diametric opposite of another proposition, referring to the second stage of a dialectical process where the thesis is negated.
- (c) Synthesis: The resulting higher level of understanding or reality, achieved by resolving the contradiction, combining thesis and antithesis to arrive at new ideals or knowledge (Gregson, 2024).

Hegel saw this dialectical process as a way to understand the evolution of consciousness, history, and the Absolute Spirit, believing contradictions are necessary for development and truth emerges from synthesizing opposing ideas. In social sciences, Hegel's dialectics has influenced critical theory, analyzing power dynamics, contradictions, and social change. In the

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Nigerian context, critical dialectics reveals how unemployment, poverty, and corruption contribute to security challenges, hindering sustainable economic development (Miller, 2024).

The Concept of Sustainable Economic Development

The United Nations (2015) defined Sustainable Economic Development (SED) as “meeting current economic needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs. It's about balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection to create a better life for all, now and later”. This is also conventionally defined as “the process whereby the real per capita income of a country increases over a long period, subject to the stipulations that the number below the absolute poverty line does not increase and that the distribution of income does not become more unequal” (Jegede, 2019).

The primary concern of sustainable economic development is ensuring that the poor have access to sustainable and secure livelihoods. At the national level, this calls for policies, regulations, and incentives to induce economic behavior that is ‘environmentally rational’. Sustainable economic development additionally argues that ‘real’ improvements cannot occur unless the strategies being formulated and implemented are ecologically sustainable over the long term, consistent with social values and institutions, and encourage ‘grassroots’ participation in the development process.

As the primary objective is to provide lasting and secure livelihoods that minimize resource depletion, environmental degradation, cultural disruption, and social instability (Ngwoke, 2020), sustainable economic development is directly concerned with increasing the material standard of living of the poor at the ‘grassroots’ level. This can be quantitatively measured in terms of increased food, real income, education services, health-care, sanitation, and water supply, emergency stocks of food and cash, to mention but a few, and only indirectly concerned with economic development at the aggregate, commonly national, level.

In general terms, the primary objective is reducing the absolute poverty of the world's poor through providing lasting and secure livelihoods that minimize resource depletion, environmental degradation, cultural disruption, and social instability (Ikenga *et al.*, 2022). The concept of sustainable economic development presents the evolution of the concept of sustainable development and reveals the factors that affect the sustainable development of economic entities. The author further emphasizes that sustainable development can be considered in relation to the economy of the country as a whole (Adebakin, 2012). From the above view, one can see sustainable economic development as a means of mitigating Nigeria's security challenges, especially when the entire regions of the nation are adequately developing.

Security Challenges in Nigeria

Security challenges in Nigeria comprise a complex, multifaceted crisis

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threatening national stability, characterized by terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, and ethno-religious conflicts. Driven by systemic corruption, extreme poverty, high youth unemployment, and porous borders, these threats hinder economic development and strain the capacity of security agencies (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025a). Nigeria, once Africa's largest economy, continues its downward trend due to Boko Haram activities, banditry, kidnapping, Fulani-Herders-Farmers clashes, and other security issues. The crime rate in Nigeria is extremely high. Institutions remain weak, with insufficiently protected property rights, high corruption, and undue influence.

The security situation remains serious in Nigeria. The country must continue to upgrade its infrastructure and improve its health and primary education (Iyekekpolo, 2020). Furthermore, Nigeria is not harnessing the latest technologies for productivity enhancements, as demonstrated by its low rates of ICT penetration. On the upside, Nigeria benefits from its relatively large market size, which bears the potential for significant economies of scale; a relatively efficient labor market, driven by its flexibility; and a solid financial market following its gradual recovery.

However, Nigeria has recently witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity, including Boko Haram activities, banditry, kidnapping, and Fulani-Herders-Farmers clashes, resulting in Ondo State's issuance of a Quit notice to Fulanis in the state. This has made national security a major issue for the government and prompted a

huge allocation of the national budget to security. To address the incidence of crime, the federal government has embarked on the criminalization of terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011, enhanced surveillance and investigation of criminal-related offenses, heightening of physical security measures around the country aimed at deterring or disrupting potential attacks, strengthening of security agencies through the provision of security facilities, and the development and broadcast of security tips in mass media (Austin-Egole, 2022).

Despite these efforts, the level of insecurity in the country remains high. Nigeria has consistently ranked low in the Global Peace Index (Obi, 2015), signifying a worsened state of security in the country. With the lingering security challenges and the inability of the security apparatus of the government to guarantee safety and security, the question that concerns everyone in Nigeria today is: "Can there be security?" Is the security of lives and properties achievable? Some have opined that the government at all levels has not done enough by not confronting the situation head-on and dealing with it decisively; others argue that the situation has a political undertone or inclination, calculated to serve the interest of certain political gods who have been dissatisfied and disgruntled about the political manifestations in the country (Nwosu *et al.*, 2019).

According to Chris (2012), GMD of Protection Plus Services Limited, security can be described as stability and continuity of livelihood, predictability of daily life, protection

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from crime, and freedom from psychological harm. Security is not the absence of threats or security issues, but the ability to rise to the challenges posed by these threats with expediency and expertise. According to Onime (2018), a security challenge is defined as “the state of fear or anxiety, stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” It refers to a lack of or inadequate freedom from danger. This definition reflects physical insecurity, which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity, such as economic security and social security.

The renowned security expert said that for the government to tackle insecurity, a key starting point should be to understand the causes of insecurity as well as to investigate the sources of social disorder and instability. Zubairu (2020) pointed out that it is necessary to distinguish between different causes, as each may require a different remedy. Besides, it is essential to provide a holistic view of the suggestions or recommendations for solutions. More often, however, policymakers are disinclined to isolate and clarify particular causes. They prefer blanket references, considering that the causes of insecurity are interwoven and contributory to one another. Like in many other societies, the sources of insecurity in Nigeria have been traced to a number of factors and explained by different people. These factors have been classified or grouped into external and internal factors.

Beyond the external-internal dichotomy, sources of insecurity have also been classified as either remote or proximate

and immediate sources/causal factors. In Nigeria, the challenge is not so much about the insecurity of external sources, but rather that of internal sources. It is recognized that some internal factors have been enhanced and strengthened by the presence of external forces, but there is no doubt that if the internal situations did not present themselves, the external forces would be unable to infiltrate. Iwuoha (2014) further expatiated on the remote (root) factors of security challenges in Nigeria. Lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure is described as the corrosion or breakdown of institutional infrastructures. The foundations of the institutional framework in Nigeria are very shaky and have provoked deterioration of state governance and democratic accountability, thus paralyzing the existing set of constraints, including the formal and legitimate rules nested in the hierarchy of social order.

The state of security challenges in Nigeria is greatly a function of government failure or can be linked to government failure. This is manifested by the incapacity of the government to deliver public services and to provide basic needs for the masses (Ogunode, 2021). The lack of basic necessities by the people in Nigeria has created a pool of frustrated people who are easily ignited by any event to be violent. The argument here is that Nigeria has the resources to provide for the needs of its people, but corruption in public offices at all levels has made it impossible for officeholders to focus on the provision of basic needs for the people. Nigerian situation can be described as a ‘Paradox of Plenty’, a situation where the country

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earns a great deal of revenue through oil sales but fails to use these earnings to meet the needs of its people and to develop infrastructure as well as the economy. When these situations exist, the crime rate is bound to rise, and the security of lives and properties cannot be guaranteed (Yusuf *et al.*, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

The Social Contract Theory was postulated by philosophers like Thomas Hobbes in 1651 in his book titled "Leviathan". It serves as a foundational work of political philosophy that discusses how people live together in society and the role of government. In it, Hobbes argues that humans are naturally self-interested and that, without a strong central authority, life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". He says people would be in a constant state of conflict, so they create a social contract, giving up some freedoms to a powerful leader (the "Leviathan") in exchange for protection and order (Thomas, 2022).

The second scholar is John Locke, who published his *Two Treatises of Government* in 1689. It's a foundational text of liberalism and discusses: the idea of absolute monarchy as the first treatise critiques, arguing against the divine right of kings. The second treatise lays out Locke's ideas on social contract, natural rights (life, liberty, and property), and the role of government. Basically, Locke argues people have inherent rights and governments derive power from the consent of the governed (John, 2025). The third scholar is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who published "The Social Contract" in 1762 as a foundational philosophy work. He

argued people come together to form a society and agree on rules (the social contract) to protect each other and the community. He believed people are born free, but in society, they give up some freedoms for protection. The idea is governments should serve the "general will" of the people, not just the powerful (Christopher, 2023).

In view of the above, each scholar had different views on the social contract, but they agreed that individuals consent to governance in exchange for protection and security, emphasizing the need for governments to fulfill their obligations to citizens, promoting trust and security. This theory is suitable for this study because it offers insights into the complex relationships between economic development, security, and governance in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for governance and institutions that promote security and stability in our society. In essence, this theory offers insights into addressing Nigeria's security challenges through economic development and governance.

Drivers of Security Challenges in Nigeria

Security challenges in Nigeria are driven by a complex mix of factors such as:

Poverty and Unemployment: Widespread poverty and unemployment create an environment where people are more likely to engage in criminal activities or join extremist groups. As a result of the high level of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths, they are adversely attracted to violent crime. Failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address challenges of poverty,

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unemployment, and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities is one of the major causes of Nigeria's security challenges. To overcome this issue, sustainable economic development is one of the key drivers (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025b) and (Nwogwu *et al.*, 2012).

Defective Governance and Deficient Leadership: Poor governance and leadership have contributed to Nigeria's security challenges, with many leaders accused of prioritizing personal interests over national security. Corruption is a major obstacle to effective governance and security in Nigeria, with many officials accused of embezzling funds meant for security and development (Ngwoke, 2021). Nigeria faces profound leadership, significantly influencing its sustainable economic development, security challenges, and social discontent. The implications of such leadership failures are deeply entrenched in governance issues, corruption, inadequate representation, and poor policy implementation (Ulu *et al.*, 2022).

Nigeria is in dire need of effective leadership. This has become pertinent, especially in contemporary times, where security challenges are ravaging the economy. No nation can improve the quality of its leaders. The development of a society may be a function of leadership strength and the governance of government machinery (Umemezia, 2023:107) notes that:

Leadership is a critical part of Nigeria's problem of governance because the educational qualification prescribed for political

leaders by Section 131(d), as amended by the National Assembly in 2010, and Section 318(1) of the Constitution does not equip them to combine ideas and power, intellectualism and politics... A semi-literate president or governor is what the prescription amounts to.

The kind of leadership needed in Nigeria is visionary leadership, a leadership that is detribalized, such that it has at the leadership position only people who can inculcate in their followers the ideals of common citizenship as a transcendent factor among all Nigerians.

We cannot discuss good leadership and governance when we are still struggling to conduct free and fair elections in a democratic government. Identified free, fair, and credible election environments are the first step towards good governance. Furthermore, when there is no free and fair election, there can be no political, social, or economic stability (Oko *et al.*, 2024). This strongly applies to Nigeria, a situation whereby the country, supposed to allow a multiparty system to thrive, becomes dominated by two major political parties, which is alarming. The APC and PDP dominate the political arena, and rigging has become the most important instrument determining election success. In addition, many politicians now defect between parties, from either APC to PDP or vice versa, turning themselves into political sycophants and flatterers of the ruling party. They tend to approach the election process with a mindset of a "do or die" affair, and this has often made them very militant. Many go about with thugs, who often

end up stealing ballot boxes to rig the election.

Ethnic and Religious Tensions:

Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious landscape can be a source of security challenges, particularly between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the Middle Belt. At the most proximate and least disputable level, terrorism is the most fundamental source of security attack in Nigeria today, and its primary bases and sources of support have generally been located in religious fanaticism and intolerance (Ngwoke, 2020). Terrorism is "the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction, or death, especially against unarmed targets, property, or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts", which has cost 13.4 percent of the world's gross domestic product. Nigeria has lost large numbers of lives in the Northern region in recent times to the insurgency of this infamous sect, Boko Haram, which has been ravaging the northern region of the country (Alegbeleye, 2014).

The insecure environment of the economy refers to insecurity variables that affect the performance of sustainable economic development but over which the economic enterprise has little or no direct control. In Nigeria, the variables range from theft to organized armed robbery, kidnapping and demand for ransom, assassination, repeated invasion and blockading of business installations, social injustice, unemployment, lack of access to livelihood resources, the rising cost of

living, and bombing, pipeline destruction. All these variables of crimes and social maladies have made the Nigerian security environment complex (Ngwoke, 2020). In addition to the usual crimes, the coordinated attacks from the Boko Haram sect in the northern part of the country, besides making life miserable for Nigerians, have affected many businesses operating in that region. The bomb explosions initiated by this group have been on the increase, leading to enormous loss of life and property and a general atmosphere of fear and social tension in the country (Ogunode, 2021).

Porous Borders

One major immediate factor that has enhanced security challenges in Nigeria is the country's porous frontiers, where individual movements are largely untracked. The porosity of Nigeria's borders has serious security implications for the country. Given the porous borders, as well as the weak security institutions, which are often underfunded, have poorly trained personnel, and are corrupt, it is difficult for them to effectively address security challenges. Weapons come easily into Nigeria from other countries; small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation and the availability of these weapons have enabled militant and criminal groups to have easy access to arms. Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa. Also, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for an unwarranted influx of migrants from neighboring countries such as the Republic of Niger, Chad, and the Republic of Benin. These migrants, who are mostly young men,

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are some of the perpetrators of crime in the country (Akwara *et al.*, 2014).

Climate Change and Resource Competition: Climate change and competition for resource control, such as land and water, contribute to security challenges in Nigeria. For instance, in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the presence of oil and environmental degradation are seen as major drivers of security challenges, leading to militancy with negative impacts on lives and properties in the region, and the same is applicable between herders and farmers in other regions of the nation (Olusakin *et al.*, 2023).

Rural and Urban Migration: The migration of jobless youths from rural areas to urban centers is also one of the causes of security issues in Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the countries in the world with very high rural and urban migration of young people seeking greener pastures. Most urban areas in Nigeria have grown beyond their environmental carrying capacities and existing infrastructure, and this has resulted in increased poor quality of living conditions in urban areas in Nigeria. Out of frustration, these youths are drawn into criminal activities as a means of survival. The sooner the government at all levels wakes up, the better for Nigeria, before things fall apart (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025a). These factors are interconnected and often exacerbate each other, making it challenging to address Nigeria's security challenges. Until we address the foundational drivers of these security challenges, sustainable economic development will always be a cog in the wheel of progress in Nigeria. Judging from the above, the

gross display of injustices in Nigeria and lack of ethical respect and understanding will always be a cog in the wheel of progress, sustainable economic development, and a security-free society until the government wakes up to its responsibilities (Ikenga *et al.*, 2022).

Evaluation

In essence, sustainable development is not just a goal but a necessary condition for security, just as security is a prerequisite for development. However, the literature on sustainable economic development as a means of mitigating Nigeria's security challenges remains scanty.

Economic Security: This refers to security that requires an assured basic income for individuals, which manifests as the provision of productive employment opportunities and adequate remuneration. Unemployment, economic hopelessness, and chronic poverty are threats to economic security, and these factors hinder sustainable economic development of any nation. Governments at all levels must be involved in creating economic opportunities via the establishment of industries and human empowerment programs for their citizens (Adebakin, 2012).

Food Security: This is of paramount necessity for the continuation of not only human existence but also the peace and security of the country. Food security in Nigeria is threatened by several challenges, including oil spills and pollution, which have devastated the Niger Delta region, affecting local ecosystems and livelihoods. For

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example, yam tubers, staple crops, and cassava in the Niger Delta region have been contaminated or damaged by oil spills. The region's agricultural productivity has decreased significantly, leading to scarcity and increased food prices. This makes it difficult for locals and poor citizens to afford nutritious food, resulting in health hazards that often lead to the untimely death of citizens (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025a). Oil pollution has affected artisanal fishermen more significantly than fish farmers. Fish populations, such as catfish and tilapia, have been severely depleted. Some food crops and fish species have disappeared or become extinct due to oil-related activities and gas flaring in the region. Many farmers in other regions of Nigeria lack access to modern farming tools, fertilizers, and herbicides, further exacerbating the decline in agricultural productivity. The study reveals that all of these lead to socio-economic challenges in Nigeria (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025c).

The high rate of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria contributes to food security challenges, as many households cannot afford nutritious food in three square meals. Inadequate storage facilities can lead to premature harvesting and post-harvest losses. Farmers often lack access to government programs and facilities designed to boost agriculture. In reality, staple crops such as cassava, yam, plantains, and cocoyam have been affected by oil spills, leading to contamination and reduced harvests, impacting the quality and safety of food consumed by local communities. The absence of proper storage facilities exacerbates food scarcity issues, forcing farmers to

harvest crops prematurely, further contributing to the challenge of food security in Nigeria (Oluwaleye, 2013).

Health Security: This is vital to human security, involving protection from threats to physical and mental well-being. In Nigeria, health security is severely undermined by environmental hazards, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, economic hardships, and security challenges. This has led to high morbidity and mortality rates, creating a public health crisis in a nation rich in natural resources but poor in basic social services, through the following health factors (Ezeajughu, 2021): Oil spills and gas flaring pollute water, soil, and air, leading to serious health issues such as respiratory problems, skin diseases, cancers, and birth defects. This security requires an assurance of minimum protection from all forms of diseases and unhealthy lifestyles that cut short human lives. Threats to health security are the absence of clean water, a dirty environment, and poor hygiene and health education. To address these health security challenges in Nigeria, effective environmental clean-up, healthcare investment, health workforce support, disease surveillance response, water and sanitation projects, community health education, and conflict-sensitive health programming are highly needed in ways that address local grievances and promote peace in Nigeria.

Environmental Security: Since the beginning of oil explorations in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, multinational oil companies have wreaked havoc on neighboring communities and their environment.

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Apart from the physical destruction of plants around the flaring areas, thick soot is deposited in the atmosphere. Whenever it rains, the soot is washed off, and the black-ink-like water runs down the roofs with chemicals that adversely affect the fertility of the soil. Many of the operational practices and facilities used by multinational oil companies are outdated, in poor condition, and are illegal in other parts of the world. Multinational high-pressure oil pipelines are constructed above the ground through villages and crisscross over pieces of land that were once used for agricultural purposes, thereby rendering them economically useless. Many oil pipelines pass within meters of people's homes (Douglas, 2018:34-36).

The World Wide Fund for Nature has calculated that Shell's gas-flaring activities in Nigeria are a major contributor to global warming. Because of nearly four decades of oil extraction, the Niger Delta coastal rainforest and mangroves are the most endangered river deltas in the world, according to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Umoh, 2023). This requires planned protection of people from the short and long-term ravages of nature, spill-over negative effects of environmental degradation, and abuse of the ecosystem and natural environment in the forms of desertification, gas flaring and emission, pollution of fresh water, and careless use of industrial chemicals.

Personal and Community Security: Nigeria faces significant ethnic and inter-community security challenges. Disputes over land, resources, and political power have led to violent

clashes between communities, resulting in displacement, injury, and loss of life. Ethnic and inter-community disputes have also played a role in exacerbating security challenges in the country. A good example is the ongoing security challenges between Nkari in Akwa Ibom State and Ariam in Abia State caused by community boundaries. This conflict has claimed many lives and some valuable property. Additionally, historical grievances, competition for resources, and perceived marginalization have fueled tensions between ethnic groups such as the Ijaw, Ogoni, and Itsekiri. Some ethnic groups have turned to militancy and violence to assert their demands, leading to attacks on oil infrastructure, government forces, and other communities. Unemployment, poverty, and lack of opportunities have contributed to youth restiveness, making them more susceptible to recruitment by militant groups, resulting in displacement, human rights abuse, and loss of life (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025a). Mutual distrust has eroded trust between communities, making it challenging to build lasting peace. The study reveals that, in addressing these challenges, potential solutions such as encouraging dialogue and mediation between ethnic groups and communities could help resolve disputes and build trust.

Political Security: This type of security is concerned with the protection of fundamental human rights of electorates as well as freedom from systematic torture, ill treatment, and coercion. The seven dimensions of national security can summarily be described as "...protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social

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conflict, political repression, and environmental hazards" (UNDP, 2023). National security, as defined above, is a sacrosanct and non-negotiable phenomenon in human society. This perhaps informed why every President or Governor in Nigeria, at the time of assuming the position of authority, is requested to take an oath to provide security for the lives and properties of citizens (Otto and Ukpere, 2012). Specifically, Section 14(b) of the Constitution (1999) states that: "...It is hereby accordingly declared that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government."

To discharge this function creditably, the Chief Executive, as President, Governor, and Local Government Boss, has been allotted security votes and access to security authorities (Osunyikanmi *et al.*, 2019). Addressing security challenges requires economic development, but economic development is hindered by security challenges. Short-term security measures might provide temporary relief but often neglect underlying economic issues. Sustainable economic development requires addressing root causes like poverty, inequality, and governance issues as a solution to Nigeria's security challenges.

Implications of Security Challenges on Sustainable Economic Development

The implications of Nigeria's security challenges on Sustainable Economic Development cannot be overemphasized. They include:

Poverty

The country's condition has had a significant impact on efforts to

enhance citizens' quality of life because poverty, unemployment, and malnutrition still exist in every corner of the nation. A country is classified as developed when it can provide a quality of life for its citizenry. Nigeria has been battling development problems despite abundant material and natural resources in its possession (Archibong and Nsikak, 2023). With the global economic meltdown occasioned by climate change and the herders' and bandits' disruption of the agriculture sector in Nigeria, one can have a clearer picture of the ripple effect of security challenges on the economy. Also, Adekoya (2021) notes that because of the instability caused by security attacks and violent confrontations between militants, herders, and farmers, food prices have increased. Many people who depended on farming are now jobless because of the menace of the bandits, militants, and herdsmen, thereby creating room for poverty.

Moreover, many farmers, especially from the Northern region, are driven away from their lands and settled in internally displaced person (IDP) camps across various areas affected by the farmer-herder conflicts. In collaboration with the above thought, work reveals that because of security issues, farmers do not farm for the whole year because of the fear of being attacked and killed in the face of ravaging security challenges in their community. Due to these security attack incidents, farmers would experience low yields and thus, low revenue.

Economic Development

The cost of conducting business in the nation and the disposable incomes of many Nigerians are suffering because of the government's incapacity to provide effective and efficient security for life and property. The economy of Nigeria is being impacted by the actions of Boko Haram, bandits, kidnappers, and other armed organizations. Together, these social ills pose a threat to the safety of the lives and property of both Nigerians and foreigners who reside in or attempt to do business in the nation (Ezeajughu, 2021). There has also been a widespread disruption of economic activities with negative effects on production. Many businesses have been destroyed as a result of security attacks. The high-risk business climate brought on by security challenges and the appalling state of essential infrastructure is one of the main issues preventing foreign investment in the economy (Adekoya, 2021).

The extent of the nation's instability, which makes it unsafe for business owners and farmers to do their business, has discouraged investors from the economy. The investment inflow continues to be hampered by security issues and governance challenges. No one can invest where they cannot recoup the intensive capital invested in the business. These businesses could have provided many job opportunities for the teeming populace of the country and also generated revenue for the government (Okolie *et al.*, 2019). The hardest hit by security attacks is agriculture, which is the sustenance of life. The farmers are prevented in

some regions from going to their farmlands because of farmer-herder crises as well as communal clashes. The result is the unavailability of raw materials to the manufacturers, who now depend entirely on imports, thereby increasing the demand for scarce foreign exchange for production. Those who made efforts cannot get to the manufacturers or distribute their products in many regions of the country.

Yusuf in Adekoya (2021) avers that even when the food is produced by the farmers, the security situation prevents farmers from accessing markets, which results in the inability to distribute goods across the country. Analyzing the effect of security attacks on the economy of Nigeria, Onime (2018) notes that security issues affect economic growth by drying out investment, increasing unemployment, and reducing government revenue, among others. Security challenges can stall economic activities and disrupt governmental programs in the country. It will dissuade investors from investing in the nation, thereby preventing the creation of job opportunities that would have offered the population jobs (Momoh *et al.*, 2020).

Momoh *et al.* (2020) outline 10 economic consequences of growing security challenges in Nigeria. These include foreign direct investment, gross fixed capital formation, public debt, inflation rate, insecurity, government security spending, per capita income, government expenditure on health, government expenditure on education, and government internal revenue

(Archibong, 2021). With security challenges affecting various economic sectors in Nigeria, any effort by the government administration to grow the economy would most likely fail if security challenges are not dealt with.

Environmental Sustainability

The level of development of a country is affected by many factors, one of which is security challenges. When security attacks are exacerbated in a society, it will affect education, businesses, and the economy, which will in turn affect the entire development of the society. Infrastructure is the basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society. Supporting this assertion, Ebiefie et al. (2025c) posit that: "The educational provisions within any given country represent one of the main determinants of the composition and growth of that country's output and exports and constitute an important ingredient in a system's capacity to borrow foreign technology effectively." It is an underlying base or foundation, especially for any society to thrive.

With the ravaging security challenges currently affecting infrastructural development and consuming much money channeled to the fight against security attacks in Nigeria, the nation's development will continue to decline. As a result of security issues, the lack of fundamental development infrastructures such as electricity has hindered the industrialization of the country and the creation of employment possibilities, which has stymied other efforts to propel the

economic revival of the world's seventh-most populated country (Pepple, 2021). However, the available infrastructures provided by the government are targeted by bandits, militia groups, and others. Since the beginning of security challenges in Nigeria, many government facilities such as pipelines, security facilities, and recently rails have been bombed by bandits. Painfully, as it is, the money that could have been used to provide infrastructure in the country has to be expended on security, yet the problem remains the same.

Conclusion

Security challenges are unhealthy for any society and even worse when they affect key sectors, wasting many lives and properties. With the ravaging security attacks in Nigeria, no place or human being is safe from the threat of security challenges. Unemployment and poverty, among other factors, are seen as drivers of security challenges in Nigeria. Despite government policies and efforts to address security issues, challenges persist. The present security challenges in Nigeria are unhealthy for the nation, posing a significant threat to its existence. It is evident from the article's findings that unemployment and poverty are used to justify perpetrators' actions, as they are made to believe they are fighting for their rights, and until this is addressed by the authorities, the situation will continue. Therefore, economic development is seen as a solution to mitigate security attacks in Nigeria. As economic development provides employment and

empowerment opportunities to young people and social control to maintain stability in society, it will enhance friendliness among people living in the same locality. It will bridge the ethnic and cultural diversity gap, cementing it with love, relationships, and mutual understanding, which will help bring all stakeholders together. Once the issues of unemployment and poverty are handled through sustainable economic development, all stakeholders will be able to unite and fight security challenges in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations to tackle Nigeria's security challenges are hereby proposed:

1. The security issue should be prioritized by the Nigerian government through employing an effective intelligence-driven mechanism to help tackle security challenges in Nigeria. Terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, and other forms of crime in Nigeria are intelligence-driven. The government should sincerely invest in security infrastructure to confront the firepower of these bandits and kidnappers.
2. Religious institutions should be tasked to lay more emphasis on the teachings of religious values and principles such as love, justice, peace and forgiveness in their communities. They should also influence these values within their communities by living them and encouraging their adherents to exhibit the same in their communities.

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Sex, Physical, and Financial Wellbeing as Predictors of Mental Health among Retirees in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examined the extent to which sex, physical, and financial wellbeing predict mental wellbeing of retirees in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Seven objectives, seven research questions and seven null hypotheses guided the study. The ex-post facto survey design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of 28,898 state government retirees in Akwa Ibom State as at April 2025. The sample size of 709 retirees was used for the study. Multi-stage sampling procedure involving random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were adopted. Data was collected using a researcher developed instrument named, "Personal-Social Variables and Retirees' Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire" (PSVRMWQ). The instrument was subjected to face validity by three experts. The reliability of the PSVRMWQ was .90, determined using Cronbach's Alpha Statistics. Data were analysed using simple linear regression. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there is no significant influence of sex on mental wellbeing of retirees. It was also revealed that physical wellbeing and financial wellbeing, significantly predicts mental wellbeing of retirees. It was recommended among other that Counsellors should develop and facilitate purpose-enhancement and mental health workshops for pre-retirees and retirees.

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Introduction

Retirement represents a significant life transition marked by the formal cessation of one's professional career, typically upon reaching a predetermined age or after completing a specified period of service. In Nigeria, the statutory retirement age is generally 60 years or after 35 years of continuous service, whichever comes first, though variations exist based on specific sectors and state regulations. For instance, in

Akwa Ibom State, the government extended the retirement age for teachers from 60 to 65 years, effective December 30, 2022 (Bassey, 2023). Transitioning into retirement generally necessitates significant adjustments, as individuals shift from structured professional routines to a more unstructured daily life, potentially impacting various aspects of wellbeing, including mental health.

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Mental well-being means that a person's mind is healthy, balanced, and able to work well. It helps people manage everyday stress, perform their jobs effectively, build strong relationships, and contribute to their communities. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) defines mental wellbeing as "a state in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community. This definition emphasizes that mental wellbeing goes beyond the absence of mental illness; it includes the presence of positive psychological functioning, emotional balance, and social connectedness, encompassing an individual's emotional, psychological, and social health.

Personal-social variables are individual characteristics or attributes that differentiate individuals and influence their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours across various situations. Santrock (2021) supports the view that personal factors can interact with social elements to determine an individual's quality of life, particularly in old age. In this study, it is suspected that personal variables can play a crucial role in shaping the mental wellbeing of retirees. Among these, sex, physical wellbeing, and financial wellbeing have been isolated for investigation based on careful exploration of extant literature and insights from the researcher's social work with retired persons.

Sex, as a biological status of being male or female, has been suggested to

influence health status, social roles, and adaptability in retirement (Harper and Hamblin, 2019). Eboh and Akpan (2021) observed that men and women experience retirement differently due to differences in their pre-retirement work roles, societal expectations, and coping mechanisms, which could in turn impact their mental wellness outcomes differently. Oyedele and Ibrahim (2018) opined that men often derive a significant portion of their identity from their professional roles, leading to feelings of loss, anxiety, and depression upon retirement, while women may display greater social resilience despite facing financial challenges due to lower lifetime earnings.

Physical wellbeing refers to the state in which the body functions efficiently and healthily, enabling an individual to perform daily activities with energy, strength, and minimal fatigue. Bengtson et al. (2020) observed that many retirees face declining physical health, often suffering from chronic illnesses including hypertension, diabetes, and arthritis, which are linked to increased stress, depression, and a decline in overall wellbeing. Okon and Essien (2022) noted that ill health not only causes physical discomfort but also limits mobility and independence, leading to frustration and emotional distress, with those suffering from multiple chronic conditions experiencing increased dependency on caregivers.

Financial well-being refers to a person's ability to manage their financial resources in a way that provides

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stability, security, and confidence about both present and future economic needs. Kohli (2020) explains that finance impacts access to healthcare, nutrition, and social engagement. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, irregular pension payments and inadequate financial planning have caused economic hardships for retirees. Okon and Essien (2022) are of the view that retirees who experience financial stress are at a higher risk of developing anxiety, depression, and emotional distress due to uncertainty about their basic needs.

This study therefore examined how these three variables namely; sex, physical, and financial predicts the mental wellbeing of retirees in Akwa Ibom State with a view to understanding the specific ways in which these personal-social variables shape post-retirement psychological outcomes and inform targeted counselling interventions.

Statement of the Problem

Retirement represents a crucial stage in human development, marked by major shifts in financial stability, social interaction, physical health, and psychological adjustment. In Akwa Ibom State, many retirees encounter difficulties such as irregular pension payments, deteriorating health, and weakened family support systems, which often translate into heightened vulnerability to stress, depression, social isolation, and loss of self-worth. As a counselling psychologist and keen observer of retirees' life realities in the study area, the researcher has noted that

while some navigate retirement successfully, many others face severe emotional struggles that threaten their mental wellbeing. The National Bureau of Statistics (2023) indicated that over 60% of Nigerian retirees experience post-retirement mental health challenges, highlighting that the transition from active employment to retirement is not always smooth. These observable challenges, coupled with reports in literature linking sex, physical health, and financial status to poor psychological outcomes in old age, prompted the need to systematically examine how these specific personal-social variables shape the mental wellbeing of retirees in this context.

Several efforts have been made at national and state levels to address retirees' welfare, most notably through pension reforms, free medical care for senior citizens by the state government, and various community support initiatives. However, these interventions tend to neglect the broader psychosocial dimensions of aging and have not adequately addressed how sex differences, physical health conditions, and financial wellbeing collectively influence mental health outcomes. Unfortunately, most studies in Nigeria have primarily highlighted economic hardship as a retirement challenge, with limited focus on how these specific personal variables influence mental wellbeing, leaving critical gaps in understanding for counselling interventions. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this critical gap by examining differences in mental wellbeing of retirees based on sex,

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physical wellbeing, and financial wellbeing.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine personal-social variables and mental wellbeing of retirees in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are to determine:

- i. The difference in mental wellbeing of retirees based on their sex.
- ii. How physical well-being predicts the mental well-being of retirees in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. How financial well-being predicts the mental well-being of retirees in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

- i. What is the influence of mental wellbeing of retirees based on their sex?
- ii. To what extent does physical well-being predict the mental well-being of retirees in Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. To what extent does financial well-being predict the mental well-being of retirees in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this work at .05 level of significance:

H₀ 1. There is no significant influence of sex on mental wellbeing of retirees in Akwa Ibom State.

H₀ 2. Physical well-being does not significantly influence the mental well-being of retirees in Akwa Ibom State.

H₀ 3. Financial wellbeing does not significantly influence the mental well-being of retirees in Akwa Ibom State.

Literature Review

This study lends credence to two relevant theories: Erikson's theory of psychosocial development and Pearlin *et al.* stress process model. Erikson's (1950) theory posits that late adulthood is characterised by the psychosocial crisis of integrity versus despair, wherein retirees' ability to achieve fulfilment depends significantly on their physical health and financial security, with sex differences in life experiences shaping how men and women navigate this developmental stage. Complementing this, Pearlin *et al.* (1981) stress process model explains how retirement exposes individuals to stressors such as declining health and financial strain, with sex influencing both exposure to these stressors and access to coping resources, ultimately shaping mental health outcomes. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for examining how sex, physical wellbeing, and financial wellbeing collectively influence the psychological adjustment of retirees in Akwa Ibom State.

Empirical evidence on sex differences in retirees' mental wellbeing has been documented across studies. Ejechi (2015) found that female retirees were more actively engaged in traditional ceremonies and religious

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activities compared to their male counterparts, with a higher percentage of female retirees (63%) reporting good self-rated health compared to male retirees (45%). Conversely, Lawal *et al.* (2017) found that male retirees reported higher life satisfaction compared to female retirees. Falade *et al.* (2020) examined the prevalence of loneliness and its association with depressive and anxiety symptoms among older retirees in Nigeria, revealing that female gender and advanced age were significantly associated with perceived loneliness, depression, and anxiety. While these studies provide valuable insights into sex differences in mental wellbeing among Nigerian retirees, they did not specifically focus on retirees in Akwa Ibom State, indicating a gap that the present study aims to address by examining how sex influences mental wellbeing within this region's unique socio-cultural context.

Regarding physical wellbeing and mental health among retirees, several studies have established significant relationships. Ogunniyi *et al.* (2017) examined health challenges faced by the elderly in Nigeria through a systematic review, identifying that older persons and their families encounter difficulties coping with functional physical, and psychosocial health statuses associated with aging. The review found that factors such as social isolation, reduced self-worth, and inadequate social support systems exacerbated mental health challenges among the elderly. Falade *et al.* (2020) investigated the prevalence of loneliness and its association with depressive and anxiety symptoms among 400 retirees aged 60

years and above in Nigeria, revealing that 58% of participants experienced loneliness, which was significantly associated with depressive and anxiety symptoms. Faronbi *et al.* (2020) conducted a retrospective study at the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex assessing chronic illness patterns among older patients, finding that 64.9% of patients had at least one chronic illness, with hypertension (45%) and diabetes mellitus (20%) being most prevalent, and that these chronic illnesses significantly impacted patients' overall health, physical health, mental wellbeing, and ability to function independently. These studies collectively highlight the connection between physical health and mental wellbeing, yet none focused specifically on retirees in Akwa Ibom State, necessitating the present investigation into how chronic illnesses influence mental wellbeing among retirees in this region.

The relationship between financial wellbeing and mental health among retirees has received considerable research attention. Netemeyer *et al.* (2018) investigated perceived financial wellbeing, subjective stress, and life satisfaction among older adults in the United States, finding that subjective financial wellbeing was a stronger predictor of mental health than objective income alone. In the Nigerian context, Adegoke and Adekeye (2019) found that inadequate pensions and lack of financial planning significantly predicted higher stress and lower life satisfaction, though social and family support partially buffered the negative

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effects of financial constraints. Gustman and Steinmeier (2019), in their study revealed that greater financial security and wealth accumulation were associated with lower depression, higher life satisfaction, and better psychological resilience. Lusardi and Mitchell (2020) found that higher financial literacy and proactive retirement planning were strongly associated with increased financial security, reduced stress, and improved overall wellbeing. While these studies offer important insights, they were largely conducted in developed country contexts with structured pension systems, unlike the Nigerian situation where retirees often face irregular pension payments and rely on informal support systems. The present study addresses this gap by examining how financial wellbeing interacts with mental wellbeing among retirees in the local context of Akwa Ibom State.

Research Methodology

This study utilised the ex-post facto survey design with the population of this study comprising all State Government retirees in Akwa Ibom State. According to Sunday (2025), 28,898 retirees were listed for verification under the payroll of the state government as of April 2025. The sample for the study was 790 retirees obtained using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula, which was initially calculated as 395 and then doubled giving 790 for higher generalization. However, out of the retirees sampled, only 709 responses were deemed valid. The multi stage sampling technique was utilised in sample selection.

The researcher-made questionnaire tagged Personal-Social Variables and Retirees' Mental Wellbeing Scale (PSVRMWS) was used for data collection in this study. The research instrument was face-validated by three experts, one from the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education, and two from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Uyo, Uyo. The instrument yielded an internal consistency reliability coefficient .90 Cronbach's Alpha. The data collected in this study were analysed using Mean, Standard deviation, independent t-test and Simple linear regression statistical tools. All data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and all hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The study adhered to established ethical guidelines to ensure that the rights, dignity, and welfare of the participants were protected throughout the research process.

Results

Research Question One: What is the influence of mental wellbeing of retirees based on their sex?

Table 1: Summary of Mean and Standard deviation for mental wellbeing of retirees based on sex (n=709)

Gender	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	352	59.89	6.92
Female	357	59.95	6.80

Source: Researcher's survey (2026)

From the result in Table 1, it is reveals that the mean and standard

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deviation scores of mental wellbeing of male retirees is 59.89 and 6.92 and that of female retirees is 56.95 and 6.80 respectively. The result means that both male and female retirees had slightly the same mean score on mental wellbeing. With this observation, it implies that sex has no influence on mental wellbeing.

Research Question 2: To what extent does physical wellbeing predict mental wellbeing of retirees?

Table 4.1: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing of retirees (n=709)

Variables	R	R ²	Extent of Prediction	Adjusted R ²
Physical wellbeing				
Mental wellbeing of retirees	0.465	0.216	21.6%	0.215

Source: Researcher's survey (2026)

In Table 2, the R-value of 0.465 indicates positive and moderate extent of prediction, while R² value of 0.216 which is the coefficient of determination show the extent physical wellbeing predict mental wellbeing of retirees. In addition, 21.6% variance in mental wellbeing of retirees is accounted for by sense of fulfilment. This means that the extent physical wellbeing predict mental wellbeing of retirees is moderate.

Research Question 3: To what extent does financial wellbeing predict mental wellbeing of retirees?

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of financial wellbeing and mental wellbeing of retirees (n=709)

Variables	R	R ²	Extent of Prediction	Adjusted R ²
Financial wellbeing				
Mental wellbeing of retirees	0.602	0.363	36.3%	0.362

In Table 3, the R-value of 0.602 indicates positive and moderate extent of prediction, while R² value of 0.363 which is the coefficient of determination show the extent financial wellbeing predict mental wellbeing of retirees. In addition, 36.3% variance in mental wellbeing of retirees is accounted for by financial wellbeing. This means that the extent financial wellbeing predict mental wellbeing of retirees is moderate.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of sex on mental wellbeing of retirees.

Table 4: Summary of Independent t-test of mental wellbeing of retirees based on Sex

	n	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Sig.	Decision at .05 Alpha Level
Sex						
Female	352	59.89	6.92			(NS)
Male	357	59.95	6.80	-.117	.907	Ho1 Retained

In Table 4, the significant (sig.) value for the influence of sex on mental wellbeing of retirees is .907. This significant level is greater than .05 alpha level in which the decision is based. This indicated that there is no significant influence of sex on mental wellbeing of retirees. Therefore, the formulated

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hypothesis that there is no significant influence of sex on mental wellbeing of retirees was retained.

Null Hypothesis 2: Physical wellbeing does not significantly predict mental wellbeing of retirees.

Table 5: Simple regression analysis of the prediction of mental wellbeing of retirees from Physical wellbeing (n=709)

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F-ratio	p-value
Regression	159.600	1	159.600	195.005*	.000
Residual	578.639	707	.818		
Total	738.240	708			

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
(Constant)	9.388	.361		26.036	.000
Physical wellbeing	.386	.028	.465	13.964	.000

The information in Table 5 shows that physical wellbeing is a significant independent predictor of mental wellbeing ($F = 195.005$; $p = 0.000$). Hence, the null hypothesis that physical wellbeing does not significantly predict mental wellbeing of retirees is rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

Null Hypothesis 4: Financial wellbeing does not significantly predict mental wellbeing of retirees.

Table 6: Simple regression analysis of the prediction of mental wellbeing of retirees from Financial wellbeing (n=709)

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F-ratio	p-value
Regression	267.784	1	267.784	402.424*	.000
Residual	470.456	707	.665		
Total	738.240	708			

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
(Constant)	7.035	.368		19.094	.000
Financial wellbeing	.564	.028	.602	20.061	.000

The information in Table 6 shows that financial wellbeing is a significant independent predictor of mental wellbeing ($F = 402.424$; $p = 0.000$). Hence, the null hypothesis that financial wellbeing does not significantly predict mental wellbeing of retirees is rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding from research question one revealed that both male and female retirees had slightly the same mean score on mental wellbeing, indicating that sex has no influence on mental wellbeing. Also, the result of hypothesis one showed that there is no significant influence of sex on mental wellbeing of retirees. This finding contradicts the study by Lawal *et al.*, (2017) which reported that male retirees had higher life satisfaction compared to female retirees in Southwestern Nigeria. Similarly, the finding disagrees with Falade *et al.*, (2020) who found that female gender was significantly associated with perceived loneliness, depression, and anxiety among older retirees in Nigeria. The result may be attributed to the fact that retirement in Akwa Ibom State represents such a profound life transition that it tends to equalize the psychological experiences

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of men and women. When individuals leave the workforce after decades of service, they step into a new reality defined less by gender and more by shared challenges. Both men and women face the same sudden loss of daily structure. Both wake up to mornings that no longer have the shape that work once provided. Both must navigate the silence of empty hours where there used to be meetings, tasks, and the company of colleagues. This structural void does not discriminate by sex. It simply exists as a condition of retirement that all must learn to manage. Men in Akwa Ibom may have derived significant identity from their professional roles. But when that identity is removed, they are thrown into a psychological space not so different from the one woman already occupied. Women may have balanced multiple roles during their working years, but retirement often removes the structure of employment while leaving other roles intact or even intensified. This shared experience of identity reconfiguration may override whatever gender differences existed before retirement.

The finding from research question two revealed that the extent physical wellbeing predicts mental wellbeing of retirees is moderate, accounting for 21.6 percent of the variance. Also, the result of hypothesis two showed that physical wellbeing significantly predicts mental wellbeing of retirees. This finding agrees with Ogunniyi *et al.*, (2017) who identified that older persons and their families encounter difficulties coping with

functional physical, and psychosocial health statuses associated with aging. The finding also supports Faronbi *et al.*, (2020) who highlighted that chronic illnesses significantly impact patients' overall health, physical health, mental well-being, and ability to function independently. The result may be attributed to the intimate connection between body and mind that becomes increasingly visible as people age. When a retiree wakes each morning with pain in their joints, that pain does not stay confined to the body. It seeps into the mind, colouring thoughts and emotions. The simple act of rising from bed becomes a reminder of decline. Walking to the market becomes a calculation of distance versus stamina. Attending church requires weighing the joy of worship against the exhaustion of travel. Each physical limitation is not merely a bodily experience but a psychological one, a repeated message that the body is no longer reliable. This daily confrontation with physical limitation reshapes how retirees see themselves. A man who once carried heavy loads on his farm now struggles with a bucket of water. A woman who spent hours cooking for her family now tires after twenty minutes in the kitchen. These changes are not neutral. They challenge fundamental beliefs about competence and independence. The retiree who cannot care for themselves must accept care from others, a reversal of roles that can feel like a loss of dignity. This psychological burden is often heavier than the physical discomfort itself.

The finding from research question three revealed that the extent

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financial wellbeing predicts mental wellbeing of retirees is moderate. Also, the result of hypothesis three showed that financial wellbeing significantly predicts mental wellbeing of retirees. This finding agrees with Adegoke and Adekeye (2019) who found that inadequate pensions and lack of financial planning significantly predicted higher stress and lower life satisfaction among retirees in Southwestern Nigeria. The finding also supports Gustman and Steinmeier (2019) who reported that greater financial security and wealth accumulation were associated with lower depression, higher life satisfaction, and better psychological resilience among older adults. The result may be attributed to the way money, or the lack of it, touches nearly every aspect of a retiree's daily existence. When a retiree wakes in the morning, the first thoughts are often about what the day will cost. Is there enough for food? For medicine? For transport to church or the market? These questions are not abstract but immediate and urgent. A mind occupied with survival has little room for peace, reflection, and joy. Financial worry crowds out everything else, becoming the background music of every waking hour. This constant low-level anxiety wears down mental health over time, eroding the psychological resources that help people cope with life's challenges.

Conclusion

It is concluded based on the study's findings that the mental wellbeing of retirees in Akwa Ibom State is shaped more by the quality of

their present physical, and financial circumstances than by fixed biological characteristics such as sex. These findings confirm that retirement is not merely a financial transition but a profound psychological journey requiring support, understanding, and intervention from counsellors, families, communities, and government.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i. State and local governments should partner with religious bodies, community centers, and retiree associations to launch mental health outreach programs tailored to the unique needs of both male and female retirees.
- ii. Pension administrators should standardize the timely release of retirement benefits, treating consistent financial liquidity as a primary clinical intervention for mental stability.
- iii. The Ministry of Health should roll out specialized healthcare schemes that provide subsidized medications, routine screenings, and low-cost management for chronic conditions specifically for the retired population.
- iv. Professional counsellors should design and lead "Purpose-Enhancement" seminars to equip pre-retirees and retirees with the psychological tools needed to navigate life transitions.

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- v. The Ministry of Education will integrate comprehensive retirement modules into adult education curricula, ensuring all public servants undergo mandatory psychological and financial preparation before exit

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Curriculum Reform in TVET for Mechanical/Automobile Technology Education Global Competitiveness

Abstract

The current state of Mechanical/Automobile Technology Education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria as regards the methodologies and practices leaves so much to be worried about. This situation has manifested in various dimensions, posing a glaring deviation from the rationale that necessitated the institutionalization of the programme as enshrined in the National Policy on Education. This, underscores that Mechanical/Automobile Technology Education was configured to produce professionals (technologists, artisans and craftsmen) with vast knowledge and requisite skills to successfully perform vital operations in motor vehicles and automotive engines. It is therefore, imperative to equip the recipients with sellable competencies to excel in their chosen vocations, improve their living standard as well as contribute to socio-economic development of the country. However, this lofty objective appears unattainable owing to the manner in which the programme was established and operationalized. In view of the foregoing, this paper highlighted apparent lacuna in knowledge-processing and optimization of skills inherent in the field, which seem to defile the potency of the programme toward human capital development. Whilst stressing the need to strengthen Automobile/Mechanical Trade through holistic curriculum reform, the paper advocated that adherence to standard evaluation among others are crucial for sustainable TVET curriculum.

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Introduction

The quest for knowledge and experience that translates into development of human resources for overall technological and socio-economic transformation of a nation necessitates the establishment of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). This is because, TVET was configured to equip the recipients with requisite knowledge, skills and

competences to embark on vocations of their choices and advance successfully in them. Additionally, technical and vocational education and training encompasses a broad range of educational elements. This includes not only general education but also the exploration of technologies and associated sciences, as well as the development of practical skills, attitudes, knowledge, and understanding relevant

to various occupations across different economic and social sectors (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Similarly, TVET could be perceived as a thoughtful and hands-on programme skillfully designed to facilitate the exploration and exploitation of requisite skills and expertise for optimal impartation of competences leading to advancement of creative and innovative potentials for sustainable enterprises. Simply put, TVET is that educational programme meant to expose learners irrespective of their age brackets and gender, the skills and in-depth understanding of how to do something which not only attracts economic gains but as well guarantees sustainable living (Okoye & Okoye; Okwelle, 2015). Hence, every recipient of the programme should in addition to being sufficiently employable, be adequately able to establish and manage their own enterprises as well as employ others. Substantiating the foregoing, FRN (2013) enumerated the major goals of TVET as follows:

- i. Supplying skilled personnel in applied sciences, technology, and business, especially at craft, advanced craft, and technical levels.
- ii. Offering technical knowledge and vocational skills essential for agricultural, commercial, and economic progress.
- iii. Training individuals and equipping them with the skills needed for economic self-reliance.

Based on these goals, TVET was structured into the following aspects: (i) Technical Colleges (ii) Vocational Enterprise Institutes (VEIs) and (iii)

National Vocational Qualifications Frameworks (NVQF). The main features of the curricula activities for technical colleges (TC) were structured in foundation and trade modules with each consisting of five components, namely: (i) General education (ii) Theory and related courses (iii) Workshop practice (iv) Industrial training/production work. (v) Entrepreneurial training. However, the trainee should at the end of the programme be able to secure employment, set up his own business and/or pursue further education in advance craft/technical institutions such as polytechnics or colleges of education and universities (FRN, 2013; Okoye & Nnajofofor, 2017).

Similarly, vocational enterprise institutes (VEIs) were instituted with a view to inculcate in students the ability to think creatively and actively participate in activities that could engender technological advances, which could in turn foster wealth generation and economic emancipation. It provides training that enables students acquire specialized knowledge and craftsman skills that could empower them to not only become wealth creators but also to compete globally. In the same vein, national vocational qualification framework (NVQF) is a system designed for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies acquired by individuals irrespective of where and how the training or skill was acquired. It gives a clear statement of what the learner must know or be able to do, whether the learning took place in a classroom, on-the-job, of non-formal (FRN, 2013). Consequently, NVQF deals

with the manner by which TVET goals are actualized through the acquisition and utilization of creative ingenuity in various fields of technology education, such as automobile/mechanical education.

In alignment with its objectives, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is organized into three main components: Technical Colleges, (ii) Vocational Enterprise Institutes (VEIs), and (iii) National Vocational Qualifications Frameworks (NVQF). The curriculum for Technical Colleges (TC) is divided into foundational and trade modules, each comprising five key components: (i) General education, (ii) Theory and related courses, (iii) Workshop practice, (iv) Industrial training/production work and (v) entrepreneurial training. Upon completing the programme, the trainees should be equipped to secure employment, establish their own businesses or pursue further education in advanced craft or technical institutions, such as polytechnics, colleges of education or universities (FRN, 2013; Okoye & Nnajofofor, 2017).

Similarly, Vocational Enterprise Institutes (VEIs) aimed to foster creativity and active participation among students in activities that promote technological advancements, ultimately leading to wealth generation and economic empowerment (Okoye, Udemgba, Okonkwo, & Onwusa (2025). These institutes provide training that equip students with specialized knowledge and craftsmanship skills, enabling them to become wealth creator and compete on a global scale.

The National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) is designed to develop, classify, and recognize the skills, knowledge, and competencies acquired by individuals, regardless of the training context. It clearly outlines the expectations for learners, detailing what they must know or be able to do, whether their learning occurs in a classroom, on-the-job, or through non-formal education (FRN, 2013). The NVQF plays a crucial role in realizing TVET goals by facilitating the acquisition and application of creative ingenuity across various fields of technology education, including automobile and mechanical education.

Automobile/Mechanical Technology Education

This is one of the trades offered at both post-secondary and tertiary education levels which aimed at equipping learners with requisite skills and competences to accurately construct, operate, effectively maintain and render services in motor vehicles and other automotive devices/gadgets (FRN, 2013). In pursuance of this, the trade was split into various modules to ensure that instructions are not only systematically designed, but also appropriately delivered so as to yield the expected outcome from learners. Taking cognizance of the immense roles of automobile industry, which stretched across all sectors of the economy, it becomes imperative that the professionals are properly groomed to ensure that they would meet the expectations of the industry. It is quite worrisome that most of the mechanics in Nigeria, especially those who had formal education, are properly trained owing to lack of workshops and

enabling environment. As such, the environment where learning takes place should be a replica of the working environment (Prosser as cited in Okoye, 2015). It becomes apparent to underscore that, having a functional TVET in place could trigger rapid advancement of requisite knowledge and cutting-edge skills for sustainable engagement in Automobile Technology programme in the following dimensions:

1. Provision of requisite skills and competences to design, construct, operate and repair vehicles and other automotive devices to specifications.
2. Establishment of formidable enterprises that could guarantee efficient service delivery and technological advancement.
3. Revitalization of existing industries cum enterprises through enhanced skills for sustainable economic development and global competitiveness.
4. Facilitating a continuous reproduction of competent manpower/personnel who would drive the industry and as well diversify the economy.
5. Reducing small businesses' failure rate by equipping the graduates with employable skills and competences to successfully manage their enterprises.
6. Drastically reducing unemployment and other social menace by preparing the youths for sustainable employment and productive lifestyle.
7. Promoting strong but mutual relationships among schools, industries and communities to foster optimal utilization of their

resources for socio-economic advancement among others.

However, the way in which the programme operates in Nigerian education system seemed not to conform with the best practices and could invariably make the realization of the aforementioned goals extremely difficult, if not impossible. This could compel a scholar to further cogitate and imagine what behooves a system that is fraught with humongous challenges, such as lack of facilities, dearth of competent professionals, flagrant use of inappropriate teaching methods by teachers, extremely poor funding, students' inordinate attitudes to learning, nonchalant disposition of government to technical/technology education, ineffective/moribund curriculum inter alia (Makus, 2009; Eze & Okoye, 2016). These factors have evidently resulted in poor image of TVET, production of army of unemployable TVET graduates, continual depopulation of students offering the programme cum low enrolment into TVET programmes, weak institutional framework, and apathy for practical discourse among others. In view of the foregoing issues, some scholars advocate that, if the curriculum is reconfigured and holistically implemented in accordance with the 21st Century global best practices, every other militating factor would likely fall in place. Therefore, there is a pressing need to develop a practical curriculum aimed at addressing challenges and revitalizing education in Mechanical/Automobile Technology. This will provide learners with the opportunity to gain essential skills and competencies necessary for

sustainable participation and global competitiveness.

Methodology

This paper employed a systematic literature review (SLR) as a qualitative methodology to address the curriculum issue in automobile/mechanical technology education. The systematic literature review is a methodical and purposeful way to locate, evaluate, and summarize previous research relevant to a particular subject or inquiry. A comprehensive search is carried out across several databases, relevant academic journals, books, and other sources to find all pertinent research on the subject matter. The systematic review's plan or methodology is well stated, and the criteria fully specified before the study. This involves planning a thorough search strategy and clearly answering an identified question (Dewey & Drahota, as cited in Genesis, 2024).

Curriculum Reform in TVET

The concept of curriculum has been explored by various scholars, each emphasizing different aspects such as course content, teaching methods, evaluation, and achievement of instructional goals. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2010), curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught within a school, course, or program. Umorah (2016) defines curriculum as a mechanism through which the educational system imparts prescribed knowledge, skills, and attitudes to learners, as defined by society. Mackus (2015) views it as the collection of activities and courses offered in schools,

encompassing the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire to meet learning objectives. Umorah (2016) asserts that curriculum, while prescriptive, is based on a broader syllabus specifying required topics and attainment levels for grades or standards. Additionally, UNESCO (2017) perceives curriculum as: (i) a body of knowledge to be transmitted, (ii) an effort to achieve specific student outcomes, (iii) a process, and (iv) a practical application. These perspectives collectively highlight curriculum's role in guiding teachers to articulate learning objectives, lessons, assignments, and materials for effective course delivery. Thus, for a school curriculum to achieve desired outcomes, it must align with 21st-century best practices, characterized by the information era.

The dynamism of technological advances in the 21st Century as regards automobile industry demands a drastic change in the principles and operations employed in performing various tasks, whether in workplaces or institutions of learning. This implies that, the emergence of information technology (IT) has ushered in a lot of changes which demand exhaustive redefinition of ways of performing various functions or tasks to meet the yearnings of the society. Such changes can be construed as curriculum reform. Curriculum reform in TVET therefore aims at improving or modifying TVET programmes to address the needs of individuals as well as that of the society; which ultimately translates to nation development. Reforming TVET curriculum grapples with deliberate reconstruction, reconfiguration and updating the programme to reflect the

prevailing reality in respect of workplace skill sets that promote creative innovations and global competitiveness. Acknowledging the import of creativity towards the actualization of goals and objectives of Mechanical/Automobile Technology trades, the following are considered paramount:

- i. *Adherence to Standards:* When schools adopt new learning standards, teachers adjust their curriculum to align with these expectations (ILO, 2010). However, merely aligning curriculum technically with standards does not guarantee that teachers are effectively teaching to those standards or that students are meeting the intended learning outcomes. Learning standards serve as a tool for policymakers and school leaders to enhance curriculum and teaching quality, underscoring the need for careful consideration in this regard.
- ii. *Evaluation Standards:* Another reform approach that can impact curriculum indirectly is assessment. This is because the methods employed to assess student learning guide teachers in instructing the content and skills that will be evaluated. Standardized tests are one method through which assessment shapes curriculum reform, but schools also utilize rubrics and various strategies to enhance teaching quality by adjusting assessment strategies, requirements, and expectations within the curriculum.
- iii. *Curriculum Coherence:* Schools aim to enhance curriculum quality by aligning teaching methods and course expectations with learning standards and other school programs, a process often referred to as "curriculum mapping." The primary goal is to establish a more unified and cohesive academic program, ensuring that teachers cover essential content and address any gaps in learning that may occur between different courses and grade levels (Umorah, 2016). This strategy contends that the core knowledge and skills in a given course should dominate the curriculum so as to heighten learners' mastery of instructional content as well as employability after graduation.
- iv. *Curriculum Philosophy and Approach:* The structure and objectives of a curriculum mirror the educational philosophy of its developers. Therefore, curriculum reform can involve adopting a new teaching philosophy or methodology, such as constructivism, by a school or educator. Constructivism emphasizes student-centered learning. Conversely, schools that adhere to models like Expeditionary Learning embrace diverse teaching approaches, such as project-based learning (UNESCO, 2017), which includes strategies like community-based and authentic learning.
- v. *Curriculum Adoption:* In such cases, schools might choose to acquire or adopt a pre-packaged curriculum developed by another

institution. A widely recognized option in American public schools is the International Baccalaureate (ILO, 2010), which provides curriculum programs for elementary, middle, and high schools. Adopting a curriculum package typically involves specialized training for teachers to ensure effective implementation and delivery of the curriculum.

- vi. *Curriculum Support*: The resources supplied by schools to teachers play a crucial role in curriculum execution. For example, equipping all students with laptops and outfitting classrooms with interactive whiteboards prompts teachers to make substantial adjustments in both content and teaching methods to leverage these tools. Furthermore, the nature of professional development opportunities offered to teachers also profoundly impacts curriculum development and design.

Implications of TVET Curriculum Reform for Automobile/Mechanical Technology

The level of implementation and the conduct of Automobile/Mechanical Technology programme across the states of the federation is quite appalling. This has apparently made the attainment of its goals or prospects practically impossible following an overt shrinkage of the credence accorded to the programme, which makes a holistic curriculum reform imperative with following implications:

- i. *Youth Empowerment*: Studies have shown that youths constitute the

greater percentage of the population of the nation's work force. Incidentally, this category of the national population appears the most vulnerable and susceptible to various kinds of activities and crimes considered inimical to national development. Though, governments at various levels and periods have introduced certain policies and empowerment programmes to curtail the spate of youth restiveness but the results were grossly insignificant (Ogbuanya and Okoye, 2015). The reason for this failure may not be distanced from the inability of the government to systematically align the programmes with TVET; which could be due to lack of understanding of the fundamental principles guiding TVET. Until those initiatives are properly aligned with TVET, they would never succeed while the future of the youth are continually bastardized.

- ii. *Job Creation*: The capacity to create and sustain jobs is what drives the industrial sector as well as the economy of any progressive nation (Okoye, Okoye & Okwelle, 2015). Incidentally, high demand of competent professionals who would pilot automobile or motor vehicle industries in Nigeria suggests that a proactive approach be taken to bridge the gap using the instrumentality of TVET. This is simply because TVET provides the creative imagination as well as the

- innovative acumen to generate jobs.
- iii. *Poverty Reduction:* The declaration by the British Prime minister, Theresa May (2019) which described Nigeria as the world's headquarters of poverty, was really a presupposed clarion call for the nation to embrace sustainably positive change that could transform the nation economically; otherwise, what another school of thought might obviously consider hate speech. Eventually, none of them either surfaced, leaving the minds bugling in the maze of reality whether the people to whom the comment was ascribed to actually discern or are nonchalant of their precarious socio-economic reality. That is why, Ukoh (2019) attributed the spate of insecurity ravaging the country to unemployment and abject poverty while the political elites coast in affluence of tax payers' money without recourse. However, a holistic reform could avert the situation.
 - iv. *Optimization of Creative and Innovative Spirit:* Creativity and innovation is the intellectual vehicle that drives the world's technological advancement. Little wonder the erstwhile US President, Barack Obama in one of his public broadcasts affirmed that creativity is the currency which the present generation trades (Okoye, 2017). With this in view, it becomes glaring that the industrialized nations, like the US, China, etc. advanced technologically because they embraced TVET holistically; which availed them ample opportunity to explore and optimize their creative and innovative acumen extraordinarily. In acknowledgement of this claims, this paper canvasses for a genuinely structural curriculum reform in Automobile/Mechanical Technology Education in Nigeria that could spark impeccable zeal for originality, creativity and innovation for global competitiveness.
 - v. *Technological Advancement:* The underling vision and intent that informed the establishment of TVET is technological advancement of the country. Obviously, motor vehicle industry is one of the major players of the economy where advances in technology have greatly impacted (Ogbuanya & Okoye, 2015). This is quite worrisome to scholars who ponder why the institutions and agencies charged with this responsibility have failed to up their game, while others blame it on governments' insensitivity to Nigerian education. But, for how long would this subsist, bearing in mind that that is one of the best ways to transform the nation. Hence, paper advocates for urgent review and repositioning of the programme in order to appropriately match theory and practice to optimize learners' potentials creatively. This would drastically reduce patronage to mediocre among the road side

- mechanics and bring TVET graduates on board for rapid advancement of the economy.
- vi. *Institutional and Industrial Synergy*: Lack of effective synergy between industries and TVET institutions seems to be one of the major threats to advancement of Mechanical/Automobile Technology Education in the country. Although, the road map was elaborately emphasized in the education policy document, but there was no concrete and committed approach to implement it. This lacuna has not only denied both the industry and the institutions ample opportunity to mutually exchange their resources but also short-circuits their ability to collaborate in order to produce employable and competent workforce that would transform the industry to global reckoning (Onwusa, Oderhowho, Okoye, & Uyeri, 2025).
- vii. *Sustainable Problem-Solving-Based Education*: The underlining principle guiding the establishment of any modern institution or invention bothers on its ability to solving societal problems. Unfortunately, the manner in which Mechanical/Automobile Technology programmes operate in Nigeria left nothing to be desired as it could be best described as a mere tool for earning degrees and qualifications rather than solving societal problems. This situation calls for an informed curriculum reform with deliberate recourse to constructivist learning approach to inculcate in learners high-thinking ability, independence of opinion, and creative spirit needed to optimize their potentials (UNESCO, 2009).
- viii. *Inclusivity*: The manner in which the programme is currently run in this part of the globe apparently portrays Mechanical/Automobile Technology Education as masculine-oriented or educational programme solely designated for male gender. This phenomenon has invariably, posed some threats or limitations to the learning process and as such some female gender who were richly endowed with the potentials to advance in the profession/industry, often drop out or jettison it for career they lack the skill sets. This ugly occurrence is usually attributed to some factors, namely: bandwagon influence, convenience, believe system among others, which consequently makes them to struggle the rest of their lives, seeking for unrealistic opportunity (Okoye & Nnajofofor, 2017). In order to arrest this situation, the curriculum reform should take cognizance of inclusiveness by developing and integrating a workable template that could attract women to seek career in Mechanical/Automobile Technology Education. This could break the age long barrier of exclusion and ultimately

enhance women enrolment in the programme.

Conclusion

The paper affirmed that TVET is not only a prime mover that drives Mechanical/Automobile Technology Education to meeting its goals and expectations but substantiates the imperative to embark on urgent curriculum reform in order to redeem the values of the trade. Having underscored some of the challenges besetting the programme and encapsulated some plausible solutions, it is believed that if appropriately harnessed, it could revamp the programme from its near-state of extinction. The paper therefore, concludes that curriculum reform, if objectively pursued with recourse to TVET could foster acquisition of innovative skills which would invariably trigger technological advancement of the country.

Recommendations

Sequel to the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Ministry of Education in collaboration with School Authorities should expose Mechanical/Automobile technology teachers to modern techniques in carrying out requisite activities either practically or theoretically. This would enable them to actively make necessary adjustments in order to impart meaningfully in learners.
2. Government should intensify efforts towards meeting TVET needs as explicitly expressed in

the policy document by providing the required equipment and modern technologies for learning. This will foster smooth and successful engagements needed to produce competent manpower who would not only acquire the requisite skills but also successfully compete globally.

3. School Administrators should encourage TVET teachers and students to embrace students-centred learning approaches in teaching and learning. This would enable them to effectively learn and adopt the modern but technology-driven workplace methods of performing tasks.
4. School administrators, stakeholders in education and other relevant bodies should heighten their campaign for curriculum reform in TVET. This will help to revitalize some ailing TVET trades such as Mechanical/Automobile Technology Education.

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