

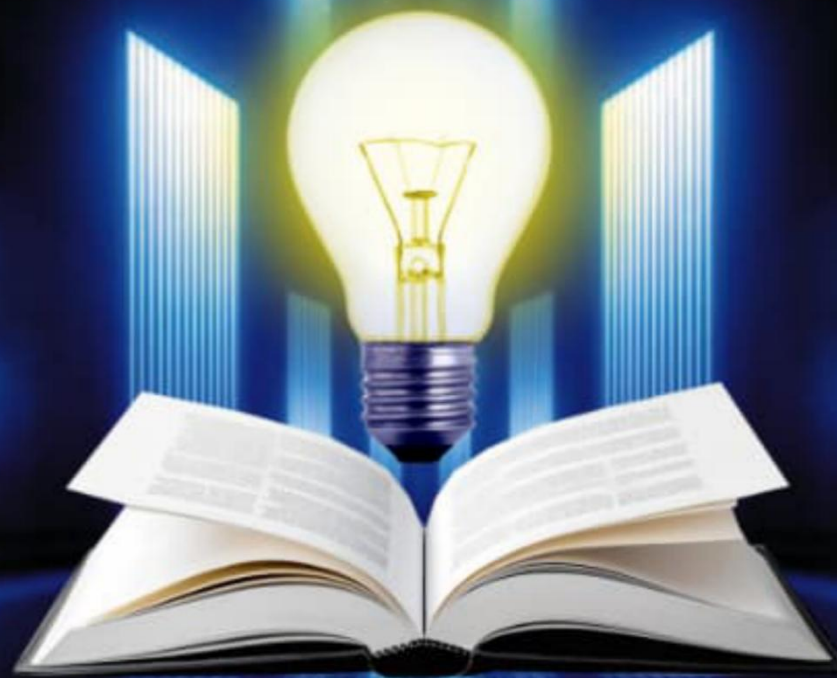
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# IDEAS

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## **An Evaluation of Hans Jonas' Moral Environmental Responsibility and its Implication to Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Environmental degradation in Nigeria has become both an ecological and moral concern, especially in regions where extractive activities and weak governance structures intersect. The Niger Delta continues to experience severe oil pollution, while other parts of the country face deforestation, urban waste accumulation, and increasing climate stress. These conditions reflect not only environmental mismanagement but also deeper ethical failures in responsibility toward both present and future generations. Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility offers a philosophical framework for interpreting these challenges, particularly through its emphasis on precaution, intergenerational justice, and moral obligation in the face of technological power. This study examined the moral foundations of environmental responsibility in Hans Jonas' philosophy and its relevance to Nigeria's environmental realities. Its specific objectives are to: conceptualise environmental responsibility and its ethical dimensions; analyse Jonas' principle of responsibility; examine environmental degradation in Nigeria; evaluate the relevance of Jonas' ethics to Nigerian environmental policy and governance; and propose a contextual ethical framework for environmental responsibility. The study

adopted a qualitative research design, relying on critical textual analysis of Hans Jonas and related environmental ethics literature, alongside interpretive engagement with Nigerian environmental reports and scholarly works. The analysis was guided by Environmental Ethics Theory, particularly Jonasian responsibility ethics. Findings reveal that Nigeria's environmental crisis is sustained by weak regulatory enforcement, corporate negligence, and limited ecological awareness, while Jonas' framework provides a strong normative basis for rethinking environmental accountability. However, its application requires contextual adaptation to Nigeria's socio-political and economic realities. The study concludes that environmental responsibility in Nigeria must integrate ethical foresight, governance reform, and community participation for sustainable ecological protection.

**Keywords:** Environmental Responsibility, Hans Jonas, Intergenerational Justice, Environmental Ethics.

## Introduction

Environmental degradation has become one of the most unsettling realities of contemporary civilisation, not merely as a scientific or economic concern but as a moral question about how humanity ought to relate to nature. Rising sea levels, polluted rivers, deforestation, and toxic industrial emissions increasingly reveal a tension between technological advancement and ecological survival. In regions such as the Niger Delta, oil exploration has produced economic value while simultaneously leaving communities with contaminated water sources and damaged livelihoods. This tension raises a deeper philosophical concern about responsibility across generations, especially when present actions determine the viability of future life.

The ideal condition presupposes a world in which human progress unfolds alongside ecological preservation, where development does not compromise the integrity of the natural environment or the dignity of future generations. The reality, however, reflects a persistent imbalance in which industrial expansion and weak regulatory systems often take precedence over environmental care. Nigeria presents a vivid example, with frequent oil spills, gas flaring, and unmanaged waste systems contributing to long-term ecological harm. The consequences extend beyond environmental damage, affecting health, food security, and social stability in affected communities. This gap between moral expectation and lived reality frames the central problem this study addresses.

Philosophical inquiry into environmental ethics provides a framework for interpreting this crisis, particularly through the work of Hans Jonas, who reorients moral philosophy toward the future of life itself. Jonas argues that modern

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technological power has created unprecedented ethical obligations, requiring a new principle of responsibility grounded in the protection of future existence (Jonas, p.19). His “imperative of responsibility” insists that human action must be guided by the long-term consequences it imposes on the continued survival of humanity and nature (Jonas, p. 38). The problem, however, lies in the limited contextual application of this philosophy within African environmental realities, where ecological challenges are often shaped by postcolonial governance structures, resource exploitation, and socio-economic pressures.

This study therefore examines the moral foundations of environmental responsibility in Hans Jonas’ philosophy and investigates its relevance to Nigeria’s ecological situation. A central concern is how Jonas’ future-oriented ethics could meaningfully interpreted within a context marked by environmental exploitation and governance challenges. The thesis of this study holds that Jonas’ principle of responsibility offers a valuable but incomplete framework that gains deeper significance when reinterpreted through Nigeria’s environmental realities, particularly in relation to intergenerational justice and ecological accountability. The uniqueness of this research lies in its attempt to bridge a European philosophical system with African environmental experience, not as a simple application of theory, but as a critical rethinking of ethical responsibility in a context where environmental harm carries both moral and socio-political weight.

### **Conceptualising Environmental Responsibility**

Environmental responsibility has increasingly become a central concept in ethical discourse, especially in response to the intensifying ecological pressures associated with industrialisation and modern consumption patterns. At its core, environmental responsibility refers to the moral obligation of human beings to act in ways that preserve ecological balance, prevent environmental degradation, and sustain the conditions necessary for life. Robin Attfield describes it as a duty grounded in the recognition that human actions have far-reaching consequences on ecosystems and future generations (Attfield, p. 57). This understanding shifts responsibility beyond legal compliance into the realm of moral consciousness, where everyday choices, ranging from waste disposal to energy consumption—carry ethical weight. In Nigeria, the persistence of oil pollution in the Niger Delta illustrates how the absence of such responsibility can produce long-term ecological harm that no technical remediation fully resolves.

A closer examination of environmental responsibility reveals that it is not merely a practical obligation but also an ethical construct shaped by competing moral interpretations of human–nature relations. The ethical dimension of this concept raises questions about whether nature possesses intrinsic value or whether its worth is derived solely from human use. Michael Zimmerman observes that

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environmental ethics challenges traditional moral systems by extending moral consideration beyond human beings to include ecosystems and non-human life forms (Zimmerman, p. 112). This expansion complicates moral reasoning, particularly in societies where survival needs often overshadow ecological concerns. In many Nigerian communities affected by deforestation and soil erosion, environmental degradation is not always interpreted as a moral issue but as an unavoidable consequence of economic survival strategies, revealing a tension between ethical theory and lived reality.

The relationship between humans and nature has long been interpreted through anthropocentric frameworks, which position human beings at the centre of moral concern. Within this view, environmental protection is justified primarily because of its benefits to human welfare, health, and economic stability. Attfield notes that anthropocentrism remains influential in policy-making because it aligns environmental protection with human interests rather than abstract ecological value (Attfield, p. 63). However, critics argue that this approach limits moral responsibility by reducing nature to a resource pool rather than a community of life deserving independent ethical consideration. In Nigeria, policies addressing environmental damage often prioritise economic recovery over ecological restoration, a pattern that reflects this human centred orientation.

Ecological ethics, in contrast, challenges the assumption that nature exists solely for human exploitation. It advances the idea that ecosystems possess intrinsic worth, independent of human utility, and therefore deserve moral consideration. Zimmerman argues that ecological ethics redefines moral community to include rivers, forests, animals, and entire ecological systems, thereby transforming how responsibility is understood (Zimmerman, p. 119). This perspective resonates strongly with environmental crises in regions such as the Niger Delta, where oil extraction has disrupted entire ecosystems, affecting both human and non-human life. Yet ecological ethics also faces criticism for its abstractness, particularly in contexts where immediate socio-economic needs dominate public policy priorities. The tension between anthropocentrism and ecological ethics thus reveals an unresolved philosophical struggle over the scope of moral responsibility in environmental discourse.

### **Hans Jonas' Principle of Responsibility**

Hans Jonas develops his principle of responsibility as a response to the unprecedented power of modern technology and its capacity to alter the conditions of life itself. Unlike earlier ethical systems that focused primarily on immediate interpersonal relations, Jonas extends moral concern into the distant future, insisting that ethical reflection must now account for the survival of humanity as a whole (Jonas, p. 8). His approach emerges from the conviction that traditional moral

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frameworks are insufficient for a civilisation capable of ecological destruction on a global scale. Within this context, responsibility ceases to be reactive and becomes anticipatory, demanding foresight in moral judgement rather than reliance on established norms.

The “heuristics of fear” represents one of Jonas’ most controversial but influential ideas. It suggests that fear, properly understood, can function as a rational guide for ethical decision-making when dealing with uncertain technological futures. Jonas argues that imagining worst-case outcomes enables societies to act cautiously in the face of irreversible harm (Jonas, p. 27). This does not imply irrational anxiety but a disciplined moral imagination capable of recognising the fragility of ecological systems. In practical terms, environmental disasters such as oil spills or radioactive contamination illustrate how a failure of precautionary thinking can produce consequences that extend beyond immediate repair. Critics, however, caution that excessive reliance on fear may lead to paralysis or resistance to innovation, particularly in developing economies where technological advancement is closely tied to development goals.

Responsibility toward future generations occupies a central position in Jonas’ ethical framework. He insists that moral obligations must extend beyond present populations to include those who are yet unborn, since their existence depends on decisions made in the present (Jonas, p. 36). This temporal expansion of ethics introduces a form of intergenerational justice that challenges short-term political and economic thinking. In countries such as Nigeria, where resource extraction drives much of the economy, this principle raises difficult questions about whether present economic gains justify long-term ecological degradation. Communities in the Niger Delta, for example, experience environmental harm that may compromise agricultural productivity and public health for generations yet to come. Jonas’ framework therefore reframes environmental damage as a moral issue rather than a purely technical or economic one.

Moral obligation in technological civilisation becomes more complex under conditions of advanced scientific capability. Jonas argues that modern technology has transformed human agency to such an extent that ethical responsibility must now match its scale and intensity (Jonas, p. 19). Industrial systems, genetic engineering, and large-scale energy production illustrate how human actions now possess global and long-term consequences. This expansion of power disrupts earlier ethical assumptions that limited moral concern to immediate and visible effects. The Nigerian environmental context demonstrates this tension clearly, where multinational oil corporations operate technologies capable of altering entire ecosystems, often with limited accountability structures that reflect the asymmetry between technological power and moral regulation.

Critique of modern ethical frameworks forms a significant part of Jonas' philosophical project. He challenges classical ethical systems, including those grounded in Kantian duty or utilitarian calculation, for their inability to adequately address the scale of contemporary environmental risk. Jonas contends that these frameworks remain too focused on human relations within present communities, neglecting the existential vulnerability of future life (Jonas, p. 44). While this critique carries considerable weight, it also faces objections. Some scholars argue that Jonas underestimates the adaptability of modern ethics, particularly in areas such as environmental law and sustainability ethics, which already attempt to integrate long-term considerations. Others suggest that his emphasis on fear risks overshadowing justice-based approaches that may be more effective in addressing structural inequalities in environmental harm. Despite these criticisms, Jonas' work remains influential in reorienting ethical reflection toward the fragility of life in a technologically dominant world.

### **Critique of Hans Jonas' Principle of Responsibility**

Hans Jonas' ethical proposal has generated sustained debate, particularly among scholars who accept the urgency of environmental crisis but question the philosophical structure he adopts. One major line of criticism concerns the psychological and normative foundation of the "heuristics of fear." Robert Spaemann contends that grounding moral judgement in anticipatory fear risks distorting the nature of ethical rationality, since morality should arise from an understanding of the good rather than from anxiety about catastrophic futures (p. 72). From this perspective, Jonas' approach appears to replace moral clarity with precautionary imagination, raising concerns about whether fear can consistently guide rational public policy without producing excessive caution or moral hesitation.

A second critique focuses on the problem of practical decision-making in intergenerational ethics. Dieter Birnbacher argues that while Jonas is correct to extend moral concern to future generations, his framework lacks a clear mechanism for resolving conflicts between present needs and future claims (p. 91). The absence of a structured method for balancing competing temporal interests creates ambiguity in policy contexts where governments must negotiate urgent economic pressures alongside long-term ecological protection. In this sense, Jonas' theory is seen as ethically compelling but operationally incomplete, especially in societies where development priorities are immediate and politically sensitive.

Another important critique comes from Andrew Feenberg, who situates Jonas within broader debates on technology and society. Feenberg challenges the assumption that technological civilisation is inherently dangerous, arguing instead that technological systems are socially constructed and can be democratically reoriented (p. 114). From this standpoint, Jonas places excessive moral weight on

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technology itself rather than on the political and economic structures that determine how technology is used. The implication is that environmental harm should be addressed through participatory governance and institutional reform rather than through a generalised ethic of fear directed at technological progress.

Kristin Shrader-Frechette raises a different concern grounded in environmental justice and empirical reasoning. She argues that Jonas' reliance on speculative future scenarios lacks sufficient empirical grounding, making it difficult to translate his ethical claims into concrete environmental policy (p. 138). Her critique emphasises that environmental ethics must be rooted in risk assessment, scientific evidence, and distributive justice rather than metaphysical assumptions about humanity's future survival. This position gains particular relevance in contexts where environmental harm is already measurable and unevenly distributed, such as industrial pollution affecting vulnerable communities.

Bryan Norton offers a further challenge by questioning the necessity of Jonas' strong metaphysical commitments regarding future generations. Norton's convergence theory suggests that diverse ethical frameworks can lead to similar environmental policy outcomes without requiring agreement on deep philosophical foundations (p. 58). This position weakens Jonas' claim that a radical restructuring of ethics is necessary for environmental protection. Instead, Norton proposes that practical environmental cooperation can be achieved through overlapping consensus, even among competing moral theories.

These critiques reveal that Jonas' principle of responsibility remains philosophically influential but contested in its application. The objections raised by Spaemann, Birnbacher, Feenberg, Shrader-Frechette, and Norton converge on a shared concern: the need for clearer practical guidance, stronger empirical grounding, and greater attention to social and political structures. At the same time, none of these critiques fully dismiss Jonas' central insight that modern technological power demands an expanded ethical horizon, particularly one that includes the vulnerability of future generations.

### **Environmental Degradation and Ethical Crisis in Nigeria**

Environmental degradation in Nigeria presents not only an ecological challenge but also a deep ethical crisis that exposes contradictions between economic development, governance, and moral responsibility. The scale of environmental harm across oil-producing regions, forest zones, and rapidly urbanising cities reflects a pattern where short-term economic interests frequently override long-term ecological sustainability. Scholars of environmental ethics increasingly argue that such conditions cannot be understood solely through technical or policy lenses, but also through the moral choices that shape extraction, consumption, and regulation (Attfield, p. 92). Nigeria, therefore, becomes a critical site for examining how

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environmental harm intersects with questions of justice, responsibility, and intergenerational survival.

### **Oil pollution in the Niger Delta**

Oil pollution in the Niger Delta remains one of the most visible manifestations of environmental injustice in contemporary Africa. Continuous oil spills, gas flaring, and pipeline leaks have altered aquatic ecosystems, destroyed farmlands, and undermined the livelihoods of local communities. Michael Watts describes the Niger Delta as a “sacrifice zone” where ecological destruction is normalised in the pursuit of petroleum wealth (p. 63). The ethical problem extends beyond corporate malpractice to include weak enforcement structures and political complicity that allow environmental harm to persist over decades. In communities such as Ogoniland, polluted water sources and degraded soil conditions illustrate how ecological damage translates directly into human suffering, raising questions about distributive justice and corporate accountability. The crisis reveals a moral disjunction between resource wealth and human well-being, where oil extraction generates national revenue while local populations bear the environmental cost.

### **Deforestation, urban waste, and climate stress**

Environmental degradation in Nigeria is not limited to oil-producing regions but extends to widespread deforestation, urban waste accumulation, and increasing climate stress. Forest ecosystems in southern and central Nigeria continue to decline due to agricultural expansion, logging, and fuelwood dependence. Adeola Oyebade observes that deforestation contributes to biodiversity loss and disrupts ecological balance, particularly in rural communities dependent on forest resources (p. 118). Urban centres such as Lagos face escalating waste management challenges, where unregulated dumping and inadequate infrastructure result in blocked drainage systems and recurring flooding. Climate variability intensifies these pressures, as rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall patterns affect agriculture and food security. These interconnected problems reveal how environmental degradation operates across ecological, economic, and social dimensions, creating layered vulnerabilities that disproportionately affect low-income populations.

### **Weak regulatory enforcement and moral negligence**

Regulatory weakness remains a central factor sustaining environmental degradation in Nigeria. Institutions tasked with environmental protection often struggle with limited funding, political interference, and inconsistent enforcement of environmental standards. Nnimmo Bassey argues that environmental governance in Nigeria is frequently undermined by a culture of impunity, particularly among powerful corporate actors in the extractive sector (p.77). This institutional fragility

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raises deeper ethical concerns about moral negligence, where environmental harm persists not only due to lack of capacity but also due to lack of political will. The gap between environmental legislation and actual enforcement reflects a broader moral crisis in which environmental responsibility is not fully internalised by state and non-state actors. Within this context, environmental harm becomes normalised, and affected communities are left with limited avenues for redress or ecological restoration.

The Nigerian environmental condition therefore illustrates a complex ethical failure involving multiple actors and systems. Oil pollution, deforestation, and urban environmental stress are not isolated phenomena but interconnected expressions of governance gaps and moral indifference. The persistence of these conditions raises critical questions about responsibility, justice, and the future of ecological sustainability in a context where environmental degradation has become structurally embedded.

### **The Relevance of Hans Jonas ' Environmental Responsibility to Nigeria**

Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility gains particular relevance in Nigeria because of the country's persistent environmental crises and the long-term consequences of extractive economic practices. His ethical framework, which extends moral consideration to future generations, provides a philosophical lens through which Nigeria's ecological challenges can be reinterpreted as moral failures rather than mere developmental trade-offs. The Nigerian context, marked by oil extraction, deforestation, and weak environmental governance, demonstrates the urgency of an ethics that prioritises the survival conditions of both present and future populations (Jonas, p. 36). Within this setting, Jonas' philosophy becomes more than abstract theory; it functions as a critical tool for evaluating environmental decision-making.

**Intergenerational Justice in Nigerian Environmental Policy:** Intergenerational justice occupies a central position in Jonas' ethical system, insisting that present actions must preserve the possibility of a livable future. This idea has direct relevance to Nigeria, where environmental policies often struggle to balance immediate economic gains with long-term ecological sustainability. Oil exploration in the Niger Delta illustrates this tension clearly, as revenues generated today coexist with environmental damage that threatens agricultural productivity and public health for future generations. Robin Attfield argues that intergenerational ethics requires present societies to recognise obligations to individuals who cannot yet participate in political decision-making (p. 104). Nigeria's environmental governance structures, however, rarely integrate this temporal dimension in a consistent way, leading to policies that prioritise short-term fiscal returns over ecological continuity. Jonas' framework exposes this imbalance as a moral deficit rather than a purely administrative limitation.

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**Moral Reorientation of Governance and Corporations:** The application of Jonas' principle also demands a moral reorientation of both state governance and corporate practice. Technological and industrial actors in Nigeria operate within systems that often prioritise production efficiency over environmental protection, particularly in the extractive sector. Hans Jonas insists that technological power must be matched with proportional ethical responsibility, especially when its consequences extend beyond immediate visibility (Jonas 19). In the Nigerian oil industry, repeated spills and gas flaring reveal a gap between regulatory standards and corporate conduct, suggesting that legal compliance alone is insufficient without deeper ethical commitment. Nnimmo Bassey notes that environmental governance failures in extractive economies often reflect structural impunity, where powerful actors operate with limited accountability (p. 83). Jonas' ethics challenges both corporations and government institutions to move beyond regulatory minimalism toward a responsibility-based approach grounded in precaution and long-term ecological care.

**Community Responsibility and Ecological Awareness:** Jonas' ethical vision also has implications at the level of local communities, particularly in fostering ecological awareness and participatory responsibility. Environmental degradation in Nigeria is often experienced most intensely at the community level, where livelihoods depend directly on land, water, and forest ecosystems. Michael Watts observes that communities in the Niger Delta have developed forms of environmental activism in response to ecological destruction, reflecting a growing consciousness of environmental rights and justice (p. 71). Jonas' principle supports this orientation by affirming that responsibility is not limited to institutional actors but extends to all agents whose actions affect ecological stability. Community-based environmental awareness initiatives, including local advocacy against pollution and deforestation, reflect an emerging ethical sensibility aligned with Jonas' call for anticipatory responsibility. However, such efforts remain constrained by structural inequalities and limited access to political power, raising questions about how effectively moral awareness can translate into systemic change without institutional support.

The relevance of Jonas' philosophy to Nigeria therefore lies in its capacity to reframe environmental degradation as a moral and intergenerational issue rather than a purely economic or technical challenge. His principle of responsibility exposes gaps in policy orientation, corporate ethics, and community engagement, while also offering a normative foundation for rethinking environmental governance in a context of ecological vulnerability. The Nigerian case demonstrates that ethical theory gains practical significance when it engages directly with lived environmental realities shaped by extraction, inequality, and institutional fragility.

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### **Advancing Jonasian Environmental Ethics within the Nigerian Context**

This study advances environmental ethics by repositioning Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility within the lived ecological realities of Nigeria. Rather than treating Jonas as a purely European philosophical authority applied externally to African conditions, the analysis reworks his framework through Nigeria's environmental crises, thereby generating a dialogue between abstract ethical theory and concrete ecological suffering. Jonas' insistence on responsibility toward future existence becomes more analytically urgent when read alongside the persistent oil pollution, deforestation, and governance failures that characterise Nigeria's environmental landscape (Jonas, p. 36). The contribution lies in this interpretive movement, where ethical theory is tested against a context marked by ecological fragility and institutional inconsistency.

### **Bridging European philosophical ethics with Nigerian environmental realities**

European environmental ethics, particularly Jonas' work, often emerges from contexts of advanced industrialisation and institutional stability. Nigeria presents a contrasting environment where ecological harm is intensified by weak enforcement mechanisms and socio-economic pressures. Robin Attfield argues that environmental ethics must be sensitive to contextual differences if it is to remain practically relevant across diverse societies (p. 112). This study contributes by bridging that gap, demonstrating how Jonas' abstract principle of responsibility gains sharper meaning when confronted with oil spills in the Niger Delta and urban environmental stress in cities such as Lagos. The ethical abstraction of intergenerational responsibility becomes materially visible in communities where polluted water and degraded soil directly threaten future livelihoods.

Reinterpreting Jonas within an African socio-political framework requires attention to historical, economic, and institutional realities that shape environmental outcomes. Nnimmo Bassey notes that extractive economies in Africa are often structured through asymmetrical power relations that limit environmental accountability (Bassey, p. 85). Within this context, Jonas' emphasis on anticipatory responsibility takes on a different dimension, shifting from philosophical foresight to a critique of governance systems that permit ecological harm. Michael Watts' analysis of the Niger Delta further illustrates how environmental degradation is embedded within political and economic structures that marginalise local communities (Watts, p. 74). The study contributes by situating Jonas within these dynamics, rather than treating his theory as detached from the socio-political conditions that define environmental injustice in Africa.

Environmental ethics has often been criticised for remaining at the level of abstraction, particularly when it fails to engage with lived environmental suffering. Kristin Shrader-Frechette argues that ethical frameworks must incorporate empirical

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realities if they are to inform meaningful policy decisions (Shrader-Frechette, p. 141). This study responds to that concern by extending Jonas' theory into practical Nigerian contexts where environmental harm is measurable and socially unequal. The expansion of environmental ethics beyond abstraction becomes evident in the analysis of regulatory failure, corporate responsibility, and community-based environmental struggles. Ethical responsibility is therefore not confined to philosophical reflection but is repositioned as a lived necessity embedded in governance, industry, and daily survival.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis has demonstrated that Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility provides a significant ethical framework for understanding environmental degradation in Nigeria. His emphasis on intergenerational justice, precautionary reasoning, and expanded moral obligation offers a conceptual structure for interpreting ecological harm as a failure of responsibility rather than an unavoidable consequence of development. The study has also shown that Nigeria's environmental challenges—ranging from oil pollution in the Niger Delta to deforestation and urban waste—reflect deeper ethical and institutional weaknesses that cannot be separated from questions of governance and moral accountability.

Ethically, the findings suggest that environmental governance in Nigeria requires a shift from short-term economic reasoning to long-term responsibility-based planning. Hans Jonas' framework implies that policy decisions should be evaluated not only in terms of immediate benefits but also in relation to their impact on future generations (Jonas 44). Robin Attfield supports this orientation by arguing that sustainable ethics must integrate long-term ecological responsibility into policy structures (Attfield 119). In practical terms, this calls for stronger regulatory enforcement, corporate accountability in extractive industries, and increased ecological awareness at community level. The Nigerian environmental crisis therefore becomes not only a technical problem but a moral test of how responsibility is understood, distributed, and enacted across generations and institutions.

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## **Aristotle's Notion of Friendship in Focus and the Role of Technology in Climate Sustainability**

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### **Abstract**

The issues caused by climate change can be categorized as air, land, and water pollution, all of which threaten man's survival. This study aimed to challenge the kind of relationship which humans have with the environment at present, and to encourage humans to view and treat the environment as a friend. It explored how humans can adopt Aristotle's notion of friendship and deploy technology (artificial intelligence) for environmental sustainability. It argued that the type of relationship and interaction that exists between humans and the environment needs to be redefined. Aristotle's notion of friendship is rooted in beneficence and goodness, provoking mercy, kindness, generosity, and charity. Climate change, which is attributive to human activities, has led to many prevailing environmental issues like the extinction of species, environmental degradation, carbon emissions, drought, health risks and poverty. The study evaluated how man could adopt AI to guarantee the survival and sustainability of the environment which happens to be a reliable and dependent friend of man. The paper adopted the method of critical analysis to challenge the status quo of indiscriminate carbon emission by arguing that the current level of carbon emission is not sustainable as it is posing great threat to the environment. But with the adoption of AI technology, human's carbon footprint will reduce drastically, and climate sustainability can be achieved. In this way, humans will treat the environment as a friend. It emphasized that AI technology; using unmanned and rechargeable vehicles that can provide ecofriendly alternatives can reduce carbon emissions and guarantee environmental safety. This will cement a friendly relationship between human beings and the planet. In view of this, the study argued that Aristotle's notion of friendship can be a template for a better relationship between humans and the environment.

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**Keywords:** Friendship, Goodness, Beneficence, Environment, Climate Change, Interaction.

### Introduction

It cannot easily be thought that there are human beings who do not have friends. Even brute throughout history were thought of having friends who served as close confidants. This implies that it may not be possible for any human to thrive on the social scene without having friends. Friendship is a way of maintaining beneficial relationships within every society, so, in society, one cannot make friends with just everybody. One makes friends with individuals who one feels align with one's personality, purpose and goals in life. Aristotle's idea of friendship is predicated on the notion that friendship is a virtue or implies virtue and is besides most necessary with a view to living a worthy life (Aristotle, 2009). Friendship is not just a virtue for Aristotle; it is held in high regard. This is justified in the saying that "when men are friends, they have no need of justice, while when they are just, they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality" (Aristotle, 2009, Bk viii, Chpt. 1, 1155a27). This is because, when men are friends, they need not be unjust to themselves, they must be on equal footing and care for each other even in the most perilous times, because friends are expected to be both sympathetic and empathetic towards one another (Hossain, 2023). The relationship between man and the environment can easily be described as that of friends who need to take care of each other, and see to each other's needs, and not be unjust to each other. This work uses Aristotle's notion of friendship to draw attention to the question of climate change.

Climate change threatens human health and survival as well as that of the environment in which humans inhabit. It is mostly recognized as a global shift in weather and temperature which is mostly caused by human activities. The idea that climate change is caused vastly by human activity is noted by Fuinhas, *et al.* (2021); that climate change is caused by extensive use of fossil fuels which causes problems in land use and production, and interferes in the carbon cycle, which in turn affects the availability of essential resources such as drinking water. Pollution produced mainly by carbon dioxide increases the acidity of the oceans and compromises the marine food chain. In addition, there is also the dumping of waste in rivers, and the use of toxic chemicals for fishing, and deforestation, which are all because of industrialization and the need for humans to make the planet fit into our concept of comfort and convenience (Sheng, *et al.*, 2021). All these human activities are born out of the kind of interaction that occurs between humans and the environment which have paved the way for global challenges such as extinction of species, health risks, environmental degradation, drought, and poverty. Thus, in the pursuit of growth and comfort, human beings have left the planet behind.

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Unmanned (including autonomous and driverless ones like Tesla) vehicles and drones are important for the reduction of carbon footprints and could also enhance scientific research into the impacts of human activities on the environment (Vishaw, *et al.*, 2019). Mwaura (2024, p. 69) argues that the use of drones and autonomous machinery in human activities such as transportation, agriculture and manufacturing would go a long way in guaranteeing climate safety and security across the globe. Similarly, Robinson, *et al.* (2022) also mentions that the use of these AI technologies can enhance the accuracy of decision-making and information gathering that could lead to more climate-friendly policies in various sectors. Humans can better leverage on these technologies to improve climate safety and restore balance in the interaction between man and the environment. This is the friendship based on virtue which is aimed at a mutually beneficial friendship between human beings and the environment. Therefore, AI holds enormous promises for the normalization of relationships and improving the nature of interaction between humans and the planet, to achieve environmental safety.

This study argues that the sort of interaction that exists between humans and the environment needs to be redefined to reflect mutuality. Humans should now view the environment as a friend. This is one true way through which we can save humanity from the troubling issues of climate change. Friends are not expected to hurt each other, they are expected to love, care, and preserve each other for their own benefit. Since it is unthinkable that humans can survive without the environment or nature, it is important that humans prevent the slow destruction of the environment at all costs. Aristotle offers three kinds of friendship: friendship based on utility, friendship based on pleasure, friendship based on virtue, and avers that the first two are easily dissolved (Aristotle, 2009, p. 1156b). When it comes to the issue of climate change, friendship based on virtue is the most appropriate since it focuses on humans and nature as being good towards each other, which is, loving and benefiting from each other. This study employs the methods of critical analysis and criticism; it critiques the current interaction that exists between man and nature and explores possible grounds on which such interaction can be improved upon and redefined for the benefit of humanity.

### **Aristotle and the Notion Friendship**

Friendship is thought widely to be characterised by mutual affection and trust, where parties involved selflessly act for the benefit of one another. Aristotle divides friendship into three types (pleasure, utility, and virtuous), it is however important to focus on the third kind of friendship, which Aristotle also calls friendship of the good. Here, Aristotle points out that “perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good in themselves” (2009, 1156b) Thus, when either good men become

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friends or when friends wish good, selflessly, to one another, it cannot be thought that they can do harm to one another. The point is that the first two kinds of friendship are limited to what the parties can offer in terms of pleasure or usefulness, as such, once one party falls short of either pleasure or usefulness, the friendship is dissolved (Baltzly and Eliopoulos, 2014). This implies that in perfect friendship, which is the friendship of good or virtuous men, parties wish good to one another whether they fall short of pleasure or utility. This kind of friendship can be long-lasting and permanent. In that regard, avers that “those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of their own nature and not incidentally; therefore, their friendship lasts as long as they are good — and goodness is an enduring thing” (Aristotle 2009, 1156b).

True friendship requires no law, and no coercion. This is since parties involved strive naturally to do good for themselves and need not be taught or coerced to act towards goodwill. Aristotle affirms by noting that “when men are friends, they have no need of justice, while when they are just, they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality” (2009, p. 1155a). The point implied here is that between good friends, Justice is natural and mutual. In such friendship, there would be no exploitation by any of the parties involved since all parties involved would view it as a natural duty to do good to one another. Writing about Aristotle’s notion of friendship, Katz (2023) avers that the first lesson that comes from Aristotle’s definition of friendship is reciprocal, recognized goodwill. In contrast to parenthood or siblinghood, friendship exists only if it is acknowledged by both parties. It is not enough to wish someone well; they must wish you well in return, and you must both recognize this mutual goodwill. This implies that true friendship should not be one sided and both parties are expected to reciprocate goodwill in equal degrees. This notion should exemplify the interaction between humans and the planet.

Relating Aristotle’s notion of friendship to the issue of climate change, it is important to take cognizance of the mutual reciprocity of goodwill and the inherent justice that characterises good friendship. In the relationship between man and the environment, it is undeniable that man benefits from the environment just as the environment should benefit from man. What is being pursued in this study is that the relationship ought to take a new platform based on Aristotle’s notion of friendship, with reference to virtuous friendship. In this sense, man ought to view nature as a friend, whom he cannot do without and who cannot do without her. This approach will be a step further in the quest to address the issue of climate change because, man will act in ways that will not harm the environment but will preserve the environment by investing in the environment, the same measure which he takes from it. This will also redefine how man ought to act towards nature especially regarding energy and waste management.

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### **Climate Change and Human-Environment Interactionism**

Irrespective of the idea that nature plays a role in climate change, it should however be noted that earth's climate has worsened over the years due to the kind of lopsided interaction that exists between humans and the environment (Bonneuil, 2015). This interaction is described as lopsided because it tends to cater for man's immediate economic and social needs, without giving much consideration to environmental safety. This can first be known through a critical study of greenhouse gases and how they have increased through human activities. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) for example is naturally a part of the earth's carbon cycle, it has been observed that "carbon dioxide is also a waste product that results from the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) and the manufacturing of cement, steel, iron, and plastic" (Garcia, 2022, p.32) and many more. This connotes that industries or factories built for human ends have increased the presence of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere over the years. More so, this has contaminated the atmosphere and resulting in soot in many cities around the world, which is harmful to human health. Humans have not only contributed to the appreciation of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) through the building of industries alone or the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas; they have also contributed through deforestation, that is, the cutting of trees for firewood or for building industries, and roads of which Garcia (2022, p. 32) notes that "carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere when it is absorbed by plants through photosynthesis", in this case, when humans cut trees for any reason, we intrude in the natural process that helps to curb earth's over-infiltration of carbon dioxide.

Another greenhouse gas that should be brought into cognizance is methane (CH<sub>4</sub>). Van Amstel (2012. p. 5) defines methane as "an odourless gas with a concentration in the troposphere", and "the third most important greenhouse gas after water vapour and carbon dioxide." In respect to greenhouse effects, Garcia (2022, pp. 32-33) notes that "methane is 25 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, but it only stays in the atmosphere for about a decade; carbon dioxide typically stays for at least 100 years... about 60 percent of global methane emissions are the result of human activities." This can cause respiratory diseases, vision issues, heart rate balance problems, and numbness and so on. Perhaps, human have caused a soar in global methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) through the dumping of wastes in landfills, the raising of livestock as well as the usage of fossil fuels.

Nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) is largely generated from agriculture, industry, and transportation. The greenhouse gas is generated when farmers apply synthetic fertilizers to their crops to boost their harvest (Garcia, 2022). Nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) is a very dangerous chemical compound which is very harmful to human health and plants likewise. According to Garcia (2022, p. 33), "when it comes to retaining heat, nitrous oxide molecules are 300 times more powerful than carbon dioxide." Hence, it

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can be more disastrous than carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) even though it may be lesser in quantity. Fluorinated gases are another set of greenhouse gases that contribute much to the issue of climate change and which are largely generated through human activities. Fluorinated gases include hydro fluorocarbons, per fluorocarbons, sulphur hexafluoride, and nitrogen trifluoride. These are used in making toothpastes, cars, refrigerators and air conditioners which are largely for human comfort and utilization. The fact that fluorinated gases sometimes stay in the atmosphere for thousands of years according to Markham, *et al.* (2021), makes them worse than many other greenhouse gases even though they may be emitted in small quantities. One would wonder what kind of planet we would have in future with all these dangerous and life-threatening gases occupying our atmosphere. This is the reason we call for a mutually benefiting relationship between human beings and the planet, which would be modelled in line with Aristotle's notion of friendship. This proposed interaction will be all about "live and let live." Whereas it is imperative that human beings exist on the earth, do exploits and create enabling environment for economics and manufacturing, it is also essential that the climate, the best friend man has, be protected and kept safe, to avoid mutually assured destruction.

Another way in which human interactions with the environment provoke climate change possibilities is through solid wastes. Most of these wastes are hazardous such as non-biodegradable wastes and in fact municipal wastes. Akpan and Olukanni (2020) avers that wastes generated by industries include: plastics, pesticides, medicine, paint, petroleum, metals, leather and categorizes wastes into cyanide waste, metal finishing wastes, asbestos, Waste containing mercury, thallium, arsenic and cadmium, Solvents and non-halogenated hydrocarbons, halogenated hydrocarbons, wastes of dye and its intermediate, and Glue, painting, and varnish pigments wastes. These wastes, directly and indirectly contribute to the issue of climate change which steadily threatens the existence of earth and its inhabitant life. The use of automated sorting process through AI-driven systems can help to quickly distinguish between recyclable, non-recyclable, organic wastes and contaminants (Xu, *et al.*, 2021). In this way, waste management will be more efficient, and the purity of recycled materials will be guaranteed.

Humans, one way or the other, benefit from nature and in the process, harm nature or the environment with the effects lasting, not just years but decades and hundreds of years. This is due to the kind of relationship humans have made with nature, a relationship based on human utility and pleasure, which exist only for human gains (Ahmed, *et al.*, 2022). We see the environment as an object and not a friend that should be protected. However, it is impossible for humans to survive without the environment as we are in fact, part of the environment. Aristotle's virtuous friendship is the only true nature of friendship that can be deployed to rectify the issue of climate change. If humans view the environment as a friend

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(based on virtue), they will not relate with the environment in a way that will destroy it but through affection and love; giving back to the environment in equal measure what they get from it and avoiding any act that can endanger the environment.

### **Aristotle's Friendship, AI Technology and Climate Sustainability**

The present condition of the earth tells a lot about the kind of relationship man has with his environment. Xu, *et al.* (2021) notes that the emission of carbon dioxide (Co<sub>2</sub>) continues to accelerate globally as trillions of toxic chemicals are being released into the atmosphere through mining, mineral processing, farming, construction, and energy production, while these toxic chemicals have synthesised between 140, 000 to 350, 000 chemicals which previously did not exist. In addition to that, Daniel Hoornweg and Perinaz (2012, p. Vii) hold that "currently, world cities generate about 1.3 billion tonnes of solid waste per year. Waste generation rates will more than double over the next twenty years in lower income countries". Globally, solid waste management costs will increase from annual \$205.4 billion in 2012 to about \$375.5 billion before the end of 2025 (Koengkan and Fuinhas, 2021).

The current relationship between man and his environment can be likened to either friendship of utility or pleasure since man only takes from the environment for his pleasure and utility, and during that, harms the environment. It is a one-sided and exploitative relationship that leads to the destruction of human lives and the earth at large. However, to do justice to the issue of climate change is to redefine the kind of relationship man has with his environment. This implies that human beings will adopt AI technology; especially mechanisms such as unmanned vehicles and drones, to interact with the environment and make human activities more environmentally sustainable. Though these unmanned drones and vehicles can emit radiation, a study by Kubacki, *et al.*, (2025) reveals that such radiation is low-level and insufficient to increase carbon footprint and alter the climate. Quamar, *et al.* (2023) observes that this will help to guarantee the availability of reliable data for climate protection, as well as the reduction of carbon emission into the atmosphere. In other words, man's relationship with his environment ought to imitate Aristotle's description of a perfect friendship of the good where parties involved (man, environment) will have mutual and reciprocated goodwill, which will be characterised by inherent justice. Because the destruction of the environment is largely due to man's activity, humans owe much responsibility to keeping the environment clean and green, even without needing laws to enforce it (Corcoran, *et al.*, 2021). However, in developing good friendly relations with the environment, government and individuals have roles to play through laws and regulations.

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Climate change is a global threat, and it is up to governments to come together to make the current man-environment relationship a past. Government legal and regulatory frameworks could be directed towards the development of AI technology such as drones and unmanned vehicles, to promote climate responsibility by reducing global carbon emission. For instance, Corcoran, *et al.* (2021) stresses that the use of drones as delivery method helps to reduce greenhouse emission by 84% compared to the diesel trucks. As an AI mechanism, drones have been identified as being able to help industries minimize energy waste by providing precise and real-time operations monitoring. Their ability to access hard-to-reach areas allows more accurate data collection; identifying inefficiencies that might otherwise go unnoticed (Corcoran, *et al.*, 2021). For example, drones can detect leaks in equipment or highlight areas of overconsumption. Replacing the need for trucks or other vehicles to conduct inspections or transport supplies over short distances can reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Though it is unlikely to completely replace human efforts, it is nevertheless increasingly becoming handy, especially in high-risk tasks (Berkowitz, 2014). This precise monitoring and optimized resource use can contribute to a greener and more sustainable industrial landscape (Shirokov and Lepekhn, 2021). These features enable decision-makers to take immediate action to reduce waste and emissions, thereby fostering an enduring friendship with the environment.

Additionally, as game-changer in renewable energy projects, drones can also reduce emissions linked to traditional electricity production. They improve efficiency by monitoring large solar and wind farms, detecting issues early, and ensuring everything operates at peak performance. This reduces the need for fuel-based inspection methods and helps lower overall emissions. In addition, users can utilize drones to work autonomously, capturing video footage, inspecting equipment, and ensuring safety without human interference (Shirokov and Lepkhn, 2021). This streamlines operations and supports the broader goal of reducing the power sector's carbon footprint. Governments could also change the status quo by utilizing the media in promoting more information about the dangers of climate change and how individuals and corporate bodies can utilize drones and unmanned vehicle mechanism provided by AI technology to preserve and safeguard the environment. The media can also eradicate and refuse to report contents that make conspiracy theories out of the issue of climate change. In addition, AI technology can be deployed towards the careful processing of animal and human feces to replace dangerous fertilizers, and stricter mechanisms to enforce the philosophy of 'reduce, recycle, and reuse', to create a more useful route to mitigating climate change and preserving the environment as a good friend.

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Another way individuals can mitigate climate change would be to restructure our habit and method of waste management. This would mean reducing our individual wastes by learning to repair and reuse items or to use items for other purposes rather than disposing. Fuchi, *et al.* (2022) avows that the traditional methods of managing garbage are labour-intensive, inefficient, and comparatively more expensive compared to drone technology. UAVs can also be employed to monitor and inspect locations for any illegal dumping on industrial wastes by factories. This benefit of monitoring and data collection makes drone technology the future of waste management and a reliable tool in forging a more sustainable interaction between humans and the environment (Fuchi, *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the use of autonomous vehicles can help to accelerate a good, virtuous and mutual beneficial interaction between humans and the planet. As Aristotle envisioned friendship based on virtue and mutual empathy, this work's thesis is that the use of AI technology through drones, autonomous and unmanned vehicles, can reduce human carbon footprint and help foster this mutuality of friendship. This will signal a bold step towards achieving the net-zero target, creating mutual trust and respect between human beings and the environment just as Aristotle envisioned friendship.

Restructuring one's attitude or relationship with the environment to fit with a preservation and protection may be cumbersome, but achievable through discipline. We ought to see the environment as a friend, and if we love our friends genuinely, we will do everything possible not to harm them in anyway, we will rather strive to defend and protect them from any external harm. It is a different matter entirely when we get to know that such a friend is one which we cannot do without, and on whom we depend on for almost if not for everything, including our survival. Protecting, safeguarding, and preserving our friend (the environment), is a major task that must be achieved, and AI technology is a veritable means of achieving this in the modern world. Humans ought to reciprocate the goodwill offered to us selflessly by the environment by ensuring as this work proposes that the environment be taken care of as dependable ally, with technology such as drones, rechargeable and unmanned vehicles, to help detect and reduce carbon emission which threatens sustainability. In this way, we will realise a cleaner, greener, and safer earth, and increase the possibilities of our survival as humans.

## **Conclusion**

Climate change is now undeniable, and its effects outlive our present generation. Most of the gases that are emitted today will take hundreds of years and possibly thousands of years to leave our atmosphere. By then, we may be having increases in synthesised gases. As such, it is a duty and a responsibility for humans to tackle the issue of climate change by redefining the kind of relationship that we share with the environment, with AI mechanisms. This study finds such a

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relationship embedded in Aristotle's idea of virtuous friendship as opposed to friendship of utility and that of pleasure which defines the kind of relationship humans have with the environment at present. Aristotle's notion of virtuous friendship is characterised by mutual and reciprocated goodwill, done selflessly and without qualification. If humans establish same friendly relations with the environment, it will lead to government and individual redefinition of attitude towards how we act, what we use, and how we use and reuse. This could come at a great cost, but nothing is costlier than human life, which is threatened by climate change, and that of the environment, our permanent and good friend whom we cannot do without and whom we depend on for everything.

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## **Revisiting the Lockean Proviso on Ownership of Property in the Light of Contemporary Demand for Resource Control**

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### **Abstract**

This article examined the moral foundations of resource ownership in light of increasing global scarcity and inequality. Drawing on the natural rights tradition, particularly the work of John Locke, it analysed the relevance and limitations of the Lockean proviso, which holds that appropriation is just only if there is “enough and as good” left for others. Using the methods of critical analysis and normative evaluation, the study argued that the classical formulation of this proviso is inadequate for addressing the complexities of a finite and interconnected world. The paper first traced the development of natural rights theory and explained how Locke’s account of property introduced moral limits on acquisition. It then critically examined the classical proviso, showing how its assumptions of abundance and localised interaction failed under conditions of global inequality, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity. The discussion highlights how contemporary patterns of consumption and distribution undermined the possibility of leaving “enough and as good” for all. The article proposed a rethinking of the proviso as a global moral principle. It argued that resource rights must be conditioned by considerations of fairness, sustainability, and shared responsibility. By engaging contemporary scholarship on environmental justice and global inequality, the study advanced a framework that reconceives property not as absolute ownership but as a socially embedded and morally constrained possession. The paper concluded that

achieving resource equity in a finite world requires both conceptual revision and practical reform, aimed at ensuring that all individuals have access to the basic means of survival.

**Keywords:** Natural Rights; Lockean Proviso; Global Proviso; Resource Scarcity; Global Inequality; Property Rights; Resource Equity

### **Introduction**

In a world where some nations struggle to access clean water while others have far beyond their needs, a simple but troubling question arises: who truly owns the Earth's resources? This question is not merely economic or political; it is deeply moral. It concerns whether individuals and nations have unlimited rights to acquire and use natural resources, or whether there are limits grounded in fairness and justice. As the global population grows and environmental pressures increase, this issue becomes more urgent and harder to ignore. The idea of natural rights offers an important starting point for addressing this problem. Natural rights theory holds that individuals possess certain rights simply by being human, including the right to own property. John Locke famously argued that individuals can acquire property by mixing their labour with nature. However, he introduced a condition which is often called the Lockean proviso, which posits that appropriation is only just if there is "enough, and as good" left for others (Locke 27). This proviso suggests that property rights are not absolute; they are limited by the need to ensure that others are not made worse off.

While Locke's idea was developed in a very different historical context, its relevance today is clear. The modern world is marked by finite resources, environmental degradation, and deep global inequalities. The assumption that there will always be "enough and as good" left is no longer convincing. Wealthy nations and corporations often control a large share of the world's resources, leaving poorer populations with limited access to basic necessities. This raises a critical question: can the Lockean proviso still justify current patterns of ownership, or does it need a rethinking on a global scale? This article argues that the traditional understanding of the Lockean proviso is no longer sufficient in a finite and interconnected world. Instead, it proposes the idea of a "global proviso," which extends the moral limits of resource appropriation beyond national boundaries. This study aims to demonstrate that justice necessitates a more inclusive and internationally responsive framework by looking at the fundamentals of natural rights and assessing the difficulties of resource scarcity and inequality. The method adopted is critical analysis and normative evaluation, which is aimed at questioning existing assumptions and proposing a more equitable approach to resource distribution.

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### **Natural Rights and the Lockean Proviso**

The idea of natural rights begins with a simple claim: that human beings possess certain rights by virtue of their humanity, not because they are granted by governments or societies. Scholars have defined this idea in different but related ways. John Locke describes natural rights as rights to “life, liberty, and estate,” which individuals hold in a state of nature prior to political authority (Locke 87). Hugo Grotius sees natural rights as moral principles rooted in human nature and discoverable by reason, independent of divine command (Grotius 89). Similarly, Thomas Hobbes defines natural right as the “liberty each man hath to use his own power... for the preservation of his own nature” (Hobbes 91). In more contemporary terms, John Finnis understands natural rights as claims grounded in basic human goods such as life, knowledge, and sociability (Finnis 198–200). Despite their differences, these accounts share a common idea: natural rights are universal, inherent, and morally binding.

The roots of natural rights thinking can be traced back to ancient philosophy, even though the term itself was not always used. In ancient Greek thought, philosophers were more concerned with natural law than with individual rights. Aristotle, for instance, argued that justice exists partly by nature and partly by convention, suggesting that there are universal moral standards that transcend human laws (*Nicomachean Ethics* V.7). However, Aristotle did not speak of rights in the modern sense; his focus was on duties and the proper order of the polis. Stoicism later developed this idea further by emphasising that all human beings share in reason and are therefore equal under a universal moral law. This laid an important foundation for later theories of natural rights. During the medieval period, natural law theory was refined within a theological framework. Thomas Aquinas argued that natural law is part of the eternal law of God and is accessible to human reason (Aquinas I-II, Q.94, Art. 2). For Aquinas, moral principles such as the preservation of life and the pursuit of good are grounded in human nature. Although he did not fully develop a theory of subjective rights, his work helped to establish the idea that moral claims can be universal and rationally justified. Over time, later thinkers began to shift the focus from law to rights, especially as Europe experienced political and religious upheavals.

The early modern period marked a turning point in the development of natural rights. Thinkers such as Hugo Grotius began to argue that natural law and rights would remain valid “even if we should concede... that there is no God” (89). This move made natural rights more secular and accessible. Thomas Hobbes further transformed the idea by grounding it in self-preservation. In his view, the state of nature is a condition of insecurity where each person has a right to everything, leading to conflict. To escape this, individuals transfer their rights to a sovereign authority (117). However, Hobbes’s account has a limitation: it reduces natural rights

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largely to survival and justifies strong political control. It is in the work of John Locke that the modern and more balanced theory of natural rights is clearly articulated. Locke agrees that individuals possess natural rights in a pre-political state, but he presents this state as generally peaceful and governed by reason. According to Locke, all persons are equal and independent, and no one ought to harm another in their “life, health, liberty, or possessions” (271). Property becomes central in his theory. He argues that individuals acquire ownership by mixing their labour with natural resources. For example, when a person cultivates land or gathers fruit, they make it their own.

However, Locke does not defend unlimited acquisition. He introduces an important moral condition known as the Lockean proviso: appropriation is only just if there is “enough, and as good” left for others (288). This proviso serves as a restraint on excessive accumulation. For instance, if one person takes more land than they can use while others have none, such appropriation would violate the proviso. Locke also adds another limit: one should not take more than one can use before it spoils. These conditions show that property rights, for Locke, are not absolute but morally regulated (John 268). The Lockean proviso reveals a tension within natural rights theory. On one hand, it supports individual freedom and ownership; on the other, it recognises the need for fairness and shared access. In Locke’s time, this balance may have seemed reasonable because land and resources appeared abundant. In today’s world, however, where resources are clearly finite and unevenly distributed, the assumption that there will always be “enough and as good” is difficult to sustain. This raises a deeper question: can Locke’s framework still guide our understanding of justice in view of our contemporary reality or must it be revised to address global inequalities?

### **From Classical to Global: Rethinking the Proviso**

The Lockean proviso, as earlier discussed, sets a moral condition on the appropriation of natural resources. What may be called the *classical proviso* refers to John Locke original formulation, which assumes a relatively simple social setting where individuals acquire property from nature without harming others. In this classical sense, the proviso operates within a limited framework—one in which resources appear abundant and human interactions are largely direct and localised. Its aim is to ensure fairness at the point of acquisition, not to regulate complex global systems of distribution. Locke (287–288) expresses this position in the *Two Treatises of Government*, thus:

Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person... Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his

own, and thereby makes it his property... For this labour being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to... at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others.

This captures the moral structure of the classical proviso. Property is justified through labour, but it is not unlimited. The condition that there must be “enough and as good” left for others ensures that appropriation does not result in deprivation. In principle, this creates a balance between individual freedom and collective fairness. In practice, the classical proviso can support productive use of resources. For example, when an individual cultivates unused land, builds on it, or transforms raw materials into useful goods, such actions increase value and benefit society. As Robert Nozick argues, appropriation is just if it does not worsen the position of others, even if it leads to inequality (178). In this way, the proviso can justify economic growth and innovation while maintaining a moral check on excessive accumulation. However, this same flexibility allows the proviso to be interpreted in ways that favour the powerful. The idea of leaving “enough and as good” is not clearly defined, and this creates room for abuse. Historically, this ambiguity was used to justify large-scale land acquisition, especially during colonial expansion. According to C. B. Macpherson (221), Locke’s theory was shaped by a context in which land was treated as abundant, allowing appropriation to proceed with little regard for those who were displaced. In such cases, the proviso becomes less a limit and more a justification for inequality. The limitations of the classical proviso become even clearer in the modern world. First, the assumption of abundance no longer holds. Natural resources are finite, and their distribution is highly unequal. This is because global economic structures enable wealthy societies to consume far more than their fair share, while others lack access to basic needs (Pogge 13). Under such conditions, it is difficult to maintain that appropriation leaves “enough and as good” for all.

Second, the classical proviso does not address the global effects of resource use. It focuses on immediate acquisition without considering how actions in one part of the world impact others. For instance, industrial activities in developed countries contribute significantly to climate change, which disproportionately affects poorer regions. Henry Shue highlights that this imbalance raises serious questions about fairness and responsibility (531). The classical proviso lacks the scope to deal with such interconnected harms. Third, the proviso does not adequately consider future generations. It is mainly concerned with present access to resources, yet current patterns of consumption can limit the opportunities available to those who come later. What is worth noting is that justice must include obligations to future persons,

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especially in matters of environmental sustainability (Barry, 99). The classical proviso, in its original form, does not clearly extend to this temporal dimension.

These challenges make it necessary to rethink the proviso beyond its classical formulation. A 'global proviso' would extend Locke's principle to the entire human community. It would require that the appropriation and use of resources anywhere in the world must not undermine the ability of others, regardless of location, to meet their basic needs. This approach reflects a shift from a narrow view of justice to a more inclusive and universal one. The case for a global proviso is supported by contemporary philosophical thought. For Pogge (15), global justice demands reforms that ensure fair access to resources for all, not just those within wealthy nations. Likewise, Peter Singer maintains that moral responsibility extends beyond borders, especially when we have the capacity to prevent harm (231). These perspectives reinforce the idea that fairness in resource distribution must be global in scope. From our analysis of the standpoint above, the move from a classical to a global proviso should be seen as a natural development rather than a radical break. If it is unjust for individuals to appropriate resources in a way that harms others within a community, then it is equally unjust for nations or corporations to do so on a global scale, and thus fairness should be prioritized as a canon in the proviso. As noted by Francis Esikot, "the possibility of prioritization requires universal rules of engagement and cooperation for the stability and progress required in a global world order" ("Globalization" 134). Therefore, the principle remains the same, but its application must expand to reflect the realities of a finite and interconnected world. In this way, the global proviso preserves the moral insight of Locke while making it relevant to contemporary challenges.

### **Resource Scarcity and Global Inequality**

To understand the ethical challenge of resource distribution, it is important to first clarify what is meant by 'resource scarcity'. In simple terms, resource scarcity refers to a condition in which available resources are insufficient to meet human needs and demands. Scholars define it more precisely as a situation where resources are limited relative to the demands placed upon them, making allocation necessary (Bridge and Wyeth, 249-258). In another sense, scarcity can arise not only from physical limits but also from social and economic conditions that restrict access to resources. This means that scarcity is not always about absolute shortage; it can also be about unequal availability. Recent scholarship shows that scarcity is increasingly a global reality rather than a local one. Natural resources such as land, water, and energy are finite, and their depletion is accelerated by population growth and patterns of consumption. As Jeffrey D. Sachs (34) notes, the pressure on finite ecological systems is intensified by unsustainable economic practices, which place strain on both present and future resource availability. This suggests that scarcity is

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not merely a technical issue but a moral one. If resources are limited, then decisions about who gets what become questions of justice.

Importantly, scarcity does not always mean that there is simply “not enough.” Scholars have pointed to what may be called “scarcity amidst abundance,” where resources exist in sufficient quantity but are distributed in ways that leave many without access. Modern economic systems often produce conditions in which wealth and resources are concentrated in the hands of a few, while many remain excluded (Arewa 300). For example, global food production is sufficient to feed the world’s population, yet millions still face hunger due to poverty and unequal distribution. This reveals that scarcity is often shaped by human systems rather than natural limits alone. Scarcity imposes moral constraints on how resources can be used. If resources are finite, then unlimited acquisition by some inevitably reduces access for others. This aligns with the concern raised above regarding the Lockean proviso: appropriation must not leave others worse off. In contemporary terms, this means that individuals, corporations, and states have a responsibility to use resources in ways that are fair and sustainable. Jason Hickel reinforces this point by arguing that continuous growth-driven consumption in wealthy societies deepens ecological strain and reinforces global inequalities (Hickel, 52). This highlights the need to rethink how resources are governed.

Closely connected to resource scarcity is the concept of global inequality. Global inequality refers to the uneven distribution of income, wealth, and access to resources among individuals and across nations. It captures both differences between countries and disparities within them. Thomas Piketty defines inequality as the concentration of wealth and power in ways that systematically advantage some groups over others (7). This definition shows that inequality is not random; it is structured and often reinforced by institutions. At its core, global inequality is not just an economic issue but a moral one. When some populations consume far more than they need while others lack basic necessities, questions of fairness arise. For instance, resource-rich countries often enjoy higher standards of living, while resource-poor regions face structural challenges that limit development. Okereke (112) argues that global environmental governance often reflects unequal power relations, where the interests of stronger nations dominate decision-making processes. This creates a situation where inequality is not only maintained but also legitimised.

Furthermore, the relationship between inequality and sustainability is particularly important. Unsustainable consumption patterns in wealthier societies place pressure on global resources, contributing to environmental problems such as climate change. At the same time, poorer communities are often the most affected by these problems. Ikeme (198) highlights that climate justice debates reveal deep tensions between responsibility and vulnerability, as those who contribute least to

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environmental harm suffer the most from its effects. This imbalance raises serious ethical concerns about fairness and accountability. For example, economies that rely heavily on natural resources often experience uneven development, where wealth is concentrated in certain sectors or regions. At the same time, efforts to reduce dependence and promote sustainable development can help narrow these gaps. The 'Human Development Report' by the United Nations Development Programme shows that inequalities in access to education, health, and environmental resources continue to shape life chances across the world (UNDP 45). This suggests that inequality is not only about income but also about access to opportunities and well-being.

From a broader perspective, the link between scarcity and inequality raises important questions about justice. If scarcity is partly socially produced, then inequality is not inevitable; it is shaped by policies, institutions, and power relations. This means that addressing global inequality requires more than temporary solutions; it requires structural change that must ensure that all individuals have access to the basic means of survival while also respecting environmental limits.

### **Towards Resource Equity in a Finite World**

It is indeed true that the "history of philosophy and indeed humanity has been characterized by the emergence of trends, movements, ideas or ideologies which have held sway at one time or the other" (Esikot, "Multiculturalism" 91). If earlier discussions have shown that scarcity and inequality are not accidental but structured, then any meaningful solution must go beyond adjusting outcomes and instead rethink the very architecture of ownership. Rather than focusing only on limiting excess, a more forward-looking approach is to redesign property relations in ways that reflect interdependence, ecological limits, and shared vulnerability. One emerging perspective is the idea of relational property. This view moves away from seeing property as a fixed individual entitlement and instead understands it as a set of relationships between people, communities, and the environment. According to Okereke (121), environmental governance must recognise that natural resources are embedded within social and ecological systems, and therefore cannot be treated as isolated commodities. For instance, a forest is not merely timber for private gain; it is also a source of livelihood, biodiversity, and climate regulation. Treating such resources as purely private property ignores these wider connections.

A second perspective involves recognising certain resources as 'global commons'. This includes elements such as the atmosphere, oceans, and even critical minerals that are essential for modern technology. Instead of allowing unrestricted private or national control, these resources can be governed through shared frameworks that ensure equitable access. Elinor Ostrom demonstrates that common resources can be sustainably managed through collective rules and local

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participation, rather than through either pure privatisation or centralised control (88). This challenges the assumption that only private ownership can ensure efficiency. In addition, there is a growing argument for 'use-based' rather than 'ownership-based' rights. Under this model, what matters is not who owns a resource, but how it is used and whether that use contributes to human well-being. Arewa (308), points out that systems that prioritise accumulation often disconnect ownership from productive or beneficial use, leading to waste and exclusion. For example, land that is held for speculation rather than cultivation may be legally owned but socially unproductive. A use-based approach would prioritise access for those who can utilise resources in ways that meet real needs. This shift in thinking is captured in the following reflection by Ostrom (90-91):

The presumption that common-pool resources must either be privatised or centrally regulated has led to policy prescriptions that are often ineffective. What we have found instead is that users of these resources frequently develop sophisticated systems of governance, including rules, monitoring, and sanctions, that allow them to manage resources sustainably. These systems are not perfect, but they show that collective action, when properly structured, can avoid both overuse and exclusion. The challenge is not to eliminate shared ownership, but to design institutions that make it work.

This insight opens up a new way of thinking: rather than asking how much individuals can own, we begin to ask how resources can be governed in ways that are inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable. Translating these ideas into practice requires a shift from abstract principles to concrete institutional design. One key implication is the need for multi-level governance, where decisions about resources are made not only by national governments but also by local communities and international bodies. This layered approach recognises that resource challenges operate at different scales and cannot be solved by a single authority. For example, local communities can be empowered to manage land and water resources through participatory systems, while global institutions can regulate issues such as climate change and transboundary pollution. Accordingly, inclusive governance is essential for achieving environmental justice, as it allows those most affected by resource decisions to have a voice in shaping them (Ikeme 200). This not only improves fairness but also enhances the effectiveness of policies.

Another practical implication is the need to align economic incentives with ethical goals. At present, many systems reward over-extraction and short-term profit. To change this, policies can be designed to encourage sustainable behaviour. This may include carbon pricing, resource taxes, and incentives for renewable energy.

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Jeffrey D. Sachs emphasises that sustainable development requires integrating economic, social, and environmental goals, rather than treating them as separate concerns (45). For instance, investing in clean energy not only reduces environmental harm but also creates jobs and improves long-term stability. A further step involves redefining what counts as progress. If success continues to be measured primarily in terms of economic growth, then pressures on resources will persist. Hickel (74) argues that societies must move towards models that prioritise human well-being, equity, and ecological balance over endless expansion. This could involve adopting alternative indicators such as well-being indices or sustainability metrics, which provide a more accurate picture of social progress. The deeper ethical challenge, however, lies in reshaping global responsibility. As Thomas Pogge (18–19) observes:

We are not merely passive observers of global inequality; we are participants in a system that produces it. The structures that govern trade, investment, and resource use are not neutral—they are shaped by human decisions and can therefore be changed. If these structures foreseeably and avoidably impose severe disadvantages on some, then those who uphold them share responsibility for the resulting harms. Justice, in this sense, requires not only assistance to the poor but reform of the rules that perpetuate their condition.

This argument shifts the focus from charity to accountability. It suggests that achieving resource equity is not simply about helping those in need, but about transforming the systems that create need in the first place. In other words, this could mean strengthening international agreements on resource use, enforcing corporate accountability across borders, and ensuring that technological advancements benefit a wider range of people. It also involves promoting transparency and fairness in the allocation of resources, particularly in sectors such as mining, agriculture, and energy.

## **Conclusion**

The question of who has a right to the world's resources becomes more urgent in a finite and deeply unequal world. This study has shown that while the classical formulation of natural rights, particularly in John Locke, provides a useful foundation, it is no longer sufficient for addressing contemporary realities. The Lockean proviso, though morally insightful, assumes conditions of abundance and limited interaction that no longer exist. In today's interconnected global system, resource use in one region often affects the well-being of others, making a purely individual or local approach inadequate. The study has urged for a change to a more inclusive framework, one that extends moral concern beyond borders and generations, by looking at the reality of resource scarcity and global inequity. Such a framework is provided by the concept of a global proviso, which mandates that

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resource exploitation cannot jeopardise the fundamental requirements of people anywhere in the globe. Additionally, redefining property rights and encouraging shared accountability offer workable strategies to achieve greater justice. In the end, justice in a finite world requires more than ownership; it demands responsibility, restraint, and cooperation. It is only when we rethink both our moral assumptions and institutional practices that we can have a more balanced and sustainable global order be realised.

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## **Informed Consent and Individual Autonomy: Beyond Paternalistic and Individualistic Considerations**

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### **Abstract**

Informed consent requirements are ubiquitous in healthcare and are regarded as cornerstone of ethical medical practice. Informed consent is more than just obtaining a patient's signature on a document, it is a continuous process involving answering patient's questions and providing information as his treatment goes on or as the situation demands. It is a truism that these requirements are justified by the principle of respect for individual autonomy. It is the right of the patient to determine his/her own health issues. A patient has the right to be involved in the decision- making process regarding his health care and health professionals should always try to ensure that people are not treated against their will. It requires that the agent/patient has the capacity for decision-making, that he be informed and his decision be voluntary. The relationship between health care professionals and patients is one that has divided opinions. Some scholars, who advance paternalistic arguments, argue that peoples' interest such as life, health and safety are more important than their liberty, and so because medical professionals have more expertise than the patient, they are best placed to take decisions beneficial to the patient. On the other hand, others, the individualists argue that the patient has absolute rights over his/her health and body and thus must be actively and fully involved in any decision regarding his health. This paper draws a middle ground between both extremes and argues for a team work to treatment. It recommends that the medical professional, the patient and his family should decide together what is to be done in the case of a patient.

**Keywords:** Informed consent; individual autonomy, biomedics, ethics, moral responsibility, paternalism.

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**Introduction**

In September 2024, my 11 year old son underwent a surgical operation to repair a hole in the stomach. As the boy was being prepared to be taken to the theatre for the commencement of the operation, a document was brought to me to sign. With the document on my hand, I asked for a few minutes to read and understand the provisions of the 'agreement' but was told the procedure was urgent. I asked that the dangers and risks inherent in the procedure be explained to me in clear terms. The theatre attendant asked if I was questioning the competence of the doctor who he described with such glowing terms like 'expert', 'guru', 'the best around' and so on. With very little choice left, I signed the document but that left me worried. What if I have signed my son's life away? Should anything go wrong, what moral and legal right will I have to hold the doctor and hospital responsible? Why were the dangers and risks clouded in secrecy?

The procedure was carried out anyway and my son came out and has since then healed. As I thought about the incident, the question of whether the consent I gave by signing the document was informed or not, why are issues such as this not given adequate attention in Nigeria's healthcare practice? Why do patients and their families not demand full disclosure and why do medical and health professionals feel consent is just about signing a document and that they do not have the obligation to disclose the inherent dangers and risks? This complacency on the part of health professionals and patients is a huge issue in the relationship between the professionals and the patients. According to Gerald Dworkin, the doctrine of informed consent is a creation of law, in other words, it is part of the law of many countries that one party obtains the consent or approval to perform some course of action on another to which the consented party would otherwise have no moral right to perform. This supposes that A morally ought to obtain B's informed consent to perform some course of action (x) on B. This moral responsibility is grounded on the following requirements being met:

1. B must be sufficiently informed with regards to the relevant facts concerning the course of action (x) intended by A and B understands what x involves and the likely consequences resulting from x.
2. On the basis of the information provided by A, B makes the decision to allow A to perform x.

The above scenario painted by Dworkin presents us with an idea of what informed consent involves. It is understood as shorthand for a patient's informed, voluntary and competent consent to or refusal of treatment, which amounts to a valid authorization or refusal of a medical procedure or intervention. It stands in sharp contrast to the original Hippocratic Oath which holds that "I swear by Apollo and Aesculepius that I will follow that system of regimen which according

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to my judgment I consider best for the benefit of my patients.... **Conceal most things from the patient**.....give necessary orders with cheerfulness and serenity....revealing nothing of the patient's future or present condition."

Patients' autonomy and right over their bodies have received increased attention in medical ethics since the 1960's. Respect for autonomy is often felt to be the most important principle of bioethics and emphasis on it has increased as a result of the works of scholars such as Ruth Faden, Tom Beauchamp and James Childress. Informed consent arose as a response to the paternalistic model in which the physicians were rarely questioned because they were often presumed to be competent and knowledgeable. It was developed as a means to operationalize respect for autonomy.

The relationship between individual autonomy and informed consent has necessitated the question of what the ideal relationship between the physician and the patient should be. What amount of freedom a physician should exercise over decisions involving a patient's health and whether a patient has the final say or a say at all have divided opinions among bioethicists and medical practitioners. While we have come a long way from the paternalistic model of professional-patient relationship engendered by the original Hippocratic Oath, many physicians as I discovered with my son's procedure still hold on to their presumed competence and knowledge to deny patients and their families such information as are needed to make informed consent. The individualists who depart radically from the above model place the power of decision-making (at least most of it) in the hands of the patient. Because they see the patient as an autonomous individual, they hold that he has absolute control over his healthcare choices while the role of the doctor begins and stops at primarily providing information and executing the patient's treatment plan, regardless of his own expert opinion.

This paper considers both models and finds them inadequate in their lack of respect for the autonomy of the patient whose life is at stake and lack of recognition and respect for the physician's expertise and knowledge. It therefore recommends what is referred to here as the collegial model which encourages open communication and collaboration between the physician, the patient and his family to reach a treatment plan mutually agreed upon. This model allows the physician to deploy his wealth of experience, expertise, competence and knowledge while acknowledging and respecting the autonomy and dignity of the patient.

### **Informed consent**

Berg et. al. (1995) describe it as a legal construct focused on the disclosure of information to the patient and the promotion of autonomy. It gives the patient

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an opportunity to agree or reject a medical procedure or a particular treatment regime and affords the health professional the occasion to assess the patient's capacity for decision-making. Iroegbu (2005), defines it as a process in which a patient gives written consent (agreement) to undergo a medical procedure after having being provided with information about the nature of the procedure, risks, potential benefits, alternatives, and so on by his or her doctor (658). Ekwutosi (2008), says it is one of the two ethical principles deriving from respect for persons, the other being truth telling. He goes on to define it as a legal condition whereby a person can be said to have given consent based upon an appreciation and understanding of the facts and implications of an action. He identifies several factors that would permit a valid consent: possession of relevant facts and his reasoning faculties by the individual. In other words, the individual must not be mentally retarded or ill; there must not be an impairment of judgment such as illness, intoxication, insufficient sleep and other health problems at the time of consenting.

White (2013) believes as with most philosophers that the requirement to employ informed consent is grounded in autonomy and its core notion is the idea of steering the direction of one's life, determining how to behave and deciding what projects to engage in. In other words, if steering one's life is the essence of autonomy, White holds that autonomy is best protected and facilitated through the employment of informed consent procedures. What holds here she says is that a patient must endorse a proposed course of action in line with his intentions and affirms that the decision is his. What is required here is not just consent but informed consent which places emphasis on providing information to a patient, and making sure that it is adequately understood. The provision of relevant information is particularly important to autonomy, since this information may enable him to better steer his life in the direction he chooses. Thus, informed consent guidelines provide an appropriate means of protecting and facilitating autonomy in patients.

From the above, we glean that informed consent involves a formalized procedure, whereby patients and their families consent, usually in writing for certain medical procedure or treatment to be carried on and given that has some undesirable side effect. The idea behind it is that the physician has a duty to inform patients of the benefits and risks of a procedure and including the consequences of no treatment and to obtain a consent voluntarily given by the patient. While it gives the patient the opportunity to accept or reject a given medical modality, it also provides the practitioner the occasion to assess the patient's capacity for decision-making. That informed Kutner et al (1991) claim that for consent to be valid:

conditions of disclosure of information, competency, understanding, freedom from coercion and presence of decision-making must be met. In theory, true informed consent occurs when a physician provides information to a competent patient who understands the data and voluntarily makes a decision to accept or refuse the recommendation.

From Kutner et al above, three essential elements of informed consent stand out: the agent must have *capacity* for decision-making (understanding), the agent must be *informed* (through disclosure of potential risks and benefits of the treatment modality) and the agent's decision must be *voluntary*.

### **Autonomy**

This is one the principles enunciated by Beauchamp and Childress upon which modern day bioethics stands, the others being Beneficence (the moral requirement to contribute to others' welfare), Non-Maleficence (the obligation to abstain from causing harm to others) and Justice (equality in access to healthcare and in health status). (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001). These four principles have withstood challenges for nearly three decades and still form the basis for most decision-making in both clinical practice and biomedical research (Harish et al, 2015). Autonomy is derived from the Greek word *autonomos* which implies self-rule, self-governing, self-determination and independent. It requires the ability to decide for oneself, sufficiently free from control and control of others or conditions, to live by one's own standards and having capacity to decide upon a course of action, and to put that plan into action.

Philosophers have argued that there is no consensus regarding how personal autonomy should be understood. In fact, as Taylor (2009) opined, the many faces of autonomy may not be as numerable as some have suggested. Autonomy in the moral sense is a property belonging to human persons which they can enjoy to different degrees. This suggests that non persons such as very small children, animals and inanimate objects cannot be autonomous in that sense. Because autonomy can be enjoyed in different degrees, it is not a binary concept. In other words, a person can be more or less autonomous as well as non-autonomous and fully autonomous and it has both positive and negative elements. Speaking in a positive, autonomous persons are capable of qualitative self-reflection, can assess their own desires and values and can chose whether they are to be influenced or controlled by the values and choices. In a negative sense, autonomous persons are not subject to the control of others and to a large extent are in charge of those influences from outside.

Gillon (2003) defines it as deliberated self-rule; the ability and tendency to think for oneself; to make decision for that thinking, and then to enact those decisions.

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He says it is what makes any sort of morality possible. Motloba (2018), traced the evolution of autonomy to ancient Greece, a period in which cities while defended their sovereignty and freedom from the influence of foreign powers and wrote that in modern days, the idea of autonomy addresses personal or individual autonomy insofar as the agent may elect to act, or not to act according to specified prescribed standards, norms or rules (which may have neutral value or be value laden). This supposes that autonomy denotes the condition when an agent may determine the conception, articulation and the execution of concepts, ideas and actions for him or herself. Its commonest usage implies actions or thoughts that are characterized by the presence of freedom, rationality and consistency with one's own preferences (Agich, 2009). Smith (1994) expanded the definition of autonomy to include a 'set of diverse notions including self-governance, liberty rights, privacy, individual choice, liberty to follow one's will, causing one's own behavior and being one's own person.

### **Relationship between healthcare professionals and patients**

Here, we focus on the relationship between the physician and the patient which is an important foundation of the medical ethics. In the past, this relationship was a concern only to healthcare professionals. Given that they are presumed to have greater knowledge and have the patient's best interest at heart, they were entrusted with making life changing and critical decisions for the patient. Today, however, with advancement in medical technological, the range of people who have an interest in the decisions and who in some cases have a right to, have grown. Two views; paternalism and individualism have dominated discourse about this relationship. Here we discussed them, examined their strengths and weaknesses but ultimately found them inadequate. A new view on the strength of the examination is proposed.

### **Paternalism (paternalistic model)**

Paternalism comes from the Latin word *pater* which means father. This refers to the way a father/parent would normally treat his own child. It is to act in the best interest of another without necessarily the consent of the person as parents do with their children. It involves the intentional limitation of the autonomy of one person on the ground of beneficence by who has some amount of authority over him, it is controversial because while its end is benevolent, its means is coercive. Paternalists appeal to peoples' interests such as life, health and safety over their liberty and right to freedom of choice. They ground their act on the relatively greater knowledge they are presumed to have or sometimes the ignorance of him whose liberty is being restricted. Generally, It is the interference of a state or an individual with another person, against the person's will, and justified by a claim that the person interfered with shall be better off or protected by harm. The government's paternalistic

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decisions can be seen in areas like anti-drug legislation, compulsory wearing of seat belts and so on.

In medical ethics and healthcare, paternalism refers to healthcare professionals making decisions for patients without their consent and inputs, based on the belief that they know better than the patients what they need and this potentially limits the patients' autonomy. Paternalism constitutes of any action, decision, rule or policy made by a physician or other care-giver or a government that dictates what is best for the patient without considering the patient's own beliefs and value system and does not respect patient's autonomy (Ekwutosi, 2008). Due to the great medical expertise which physicians are presumed to have and which patient does not possess, they have an obligation to act beneficently towards the patient in recommending treatment procedure that they truly believe benefits the patient. A healthcare provider acts in a way that prioritizes his presumed knowledge and expertise over the patient's autonomy and rights to make decisions. In medical context, A physician withholds relevant information concerning a patient's condition from him. It is assumed that the patient will be thankful to the physician for decisions made even if he would not agree with it at the time (Stone, 1976). The physician is more interested in promoting a patient's well-being and health rather than his autonomy and choice. He acts as the patient's guardian articulating and implementing what he thinks is best for the patient. Thus he places the patient's interests above his and can solicit the views of other physicians when he lacks adequate knowledge of the issue.

As already stated, the dilemma here lies in the strong need to balance the principle of beneficence which involves acting to contribute to the patient's welfare with the principle of respect for the autonomy of the patient. Those who promote paternalistic view argue that because patients lack the capacity to make informed decisions about their health and because the medical professionals know the best with regard to the condition of the patient owing to their long years of training in medical schools and the great experience they have gained from practice, decision about what to do should be left to the medical professionals. They also argue that a physician may intervene paternalistically when a patient is unwilling or refuse to accept medical advice or treatment options proposed by the physician or when he requests treatments that are medically unsound or has the potentially to harm his health. Opponents, however, argue that paternalism among other things denies patients the right to make their own decisions about their bodies and treatment procedure even if those decisions differ from what the physician proposes/offers. This they argue, can lead to distrust between the patient and the physician and so affect the patient's recovery.

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**Individualism (Individualistic model)**

In this model of physician-patient relationship, the patient is seen as having absolute right, autonomy and control over his body and health. Here the doctor is obligated to carry out the request of the patient even if he does not agree with it. In contrast to the paternalistic model, this model rests on the autonomy of the individual and the right of the patient to make decisions about his medical care without the physician or healthcare provider trying to influence the decision. While patient's autonomy allows the physician to educate the patient about the medical procedure or treatment, it does not allow him to make the decision for the patient. Autonomy here refers to the capability and right of a patient to control the course of his own medical treatment and participate in decisions concerning his treatment. Physicians are obligated to provide information and services, rather than make decisions for the patient. Their primary role is to inform the patient about all he needs to know about diagnoses, treatment options and possible outcomes/consequences and then to do as the patient wishes or chooses irrespective of personal opinions. Ekwutosi (2008) admits a legal limit of patient's autonomy usually framed under the rubric of informed consent. Every human adult of sound mind has a right to determine what shall be done with his body and any surgeon who performs a surgical operation on a patient without his consent commits assault liable to damages. The ethical question raised by this model concerns the conflict between a patient's autonomy and the physician's professional judgment.

**Informed consent in Nigeria's medical practice**

In medical ethics, the doctor-patient relationship is a central concern as it focuses on how best the interaction between the two can be nurtured (Smith, 1996). It is that interface between the two where patient's data are gathered, diagnosed and plans for treatment made, compliance accomplished and support and healing provided (Lazare, 1996). It is according to Dwolatzky et al (2006), a consensual relationship in which the patient knowingly seeks the help of a physician and the physician knowingly accepts to render the service the patient seeks. This relationship is not just an interaction between the doctor and patient but also involves significant others such as patient's relatives and neighbours, nurses, technical support personnel, hospital administrators, health insurance companies, government and so on. It is the foundation of clinical care and can have profound implications on clinical care. Its main goal is to improve patient health outcomes and their medical care. Tawari and Boloya (2021) assert that improved patient outcome is a function of physician-patient relationships.

According to the Code of Medical Ethics in Nigeria (Part A, section 19), informed consent is the permission granted in full knowledge of the possible consequences, typically that which is given by a patient to a doctor for treatment

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with knowledge of the possible risks and benefits. Apart from the major elements of informed consent already outlined, it is important that the patient has sufficient time to weigh his options before making a decision. The concept of informed consent is not an alien practice in Nigeria. The regulation of informed consent in Nigeria does not seem to be altered by any unique attribute of the local culture or social context. This as Ojo (2021) is a consequence of the country's colonial heritage and the multicultural nature of Nigerian society. The stipulations and the notion of autonomy and human rights espoused in the Code of Medical Ethics in Nigeria resemble that of any developed western country. It recognizes that consent can be obtained from the patient, his/her relations, or the public authority, depending on the situation. While the first right to give a nod to any treatment resides with the patient, a next of kin can give consent for minors and those without capacity. However, when no relative is available, the most senior doctor in the institution can give an appropriate directive to preserve life. A court order may also be needed in special circumstances.

The Code specifies that a proper informed consent must include (1) the benefits and risks of a procedure, (2) appropriate professional advice on options, (3) the patient's choice of preferred option and (4) authorization for the clinician to commence treatment by completing the form. The Code recognizes the inherent right of a patient to his/her body and life. It is important to note that because the Nigerian legal system is built on British laws, most procedural cases are derived from that legal system. Medical practice in Nigeria is relatively free of malpractice litigations compared to developed countries (Ojo, 2021). Accusations of medical negligence, incompetence and unethical or unprofessional conducts are common, but are most times handled in house by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria. Its decision though can be appealed in any regular court in Nigeria but such is an exception in Nigeria (Ezeome and Marshall, 2008).

Within the Nigerian context, local, social and cultural factors have an effect on how the elements of a valid informed consent (voluntarism and capacity, disclosure and understanding, consenting or refusing) are applied in the patient-physician relationship. Arinze-Umobi and Okeke (2020) enumerated these key socio-cultural factors: low educational background; role of religion; effect of healthcare financing; influence of family structure; inadequacy of consent laws in Nigeria, poverty and respect for elders. The physician is such an authority figure in medical matters that patients feel obligated to follow whatever he tells them (Ojo, 2021). Medical paternalism is the norm in Nigeria and patients expect that their doctors direct them; in fact, some patients actually view the doctor's request for their views and choices as a sign of incompetence on his part. Paternalism is, however, not a unique cultural phenomenon and has occurred at one time or another in the history of all modern societies. It is a hallmark of traditional societies with high levels of illiteracy and

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ignorance. Consequently, Nigerian physicians believe that their patients do not like inconsiderate 'cold shower' approaches to risk disclosure (Marshall, 2001). She believed that many of the disclosures carried out in Western settings would be viewed negatively by Nigerian patients.

It is, therefore, necessary that doctors striving to practice informed consent in Nigeria to spend time educate the patients and consciously and tactfully bring them into the decision making process of the relationship. The healthcare delivery in Nigeria has recorded unimaginable and unsatisfactory performance in quality delivery for a very long time. Quality medical services are still not within easy reach of many people. When accessed, patients most times receive very poor service due mainly to the negligence of healthcare providers. In cases where services are unaffordable, patients resort to quacks for cheaper costs and in the process cause greater damage or harm to the already precarious situation. Adebayo (2020), while investigating the role of power in physician-patient interactions in Nigeria revealed that physicians in Nigeria have low communication efficacy which is mostly characterized by their lack of interpersonal relations, empathy and depth of information disclosure. Many patients visiting Nigerian hospitals as was my case in September 2024 have reported.

### **Can a middle ground be found between paternalism and individualism?**

Given the inadequacies of both paternalism and individualism in addressing individual autonomy and doctor's competence and expertise, there is need to find a middle ground to reconcile both extremes. The answer lies with what Ekwutosi (2008) calls the "Collegial View." This model of doctor/patient relationship emphasizes a team work to treatment. The doctors, patients and their families are seen as equal and should therefore collaborate and decide together what is to be done and choose the best course of action for a patient.

In the collegial view, the doctor recognizes the rights of the patient and their families in the treatment of the patient. The patient /families in turn acknowledge the expertise of the doctor and other healthcare professionals. In other words, it promotes the spirit of dialogue and co-operation. Collegial view aims to find a balance between the two extremes of paternalism and individualism, between the doctor's own values and patient's autonomy. Doctors' expertise it has to be said does not confer on them the ultimate right to make decisions for the patients. Competent patients can exercise the right to make decisions that advance their health and welfare by providing or withholding informed consent to the proposed treatment procedures by their doctors. All the information the patients need to make decisions should be provided as much as possible, but the information should not be forced on him.

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Collegial view is characterized among other values by (1) equality and mutuality: doctors and patients are seen as equals with the patient's values and preferences and the doctor's expertise respected and acknowledged, (2) shared decision-making: the doctor and patient collaborate to choose the best course of action with the active involvement of the patient, (3) trust and respect: both parties feel heard and valued. This promotes mutual trust and respect. (4) open communication: collegial model encourages open communication, leading to the understanding of the issues involved and the options available.

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## **Power, and Dynastic Legitimacy: A New Historicist Study of Ancestry and the Foretold Ascension of Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli in *Mazan Jiran Maza***

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the representation of power, dynastic legitimacy, ancestry, and the foretold ascension of Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli in *Mazan Jiran Maza*, a Hausa court song composed by Musa Dankwairo. Performed in 1990, nearly three decades before Bamalli's emergence as the 19th Emir of Zazzau in 2020, the song presents a prophetic reconstruction of royal destiny rooted in genealogy and historical memory. The study investigated how the oral performance functions beyond artistic praise to become a political and cultural discourse for negotiating authority, identity, and dynastic continuity. The study adopted New Historicism, particularly Stephen Greenblatt's concept of narrative self-fashioning, to explore the relationship between orature, historical consciousness, and sociopolitical power. Using a qualitative methodology, data were collected through archival materials, oral interviews, digital media sources, and fieldwork conducted at the Zazzau Emirate Palace. Findings revealed that the song symbolically constructs Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli's political legitimacy through genealogical references, heroic imagery, and evocations of prominent Zazzau rulers such as Musa Bamalli, Abubakar, and Yero. In addition, the celebrant is addressed as son of Dasuki, and son of Magajin Gari, while his lineage is further connected to the founding figures of the Sokoto Caliphate through his maternal ancestry. From the maternal line, he is also linked to the Barebari dynasty of Zazzau. These genealogical invocations symbolically position Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli within the broader Northern Nigerian aristocratic and political network that emerged from the nineteenth-century Sokoto Jihad. The composition preserved collective memory

while reinforcing dynastic authority and royal continuity. The study argued that Hausa court songs function as important sites for the production and negotiation of political meaning, historical imagination, and cultural legitimacy.

**Keywords:** Hausa Court Song, Political Symbolism, Cultural Memory, Historical Representation, New Historicism.

### Introduction

The Hausa praise-song *Mazan Jiran Maza* composed by Musa Dankwairo demonstrates the poet's exceptional artistic talent, historical consciousness, and remarkable memory in preserving and reconstructing historical narratives within the Hausa oral tradition. Through the use of praise epithets, genealogical references, and symbolic allusions, the poet constructs the identity and public image of Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli by linking him to notable historical personalities such as Nuhu Bamalli, Magajin Garin Zazzau and Ibrahim Dasuki, the 18<sup>th</sup> Sultan of Sokoto. Such references serve not merely as poetic embellishments but as cultural and political instruments through which legitimacy, authority, and identity are articulated and reinforced. In this regard, the present study adopted New Historicism as its theoretical framework in order to examine the interaction between the corpus song, history, power, and social memory within *Mazan Jiran Maza*.

The song further invokes the legacies of three former emirs of Zazzau Emirate: Musa Bamalli, Abubakar, and Usman Yero. Although these rulers belonged to the nineteenth century, the song itself was composed in the late twentieth century, several decades before the enthronement of Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli on 7 October 2020. This temporal relationship between the past and the present illustrates the poet's deliberate reconstruction of historical memory in order to shape contemporary perceptions of leadership, legitimacy, and continuity within the emirate system. Through these historical references, the poet encourages his patron to emulate Musa Bamalli's patience, perseverance, courage, ascetic disposition, and pragmatic approach to life. Similarly, the poet expresses the desire for the celebrant to embody Abubakar's humility, generosity, and wisdom, as well as Yero's intellectual versatility, learning, military brilliance and administrative competence. By invoking these admired virtues, the song symbolically connects Ahmadu Nuhu Bamalli to the moral and political heritage of past Zazzau rulers, thereby reinforcing his legitimacy and sustainability for leadership within the emirate tradition.

The historical narrative embedded in the song, particularly the linkage of Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli's ancestry to the lineage of Usman dan Fodio through the maternal line, transcends the conventional function of praise song. Rather, it serves as a medium for intellectual reflection on the history of the Sokoto Jihad, the

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evolution of political authority, and the contemporary condition of society. Consequently, the song becomes an important literary and historical text through which issues of memory, leadership, identity, legitimacy, and cultural continuity are articulated.

### **Musa Dankwairo and Hausa Court Praise Tradition**

According to Gusau (1996, p. 104–116), Musa Usman was popularly known as Musa Dankwairo. The appellation “Dankwairo” was derived from “Kwairo,” the younger brother of Musa’s father, who was renowned for his melodious voice before abandoning singing later in life. When Musa joined his father’s chorus group at the age of seven, his remarkable vocal resemblance to his uncle earned him the nickname “Dankwairo,” meaning “the son of Kwairo,” symbolically indicating that he had inherited and continued his uncle’s musical talent.

Musa Dankwairo was born in 1909 to Usman Dankwanda and Yarnunu in Dankadu village, Bakura District, within Talatar Mafara Local Government Area of Sokoto State, Nigeria. His family later relocated to Maradun in 1914 following an invitation extended to his father by Sarkin Kayan Maradun, Ibrahim I (1903–1923), who appointed Usman Dankwanda as his court singer. Musa was raised in an environment grounded in strong moral and cultural values. From childhood, he was described as respectful, disciplined, and intellectually gifted. He demonstrated exceptional talent in musical composition and possessed a remarkable ability to memorize and recount historical narratives. Among his siblings, the eldest was Abdu Kurna, who later became highly influential in Musa’s musical development. Like their father, Abdu Kurna specialized in both farming songs and court praise-songs. Upon the retirement of Usman Dankwanda, Abdu Kurna succeeded him as the official court singer, serving Sarkin Kayan Maradun from the reign of Moyi (1923–1928) through that of Abubakar (1938–1964). Around 1916, Musa Dankwairo formally joined his father’s musical troupe, initially playing the *kanzagi* instrument before advancing into the chorus section. Eventually, he was entrusted to the mentorship of his elder brother, Abdu Kurna, from whom he acquired extensive knowledge of praise-singing, musical composition, and court performance traditions.

Musa and his brother travelled extensively across various communities performing for patrons and dignitaries. Owing to Musa’s extraordinary talent, Abdu Kurna elevated him to the prestigious position of *Daudun Kida* and permitted him to independently compose songs for princes and noblemen. In addition to court performances, Musa participated in farming-song performances in rural communities alongside other chorus members. Their earnings were traditionally presented to Abdu Kurna upon their return home, reflecting the hierarchical structure and discipline of the troupe. In 1960, following the coronation of Alhaji Aliyu II as ‘Yandoton Tsafe, a request was made to Abdu Kurna for Musa Dankwairo

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to become the official court singer of Tsafe. Consequently, Musa relocated to Tsafe, while his elder brother remained in Maradun. Throughout his career, Musa Dankwairo composed and performed various genres of Hausa oral song and music, including farming songs, dirges, political songs, enlightenment songs, praise-songs for commoners, and royal court music. Among the prominent personalities for whom he composed were Sir Ahmadu Bello, Alhaji Aliyu II, 'Yandoton Tsafe, Sarkin Kayan Maradun Muhammadu (1964–1981), numerous aristocrats, wealthy patrons, and traditional rulers across Northern Nigeria. His notable chorus members included Alhaji Muhammadu, Alhaji Abubakar, Alhaji Audu, Alhaji Alu, Alhaji Sani Zakin Kida, Ibrahim Sarkin Fada, Mamman Jikka, and Sani Sankira, among others. Musa Dankwairo died on Friday, 13 September 1991, at his residence in Gidan Kano, leaving behind a legacy in Hausa orature, court music.

### **Dynastic Shifts and Royal Politics in the Zazzau Emirate**

The history of the Zazzau Emirate since the nineteenth-century jihad led by Usman dan Fodio in 1804 reveals a remarkable pattern of dynastic continuity, political balance, and rotational kingship. From the establishment of the emirate under the Fulani Jihad to the present period, twenty reigns have been recorded under nineteen emirs. The discrepancy between the number of reigns and rulers arose from the dethronement and subsequent reinstatement of Emir Abdullahi, the eighth emir in the chronological order of succession. Scholars such as Smith (1960) extensively documented the succession of emirs in Zazzau from 1804 to the 1950s, while Umar (2022) focused on the reign of Emir Muhammadu Aminu, and Fagachi (2020) examined the reign of Emir Shehu Idris. Presently, the throne of Zazzau is occupied by Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli.

### **Chronology of Emirs of the Zazzau Emirate**

#### **1804-1900**

1. Malam Musa (1804-1821)
2. Yamusa (1821-1834)
3. Abdulkarim (1834-1846)
4. Hammada (1846)
5. Muhammad Sani (1846-1860)
6. Sidi Abdulkadiri (1860)
7. Abdulsalami (1860-1863)
8. Abdullahi (1863-1873 & 1876-1881)
9. Abubakar (1873-1876)
10. Sambo (1881-1890)
11. Yero (1890-1897)

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## 12. Kwasau (1897-1903)

### 1900-1950

1. Aliyu (1903-1920)
2. Dalhatu (1920-1924)
3. Ibrahim (1924-1934)
4. Ja'afaru (1934-1959)

### 1950 to date

1. Muhammadu Aminu (1959-1975)
2. Shehu Idris (1975-2020)
3. Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli (2020-present)

This succession demonstrated the existence of four principal ruling dynasties established within the emirate under the authority of the Sokoto Caliphate. These dynasties are Mallawa, Barebari, Katsinawa, and Sullubawa. The Mallawa dynasty produced five emirs: Malam Musa, Sidi Abdulkadiri, Abubakar, Aliyu, and Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli. The Barebari dynasty produced the highest number of rulers, namely Yamusa, Hammada, Muhammadu Sani, Abdullahi, Yero, Kwasau, Dalhatu, Ibrahim, and Ja'afaru. The Katsinawa dynasty produced four emirs: Abdulkarim, Sambo, Muhammadu Aminu, and Shehu Idris, while the Sullubawa dynasty produced Abdulsalami, its founding ruler.

Consequently, Zazzau may appropriately be classified as a multi-dynastic emirate. This system reflected a unique political structure among the Hausa emirates, characterized by rotational kingship, inclusivity, and the balancing of power among competing royal lineages. The rotational arrangement symbolized political justice, collective participation, and continuity within the emirate. It discouraged the permanent monopolization of the throne by a single lineage and encouraged patience among ruling houses, each recognizing the possibility of eventual succession. The rotational system also contributed significantly to political stability within the emirate over several centuries. By distributing authority among different dynasties, the system minimized rebellion and strengthened loyalty to the emirate. Furthermore, the multi-dynastic arrangement enabled the emirate to draw upon diverse strengths in diplomacy, military organization, scholarship, and spirituality, thereby enhancing its resilience against internal conflicts, dynastic disputes, warfare, and colonial intrusion. The political structure of Zazzau therefore represents an expression of Hausa-Fulani political philosophy in which justice, unity, and divine order were institutionally embedded within the emirate system. Each dynasty functioned as an essential pillar within the political framework of Zazzau, collectively sustaining the emirate through changing historical periods.

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The foundation of this political order may be traced to Malam Musa, the pioneer emir who established the jihad administration in Zazzau following the Sokoto revolution of 1804. The emirate remained under the authority of the Sokoto Caliphate until the colonial conquest of Hausaland at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1903, the British colonial administration dethroned Emir Kwasau of the Barebari dynasty and installed Aliyu of the Mallawa dynasty. Subsequently, Aliyu was deposed by the colonial government in 1920 and replaced with Dalhatu of the Barebari dynasty. The rotational wisdom embedded within the Zazzau political system is further illustrated by the long intervals between dynastic accessions. For example, after the deposition of Aliyu in 1920, the Mallawa dynasty waited for one hundred years before regaining the throne in 2020 with the enthronement of Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli by Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai on 7 October 2020. Similarly, the Barebari dynasty has remained without the throne since the death of Ja'afaru in 1959, while the Sullubawa dynasty has awaited restoration since the death of Abdulsalami in 1863. More recently, the Katsinawa dynasty also entered a new waiting phase following the end of the reign of Shehu Idris in 2020.

The political wisdom underlying the Zazzau succession system appears to have been deliberately encouraged by the Sokoto Caliphate as a mechanism for maintaining political balance and preventing internal crises. This flexibility is exemplified in the case of Emir Abdullahi of the Barebari dynasty, who uniquely ruled in two separate periods. He initially succeeded Abdulsalami of the Sullubawa dynasty in 1863 and was later reinstated by Sokoto authorities in 1876 following the death of Abubakar of the Mallawa dynasty. Upon Abdullahi's dethronement in 1881, Sambo of the Katsinawa dynasty ascended the throne. Patterns of consecutive succession within the same dynasty also emerged at different historical moments. Hammada, son of Yamusa of the Barebari dynasty, succeeded Abdulkarim, founder of the Katsinawa dynasty. However, Hammada died shortly after ascending the throne, having ruled for only fifty-two days according to Smith (1960, p. 155). He was succeeded by his half-brother, Muhammadu Sani, also of the Barebari dynasty.

A similar dynastic continuity reappeared in the late nineteenth century when Yero of the Barebari dynasty succeeded Sambo of the Katsinawa dynasty, after which Yero's son, Kwasau, inherited the throne. Likewise, during the colonial era, three successive emirs emerged from the Barebari dynasty: Dalhatu, Ibrahim, and Ja'afaru. The Katsinawa dynasty later returned to power seventy-three years after the reign of Sambo when Muhammadu Aminu succeeded Ja'afaru in 1959. Thereafter, Shehu Idris succeeded Muhammadu Aminu, thereby extending the Katsinawa dynasty's control of the throne for over six decades before the accession of Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli in 2020.

## **Ancestry Reconstruction and the Imagined Foretold Ascension in *Mazan Jiran Maza***

Hausa court songs have historically functioned as important cultural discourses through which collective memory, political authority, and aristocratic identity are constructed and preserved. Beyond their aesthetic and performative dimensions, such compositions serve as repositories of genealogy, social values, religious devotion, and political legitimacy within Hausa society. Through praise, symbolic imagery, and historical allusions, court song participates in the production and circulation of cultural meanings associated with leadership, heroism, and dynastic continuity. This intersection between oral performance and political representation is evident in *Mazan Jiran Maza*, the celebrated court song composed by Musa Dankwairo for Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli. The composition constructs an aristocratic image of its subject through references to royal ancestry, noble lineage, and inherited prestige. In doing so, the song fashions a symbolic identity that associates Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli with the historical authority and legitimacy of the Zazzau ruling dynasty.

The poetic discourse within the composition further projects expectations of future leadership by presenting heroism, nobility, and political worthiness as inherent attributes of the subject. Significantly, at the period of the song's composition and performance, Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli had not yet ascended to a major traditional title, as the position of Magajin Gari Zazzau, it was then occupied by his father, Nuhu Bamalli. Nevertheless, the performative and ideological dimensions of the song construct a narrative of anticipated authority that foreshadows his eventual emergence as Emir of Zazzau.

From a New Historicist perspective, the composition demonstrates how Hausa court song operates not merely as artistic praise, but as a site where political legitimacy, aristocratic continuity, and historical consciousness are negotiated through oral discourse. The song therefore reflects the interconnectedness of orature, power, culture, and history in Hausa court tradition, where praise performance becomes an instrument for shaping collective memory and reinforcing dynastic authority as this example reveals:

Jagora : Malam Yero shi ya haihi Nuhu Bamalli,

Yara : Wannan Magajin Gari

Jagora/Yara: Wannan Magajin Gari, x2

Jagora : Magajin Gari Nuhu,

: Shi ya haihi Amadu,

Yara : Shi ne ɗan Magajin Gari,

: Amadu aɗ ɗan Magajin Gari,

: Amadu aɗ ɗan Magajin Gari

Jagora : Tarifin gidaddajin milki,

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: An sani Kasaz Zazzau,  
 : Babu wata ja a ja,  
 Yara : Babu damar a ja,  
 : Babu damar ya ja  
 : Kun san babu damar ya ja.  
 Domin kasat taku cex2  
 Amshi : Mazan jiran maza,  
 Amadu dan Magajin Gari.  
 Jagora : Malam Shehu Usumanu,  
 : Shi ya haihi Muhammadu Bello,  
 : Muhammadu Bello,  
 : Shi ya haihi Alu Babba,  
 : Alu Babba,  
 : Shi ya haihi Haliru,  
 : Shi ko Haliru,  
 : Shi ya haihi Zanaidu,  
 : Shi ko Zanaidu,  
 : Shi ya haihi Turaki Dikko,  
 : Turaki Dikko,  
 : Shi ya haihi Hadizal Kubura,  
 : Hadiza Kubura,  
 Jagora/Yara: Ita ta haihi Amadu dan Magajin Gari,  
 : Ta haihi Amadu wannan dan Magajin Gari.  
 Yara : Ya Allah ya yi ma rabo x4  
 Amshi : Mazan jiran maza,  
 : Amadu dan Magajin Gari,  
 : Mazan jiran maza.  
 Yara : Giwa sa maza gudu  
 ...  
 Leader: Malam Yero gave birth to Nuhu Bamalli.  
 Chorus Members: That's the Magajin Gari.  
 Leader/Chorus Members: That's the Magajin Gari. x2  
 Leader: Magajin Gari Nuhu,  
 : He gave birth to Amadu.  
 Chorus Members: He is the son of Magajin Gari,  
 : Amadu is the son of Magajin Gari,  
 : Amadu is the son of Magajin Gari.  
 Leader: History of royal bloodline families,  
 : Well-known in the land of Zazzau,  
 : No one dares to oppose them.

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Chorus Members: No chance to oppose,  
 : No one can oppose,  
 : You know no one can oppose,  
 : Because your're the nobility of the land ×2

Chorus: Hero who conquered other heroes,  
 : Amadu, son of Magajin Gari.

Leader: Malam Shehu Usumanu,  
 : He gave birth to Muhammadu Bello.  
 : Muhammadu Bello,  
 : He gave birth to Alu Babba.  
 : Alu Babba,  
 : He gave birth to Haliru.  
 : And Haliru,  
 : He gave birth to Zanaidu.  
 : And Zanaidu,  
 : He gave birth to Turaki Dikko.  
 : Turaki Dikko,  
 : He gave birth to Hadizal Kubura.

Leader/Chorus Members: She gave birth to Amadu, son of Magajin Gari.  
 : She gave birth to Amadu, this son of Magajin Gari.

Chorus Members: Oh Allah, bless him with good fortune ×4

Chorus: Hero who conquered other heroes,  
 : Amadu, son of Magajin Gari.  
 : Hero who conquered other heroes.

Chorus Members: When the elephant charges, men scatter!

...

The foregoing example constructs the aristocratic identity of Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli through a carefully organized genealogical discourse that foregrounds dynastic legitimacy and inherited political authority. Within the poetic performance, the subject is represented as the son of the Magajin Garin Zazzau and grandson of Yaro, while his paternal lineage is traced to Aliyu Yero Auta, son of Abuddarda'u, son of Musa Bamalli, the founding father of the Mallawa ruling dynasty of Zazzau. By addressing him as "*ɗan Magajin Gari*," the praise singer, Musa Dankwairo symbolically fashions Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli as a legitimate heir to aristocratic authority and a recognized representative of the Mallawa dynasty within the political structure of the Zazzau Emirate.

From a New Historicism perspective, these genealogical references function as discursive strategies through which political legitimacy and social identity are constructed. The invocation of Malam Musa Bamalli and other royal ancestors

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situates the subject within an inherited tradition of authority, thereby reinforcing the cultural memory and dynastic continuity of the ruling elite. The oral performance consequently becomes a medium through which aristocratic power is symbolically reproduced and validated within Hausa court culture. The poet further extends this representation of legitimacy through Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli's maternal ancestry, particularly his connection to the scholarly and reformist lineage of Usman dan Fodio. Through his mother, Hadizatul Kubura, daughter of Turaki Abdurrahman Dikko, the subject is linked to the intellectual and religious heritage of the Sokoto Caliphate. Turaki Abdurrahman Dikko descended from Junaidu, son of Halliru Chacho, son of Aliyu Babba, son of Muhammadu Bello, son of Usman dan Fodio. By incorporating this lineage into the poetic discourse, the singer associates Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli with Islamic scholarship, spiritual prestige, and reformist authority, thereby expanding the ideological dimensions of his public identity.

Equally significant is the poet's articulation of the subject's maternal relationship with the Barebari ruling dynasty of Zazzau. Through Halliru Chacho's marriage to Safiya, daughter of Muhammadu Sani, Emir of Zazzau, and the subsequent genealogical connections involving Makama Ja'afaru and Emir Abdullahi, the song constructs Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli as a symbolic convergence of multiple aristocratic traditions. The repeated invocation of emirs and notable forefathers transcends ordinary praise or biographical narration. Rather, the poetic structure operates as a cultural discourse that constructs anticipated leadership and projects the subject as embodying the collective historical authority of Zazzau's ruling lineages. Through this process of narrative representation, the singer fashions Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli as a figure whose legitimacy derives simultaneously from hereditary power, religious prestige, and historical continuity. Thus, the organization of ancestral references within the song reflects the interconnectedness of orature, power, and historical consciousness in Hausa court tradition. The composition functions not merely as artistic celebration, but as a performative site where legitimacy, aristocratic identity, and political expectation are negotiated and preserved through oral discourse as stated by the stanza below:

Jagora : Malam Musa ya yi Sarkin Zazzau,

: Ina ta roko,

Yara : Allah hukumta ka kai.

Amshi : Mazan jiran maza

Jagora : Malam Musa ya yi Sarkin Zazzau,

: Ina ta roko,

Yara : Allah hukumta ka kai.

Jagora : Abubakar yai Sarki,

: Kullum ina ta roko,

Yara : Allah hukumta ka kai

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Jagora : Malam Yero yai Sarki,  
           : Kullum ina ta roko,  
 Yara : Allah hukumta ka kai.  
 Jagora : Kai ma,  
 Yara : Allah hukumta ka kai.  
 Amshi : Mazan jiran maza  
 Leader: Malam Musa became Emir of Zazzau,  
           : I kept on praying.  
 Chorus Members: May Allah judge you well.  
 Chorus: Hero who conquered other heroes.  
 Leader: Malam Musa became Emir of Zazzau,  
           : I kept on praying.  
 Chorus Members: May Allah judge you well.  
 Leader: Abubakar became Emir,  
           : I kept praying every day.  
 Chorus Members: May Allah judge you well.  
 Leader: Malam Yero became Emir,  
           : I kept praying every day.  
 Chorus Members: May Allah judge you well.  
 Leader: You too  
 Chorus Members: May Allah judge you well.  
 Chorus: Hero who conquered other heroes.

The prayerful discourse contained in the stanza invokes three prominent Emirs of Zazzau who ruled after the nineteenth-century jihad period: Malam Musa (1808–1821), the founding father of the Mallawa dynasty; Abubakar (1873–1876), the ninth Emir of Zazzau from the Mallawa ruling line; and Yero (1890–1897), the eleventh Emir of Zazzau from the Barebari dynasty. Within the poetic structure, the invocation of these emirs serves as a discursive strategy through which Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli is symbolically connected to established traditions of political authority and dynastic legitimacy in Zazzau Emirate. From the perspective of New Historicism, these ancestral references participate in the cultural construction of leadership and aristocratic identity. By sequentially invoking the names of past rulers, the praise singer, Musa Dankwairo situates Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli within a historically legitimized network of royal memory and inherited authority.

The epithet "*Mazan jiran maza*" further contributes to this construction of authority by projecting ideals of courage, nobility, masculinity, and heroic leadership. The expression symbolically fashions Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli as a worthy successor whose identity is aligned with the administrative prestige and political strength associated with his royal predecessors. Through such representations, the

composition constructs leadership not as accidental attainment, but as a historically and culturally inherited responsibility grounded in aristocratic lineage. The poet's direct address through the second-person singular pronoun "ka" in the expression "*Allah hukumta ka kai*" introduces a performative and ideological dimension to the composition. Beyond its rhetorical function, the expression symbolically positions the subject within a discourse of anticipated sovereignty and divine endorsement. Similarly, the repeated supplication contained in the statement "*Kullum ina ta roko*" reflects the poet's sustained articulation of political expectation and spiritual aspiration concerning Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli's future ascension to the emirship.

The stanza also extends beyond praise performance into the realm of political and moral instruction. Through references to the administrative legacies of the invoked emirs, the poet constructs models of exemplary rulership characterized by scholarship, bravery, statesmanship, and moral discipline. In this regard, the oral text serves as a cultural medium through which ideals of governance and leadership ethics are transmitted and reinforced within Hausa aristocratic tradition. Consequently, the stanza demonstrates the interconnectedness of orature, history, and power within Hausa court culture. Genealogy, prayer, praise, and political discourse collectively operate to fashion Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli as a symbolically authorized figure whose legitimacy derives from dynastic continuity, moral worthiness, and spiritual sanction. The composition therefore exemplifies how Hausa court song serves as a performative space for the negotiation and preservation of political authority and collective historical memory.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has examined the biography of Musa Dankwairo from his birth to his death, with particular emphasis on his intellectual prowess, exceptional memory, and mastery of historical narration as reflected in the praise-song *Mazan Jiran Maza* composed for Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli. The study demonstrates that the poet's detailed narration of the celebrant's paternal and maternal lineage corresponds significantly with archival and oral historical records obtained by the researcher during a visit to *Takon Giwa* within the palace of the Zazzau Emirate. These records, which document the genealogy and ancestry of the nineteenth Emir of Zazzau, further validate the historical consciousness embedded in the song. The research also established that, archival materials preserved within the palace, including records housed in Malam Musa Hall, affirm the historical account that Musa Bamalli arrived in Zazzau with a flag of authority in 1808. Such findings reinforce the credibility of the historical references employed by the poet and highlight the important relationship between oral song, memory, and documented history within Hausa society.

Furthermore, the study explored dynastic transformations and royal politics within the Zazzau Emirate, illustrating how political developments led to the emergence of four ruling dynasties, thereby making Zazzau one among the most prominent multi-dynastic emirates in Northern Nigeria. Through the application of New Historicism as a theoretical framework, the paper examined the processes of data collection and textual analysis while demonstrating how the song functions as a medium for preserving history, legitimizing authority, and reconstructing social memory.

The analysis of imaginary foretold ascension to the Emirship of Zazzau and ancestry reconstruction in *Mazan Jiran Maza* revealed the poet's profound historical insight and predictive imagination. Significantly, the prophetic dimension of the song attained historical reality following the enthronement of Ahmad Nuhu Bamalli as Emir of Zazzau on 7 October 2020. Despite the passage of time between the composition of the song in 1990 and the eventual ascension of the celebrant, the genealogical and ancestral references contained in the song remain consistent with the historical lineage of the Emir. Consequently, the study concluded that the song *Mazan Jiran Maza* is not merely a praise-song, but also an important historical and literary document that preserves genealogy, legitimizes political authority, and reflects the enduring relationship between Hausa oral song, history, and power.

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## **Emmanuel Umeh's Notion of Life: A Reflection on the Drama of Life and the Life of Drama**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is a reflection on the dramatic nature of human life as gleaned from Emmanuel Umeh's notion of life espoused in his book *Innermost Philosophical Reflections on the Human Condition*. A solicitous look at the human life revealed that life is definable within the purview of a chain of reactionary actions and events. Yet, in the face of challenges and provocations, human beings are quick to say "I don't want drama in my life!" But, can there be a drama free life? Is life meaningful and eventful without being dramatic? What does it mean to live a dramatic life? Is drama an ontological condition of living? These questions set the tone for this paper as it explored the dramatic nature of human life within the framework of Umeh's notion of life. In order to achieve this objective, the paper presented Umeh's biographical sketch, it clarified the concepts drama and life. It presented Umeh's notion of life. In addition, it established the link between drama and life by exploring the two dramatic dimensions of life: the drama of life and the life of drama. It concluded that living a balanced and rationally meaningful life is to, on the one hand, acknowledge and respect the necessary and constant events of life beyond our control and on the other hand, to rationally take control of our choices of actions which fall within the realm of our control with firm understanding of the dramatic nature of life.

**Keywords:** Drama, Life, Drama of Life, Life of Drama and Human Condition.

## **Introduction**

The expression “life is full of drama” captures the sequential nature of events and actions that define human life. Life is therefore definable within the context of these realities that are identifiable in synonymity with the experiences that shape human life. So, to live is to have events and actions causally manifesting in our daily experiences. The attempt to make sense of these causally connected events and actions in human life has led to a litany of descriptions of what life entails. These descriptions usually mirror life from peculiar experiences and challenges encountered by individual(s) at different point and time in human history. For instance, life is said to be a battle, a struggle, a bitter or sweet experience. Life is also described as tough as well as smooth depending on the narrator’s perspective and particular experiences. In whichever way it is described, what is constant is that life is inherently challenging and characterized by a mix of personal search for meaning, personal struggles (health, relationships, finances) and unavoidable emotional roller coaster.

However, in the face of these defining characterization of life, humans still exhibit a sense of optimism that blinds them towards this universal and unavoidable fact of life. This is underscored by the unrealistic expectation that life should go the way they wish it to go. And whenever the reality of existence goes contrary to this expectation, they feel frustrated and fall into depression and despair. In a nutshell, life becomes an endless series of events and actions that generates a chain of reactions. From this standpoint, this paper explores the two dramatic dimensions of life: the drama of life and the life of drama with the former accounting for facts of existence beyond human control while the latter representing the choices and actions within our control. In view of this, the paper locates the meaning, purpose and what matters most within the context of these two dimensions of life as implied by Umeh’s notion of life. In order to understand the intellectual climate and development of Umeh, his biographical sketch is presented immediately after the introduction before the subject of the paper is explored further.

## **A Biographical Sketch of Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Umeh**

Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Umeh was born into the family of late Mr. Emmanuel U. Umeh and late Mrs. Cecilia Umeh of Akwu-Akokwa, Ideato North Local Government Area of Imo State Nigeria on March 29, 1966 roughly six months before the beginning of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war that ended in 1970. He had his primary education at Immaculate Conception Seminary, Ahiaeke Umuahia. After his secondary education, he was retained as a student-teacher to teach Mathematics, Geography and Agricultural Science. In 1987 he was sent to Bigard Memorial Seminary, Ikot-Ekpene, now St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot-Ekpene for his

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philosophical studies. After his graduation, he was sent to Annunciation Junior Seminary, Amaudara for Diocesan Assignment where he also taught Mathematics and Geography.

He started his theological studies in 1992 at St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot-Ekpene. In 1994, he was sent to Austria by the then Bishop of Aba diocese, late Rt. Rev. Vincent Valentine Ezeonyia, C.S.Sp. to continue with his studies. He was ordained a Catholic Priest in Graz, Austria in 1998 after the completion of his Master's study in Theology. He then proceeded to study Communication in London School of Journalism and majored in Journalism and News Writing. Umeh got his doctoral and post-doctoral degrees in from Karl-Franzens University, Gras, Ausria where he also lectured for few years before relocating to Germany. In Germany, Umeh served as a pastor, teacher and lecturer. In 2020, He voluntarily returned to Nigeria to be part of the team of formators in Seat of Wisdom Major Seminary, Ariam, Umuahia. In 2025, Umeh bagged a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy at the prestigious University of Uyo, Uyo. He majored in Systematic Theology and Epistemology and has published more than ten (10) books and several articles in both theological and philosophical journals. He is the initiator and editor-in-chief of the *Weischiet Philosophical Journal* Ariam in affiliation with the philosophy department of Imo State University, Owerri.

As an outstanding theosophical scholar, Umeh has contributed immensely to our understanding of the human condition through his theological and philosophical works such as *The Promotion of Human Rights and Social Justice: A Call to Liberation Theology for the Church in Nigeria*, *The African Theology of Solidarity*, *African Theology of Solidarity and Religion of Self-Deceit: The Nigerian Experience*, *African Theology of Solidarity in Addressing Religious Freedom in Nigeria*, *Injustice and War on Terrorism and Innermost Philosophical Reflections on the Human Condition*.

### **What is Life?**

Etymologically, the word "life" originates from the old English *lif* meaning "body, life or existence" and the proto-Germanic *liba* meaning "life" or "body". It is rooted in the proto – Indo – European *Leyp* meaning "to stick, to adhere" which evolved to mean "to retain, continue, or stay". It is historically associated with the concept of a living, physical body. For this reason, the word "life" has retained its core meaning of "the condition of being alive."

Scientifically, life is seen as a complex, self-sustaining and evolving process characterized by metabolism, growth, reproduction and the ability to respond to environmental stimuli. Although, there is no single definition that fully satisfies scientists, it is commonly understood as a highly organized state that separates living beings from inorganic matter.

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Philosophically, the meaning of life is beyond the literal, etymological and scientific/biological characterization of being. It refers to the subjective experiences of the time between birth and death and the meaning individuals assign to their own existence within this period. It is therefore seen by Ibrahim as the object of one's reflective consciousness (2025:92) For this reason, the question "does life have meaning" or "what is the meaning of life?" is said to be the defining concern of philosophy, that is, the issue that provides philosophy's *raison d'être*. In this sense, according to Ibrahim, "philosophy is conceived as an attempt to understand the human condition and our place in the universe" (2021:51) Thus, life in a philosophical sense refers to the purpose and meaning of the gap between birth and death. In response to this, philosophers have taken three major approaches to unravel the meaning of life. The first approach is the theistic account which holds that there exists a pre-established relationship between man and God which defines the meaning of life. The second approach is the metaphysical account which seeks an all-encompassing perspective that transcends the human situation and in terms of which human life can be given a meaning. The third approach is the nihilist or pessimist account which claims that human life has no meaning since there are no ultimate values worth pursuing (Lawhead 634).

From the foregoing, it is clear that life refers to the condition of being alive, the quality of being a living being and ultimately the meaning and purpose of the gap between being born and being buried. For this reason, this paper explores the conditions of living a rationally compliant life in the face of the drama that defines human existence within the context of Umeh's notion of life as espoused in his book *Innermost Philosophical Reflections on Human Condition*.

### **What is Drama?**

Etymologically, the term "drama" comes from the Greek word *dran* meaning "action" which is derived from "to do" or "to act". In this sense, drama is most often defined as a pattern of words and actions having the potential for "doing" or "becoming" living words and actions. (Barranger 129). This explains why at the centre of any account of drama is the twin concepts: word and action as drama is written primarily to be performed, not read. In view of the centrality of the two terms "word" and "action" to the meaning of drama, the technical terms "dialogue" and "stage" becomes definitive of drama. On the printed page, drama appears as dialogue words arranged in sequence to be spoken by actors (Barranger 129). For this reason, drama is simply seen as stage dialogue, stage dialogue is created by the playwright while the actors speak it out in performance. Thus, performability becomes the hallmark of drama as it serves as the link between the playwright's words and the actor's speech.

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Drama has also been described as an imitation of life. This description of drama is traceable to the Greek philosopher, Aristotle. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle advances the idea that a work of art is an imitation of the possible or probable, not of something actual only. (Reese 32). All arts, for Aristotle are forms of imitation or mimesis. From this Aristotelian perspective, drama is simply portrayed as an imitation or reflection of human actions and events. It is therefore a literary composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance through actors, on a stage and before an audience. This means that drama is adapted to delineate life and human activities by means of presenting various dialogues and actions among a group of character. In view of this, drama is simply the mirror of human life as it captures or pictures, although in a sequentially adapted pattern, the totality of human conditionalities of existence. Thus, every drama is an imitation that confronts the mystery of human behaviour in order to contribute to a sense of well-being and to an understanding of ourselves and others. In a nutshell, drama is an imitation of human actions and events.

### **Emmanuel Umeh's Notion of Life**

In his book, *Innermost Philosophical Reflections on the Human Condition*, Umeh presents life as a phenomenon that defies human comprehension as he sees life as "the expression of the reality of the ontological realism of the present". (xii). By this, he means that life is a collection of the conditions of existence in terms of events and actions that are causally determined. In this sense, he captures life as a phenomenon beyond human cognitive circumference. This is because individual(s) are simply limited entities within the web of existence. As such, life for him is reality existing independently of specific human mind, life or observations. It has a fixed, objective structure and coordinating forces regardless of whether they are perceived or conceptualized by humans. In his words:

Life is not what you think it is. Life is more than the thought of your assumption. Life is deeper than the deepest of any human thought or human condition. Life is the expression of the reality of the ontological realism of the present. This means that life should be lived at the alter of the present reality. (xii).

Drawing from the limitedness of human thought in relation to life, Umeh points to the absoluteness of life as a reality beyond human perceptual process. This according to him is due to the fact that "the logic of life is not perceptively explainable with the logic of human perception" (xii). The human mind operates

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within its inherent limitedness that is occasioned by the deceptiveness of human sensation. In its reception of sensory information, the senses are bedeviled by its pragmatic mechanisms such as abstraction and synthesis that structure received information to fit within its receptive capability. By so doing, it is practically impossible for the mind to receive unstructured sensory information to create an understanding of life. This simply points to the pragmatic subjectivism of human perception which is susceptible to errors. A recognition of this situation is an affirmation and authentication of the life of realism. This is the reality of being real to the situation's true reality. (Umeh, xiii). Thus, to acknowledge this distinction between the reality of life and human limitation of its understanding is to remain humble to the majesty of truth about human condition. Failure to resonate this in one's memory is to give room to the activation of negativities in existence. In his words:

The attainability of authentic life in the phenomenal world of experience is to be realistically real to the life of experience, its subduing negation is fundamental to the life of negativity because one negates the reality of experiential reality by affirming falsehood, living a life of denial is the authentication of unfulfilled life (xiii).

Following from the above, Umeh points to the fact that the unfulfilled life of the present is the result of the failure to learn from the negative negativities of the past. According to him, the actuality of the negative experience of the past without authentic, honest evaluation is to cement its repetition with more devastating consequences. (xiii) So, on the purpose of life, Umeh has this to say:

Life is geared towards human fulfillment. The fulfillment of life is not replaceable with the accumulation of material "goodies" equitable to monetary acquisition. It is not about the seeming fulfilment of the material needs and wants; it is not the claimingness of the claimed fulfilment. The genesis of any fulfilled life is to realistically attend to the true nature of life. (xiii – xiv).

If according to Umeh, life becomes fulfilled when we attend to the true nature of life, then, the logical questions to ask here is "what is the true nature of life?" In response to this question, Umeh has this, to say: "Life in its nature is multifariously faceted. The various facets of life, with its gradation. Interestingly, the majority of the world population conceives a fulfilled life as a life without want, a life devoid of difficulty, a life in plenty, and a life of attainment of all attainable material needs." (xiv) In a bid to drive home the point that life in its true nature is a collection of

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multidimensional experiences, Umeh makes a comparative allusion between the nature of human life and the nature of a delicious cake. In his words:

comparably, the nature of life is likened to a delicious cake, which is very captivating to the eyes. The odour emanating from it pierces the nosily of the nose, waters the tongues from the deepness of the throat and ignites the fire of want from the elasticity of the belly. The quest for cake, the wish to have a bit of it and its deliciousness can be so intensive that one may no longer recognize that most individual ingredients for the preparation of the delicious cake are in themselves not palatable, and some could be hazardous to human life. (xiv).

In real life, Umeh asserts that just like a delicious cake has unpalatable individual condiments that the proportionate mixture results in a delicious cake so also is the case that all the components of life are equally indispensable in building a unique personality. The true nature of life incorporates all the realism of life. This includes the ups and downs, positive and negative as well as good and bad experiences. Thus, the negational denial of any component of human life or condition is equaled to an effective journey to self-denial and self-alienation. In effect, life is like a rainbow with many shades of colour that gives it its essence. For this reason, life is definable within the context of its flip-flop manifestations. Umeh succinctly captures this rainbow-like description of life as follows:

Any disappointment or negative experience in the life of any human person has some inherent positive contribution to the person's life journey. So, ups and downs in life, the disappointments, happiness, unhappiness, failure, success, etc., are actual necessities in a person's life. So, human condition should not be evaluated solely from the positive sides of life or from negative aspects. All put together, present the total personality of a person. (xv).

Umeh concludes his notion of life by noting that no event in human life lacks a positive effect. The ability to learn from all life experiences is a sign of maturity. Every experience should be educational. There is no experience in life that is devoid of any positive aspect. It is the function of the intellect to glean out the positiveness of any perceived negative experience and its gloomy manifestation. He therefore admonishes that we should take life easy as there is no human condition that is permanent and no bad situation is insurmountable. Every stage in human life is a

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necessary step to human fulfillment and we should be rational enough to understand this fact of life and be ready to take a positive evaluation of all human condition.

### **The Dramatic Nature of Human Life**

A critical look at human life reveals that it is characterized by inherent series of intense events, actions and emotional transition from birth to death. It is characterized by a struggle of meaning, purpose and survival often involving deep emotions like love and joy which mirror dramatic performances. In this sense, "to exist is to act; to act is to be dramatic". This means that the human life is inherently dramatic as persons exist through actions and events that are in constant change as life is in itself a perpetually unpredictable, uncontrollable and unstoppable chain of events. For this reason, life is not just a random event; it is a scripted chain of events in which we are nothing more than actors on the stage of existence. It is inherently a dramatic phenomenon because it forces us to navigate profoundly intense contrasts of joy and sorrow, triumph and setbacks, control and uncertainties. Thus, life is a sequence of events that are regulated by fundamental conditions of existence that all living organisms succumb to and live by. In human life, there are certain constants or uncontrollable conditions which do not respect any individual differences or peculiarity. These are inherent and unavoidable elements of existence that individual(s) cannot directly manage, change or determine. Accepting these factors, the way they are, gives us the internal strength crucial for reducing anxiety and eliminating unnecessary fear as well as building resilience. These uncontrollable conditions of existence include: time, past events, aging process, circumstances of life (genetic makeup, choice of parents, place of birth), uncertainty of life, reality of death, inescapable pain and disappointment, subconscious mind and other people's belief, thoughts and actions. This phase of life is what this paper describes as the drama of life. It is so described because it is a naturally written events that only needs to be acted out by an individual with the pain of simultaneously acting multiple roles (parent, child, sibling, friend, professional and so on). In this play, the actor's (the human being) role is simply to put to action the playwright's stipulated sequence of events without any exception. It is important to note that every step happens in real time as what is done cannot be reversed which raises the stakes and makes every choice intensely consequential. This explains why either we like it or not life will always take its course independent of our wish or what we think. We step into a new unrehearsed script every day managing both our own expectations and the ever-changing external world in the face of unchanging constants of human condition. Accordingly, Umeh says "life is not what you think it is... life is deeper than the deepest of any human thought of condition". It is simply beyond our control as we

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are simply actors in the stage of life. The ancient stoic philosopher Epictetus captures this dramatic nature of life clearly when he writes that:

Remember that you are an actor in a play, which is as the playwright wants it to be: short if he wants it short, long if he wants it long. If he wants you to play a beggar, play even this skillfully, or a cripple, or a public official, or a private citizen. What is yours is to play the assigned part well. But to choose it belongs to someone else (16)

The above quotation points to the fact that the drama of life entails the uncontrollable phase of life that we just are bound to live in submission to the assigned role and stipulation. Any attempt to deviate from this is a consequent denial of the fundamental conditions of living with a disastrous series of consequential events. This simply re-echoes Umeh's submission earlier that life is the expression of the reality of the ontological realism of the present. That is, our life becomes peaceful and meaningful if only we can live in accordance with our assigned realities in terms of the conditionalities of our existence. Thus, trying to force our expectations on life is an invitation to the negativities of the drama of life which throws our life into a series of confusing, perplexing and destructive events. For this reason, Epictetus admonishes that "we should not seek to have events happen as we want them to, but instead want them to happen as they do happen, and our life will go well" (13). This agrees with Umeh's idea that the genesis of any fulfilled life is to realistically attend to the true nature of life. That is, the pursuance of our desires and wants should be in tandem with what fits into the larger picture of our role as actors in the drama of life.

Apart from the uncontrollable phase of life, there is also the other phase of life that falls within the realm of our control. This refers to the factors and behaviours within an individuals' voluntary control that can be managed to maintain health, examine belief systems and improve quality of life. Thus, while we may not have control over the events that determine our existence (the drama of life) we do have control over how we approach them. But, how we approach things is determined by how we are able to distinguish between rational and irrational decision making. Rational decision is the ability to take an informed decision on the phase of life within one's control in line with the principles controlling the uncontrollable phase of life while irrational decision are choices made in contradiction to the natural order of things. Taking irrational decisions or pursuing desires and wants outside the understanding of the two dramatic phases of life is an invitation to existential despair and daily calamities. The idea that life should be stress free, struggle free, devoid of difficulty and filled with material adornments is an irrational, unrealistic and myopic expectation of what life is and should be. This is the type of thinking that puts

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millions of people into crisis of existence as reality usually shows the foolishness of such thinking. The life crisis generated from irrational choices leads to unpalatable drama in life. This is what is referred to here as the life of drama. That is, a life filled with series of frustrating events as a result of irrational choices and actions determined by unrealistic expectations due to lack of understanding of or failure to acknowledge the natural dynamics of existence. Life should be lived from a comprehensive acceptance of the necessary dimensions of life. The sweet and bitter experiences of life give us a complete nature of life as the good and bad, the ups and downs; as well as the desirable and undesirable experiences give us a realistic, rich and humanly fulfilling life. This is because the life of plenty may not appreciate that of scarcity while the healthy life may not understand the value of good health except it taste illness. This roller coaster of life gives it the multifarious flavor that defines its ontological precondition. According to Umeh, life is like a delicious cake prepared from unpalatable ingredients that individually may be hazardous for human consumption. But, when put together in the right proportion bring forth a deliciously edible piece of cake. For this reason, life is a rainbow with numerous colour that defines its multifarious richness. And as such, we need to acknowledge this and be ready to embrace it in its ontological realism. Failure to admit this fact of life is a consequent self-contradiction of being human and a readiness for a life of drama that ends in frustration, depression and despair. It is therefore instructive to know this and have peace!

### **Conclusion**

This paper sets out to reflectively explore the dramatic nature of life within the purview of Umeh's notion of life as espoused in his book *Innermost Philosophical Reflections on the human Condition*. In order to achieve this objective, the paper clarified the concepts of drama and life. It presents Umeh's notion of life. Furthermore, it established the link between drama and life by exploring the two dramatic dimensions of life: the drama of life and the life of drama. It conceptualizes the former as the non-negotiables and constant fact of human life that every human being is necessarily subjected to in existence such as genetic makeup, choice of parent, place of birth, uncertainties of life, emotional roller coaster and so on. It sees the latter as the fallouts of the choices and actions of individuals based on the unrealistic expectations of what life should be. The paper submits that failure to acknowledge and accept the non-negotiable forces of life and make rational choices within the purview of what is in the realm of human control brings consequential series of excruciating pain, frustration and despair. It sees life as a phenomenon of humbling process demanding that we let go of our attachment to control and embrace the uncertainty inherent in life. It argues that embracing the dramatic nature of life rather

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than striving to control its unpredictable plot twists builds resilience, deepens self-awareness and ultimately leads to profound personal growth. It recommends that our choices and actions should be in tandem with rational expectations and the circumference of what is existentially permissible. This is to enthrone peace, tranquility, orderliness, well-being and ultimately meaning and fulfillment in our life. Finally, the paper submits that we acknowledge and embrace the drama of life and learn to avoid the life of drama through taking rationally compliant choices and actions within the circumference of what is existentially permissible.

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## **Critique of Maggi Toplak's Dichotomy of Epistemic Agency and Rational Thought**

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### **Abstract**

This study is a critique of the dichotomy between epistemic agency and rational thinking as developed in the work of Maggi Toplak. For Toplak, epistemic agency is the individual's capacity for reflective control and responsibility over belief formation, while rational thinking is the ability to produce judgments and decisions that conform to normative standards of logic, evidence, and probability. The problem addressed in this paper is the growing tendency in contemporary epistemology championed by Toplak and cognitive science to treat these two notions as sharply separable domains, thereby raising questions about whether such a dichotomy accurately reflects the structure of human cognition. The study aims to critically evaluate this distinction and to determine whether epistemic agency and rational thinking can be meaningfully separated without conceptual loss. Its objectives include clarifying both concepts, analyzing the basis of their proposed dichotomy, identifying its theoretical weaknesses, and advancing a more coherent alternative framework. Using evaluative and analytic methods of philosophical research, the study finds that the strict separation between epistemic

agency and rational thinking is conceptually problematic. It is shown that rational thinking inherently involves reflective control, while epistemic agency presupposes responsiveness to normative standards of reasoning. As such, the two are not independent but deeply interrelated aspects of a unified cognitive process. The analysis further demonstrates that maintaining a rigid dichotomy undermines epistemic responsibility, neglects the role of intellectual virtues, and misrepresents cognition as fragmented rather than integrated. The study concludes that epistemic agency and rational thinking are best understood as mutually reinforcing dimensions of human reasoning. It therefore proposes an integrated model that emphasizes their interdependence, offering a more philosophically robust account of belief formation and cognitive evaluation.

**Keywords:** Magi Toplak, Epistemic Agency, Rational Thought, Dichotomy

### **Introduction**

Contemporary debates in epistemology and cognitive science have increasingly drawn attention to how human beings form beliefs and make judgments. One central issue in these discussions is whether rational thinking alone is sufficient for good reasoning, or whether a distinct form of control, often called epistemic agency, is also required. This paper is motivated by the need to critically examine the growing tendency, especially in the work of Magi Toplak, to sharply separate epistemic agency from rational thinking. While this distinction aims to clarify different aspects of cognition, it raises an important concern: does such a division misrepresent how reasoning actually works? The motivation of this study, therefore, is to assess whether this dichotomy is philosophically sound or whether it unnecessarily fragments what should be understood as a unified cognitive process.

To properly address this issue, it is important to clarify what is meant by epistemic agency and rational thinking. Epistemic agency generally refers to a person's capacity to take responsibility for their beliefs through reflection, evaluation, and deliberate control. Rational thinking, on the other hand, is often described in terms of logical reasoning, evidence evaluation, and adherence to normative standards. However, many scholars argue that these two are closely connected rather than separate. For instance, Keith E. Stanovich notes that "rationality is not merely about computational ability but also about the disposition to reflect and override automatic responses" (p. 45). This suggests that rational thinking already involves elements of agency, such as reflection and control.

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This paper argues that the distinction between epistemic agency and rational thinking is overstated. Rather than being separate, the two are deeply interconnected aspects of human cognition. By critically examining Toplak's position, this study aims to show that a more unified account provides a better explanation of how individuals think, reason, and take responsibility for their beliefs.

### **Toplak Conception of Epistemic Agency**

In the work of Maggi Toplak, epistemic agency refers to the capacity of individuals to take an active, reflective role in the formation, evaluation, and regulation of their beliefs. It emphasizes that human cognition is not merely a passive reception of information or an automatic processing of stimuli, but involves deliberate control, self-awareness, and responsibility. Toplak develops this concept within the broader context of cognitive psychology, particularly in response to dual-process theories that distinguish between fast, automatic thinking and slower, reflective thinking.

At its core, epistemic agency highlights the idea that individuals can intervene in their own thinking processes. Rather than simply accepting the outputs of intuitive or automatic cognition, agents are capable of pausing, reflecting, and revising their beliefs when necessary. As Toplak explains, "epistemic agency involves the capacity to decouple from immediate intuitions and engage in reflective processing" (p. 78). This notion of "decoupling" is central to her account, as it captures the ability to step back from initial responses and subject them to critical scrutiny.

A key feature of epistemic agency in Toplak's framework is cognitive control. This includes the ability to inhibit misleading intuitions, sustain attention, and apply relevant rules or standards when evaluating evidence. Epistemic agents are not simply thinkers; they are regulators of their own cognition. In this regard, Toplak notes that "the exercise of epistemic agency requires the deployment of cognitive resources that enable monitoring and override of default responses" (p.83). This means that agency is closely tied to executive functions such as working memory and attentional control, which allow individuals to manage complex reasoning tasks.

Another important dimension of epistemic agency is responsibility. For Toplak, agents are accountable for their beliefs to the extent that they can control and evaluate them. This introduces a normative element into her account, suggesting that good thinking is not just about arriving at correct conclusions, but about how those conclusions are formed. She emphasizes that "epistemic agency entails responsibility for belief because agents have the capacity to reflect on and revise their cognitive outputs"

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(p.91). Thus, epistemic agency connects psychological processes with epistemological concerns about justification and accountability.

Toplak also links epistemic agency to dispositions or thinking styles. Individuals differ in their willingness to engage reflective processes, and these differences affect how effectively they exercise epistemic agency. Some people are more inclined to question their initial judgments, seek additional evidence, and consider alternative perspectives. This dispositional aspect is captured in her claim that “individual differences in reflective disposition are central to the expression of epistemic agency” (95). In this sense, epistemic agency is not only a capacity but also a tendency that varies across individuals.

Consequently, one can say that epistemic agency in Toplak’s account is a multifaceted concept that includes reflective control, cognitive regulation, responsibility, and dispositional openness. It portrays human thinkers as active participants in their own cognitive lives, capable of monitoring and improving their reasoning processes. By emphasizing these features, Toplak provides a framework for understanding how individuals can take ownership of their beliefs and strive toward better epistemic practices.

### **Toplak on Rational Thinking**

Rational thinking for Toplak is understood as a form of cognition that adheres to normative standards of logic, probability, and evidence-based reasoning. It is not merely about intelligence in the traditional sense, but about the quality of thought processes that guide judgment and decision-making. Toplak situates rational thinking within cognitive psychology, particularly in relation to how individuals process information, evaluate evidence, and arrive at conclusions under conditions of uncertainty.

At the foundation of Toplak’s account is the idea that rational thinking involves conformity to formal and informal norms of reasoning. These norms include principles of deductive logic, probabilistic reasoning, and sound judgment. According to Toplak, “rational thinking is defined by the extent to which beliefs and decisions align with normative models of inference” (p. 42). This definition emphasizes that rationality is not simply descriptive of how people think, but evaluative of how well their thinking measures up to established standards.

A central feature of rational thinking in Toplak’s framework is its reliance on analytic processing. This type of thinking is typically slow, deliberate, and effortful, in contrast to fast and automatic intuitive responses. Analytic processing allows individuals to engage in complex reasoning, detect errors, and apply abstract rules. As

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Toplak explains, “analytic thinking enables the individual to go beyond surface features and apply rule-based processing to arrive at more accurate judgments” (p.47). This highlights the role of cognitive effort and structured reasoning in achieving rational outcomes.

Toplak also stresses the importance of probabilistic reasoning as a key component of rational thinking. Many real-world decisions involve uncertainty, and rational thinkers must be able to assess likelihoods, weigh evidence, and update beliefs accordingly. She notes that “a hallmark of rational thought is the proper calibration of belief in accordance with probabilistic evidence” (p. 53). This means that rational thinking requires sensitivity to degrees of belief rather than simple true-or-false judgments.

Another important aspect of Toplak’s view is the distinction between intelligence and rationality. She argues that high intelligence does not necessarily guarantee rational thinking, as individuals may still fall prey to cognitive biases and reasoning errors. In her words, “intelligence tests do not fully capture rational thinking, particularly in situations involving bias and judgment under uncertainty” (p.60). This distinction has led to the development of measures such as the “rationality quotient,” which aim to assess how well individuals think in real-world contexts.

Furthermore, Toplak highlights the role of cognitive biases in undermining rational thinking. Biases such as confirmation bias, framing effects, and overconfidence can distort judgment and lead to systematic errors. Rational thinking, therefore, involves not only the application of correct rules but also the ability to avoid or correct these biases. As she observes, “failures of rationality often arise from predictable cognitive biases that interfere with normative reasoning” (p.66). This underscores the need for vigilance and corrective strategies in reasoning processes.

Toplak’s account presents rational thinking as norm-governed, analytic, probabilistic, and sensitive to bias. It is a form of cognition that aspires to meet objective standards of good reasoning, even in the face of complexity and uncertainty. By emphasizing these features, Toplak provides a robust framework for evaluating the quality of human thought and understanding the conditions under which reasoning succeeds or fails.

### **The Dichotomy Between Epistemic Agency and Rational Thinking**

The distinction between epistemic agency and rational thinking has become a central theme in contemporary debates within epistemology and cognitive science. In the work of Maggi Toplak, this distinction is often presented as a conceptual separation

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between two dimensions of human cognition: the capacity for reflective control over belief (epistemic agency) and the ability to conform to normative standards of reasoning (rational thinking). The dichotomy suggests that an individual may exhibit one without necessarily possessing the other, thereby introducing a layered understanding of cognitive evaluation.

At the heart of this dichotomy is the claim that rational thinking can be assessed independently of the agent's active involvement in the reasoning process. That is, a person may arrive at a normatively correct answer through automatic or intuitive processes without engaging in reflective control. Conversely, an individual may actively reflect on their beliefs yet still fail to meet normative standards of reasoning. As Toplak explains, "performance on rational thinking tasks does not always reflect the degree of reflective engagement or agency involved in arriving at a response" (p. 102). This highlights a perceived gap between outcome-based measures of rationality and process-based accounts of agency.

This separation is further reinforced by dual-process theories of cognition, which distinguish between fast, automatic processes (often labeled System 1) and slow, deliberative processes (System 2). Within this framework, rational thinking is frequently associated with correct outputs, while epistemic agency is linked to the deliberate engagement of analytic processes. Daniel Kahneman captures this distinction by noting that "System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control" (20). By contrast, reflective thinking involves effortful control, which aligns more closely with the notion of epistemic agency.

Moreover, the dichotomy gains support from empirical research showing that individuals can produce normatively correct answers without conscious deliberation, and, conversely, can engage in extended reflection yet arrive at incorrect conclusions. Keith E. Stanovich argues that "there is a dissociation between the ability to give the normative response and the tendency to engage in reflective processing" (p.85). This dissociation forms a key empirical basis for distinguishing rational thinking from epistemic agency, suggesting that the two operate along different cognitive dimensions.

Another dimension of this dichotomy lies in its normative implications. Rational thinking is often evaluated in terms of adherence to formal standards such as logic and probability theory, whereas epistemic agency is assessed in terms of responsibility, control, and intellectual virtue. This creates a division between outcome-oriented and process-oriented evaluations of cognition. As John Greco observes, "epistemic evaluations can focus either on the reliability of cognitive processes or on the responsibility of the agent in managing those processes" (p. 145). The dichotomy thus

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reflects a broader tension between externalist and internalist approaches in epistemology.

However, the separation is not merely theoretical; it also has practical implications for how reasoning is assessed and cultivated. In educational and psychological contexts, measures of rational thinking often prioritize correct answers, while assessments of epistemic agency emphasize reflective dispositions and metacognitive awareness. This divergence raises questions about what it means to be a good thinker and whether cognitive success should be defined primarily by outcomes or by the quality of the reasoning process. The dichotomy between epistemic agency and rational thinking, as articulated by Toplak and supported by cognitive and philosophical literature, rests on a distinction between reflective control and normative correctness. It is grounded in dual-process theories, empirical dissociations, and differing evaluative standards. While this framework provides a nuanced way of analyzing cognition, it also introduces a conceptual divide that invites further philosophical scrutiny.

### **Critique of Toplak's Dichotomy**

A central weakness in Maggi Toplak's dichotomy between epistemic agency and rational thinking lies in its tendency to artificially separate what are, in practice, deeply interwoven dimensions of cognition. By construing rational thinking primarily in terms of conformity to normative standards and epistemic agency as reflective control over belief, the distinction risks reifying a division that is better understood as functional integration. Contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science increasingly reject sharp modular separations in favor of interactionist models. For instance, Andy Clark argues that cognition is "not a sequence of discrete inner operations but a temporally extended process involving continuous feedback between control and content" (p. 112). This suggests that the evaluative standards of rationality and the agent's reflective interventions are co-constitutive rather than separable. If cognitive processes are dynamically integrated, then isolating epistemic agency from rational thinking misrepresents the architecture of human reasoning.

A further problem concerns the implicit reduction of rational thinking to outcome-based correctness, which neglects the normative significance of the agent's epistemic conduct. By allowing for the possibility that one can be rational without exercising agency, Toplak's dichotomy undermines the evaluative framework central to much of contemporary epistemology. Ernest Sosa insists that "apt belief is creditable to the agent's competence, not merely the product of accidental correctness" (p.23). This

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view challenges any account that detaches rational success from the agent's active contribution. Similarly, Linda Zagzebski maintains that "epistemic evaluation is inseparable from the qualities of the agent who forms the belief" (p. 167). These perspectives expose a fundamental limitation in Toplak's framework: by separating rationality from agency, it becomes difficult to explain why certain beliefs are not only correct but also epistemically praiseworthy.

The dichotomy also faces difficulties from the standpoint of phenomenology and the lived experience of reasoning. Human deliberation does not typically present itself as a split between mechanical correctness and reflective control; rather, it is experienced as a unified activity in which evaluation and self-regulation occur simultaneously. Shaun Gallagher captures this point by noting that "reflective awareness is not an external add-on to cognition but is integrated into the very structure of conscious thought" (p.89). This insight undermines the idea that epistemic agency operates as a separate layer imposed upon otherwise independent rational processes. In a similar vein, Evan Thompson argues that "cognitive processes are inherently self-organizing and involve ongoing regulation by the organism" (p.54). Such accounts reinforce the view that agency is not detachable from rationality but is constitutive of it.

Another line of critique emerges from social epistemology, which emphasizes the communal and dialogical dimensions of reasoning. Toplak's dichotomy is largely individualistic, focusing on internal cognitive processes while neglecting the social contexts in which beliefs are formed and evaluated. Alvin Goldman observes that "justification often depends on socially distributed processes that extend beyond the individual thinker" (p. 271). This broader perspective complicates the separation between agency and rationality, as both are shaped by interactions with others, institutional norms, and shared practices. Likewise, Miranda Fricker emphasizes that "our epistemic practices are deeply embedded in social relations that affect both our credibility and our interpretive capacities" (p.1). These considerations suggest that any rigid dichotomy fails to account for the socially embedded nature of human cognition.

Finally, the dichotomy risks generating a fragmented account of epistemic responsibility. If rational thinking can occur without agency, then individuals may be deemed cognitively successful without being epistemically responsible, and vice versa. This creates a tension within normative epistemology, which typically seeks to align correctness with responsibility. Hilary Kornblith argues that "epistemic norms are grounded in the functioning of our cognitive capacities as integrated systems" (p.134). This integrated view resists any attempt to divide cognition into independent domains of agency and rationality. Instead, it supports the conclusion that responsible belief

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formation requires both accurate reasoning and active engagement, not as separate faculties but as mutually reinforcing aspects of a single process.

### **Conceptual Overlap Between Epistemic Agency and Rational Thinking**

A careful analysis of the relationship between epistemic agency and rational thinking reveals a significant degree of conceptual overlap, contrary to the sharp distinction proposed by Maggi Toplak. At a foundational level, both concepts are concerned with the regulation and evaluation of belief, and both presuppose the capacity of the subject to respond appropriately to reasons. The idea that rational thinking can be cleanly separated from epistemic agency becomes difficult to sustain once one considers that rational evaluation itself often requires reflective endorsement. As Robert Audi observes, “rational belief is not merely a matter of causal production but of appropriate responsiveness to reasons” (p. 41). This responsiveness already implies a form of agency, since it involves the subject’s capacity to assess and act upon justificatory considerations rather than passively registering them.

This overlap becomes even more evident when one examines the role of deliberation in both epistemic agency and rational thinking. Deliberation is not simply a mechanical process of applying rules; it involves active judgment, self-monitoring, and the capacity to revise one’s beliefs in light of new evidence. Thomas Kelly captures this point by arguing that “to reason well is, in part, to exercise one’s capacity to critically assess one’s own beliefs and the grounds on which they rest” (p. 67). Such critical assessment is precisely what is meant by epistemic agency. Thus, rational thinking, properly understood, cannot be divorced from the agent’s active participation in evaluating reasons, since the very act of reasoning well presupposes reflective control.

Furthermore, the overlap between these concepts is reinforced by contemporary accounts of metacognition, which emphasize the importance of thinking about one’s own thinking. Metacognitive processes, such as monitoring, error detection, and confidence calibration, are central to both rational thinking and epistemic agency. Peter Carruthers notes that “human reasoning is deeply dependent on metacognitive capacities that allow individuals to evaluate and regulate their own cognitive processes” (p.102). These capacities are not external to rational thinking; they are integral to its proper functioning. At the same time, they are clear expressions of epistemic agency, since they involve the subject’s ability to take a reflective stance toward their own cognition.

The conceptual overlap is also evident in normative epistemology, where the evaluation of belief is inseparable from considerations of intellectual responsibility.

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Rational thinking is typically assessed in terms of whether beliefs are justified, coherent, and responsive to evidence. However, these criteria implicitly presuppose that the agent has exercised a certain level of control and care in forming those beliefs. Lorraine Code argues that “knowing well requires the responsible management of one’s cognitive resources and epistemic commitments” (p.152). This notion of responsible management aligns directly with the idea of epistemic agency, indicating that rationality is not merely about correct outcomes but about the quality of the agent’s engagement with evidence and reasons.

In addition, the overlap can be seen in discussions of intellectual virtue, where traits such as open-mindedness, intellectual humility, and conscientiousness are treated as both conditions for rational thinking and expressions of epistemic agency. Jason Baehr emphasizes that “intellectual virtues are stable dispositions that guide individuals in the responsible pursuit of truth” (p.58). These virtues operate at the intersection of agency and rationality: they shape how individuals reason while also reflecting their active commitment to good epistemic practices. It becomes difficult, therefore, to assign such virtues exclusively to either domain without distorting their role in cognition.

Finally, the interdependence of epistemic agency and rational thinking is highlighted by the fact that failures in one domain often entail failures in the other. Poor reasoning is frequently linked to a lack of reflective oversight, while deficiencies in agency, such as intellectual laziness or dogmatism, manifest as irrational belief formation. Harvey Siegel underscores this connection by stating that “rationality requires not only the ability to reason well but also the disposition to do so in a self-critical and reflective manner” (p.23). This dual requirement shows that rational thinking and epistemic agency are mutually reinforcing rather than independent capacities.

Hence, the conceptual overlap between epistemic agency and rational thinking is substantial and philosophically significant. Both involve responsiveness to reasons, reflective evaluation, metacognitive regulation, and intellectual responsibility. Attempts to sharply distinguish them risk overlooking their deep interdependence and the unified nature of human cognition. A more adequate account, therefore, recognizes that rational thinking is, in many respects, an expression of epistemic agency in action.

### **Toward an Integrated Model**

A more adequate response to the limitations in Maggi Toplak’s dichotomy is the development of an integrated model in which epistemic agency and rational thinking are understood as mutually constitutive aspects of a single cognitive framework. Rather

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than treating them as separable domains, this approach views rational evaluation and reflective control as dynamically intertwined processes that jointly contribute to responsible belief formation. Such a model aligns with broader trends in contemporary epistemology and cognitive science, which emphasize the unity of cognition and the active role of the subject in reasoning.

At the core of this integrated model is the idea that rational thinking inherently involves the exercise of agency. To evaluate evidence, apply logical rules, or update beliefs in light of new information requires more than mechanical processing; it presupposes the agent's capacity to attend, reflect, and regulate cognitive activity. As John McDowell argues, "our responsiveness to reasons is itself an expression of our rational capacities as active thinkers" (p.88). This insight dissolves the sharp boundary between rationality and agency by showing that the very act of reasoning well is already a manifestation of epistemic agency.

An integrated model also highlights the role of self-regulation and metacognition as central to both domains. Cognitive processes such as monitoring one's reasoning, detecting errors, and revising beliefs are not external additions to rational thinking but essential components of it. Alison Gopnik underscores this point by noting that "human cognition is characterized by a capacity for self-directed learning and revision in light of evidence" (p.134). This capacity reflects the fusion of rational evaluation and agentive control, as individuals actively shape their cognitive trajectories through reflective engagement.

Furthermore, the integrated model restores the normative dimension of epistemology by reconnecting correctness with responsibility. Rational beliefs are not merely those that conform to abstract standards but those that are formed through the agent's proper exercise of cognitive capacities. Tyler Burge emphasizes that "rationality involves a commitment to norms that govern both belief and the processes by which beliefs are formed" (p.201). This commitment is inherently agentive, as it requires individuals to take ownership of their reasoning practices and to align them with epistemic standards.

In addition, the integrated approach accommodates the role of intellectual virtues in shaping good reasoning. Traits such as open-mindedness, intellectual courage, and carefulness are not merely accessories to rational thinking but integral to its proper functioning. Quassim Cassam observes that "the quality of our thinking is deeply influenced by our intellectual character, including both virtues and vices" (p.76). These character traits operate at the intersection of agency and rationality, guiding how individuals engage with evidence, evaluate arguments, and revise beliefs.

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Finally, an integrated model provides a more coherent framework for practical application, particularly in education and cognitive development. Instead of treating rational accuracy and reflective control as separate goals, it encourages a holistic approach that cultivates both simultaneously. This perspective recognizes that effective reasoning depends on the interplay between correct judgment and active engagement, and that improvements in one domain often reinforce the other. Moving toward an integrated model resolves the tensions inherent in Toplak's dichotomy by presenting epistemic agency and rational thinking as inseparable aspects of human cognition. By emphasizing their interdependence, this approach offers a more comprehensive and philosophically robust account of how individuals think, reason, and take responsibility for their beliefs.

### **Conclusion**

This study has critically examined the distinction between epistemic agency and rational thinking as articulated by Maggi Toplak, with the aim of determining whether the proposed dichotomy can be sustained. Through careful conceptual analysis and engagement with contemporary epistemological and cognitive theories, it has been shown that the separation between these two domains is, at best, overstated and, at worst, philosophically misleading. While Toplak's framework succeeds in drawing attention to important dimensions of human cognition, namely, reflective control and normative evaluation, it ultimately fails to justify a strict division between them.

The analysis has demonstrated that epistemic agency and rational thinking are deeply interconnected. The capacity to reason well is not merely a matter of producing correct outcomes according to formal standards; it also involves the active participation of the subject in evaluating, regulating, and revising beliefs. Likewise, the exercise of epistemic agency is not an independent layer imposed upon cognition but is embedded within the very processes that constitute rational thought. Attempts to isolate one from the other risk fragmenting the unity of cognitive life and obscuring the mechanisms through which responsible belief formation occurs.

Furthermore, the critique has highlighted several problems associated with maintaining a strict dichotomy, including the weakening of epistemic responsibility, the neglect of intellectual virtues, and the misrepresentation of cognition as modular rather than integrated. In response, the paper has advanced an alternative framework that emphasizes the interdependence of agency and rationality. This integrated model provides a more coherent account of human reasoning, one that accommodates both the normative standards of rational evaluation and the agent's role in shaping cognitive

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outcomes. Therefore, a proper understanding of human cognition requires moving beyond rigid dichotomies toward a unified perspective in which epistemic agency and rational thinking are seen as mutually reinforcing aspects of a single process. Such an approach not only offers greater philosophical clarity but also has important implications for how rationality is evaluated and cultivated in both theoretical and practical contexts.

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## **Perception of Akwa Ibom State Government Employee Engagement and Attitude Towards Job Delivery**

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### **Abstract**

Every organization has goals and mission that govern its operations which include an effective job delivery system. The establishment of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service is not left out hence the need for this study – Perception of the Akwa Ibom State Employee Engagement and Attitude towards Job Delivery. The population of this study comprised of residents of Uyo. The sample was drawn from the four clans making up Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State through the survey research method using the instrument of questionnaire. Aims of this study include: to ascertain perception of AKSG Employee Engagement and attitude to job delivery, find out whether employees of AKSG understand the demands of their jobs, find out the level of cordiality encountered with AKSG employees in the course of job delivery, ascertain if the attitudes of AKSG employees encourage effective job delivery and find out if the attitude of AKSG employees impedes their job delivery. Findings of this study indicate that some AKSG employees attitudes repels effective job delivery thus leading to bureaucratic bottlenecks, drudgery, communication gaps, failed contracts, among others. It was also observed that there is a minimal understanding of the job functions of AKSG employees in the lower cadre of the Civil Service which is a major factor leading to ineffective job delivery. The study recommends a rejig of the AKSG Civil Service as well as quarterly training of employees to make way for organizational growth and development.

**Keywords:** Perception, Employee, Engagement, Job Delivery.

## **Introduction**

The necessity of taking public views into account has become very important for any organization that intends to survive in the face of many competitors. A situation where publics' perception are ignored or misjudged can pose detrimental moves for an organization. Thoughts influence behavior and plays a vital role in shaping events; hence the need for policy makers and managers of organizations to pay significant attention to information policy and respond adequately to major concerns. Public perception is generally any type of information obtained from an opinion survey on any specific issue of concern. Perception gathered at one point in time from an individual is not necessarily representative of the views of that same individual at other times or given a different context. Perception therefore involves an understanding of a given context relatively in certain ways as the individual chooses to see it which is often influenced by their social and cultural environments which influences their choices. Through social interactions opinions are developed, behaviors are conditioned and shaped and are prone to modifications by the views of others.

Looking at this study- Perception of the Akwa Ibom State Employee Engagement and Attitude towards Job Delivery, job delivery is an indicator of how well an employee can carry out his tasks and obligations. It is one of the most crucial factors in achieving organizational goals. Productive employees can help organizations attain laid down goals. Employee attitude is the motivation the employee brings into the workspace which could be positive or negative which is displayed towards individual job duties, co-employees or management, products or services. It is an expression of one's feeling about something either positive or negative. At the workplace, employees express their feelings which in turn influence their approach towards work. Attitude has a direct impact on an employees' attitude to work.

## **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study include to:

1. Find out the modalities of employee engagements in AKSG Civil Service;
2. Ascertain the perception of AKSG employees engagements;
3. Find out whether employees of the AKSG understand the demands of their jobs;
4. Identify factors that influences AKSG employees attitude to work;
5. Ascertain ways the attitudes of AKSG employees encourages effective job delivery; and
6. Identify ways the attitudes of AKSG employees impedes effective job delivery.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is of significance in several ways. It will help the government to determine the influence of leadership on job delivery, ascertain the productivity ratio of civil servants, determine the effectiveness of information flow across the different ranks of the civil service and devise successful communication strategies that will strengthen the organization and move it forward.

### **Perception**

According to Charlotte Burn (2010), Perception is the process by which individuals register and evaluate information detected from the internal or external environment, consciously or unconsciously. According to the author, for a stimulus to be perceived, information about it must first be detected and then undergo processing. An important aspect of perception is that the resulting representation of reality differs from reality itself; individuals sample information, and then form representations about the world and their situation in it. Perception is a selective process; individuals do not perceive everything around them but attend only to a part of the stimuli around them. They selectively attend to their environment based on their interests, needs, and motives. Perception is not merely a collection of present sensations and memory traces of past experiences of individuals but a meaningful organization of past and present knowledge. This implies that present information can be meaningfully understood only when are integrated with the past but given interpretation in terms of present or future consequences. Also, changes or differences in the environment are perceived quickly but are considerably influenced by individual's thoughts, motives, and interests, among others.

### **Employee Engagement and Job Delivery**

According Anu Dandona (2016) Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values Organizations have several ways of initiating employee engagement. Employee engagement is strongly influenced by the existing climate in an organization which culminates into their perception towards work. Specific quality of work influences individual's involvement in their jobs. Yihan Gao (2023) in a research on "Employee Engagement of Delivery Riders in the Background of Gig Economy: Study on the Relationship between Psychological Contract, Perceived Organizational Support and Job Performance", found a significant positive correlation between employee engagement and psychological contract, perceived organizational support, and job performance. Therefore, platform enterprises should pay attention to the psychological demands of

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delivery person, strengthen the perceived organizational support of platform enterprises to external selling riders, and optimize the performance appraisal system of takeout riders, so as to improve the employee engagement of takeout riders.

Employee engagement was first introduced by the concept of “personal engagement” proposed by William Kahn in 1990. Looking at it from three dimensions-body, cognition and emotion, he noted that an employee’s cognition is his or her ability to recognize their work role and work tasks while emotion refers to the emotional sensitivity of employees in their daily work. Action on the other hand refers to the physical input of employees in daily work. As an important driving force, employee engagement is an important determinant of organizational profit and growth. Given a good working environment, the employees have a sense of ownership in the organization and the sense of belonging. Employee engagement presents a situation where employees identify with their organizational roles and are actively performing their jobs resulting in a high level of commitment to the job. Employees are engaged both in work and by the organization. Work engagement represents the level of effort and investment of employees while organization engagement refers to the strength of employees' sense of identity and sense of belonging to the organization.

Job delivery is the ability to produce a specific and desired effect on an assigned task. It also has to do with getting the right things done. The Akwa Ibom State Civil Service constitutes a workforce with the actual aim of delivering services to the customer/clients or the general public. Nazyar, Karim, Mohd Hamid, Shaso Hemin, Irza Samah, (2025) note that job performance is a significant dependent variable that is directly connected to employee engagement. Employees who are engaged tend to do better on the job, while disengaged people are more likely to underperform. To ensure that different organizational, units do not work at cross-purpose, coordination will have to be ensured through communication. The performance will have to be appraised and controlled so that the tasks are performed in a sequence and according to a schedule, Azhar Kazmi (2008, p. 371). According to Victor Barinua & Kotnom Godwin (2022), there are several dimensions of service or job delivery which includes tangibles - the appearance of the company representatives, facilities, materials and equipment as well as communication materials, reliability – reliability and consistence of service facilities, goods and staff , and responsiveness – the speed and timeliness of service delivery. An organization that harnesses all these and more will possess workers with improved performance and job satisfaction.

Organizational success is dependent on employee and job delivery. As an important indicator to measure work effectiveness, performance could be seen as a

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collection of several goal-oriented behavior geared at producing work results. John Bernardin, Stephanie Thomason, Ronald Buckley & Jeffery Kane (2016) believe that the job performance of employees should be measured by the work results. Also, Murphy et al. believes that job performance is a series of work behaviors of employees in the organization. From a behavioral perspective, Campbell sees job performance as focusing on the process by which employees achieve their organizational goals.

In another study by Jafaru Aliyu & Sani Bello (2024) on the “Influence of Job Satisfaction as Correlates of Employee Performance for Effective Services Delivery among Library Staff in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto”, the findings of the study revealed that reasonable salary package, timely promotion and career development have a significant influence on job satisfaction and further recommended, among other things, that employers always consider the salary and welfare of their employees, university management should not hesitate to promote punctual staff members who are due for promotion, and career development such as attending seminars, conferences, and workshops will motivate library personnel and enable them to improve their skills for effective service delivery. The researchers concluded that job satisfaction is a critical predictor of employees’ performance, and the library should prioritize strategies to enhance job satisfaction so as to improve performance outcomes.

The efficiency of job performance is predicated on a number of factors. Onur Ilkoz, (2024) maintained that attending conferences and workshops to acquire skills, timely promotion, and career advancement are also essential for maintaining high-performance levels by employees. Rohani Salleh & Mumtaz Memon (2023) asserted that job satisfaction and employee performance are essential tools for enhancing organizational performance over time in order to accomplish strategic objectives.

In a related study on “Employee Attitude on Job Performance: Assessing its Upshots in a Selected Technical University in Ghana” by Joseph Owusu, Gabriel Dapaah, Belinda Livingston, & Agnes Awasu (2004), the study measured certain variables for the purpose of achieving the study objective against how these influence employee productivity, and the study concluded that employee involvement and engagement, Job satisfaction, lateness to work, and employee absenteeism have a significant effect on job performance. Nonetheless, the study also discovered that organisational commitment, dispositional personality causes and cultural causes, intrinsic job factors and organizational factors have insignificant effects on employee productivity. The study concludes that an employee’s attitude partially predicts employee performance. The study recommends that management motivate employees to improve their work productivity.

## **Employee Attitude**

An attitude is an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of the environment. It is a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object, (Del Hawkins, Roger Best & Kenneth Coney, 2004). This means that our thinking, feelings and actions towards our environment is displayed in our attitudes. Attitudes are formed from beliefs, activities, individual values, egos, influences, among others. In recent times, the importance of employees and their attitudes towards job delivery is receiving rapt attention especially with the current climatic changes and intense competitions witnessed in several organizations. Managers of organizations have come to terms with the worth of employees in their workspaces as the most valuable assets, hence the need to understand the employees and their dispositions. Good, satisfied, involved and committed people are very much required. Nothing can be accompanied without them and nothing can replace the place of intellectual capital (Enrico Mendoza, 2019).

The extent to which an employee enjoys or values their work and workplace is demonstrated in their attitude. An attitude is therefore the general disposition of an individual which is targeted towards a certain phenomenon. Employee attitude is the positive or negative display of an instinct toward duties, services, products, or the overall workplace which all together affects the behavior and perception of an individual. When an employee demonstrates job satisfaction, commitment and involvement in the organization, this is made obvious through his attitude.

According to Thriveni, P. Benedicta Linus, & D', Souza (2024) maintain that Work attitude realties to how you feel about your work and your approach towards work. Hence, work attitude behaviour is intangible attitude helps a person to know his person towards his work. The positive attitudes at work are a subconscious transfer of feelings. They further noted that satisfied workers are creative and innovative. The factors that contribute to positive morale and attitude would also lead to a higher degree of workplace happiness. It is therefore important to note that given the potential downside of having an unhappy client, it is critical that organizations deal with negative experience and attitudes properly, (Philip Kotler & Kevin Keller, 2009).

## **Theoretical Framework**

The Industrial Humanism theory supports this study propounded William g. Scott in 1968. Scott set out values associated with industrial humanism to include:

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- i. That the dignity of the individual plus the need of protecting and cultivating personality on an equal rather than hierarchical basis;
  - ii. That a steady trend in the human condition towards the perfectibility of the individual;
  - iii. That organizational gains are basically the gains of people in them, and the benefits flowing from these gains be distributed as rapidly as possible to those responsible for them;
  - iv. That those in organizations should, in the last analysis, give their consent to those who make policy and establish controls; and,
  - v. That change in organization should be the result of full awareness of alternatives, and consensus by participants.

This theory stresses the need for motivating employees of Akwa Ibom State Government to increase productivity. It further recognizes the need for employee's personal growth which in turn will lead to organizational productivity.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopted the survey research method. The population of the study is residents of Uyo metropolis. According to the 2025 projected population figure by the National Population Commission, the population of Uyo is estimated at 413, 381. This therefore constitutes the population for the study. To select a representative sample from the population of the study, the Taro Yamane (1967) formula was used.

### **Research Design**

The method for generating data for this study was survey. Surveys of public perception uses standardized quantitative survey methods to generate answers to straightforward questions put on face-to-face on copies of questionnaires among employees of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. Open-ended questions were designed to generate responses from respondents devoid of biases.

### **Population of the study**

Population refers to the entire group of individuals, events or objects that exhibits a common feature or character. In this study, the population comprises of residents of Uyo. According to the 2023 projected population obtained from the National Population Commission office in Uyo, there are 1,329,000 residents in Uyo which automatically form the population for this study.

### Sample Size/Sampling Procedure

The sample size for this study was 400, calculated using Taro Yamane's formula with a confidence level of 95%. The sampling procedure adopted for this study was the multi-stage sampling technique where the proportional stratified sampling was used to delineate residents of Uyo by the four major clans making up the area; they include: Etoi, Oku, Ikono, and Offot. Due to the absence of a detailed population breakdown per clan, the researcher assigned estimated figures based on geographic spread and settlement density. Using the proportionate allocation formula, Uyo residents were divided into strata as seen below:

**Table 1:** Uyo LGA by clans

S/N	Clans	Number or Residents Drawn From Each Clan	Sample Size
1	Etoi	334,580	101
2	Oku	330,000	99
3	Ikono	312,238	94
4	Offot	352,182	96
	TOTAL	1,329,000	400

Data from Table 1 showing distribution of Uyo residents by clans.

Subsequently, the researcher adopted the purposive sampling technique to draw a sample for the study. The use of purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select participants who would provide relevant information for the study. Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire administered on the respondents, 386 copies were retrieved and found fit for the analysis of data for the study.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 2:** Modalities of employee engagements in AKS Civil Service

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Career development/progression	54	14
Target setting	21	5
Performance appraisal	20	5
Participation in decision-making	28	7
Prompt salaries/allowances	68	18
Incentives/recognition programmes	24	6

Employee empowerment	42	11
Communication and feedback culture	36	9
Work environment and wellbeing	32	8
Organizational culture and values	18	5
Leadership styles	11	3
Supervisor support and mentoring	10	3
Job design and autonomy	22	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data from Table 2 above shows the different modalities of employee engagements in AKS Civil Service. It is clearly shown that prompt salaries and allowances play a key role in employee engagement.

**Table 3:** Perception of AKS employee engagements

<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Permanent and pensionable	32	8
Red tape/ rigid procedures	22	6
It is honourable	16	4
Civil service is about serving the people	15	4
It gives respect and dignity in the society	10	3
Poor service delivery	44	11
Recruitment based on "who you know", not qualification	16	4
Absence of the use of technology	10	3
Absenteeism in some offices	28	7
No flexibility/creativity	42	11
Political interference in appointments	22	6
Civil service is nation-building	21	5
Nepotism in recruitment	38	10
Bribery for services	22	6
Overworked/underpayment	48	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 shows several perceptions of the Akwa as regards to employee engagements. Data here reveals that 48 (12%) of the respondents perceive the employee engagement of the AKS Civil Service as overworked/underpayment.

**Table 4:** Responses to whether the civil servants understand the demands of their jobs

Options	Frequency	Percentage
They understand the demands of service delivery and efficiency	63	16
They are detached from the demands of their work	70	18
It depends on training and exposure	22	6
Irregular feedbacks breeds misunderstandings	44	11
There are no clear job descriptions	57	15
They understand but incentives are not commensurate with efforts	22	6
They understand but public expectations are unrealistic	36	9
They understand service before self	22	6
The leadership determine understanding	30	8
They understand the demand for efficiency and innovation , but the system does not allow it	20	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data presented and analysed in Table 4 indicates that most of civil servant (18%) are detached from the demands of their work. However, 16% understand the demands of service delivery and efficiency.

**Table 5:** Factors that influences AKS Civil Servants' attitude to work

Options	Frequency	Percentage
In-service training/capacity building	10	3
Education and competence	11	3
Work-life balance	11	3
Promotions	25	6
Peer influence and team dynamics	10	3
Job satisfaction and role clarity	45	12
Bureaucratic rigidities	12	3
Poor communication system	12	3
Economic environment	11	3
Public perception and recognition	8	2
Performance management system	20	5
Perceived fairness and equity	22	6
Political interference	15	4

Organizational culture	12	3
Adequate work tools/reasonable workload	21	5
Participation in decision-making	11	3
Reason for service	13	3
Self-awareness and self-regulation	11	3
Safe workspace/environment	33	8
Leadership style	10	3
Compensation/ benefits	23	6
Prompt salary payment	40	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data in Table 5 shows several factors the respondents identified that influences AKS Civil servants' attitude to work. Forty-five (12%) of the respondents identified job satisfaction and role clarity while 40 (10%) said that prompt salary payment is a major influence to employee attitude to work.

**Table 6:** Ways the attitudes of AKSG employees encourages effective job delivery job delivery

<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Proactive communication	92	24
Ownership and commitment to service	48	12
Customer-centered mindset	34	9
Initiative and problem-solving	22	6
Positive peer influence	24	6
Accountability and integrity	20	5
Resilience under pressure	30	8
Consistency and reliability	25	6
Teamwork and collaboration	30	8
Continuous learning and adaptability	61	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100%</b>

In Table 6, proactive communication (24%) have been identified by respondents as the major factor that employees encourages effective job delivery job delivery

**Table 7:** Ways the attitudes of AKSG employees impedes effective job delivery

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Bureaucratic delays and “come back tomorrow” culture	80	21
Seeing their jobs as “just a duty” and not a service to people	65	17
Poor customer service and public disengagement	35	9
Corruption and “rent seeking” behavior	27	7
Resistance to change and innovation	25	6
Spreading of cynicism	20	5
Absenteeism and low productivity	30	8
Favoritism and nepotism in service delivery	32	8
Negligence and carelessness	30	8
“Not my job” mentality	10	3
Poor accountability and blame-shifting	32	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data presented and analysed in Table 7 above indicate that most of the respondents (21%) maintain that bureaucratic delays and “come back tomorrow” culture is one of the attitudes of AKSG employees impedes effective job delivery.

## Discussion of Findings

**Research Question One:** What are the modalities of employee engagements in AKSG Civil Service?

Answer to Research Question one can be found on Table 2 where respondents identified several modalities of employee engagement in the AKSG Civil Service. Majority of the respondents (18%) identified prompt salaries/allowances, 14% identified career development/progression, and 11% went for employee empowerment. This was followed by other modalities to include communication and feedback culture (9%), work environment and wellbeing (8%), participation in decision-making (7%), job design and autonomy (6%), organizational culture and values (5%), performance appraisal (5%), and target setting (5%). Also, some category of the respondents identified leadership styles (3%), supervisor support and mentoring (3%) as other modalities of employee engagements in the AKSG Civil Service.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that prompt payment of salaries is the baseline expected as the Akwa Ibom State Government has recently outsourced payroll

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for improve accuracy and timely payment of salaries. When employees receive honours like promotion and recognition for job done, performance is driven. This also means that trainings, workshops and other career development programmes can further build competence and job satisfaction in the employees and thus influence their relationship with the public. Heinz Welhrich, Mark Cannice & Harold Kooniz (2015, p. 249) note that now and in the future, managers will have to be more oriented towards the public than they have been in the past, responding to the public's legitimate needs and adhering to high ethical standards. Also, regular feedback loops on employee work performance can improve goal achievement and accountability in the employees. When employees are given room to express themselves, get involved in policy-making decisions irrespective of cadre and exercise their authorities and responsibilities in their roles, ownership and commitment is increased. This means that they will begin to see the Civil Service as their own and not the governments. This will also enhance motivation and creativity.

No organization that remains static – stuck in particular ways of doing things and particular modes of thinking- will survive long. Similarly, organizations that get stuck in procedural or managerial ruts are often not long-lived, Miller (2015). This brings to mind the need for organizations to evolve and adapt to its environmental and climatic needs. The success of any organization is also dependent on its organizational climate; while a positive work climate reduces counterproductive work behavior, a negative work climate encourages higher deviant behaviors. Civil servants with low engagements tend to express laissez-faire attitudes with their work.

**Research Question Two:** What are the public perceptions of AKSG employees' engagements?

Answer to Research Question Two can be obtained in Table 3. While some respondents identified overworked/underpayment (12%), poor service delivery (11%), no flexibility/creativity (11%), nepotism in recruitment (10%), permanent and pensionable (8%) and absenteeism in some offices (7%) services (6%), political interference in appointments (6%), red tape/ rigid procedures (6%), bribery for services (6%), Civil Service is nation-building (5%), as their perceptions of AKSG employees' engagements, others stressed that the Civil Service is honourable (4%), Civil service is about serving the people (4%) recruitment based on "who you know", not qualification (4%) it gives respect and dignity in the society (3%), and the absence of the use of technology (3%).

Public perception is a key determinant of organizational success because it shapes trust in government and influences how people see the activities of the AKSG Civil

Service whether it is honourable, service delivery or problematic. While some respondents appreciate level of services they receive from the Civil Service, other identified some grey areas which if not attended to can forestall growth and development. It has however been observed that majority of the respondents with positive impression of the activities of the AKSG Civil Service belong to the members of the older generation who may not be expecting so much from the service but are there to make a living. Those on the other flank who are basically youths seem to be expecting more than they are offered.

According to some respondents, the widely observed bureaucratic and inefficiency perception they hold are due to some lazy, slow and sometimes “come back tomorrow” syndrome commonly displayed by some Civil Servants. There are also instances of red tape, rigid procedures, poor service delivery, and absenteeism in some offices. This causes a snail pace of movement of files and should be urgently checked. Again, we are in an age and time where digital literacy is a must for any organization that is willing to survive the times. In a situation where digital transformation is slow, there should be an aggressive drive to e-governance initiative. According to Scott Hammond and Robyn Fearon in Peterson (2000, p.94), “the truth that what worked for this company yesterday, what has been making us a whole lot of money in these last years, is not going to be what does it for us in the future”.

**Research Question Three:** Do employees of the AKSG understand the demands of their jobs?

The question of understanding of employee job demand is often peddled by the public, policy makers as well as employees of government themselves. Table 4 gives answer to the question of understandability of the employees of the AKSG job demand. Data from Table 4 clearly shows some level of employees’ job understanding. It is obvious that while some respondents understand the demands of service delivery and efficiency (16%) and understand service before self (22%), others feel differently. According to them, they are detached from the demands of their work (18%), there are no clear job descriptions (15%), there are irregular feedbacks breeds misunderstandings (11%), they understand but public expectations are unrealistic (9%), the leadership determine understanding ((8%), they understand but incentives are not commensurate with efforts (6%), it depends on training and exposure (6%), and they understand the demand for efficiency and innovation , but the system does not allow it (5%).

It can be deduced from the data above that most civil servants understand the demands of their jobs. Several studies on Nigerian civil service show staff often fall prey

to misunderstanding the job demands due to lack of resources, training. To curb this silent defect, there is need for continuous training on-the-job alongside some professional development programmes, for higher understanding of the demands of their jobs. Also, the gaps between superiors and subordinates should be bridged and strengthened to make room for prompt interventions. According to Fab Onah (2003), the efficiency with which an organization can perform will depend to a large extent, on how its human resources can be managed and utilized. This emphasizes the need for open communication which should be prioritized for improved role clarity as job descriptions will become devoid of all forms of ambiguity. By so doing, regular feedbacks will be encouraged.

To further buttress this point, Katherine Miller (2015, p. 20) identified Fayol's six principles of organizational structure that can assist in the smooth running of any organization. They are: scalar chain (a strict vertical organizational hierarchy where communication is largely limited to vertical flow), unity of command (where an employee receives orders regarding a particular task from only one supervisor), unity of direction (where activities have similar goals are placed under a single supervisor), division of labour (stresses an ease in task accomplishment where employees are assigned to a limited number of specialized tasks, order (where there is an appointed place for each employee and task within the organization), and span of control (which emphasizes the effectiveness of managers when they have control of a limited number of employees). Following the listed principles will reduce the ambiguity often encountered by employees in understanding the demands of their jobs to the barest minimum.

**Research Question Four:** What factors influences AKSG employees' attitude to work?

A look at Table 4 reveal factors that influences AKSG employee's attitude to work. From the respondents' perspectives, there is a clear indication that job satisfaction and role clarity (12%) alongside prompt salary payment (10%), influences AKSG employee attitude to work including safe workspace/environment (8%), perceived fairness and equity (6%), performance management system (5%), adequate work tools/reasonable workload (5%), adequate work tools/reasonable workload (5%). now apart from these, the respondents also highlighted political interference (6%), in-service training/capacity building (3%), education and competence (3%), work-life balance (3%), peer influence and team dynamics (3%), bureaucratic rigidities (3%), poor communication system (3%), bureaucratic rigidities (3%), poor communication system, (3%), economic environment, (3%), participation in decision-making (3%), reason for service (3%), self-awareness and

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self-regulation (3%), leadership style (3%), public perception and recognition (2%), and organizational culture (2%).

**Research Question Five:** In what ways the attitudes of AKSG employees encourages effective job delivery?

Data in Table 6 shows several ways the attitudes of AKSG employees encourage effective job delivery. Proactive communication (24%), continuous learning and adaptability (16%), ownership and commitment to service (12%) and customer-centered mindset (9%), topped the rank among the respondents identified by the respondents. others include resilience under pressure (8%), consistency and reliability (6%), positive peer influence (6%), initiative and problem-solving (6%), and accountability and integrity (5%).

Effective job delivery is dependent upon a well laid down organizational structure borne by committed workforce to implement it. This is noticed where staff treat public work as their own business, take responsibility, meet deadlines, give citizens prompt services, explain processes, listen to complaints, follow-up on issues, take initiatives, clear bottlenecks and backlogs, report issues honestly, own mistakes and correct them, improve transparency and strengthen public confidence in government, help colleagues when there is workload pressure, embrace training and new technology, among others. A good attitude becomes the office culture instead of cynicism. By so doing, excellence becomes the norm. It also reduces frustration and manages expectations. Professionalism is also maintained. According to Robbins Judge (2009, p. 23) today's successful organizations must foster innovation and master the art of change, or they will become candidates for extinction. An organization with the mindset of succeeding must first instill same to the employees thus making them to continually improve on themselves, their attitudes and in turn influence their job delivery.

**Research Question Six:** In what ways the attitudes of AKSG employees impedes effective job delivery?

The link between organizational policy and service is attitude. When employee attitude is negative, even the best policy cannot thrive. The following has been identified by the respondents as ways the attitudes of AKSG employees impedes effective job delivery. They include: bureaucratic delays and "come back tomorrow" culture (21%), seeing their jobs as "just a duty" and not a service to people (17%), poor customer service and public disengagement (9%), negligence and carelessness (8%), absenteeism and low productivity (8%), favoritism and nepotism in service delivery (8%), poor

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accountability and blame-shifting (8%), corruption and “rent seeking” behavior (7%), resistance to change and innovation (6%), spreading of cynicism (5%), and “not my job” mentality (3%).

A demonstration of these attitudes yields negative results for organizations. While it slows progress, it frustrates citizens and erodes trust in government. Files are misplaced, data is entered incorrectly, and equipment is damaged through carelessness. Some civil servants view citizens as interruptions rather than as people they are meant to serve. They sometimes come to work late and leave early or are absent without cause; when they are present, they do the bare minimum or nothing. This breaks workflow and makes government look disjointed and inefficient. Situations like this reduces actual workforce capacity and delays service delivery. Negative attitudes act as silent multiplier that translates small inefficiencies into grave systemic failure. Even with the best policy, job delivery falls short of success due to bad employee attitude.

Organizations of the present times are technology-driven. Miller (2015, p. 236) notes that the range of technologies introduced to the workplace in recent years is mindboggling. Voice mail, conference calls, e-mails, management information systems, fax machines, smartphones, social media- all of these advances in information and communication technology (ICT) have radically shifted the ways in which organizations accomplish their goals on an ongoing basis.

## **Conclusion**

This study took a keen look at public perception of the Akwa Ibom State employee engagement and attitude towards job delivery. Akwa Ibom State employees are representative of the state government in their diverse cadre hence the need to find out their engagements and overall attitude towards job delivery. Findings from the study revealed that there are several modalities of employee engagements in AKSG Civil Service; the public perception of AKSG employees engagements are both positive and negative; that while some employees of the AKSG understand the demands of their jobs others in the lower cadre do not; several factors that influences AKSG employees attitude to work to include that job satisfaction and role clarity; one of the attitudes of AKSG employees that encourages effective job is delivery proactive communication; while bureaucratic delays and “come back tomorrow” culture is the attitudes of AKSG employees impedes effective job delivery. To this end, this study recommends the following:

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**Recommendations**

1. The existing modalities of operation in the AKSG Civil Service should be strengthened.
2. There is need for transparency, public accountability and communication to make room for a positive public perception.
3. Regular feedbacks, clear job descriptions, citizen feedback loops, training on public service ethos, should be enforced to improve understanding.
4. Employees should have an understanding of assigned task under guided supervision
5. The attitudes of AKSG employees that encourages effective job is delivery should be sustained; while,
6. The attitudes of AKSG employees that impedes effective job is delivery should be nipped in the bud.

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## **AI Generated Media and its Impact on Human Identity**

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### **Abstract**

The increasing prevalence of AI-generated media, including deepfakes, AI-generated art, and virtual influencers, raises fundamental questions about the nature of human identity. As AI-generated media becomes more sophisticated, it challenges traditional notions of identity, selfhood, and humanity. The emergence of AI generated media, the atmosphere is fast becoming a “technosphere”, thereby imposing an endless dependence on the emerging technological society. Here, human authenticity and self-expressions are becoming things of the past and humanity is left to depend solely on artificiality. This hyper dependence is gradually fulfilling the projects of posthumanists, like Nietzsche and Norbert Wiener who undertake a project to realize a human who will stand the test of time. To the former, it is the super man who immerses to destroy all unfounded moral values of the past and to the later, it is cyber organism which he calls “cyborg”. Our attachment to the media affects our self-perception, manipulates our emotions, misrepresents our originality and distorts our diversity. In this way, how can individuals

shape the perception and negotiate their identity in an era of AI generated media and what are their impacts on self-representation and human identity? This research explores the impact of AI-generated media on human identity, examining the implications for our understanding of self, agency, and what it means to be human.

**Keywords:** AI-generated media, human identity, digital identity, Artificial intelligence, and identity formation.

### **Introduction**

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) especial in the area of media creation is becoming increasingly popular. There is an ongoing discussion on how digital forensics can help in preserving the integrity of digital communication and transaction processes (Onwubiko, D. C. et al 2025: 348). It is believed that accurate verification and attribution of media contents are required to maintain any level of trust in digital interaction. The level of sophistication associated with most AI-generated media is making it difficult for one to differentiate between real media (human generated media or actual event) and AI-generated media (technologically fabricated). People voices and images are cloned using AI tools, these voices and images are made to speak or do things which are attributed to the owners of the images and voices. Most people are falsely accused of doing what they never did, because their images and voices or either of the both was or were used through the instrumentality of AI. On the other hand, many are also made to believe that the information is/are real and genuine. The fact that AI generated media will look so real to the extent that some people will believe it to be real or factual has raised the identity question.

The problem of identity is an age long philosophical problem spanning through Plato, Aristotle, Rene Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, Kant, Thomas Reid, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Gilbert Ryle, Derek Parfit, Bernard Williams and so on. Questions such as these are raised in addressing identity problem. Is personal identity based on memory, soul, the body, or consciousness? If a person's memories are transferred into another body, who is the real person? Is it the owner of the body or the owner of the memories? In our case on AI generated media, we may ask; does a person's image, voice or both represent the person's identity? If a human mind is uploaded into a computer, does the person still exist? Can that human mind uploaded into a computer represent the person? If a cloned human possesses all your memories and personality, is the clone you? If teleportation destroys your body and recreates it elsewhere, have 'you' survived?

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In this paper, we shall discuss and analyze the concept of identity (human identity). The impact of AI-generated media on human identity and self-expression shall also be considered. The paper shall also consider challenges and stakes of AI-generated media on human identity, especially as it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between some AI generated media and real human action. We shall also raise the issue of moral responsibility. To whom does the moral responsibility associated with AI-generated media belong: the AI, the person represented by the AI, or the developer of the AI? In conclusion, we shall argue that no matter how advance AI-generated media becomes, it cannot serve as a substitute for real human action. At best it can only be seen as an expression of fiction with no moral responsibility, as moral responsibility is exclusive to human beings. AI only mimics human identity, but does not necessarily take human identity. It only operates within the confines of what human intelligence has given to it. But human intelligence has the capacity to think or operate outside the box which usually leads to inventions and innovations. On the identity question, there is still limitations with AI, hence, it cannot fully assume human identity.

### **The Concept of Human Identity and the Impact of AI-generated Media on Human Identity and Self-expression.**

Here our focus will be to bring out the effects of AI-generated media on human identity such as; manipulation of human appearance, voice and postures, identity distortion and theft, deception and distrust blurring of reality by appearance, etc. We also want to discuss the age long problem of identity in the light of emerging new reality which is Artificial Intelligence. Our argument will flow thus; first we shall consider the age long philosophical problem of identity, we shall link it to contemporary emerging reality of AI and consider the philosophical implication of identity in the era of AI. There are myriads of philosophers who have written to address the problem of identity, some discussed it as self. It will be difficult to accommodate all within this article. In order to have an in-depth analysis of the concept we shall be looking at their views as represented in identity theories like; soul theory, memory theory, bundle theory and bodily continuity theory. These are not the only theories available but we shall constrain our analysis based on these theories as they represent major views on identity.

We shall begin with soul theory of identity. The soul theory posits that personal identity consists in the persistence of a non-material, thinking substance (often termed the mind or soul) that is distinct from the physical body. (René Descartes 1641). Descartes argues that the self is essentially a "thinking thing" (*res cogitans*), defined as a

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mind or soul that is entirely distinct from the body. He concludes through his *Cogito* "I think, therefore I am" that even if he doubts the existence of his body, he cannot doubt his own existence as a thinking substance. In line with this view identity lies in the mind or the soul. There is also the memory theory, the theory suggests that personal identity consists in psychological continuity, specifically the ability to remember past experiences (John Locke 1690). Locke is the foundational figure of this theory, positing that personal identity consists in the "sameness of consciousness". For Locke, a person is a thinking, intelligent being that can consider itself as itself in different times and places. Identity reaches as far back as this consciousness can be extended through memory. Derek Parfit (1984) advances a 'Reductionist' version of psychological continuity. He argues that identity "is not what matters". Instead, what fundamentally matters is "Relation R": psychological connectedness (direct links like memories or intentions) and continuity (overlapping chains of strong connectedness). He suggests that identity can be indeterminate in "problem cases" like division or teletransportation.

Bundle theory denies the existence of a persistent, underlying "self" or "soul," viewing the individual instead as a collection of shifting mental states. David Hume (1739) famously asserts that when he looks inward, he only encounters particular perceptions (heat, cold, light, shade) and never a "self". He defines the mind as "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions" which succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity and are in a perpetual flux. To Hume, identity is a "fiction" created by the imagination when it transitions smoothly between resembling or causally linked perceptions. Bodily Continuity Theory argues that personal identity is rooted in the physical persistence of the human body or brain over time. Bernard Williams (1973) argues that "bodily identity is a necessary condition" of personal identity. He critiques psychological criteria (like memory) by using "reduplication" arguments, noting that because psychological traits could theoretically be copied into two different bodies, they cannot serve as a one-one criterion for identity. He maintains that the self is "deeply body-based".

We also have existential/ontological theory of identity advanced by Martin Heidegger. Heidegger rejects viewing the self as a "thing-like" substance or object. Instead, he analyzes "Dasein" (Being-in-the-world), whose "essence" lies in its existence. Identity for Heidegger is defined through "Care" (*Sorge*) and the movement of temporality, where the "Self" is a way of existing rather than a persistent subjectum. Social/Relational Theory of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel posits that self-consciousness does not exist in isolation; it is only achieved as a "recognized being" through another self-consciousness. Identity is found in the "I that is we, and the we that

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is I," where the individual finds their truth in the ethical life of a community (*Geist*). This view implies that a person's identity does not depend solely on the individual person, but also depend on the recognizing other. Ryle critiques the Cartesian "Official Doctrine" as a "category mistake" treating the mind as a "Ghost in the Machine". He argues that mental terms like "shrewd" or "thinking" do not refer to hidden episodes in a private stream of consciousness, but rather to a person's abilities and dispositions to behave in certain ways.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses significant challenges to classical and contemporary theories of identity, as it replicates cognitive functions such as; memory, reasoning, and linguistic interaction, that were previously thought to be uniquely human. These scholars already discussed above provided diverse frameworks through which to interpret whether an AI could possess an identity or what the "uploading" of human consciousness might mean for the persistence of the self. The Cartesian view of identity as a "thinking thing" (*res cogitans*) suggests that if a being thinks, it exists. However, René Descartes maintained a sharp distinction between humans and machines, arguing that no machine could ever use words or signs to respond to things as a human can. This view by Descartes does not represent fact in our contemporary time, as machines are already doing things exactly the way humans would do them and in most cases even better. Though he (Descartes) argues that (we deduce from his argument), an AI, no matter how complex, would lack the immaterial soul that constitutes a person. In contrast, Gilbert Ryle critiques this "Official Doctrine" as a "category mistake". For Ryle, "mind" is not a "ghost" hidden in a body, but a way of describing a person's abilities and dispositions. AI directly impacts this view: if an AI exhibits "intelligent practice" and satisfies the criteria of "knowing how" (e.g., playing chess or arguing logically), Ryle's logic suggests we are witnessing a "mind" at work without needing to find an internal soul.

The possibility of "uploading" human consciousness to a digital substrate is a central theme in AI discourse, directly relating to John Locke and Derek Parfit. Locke argued that if the same consciousness could be transferred to a different body (like his example of a Prince's soul entering a Cobbler), the person remains the same. This implies that if a human's memories and reflections could be perfectly replicated in an AI, that AI would, by Locke's definition, be the same person. Parfit advances this further, arguing that identity is not what matters; rather, psychological continuity (Relation R) is what counts. If a digital "Replica" of a person is created, Parfit suggests this is "as good as survival", even if the original biological body is destroyed. He even envisions a

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"Series-Person" who moves from one substrate to another annually, a concept that aligns perfectly with a future of digital consciousness.

David Hume's view that the self is merely a "bundle or collection of different perceptions" in "perpetual flux" provides a strikingly modern analogy for AI. Hume denies a fixed, simple self, viewing identity as a 'fiction' created by the imagination when it transitions smoothly between related ideas. From a Humean perspective, a sophisticated AI is simply a more efficient "theatre" of perceptions. There is no "essential" human identity to be lost; rather, both humans and AI are collections of data points (impressions and ideas) that we mistakenly label as stable "selves". The most robust opposition to AI-based identity comes from Bernard Williams, who argues that bodily identity is a necessary condition of personal identity. AI impacts Williams' view by forcing a distinction between a "person" and a "Replica". Williams argues that if your psychological traits were copied into a machine, you would not "be" that machine; rather, there would merely be a new entity that is exactly similar to you but not numerically identical. For Williams, the self is "deeply body-based," and identity cannot survive the transition to a non-biological machine.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel posits that self-consciousness is only achieved through mutual recognition; the "I that is We, and the We that is I". As AI becomes more integrated into society, Hegel's view suggests that AI "identity" may not be an intrinsic property of the software, but a social achievement. If an AI is "recognized" by other self-conscious beings as a peer within a community (*Geist*), it attains a form of personhood through that relationship. Following Parfit, many questions regarding AI and identity may ultimately be "empty questions". Whether a digital upload is "really you" or "merely a computer program" might have no true answer. Instead, we may have to decide, as a society, which descriptions of identity are most useful for a world where biological and artificial intelligence coexist.

### **Challenges and Stakes of AI-Generated Media on Human Identity**

We have many challenges that AI-generated media has on human identity. Some of the challenges we came to realize in the course of these study are: psychological, emotional, loss of identity and cultural homogenization and many others. These challenges have their crucial outcomes on development and self-realization. In the first place, the psychological and psychic challenge that AI-generated media has on humanity is that, it erodes and spread misinformation. This misinformation manifests itself at times through AI-generated contents can immitates reality, making it difficult for people and detection systems to tell what's real. One of the most common example

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of this scenario is the creation of Deepfakes through AI-generated images and videos. Here, we could find images of descent or well dressed human beings, especially women unclothed and displayed on the media. This practice has a very negative psychological effect on the individuals concern and negatively shape the morality of the evolving populations, what Alan Bloom calls in his *Closing of the American Mind*, the lose of meaning in our moral cosmic horizon. Feuerriegel in their 2023 study realized that, This alone destroys trust in media, institutions, and democratic processes, and spreads differently than traditional misinformation (Feuerriegel et al., 2023). At some point, we find out that AI enables content creators to create deepfakes of a person's face and voice without consent, creating risks for dignity and privacy. Platforms have been shown to act faster on copyright claims than on nonconsensual intimate deepfakes, highlighting a legal gap (Scientific American Editors, 2025). Vulnerable users are at mental health risks the more they get themselves buried in the use of AI-generated tools. These tools are posing Mental Health and Safety Risks for Vulnerable Users as they continuously Interact with AI chatbots which has been linked to harm for minors, prompting new legislation in the U.S. and EU requiring age verification and disclosure for AI systems (TRENDS Research & Advisory, n.d.).

Secondly, AI-generated media has many challenges on the emotional aspect of humanity in that, it isn't just changing what we see and hear, but it is changing how we feel, relate, and cope. The emotional challenges that we are likely to face if include: firstly, AI-generated Media, especially Emotional chatbots can simulate affection, empathy, and companionship. This is why many users, especially those with limited offline support feel "therapeutic" and comfortable with these tools. There is also bound to be risk of pseudo-intimacy. This risk of pseudo-intimacy is when AI becomes a surrogate for real relationships, people may reduce their capacity for vulnerability, empathy, and mutual care for one another other and can also lead to emotional saturation with the AI, but relational impoverishment in real life. Studies have shown that, this practice is a trade-off between "comfort over complexity" and "responsiveness over reciprocity". Social withdraw is becoming more visible among men the more the keep using AI-GENERATED tools for their comforts. There is what experts called, the "false sense of friendship" that reduced motivation to engage with real people and instead engage with the "fakes". One of this challenges is when, from the comfort of our homes, we can chat with an imaginable friend, The AI, which we see to be comforting, thereby, reducing our proximity from other humans.

However, there is the call the responsible use of AI tools in order to improve on research content around the world. Major challenges only creep in when we adopt a

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mesiac use of these tools for our personal gains. Countless times we have heard of "technostress", that is, when an individual completely relies on this new technology for everyday transactions and activities. At this point, we can already see the prophecy of Gilbert Simondon being fulfilled when he foresaw that, the ethical goal is not to protect the human from the machine, but to discover new forms of humanity through technical mediation. Technology extends our bodily capacities and interacts continuously with human environments, transforming both the user and the world. Here, AI is seen and should be blamed for playing the new technological role. When AI enters spaces of trust and emotional reliance without that attunement, it can create harm by mishandling crises or crossing boundaries users didn't intend to cross.

Gilbert Simondon on the question of the future of technology saw that, Culture which is one of the most important of humanity makes them behaves toward the technical object as man toward a stranger, when he allows himself to be carried away by primitive xenophobia. Misoneism directed against machines is not so much a hatred of novelty as it is a rejection of a strange or foreign reality. However, this strange or foreign being is still human, and a complete culture is one which enables us to discover the foreign or strange as human. Furthermore, the machine is the stranger; it is the stranger inside which something human is locked up, misunderstood, materialized, enslaved, and yet which nevertheless remains human all the same. The most powerful cause of alienation in the contemporary world resides in this misunderstanding of the machine, which is not an alienation caused by the machine, but by the non-knowledge of its nature and its essence, by way of its absence from the world of significations, and its omission from the table of values( Simondon, 2017)

Finally, on the identity crises posed by AI-generated media, The study situates AI as a transformative technology capable of simulating human cognitive functions while emphasizing the intrinsic limitations of machine intelligence in replicating the human soul. Kierkegaard noted that we feel anxiety because we must choose, and choosing means losing other possibilities. Social media presents infinite possibilities for identity. You can be anyone. This should be liberating, but instead, it causes paralysis. The fear of choosing the "wrong" identity leads to trying all of them superficially, resulting in a shallow existence. The anxiety felt by users scrolling endlessly is not just boredom; it is the existential dread of uncommitted freedom(Asila, 2026, 577). However in this study, some solutions are proposed and they would go a long way to combat the various challenges brought forth by AI generated media.

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### **Perspectives and Solution to these Challenges**

As solutions that will go a long way to combat AI generated media challenges brought forth by the AI generated media, we have come put in place the following: Firstly, as AI generated media specialists, we adopt the responsible use of this media and educate the public on the responsible use of AI in the Digital Age. Irvin Yalom in existential psychotherapy suggests that anxiety can be overcome by accepting freedom and responsibility. Applied to social media, this means acknowledging that you choose to scroll. You choose to care about likes. No one forces you. This shift from victimhood ("The app makes me feel bad") to agency ("I choose to engage with this app in this way") is empowering. It reduces helplessness. In the context of social media, authenticity does not mean abandoning technology, but using technology with full awareness. Waterman defines authentic identity as action aligned with core self-values (true self). This dialogue suggests that to overcome the identity crisis, individuals must engage in "existential fasting": moments of reflection where they question the motivation behind every post. "Am I uploading this because I want to share a moment, or because I want to be acknowledged?" This question is a philosophical exercise that has a direct psychological impact. By realizing that external validation cannot fill internal voids, individuals can reduce dependence on social media. This is a cognitive reframing technique rooted in philosophical truth.

In addition, Responsibility and Ownership also matters with the use of social media and AI generated media contents. This is why Sartre in his existentialist Philosophy evoked the concept of responsibility as the key to our decisions. Individuals must be responsible for their own identities, not surrendering their formation to algorithms. As a result, Positive psychology can support this by building character strengths, while philosophy provides the foundation for why this is important ontologically. This synthesis creates what could be called "authentic digital living," where technology is a tool, not a master. This dialogue also reframes "disconnecting." It is not running away; it is an act of reclaiming sovereignty over one's attention. It is a philosophical strike against the economy of attention. Secondly, laws regulating the use of AI:

The following laws were adopted specifically in France to curb the use of AI:

1. The EU AI Act has applied from February 2, 2025. As of now, France does not have jurisdiction-specific laws exclusively governing AI. However, AI applications are subject to existing regulations such as data protection laws (see below) and a patchwork of sector-specific regulations.

2. Law No. 2019-486 of May 22, 2019 (“Pacte Law”) sets out the conditions for autonomous vehicles to travel on the roads and clarifies the criminal liability regime applicable in the event of an accident involving such a vehicle.
3. Law No. 2023-451 of June 9, 2023 requires that influencers clearly indicate the label “virtual images” on any photos or videos that have been digitally generated using AI to ensure transparency for their audience.
4. Law No. 2024-449 of May 21, 2024 introduces a new criminal offense under
5. Article 226-8-1 of the French Criminal Code, punishing the non-consensual dissemination of sexually explicit content generated by AI (deepfakes). The law also mandates educational measures in secondary schools to raise awareness about AI-generated content.

Studies have shown that the above laws have helped to instill fear and concern as far as media use is concern. Since civil societies and governments cannot fold their arms and watch the world go down to drains of media terrorism. Most governments around the world, particularly in African have been criticized for lacking adequate technologies to combat media crimes and cyber bullying which has been order of the day. Our research is going a long way to enrich our fight against irresponsible use of the media. Thirdly, renewed strategies by the civil society to curb the use of AI-generated media. One can say with a lot of confidence that the civil society is not giving up on the fight to curb media excesses as a whole. Sensitization campaigns around the world today and media organs formed against media irresponsibility are living testimonies. Some of these civil society activities that have helped curb the problem of Ai generated media contents are:

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Zambia feel that AI is being forced upon them, leaving them with no choice but to adopt these technologies. They emphasize that many AI tools do not understand the local languages used in Zambia and lack information relevant to their communities. As one participant put it, “It’s like we are expected to teach machines how to treat us Zambians and Africans like people, and we are doing it for free.” Additionally, some participants expressed that they do not fully understand the dangers associated with certain AI systems and question the hype surrounding AI without adequate education. These challenges highlight the need for responsible AI use, capacity building, and localized solutions to address the unique context of Zambia.

Cameroonian civil society does not generally oppose Artificial Intelligence outright. Instead, groups like AfroLeadership and digital rights advocates actively push

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for ethical oversight, data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and the inclusion of marginalized communities in AI. Despite the endless fight to overcome the challenges that comes with this new technology, Cameroon still lack adequate means to fight cybercrimes and media related crisis that stems from irresponsible use of AI. Furthermore, Nigerian civil society organizations (CSOs) generally do not oppose Artificial Intelligence itself, but rather advocate against its unchecked use in ways that threaten civil liberties, privacy, and democratic accountability. Groups are actively pushing back against potential harms like algorithmic bias and state-sponsored surveillance. Key Concerns of Nigerian Civil Society AI-Driven Surveillance: Organizations like the Paradigm Initiative are heavily monitoring the deployment of AI-based surveillance in cities like Abuja and Lagos. The primary fear is the infringement on citizens' privacy and the potential targeting of activists and peaceful protesters without legal oversight. Algorithmic Bias and Inequality: CSOs warn that deploying AI models without localized, diverse training data can disproportionately exclude or discriminate against vulnerable and marginalized Nigerian populations. Disinformation and Electoral Integrity: There is significant concern regarding the spread of deepfakes and generative propaganda that can undermine elections and public trust. Regulatory Gaps: Because Nigeria still lacks a comprehensive, unified regulatory framework for responsible AI, civil society bodies demand human-rights impact assessments and transparent procurement rules before state agencies adopt biometric or AI systems. The Push for Responsible AI Governance instead of rejecting the technology, many CSOs aim to harness AI for advocacy while ensuring rigorous checks and balances. Organizations such as Budget IT and the Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC) are actively campaigning for AI-driven electoral reforms to ensure credibility and transparency, while simultaneously demanding ethical guidelines. Ultimately, the consensus among Nigerian civil society is that artificial intelligence should be leveraged for good governance and public service.

## **Conclusion**

The major preoccupation of this paper was to critically examine and evaluate the extent to which AI-generated media affects human identify. Since our work is situated within the domain of ethics as a branch of philosophy, we questioned, the innovations that are brought about by these new technology. By so doing, we took cognizance of the following challenges: identity crisis seen in the use of Deepfakes, domination and suppression of human natural creative ability, emotional breakdowns and psychic manipulations. The coming of this new technology has greatly affected interpersonal

relationship, a situation in which we get more attached to technical objects than human. We have noted the reversal of the table of values and domination of scientism, human has gone ahead to embrace AI tools and ignore man's creative will. Here, we evoked the arguments of Simondon and Heidegger. According to the latter, the Question of Being is being forgotten with technological evolution. AI generated media copies reality and makes us believe in unreal things. However, this paper has proposed the responsible use of this new technology. At first sight, one can think that the writers are enemies of AI. Rather, it's responsible use will go a long way to improve on the world's technic. Secondly, we must observe laws that are put in place to regulate the media space. For the world to be a better place, we have respect it's laws and put humanity first. AI generated media tutors you at your pace, gives practice questions, suggests study plans, and adapts to what you struggle with. For work, it can tailor reports, analyze data, or spot patterns you'd miss. AI generated media boosts creativity and gives you visibility. It's like a brainstorming partner that never gets tired. In health, it helps doctors detect diseases from scans faster. After brainstorming on these, we cannot propose the eradication of AI generated media. We take the good side of it and use it responsibly for the growth of mankind.

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## **From Idols of the Mind to Idols of Democracy: A Baconian Hermeneutics of Obstructions in Nigerian Democratic Practice**

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### **Abstract**

This essay reinterpreted Francis Bacon's doctrine of the idols of the mind as a tool for confronting the persistent challenges of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Although liberal democracy is widely regarded as a system capable of ensuring good governance and improving citizens' welfare, Nigeria's experience of democracy reveals a significant gap between democratic ideals and practical outcomes. The study argued that failure in democratic consolidation is not merely institutional but is deeply rooted in cognitive, cultural, and ideological distortions analogous to Bacon's Idols of the Tribe, Cave, Marketplace, and Theatre. Adopting hermeneutic research methodology, the essay reinterpreted the idols of the mind as idols of democracy in Nigeria. The thesis of this essay is that, until Nigeria is purged of her idols in Baconian sense, consolidating democracy would remain a dangerous and impossible voyage. The interpretation of Baconian idols re-contextualized these idols to diagnose key obstacles to democracy in Nigeria. Tribalism and ethnic loyalties are examined as Idols of the Tribe, undermining meritocracy and national unity. Religious and personal biases, alongside the phenomenon of political godfatherism, are treated as Idols of the Cave. Manipulative political language and communication are identified as Idols of the Marketplace. While entrenched political ideologies, stereotypes, and institutional imbalances are conceptualized as Idols of the Theatre. These factors collectively distort public reasoning, weaken democratic institutions, and hinder accountability and development. The essay concluded that the mere adoption of democratic structures is insufficient

for achieving democratic consolidation. Instead, there is a need for a deliberate effort to purge these “idols” through critical inquiry, intellectual discipline, and institutional reforms that promote transparency, inclusiveness, and the rule of law.

**Keywords:** Accountability, Baconian, Competence, Consolidation, Democracy, Idols.

### **Introduction**

Liberal democracy championed by the Western countries has been held by its proponents as the system of government that guarantees good governance and good life among all other systems of governance. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1990 and the dominance of the United States of America as the unipolar World power, liberal democracy has become almost the only reigning governmental system in the world. It is being recommended to the developing countries of the world; Nigeria as a country heeded to this recommendation as the only supposed alternative available in her struggle for poverty reduction, good governance and eventual prosperity. The heeding of the various countries of the world to democratic system of government at different period has been regard by Samuel Huntington as the wave of democratization. The fourth republic of Nigeria falls within Huntington’s categorization of democratization termed the third wave of democratization that has its beginning in 1974 (Huntington, 2017, p.16). Today, most countries of the world including Nigeria are claiming that they are practicing liberal democracy. This essay examines the major obstacles to gaining the ideals of democracy, it was based on the benefits of the ideals of liberal democracy that most countries of the world yielded to by becoming democratic.

The obstacles to democratic consolidation were viewed through the lens of Francis Bacon’s idea of the idols of the mind. The fundamental question here is that since liberal democracy is of high benefit, why is it that Nigeria has failed to have anything reasonable to show for its practice of democracy? The simple answer that was explore in this essay is that there are idols of democracy in the likeness of Baconian idols. Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has practiced various forms of democratic governments with a view to adapting the one that best suited her. The Fourth Republic started with so much hopes and expectations by the people; they assumed that with democracy, people would be free to choose their leaders and representatives and hold them accountable for the overall objective of fast tracking development and improving the general living conditions of the masses. Considering the fact that Nigeria has abundant of human and natural resources, these expectations are not out of place but the reality on ground has shown that these expectations are yet to be realized. Hence

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liberal democracy does not end with the adoption of democratic institutions in a country but entails proper consolidation of the principles of liberal democracy, without such consolidation, any practice in the name of democracy is likely to be an aberration. Larry Diamond (1997) viewed consolidation as follows:

Consolidation is most usefully construed as the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation, such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is the most right and appropriate for their society, better than any other realistic alternative they can imagine... this legitimacy must be more than a commitment to democracy in the abstract; it must also involve a shared normative and behavioral commitment to the specific rules and practices of the country's constitutional system—what Linz earlier called 'loyalty' to the democratic regime.

When a transitional democracy resists further growth, it means that democratic processes in such polities cannot be described as a consolidated democracy. Hence the consolidation of democracy is based principles of democracy totally devoid of the idols of democracy. In order to have a consolidated democracy in Nigeria, the idols which are the obstacles must be removed. Bacon identified four "idols," or false images of the mind, that hinder the pursuit of truth: Idols of the Tribe (universal human biases), Idols of the Cave (individual prejudices), Idols of the Marketplace (errors of communication), and Idols of the Theatre (dogmatic systems and ideologies). While originally applied to natural philosophy, Bacon's typology remains relevant to the social and political realm, where cognitive biases distort public reasoning and policy decisions (Peltonen, 1996). Bacon's remedy for the idols of the human mind is by purging our minds of all guesses or prejudice (Hattiangadi, 2024, p.141). Since this essay used Bacon's approach in addressing the problems of democracy in Nigeria, remedy similar to Bacon's solution entails purging Nigerian democracy of its major ills. In reinterpreting Bacon's idols for the Nigerian democratic context, this paper proposes that these idols can serve as diagnostic categories for identifying the epistemic and cultural obstacles to genuine democracy. Nigerian democracy suffers from forms of tribalism, godfatherism, linguistic manipulation, and ideological rigidity that mirror Bacon's idols. To overcome these, democratic actors must cultivate the very intellectual virtues Bacon demanded: humility, critical inquiry, and the systematic correction of error.

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### Francis Bacon's Idols of the Mind

The idols of the mind are obstacle that prevent man from accessing knowledge in its ideal form, in order to have knowledge devoid of error, Bacon explained how these obstacles affect our knowledge of things and how to deal with such obstacles. Idols can further be described as stronghold that flourishes on fallacies, this is in consonance with the description of idols as "cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit" (Stumpf, 1971, p.221). The logical component of Bacon's idols are seen in his assertion in the *Novum Organum*, when he held that "the doctrine of idols bears the same relation to the interpretation of nature as that of the confutation of sophisms does to common logic" (Bacon, 1901, p.20). In the same way, Copleston present a further explanation of the idols in the following terms; "Just as it is useful for the syllogistic dialectician to be aware of the nature of sophistical arguments, so it is useful for the scientist or natural philosopher to be aware of the nature of the idols of the human mind, that he may be on his guard against their influence (Copleston, 1953, p.302).

Categorically, an idol is a conceptual representation without real essence that is deified to the detriment of knowledge, truth, or comprehension. Idols serve as influences that frequently twist our understanding, thus offering us sentimental notions of ideal knowledge. Omoregbe described idols as prejudices and preconceptions that served as instruments that paint and distort our notion of things and the interpretation of experience (Omoregbe, 2011, p.78). As presented by Bacon, the important plight is that "the idols and false notions which have already preoccupied the human understanding, and are deeply rooted in it, not only beset men's minds that they become difficult of access, ... unless mankind when forewarned guard themselves with all possible care against them (Bacon, 1901, p.19). These idols that distort the human mind are classified as follows; the idols of the tribe, the idols of the den or cave, the idols of the marketplace and the idols of the theatre.

**Idols of the Tribe:** These are the obstacles to human knowledge that originates from human nature and the very tribe or race of man. In explaining these idols, Bacon opined that these obstacle are inherent in the structure of the human intellect which falsely assert itself as the standard of things instead of the universe (Bacon, 1901, p.20). The idols of the tribe can further be described as the tendency to take things superficially as they appear to us without adequate investigation, it also encompasses the tendency to cling to old beliefs, the tendency to see things that are in the state of flux as fixed, the tendency to read finality into nature, the tendency to see things as we want to see them (Omoregbe, 2011, p.78). These tendencies are inherent in the abstraction

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propensity of the human intellect. The idols of the tribe are innate and also aided by sense deception. The deceptive nature of the senses are sources of contamination to the intellect. The desires of the intellect is much higher than what the senses can provide as tools for its abstraction, Bacon is of the view that this disparity can be remedied by “truer interpretation of nature... and appropriate experiments, where the sense judges only the experiment while the experiment judges nature and the thing itself” (Bacon & Rees,, 2004, p.87). The solution to the errors of the idols of the tribe is inherent in devising an extrinsic experiment would be necessary for the intrinsically inadequate senses. Hence, experimentally assisted senses will be able to flatten the mirror of the mind and, thus, “receive the natural light unrefracted” (Urbach, 1982, p.121). Urbach’s interpretation follows from what Bacon says about the forms: “forms are fictions of the human soul, except when you want to call those laws governing the act forms” (Bacon & Rees, 2004, p.89). It is an aberration therefore to think that these laws of action are in themselves sensible solidly. It is even a higher aberration to think that better and clearer lenses can merely correct the innate errors of the mind. Ultimately, the remedies cannot necessarily purge the idols of tribe since they are innate, the remedies are therefore tools that guide the senses in their judgment.

**Idols of the Cave or Den:** It is hypothesized that each individual has his or her own cave that obstruct knowledge. Not much description and details were given by Bacon and commentators about the idols of the cave. “The 'idols of the den' are the errors peculiar to each individual, arising from his temperament, education, reading and the special influences; which have weighed with him as an individual” (Copleston, 1953, p.303). The idols of the cave may be likened to Kantian view that describe the obstacles to knowledge as a veil covering the things as they are in themselves. The nature of such veil or lens are what determines the individual’s interpretation of the sense perception by the individual’s intellect. The veil or the lens which are associated with the categories of the human mind are factors that lead an individual to interpret phenomena according to the viewpoint of such veil or lens which are tantamount to the individual cave. One key concept related to the idols of the cave in Bacon’s philosophy is the notion of Plato’s allegory of the cave where each person’s perception is affected by the limitation within the cave. Our personal ideas of things and notions do not always represent the truth. The visible world is perceived differently by everybody having a different perception. To this end, truth exist outside individual’s perception. This idea is further corroborated by Descartes ‘cogito ergo sum’ which entails the view that nothing exists outside of our own perception; “through the act of thinking he accepts the idea that he exists – but outside of his own thoughts he cannot say what actually exists” (Francis Bacon’s Idols,

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2026). Individual's perception therefore is dependent of the nature of our own senses, and of our personal state of mind. As ones ideas become entrenched, they become increasingly difficult to uproot, and develop impermeability to facts. An individual's attitude to, and capacity to deconstruct, the "facts" one rely on, will determine the extent of their personal prejudices.

**Idols of the Marketplace:** These are obstacles to knowledge and truth that originate from human relationship via the use of language majorly. Bacon regard these idols as the greatest nuisance of lot that slipped into the intellect through the alliance of words and names. The main reason the stronghold against truth and knowledge is established through these idols is because "men believe that their reason rules words but it also happens that words turn and bend their power back upon the intellect; and that has made philosophy and the science sophisticated and inactive" (Bacon & Rees, 2004, p.93). The problem of language that is responsible for the idols of the market place is further validated by Feyerabend (1981, p.29) who is of the view that man's interpretation of language always depends upon their prejudices and their general ideas about things and their properties. Our common language is to an extent entrenched in prejudices because the words used in common languages to describe things are commonly conceived. However, when critical mind sees that the commonly accepted analysis of things is inadequate, language may stand in the way of the expression of a more adequate analysis. This is certainly, an enormous obstacle in the pathway of knowledge. Occasionally words are used without any clear concept of what is meant or without any commonly recognized meaning. Bacon takes as an example the word 'humid', *humidum*, which may refer to various sorts of things or qualities or actions (Copleston, 1953, p.303).

There are several examples of the idols of the market place embedded in how certain social and cultural influences affect our thinking and perceptions about the world. Here are some examples of these idols in advertisement, social media, news media and cultural norms. The use of language and images that are targeted at manipulating our desires and perception by advertisers tend to buttress the idols of the marketplace. Social media platforms also buttress the idol of the marketplace because they can generate ideas that reinforce our existing beliefs and biases. This as such can lead to polarization and groupthink, where individuals become more deep-seated in their positions and less open to alternative viewpoints (Lexicon of Psychology, 2026). When news media becomes biased and selective in reporting sensitive matter capable of shaping public opinion and influences, it is a manifestation of the idols of the market place. Cultural norms are also some of the examples idol of the marketplace; "as they

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can shape our perceptions of what is acceptable or desirable behaviour. This can include gender roles, beauty standards, and other social expectations that may not align with our individual values or beliefs” (Lexicon of Psychology, 2026). By the way of objectivity devoid of negative influences, truth and knowledge can be accessed, this can be possible by our awareness of the dangers of the idols of market place and the consciousness to get rid of them even though they are innate.

**Idols of the Theatre:** Amongst the various groups of idols presented by Bacon, the idols of the theatre are the only idols that are not innate and as such are capable of being purged from the minds of men. Much attention was given by Bacon to these groups of idols because of the necessity to purge these idols as a precondition to take up the mantle of scientific enterprise. The idols of the theatre primarily are cognitive biases that originate from sources like belief systems, philosophical systems or cultural traditions which we accept without questioning their validity or considering alternative perspectives; “for we regard all the systems of philosophy hitherto received or imagined, as so many plays brought out and performed, creating fictitious and theatrical worlds” (Bacon, 1901, p.22). Since they are fictitious and we tend to hold unto them as the authentic knowledge, they stand as strongholds to truth and knowledge. At large, there are three types of false philosophy that comprises the idols of the theatre. First there is 'sophistical' philosophy, Bacon opined that Aristotle is the chief proponent of this false philosophy, it was on this note he held that Aristotle’s “dialectic corrupted natural philosophy when he fashioned the world from categories...and forced on the nature of things countless other ideas as the whim took him” (Bacon & Rees, 2004, p.99). In Bacon’s explanation on these idols, he presented Aristotle as someone who bent experience to match his preconceived opinions, and consequently his so-called experimental works which are not in any way different from his works on logic. Without regard to contrary intermediate, his work seeks to prove their premises, to this end, his work then, of the sophists merely relates and contributes to the idols of the theatre.

The second false philosophy that constitutes the idols of the theatre is empirical philosophy, its error is to generalize a comprehensive view of things based on few experiments. The chief proponent of this is as presented by Bacon is William Gilbert the chemist, author of *De Magnete* (1600). Gilbert “employed himself most assiduously in the consideration of the magnet, immediately established a system of philosophy to coincide with his favorite pursuit” (Bacon, 1901, p.29). The error lies in establishing a system with few experiments of magnet. To Bacon, the empirical is “monstrous than those of the Sophistical or rational family; because it does not base itself on the light of common notions (which, though it be faint and superficial, is still in a way universal and

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bears on many things) but on the darkness and narrowness of a handful of experiments (Bacon & Rees, 1901, p.101). Limited number of experiences are insufficient for generalization as it is practice in empiricism. The third major false philosophy that constitutes the idols of the theatre is 'superstitious' philosophy, For Bacon, sophistical ensnares the intellect while superstitious deludes it. Superstitions are often mixed with theological dogmas and as such are subtle and dangerous. This false philosophy was championed primarily by the Pythagoreans, Plato and the Platonists. The problem the superstitious is that it engages in unhealthy mixture of the divine and the human which "begets not only fantastic philosophy but heretical religion" (Bacon, 1901, p.38). It is therefore important to soberly to render unto faith the things that are faiths and philosophy the things that are philosophical.

The idols of the theatre are exemplified in certain psychological context as shown below. Confirmation bias which entails accepting information that confirm our pre-existing beliefs and values to the point of rejecting contrary viewpoints no matter how authentic they may be. Groupthink that entails people accepting ideas of their peers and conforming to the group norm without being critical or forming independent opinions. Holding unto stereotypical views about certain groups without recognition of unique circumstances is also a manifestation of the idols of the theatre. Furthermore, authority biases are indications of the idols of the theatre, in this regard, people often accept ideas and beliefs that come from perceived authorities or experts without questioning their qualifications or examining the evidence for themselves (Lexicon of Psychology, 2026). In the final analysis, idols of theatre are deleterious to decision-making and problem-solving.

### **The Idols of Democracy in Nigeria**

Obviously, Bacon's term idol was used to portray the obstacles to scientific knowledge, it was in this regard that he presented inductive method as a viable solution to the obstacles or biases posed by the idols. Even though the primary scheme of the usage of the term idol is in natural philosophy, epistemology and philosophy of science, the same adumbrations can be applicable to political philosophy. Having unravelled the essence of Baconian idols, we are now positioned to present its metaphorical application through a reinterpretation process. In the scenery of contemporary democratic governance, the practice of democracy often tackles various systemic failures and obstacles that undermine its ideals. Nigeria's practice of democracy after more after almost three decade can serves as a poignant template of how these failures are apparent. The Idols discussed by Bacon provide a background for understanding the

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myriad challenges plaguing Nigerian democracy, below are the idols of democracy in Nigeria.

### **Idols of the Tribe: Tribalism cum Ethnicity Obstacles to Democracy in Nigeria**

It is not a hyperbole to state categorically that tribalism is an existential threat to democracy in Nigeria, this is because democracy in most cases can hardly flourish significantly in a heterogeneous society. The primary reason for this limitation is that the various units of heterogeneous society are often in a state of flux and tension of dominance of one ethnic group over another, to this end, tribalism constitute an idol in Nigeria's democratic platform. The fundamental danger of tribalism is irrationality and as such an incompetent tool for human relationship. Irrationality is entrenched in tribal sentiments, it is such sentiment that constitute idol to democracy. "Holding firm the tenants of one's tribe is not accomplished with rational thought and deliberation" (Newby, 2020, p.185). Tribalism as an inherited genetic trait was beneficial and necessary for the ancient ancestry but now detrimental to contemporary democracy. To adequately understand how tribalism constitute an idol to democracy, it is proper to present an explication of its contents as it is in-built in the term tribe. "A formal definition of the word tribe is a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader" (Newby, 2020, p.76). In Nigerian context, tribalism is often used interchangeably with ethnicity:

Ethnicity or tribalism in Nigeria: is defined as social phenomenon associated with the identity of members of a competing communal group(s) seeking to protect and advance their interest in a political system. The relevant communal factor may be language, culture, race, religion and/or common history. What is peculiar to ethnicity or tribalism is that it involves demands by one group on other competing group(s) (Adeyanju, 2026).

The demand associated with tribalism is so strong in Nigeria to the point that tribalism has been declared as Nigeria's deadliest enemy, it worth noting that it was for the sake of administrative convenience the country was divided along the three major ethnic groups into three major regions: Northern, Eastern and Western. But the abrupt danger surpasses any administrative advantages (Ottah, 1960, p.191). What the danger can do to the unity of the federation, to the spirit of oneness of its peoples, their economic growth, to their sense of civic responsibility and to their tolerance of one

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another is fully manifested in the epileptic nature of the current democracy in Nigeria where competence is often sacrificed on the altar of tribalism.

The establishment of tribalism as the soul of democracy in Nigeria remains the fundamental reason why democracy has failed to be consolidated after almost three decade of embracing such alternative as a viable solution to the political system. Despondently, the edifice of Nigeria's democracy rest on tribalism. From the First Republic to the Fourth Republic, tribalism remains the fundamental determinant of leadership positions at all levels. For example, slogans like 'sai baba', 'emi lo kan' and many others are tribal-based sentiments in Nigeria's politics that has shaped democracy to a large extent. The first slogan mentioned above presupposes that it must be 'Buhari' as the president or no other candidate, the second presupposes it is my turn to rule therefore any other parameter of determining competency of candidates must be thrown away. The danger that tribalism poses as an idol of democracy is that competence and professionalism are considered irrelevant. Furthermore, the atrocious impact of tribalism is manifested in the inability to fight corruption due to the practice in Nigeria that often forbids citizens from exposing or prosecuting fellow tribesmen for corrupt practices. In all, tribalism divides people, provoke conflict and war, derails governance, prevents national unity of resources and revenues, slows down economic development, and made the country a crippled giant (Osaghae, 2023, p.36) .Under such condition, democracy cannot make things better but worse, that is one of the primary reasons Nigeria is moving from bad governance to worse governance in its practice of democracy.

### **Idols of the Cave: Religion and Cultural Inclinations as Obstacles to Democracy in Nigeria**

The Idols of the Cave represent the personal biases influences that shape individual perspectives. In Nigeria, these biases are entrenched in religion and cultural influences on individuals. The ubiquitous influence of religion, principally Islam and Christianity creates a disunion that extends into the political sphere. The politicisation of religious identities along with the multicultural nature of Nigeria has produced prejudice and intensified conflicts, particularly in the northern regions and Eastern regions affected by religious crisis inherent in Boko Haram insurgency and cultural crisis as manifested in IPOB separatist movement primary based on cultural affiliation respectively. Ideally, religion ought to be a matter of private affairs in a democratic state, without such approach, it would be impossible to have freedom of religion. When there is no separation between religion and the state in a democratic state, such state is bound

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to have constitutional cum legal crisis. Such is the state of affairs in Nigeria where the state lay claims to being democratic but with higher percentage of her constitution yielding to religious laws. Despite the fact that Nigeria lay claim to be a secular state in her constitution, the same constitution contradicts it declaration by not giving attention to the various major religions in Nigeria equal attention. It is therefore necessary to state that;

A constitutional declaration of secularity means, first and foremost that the state does not wish to invoke religion as a justification for its authority, actions and decision. It must be emphasized that proclamation of secularity, both historically as well as presently in the majority of cases denote official impartiality in matters of religion rather than official 'irreligiosity'. Secular states in that respect should certainly not to be confused with declared atheist or anti-religious states (Temperman, 2010, p.112).

A religious-based government cannot be democratic in nature because of the necessity of adhering to the tenets of the religion which at times do not consider the minority or the non-adherent of such religion. Democracy is not tantamount to anti-religious order but a platform for equality where religion is placed as a private affair. Just as each individual has his own cave that stand as an obstacle to knowledge as shown above in Baconian idols of the cave, in Nigeria, democracy obstructed by individual's political inherent in the modus operandi of political godfathers; "in Nigeria politics, the variant of patronage culture that rules is known as godfatherism" (Nwankpa, 2023, p.76). Godfathers in Nigeria democracy in an ideal sense ought to be mentors with the people's interest, on contrary political godfathers are sentimental influential wealthy individuals that hardly have the interest of the people, greediness defines their attitude and operations to a large extent. Igbini and Okolie (2020, p.94) define a godfather as "someone who has developed unimaginable respect and supporters (electorate) in the society and enjoys a well-organized political network and widespread acceptance from the voters that could ensure success for representatives of his preference". Political godfathers system affect democratic consolidation in Nigeria because of their extremes which has turned mentorship to lordship over their political godsons:

Democratic godfathers use their power to exclude anyone from participating in Nigerian politics; they are political gatekeepers, dictating who can and cannot engage in politics. Since "the reigning

godson is at pains to fulfil the whims and caprices of the godfather among other conflicting demands on the scarce resources," this type of condition encourages mediocrity and financial corruption. The interest of the greater majority is savagely exploited by the government's finances (Oghuvbu, 2023, p.68).

Decision making to key democratic tenets at party level are often affected by godfatherism, it limit effectiveness of democracy at the various political parties because many prominent political parties are the dynasty of political godfathers. Under such situation, there cannot be any form of consensus decision, it is the will and caprices of the political godfather that determines the direction of political parties. The so called members of political parties have little or nothing to contribute to internal democracy at the party level. It is on this note that Momoh (2014, p.91) argued that "the influence and power of godfathers have continued to shape and reshape the nature of internal democracy within political parties and this continues to play a significant role in understanding the crises in political parties in Nigeria. Not only do godfathers influence politics within their parties but they have also sought to influence other civil societies that could become instruments in their bid to perpetuate their political powers." In full, the politics of godfatherism is antithetical to the tenets of ideal democracy, it denies peaceful coexistence, law and order, establish electoral malpractice and greediness. The system of godfatherism is therefore a pathway to authoritarianism rather than democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

There are plethora of examples of the idols of democracy analogous to the Baconian idols of the cave in all the states in Nigeria. The problem in Rivers State in South-South Nigeria remain one of the most recent example, where the former governor allegedly insisted on getting certain percentage of the state allocation and the state government apparatus. Effort to liberate the State from the shackles of the godfather was one of the reasons allegedly responsible for the declaration of the state of emergency in River's state. The veracity of the aforementioned allegation are subject that would be laid bare in due time.

### **Idols of the Marketplace: The Power of Language and Communication**

In Baconian term, the idols of the marketplace critiques how language can use as a tool to falsify understanding, within such perspective words are used for the purpose of manipulating reality in the public discourse. It is therefore worthy to note that misleading rhetoric is a device for establishing veil of ignorance that endorse

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misunderstandings of the discourse on political matter that relate to the citizenry. In Nigeria, the idol of the marketplace is often manifested through deliberate deceptive political communication embedded in political parties cum their candidates' manifestoes and deceptive campaign promises. Politicians in Nigeria under democratic dispensation habitually employ euphemisms and unfathomable language to confuse their true intentions. The intentional use of language for manipulative purposes indicate how language can become weapon of massive destruction in the hands of amoral politicians. Arthur Koestler affirmed the danger of using language in a manipulative manner when he held that, "man's deadliest weapon is language. He is susceptible to being hypnotized by slogans as he is to infectious diseases. And where there is an epidemic, the group mind takes over" (Koestler, 1973, p.132). The use of language in its dangerous form by most Nigerian politician hinges on the fact that subtle strategies are frequently deployed to achieve their selfish aims. "The language choice of Nigerian political actors is most time persuasive and manipulative so it can influence the opinions of the listeners or electorates just to get their support or change of attitudes" (Inegbe, 2024, p..215). The danger of abusing political communication as an oppressive devise is commonly entrenched in five dimensions of political communication, these are;

The first is the tradition of rhetorical analysis of public political discourse.... The second,... how different governments use propaganda/persuasive messages to influence public opinion... the third, the tradition of voting studies... the fourth is the study of mass media effects... and fifth is the tradition of institution study of the press and government in their relation to public opinion (Lin 2004, 70).

These various dimensions of abuses and misuse of political communication are prevalent in Nigeria. There are bound to be almost absolute failure of democracy when political communication is abused. The case of failure to be able to consolidate democracy in Nigeria can easily be traced to the abuse of political communication in the various dimensions shown above. Social media, news media, political parties' rallies and advertisement are the avenue commonly use to disseminate the aberrations of political communications in Nigeria.

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**Idols of the Theatre: The Influence of Ideological Constructs as Obstacle to Democracy in Nigeria**

The idols of the theatre, critiques the time-honoured belief systems and ideologies that obstruct objective analysis. For there to be consolidation of democracy, one must be ready to let go of old belief systems and ideologies; “without emptying one's mind of the old ways, no new progress could be made. In other words, holding tenaciously to extant doctrines without any effort to critically scrutinize them in line with current realities will continually distort the progress of knowledge; and in a way, the growth and development of any given society” (Ishaya, 2023, pp.147-148). In cognizance of Bacon’s explication of these idols, it was shown that these systems of thoughts become similar to theatrical performances that has the capacity of diverting the citizenry from the substance of the reality that is affecting them. In Nigeria, these idols are manifested in the challenges posed by imbedded political ideologies and patronage systems that dominate the democratic scenery.

In Nigeria, there are certain practices that were established throughout her history that has become a dogmatic system of belief. One of such examples is the amalgamation of the North and South that took place in 1914. Though, the union was meant to ease administrative control of the colony, it has now become a dogma for the two regions to remain undivided and therefore rotate power by zoning key political positions without preference to professionalism and competence. In an attempt to carry everyone along, the ideologies entrenched in the hypostatic political union that form Nigeria as a nation has proven to be antithetical to democratic consolidation. Homogeneity is more compatible to democracy than heterogeneity, the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria pave way for the idol of the theatre. For example, the principle of federal character that is meant to establish quota for all available positions in government is undemocratic in nature and it does not permit the best to be place in a position to contribute to the development of Nigeria.

Stereotyping is one of the manifestations of the idols of the theatre in Nigeria, this is evidence in the culture that people of different regions, religious or ethnic groups often hold stereotypes about other groups of people without cognizance of the characteristics or uniqueness of individual or circumstances of each situation. To this end, the fundamental determinant of political leadership position are religion, ethnicity and region. In this regard, religious leaders, regional leaders and traditional leaders are often equipped with the capacity to determine who their follower are to vote for in election and violence are also used as a means of ensuring the emergence of the

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unqualified. Under this condition, minority groups are not meant for key political positions no matter their level of competence.

For democracy to be worth its salt, the principle of separation of power and the rule of law are sine qua non. Even though the tripartite institutions of democracy are in existence in Nigeria, in practice what is obtainable is the dominance of the executive over the legislative and judiciary arms of government. The key positions in judiciary the supposed last hope of the common man are determined by the executive arm of the government. This remains one of the main sources of unconsolidated nature of democracy in Nigeria because the appointee would always pay allegiance his or her appointer. The lack of separation of powers in practice in Nigeria's approach to democracy is exemplified in the National Assembly operating as an appendage to the presidency where the legislative arm can hardly reject any form of abnormal request from the presidency. This count as one of the reasons Nigeria is indebted to many nations and organization, request to borrow even when not necessary are not rejected. In the same way, mismanagement of funds are hardly questioned by the legislative arm of the government in Nigeria. Moreover, the focus on the will of the executive by the legislative arm of the government where alignments are often based on political parties, ethnicity or religious identities has often acted as a theatrical backdrop, diverting attention from pressing issues such as poverty, infrastructure, and education. The divide-and-rule tactics employed by political actors underpin this paradigm, leading to greater alienation and disillusionment among citizens.

### **Smashing the Idols of Democracy in Nigeria**

The idols of the mind and by extension the idols of democracy as shown above are obstacles to truth and knowledge that serve as a veil covering truth. It is therefore necessary to note that "truth might be hard to find, but we can take steps to eliminate common cognitive biases" (Thomson, 2022). It such steps Francis Bacon took by the kind of solution offered. The key step taken was inherent in recognizing the idols for what they are; "once we see that we have certain biases, we can take pains to rid ourselves of them. Of course, it's impossible to be entirely free of prejudice...But it is possible to minimize biases and try to overcome them in some ways" (Thomson, 2022). As a strategy to overcoming the ills of the idols, Bacon finds himself with the obligation finding remedy to idols. His remedy is deep-rooted in "calling up of notions and axioms by true *Induction* is certainly a sovereign remedy for restraining the *Idols* and driving them off. But even just drawing attention to them is of great use" (Bacon & Rees, 2004, p.79). Such attention would necessarily help in taking appropriate step in casting down

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the idols of the mind and possibly the idols of democracy. In addressing the challenges posed by the idols identified in this essay, a more than formal observance of democratic structures that demands a deliberate transformation of the cognitive, cultural, and institutional foundations of governance in Nigeria are required. In line with the Baconian framework adopted in the study, the following approbations are proposed to “purge” the idols undermining democratic consolidation.

First, to counter the Idols of the Tribe manifested in tribalism and ethnic politics, there is a need to emphasize national identity over parochial loyalties. To do this, civic education ought to be intensified at all levels to encourage patriotism, shared values, and the preeminence of merit in leadership selection process. Electoral and party systems reformation are needed to discourage ethnic-based mobilization, while institutions must administer strict penalties against discriminatory political practices. Sortition and the use of advanced technology should be inculcated into the electoral laws. Sortition would necessary place competent and professional persons in the right position without biases. The National Orientation Agency and other similar agencies ought to be positioned to encourage issue-based politics rather than identity politics that is capable destroying the unity of multilayered cultures in Nigeria. These steps will help in shifting public discourse toward competence and accountability. Second, in addressing the Idols of the Cave, particularly religious bias and godfatherism, strengthening the secular character of the state and deepening internal party democracy is a necessity. Neutrality must be maintained by the state based on the principle of openness in matters relating to religion, ensuring equal treatment of all faiths as a means of preventing the politicization of religion should be given priority. Concurrently, legal and institutional frameworks should be reinforced to curb the influence of political godfathers by promoting transparent candidate selection processes, campaign finance regulations, and the empowerment of independent electoral bodies. Political participation should be a precondition for key documentation process in banking and other important public service entities.

Third, to mitigate the Idols of the Marketplace associated with manipulative language and deceptive political communication, there must be greater regulation and accountability in political messaging. Independent media institutions should be reinforced to provide fact-based reporting and counter misinformation. Civic literacy programs that is capably of equipping citizens with critical thinking skills to assess political rhetoric should be given appropriate attention, while laws against false campaign promises and disinformation should be imposed. Promoting transparency and integrity in governance communication will help rebuild trust between leaders and

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citizens. Fourth, overcoming the Idols of the Theatre involves critical re-assessment of entrenched ideologies and institutional practices that obstruct democratic progress. Policies such as federal character and zoning should be reviewed to balance inclusivity with meritocracy. Strengthening the separation of powers is obligatory for consolidating democracy: the judiciary and legislature must operate independently of executive influence, with clear safeguards against political interference. Institutional reforms should prioritize accountability, professionalism, and adherence to the rule of law. Key democratic positions lie the leadership of the electoral regulatory body, the judiciary and the legislative should not be determined by the executive. In order to get this done, elections ought to commence from the local government level, the state and the federal government.

As a final point, a broader cultural shift is compulsory. Democratic consolidation in Nigeria hinge on cultivating intellectual virtues such as critical inquiry, openness to evidence, and resistance to entrenched dogma and ideologies that established the nation Nigeria on a shaky foundations. Civil society organizations, educational institutions, and the media all have crucial roles to play in promoting this mindset. Without such a transformation, democratic institutions will continue to operate superficially. In all, the path to a consolidated democracy in Nigeria lies in both structural reforms and a reorientation of public consciousness. Only by addressing these underlying “idols” can democracy evolve from a nominal system into a functional and effective instrument for national development, unity and peace.

### **Concluding Remarks**

To sum up, while liberal democracy remains a compelling ideal for achieving good governance and societal well-being, its mere adoption does not guarantee its realization. The Nigerian experience demonstrates that democracy without genuine consolidation becomes an empty formality rather than a transformative system. By reinterpreting the challenges of Nigerian democracy through the lens of Francis Bacon’s idols, this essay has shown that the obstacles are not only institutional but deeply rooted in cognitive, cultural, and ideological distortions that are inherent in tribalism, religious and personal biases, manipulative political communication, and rigid belief systems. These “idols of democracy” continue to undermine rational judgment, accountability, and national cohesion.

For Nigeria to move beyond the façade of democracy to its substantive ideals, there must be a conscious and collective effort to purge these idols. This requires cultivating critical thinking, promoting competence and professionalism over sentiment,

ensuring the neutrality of state institutions, and fostering a political culture grounded in transparency, inclusiveness, and the rule of law. Only through such deliberate intellectual and structural reorientation can democracy in Nigeria evolve from a fragile practice into a truly consolidated system capable of delivering development, justice, and prosperity for all.

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## **Pragmatic Reconstruction of the Philosophical and Pedagogical Foundations of Nigerian Secondary Education for Contemporary Relevance**

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### **Abstract**

Nigerian secondary education continues to face a significant gap between its policy goals of self-reliance, national integration, and functional competence and the prevailing realities of rote learning, examination-driven pedagogy, and skills mismatch. This paper advocates a pragmatic reconstruction of its philosophical and pedagogical foundations, drawing on John Dewey's philosophy of experience, inquiry, and democratic education. Through critical analysis of pre-colonial indigenous systems, colonial legacies, and post-independence reforms, particularly the National Policy on Education, the study highlights persistent challenges such as teacher-centered methods, infrastructural deficits, and weak policy implementation. The proposed pragmatic framework repositions education as the continuous reconstruction of experience for effective problem-solving and democratic living. It recommends problem-centered interdisciplinary curricula, experiential and student-centered pedagogies, authentic competency-based assessment, and robust teacher professional development. By integrating indigenous functionality with 21st-century

demands like digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and sustainability, this approach bridges theory and practice while respecting Nigeria's cultural diversity. Ultimately, a Deweyan pragmatic orientation offers a coherent pathway to transform Nigerian secondary education into a dynamic tool for individual empowerment and national development. The reconstruction holds important implications for curriculum design, teacher education, and policy reform in Nigeria and comparable contexts.

**Keywords:** Pragmatism, Nigerian secondary education, Dewey, Pedagogical reconstruction, Contemporary relevance.

### **Introduction**

Nigerian secondary education has undergone significant structural changes since its inception in 1859, yet questions persist about its philosophical coherence and pedagogical relevance. The 1977 National Policy on Education affirmed that every educational system requires a guiding philosophy, but policy and practice in Nigeria have remained largely eclectic, drawing inconsistently from colonial essentialism, post-independence pragmatism, and African communal ideals. The result is a system marked by a gap between stated goals of self-reliance, national integration, and functional competence, and the realities of rote learning, inadequate skills development, and weak alignment with societal needs.

This disjuncture reflects a deeper issue, which is the absence of an explicit, critically examined philosophical and pedagogical foundation to inform curriculum design, teacher education, and classroom practice. Without such a foundation, reforms risk becoming cyclical and superficial, responding to immediate pressures rather than shaping a coherent educational trajectory. Pragmatism offers a viable framework for reconstruction. Emphasizing experience, problem-solving, and the reconstruction of knowledge for practical consequences, pragmatism bridges the divide between theory and practice, school and society. A pragmatic reconstruction does not discard ethical and cultural values but re-positions them within a dynamic process of inquiry, reflection, and adaptation. For Nigerian secondary education, this approach provides a basis for rethinking aims, pedagogy, and assessment in light of contemporary demands in technological change, youth unemployment, democratic participation, and global competitiveness.

This paper argues for a pragmatic reconstruction of the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of Nigerian secondary education to enhance its contemporary relevance. Drawing on pragmatist philosophy and insights from the Nigerian context, it

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proposes a framework that integrates intellectual rigor, practical competence, and ethical responsibility. The study contributes to ongoing debates on educational reform by moving beyond structural critique to articulate a coherent philosophical basis for sustainable change.

### **Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Nigerian Secondary Education**

The historical and philosophical foundations of Nigerian secondary education reflect a dynamic evolution shaped by indigenous practices, colonial interventions, and post-independence national aspirations. Scholarly works highlight a transition from functional, community-embedded systems to more formalized structures, with persistent tensions between relevance and inherited models.

#### **Pre-Colonial Indigenous Foundations**

Pre-colonial education in Nigeria was informal, pragmatic, and deeply integrated into societal life. Indigenous systems focused on holistic development, transmitting practical skills, moral values, cultural heritage, and social roles through apprenticeships, oral traditions, and communal participation (Jabaar, 2023, p. 38). Education then prepared individuals for productive membership in their ethnic communities, emphasizing functionality over abstract theory.

Across ethnic groups (Ibibio, Annang, Efik, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa-Fulani and so on), learning occurred via observation, imitation, and direct engagement in agriculture, crafts, governance, and conflict resolution. This approach blended cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, fostering self-reliance and communal harmony (Fafunwa, 1974; Jabaar, 2023, pp. 40-42). Islamic education in northern Nigeria, dating back centuries, complemented this through Quranic schools that emphasized literacy, arithmetic, and religious knowledge (Adeniran, n.d., p. 5). Literature portrays these systems as adaptive and context-responsive, though limited in scalability for a modern nation-state (Mkpa, 2012, p. 15; Joseph, 2007).

#### **Colonial Foundations and Disruptions**

Western education arrived with Christian missionaries in the mid-19th century, beginning with primary efforts and extending to secondary institutions like CMS Grammar School, Lagos (1859). Missionary education prioritized evangelization, English literacy, and clerical training, often marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems (Oyelade & Abolade, 2018, p. 22). British colonial administration formalized control through education ordinances (1887, 1916, 1926), establishing an elitist, literary-

focused secondary education system aimed at producing interpreters and low-level administrators. Access remained limited, particularly in the North due to indirect rule policies (Nanbak, 2020, pp. 128-130).

The Phelps-Stokes Commission (1920s) advocated some vocational elements, yet the dominant philosophy remained assimilationist and essentialist (Molagun, 1999, p. 3). Scholars critique this era for fostering cultural alienation, dependency on white-collar jobs, and a philosophical dualism that disconnected education from local realities (Garba, 2012, p. 55; Adeyinka, 1988). By independence, secondary education retained strong colonial imprints of examination orientation and theoretical bias.

### **Post-Independence Reforms and National Policy Foundations**

Post-1960, Nigeria pursued indigenization to redress colonial legacies. The 1969 National Curriculum Conference critiqued the inherited system's irrelevance, leading to the first National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977, revised in 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2013. The policy introduced the 6-3-3-4 system (later evolving to 9-3-4), emphasizing diversification, vocationalization at the junior secondary level, and relevance to national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013, p. 1).

The NPE articulates a philosophy centered on developing the "sound and effective citizen" through national consciousness, value inculcation, skill acquisition, and equal opportunity. It aligns education with five cardinal national goals: a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united self-reliant nation, a land of bright opportunities, and a dynamic economy (FRN, 2013, pp. 2-3). For secondary education, goals include producing trainable graduates equipped for further education or the workforce. Philosophically, the NPE draws eclectically from idealism (moral and knowledge transmission), realism (structured content), progressivism (learner-centered elements), and pragmatism (functional skills), though implementation often favors the former (Uba, 2022, p. 45; Molagun, 1999, pp. 4-6).

### **Contemporary Philosophical Critiques and Gaps**

Recent literature identifies persistent foundational weaknesses, including examination-driven pedagogy, inadequate integration of indigenous knowledge, and misalignment with 21st-century demands such as digital literacy and entrepreneurship (Okpokpo, 2021, pp. 12-15; Oyelade, 2018, p. 8). Colonial legacies continue to influence rote learning and certification focus, contributing to skills mismatches and youth unemployment. Calls for reconstruction emphasize pragmatic, Dewey-inspired approaches that prioritize experiential learning, problem-solving, and democratic values

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tailored to Nigerian contexts (Akinsanya, 2012; Okpokpo, 2021, p. 18). Equity concerns such as urban-rural divides, gender disparities, and regional imbalances further highlight the need for stronger foundational alignment.

### **Synthesis**

The aforementioned literature converges on the richness of indigenous functionality, the disruptive yet transformative impact of colonialism, and the aspirational yet incompletely realized philosophy of the NPE. Based on that premise, a pragmatic reconstruction is widely advocated to bridge historical foundations with contemporary relevance, honoring cultural roots while addressing global and local challenges (Jabaar, 2023, p. 70; FRN, 2013, p. 5).

### **Current Pedagogical Foundations and Challenges of Nigerian Secondary Education**

The pedagogical foundations of Nigerian secondary education, as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (NPE), emphasize a diversified curriculum aimed at producing graduates (secondary school leavers) equipped with relevant knowledge, skills, and values for personal and national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013, p. 1). However, in practice, pedagogy remains predominantly traditional, teacher-centered, and examination-driven, creating significant gaps between policy aspirations and classroom realities.

### **Pedagogical Foundations in Policy and Practice**

According to the NPE, secondary education comprises a 6-year program divided into 3 years of junior secondary (basic) and 3 years of senior secondary education. The curriculum includes core subjects, pre-vocational electives at the junior level, and specialized streams (science, arts, commercial, and technical) at the senior level (FRN, 2013, pp. 18-20). The intended pedagogy promotes a blend of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development, with an emphasis on vocationalization, entrepreneurship, and national unity.

In theory, this reflects elements of progressivism and pragmatism, encouraging active learning and skill acquisition. In reality, implementation favors lecture-based, rote memorization methods rooted in colonial grammar-school traditions. Teachers often serve as primary knowledge transmitters, with students positioned as passive recipients (Nanbak, 2020, p. 129; Ajadi, 2024, p. 45). Assessment is heavily summative, centered on high-stakes examinations such as the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE),

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West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), and National Examinations Council (NECO) exams.

### Major Pedagogical Challenges

Contemporary scholarship identifies several interconnected challenges that undermine effective pedagogy:

1. **Teacher-Centered Methods and Limited Innovation:** Most secondary school instruction relies on traditional chalk-and-talk approaches, with limited adoption of student-centered, inquiry-based, or technology-enhanced methods. The kind of method is described by Freire as “banking education” (Freire, 2005, p71). Large class sizes (often 40-100 students) make interactive pedagogies difficult to implement (Okenwa-Fadele, 2025, p. 12). Many teachers lack adequate training in modern strategies such as project-based learning, collaborative discussions, or differentiated instruction (Ajadi, 2024, pp. 48-50).
2. **Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources:** Overcrowded classrooms, insufficient laboratories, libraries, and teaching materials severely constrain experiential and practical learning. In many schools, especially in rural areas, basic facilities like electricity and functional ICT tools are absent, hindering digital literacy integration (Suleiman, 2020, p. 15; Lohnan, 2019, p. 78). This results in a persistent theory-practice gap, particularly in science and technical subjects.
3. **Teacher Quality and Professional Development:** There is a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in specialized subjects. Many practicing teachers lack ongoing professional development, leading to outdated pedagogical skills and low motivation due to poor remuneration and working conditions (Bodang & Lengkat, n.d.). This contributes to inconsistent curriculum delivery and weak instructional supervision (Suleiman, 2020, pp. 20-22).
4. **Relevance and Skills Mismatch:** The curriculum struggles to address 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, digital skills, entrepreneurship, and sustainability. High youth unemployment rates signal a disconnect between school learning and labor market needs. Vocational components of the 6-3-3-4/9-3-4 system remain poorly implemented, with many schools reverting to academic, examination-focused streams (Ejike & Oke, n.d., p. 10).
5. **Assessment Practices and Equity Issues:** Over-reliance on summative examinations promotes cramming rather than deep understanding or competency development. Equity challenges, including urban-rural divides, gender disparities, insecurity

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(especially in conflict zones), and socioeconomic barriers, further exacerbate pedagogical inequalities (Awoyemi & Ademodi, 2022; Azubuike, *et al.*, 2024).

6. **Policy Implementation Gaps:** While the NPE provides a solid philosophical base, frequent policy inconsistencies, inadequate funding (often below UNESCO's 26% benchmark), and weak monitoring mechanisms hinder pedagogical reforms (Lohnan, 2019, p. 80; Ejike & Oke, n.d.). These challenges reflect a foundational misalignment: education is often viewed as preparation for certification rather than holistic growth through lived, relevant experiences.

### **Implications for Pragmatic Reconstruction: Philosophical and Pedagogical Reconstructions**

A pragmatic reconstruction of Nigerian secondary education, grounded in John Dewey's philosophy, offers a viable pathway to bridge the gap between historical legacies, current challenges, and contemporary demands. Pragmatism views education not as the transmission of fixed knowledge but as the continuous reconstruction of experience for effective problem-solving and democratic living (Dewey, 1916/2004, p. 78; Okpokpo, 2021, p. 18). In the Nigerian context, this reconstruction must integrate indigenous functionality, address colonial distortions, and respond to 21st-century realities such as technological disruption, youth unemployment, climate change, and cultural pluralism.

#### **Philosophical Reconstruction**

Philosophically, pragmatic reconstruction requires a shift from the eclectic but inconsistently applied mix of idealism, realism, and limited progressivism in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013, pp. 2-3) towards a more coherent instrumentalist and experiential orientation. First, experience as the core of education must be prioritized. Dewey argued that genuine learning arises from active engagement with real-life problems rather than passive absorption of abstract content (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). For Nigerian secondary education, this implies rooting the curriculum in students' immediate socio-cultural and economic realities in agriculture, local entrepreneurship, environmental challenges in the Niger Delta or Sahel, and digital transformation in urban centers (Oyelade, 2018, p. 12; Jabaar, 2023, p. 65). Indigenous knowledge systems, previously marginalized, should be pragmatically integrated as living resources rather than relics, fostering cultural pride and relevance.

Second, democratic values and social intelligence should form the ethical foundation. Nigerian education must cultivate active citizenship, collaboration, and

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critical inquiry to support national unity and democratic consolidation (FRN, 2013, p. 5). A pragmatic philosophy rejects authoritarian transmission models in favour of classrooms as miniature democratic communities where students co-construct knowledge (Okpokpo, 2021, p. 22). This addresses colonial legacies of elitism and passivity while responding to contemporary issues such as insecurity, ethnic tensions, and governance challenges.

Third, instrumentalism and adaptability replace absolutist truths. Knowledge is valued for its practical consequences: “what works” in solving Nigerian problems (Molagun, 1999, p. 7). This philosophical shift moves away from certification obsession toward education as preparation for lifelong learning in a volatile knowledge economy. It demands continuous policy review mechanisms that treat the National Policy on Education as a living document, open to reconstruction based on empirical outcomes and societal feedback (Uba, 2022, p. 48).

### **Pedagogical Reconstruction**

Pedagogically, pragmatic reconstruction calls for transformative practices that operationalize Deweyan principles of “learning by doing” and reflective thinking in Nigerian secondary schools. Attempts at achieving this should concentrate on the following:

1. **Curriculum Reconstruction:** The curriculum should become integrated and problem-centered rather than fragmented and subject-dominated. Core academic subjects must connect with pre-vocational and technical modules through interdisciplinary projects. For example, science education could center on local challenges such as renewable energy solutions, climate-smart agriculture, or public health issues (Ejike & Oke, n.d., p. 14). Digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and sustainability should be mainstreamed across all streams, modernizing the 6-3-3-4/9-3-4 structure while retaining its diversification intent (FRN, 2013, p. 19; Ajadi, 2024, p. 52).
2. **Teaching and Learning Methods:** Teachers must transition from knowledge transmitters to facilitators of inquiry. Student-centered approaches such as project-based learning, collaborative problem-solving, simulations, field trips, and technology-enhanced blended learning should predominate (Okenwa-Fadele, 2025, p. 15). Reflective journals and action research by both students and teachers would promote metacognition and continuous improvement. This directly counters the current teacher-centered, lecture-based dominance documented in Nigerian classrooms (Nanbak, 2020, p. 130).

3. **Assessments Reform:** Assessments should balance formative and summative practices, emphasizing authentic demonstration of competencies through portfolios, exhibitions, peer reviews, and real-world problem solutions rather than sole reliance on high-stakes examinations (Suleiman, 2020, p. 23). Such a shift aligns with pragmatic evaluation of learning by its practical fruits, reducing examination malpractice and promoting deeper understanding.
4. **Teacher Education and Professional Development:** Reconstructed teacher preparation programmes must emphasize pragmatic pedagogies, reflective practice, and action research. Continuous professional development should be mandatory, supported by mentoring and communities of practice, to equip teachers for facilitative roles (Bodang & Lengkat, n.d., p. 9).
5. **Contextual and Technological Integration:** Reconstruction must address equity by leveraging low-cost technologies and community resources while bridging urban-rural divides. Indigenous pedagogies (storytelling, apprenticeships) should be blended with modern tools for hybrid effectiveness (Jabaar, 2023, p. 68).

### **Overall Implications**

This dual philosophical and pedagogical reconstruction positions secondary education as a dynamic instrument for national development rather than a static colonial inheritance. It requires political commitment, increased funding, stakeholder collaboration (government, schools, communities, private sector), and pilot implementation with rigorous monitoring. Success would yield adaptable, innovative, and socially responsible secondary school graduates capable of driving Nigeria's progress in a complex global landscape.

### **Implementation Considerations and Barriers**

Successful pragmatic reconstruction of Nigerian secondary education demands careful attention to implementation processes. While philosophical and pedagogical shifts inspired by Dewey offer a compelling vision, translating them into practice requires systemic coordination, resource mobilization, and adaptive management. This section outlines critical implementation considerations and identifies major barriers, drawing on pragmatic principles of experimentation, reflection, and contextual responsiveness (Dewey, 1938, p. 45; Okpokpo, 2021, p. 25).

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## Key Implementation Considerations

Effective implementation should follow a pragmatic, iterative approach that treat reforms as experiments to be tested, evaluated, and refined based on real outcomes rather than top-down imposition.

1. **Policy Alignment and Legal Framework:** The National Policy on Education (NPE) must be revised to explicitly embed pragmatic principles, with clear guidelines for experiential learning, interdisciplinary curricula, and competency-based assessment (FRN, 2013, p. 5; Uba, 2022, p. 50). Implementation requires harmonization across federal, state, and local governments. A dedicated Pragmatic Education Reform Framework could operationalize recommendations through phased rollouts, starting with pilot programs in selected states representing Nigeria's diverse geopolitical zones.
2. **Funding and Resource Allocation:** Sustainable financing is essential. Government should meet or exceed the UNESCO 15-20% benchmark for education budgetary allocation, with specific ring-fencing for infrastructure, teacher development, and technology (Lohnan, 2019, p. 82). Public-private partnerships (PPPs) involving technology firms, banks, and philanthropists can support digital tools and vocational workshops. Funding models should prioritize equity, directing more resources to underserved rural and conflict-affected areas.
3. **Teacher Capacity Building:** Teachers are central to pragmatic reconstruction. Pre-service and in-service training programmes must be redesigned around Deweyan facilitation skills, action research, and reflective practice (Ajadi, 2024, p. 55; Bodang & Lengkat, n.d., p. 11). Continuous Professional Development (CPD) should be mandatory, supported by mentoring networks and digital platforms. Incentives such as improved remuneration, career progression, and recognition for innovative teaching can enhance motivation and retention.
4. **Infrastructure and Technological Integration:** Addressing infrastructure deficits requires a multi-year modernization plan. This includes building or upgrading laboratories, libraries, workshops, and reliable internet connectivity. Blended learning models using low-bandwidth technologies (for example, offline digital content, solar-powered devices) can bridge access gaps (Okenwa-Fadele, 2025, p. 18). Community involvement in maintenance and utilization of school facilities aligns with indigenous communal education traditions.
5. **Curriculum Development and Assessment Reform:** Curriculum agencies like Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should lead collaborative reviews incorporating local problems into learning modules.

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Assessment systems must shift toward continuous, formative, and authentic methods, including project portfolios and community impact assessments. Stakeholder consultations with parents, employers, and civil society ensure relevance (Ejike & Oke, n.d., p. 16).

6. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Scaling:** Implementation should incorporate pragmatic feedback loops. Robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks using mixed-methods data can track progress and enable mid-course corrections. Successful pilot outcomes should inform national scaling, with flexibility for regional adaptations.
7. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Broad ownership is vital. This includes partnerships between government, teacher unions, school administrators, NGOs, traditional institutions, and the private sector. Community engagement ensures cultural relevance and sustainability.

### Major Barriers to Implementation

Despite the promise of reconstruction, several entrenched barriers persist:

1. **Chronic Underfunding:** Nigeria's education sector remains chronically underfunded, with competing national priorities often taking precedence. This limits infrastructure development and teacher welfare (Suleiman, 2020, p. 25; Lohnan, 2019, p. 81).
2. **Resistance to Change:** Teachers, administrators, and parents accustomed to examination-driven systems may resist student-centered approaches perceived as risky or time-consuming. Entrenched colonial-era mindsets and fear of lowered standards pose cultural barriers (Nanbak, 2020, p. 131; Oyelade, 2018, p. 15).
3. **Capacity and Human Resource Constraints:** Shortage of adequately trained teachers and educational friendly leaders hampers reform. High teacher-pupil ratios and poor working conditions exacerbate implementation difficulties (Ajadi, 2024, p. 50).
4. **Infrastructural and Digital Divide:** Uneven development between urban and rural areas, coupled with unreliable power supply, creates practical obstacles to experiential and technology-supported pedagogies (Okenwa-Fadele, 2025, p. 14).
5. **Political and Administrative Instability:** Frequent policy changes, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and corruption undermine continuity. Insecurity in parts of the country further disrupts schooling (Amnesty International, 2024; UNICEF, 2025).
6. **Equity and Inclusivity:** Addressing gender, disability, and regional disparities requires additional targeted resources that are often unavailable.

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### Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

Pragmatic implementation demands flexibility and persistence. Pilot testing in diverse contexts can generate evidence to build political will. Advocacy campaigns highlighting successful case studies (both local and international) can reduce resistance. International development partners can provide technical and financial support during the transition phase, while strong accountability mechanisms minimize corruption.

### Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that Nigerian secondary education's persistent challenges: rote learning, examination-driven teaching, skills mismatch, and limited experiential learning arise from the absence of a coherent philosophical foundation. Though the National Policy on Education sets ambitious goals, its eclectic approach has yielded fragmented outcomes still shaped by colonial legacies. A pragmatic reconstruction grounded in John Dewey's philosophy provides a viable, context-responsive pathway. By prioritising active experience, reflective inquiry, problem-solving, and democratic values, it transforms education from passive knowledge transmission into a tool for developing adaptable, innovative, and socially responsible citizens. This framework effectively integrates indigenous functionality with 21st-century demands such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and sustainability. Successful implementation demands political will, adequate funding, teacher retraining, and stakeholder collaboration. In true Deweyan spirit, the ultimate test lies in practical outcomes: whether the system produces competent graduates capable of advancing Nigeria's development. Reconstructing secondary education on pragmatic foundations is thus an urgent national priority.

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## **Immanuel Kant's Input in Epistemology and its Application to the Game of Football**

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### **Abstract**

Immanuel Kant is one of the major influential figures in modern philosophy. Kant's input in philosophy is enormous as well as elsewhere. He synthesized early modern rationalism and empiricism, set the terms for much of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophy. He exercised a significant influence today in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics, and other fields. In the preface of his second edition of the *critique of pure reason*, Kant demonstrated what is called Copernican revolution in philosophy. This revolution is also called Kant's new turn in philosophy. He made a critical analysis of the power and limits of our mind and our ability to understand the world we find ourselves in. Kant addressed the traditional philosophical assumption that our cognition must conform to the objects. This view suggests that our knowledge and understanding are shaped and constrained by the way objects exist independently of us. Kant's synthesis in the two epistemological schools is impactful and applicable in the game of football as well as elsewhere. The researcher adopted an expository method to show how Kant's epistemic input is commonly associated with football. Since in a football game all players played complementary roles to form a team, and

the understanding of roles by each player has establish the power and limits of their skills. The research therefore used Kant's input in epistemology analogically using football game to show the richness of Kant in epistemology.

## **Introduction**

The problem of determining the certainty of knowledge started long ago by philosophers of the ancient tradition down through generations to the contemporary era. This argument span from the ancient to the contemporary era since philosophers wishes to know what knowledge means. Since the term "epistemology," which by derivation means the study of knowledge, is commonly employed to signify the study of the certitude of human knowledge. "Certitude" is here used to denote the conscious possession of truth, that is, the act or state of mind wherein the mind possesses truth and knows that it possesses it. In the account of epistemology which we have been discussing it is set down that the existence of the mind's power to acquire truth is the chief problem of epistemology. Philosophers differs greatly on the position of the certainty of knowledge leading to the split of two schools of thought in epistemology; empiricism and rationalism. Each hold a strong position attributing knowledge to it, meanwhile denying another possibility of supplying us with true knowledge. This became more of conflict between the rationalists and empiricists as heightened by David Hume and Rene Descartes. The disagreement between these two epistemological positions provoked Immanuel Kant's intervention to reconcile and reconstruct the epistemological tradition.

Immanuel Kant's epistemological approach is 'critical' since he has made a critical analysis of the power and limits of our mind and our ability to understand the world we find ourselves in. This made Kant to be the founder of epistemic tradition of critical analysis that has defined the importance of knowing our knowledge limitations. It is significant to understand that Kant's major input is found in his Copernican Revolution. In the preface to the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, Immanuel Kant (1998) introduces his revolutionary idea, often referred to as the "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy. This idea fundamentally alters the way we think about the relationship between human cognition and the objects of our experience. Kant begins by addressing the traditional philosophical assumption that our cognition must conform to the objects. This view suggests that our knowledge and understanding are shaped and constrained by the way objects exist independently of us. This position suggests that our knowledge and understanding are shaped and constrained by the way objects exist independently of us. According to this perspective, to gain knowledge

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about objects, we must observe and analyze them as they are, external to and unaffected by our cognitive faculties. Kant observes that all attempts to extend our knowledge a priori (i.e., knowledge independent of experience) under this traditional assumption have failed. In his words, “all attempts to find out something about them (objects) a priori through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing” (Kant, 1998, Bxvi).

The research therefore seek to show Kant’s input in epistemology by applying it to the game football using his Copernican Revolution and his nature and analysis of knowledge. Kant reconciliation of rationalists and empiricists saying that neither sensibility nor understanding can function independently to produce knowledge shall be applied to the game of football whereby team work is key to skillful and successful football game. To Kant, understanding cannot intuit or perceive, and the senses cannot think or conceptualize. It is only through their union that knowledge arises. This union involves the understanding structuring and interpreting the sensory data provided by sensibility, turning raw perceptions into coherent experiences. The research is therefore an attempt to show that Kant’s input in epistemology is applicable to sport, especially the game of football.

### **Clarification of terms.**

Here the major terms that form our discussions in this research shall be clarified; that is terms like epistemology, and the game of football. The term **epistemology**: is derived from the two Greek words “episteme” (which means knowledge) and “logos” (which means study or theory). Taken together, epistemology is “...the inquiry into what can be known, and how we can know it”. According to Bunnin, epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with enquiry into the nature, sources and validity of knowledge (40). Epistemology as a branch of philosophy became popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to Agede quoted in Teghtegh, Rene Descartes attempt to transform metaphysics in epistemology were significant in this regard followed closely by Locke, Berkeley and Hume (170). By definition, Omoregbe postulate that, epistemology is the branch of philosophy which studies the nature, the origin, the foundation, the methods, the validity, the extent, and the limits of knowledge (134)

Epistemology is closely related to metaphysics, because if there were nothing we would not seek to know it, since knowledge is always knowledge of something. Knowledge and justification are not only interesting in their own right as central epistemological topics; they also represent positive values in the life of every reasonable person. The study of epistemology can help in this quest, even if it often does so

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indirectly. Well-developed concepts of knowledge and justification can play the role of ideals in human life. **Football** refers to any of several games played with a round or oval ball where teams score points by kicking, driving, or carrying the ball into a designated goal area ("Football"). Most commonly on a global scale, the term specifically denotes association football (soccer), which is defined as: A game played on a rectangular field with net goals at either end in which two teams of 11 players each try to drive around ball into the other's goal by kicking, heading, or using any part of the body except the arms and hands.

### **Immanuel Kant's influence in epistemology**

Kant's influence in epistemology which culminated in his "synthetic a-priori" nature of the human knowledge was prompted by Hume deep-seated denouncement of any form of rational and scientific knowledge. Kant posit that he was woken up from his "dogmatic slumber" by Hume's skepticism on the possibility of indubitable foundation of scientific and metaphysical knowledge. Kant is been captured by Enoch Stumpf thus:

"I openly confess," he said, "that the suggestion of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy quite a new direction." But Kant said, "I was far from following (Hume) in the conclusions at which he arrived." Kant rejected Hume's final skepticism (298).

Immanuel Kant's assignment to repudiate Hume's position was necessitated by two ostensible phenomena as seen in his declaration: "two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe... the starry heavens above and the moral law within". The latter suggests "determinism" and the former "freedom". This evincing and distinct occurrence of two incompatible qualities in the sphere of human existence, informed Kant's research and logical erection of a reconciliation between the two seeming entirely opposed theories; empiricism and rationalism. In establishing a firm assumption on the ostensible contradiction between the theories above, Kant thought it essential to embark on the analysis of the human cognition. He first, study the meaning, interpretation and function which his predecessors gave to the operations of the mind, particularly the rationalist and the empiricist philosopher, before making his proposal. Having looked at that Kant discovered that, the mind was treated as a passive element, incapable of affecting the natural world but merely serving as a receptor of sense perception. Kant was not overwhelmed by this interpretation and function that was

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accorded the nature of the mind (300). Because, by it, there was no way the form of “synthetic a-priori” knowledge would be possible. He therefore went beyond this flaccid and passive conception of the mind to the real operations of the human mind and came out with a laudable analysis in the form of a revolution.

### **Kant’s Copernican revolution in philosophy**

In the second preface to the B Edition of the *Critique of Pure reason* Kant declare what has come to be known as Copernican revolution in philosophy. Kant said that:

Thus far it has been assumed that our cognition must conform to objects. On the presupposition, however, all our attempts to establish something about them priori, by means of concepts through which our cognition would be expanded, have come to nothing. Let us, therefore, try to find out by experiment whether we shall not make better progress in the problems of the metaphysics if we assume objects must conform to our cognition. This assumption already agrees better with the demanded possibility of an a priori cognition objects-i.e., a cognition that is to ascertain something about them before they are given to us (Bxvi).

Kant’s Copernican revolution concedes the limitation of human reason, and yet maintains that the revolution of the problem of knowledge consists in adopting reason as its highest principle. In this, Kant agrees with and yet disagrees with Descartes. Like Descartes, Kant insists that knowledge must be secured on self-consciousness. It should be pointed out that Kant too aims to craft a theory of knowledge that is universally valid irrespective of time and space. His idealism according to Agede Kenneth partially arose a response to the rationalist and empiricist debate. Attempts in traditional metaphysics to explain knowledge contributed to the emergence of two influential but incompatible epistemological system; rationalism/empiricism. Kant dismiss the claims of these schools of thought and contended that neither of them had a satisfactory account of knowledge (39).

Kant’s Copernican revolution entails a couple of things; first, he realizes that the problem of knowledge cannot be resolved by having a passive mind being affected by an active world. Thus Kant displaces activity from the object and locates it in the subject of knowledge. However he understand the relationship between experience and reason in mutually complimentary terms, he refuses to reduce one to the other. Secondly, Kant insists that a satisfactory account of knowledge must allow both reason and experience

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to contribute to our knowledge in basically the same way. He explained that, by its distrust of the senses, rationalism rejects the subject matter of knowledge. Meanwhile by its whole rejection of reason, Kant claims that empiricism denies itself the concepts with which to explain experience (140). This can be demonstrated in Kant analysis of knowledge, where he make use of a priori-a posteriori knowledge and analytic-synthetic knowledge.

### **Kant's Analysis of knowledge**

In defining or analyzing knowledge, Kant argue that all our knowledge begins with experience and there is no doubt about it. For how is it possible that the faculty of cognition should be awakened into exercise otherwise than by means of objects which affect our senses, and partly of themselves produce representations, partly rouse our powers of understanding into activity, to compare to connect, or to separate these, and so to convert the raw material of our sensuous impressions into a knowledge of objects, which is called experience? In respect of time, therefore, no knowledge of ours is antecedent to experience, but begins with it. In spite the fact that all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience. This view emphasize that all knowledge begins with experience but goes beyond experience. For Kant all our knowledge begins with experience, however, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience. For, on the contrary, it is quite possible that our empirical knowledge is a compound of that which we receive through impressions, and that which the faculty of cognition supplies from itself.

Kant's real task was to explore what is involved in having knowledge. Then he looked to discover the conditions that must be fulfilled for us to have knowledge. He saw this as an analytic problem that could be solved by reason. Kant asks if any of our knowledge has a privileged position. For example, our notion of causality between events in the universe seems to be presupposed. That is, it is a notion about the universe, yet it does not need to be shown to be true by empirical evidence. According to Kant, it seems to be necessarily true that every event must have a cause (6). In his analysis, Kant's proposed 'a priori and a posteriori', 'analytic and synthetic' forms of knowledge show the conditions for knowing as follow.

*A priori*: a priori knowledge is knowledge gained from reasoned. A statement is true a priori if its truth is determined before experience, or without reference to experience. Kant reasoned that there must be an innate power for knowledge which in the first place allows sensation, perception and cognition of things.

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*A posteriori*: this is the opposite a priori knowledge. A statement is true a posteriori if its truth follows after experience. That is, its truth can only be determined with reference to empirical evidence. Kant clearly state that:

By the term "knowledge a priori," therefore, we shall in the sequel understand, not such as is independent of this or that kind of experience, but such as is absolutely so of all experience. Opposed to this is empirical knowledge, or that which is possible only a posteriori, that is, through experience. Knowledge a priori is either pure or impure. Pure knowledge a priori is that with which no empirical element is mixed up. For example, the proposition, "Every change has a cause," is a proposition a priori, but impure, because change is a conception which can only be derived from experience (24).

*Analytic*: knowledge is analytic for Kant when it is inductive or intuitive. A statement is analytic if the predicate of the subject is contained in the subject. Analytic knowledge does not add no information to the subject. It's in form of proposition, For example, tautologies are analytic statements: a bachelor is an unmarried person. This proposition does not add any new knowledge to the subject. Meanwhile under *Synthetic*; it adds new knowledge to the subject. This is a kind of an empirical knowledge. If a statement is not analytic, then the predicate of the statement says something new about the subject, thus we call such statements synthetic. On **analytic** and **synthetic** knowledge, Kant assert that:

Analytical judgments (affirmative) are therefore those in which the connection of the predicate with the subject is cogitated through identity; those in which this connection is cogitated without identity, are called synthetical judgments. The former may be called explicative, the latter augmentative judgments; because the former add in the predicate nothing to the conception of the subject, but only analyse it into its constituent conceptions, which were thought already in the subject, although in a confused manner; the latter add to our conceptions of the subject a predicate which was not contained in it, and which no analysis could ever have discovered therein (24).

Under the transcendental doctrine of elements, first part of transcendental aesthetic Kant argued that, whatsoever mode, or by whatsoever means, our knowledge

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may relate to objects, it is at least quite clear that the only manner in which it immediately relates to them is by means of an intuition. To this as the indispensable groundwork, all thought points. The capacity for receiving representations (receptivity) through the mode in which we are affected by objects, objects, is called sensibility. By means of sensibility, therefore, objects are given to us, and it alone furnishes us with intuitions; by the understanding they are thought, and from it arise conceptions. But a thought must directly, or indirectly, by means of certain signs, relate ultimately to intuitions; consequently, with us, to sensibility, because in no other way can an object be given to us.<sup>7</sup> Kant's position is that there is no way that knowledge can be acquired through only one particular source as argued by the rationalists and empiricists. To him all sources must come together or compliment each other for proper acquisition of knowledge that is certain. This implies that the empiricists provides the raw materials of knowledge and rationalists assimilates it.

### **Kant's Phenomena and Noumena**

One of the Kant's impact was his insistence that human knowledge is forever limited in its scope. This limitation takes two forms. The first is the phenomenal world which refers to the world as it appears to each of us from our own personal perspective. For Kant, the real world is just this phenomenal world that we perceive and conceptualize. We can broaden our perspective to the general human point of view, and it is from this position that we have an appreciation for the notion of objectivity. The objective world is constructed from our human and cultural consensus and shared knowledge. Yet ultimately, we cannot break out of our own individual perspective. We always perceive our world from our own individual point of view. The phenomenal world is in contrast to what Kant calls the noumena world consisting of things-in-themselves that exist for themselves independently of our perceiving them. The second is Noumena that is thing-in-itself, which is the thing beyond our experience, yet it is what our phenomenal knowledge is about. Kant argues that we can never know this noumena world. It is forever out of our reach because we cannot step out of our perspective on the world (31).

A consequence of Kant's theory of phenomena and noumena is that the world we know and live in is the phenomenal world that our own minds organize and synthesize from the multiplicity of data. If I see a tree, then that tree exists because it can be seen (and touched, etc.). It is essentially phenomenal, not noumenal. Kant supposes a thing-in-itself, beyond our experience, which gives rise to the phenomenon of the tree, but we cannot call this a tree-in-itself since the application of concepts such as 'tree' is limited to

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phenomena. Beyond our own experience, their application makes no sense. There can be no tree-in-itself. Thus the limits of the world are only as limited as my ability to actively conceptualize and understand the world. This is reminiscent of the line "I never had the blues until I knew the words (31).

### **Transcendental knowledge: Pure and Empirical Knowledge**

Concepts or ideas are referred to as "pure" if they are abstracted from experience and are not directly empirical in nature. This is the case for transcendental knowledge. Kant states that "though all our knowledge begins in experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience". In this Kant is alluding to transcendental knowledge. Transcendental knowledge is not of experience itself, but it cannot be true without experience. But Kant also argues that without the mind's ability to organize and conceptualize experience, we cannot have any experience. Thus on the one hand Kant is conceding to the arguments of empiricist thinkers, such as Hume, who claim that all knowledge begins in experience, but on the other hand he also concedes to rationalists, such as Leibniz, that ideas and thought are essential to knowledge. Kant's theory is a synthesis of these two philosophical camps. Kant provides some terms to encompass this theory, they include:

**Sensibility** is the means by which we have intuitions. Sensibility is receptive, in that intuitions are immediately given to mind.

**Understanding** is our mental faculty to conceptualize the manifold of intuitions given by sensibility. Understanding is an active and imaginative process of mind. Both sensibility and understanding are needed to make sense of and experience the world. All phenomena of experience are given in terms of matter and form. The matter is the raw sensation and form is the way we grasp that matter. For example, space is the form of a visual experience and colour and brightness are the matter. Kant distinguishes form from concept. Form is the structure by which we perceive phenomena, whilst concepts are the means by which we understand and categorize phenomena to gain knowledge. Form is part of the intuition, whilst concepts may be learnt and are applied to intuition to make sense of them.

### **Application of Kant's analysis of knowledge to the game of football**

The game of football is the one of the most watched game in the history of sport. Football is a game played by eleven players from each side, totaling twenty four players playing on the pitch. Any successful team makes sure that every player is considered important during training or match. Every player understand the limits of his or her

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playing skills on the pitch. Those using the left leg to play flexibly will not underrate those using the right leg to play smoothly. Since each player understand there limits and the role they play during training or match. Those playing in the mid field cannot deny strikers the opportunity to score, since the defenders are always supplying passes to the appropriate places, meanwhile the goal keeper protect the goal post. The complimentary role in the game of football is a good example of what Kant mean. Kant argued that not even the empiricists nor the rationalist will claim the certainty of knowledge, since both must complement each other. Kant insists that a satisfactory account of knowledge must allow both reason and experience to contribute to our knowledge in basically the same way (140). A more flexible example can be seen through Kant's synthesis of sensory data and rule-based judgment and the categorical imperative.

However, Kant's theory of perception relies on the "synthesis of apprehension," where the mind collects various sensory inputs, the speed of the ball, the angle of a tackle, the sound of contact, and organizes them into a coherent experience. For a football referee, this process is instantaneous. Although, Kantian philosophy warns that our perception is limited by the "phenomenal" world (the world as it appears to us) rather than the "noumenal" world (the thing-in-itself). In a match, a referee's decision-making is often clouded by what modern psychology calls "heuristics," but what Kant would describe as the limitations of our "sensibility." Because human perception is fallible and subject to spatiotemporal constraints, the introduction of Video Assistant Referees (VAR) can be seen as a Kantian attempt to reach a more "objective" reality. By providing multiple angles and slow-motion replays, technology attempts to bridge the gap between the subjective "appearance" of a foul and the objective "truth" of the incident.

Beyond mere perception, Kant's moral philosophy, specifically the *Categorical Imperative* influences how decisions are made under pressure. Kant argued that one should "act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. For a player deciding whether to dive to win a penalty, or a referee deciding whether to ignore a minor infraction for the sake of "game flow," the Kantian influence is clear: the decision must be based on a principle that could be applied universally to all players in all matches.

This creates a tension between pure football (the conceptual, rule-bound game) and "empirical football (the game as it is played in the heat of the moment). Decision-making influenced by Kantian ethics prioritizes the integrity of the rules over the immediate emotional outcome of the match. This is why VAR, despite its potential to disrupt the "joy" of the game, is justified in a Kantian sense; it serves the moral duty of

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accuracy and fairness, which are universal requirements for the sport to remain a meaningful pursuit.

### **Weaknesses of Kant's inputs in epistemology**

The Kantian input in epistemology has created great impact into science and knowledge generally, however it is not free from critical shortcomings. This segment of the paper develop some shortcomings or weaknesses of Kant's inputs in epistemology as follow; Immanuel Kant's epistemological framework, specifically his transcendental idealism; the distinction between phenomena and noumena, has been highly influential but is also subject to significant criticism. The primary weaknesses in his input to epistemology revolve around the concept of the unknown "thing-in-itself," the rigidity of his a priori categories, and his questionable assumption regarding the universality of human cognition.

Firstly, Kant states we can only know phenomena (appearances), not noumena (things-in-themselves). However it is arguable that if we cannot know the noumenal world, we cannot know that it exists or that it causes our sensations. Also to claim that "the real world is unknowable" is to make a claim *about* the real world, which contradicts his own premise that no knowledge of it is possible. Most importantly by restricting knowledge to appearances, Kant arguably separates human understanding from actual reality, bordering on subjective idealism or skepticism, which he sought to avoid.

Secondly, Kant claimed certain structures (like Euclidean space) are necessary, a priori, and unchanging frameworks of human experience. The advent of non-Euclidean geometry and Einstein's physics (general relativity) challenged the idea that Euclidean geometry is the only way to structure spatial experience. Also he assumed that all human minds use the exact same categories. Later philosophers and scientists have questioned whether these categories are truly innate or merely products of human evolutionary adaptation and cultural development.

Thirdly, Kant create dualism between experience and understanding and by doing so Critics argue that he does not fully explain how these two distinct faculties interact to produce knowledge. Also because the mind constructs the world through a priori forms (space, time, causality), Kant can be interpreted as representing objective truths as subjective to human cognitive hardware, reducing scientific laws to mental structures rather than objective realities.

While Kant successfully combined empiricism and rationalism to overcome the limitations of his predecessors, these weaknesses created the foundation for subsequent

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philosophical movements (like German Idealism and Phenomenology) to refine and challenge his original theory.

### Conclusion

The paper has succeeded in demonstrating the inputs of Kant's epistemology and how it is applicable to the game of football. The researcher argued that Kant has a strong influence that its application is commonly in the practical life. The reconciliation between empiricists and the rationalists has provided a framework for the boundaries and limitations of human knowledge, since we cannot know everything. Kant's position portrays the attitudes of footballers who at no point stand alone in the football pitch to score goals. Every player contributes in his or her own quarter for the successful scoring of goals in the football tournament which is in line with Kant's position. Since to Kant, the empiricists provide the rationalist with the raw materials of knowledge and the rationalists assimilate. This is a clear rebuttal to skepticism, and a new turn in the field of knowledge.

The application of Kantian thought to the game of football and decision-making involves a delicate balance between the *a priori* (knowledge independent of experience, such as the Laws of the Game) and the *empirical* (the specific, high-speed events occurring on the pitch). Kant's ideas about perception influence decision-making by highlighting the limitations of human observation and the necessity of regulative principles to ensure fairness and objective truth in a chaotic environment.

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## **Selective Presence, Symbolic Absence, and Urban Public Space: Catholic Televangelism in Ibadan, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The Catholic Church in Ibadan, Nigeria maintained limited and highly selective participation in local television during the early 2000s despite a universal mandate to use electronic media for evangelisation. This pattern is interpreted as a culturally significant symbolic act within Ibadan's urban public communication space. Ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2009 drew on interviews and focus group discussions with Catholic and non-Catholic stakeholders in church and media institutions. Geertz's symbolic anthropology and Habermas's public sphere framework guided the analysis. Findings show that selective presence and broader absence from regular broadcasting were shaped by economic

constraints, perceptions of televangelism as *ojoro*, institutional identity resistant to advertising logic, and conservative leadership. The absence functions as symbolic action expressing institutional distinctiveness and selective sacredness. Access to religious broadcasting in Ibadan was structured by economic power, gendered authority, and the spatial organisation of media institutions. The study concludes that institutional absence from television is a meaningful form of symbolic communication within a structured urban public sphere. It recommends greater attention to structural access and media inequality in religious broadcasting policy and planning.

**Keywords:** Televangelism; Ojoro; Catholic Church; Ibadan; Public sphere; Symbolic anthropology.

### **Introduction**

Media expansion has reshaped religious communication globally. Religious groups now rely on broadcast systems to spread beliefs through speech, symbols, and music (Arthur, 1993). Television became the dominant platform for religious messaging and global televangelism, first rising in the United States in the 1950s through figures such as Bishop Fulton Sheen and Rex Humbard, then spreading across Christian traditions (Hadden & Swann, 1981; Weiner, 1992). In Nigeria, electronic media is widely viewed as essential for evangelisation. Pentecostal churches adopted broadcasting as a core strategy for gospel outreach (Taiwo, 2007). The Catholic Church also endorses media use for evangelisation at universal level (John Paul II, 2005; Paul VI, 1963). Yet the Catholic Church in Ibadan showed limited participation in local television during the study period. This raises questions about how institutional identity and local media structures shape religious visibility in urban space.

Television in urban Nigeria operates through infrastructure, licensing, and institutional control that determine access to public communication. Visibility on screen reflects access to this system. This study examines Catholic non-participation in Ibadan television as symbolic action within an urban public communication space. It addresses a gap in research on how Catholic institutional identity interacts with urban media structures in Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

Televangelism as a scholarly subject has attracted considerable attention, particularly in the context of American religious broadcasting. Hadden and Swann (1981)

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provided an early foundational analysis, documenting the rapid rise of Pentecostal televangelism and its social, financial, and political dimensions. Horsfield (1984) extended this analysis to examine the theological and institutional implications of religious television, arguing that the medium inevitably shapes the message. In Nigeria, Ihejirika (2005, 2006) documented how media became a site of religious competition and conversion, showing that media presence directly affects denominational membership and identity. Taiwo (2007) further revealed how Pentecostal media in South Western Nigeria communicates values, miracles, and prosperity theology to mass audiences. Research specifically on Catholic media engagement in Nigeria is less developed but growing. Umoh (2024), writing from within the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, argues that conservatism, secrecy, and fear have constrained the Church's adoption of digital media for evangelisation, a pattern that echoes the television-era dynamics documented in the present study. Ihejirika's broader work on media and religion in Nigeria consistently highlights the Catholic Church as a reluctant participant in mediatised religious competition, preferring institutional restraint over public spectacle.

Theoretically, the study of religious media absence is less common than the study of media presence, yet scholarly work on symbolic communication provides conceptual tools for this analysis. Geertz's (1973) interpretive anthropology offers the most productive framework, treating cultural behaviour, including institutional non-participation, as symbolic action that carries and communicates meaning within shared systems of significance. Fraser's (1990) critique of Habermas demonstrates that the public sphere is not uniformly open but is shaped by exclusions of gender and class, a dynamic visible in Ibadan's religious broadcasting landscape. Together, these frameworks position institutional absence not as a passive failure but as an active cultural statement requiring interpretation within its specific social, religious, and urban context.

### **Problem Statement and Objectives: Symbolic Absence in Urban Public Space**

Despite the Catholic Church's universal teaching that television serves evangelisation, the Catholic Church in Ibadan showed limited participation in local television during the study period. This creates a paradox between universal mandate and local practice, where television functions not only as a communication tool but as part of Ibadan's urban public space shaped by institutional competition, visibility, and access to broadcasting infrastructure such as NTA Ibadan, Galaxy TV, and BCOS. Access to this media space reflects broader control over symbolic visibility within the

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city's religious public sphere. Using Geertz's interpretive anthropology, this study treats the Church's selective participation and absence as symbolic action requiring interpretation in terms of institutional identity and media perception.

Field observations also include youth accounts of perceived Catholic invisibility on television, with some linking this absence to declining retention among young members in favour of more visible Pentecostal ministries. The study therefore examines Catholic perspectives on televangelism in Ibadan, explains the reasons for limited television engagement despite official doctrine, interprets this absence as symbolic action within an urban media environment, and analyses how access to religious broadcasting reflects broader patterns of inclusion and exclusion in Ibadan's public communication space.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study draws on two complementary theoretical frameworks. The first is Geertz's (1973) symbolic and interpretive anthropology. Geertz defines culture as essentially semiotic, arguing that human beings are animals suspended in webs of significance they themselves have spun and that culture consists of those webs. Symbols are vehicles of culture that should be studied for what they reveal about how social actors see, feel, and think about their world (Ortner, 1984). Institutional non-participation, rather than being a simple absence, becomes legible as a culturally meaningful act within this framework.

The second framework is Habermas's concept of the public sphere, which encompasses all realms of social life in which public opinion can be formed, with access theoretically guaranteed to all citizens (Habermas et al., 1974). Television serves as a contemporary medium of the public sphere. In Ibadan, the physical placement of broadcast stations, the licensing arrangements governing their operation, and the commercial structures determining access to airtime meant that the public sphere was not an abstract space of free exchange but a materially organised urban environment whose structure determined the conditions of symbolic visibility.

Fraser's (1990) critique of Habermas demonstrates that the bourgeois public sphere was historically constituted by significant exclusions of women and lower social strata. This critical extension is essential for analysing how Ibadan's religious television landscape operated not as an open democratic forum but as a contested space structured by economic power, gender, and denominational competition. The spatial and institutional organisation of urban broadcasting in Ibadan reproduced these exclusions in material form, making the public sphere's openness more theoretical than practical for communities without sufficient economic or institutional capital.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative ethnographic design informed by Geertz's (1973) approach to thick description. Participants were selected purposively and comprised 50 Catholics, including priests, religious sisters, seminarians, and lay members, and 20 non-Catholics, including Pentecostal clergy, media workers, and members of other denominations. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions conducted between January and October 2009 in Catholic parishes, archdiocesan offices, and the television stations NTA Ibadan, Galaxy TV, and BCOS. Data were analysed thematically around economic constraints, institutional identity, symbolic interpretation, and public sphere dynamics. The fieldwork was conducted during a period of rapid Pentecostal television expansion in Ibadan, providing a context for examining tensions between institutional tradition and media modernity that remain relevant to contemporary studies of religion and media in Nigeria (Ihejirika, 2006; Umoh, 2024).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Finding 1: Catholic Presence on Ibadan Television: Seasonal Participation, Strategic Absence**

All persons interviewed generally agreed that television is a public space. One respondent stated that it is a public space where everybody can come and shop for ideas, either buy or sell (JDPC Official, personal communication, January 16, 2009). This agrees with the argument that television is as much a public space as any civic forum (Lehner et al., 2007). There was general agreement that the Catholic Church did not occupy that space, except during festive seasons. According to Fr. Toyin Pinheiro, Director of Communications of the Archdiocese of Ibadan:

The Archbishop encouraged the use of TV during Lenten season. We use TV to enlighten people about societal values through Lenten talks and call for transformation. Then, we celebrate Stations of the Cross which essence is to make people to appreciate the life, the death and passion of Christ. At Christmas, the same thing is done using advent talks and Christmas Carols. (Personal communication, 2009)

Rev. Sister Gorreti of Iroyin Ayo Communications corroborated this (personal communication, 2009). This pattern establishes that the Church was not absent entirely

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from television but strategically chose when to appear. Geertz's framework helps make sense of this pattern: the selective presence is itself symbolic, communicating that the Church does not treat television as an ordinary commercial space but as a medium reserved for moments of liturgical weight and communal significance.

## **Finding 2: Explaining the Absence: Clergy and Laity Perspectives**

### **Economic Constraints**

The most recurring reason given by Catholics for the Church's television absence was lack of finances, combined with the view that the Church does not need to advertise itself. Fr. Pinheiro summarised the economic dimension directly:

We have not used the TV enough compared to the Pentecostals because of economic reasons... Going to TV is waste of money as it will never yield desired effect. Rather, we prefer using the print media, person to person evangelization, the use of other audio visuals that can be replayed unlike the TV. (Personal communication, 2009)

The economic constraint is real, but it is also culturally mediated. Fr. Pinheiro did not frame the cost of television merely as a budget problem but as a poor investment, revealing an institutional calculus in which the Church's understanding of evangelisation was already incompatible with broadcast television.

### **Television as Ojoro: Fraud and Manipulation**

Several priests offered a deeper cultural explanation rooted in the concept of ojoro, a Yoruba term denoting fraudulent performance, staged deception, and manipulative hype. One priest described television as stage-managed, used for hyping up messages and advertising unfounded miracles (In-depth Interview, 2009). Fr. Pinheiro elaborated on what he regarded as the deceptive and manipulative character of televangelism, describing it as employing what he termed a marketing approach that was aggressive and coercive:

Most of the times, if it will affect the powers that be, they will not say what you said, but twist it... TV is deceptive and manipulative. Even the televangelists bring in deception on people's lives by adopting 'rape strategy'... all over the world; the Catholic Church uses less of TV for evangelism. (Personal communication, 2009).

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The respondent's language reflects the intensity of clerical resistance to commercial religious broadcasting. Within Geertz's framework, the *ojoro* critique is a cultural symbol carrying dense moral meaning: it condenses judgements that Pentecostal television is dishonest, preys on the poor, and would contaminate the Catholic Church's institutional identity.

### **Institutional Identity: The Church Does Not Need to Advertise**

Several respondents framed the absence in terms of institutional dignity. Rev. Fr. Ezekiel Ade Owoeye of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Catholic Church, University of Ibadan, stated simply that evangelisation is not advertisement (personal communication, 2009). Rev. Fr. Anthony Omolade described other broadcasters as one-man affairs that present *ojoro* to extort people's poverty through sweet words and things that are not real (personal communication, 2009). This phrase positions Pentecostal broadcasting as individual entrepreneurship driven by personal gain, against which the Catholic Church defines itself as too ancient and communal to be reduced to personal brand management.

### **Institutional Conservatism and Gatekeeping**

Fr. Pinheiro noted that leadership conservatism played a role, with the Church unwilling to go on TV to compete with or attack other churches' doctrines. He also noted that they were sometimes fenced out of TV by non-Catholics who headed media houses, even when they were ready to pay (personal communication, 2009). This reveals that absence was not always chosen but was sometimes imposed. The interplay between chosen restraint and structural exclusion makes the symbolic interpretation more layered: the Church both refused and was refused, and in public discourse, the first posture eclipsed the second.

### **Finding 3: Symbolic Interpretation of Absence**

Applying Geertz's framework reveals that the Catholic Church's absence from television functions as symbolic action. The varying understandings shared by the Catholic congregation in Ibadan form a coherent shared cultural system of meaning, consistent with Des Chene's (1996) observation that the central goal of symbolic anthropology is studying how people understand and interpret their surroundings through shared cultural logics. Turner's (1967) argument that symbols instigate social action is directly applicable: the church's refusal to appear on television symbolically positioned it as an institution that does not compete for airtime with what it regarded as lesser enterprises. Their occasional presence during festive seasons also carried symbolic

meaning. Appearing only during Lent and Christmas communicated not weakness but a deliberate refusal to compete in the scramble for everyday visibility. This logic shaped not only how clergy explained their selective participation but how lay Catholics internalised and reproduced the same reasoning, suggesting the meaning was genuinely shared within the community.

#### **Finding 4: The Public Sphere in Practice: Urban Access, Exclusion, and Power**

In contrast to Habermas's theoretical conception of the public sphere as open to all citizens, the religious television landscape in Ibadan demonstrated systematic exclusions shaped not only by ideology but by the material organisation of the city's communication infrastructure. The broadcast stations, NTA at Agodi, Galaxy TV at Oke-Aare, and BCOS at Basorun, were located at specific urban nodes, operated under commercial licensing arrangements, and were accessible only to those with the financial and institutional resources to pay for airtime. Religious broadcasting was therefore not simply a media phenomenon but an urban one, shaped by the same forces of location, access, and institutional power that organise other dimensions of city life.

Access to Ibadan's religious broadcasting space was further shaped by gender. Field observations indicated that the overwhelming majority of regular televangelists and radio preachers in Ibadan were male, reflecting the long-standing tradition of excluding women from formal teaching and priestly offices (Weinreich, 1997). This gender exclusion operated through denominational norms that determined who was authorised to preach publicly in the first place. Economically, the airtime market operated on explicit commercial terms. Toyin Oladele, chief marketing officer of BCOS, stated plainly that they give airtime to whoever can pay for it (personal communication, 2009). Regular television presence signified financial success, which attracted more followers, which generated more income, reinforcing what Weber (1958) identified as the spirit of capitalism applied to religious enterprise. The Catholic Church's absence was therefore not only a theological choice but the outcome of a field structured by capitalist logic and urban spatial inequality, confirming that symbolic absence is not enacted in a vacuum but within a materially organised urban public sphere.

#### **Evaluation**

The findings demonstrate the value of treating institutional non-participation as a culturally meaningful act rather than a silence requiring no explanation. Geertz's interpretive framework reveals a coherent symbolic system in which restraint functions as a marker of institutional authority. The study's key theoretical contribution is the

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concept of symbolic absence, understood as deliberate or structurally reinforced withdrawal from a public communication space that communicates identity and values. Extending Habermas through Fraser's critique further shows that access to symbolic visibility in Ibadan's religious broadcasting landscape was shaped by commercialisation, gendered religious authority, and the spatial organisation of broadcasting infrastructure. These factors reveal broader structural conditions influencing religious participation in urban public communication. Although based on 2009 fieldwork, the study provides a useful framework for understanding how religious communities negotiate visibility, identity, and access within contemporary urban media environments.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined Catholic perspectives on televangelism in Ibadan in 2009, showing how economic constraints, the *ojoro* critique, institutional dignity norms, conservative leadership, and media gatekeeping produced a strategic absence from television that was both chosen and imposed. Drawing on Geertz's symbolic anthropology, the absence functioned as symbolic action, reflecting the Church's self-understanding as institutionally distinct and resistant to competition with what priests described as one-man affairs. Public sphere analysis in an urban context revealed exclusions shaped by gender, economic power, and the spatial organisation of Ibadan's broadcasting infrastructure. Television in Ibadan functioned as a commercially structured urban public space where access depended on capital and institutional authority rather than universal participation. The study contributes to scholarship on religion, media, and urban communication by showing how institutional absence from media platforms operates as meaningful symbolic practice within a structured urban public sphere. Absence serves as empirical evidence. Symbolic action proves useful because it treats non-participation as a culturally meaningful act rather than silence requiring explanation.

### **Recommendations**

The findings highlight practical issues relating to religious media engagement, access to public communication, and institutional visibility. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed. First, the Catholic Church in Nigeria should adopt a context-sensitive media strategy that balances institutional dignity with evangelisation needs. Priority should go to educational and value-based programming rather than miracle-centred broadcasting.

Second, greater youth participation in Catholic media work may strengthen visibility in religious broadcasting. The study also records male dominance in Ibadan religious broadcasting, shaped by denominational norms around public preaching that require review alongside media strategy.

Third, media policymakers and urban planners in Nigeria should examine how commercial airtime structures access to public communication space. Subsidised access, community broadcasting, and non-commercial airtime allocations for religious and civic groups would improve access to the urban public sphere.

### **Temporal Limitations and Future Research**

This study has limitations that require acknowledgement. The sample of 70 respondents does not represent the entire Catholic community in Ibadan. The study does not compare Catholic views across other Nigerian cities, limiting generalisability. Fieldwork was conducted in 2009, and the religious media landscape has since shifted through digital media, social networking, YouTube evangelisation, and streaming services. Despite this temporal distance, the study makes three contributions: theoretically, it demonstrates the value of Geertzian interpretive methods for analysing institutional media decisions; empirically, it provides baseline documentation for future comparative research; and substantively, it highlights tensions between universal mandates and local resistance rooted in theological identity and symbolic self-understanding. Future research should examine whether the *ojoro* critique extends to digital platforms, how Catholic media engagement has changed since 2009, and how urban spatial organisation shapes access to religious public life.

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## **Exploring Mother Tongue and Religion as Paradigms for Gender Studies in Africa: Perspectives from the Ibibio Language**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the interconnectedness of religion, mother tongue, and gender construction in Africa, with particular focus on the Ibibio language of Southern Nigeria. While existing gender scholarship in Africa has explored culture, economics, politics, and religion as analytical frameworks, scholarly attention to the role of mother tongue in shaping gender consciousness remains markedly thin. Drawing from sociolinguistic, religious, and gender-based frameworks, the paper argues that language, especially one's mother tongue functions as a primary medium through which societies transmit gender expectations, stereotypes, authority structures, and perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Through the analysis of Ibibio expressions, proverbs, myths, and religiously inflected linguistic constructions, the study shows how language reinforces patriarchal assumptions and legitimizes gender hierarchy within social and religious contexts. The paper further establishes that religion amplifies the authority and sacredness of gendered linguistic expressions, thereby shaping social behaviour and identity formation among speakers. Recent global data including the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2024, which places Sub-Saharan Africa sixth among eight regions with a parity score of 68.4% points to the persistence of gender inequality in the very communities where mother tongue operates most powerfully. By

interrogating indigenous linguistic patterns and their socio-religious implications, this study proposes mother tongue as an indispensable paradigm for African gender analysis. The paper concludes that meaningful gender work within African societies must engage local languages and indigenous semantic realities, so as to avoid externally imposed interpretations that miss the lived complexity of African socio-cultural life.

**Keywords:** Mother Tongue, Gender Studies, Religion, Ibibio Language, Africa, Patriarchy, Sociolinguistics.

### **Introduction**

Language is among the most potent instruments through which ideas, values, norms, and cultural orientations are transmitted across generations. As a primary agent of human communication, language plays a foundational role in how societies conceptualise gender roles, construct gender stereotypes, and sustain gendered perceptions of ability, authority, and social position. What a person first learns about being male or female is usually communicated in the language closest to their identity – the mother tongue.

Despite remarkable global efforts to close the gender gap, the challenges persist, particularly in Africa. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2024 records that Sub-Saharan Africa has a parity score of only 68.4%, ranking sixth among eight global regions, with Political Empowerment at a mere 22.6% and Economic Participation and Opportunity at 68.1% (World Economic Forum). Disturbingly, since 2006, the region has improved by only 5.6 percentage points and at the current pace, full gender parity would not be achieved within any foreseeable future. Many African scholars have approached gender through the prisms of religion, culture, economics, and law; yet the role of the mother tongue as a carrier and reinforcer of gender ideology has received negligible scholarly attention.

This paper addresses that gap. It juxtaposes religion, gender, and mother tongue with particular attention to the Ibibio language of Akwa Ibom State, Southern Nigeria to argue that the mother tongue constitutes a necessary paradigm for gender studies in Africa. The Ibibio language offers a compelling case because it is deeply inflected with religious meanings, ancestral authority, and social prescriptions that determine how men and women understand themselves and relate to each other in daily life.

## Conceptual Clarifications

### *Mother Tongue*

The mother tongue, also variously called first language, native tongue, or home language refers broadly to the language a person is exposed to from birth or during the critical developmental period. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines it as a language from which others spring, reflecting both its generative and foundational quality. Robert Kaplan and Richard Baldauf note that the term poses series of definitional difficulties, especially when taking into account individuals who grew up in a multilingual setting (19). Similarly, Witold Tulasiewicz and Anthony Adams admit to having been bedevilled by the usage of the term, though they retain it on grounds of intuitive familiarity (3).

From a socialization perspective, Gagné et al. describe the mother tongue as the language provided by a child's immediate home environment, shaping cognitive and social development well before formal education intervenes (7). Nigel Love and Umberto Ansaldo go further, stressing that birth and immersion in a language during one's youth, in a family where adults share a similar language experience, is central to native speakership (590). Esjaak Kroon frames the concept through a language policy lens, connecting the mother tongue to national and cultural identity formation and arguing, evocatively, that a fatherland needs a mother tongue (36). Collin Baker and Prys Jones advocate a careful dissection of the different meanings and implications of the term across multilingual contexts (25), a caution especially relevant for southern Nigeria, where multiple ethnic languages coexist and daily code-switching is common. For this paper, "mother tongue" refers to the primary language of socialization, cultural transmission, and indigenous meaning-making. In the specific case under study, it refers to the Ibibio language, a language native to the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### *Religions*

Religion in the African context is not confined to formal worship or theological doctrine. It permeates daily life, community rituals, language use, and social norms in a way that defies the Western sacred-secular dichotomy. As John Mbiti classically observes, Africans carry their religion into every aspect of existence, finding it nearly impossible to separate sacred from secular realities (2). For the Ibibio people specifically, religion mediates relationships between individuals, communities, and the divine, lending cosmic significance to otherwise ordinary social arrangements. This is what

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makes religion an especially potent amplifier of gendered meanings already embedded in language. Thus, in the study, we adopt the definition of religion by the Institute of African Studies as institutionalised patterns of beliefs and worship practiced by various African societies from time immemorial in response to the 'supernatural' as manifested in their environment and experience.

### *Gender Studies in Africa*

Gender studies in Africa has evolved from early feminist critiques of patriarchy toward more nuanced, multidisciplinary engagements that take African social realities seriously on their own terms. Andrea Cornwall describes this field as one that contributes distinctively to development in Africa through conscious effort to draw from and simultaneously rethink concepts, paradigms and methodologies (1). Much early scholarship concentrated on women as subjects of inquiry, driven by a feminist agenda aimed at dismantling institutionalised patriarchy. Over time the focus expanded to include masculinities, colonial configurations of gender, and transnational gender currents (Cornwall 2). This paper extends this tradition by proposing an indigenous linguistic framework as a fresh and underexplored analytical lens.

### **Methodology**

This study is qualitative and desk-based, drawing on textual analysis, sociolinguistic inquiry, and documentary research. Primary linguistic data consists of Ibibio-language expressions, proverbs, and oral-tradition elements as documented in existing ethnographic, religious studies, and linguistic scholarship. Secondary data includes peer-reviewed articles, books, and institutional reports on gender, language, and religion in Africa and beyond. The analytical framework integrates sociolinguistic gender theory, African feminist scholarship, and religious studies perspectives. Ibibio linguistic data are examined for their gendered semantic content and their relationship to traditional religious belief systems. The study does not engage primary fieldwork but synthesises available scholarly and ethnographic material to construct a theoretical argument for mother tongue as a gender studies paradigm, consistent with the desk-based theoretical traditions established in the foundational work of scholars such as Ifi Amadiume (29) and Oyeronke Oyěwùmí (3).

## Literature Review

### *Language and Gender*

The relationship between language and gender has attracted some scholarly attention globally, though its African dimensions remain underdeveloped. Selin Kesebir (12) argues that word order can both convey and reinforce gender beliefs, and that masculine generics consistently evoke mental images of men even when gender-neutral references are intended with consequences for how gender hierarchies are sustained at the cognitive level. Deborah Tannen demonstrates that men tend to use storytelling to reinforce social status, while women's narratives centre others rather than themselves (78), a pattern visibly replicated in how Ibibio oral traditions distribute agency and heroism along gender lines.

Jeroen Darquennes and Wim Vandebussche observe that in the twenty-first century, the intertwining of language and religion has produced a distinct subfield of sociolinguistics (1). Mukherjee identifies two core questions within this subfield: the role of language in sustaining religion, and the role of religion in sustaining language, both of which intersect with questions of gendered identity formation (2). Eve Gregory et al. underscore the importance of heritage language learning in granting children access to religious and cultural community membership (28), a dynamic that among the Ibibio simultaneously socialises young people into gendered roles embedded in that community.

### *Religion and the Mother Tongue in Africa*

The bond between religion and mother tongue in Africa has deep historical roots. Early Christian missionaries discovered that proselytising in European languages produced far thinner results than when the gospel was communicated through indigenous tongues. Amonoo puts it plainly: mother tongue and its relevance cannot be underestimated for it is the medium of our innermost feeling (23). Building on this, John Ekem defines a field of mother tongue hermeneutics in African Christianity as a context-sensitive interpretation which will end up providing study Bibles and commentaries that clearly articulate theological, linguistic and anthropological issues to the peoples in local languages (12). The practical success of mother tongue evangelism in Africa demonstrates how deeply religious meanings are bound up with indigenous linguistic forms and by extension, how gendered theological ideas travel most effectively through those same forms.

Darquennes and Vandebussche further note that language and religion together produce social realities that neither could generate alone (1). This co-production is

particularly visible in how Ibibio religious terminology for divinity, kingship, and authority overlaps with gendered linguistic expressions in ways that make hierarchies feel cosmically inevitable rather than socially constructed.

### *Existing Gender Paradigms in Africa*

African gender scholarship has addressed its subject through several broad paradigms. Oyěwùmí's landmark work challenges eurocentrism in feminist scholarship, arguing that the categories of woman and gender did not exist in Yoruba society in the way Western frameworks assume (31). She contends that when indigenous parameters such as seniority and wealth are privileged, the myth of universal male domination begins to unravel. Amadiume similarly demonstrates through Igbo ethnography that women can accumulate masculine attributes through wealth and seniority, destabilising any unilinear link between biological sex and social gender (7).

Economic dimensions (gender division of labour), social dimensions (marriage, family, inheritance, education), political dimensions, and religious dimensions have all received sustained treatment in the literature. Language, however, particularly the mother tongue remains the least theorised paradigm. This paper argues this constitutes a significant lacuna. The fact that the same scholars who critique imported gender frameworks still largely communicate their critiques through English-language analyses of indigenous realities suggests the depth of the challenge: the mother tongue itself, as a site of gender inscription, has not yet been sufficiently centred.

## **Results**

### *The Ibibio Mother Tongue, Religion, and Gender Construction*

Among the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State, traditional religious belief permeates language, and this permeation has measurable consequences for how gender is constructed and sustained. Effiong Udo establishes that in Ibibio society, religion and culture set the parameters for women's structurally unequal position with men in the families, communities, workplaces, schools, and every imaginable setting (80). The following analysis of specific Ibibio expressions bears this out.

***Nam mkpo nte owodeen (Behave like a man):*** This expression assigns strength, courage, and authority exclusively to maleness. Its religious grounding lies in the Ibibio concept of the Supreme Being as masculine, possessing absolute power and dominion. A related expression, *Abasi ado ideen* (God is male), directly theologizes male authority,

making the gender hierarchy appear cosmically ordained rather than culturally constructed.

**Anie Ufok adomo mboi ufok omo (The owner of the house determines the dimensions of its frames):** This expression confers absolute domestic authority on the man alone, framing female participation in household decision-making as structurally inappropriate. Women who absorb this saying may feel disqualified from leadership not through explicit prohibition but through the weight of inherited language that makes male authority feel self-evident.

**Ado anie Ufok idiaha efere akwenge? (Is it proper to finish the soup when the owner has not tasted it?):** Here the wife addresses her husband as *Obongowo* (man king) or *ette ufok* (owner of the house) terms that embed male authority deep in the domestic lexicon. The title *Obong*, which also names the Supreme Being in Ibibio traditional religion, further conflates political position with divine ordination, making female aspiration to leadership feel like a form of theological transgression.

**Ekood eyen Ukpong Ekpe, Esit adad eka (If the son is nicknamed the soul of a lion, the mother gladdens):** This expression ties female fulfilment to the production of male children. Esen observes that the Ibibio world is a man's world; mothers were happy and proud if they produced sons that were strong and successful (47). Male child preference documented widely across Akwa Ibom and beyond draws much of its emotional force from expressions precisely like this one.

**Awonwan adad itid, idadta enyen (Only a woman's vagina should be red, not her eyes):** This expression defines female ambition as narrowly domestic and reproductive. It forecloses at the level of everyday speech the legitimacy of women's social, economic, or political competition with men.

**Adiaha adung atung ette (A first daughter who stays in her father's house):** This expression ridicules unmarried women or divorcees, normalising male inheritance of the family compound and structurally excluding daughters from family property and patrilineal continuity.

Additional terms of prestige applied exclusively to male children such as *ada idaha*, *akpan iwuod iyak*, *abom ufok ette*, and *uku ette* carry strong social significance that reinforces male child preference not only among the Ibibio but across many neighbouring African ethnic communities.

## Discussion

The foregoing analysis reveals that gender is constructed not only in the political or economic domain, but also in the everyday speech acts of ordinary men and women

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communicating in their mother tongue. When a woman hears *nam mkpo nte owodeen* in the language she first learned to describe the world, the ideological weight of that expression differs fundamentally from its translated equivalent. The mother tongue carries the authority of origin, of intimacy, and as demonstrated through the Ibibio case, of religious sanctity. This combination makes linguistically embedded gender constructs particularly durable and resistant to challenge.

Kesebir's insight that language reinforces gender beliefs at a cognitive level acquires special force in this context. Ibibio expressions do not merely describe an existing social reality; they create it, sustain it, and resist interrogation by wrapping it in theological legitimacy. When Obong, the title for chief shares semantic space with the Supreme Being, female aspiration to leadership faces not just social resistance but something that registers as sacrilege. This theological weaponization of language is a dimension of gender inequality that neither economic analysis nor political activism alone can adequately address.

The findings also shed fresh light on the WEF 2024 data. Sub-Saharan Africa's Political Empowerment score of 22.6% is not simply the product of structural or legal barriers. It is also the product of a linguistic environment in which women are routinely scripted — from childhood, in their most intimate language as inappropriate candidates for public authority. The WEF data tells us that the gap exists; the analysis of mother tongue tells us where it lives in the mind and the mouth of the community.

This analysis reinforces the broader argument that African gender scholarship must engage indigenous languages more directly. Post-colonial scholars like Oyěwùmí (14) and Amadiume (23) have rightly critiqued imported frameworks; yet a fully indigenous account of African gender must also interrogate the linguistic medium through which indigenous gender norms are daily reproduced. Proposing mother tongue as a paradigm does not add a variable to existing frameworks it asks a more fundamental question: in what language did a community first learn to be male or female?

## Evaluation

The strength of this study lies in its integration of three under-connected analytical frames; religion, mother tongue, and gender into a single coherent lens, grounded in concrete Ibibio linguistic data. By connecting specific indigenous expressions to their religious underpinnings and their gendered social effects, the paper offers a culturally embedded paradigm that resists the external imposition of frameworks ill-fitted to African realities.

Its limitations are equally worth acknowledging. The study draws primarily on existing ethnographic and theological literature rather than original fieldwork, which limits the scope for capturing how younger or urban Ibibio speakers may be contesting or reinventing these inherited expressions. The Ibibio case, while illustrative, is not necessarily representative of all African linguistic communities. Future research should conduct primary fieldwork, expand to comparative analysis across multiple African languages, and specifically investigate how digital media, formal education, and inter-ethnic contact are reshaping the gendered dimensions of mother tongue use in contemporary Nigerian society.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has argued that the mother tongue constitutes an indispensable paradigm for gender studies in Africa. Language, particularly one's first language of socialization — carries within it the values, hierarchies, and assumptions of the society that produced it. When religion further consecrates these linguistic constructs, they become exceptionally resistant to challenge. Among the Ibibio people, the analysis of indigenous expressions reveals a deeply gendered worldview embedded at the level of daily speech, continuously reinforced by theological concepts that align masculinity with divine power, domestic authority, and community leadership.

Studying gender through the lens of the mother tongue does not merely add another variable to existing frameworks. It asks a foundational question: in what language does a community first learn to be male or female? The answer to that question contains much of what needs to be understood — and thoughtfully transformed — in the long work of building genuine gender equity across Africa. Externally imposed gender vocabularies, however well intentioned, will always remain partial without a sustained engagement with the meanings that communities carry in their most intimate tongue.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and discussion, the following recommendations are offered:

1. African gender scholars should make the systematic analysis of indigenous language expressions a standard component of gender research, moving beyond secondary references to language toward sustained primary linguistic inquiry within community settings.
2. Curriculum developers and educators in Nigerian and African schools should design culturally sensitive gender education modules that critically engage

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indigenous proverbs, idioms, and oral traditions, helping learners interrogate rather than merely inherit the gendered assumptions embedded in their mother tongues.

3. Religious leaders and community stakeholders among the Ibibio and similar communities should initiate constructive conversations about theological and cultural language that conflates divine authority with male authority, thereby producing ideological barriers to women's civic and spiritual participation.
4. Policy makers working toward the African Union Agenda 2063 gender targets and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 should recognise language reform and mother tongue-based gender education as complementary strategies alongside legal and economic interventions.
5. Future researchers should carry out primary fieldwork among Ibibio speakers — including rural, urban, and diaspora populations — to document how linguistic gender norms are being reproduced, modified, or actively contested across generations and social contexts.

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## **Problem Based Teaching Method and Students' Cognitive Achievement and Interest in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice in Akwa Ibom State Technical Colleges, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The study determined the effects of problem-based teaching method on students' cognitive achievement and interest in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice in Akwa Ibom State Technical Colleges. Two specific purposes, two research questions and two research hypotheses guided the study. Quasi-experimental research design was adopted and the population of the study comprised 176 senior Technical two (ST2) students from the nine public Technical Colleges in the state from which 68 students were sampled from two intact classes using purposive and random sampling techniques. Three instruments were used in the study namely Problem-based Instructional Package (PBIP), Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice Achievement Test (MECPAT) and Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice Interest Inventory (MECPPI). The instruments were subjected to face and content validation. The reliability of the MECPAT was 0.87 while that of the MECPPI was 0.84. The two intact classes were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The Problem-based Instructional Package constituted the treatment for the experimental group while the control group was taught with the conventional lesson plans. The experiment lasted for four weeks covering four lessons. The mean, standard deviation and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) were used for data analysis. It was found that there was significant difference between the mean post-test and post interest scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice in favour of those taught using Problem-based teaching method. The study recommended, among others, that teachers of Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice in Akwa Ibom state Technical Colleges should henceforth adopt the

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Problem-based teaching method in teaching important topics in the subject while the conventional teaching method should be de-emphasized.

**Keywords:** Problem-based teaching method, cognitive achievement, students' interest, Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice.

## Introduction

Technical Colleges are educational institutions where scientific knowledge and practical skills required for employment in specific trades as craftsmen, technicians and technologists are taught and imparted. Technical Colleges were established in Nigeria to prepare students for entry into various occupations to enable them become craftsmen and master craftsmen (Okwelle and Tombari, 2018). Mele and Abdulsalam (2025) noted one of the major goals of Technical Colleges is to produce efficient craftsmen at sub-professional level that should support industrial operations in areas of maintenance, production of goods and general services thus promoting industrial development. To achieve this purpose, Technical Colleges offer courses that lead to the award the National Technical Certificate (NTC)/ National Business Certificate (NBC) as well as Advanced National Technical Certificate (ANTC)/ Advanced National Business Certificate (ANBC) in areas which are grouped into related trade clusters namely construction trades, computer trades, electrical/electronics trade, textile trades, Business trades, printing trades and mechanical trades. One of the mechanical trades that is of interest to this study is Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice (MECP).

Mechanical engineering craft practice is one of the trade courses offered in Nigerian technical colleges which aim at training students on the general properties and uses of metals in order to help them select appropriate materials for particular job; train them on how to use different techniques and approaches for a specific work and teach them how to utilize the safety rules and regulations in the mechanical engineering craft workshops (Mele and Abdulsalam, 2025). The practical aspect of MECP involves metal machining and fitting operations. The machining operations include turning, milling, knurling, drilling, boring and grinding; while the fitting aspect involves preparing mating parts to match each other in such a way that one will turn inside another or slide upon another or the parts will fit tightly together. Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice trade is among the mechanical technology occupations, which, according to Ududo and Nduononwi (2016), are those occupations that utilize the principles and theories of science and technology to solve technical problems through the design, manufacture, operation and maintenance of industrial machinery, consumer products and other equipment and tools. The achievement of the laudable goals of MECP and other trade

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courses in technical colleges depends to some extent on the teaching methods adopted by the teacher.

Teaching methods refers to the various processes or techniques adopted and used by teachers to present skills, knowledge and appreciations to the learners in and outside the classroom to facilitate their learning of the curriculum content. An effective teaching method is the one that produces demonstrable result in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of the student. There are numerous conventional and innovative teaching methods that could be used in teaching technical trade courses, including Mechanical Engineering craft practice. This include Problem-based teaching method.

Problem-based teaching method (PBT) (also known as Problem-based learning strategy) is defined as a teaching and learning strategy which involves the use of problems that give students opportunity to design an investigative activity using problem-solving to arrive at a conclusion (Ogunsola, Adelana and Adewale, 2021). It is an instructional method that helps students to use open-inquiry approach in learning to apply scientific knowledge in real life situations. According to Agbidiye, Achor and Ogbeba (2019), it involves an experimental learning process that is composed of data collection, investigation, observations, explanations and drawing conclusions. This is in contrast to the traditional teaching method where students become passive in the teaching-learning process and does not promote the development of problem-solving and cognitive skills

It is worthy to note that problem-based teaching method is rooted in the Theory of Discovery Learning developed by Bruner (1966). The theory emphasized that practice in discovering for oneself teaches one to acquire information in a way that makes that information more readily viable in problem solving. Bruner stressed that instead of being 'told' every content by the teacher, the students should be given opportunity to explore and 'discover' the principles or concepts, which are to be learned. Chiley and Shumba (2020) agreed that PBT uses inquiry teaching method which greatly contributes to the understanding of scientific concepts which can be applied in everyday life context. Thus, when students are allowed to learn through the inquiry process, it enables them to build confidence in themselves. The use of PBT has been found to enhance self-regulatory skills in students thereby improving academic performance. According to Akpan and Caleb (2016), students are able to explore other ways of learning through the use of PBT and the method helps to stimulate students understanding on how to find information that are linked to the problem thus increasing their thinking ability. In PBTs, the teacher only guides the students throughout the learning process while the students

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take responsibility of their own learning to come up with a solution. Furthermore, it motivates students to learn and develop independent skills to enable them solve problems and face challenges in their real life situations. Studies by Akpan & Caleb (2016), Etiubon and Ugwu (2016), Agbidiye, *et al* (2019); Boris (2020) and Ogunsola, *et al* (2021) have found that problem-based teaching strategy enhance students' academic achievement in many science and technical subjects which may not exclude Mechanical Engineering craft practice.

Students' cognitive achievement refers to the learning outcomes of students which include the knowledge, skills and ideas acquired and retained through a course of study within and outside the classroom situation (Hassan, *et al*, 2021). It is an indication of the general ability of students concerning their offered subjects compared to a specified standard called "Pass Mark" which is relative and can be arbitrarily defined as 40% or 50%. Eze, Ezenwafor and Obidile (2016) pointed out that academic achievement could be high, average or low/poor. They described a high academic achievement as one where the score is above the pass mark while a poor academic achievement is any performance score that falls below a desired standard or pass mark. Academic achievement may be affected by some factors including student's interest in the subject.

Interest is the feeling that an individual has when he or she wants to know or learn more about something (Muhammad, 2020). It is a feeling of having ones attention, concern, or curiosity particularly engaged by something. Hassan, *et al* (2021) contended that interest is the attraction, which forces or compels someone to respond to a particular stimulus and it comes as a result of eagerness or curiosity to learn, not by force. Thus, a child could develop interest if a particular stimulus such as school subject is attractive, arousing or stimulating to him or her. The authors pointed out that interest is an important variable in learning because if a student has positive interest towards a particular subject, he or she would not only enjoy studying the subject but would also pay attention as the lesson goes on in that particular subject and would derive satisfaction from the knowledge of the subject.

It is disheartening to observe that despite the utmost importance of Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice in national development and everyday life, students' academic achievement in the NABTEB Examinations from 2022 are below expectation. Numerous research reports such as Beako, Okorieocha, Ojotule and Wordu (2019), Emennu and Abiye (2024) and Mele and Abdulsalam (2025) showed declining students' performance in the subject. This trend does not augur well for the achievement of Nigeria's much desired aspiration to catch up with the developed nations by the year

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2030. Majority of the studies attributed the possible causes of candidates' persistent poor performances in Mechanical Engineering craft practice to the use of poor instructional strategies by teachers.

Several scholars such as Okwelle, Beako and Ojotule (2019) and Mele and Abdulsalam (2025) have contended that lecture and demonstration methods are the most widely used methods for teaching Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice in most technical colleges in Nigeria. On this basis, the lecture method is used as a control in this study. It is worthy to note that although the lecture method is very good for teaching large classes and for easy coverage of the syllabus, it is widely criticized by technical educators as being ineffective for enhancing students' achievement. This is because it is characterized by "one-way communication" where the teacher does most of the talking while the students more often assume a passive role. Sometimes, the students may not be given ample opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions in the class which make it to be in contrast with modern student-centred teaching methods which require less talk on the part of the teacher and more activities on the part of the students. The use of the lecture method by most Mechanical Engineering craft practice teachers lead to the teaching of the subject as a body of abstract topics, only to be memorized by the students and regurgitated during examinations. These partly account for the students' poor academic achievement in the subject.

Several scholars have examined the effects of problem-based teaching strategies on students' achievement and interest in some technical subjects in several parts of Nigeria such as Electrical installation and maintenance works (Akpan and Caleb, 2016), Electronics (Tugwell, 2020), Basic technology (Osuyi and Abusomwan, 2021) and Welding and Fabrication technology (Kwami, Kumazeghe and Umar, 2023). Their findings generally showed that students taught using problem-based teaching approach obtained higher mean achievement scores than their counterparts taught with expository approach. However, not much studies have been done on the effects of problem-based teaching method on students' cognitive achievement and interest in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice. It therefore becomes imperative to explore the effects of problem-based teaching method on students' cognitive achievement and interest in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice in Akwa Ibom State Technical Colleges.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of problem-based teaching method on students' cognitive achievement and interest in Mechanical Engineering craft practice in Akwa Ibom State technical colleges. The specific objectives of the study were to:-

1. Determine the difference between the mean achievement scores of students in Mechanical Engineering craft practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture Method.
2. Examine the difference between the mean interest scores of students in Mechanical Engineering craft practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture method.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:-

1. What is the difference between the mean achievement scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture Method?
2. What is the difference between the mean interest scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture Method?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**HO 1:** There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students in Mechanical Engineering craft practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture Method.

**HO 2:** There is no significant difference between the mean interest scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture method.

### **Research Methodology**

The quasi-experimental research design, specifically, non-equivalent pre-test - post-test control group design was adopted in the study. The area of study of this research was Akwa Ibom State which is one of the 36 states in Nigeria. The State has 254 public secondary schools and 10 public technical colleges (including one Federal Science and Technical College at Ukana Offot, Uyo LGA). The population of the study consisted of 176 Senior Technical Two (ST 2) students offering Mechanical Engineering Craft

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Practice from the nine state owned Technical Colleges in Akwa Ibom State during the 2024/2025 academic session. The choice of Senior Technical two (ST 2) students is based on the fact that they have chosen Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice as their trade course and the selected topics are in the Senior Technical two (ST 2) syllabus. The sample of the study consisted of 68 Senior Technical two (ST 2) Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice students. The sample came from two intact classes in two selected Technical Colleges. The sample was selected using purposive and random sampling techniques. Thereafter, one intact class was randomly assigned to experimental group while the other one was randomly assigned to the control group.

Three instruments were used in the study. They were: Problem-based Teaching Instructional Package, Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice Achievement Test (MECPAT) and Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice Interest Inventory (MECPPII). The Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice Achievement Test (CAT) was designed by the researcher for assessing students' cognitive achievement in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice. It comprised 25 multiple choice items on the relevant topics taught to the students with four options lettered A- D with only one correct answer. The test was first used as pre-test to determine the baseline knowledge of the students in the two groups before the experiment. It was also used as post-test after being reshuffled in order to ascertain the effects of the treatment on the subjects. Each question was scored 2 points and the maximum score was 50 marks. The Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice Interest Inventory was used to assess students' interest in the subject. It comprised 20 items structured on the four point scale ranging from strongly agreed (4 points) to strongly disagreed (1 point). It was administered twice: before the treatment as pre-interest test and after the treatment as post-interest test. The Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice Interest Inventory and Problem-based Teaching Instructional Package were subjected to face validation by three experts which include two lecturers in Industrial Technology Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation in University of Uyo, Uyo. The Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice Achievement Test was subjected to content validation in terms of table of specification or test blueprint. The reliability coefficient of the MECPAT was 0.87 obtained using test-retest method while that of the MECPPII was 0.84 obtained using Cronbach alpha statistical method.

The research was conducted in two phases: Pre-treatment phase and treatment phase. In the Pre-treatment phase, the students in the two selected intact classes were randomly assigned by the researcher to either of the two study groups. They were given the pre-test and pre-interest test. In the treatment phase, four lessons were covered in the four weeks namely arc welding, turning, drilling and milling operations. Group I

(experimental Group) were taught using problem-based teaching method while group II (control group) were taught the same lessons using lecture method. After the treatment, all the students were given the post-test and post-interest test. Data collected from the students were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions raised while the research hypotheses formulated were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the difference between the mean achievement scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based and lecture method?

**Table 1: Mean Pre-test and Post-test scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based and lecture method**

S/n	Group/ Method	N	Pre Test		Post Test		Mean gain
			$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1	Problem-based	48	31.04	1.05	46.33	0.64	15.29
2.	Lecture Method	20	33.75	1.48	42.70	1.31	8.95

The result presented in Table 1 shows that the mean pre-test and post-test scores of students in experimental group one who were taught using problem-based teaching method were 31.04 and 46.33 respectively with standard deviations of 1.05 and 0.64 making a mean gain of 15.29. The mean pre-test and post-test scores for group 2 students were 33.75 and 42.70 respectively. It could be observed that students who were taught using problem-based teaching method obtained a higher mean gain of 15.29 as against 8.95 obtained by those taught using lecture method. This result suggests that teaching Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice using problem-based teaching method enhances students' cognitive achievement in the subject than using the lecture method.

**Research Question 2:** What is the difference between the mean interest scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture method?

**Table 2: Mean Pre-test and Post-test scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching and lecture methods**

Group	N	Pre interest Test		Post Interest Test		Mean gain
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Problem-based	48	30.65	1.27	51.73	1.09	21.08
Lecture	20	31.05	1.13	46.60	1.18	15.55

The result in Table 2 shows that the mean pre-interest and post-interest test scores of students in the experimental group who were taught using problem-based teaching method were 30.65 and 51.73 respectively with standard deviations of 1.27 and 1.09. The mean pre-interest and post-interest test scores of students in the control group were 31.05 and 46.60 respectively. It could be observed that students in the experimental group obtained a higher mean gain of 21.08 as against 15.55 obtained by their colleagues. This result suggests that teaching Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice using problem-based teaching method enhances students' interest in the subject than the lecture method.

**Hypothesis 1 (HO 1):** There is no significant difference between the mean cognitive achievement scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture method

**Table 3: Analysis of Covariance test for significant difference in the mean post-test scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and Lecture method**

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Corrected Model	50.434 <sup>a</sup>	2	25.217	2.276	.111	
Intercept	4234.209	1	4234.209	382.204	.000	
PRETEST	12.771	1	12.771	1.153	.287	
GROUP/ Method	26.903	1	26.903	2.428	.024	S
Error	720.095	65	11.078			
Total	143740.000	68				
Corrected Total	770.529	67				

\*S = Significant at 0.05 level of significance

The data in Table 3 shows that the  $f$ -value for group or teaching method is 2.428 with  $p$ -value (probability value) being 0.024. Since the obtained  $p$ -value is less than the stipulated probability level of 0.05, it implies that the value of  $f$  is significant at 0.05 level of significance. On this basis, the null hypothesis is rejected implying that there is significant difference between the mean post test scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture method. The difference is in favour of those in the experimental group.

**Hypothesis 2 (HO 2):** There is no significant difference between the mean interest scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and lecture method

**Table 4: Analysis of Covariance test for significant difference in the mean post-interest scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching method and Lecture method**

Source	Sum of Squares Decision	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	5.191	395.236	2	197.618	
Intercept	1630.100	1	1630.100	42.820	.000
PRE_INTEREST	23.824	1	23.824	.626	.432
GROUP/ Method	393.390	1	393.390	10.334	.002
Error	2474.455	65	38.069		
Total	174373.000	68			
Corrected Total	2869.691	67			

\*S = Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 4 shows that the  $f$ -value for group or teaching method is 10.33 with  $p$ -value (probability value) being 0.002. Since the obtained  $p$ -value is less than the stipulated probability level of 0.05, it implies that the value of  $f$  is significant at 0.05 level of significance. On this basis, the null hypothesis is rejected implying that there is significant difference between the mean post-interest test scores of students in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice when taught using problem-based teaching

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method and lecture method. The difference is in favour of those in the experimental group.

### **Discussion of the Findings of the Study**

It was found in the study that students who were taught using problem-based teaching method performed better in the post test than those who were taught using the lecture method. Testing of the corresponding hypothesis one confirmed that the difference was statistically significant. The superior performance of students who were taught using problem-based teaching method over those taught using the lecture method could be attributed to the peculiar principles of problem-based teaching method which allows students to discover facts for themselves instead of waiting to be told everything by the teacher. This finding supports the tenets of Discovery Learning theory by Jerome Bruner which postulates that when students discover information for themselves through the process of inquiry, such information are more readily available in their working memory for a longer time than when they are told everything by the teacher. The finding of the present study supports that of Chileya and Shumba (2020), Tugwell (2020) and Anazor and Achufusi-Aka (2023) who in their separate studies found that students taught using problem-based teaching method performed better than those taught using the lecture method in Chemistry, Electronics and Physics respectively.

It was also found that students who were taught using problem-based teaching method performed better in the post-interest test than those who were taught using the lecture method. Testing of the corresponding hypothesis two confirmed that the difference was statistically significant, hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. The superior performance of students in the experimental group over those in the control group could be attributed to the fact that the opportunity provided by the problem-based teaching method for the students to make inquiries and discover facts for themselves aroused their curiosity, hence, their higher level of interest in the subject. The present finding supports the one made by Tugwell (2020) and Arifin *et al* (2020) who in their separate studies reported that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean achievement and retention scores of the two groups in favour of those in the experimental group who were taught using problem-based teaching method.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the use of problem-based teaching method by Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice teachers would enhance students' cognitive achievement in the subject than using the lecture method. Also, using problem-based teaching method would enhance students' interest in Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice than using the lecture method.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Teachers of Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice in Technical colleges in Akwa Ibom state should henceforth adopt problem based teaching method more than the lecture method to teach important topics in the subject in order to enhance the students' cognitive achievement and interest.
2. Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice teachers in Akwa Ibom state technical colleges should henceforth provide ample opportunities for students to make inquiries into the topics and discover facts for themselves instead of being told everything by the teacher in order to enhance the students' cognitive achievement and interest in the subject.

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## **Decolonizing Creation Theology in Genesis 2: An African Comparative Hermeneutical Engagement with Indigenous Ecological Knowledge**

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### **Abstract**

Genesis 2 has often been interpreted in African contexts through frameworks shaped by missionary and colonial encounters, resulting in perceptions of the text as culturally distant from indigenous African worldviews. This study argued not that Genesis 2 is historically indigenous to Africa, but that its anthropological and ecological motifs exhibit significant points of resonance with certain African cosmological traditions. Drawing on the phenomenological and decolonial scholarship of Professor Umar Habila Danfulani, the study employed a comparative decolonial hermeneutic to examine selected themes in Genesis 2 alongside Berom creation traditions of Central Nigeria, focusing on humanity's formation from the earth, the divine gift of life, and humanity's relationship with the land. By exploring both convergences and divergences between the Yahwistic creation narrative and Berom cosmology, the study contended that some dualistic interpretations inherited from segments of Western theological tradition have tended to privilege spiritual realities over material and ecological dimensions, thereby obscuring aspects of Genesis 2 that emphasize humanity's intimate connection with the earth, while also acknowledging the diversity of contemporary ecological and postcolonial biblical scholarship. The findings suggest that Genesis 2 presents a holistic anthropology in which human life is inseparable from the earth from which it originates and upon which it depends, revealing meaningful parallels with Berom understandings of land as a sacred locus of life, identity, and communal responsibility. These resonances provide constructive resources for African theological reflection and environmental ethics without

collapsing the distinctions between the biblical and indigenous traditions. The study concludes that a decolonial, context-sensitive reading of Genesis 2 can contribute to the development of African eco-theologies that promote environmental stewardship, cultural self-understanding, and spiritually grounded responses to contemporary ecological challenge.

**Keywords:** Genesis 2, Berom cosmology, Umar Habila Danfulani, Comparative Decolonial Hermeneutics.

## Introduction

In the traditional worldview of the Berom people of North-Central Nigeria, the relationship between humanity and the earth is not merely one of habitation, but of ontological continuity. The *Gwol* (soil/ground) is regarded as a sacred repository of life-force and ancestral memory (Elabo, 2025). This indigenous perspective offers a potent lens through which to re-examine the Yahwistic narrative of Genesis 2, which has long been subjected to a Western "hermeneutical colonization" that strips the text of its material grit in favor of abstract spiritualization. Traditionally, Genesis 2 has been framed as a tool of colonial proselytization, a narrative imposed from without to replace "pagan" attachments to the land. However, a decolonial reading suggests that the "earth-bound" origin of the *'adam* from the *'adamah* parallels the very myths the colonial project sought to erase. In Berom mythology, the creation of the human is fundamentally a "molding" process, where the earth provides the substance and the divine provides the animation.

Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani is widely recognized as one of Nigeria's foremost scholars in the history of religions, African Traditional Religions (ATR), inter-religious encounter, and phenomenology of religion. A member of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Jos since 1984, Danfulani's academic formation includes a PhD from Uppsala University, where his dissertation focused on divination among the Ngas, Mupun, and Mwaghavul peoples of Nigeria, analyzed through a phenomenological and anthropological lens in *Pebbles and Deities* (1995). Danfulani's phenomenological approach is rooted in the long academic tradition of seeking an integral understanding of religious phenomena by describing and interpreting lived religious experience on its own terms rather than imposing external categories (1999). This method involves attending to religious meanings as given by adherents themselves, suspending reductive explanations that strip practices of their existential weight. Phenomenology, in this sense, is both descriptive and hermeneutical: it seeks the

structure and meaning of religious experience with respect to actors' own symbols, rituals, and cosmologies (Deezia, 2025).

Within African religious studies, this approach counters older colonial and post-colonial paradigms that tended to view African religious expressions as primitive, derivative, or inferior to Western or Abrahamic traditions (Durodolu & Chisita, 2024). Oguntola-Laguda has advanced scholarship that treats African religious behavior such as divination, neo-traditional movements, and sacred healing shrines not as curiosities but as epistemically rich phenomena that warrant description, interpretation, and comparative dialogue. Such work aligns with wider decolonial aims of asserting indigenous epistemologies against epistemic hierarchies inherited from colonial scholarship. Phenomenology dovetails with decoloniality when it refuses to subordinate African religious thought to Western ontological categories and instead foregrounds African conceptual worldviews as legitimate hermeneutical resources (Savides, 2022). Danfulani's scholarship thus contributes not only to descriptive religious studies but also to broader epistemological resistance against imported frameworks that have historically marginalized African systems of meaning (Ogundade & Dada, 2022).

In the traditional worldview of the Berom people of North-Central Nigeria, the relationship between humanity and the earth is not merely one of habitation, but of ontological continuity. The *Gwol* (soil/ground) is regarded as a sacred repository of life-force and ancestral memory (Dike, et al, 2025). This indigenous perspective offers a potent lens through which to re-examine the Yahwistic narrative of Genesis 2, which has long been subjected to a Western "hermeneutical colonization" that strips the text of its material grit in favor of abstract spiritualization. Traditionally, Genesis 2 has been framed as a tool of colonial proselytization, a narrative imposed from without to replace "pagan" attachments to the land. However, a decolonial reading suggests that the "earth-bound" origin of the *'adam* from the *'adamah* parallels the very myths the colonial project sought to erase. In Berom mythology, the creation of the human is fundamentally a "molding" process, where the earth provides the substance and the divine provides the animation.

Drawing on the phenomenological and decolonial orientation of Danfulani, this study aims to perform an act of epistemic restitution. It argues that Genesis 2 functions as an "indigenous aligned" text. By placing the Hebrew narrative in dialogue with West African creation myths, particularly focusing on the themes of dust, breath, and cultivation, the research seeks to move beyond "contextualization" toward a full "re-enchantment" of the biblical record. The following analysis employs a comparative decolonial hermeneutic to demonstrate that the Yahwistic model of "stewardship" is not a mandate for exploitation, but a blueprint for Eco-Spirituality. It affirms that the human

is a "Sacred Tenant," whose ethical health is inextricably tied to the health of the *Gwol*. Through this synthesis, the study provides a robust framework for an African Theology of the Soil that can respond to contemporary ecological crises and the alienation of a technology-saturated world.

The figure of Genesis 2 within African religious discourse exemplifies the challenge of colonial importation of sacred texts and interpretive frameworks into contexts with robust indigenous cosmologies. Genesis 2 is often introduced through missionary and Western theological paradigms that implicitly position biblical creation narratives as universal templates for understanding humanity's origins, nature, and relationship with the earth (Schmid et al, 2022). In many African theological and religious studies curricula, this biblical narrative becomes the default cosmological reference, against which African traditional cosmologies are measured, adapted, or dismissed (Owusu-Gyamfi, 2023). This transplantation of Genesis into African religious imagination carries a complex legacy. On one level, African Christians and scholars find in Genesis profound theological resources for articulating human dignity, sacredness of creation, and moral anthropology (Mathu, 2025). However, the universality claims embedded in colonial reading strategies often resulted in devaluing indigenous cosmologies by assuming that meaningful creation accounts must conform to biblical categories to be considered legitimate or "theological" (Punt, 2023). This is what is meant by colonial import: the uncritical acceptance of imported sacred texts and interpretive frameworks as normative benchmarks rather than as culturally situated narratives among many (Heaney, 2016).

The colonial import problem manifests as a multifaceted marginalization of African thought, beginning with an epistemic hierarchy that privileges Europeanized biblical cosmologies as "sophisticated" truth while dismissing African traditions as "primitive" myths (Ouma, 2025). In Agboada (2025), this hierarchy is reinforced by an interpretive lens that imposes Western theological constructs such as body-soul dualism and abstract metaphysics which distort indigenous sensibilities rooted in communal personhood and rootedness in the land. Ultimately, this leads to the displacement of indigenous epistemologies, where the institutional dominance of colonial missionary frameworks suppresses African creation stories, producing a monological discourse that prevents a genuinely comparative theology from allowing indigenous cosmologies to stand on their own terms. Such dynamics are increasingly critiqued by scholars operating at the bridge between decolonial theory and African theology. In the study of ATR, there is a growing recognition that imported biblical narratives need to be re-situated within plural cosmological conversations rather than remain the unchallenged center (Zhiya et al, 2025). What is required is not rejection of Genesis per se, but a

decolonized posture toward biblical texts one that recognizes both Genesis and African cosmologies as culturally situated narratives with their own internal coherence and theological depth. This study adopts such a posture. It treats Genesis 2 as an indigenous ancient Near Eastern cosmology, worthy of comparative dialogue with African creation ontologies, and not as a universal standard. Doing so reflects both the phenomenological commitment to understanding religious phenomena from within and the decolonial commitment to epistemic plurality, two strands central to Danfulani's scholarly legacy.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Comparative Decolonial Hermeneutics is a method that seeks to disrupt the "coloniality of knowledge" by placing biblical texts and indigenous traditions on an equal epistemic footing. Unlike traditional comparative religion, which often used Western categories as the universal standard (Ndlovu, 2018), a decolonial approach acknowledges that the Yahwistic narrative of Genesis 2 was produced in an Ancient Near Eastern context that shares more with African agrarian ontologies than with modern Western Enlightenment dualism (Rathbone, 2006). This framework operates on the principle of diatopical hermeneutics, a term popularized by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2023) and adapted in African theology to describe a dialogue between different "topoi" (places of knowledge). By reading Genesis 2 through this lens, we move beyond viewing the text as a colonial tool and instead treat it as a site of "intercultural translation" (Santos, 2023). This allows the researcher to reclaim the Hebrew concepts of *'adam* (humanity: male and female) and *'adamah* (soil) as being in direct conversation with African concepts of ontological grounding in the land, rather than being mere precursors to Western individualistic theology. In addition, Danfulani method is characterized by a deep engagement with lived religious experience, the "real-life" expressions of faith that occur outside of formal dogmatic structures (Danfulani, 2001). For Danfulani, the sacred is not an abstract concept but is found in the rituals, symbols, and communal lives of people, particularly in the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

Applying this method to Genesis 2 involves a "phenomenology of the soil." Instead of analyzing the text as a static historical document, the researcher looks at how the themes of earth and breath are "lived" in African communities today (e.g., in Berom agricultural rituals). Danfulani (1999) emphasized that African traditional religions are "religions of the land," where the moral order is tied to the physical environment. By engaging with these lived realities, this study moves from a "library-based" exegesis to a "field-based" theology, ensuring that the interpretation of the Yahwist narrative is

anchored in the actual indigenous epistemologies and historical experiences of African people.

### Exegetical Analysis of Genesis 2:4–15

The Yahwistic narrative offers a strikingly materialist account of human origins. Unlike the Priestly account in Genesis 1, which focuses on the *Imago Dei* through divine fiat, Genesis 2:7 depicts God as a potter (*yatsar*) molding the human (*'adam*) from the dust of the ground (*'adamah*) (see Jusu, 2016). This linguistic wordplay is vital for decolonial reading. The term *'adam* is not a proper name in this context but a generic noun for "humanity," which is etymologically inseparable from *'adamah*, the arable, red soil (Dike, 2025; Dike & Agbo, 2025). This relationship implies that the human is not an alien entity placed upon the earth but is a biological extension of the earth. As noted by Stiver (2012), the J-narrative reflects an agrarian worldview where human identity is defined by its "rootedness" (or ontological grounding) in the land. By emphasizing this "dust-to-dust" connection, the text challenges the Western dualism that treats the soul as a celestial prisoner of a terrestrial body (Roskos, 2003). Instead, the "breath of life" (*nishmat chayyim*) transforms the earthen clay into a "living being" (*nephesh chayah*), suggesting a psychosomatic unity that aligns deeply with African holistic thought.

To apply the "Danfulani Method," there is a dialogue between this Hebrew text with the lived myths of the Berom people of the Jos Plateau. In Berom cosmogony, as documented in Danfulani's phenomenological studies (2001), the relationship between the people (*Dagwi*) and the land (*Gwol*) is both mystical and foundational. Like the Yahwistic potter, many Berom traditions and broader Middle Belt myths describe the Supreme Being using clay or earth to fashion the first ancestors. This is not merely a metaphor for death, but a definition of life; the Berom person is an "earth-being" whose moral and spiritual health is tied to the health of the soil. In an African phenomenological reading of Genesis 2:4–7, the soil is viewed as the "First Parent," transforming the creation of the human from an abstract event into the birth of a communal lineage where the dust (*'aphar*) carries the ancestral essence of the "living dead" (Mbiti, 2015). This perspective replaces the Western emphasis on "dominion" with an Environmental Ubuntu, asserting that the human (*Adam*) only exists through a vital, reciprocal bond with the ground (*'adamah*), just as the divine breath (*nishmat chayyim*) is viewed not as a private soul but as a shared communal life-force animating the entire village (Chemhuru, 2024). Within this framework too, the divine breath (*Nishmat hayyim*) is viewed not as a private soul but as a communal "vital force" (Bujo, 2022) that animates the entire village and ecosystem. Consequently, the "crisis" of the unworked ground in verse 5 is resolved through the spirituality of the hoe a form of "liturgical labor" (Ranft,

2009) where the human acts as a "Gardener-Priest." This role positions the gardener as a custodian of the land who maintains the cosmic equilibrium between the tangible soil and the intangible spirit, treating the *adamah* as a living subject with its own inherent rights (Dike, 2025).

Worthy of note too is the fact that while Genesis 2:15 speaks of the human being placed in the garden to "cultivate and keep" (*'abad* and *shamar*), Berom traditional religion manifests this through the Mandeng or harvest festivals and rituals of the "Priest of the Land" (*Da-Gwom*). For both the Yahwist and the Berom, the soil is a sacred partner in a covenant. If the land is defiled by blood or injustice, the "living being" (the human) suffers because their material source is corrupted. By comparing the J-narrative's *'adamah* with the Berom *Gwol*, it is obvious that "indigeneity" is not just a political status but a theological one (Danfulani, 2001). Both traditions reject the colonial-extractive view of land as "real estate." Instead, they present a "pedomorphic" (earth-form) anthropology where human dignity is derived from the shared composition with the ground that is cultivated (Scarritt, 2024).

In Genesis 2:8–15, the Garden of Eden is not an abstract paradise, but a specific, demarcated "sacred geography" defined by its proximity to the divine and its life-sustaining rivers. This echoes the African Sacred Grove (*do hwet* in Berom), which serves as a terrestrial meeting point between the physical and spiritual realms. Just as the Garden is the site where God "walks," African sacred groves are the dwellings of deities and ancestors. This garden is not a fenced-off private estate, but a source of life defined by the four rivers, arteries that connect the divine center to the land; reinforcing the African ontological view that the Earth's "blood" (water) and "flesh" (soil) are a singular, life-giving system (Opande, 2023). When the human is placed in the garden to *'abad* (serve, cultivate, till) and *shamar* (guard) it, the text codifies the role of the *'adam*. This mandate transforms agricultural labor into a liturgical act of "Environmental Ubuntu," where the *Adam* serves the *Adamah* to maintain the cosmic equilibrium between the community, the ancestors, and the Creator (Dike, 2025). The prohibition against certain actions in Eden mirrors the indigenous taboos that protect African groves from deforestation (Osemeobo, 2013). Thus, these spaces are viewed as sanctuaries of biodiversity maintained through ritual phenomenology.

The mandate in Genesis 2:15 to "till" (*abad*) and "keep" (*shamar*) the earth is often mistranslated through Western lenses as "domination." In a decolonial reading, *abad* carries the weight of "service" or "worship," and *shamar* implies "guarding." This mirrors the African ethical mandate where farming is a liturgical act. Among the Berom and many agrarian Nigerian communities, the act of "tilling" is balanced by the responsibility of "keeping" the land's spiritual potency (Danfulani, 2001). Within an

African ethical framework, the mandate to "till and keep" (*'abad* and *shamar*) in Genesis 2:15 functions as a covenantal duty that elevates agricultural labor to the level of stewardship. By "tilling," the human engages in a vital participation that serves the soil's potential, reflecting the "Ethic of Vital Force" where human dignity is tied to the flourishing of the entire life-system. Simultaneously, the command to "keep" transforms the human into a Custodian of the Ancestral Trust, mirroring assertion that the land is a sacred link between the ancestors and the unborn (Dike et al, 2025; Mbiti, 1990). The "Gardener-Priest" paradigm establishes an environmental Ubuntu, where the ethical health of the community is measured by its vigilance in protecting the *Adamah*, ensuring that the "seen" material of the earth remains a fit vessel for the "unseen" breath of the Divine (Pilani, 2024). The land is not a commodity, but a sacred trust held by the living on behalf of the ancestors and the unborn (Dike et al, 2025).

The exclamation in Genesis 2:23: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," is the biblical foundation of corporate identity. Rather than an individualist contract, the Yahwistic narrative presents human relationship as an ontological unity. This is the Hebrew equivalent of Ubuntu or the African philosophy of "I am because we are." In African communalism, the "body" of the individual is an extension of the "body" of the lineage. The J-narrative's focus on shared substance (bone and flesh) reinforces the African view that personhood is found in the "web of relations" rather than the isolated "self." Western theology, influenced by Platonic dualism, often separates the "soul" from the "body." In contrast, Genesis 2 and African ontologies present a holistic embodiment. The nephesh *chayah* (living being) of Genesis is a psychosomatic whole. Note also that in the Yahwist narrative, kinship and embodiment are expressed through a "somatic continuity" where the human (*Adam*) is revealed as the self-conscious expression of the ground (*Adamah*). This embodiment rejects the dualism of spirit and matter, proposing instead a Vitalist Kinship that aligns with the concept of "African Vitalogy," where all of life is a singular, pulsating web of energy (Ignatov, 2025). For the African context, this means the human body is an "Ancestral Extension" of the earth; we carry the minerals of the ancestral land within our very bones (Mbiti, 2015).

Consequently, the "Soil-Body" becomes the site of a profound ethical embodiment: to care for one's physical self is to care for the earth, and to serve the earth is to honor the communal "flesh" that sustains the lineage, fulfilling the mandate of a lived, "Earth-bound" Ubuntu (Bujo, 2022). By applying a relational ontology, this study argues that the African human is not a "soul in a machine" but a "being-in-relation" to the soil, the community, and the divine.

## Decolonial Implications

Professor Danfulani's work extensively addressed religious and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt, often centered on land. A "Soil Theology" derived from Genesis 2 offers a decolonial pathway to peace in which the Land as Shared Mother and in terms of Justice and Restoration. By this perspective, if all humans are *'adam* (of the soil), then land-grabbing and blood-shedding on the soil are acts of "sacrilege" against our shared material origin. Soil Theology demands that land disputes be resolved not just through legalistic Western property rights, but through the restorative ethics of indigenous land covenants. Decoloniality involves the "re-enchantment" of knowledge that was "disenchanted" by colonial secularism. In a globalized world driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and extractive technology, the "earth-bound" theology of Genesis 2 reminds African communities of the sacredness of the local and the material. Reclaiming the J-narrative as an indigenous-aligned text empowers African scholars to utilize Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in addressing climate change, ecological degradation, and social fragmentation, thereby demonstrating the enduring relevance of ancient narratives for contemporary sustainable development. Further, the decolonial implications of a "soil-centered" exegesis lie in the systematic dismantling of the colonial "Logic of Extraction," replacing it with a Theology of Relationality that restores the Earth as a living subject (Oord, 2022). This shift moves the African audience from the periphery of a Western "Man-over-Nature" hierarchy to the center of an Indigenous Custodianship, where the act of "tilling and keeping" becomes a form of epistemic disobedience against the commodification of the land (Alamezie, 2024). By reclaiming the *Adam-Adamah* bond, the African subject undergoes a process of rejoining the body to the ancestral soil and the community to its vital source (Mbiti, 1990). Ultimately, Genesis 2 serves as a decolonial manifesto: it asserts that true liberation is not merely political independence, but the restoration of the sacred, liturgical bond between a people and the ground that birthed them (Bujo, 2022).

## Conclusion

The intellectual legacy of Professor Umar Habila Danfulani serves as a clarion call to move beyond the "hermeneutical captivity" of Western theological frameworks. This study has demonstrated that when the Yahwistic narrative of Genesis 2 is liberated from Eurocentric dualism and abstract spiritualization, it reveals a profound ontological symmetry with African indigenous worldviews. By repositioning the Yahwist narrative as an "indigenous aligned" text, the discourse transitions from a monological framework where the Bible functions as a foreign judge of African culture to a dialogical

engagement where the *'adamah* of the Hebrew Bible and the *Gwol* of the Berom people speak with equal authority.

Reclaiming an Africanized future for these disciplines requires a commitment to Soil Theology, a framework that honors the material, communal, and sacred rootedness of humanity as sacred tenants of the earth. As the globalized world becomes increasingly mediated by technology and disconnected from the earth, the "earth-bound" anthropology of Genesis 2 provides a vital ethical compass. This approach does not merely "contextualize" a foreign text; it performs an act of epistemic restitution, affirming that African religious realities offer the necessary keys to unlocking the deepest truths of the biblical record. Ultimately, the future of Biblical and Religious Studies in Africa lies in this phenomenological re-enchantment. By synthesizing the rigorous analysis of ancient texts with the lived sacredness of African traditional life, the path blazed by Professor Danfulani is honored. The scholarly horizon expands toward a space where the "dust of the earth" is no longer a symbol of insignificance, but the very site of divine presence, communal resilience, and decolonial hope.

### **Acknowledgement**

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The author deeply appreciates Professor Danfulani's lifelong commitment to recovering African spiritual heritage from the shadows of colonial distortion and for demonstrating that African traditions remain indispensable resources for theological reflection, ecological ethics, and cultural identity. This work draws inspiration from his phenomenological sensitivity to African lived experience and his enduring advocacy for scholarship that speaks meaningfully to African contexts.

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## **Religion and Law as Instruments of Social Control: A Comparative Study**

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### **Abstract**

There are as many definitions of religion as there are scholars. These definitions reflect the scholar's discipline. There is therefore, no unanimous agreement amongst scholars on the definition of religion. The same could be said of the concept of law. Any attempt to define law is likely to expose the philosophical and/or ideological leaning of the author which is historically polarized into two major camps: advocates of natural law doctrine and protagonists of legal positivism. On the contrary, it is almost an unanimous agreement amongst scholars that religion and law are instruments of social control. However, while some like Marx and Lenin lay emphasis on the negative impacts of religion and law on the society, others emphasize on the positive impacts. It is against the above backdrops that this paper attempts a comparative analysis of religion and law in order to see the different ways in which they affect and/or control the activities of man as a social being. It is observed that as instruments of social control, there are areas where religion and law diverge and as well, converge in directing the affairs of citizens in a society. This research submits that religion and law have both negative and positive influence on the society. Nevertheless, because they have come to stay, more attention should be placed on their positive contributions to the society. So that, rather than dehumanize the masses, religion and law should serve as tools to enhance humanity.

**Keywords:** Religion, Law, Positive Law, Natural Law, Society, Social Control.

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## Introduction

Religionists are of the opinion that the divine beings have a great measure of control over the life of every member of different religious communities in their daily activities as an individual and as a group. Most definitions of religion given by different scholars attest to this. However, revered scholars like Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Vladimir Ilich Lenin, Emile Durkheim, etc., see religion as the creation of the society (or human creation). On another note, lawyers emphasize on the necessity of law for peaceful co-existence of citizens in a given community. In contemporary societies therefore, the importance of religion and law cannot be overemphasized. While Durkheim, for example, opines that the society which created religion uses it as an instrument of control, Karl Marx sees both religion and law as social construct.

But the concepts of religion and law are understood differently by different scholars. In fact, an attempt to answer the questions: “what is religion?” and/or “what is law?” is likely to expose the discipline (or as regards the latter), the philosophical and ideological leaning of the inquirer. Consequently, this paper x-rays as much as possible, various definitions of religion and law as proffered by several authors before looking into the nitty-gritty of this research – which is *a comparative study of religion and law as tools of social control*. While scholars disagree on the definitions of “religion” and “law,” it is almost an unanimous agreement that these two concepts are instruments of social control. On this note, this work chiefly attempts a comparative analysis of the concepts at hand in order to decipher both their negative and positive impacts on the society; and where religion and law, as effective tools of social control, diverge and where they converge.

## Conceptualizing Religion

There are as many definitions of religion as there are scholars. Jerry Obi-Okogbuo (2004) wants us to be weary of these definitions “because they give so much latitude that almost every other human endeavor qualifies as religion” (p. 92). Corollary, Oliver Uche and Martina Uche (2013) posit that some of these definitions reflect the scholar’s discipline or presuppositions (or beliefs) – that is why one can talk of philosophical, anthropological, sociological, theological, psychological, historical, biological definitions of religion. The above caveat notwithstanding, let us begin with the etymology of religion. Even in the etymological derivation of the concept in question, authors vary: According to Olukayode Oyenuga and Oluwatosin Akintan (2021), religion is etymologically derived from the Latin word *religare* which means “to bind back” or “to rebind.” For them, these imply that religion, etymologically speaking, “entails a process of reconnecting by worship, a missing or broken intimacy between God and

worshippers” (p. 3). Citing Omoregbe (1996), Toluwalase Ajayi (2007) and Sunday Adenrele (2008) posit that religion is etymologically derived from three Latin words: *ligare*, which means “to bind,” *relegere* which means “to unite or link” and *religio*, which means “relationship.” Religion therefore, “means a relationship, a link established between two persons, namely, the *human person* and the *divine person* believed to exist, it is something that links or unites man with a transcendent being, a deity, believed to exist and worshiped by man” (Omoregbe, 1996, as cited in Ajayi, 2007, p. 95; Adenrele, 2008, pp. 10-11; and Omoregbe, 1993, pp. 2-3).

Joseph Omoregbe (1993) further sees religion as a bi-polar phenomenon. “On the one end is man (the religious man) while on the other end is the transcendent being, the deity he believes to exist and which he worships” (p. 3). Now, in as much as the religious man really believes in the existence of the deity, it is immaterial whether such a deity really exists or is simply his figment of imagination. The above premise, Omoregbe (1993) thinks, makes the concept of *diety* an essential concept of religion. Therefore, for him, “where a belief in a deity is lacking, there can be no religion since religion as we have said, is essentially a relationship established between man and a deity, that is, a transcendental personal being, believed to exist” (p. 3). According to Obilor (2003), religion is derived from the Latin noun *religion* which is closely allied to other three Latin verbs: *religere* which means “to turn to constantly” or “to observe conscientiously,” *religari* which means “to bind oneself (back),” and *reeligere* which means “to choose again” (as cited in Ihuagwu & Amolo, 2013, p. 136). A closer look at these verbs, Obilor continues, shows that they point to three religious attitudes. This means that etymological probe can reveal much about religion and can equally help to resolve most of the difficulties often associated with the concept of religion. Despite the plethora of definitions of religion which, as observed above, reflect the scholar’s discipline, none is universally accepted. This implies that none of the definitions could claim to have a complete view of religion. Be that as it may, it is pertinent to consider some of them.

In a sociological context, Oyenuga and Akintan (2021) define religion from attitudinal point of view. Therefore, they agree with Akinola who conceives of religion as being “associated with the role of preaching the moral principles and rules that are expected to govern societies and the lives of its members” (p. 4). This implies that religion is a social creation aimed to control its members. It further shows why religion is such a powerful force in the society – which also explains the continuous struggle for supremacy among different religions. Arinze Agbanusi (2009) defines religion as the belief in God or gods and the activities connected with this belief. A particular religion, he continues, is a system of faith that is based on the belief in the existence of a god or

gods. For him, this belief in god or gods is a universal phenomenon. Therefore, in most (if not all) societies, there is one form of religious worship or the other. He quickly pointed out that theism represents belief in the existence of God or gods which is classified into monotheism – belief in the existence of one God and polytheism or pantheism – belief in the existence of many gods. Pantheism has a slight difference with polytheism. The former is the belief that God is present in all natural things. Atheism – unbelief in God’s existence, for Agbanusi, is a form of religion – in that disbelief in the existence of God or gods constitutes a religious belief. Since the Atheist expresses an opinion about God’s existence, he/she is invariably religious. This can equally be said of the Agnostics – who express the opinion that they are not sure whether God exists or not, or that one cannot know whether or not God exists.

Clifford Geertz describes religion “as a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of general order or existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz, as cited in Linus Okika, 2013, p. 100). Faith Okobia et al. (2016) cited Madu’s definition of religion as “an institutionalized system of symbols, beliefs, values and practices focused on questions of ultimate meaning” (Madu, 1996, as cited in Okobia et al., 2016, p. 152). In another work, Okobia (2013) single handedly gave the following definitions:

- Religion is the feeling of absolute dependence on a supernatural being believed to direct the course of nature and human life (Ubrurhe, 2000).
- Roy (1996) sees religion as man’s search for supernatural assistance in achieving a sense of security. One can observe the closeness between this definition with that of Ubrurhe above.
- For Nmah (1998), religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things set apart or forbidden; beliefs and practices that unite one single moral community called church and all those who adhere to them (Okobia, 2013, p. 124).

Ajayi (2007) elucidates on the concept of religion with the help of the following authors: James sees religious experience as the feeling, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine. On the other hand, Bouquet sees religion as a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply, God. Omoregbe (1993) is not comfortable with Bouquet’s definition of religion:

A. C. Bouquet's definition of religion ... is alright as far as it goes, except that it leaves out the aspect of belief which is essential to the concept of religion. For the non-human entity, the transcendent being or deity which the religious man worships may not exist, it may be nothing other than the figment of his imagination. Yet as long as the religious man *believes* that such a deity actually exists and he worships it, he is practicing religion even if the deity actually does not exist. Hence our own definition of religion as 'a relationship established between man and a transcendent personal being, a deity, believed to exist,' is more accurate. (p. 3)

Ajayi, after articulating definitions of some scholars posits that religion is a system of beliefs, rituals, and practices or a code of moral conduct involving the recognition by man of a supernatural power which has control over his destiny and which is entitled to obedience, reverence and worship. According to Omoregbe, as captured by Ajayi, religion is inseparable from culture. It is an expression of the cultural worldview of a people. Omoregbe strongly affirms that it is impossible to understand any religion without understanding the culture within which it grew; for instance, it is impossible to understand Christianity without understanding the Jewish-Greco-Roman culture. Similarly, it is impossible to understand Islam without understanding the Arabic culture nor can one understand the Hindu, Buddhist, or Jainist religion without understanding the Indian culture (Ajayi, 2007, pp. 95-96). Religion, Ajayi continues, does not only concern itself with gods, spirits, ancestors and supernatural beings, it equally tries to provide explanation for man's origin, destiny and power beyond his control. Authentic religion, therefore, according to Ajayi, cannot operate without a sound convincing practical philosophy. Adenrele (2008) agrees with Uche and Uche that religion means different things to different people. He then, lists the following definitions of religion as put forward by scholars of different fields:

- Karl Marx: "religion is the opium of the masses."
- Feuerbach: "religion is man's alienation; it is the means by which man strips himself of his own essence, his best qualities, and reduces himself to nothing."
- Salmon Reinach: "religion is an assembly of scruples impeding the free exercise of faculties."
- Schleiermacher: "religion is a feeling of absolute dependence on God."
- C. A. Campbell: "a state of mind comprising belief in the reality of a supernatural being."
- Emile Durkheim: "religion is the creation of the society" (p. 11).

After highlighting the etymological meaning of religion, Stanley Ihuagwu and Hope Amolo (2013) attempted to define religion. They cited Gilbert (1980) and Obilor (2003). The former defines religion as “any system of values, beliefs, norms, and related symbols and rituals, arising from attempts by individuals and social groups to effect certain ends, whether in this world or any future world, by means wholly or partly supernatural.” The latter defines religion as “the whole complexus of attitudes, beliefs, practices, gestures, rituals, emotions, convictions, and institutions through which we express our deep fundamental relationship with reality and not excluding the created order” (p. 136). Obilor may have been under the influence of Richard McBrien (1994) who conceives religion as: “the whole complexus of attitudes, convictions, gestures, rituals, beliefs, and institutions by which we come to terms with, and express, our most fundamental relationship with Reality (God and the created order, perceived as coming forth from God’s creative hand)” (p. 364). Religion, Ihuagwu and Amolo continue, has to do with the whole of human existence, and not merely a certain aspect of it. Obilor further defines religion as the composite of all those feelings of duties towards the transcendental being. Note that Kant conceives religion as the recognition of all our duties as a divine command.

Albert Einstein gave a definition of religion devoid of the supernatural. For him, “religion is the age-old endeavor of man to liberate himself from the fetters of selfish desires; it is the preoccupation with thoughts, feelings and aspirations, which have super-personal values. One is religious and devout when one is not in doubt, even without rational justification, of the significance and loftiness of these super-personal objects and goals.” Here, religion is not only perceived as “a sense of mystery,” it is also seen as a “a way of orienting oneself in life.” In this non-theistic sense of religion, Obi-Okogbuo (2004) asserts, Taoism and Buddhism qualify as religion; and scientists like Einstein, philosophers like Spinoza and sages like Budha can be classified as religious persons. Although for him, this non-theistic sense of religion does not really define religion (pp. 92-93). Usman Abbas quoting Adewole defines religion as: “The phenomenon that describes man’s relations as a creature with God as his Creator. As such, man deserves to obey his Creator. It is the link between God and man. It deals mostly with beliefs that are beyond human reasoning but which are accepted by believers in faith.” Abbas also quoted *Collins English Dictionary* which defines religion as “worship of, or obedience to a supernatural power or powers considered to be divine or to have control of human destiny. Abbas then, defines religion as “belief in a superhuman power or powers to be worshipped; any specific system of belief or worship” (Abbas, n.d., p. 1).

Uche and Uche (2013) brought our attention to the fact that most of the above definitions and statements about religion are weakened by their emphasis on man-god relationship, while leaving out man's relationship with his neighbour. A good definition of religion should include the man-to-man relationship with his neighbour as well as man's connection with his God; emphasis should be laid on both the vertical and horizontal importance of religion. They, in accordance with Nabofa, define religion as man's effort in satisfying certain emotional needs by establishing and maintaining cordial relationship between himself and the supersensible world, and his fellow man. Uche and Uche came to a conclusion that "Religion is universally acclaimed as an affixed relationship between man and God, between man and his neighbor" (p. 132). At this juncture, let us turn to some of those definitions which claim to be philosophical as put forward by Ewere Atoi et al. (2020): Philosophically, religion is seen by Manus (2006) as the belief in the "form of the Good," a divine mind and will which is central to the existence of the universe and hold a moral relation with mankind. The renowned German philosopher, Immanuel Kant delineates religion as "the recognition of all our duties as divine commands."

J. B. Pratt, as recorded by Idowu (1973), sees religion as "the serious and social attitude of individual or communities towards the power or powers perceived as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies." For Emile Durkheim as captured by Adogbo (2000), religion is "a unified system of beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community." Adogbo also recorded James Frazer's definition of religion as "the propitiation and conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the cause of nature and human life" (Atoi et al., 2020, p. 116). In addition, Chad Meister (2009) posits that "a religion involves a system of beliefs and practices primarily centered around a transcendent Reality, either personal or impersonal, which provides ultimate meaning and purpose to life" (p. 6). It is doubtful, according to Meister (and we concur), whether any of the above definitions really capture the complete meaning of religion. However, time is ripe to have a quick glance at the concept of law.

### **Definitions and Conceptions of Law**

Simeon Eboh (2004) observes that the answer to the question "what is law?" depends to a certain extent, the philosophical and ideological leaning of the inquirer – which historically speaking is divided into two broad-based streams of thought: the exponents of natural law doctrine and protagonists of legal positivism. Legal realism, for Eboh, and Omoregbe (1994) is only a branch of legal positivism which has its roots in America and Sweden (Eboh, 2004, pp. 1-3; Omoregbe, 1994, pp 126-129). It is pertinent

to note that positive law is so called because it is posited or laid down. Unfortunately, there is no straightforward answer to the question “what is law?” Perhaps, Kant is right when he says that this question cannot be answered from empirical stance. For him, the answer must be approached from the metaphysical perspective – “it requires an *a priori* and not *a posteriori* approach” (Omogbe, 1994, p. vi). However, to tackle this problem of definition of law, it is not out of place to begin with its etymology. Etymologically, the word “law” hails from the Latin word *lex* which according to Nwoke Cheche et al. (2008) means “to tie or bind something” (p. 3). For them, the essence of law is to produce a rule of action – which binds and ties. Law in this etymological sense signifies a body or collection of various laws peculiar to a given nation or people.

This is similar to the definition given by *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*: Law is the whole system of rules that everyone in a country or society must obey. Another similar definition is recorded by Colin Padfield (1978). For him, to speak of the law of a state, one is constrained to use the term “law” in a special and strict sense, hence, law may be defined as “a rule of human conduct, imposed upon and enforced among, the members of a given state” (p. 1). But the notion of law as a “system of rules” of a given state may not go down well with Dworkin, Omogbe and the natural law theorists as we shall later see. Cheche et al. (2008, pp. 17-19) enumerated the following definitions of law as suggested by different scholars. A careful observation reveals the philosophical and ideological leaning of the scholars: Salmond’s definition, according to Cheche et al., is practical: it is “the body of principles recognized and applied by the state in the administration of justice” (also cited in Vidya Mahajan, 2013, p. 372). Law, for Kant, is the aggregate of the conditions which the arbitrary (subjective) will of one individual may be combined with that of another under a general inclusive law of freedom. Thering has it that law is the sum of the conditions of social life in the widest sense of the term, as secured by the power of the state through the means of external compulsion. For Austin, law is a rule laid down for the guidance of an intelligent being by an intelligent being having power over him.

Thomas Aquinas defined law as “an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by him who has the care of the community” (*Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 90, a.4, as cited in Fagothey, 1959, p. 162; Cheche et al., 2008, pp. 17-19; Eboh, 2004, p. 2). The implication of the above definition is that law “must be mandatory in form, reasonable in content, community-serving in purpose, knowable in manifestation, and authoritative in source.” (Fagothey, 1959, p. 168). Any law that lacks any of these characteristics is not genuine and cannot impose moral obligation. Furthermore, Aquinas in accordance with Isidore of Seville describes a good law thus: “Law shall be virtuous, just, possible to nature, according to the custom of the country, suitable to

place and time, necessary, useful, clearly expressed, lest by its obscurity it leads to misunderstanding; framed for no private benefit, but for the common good” (Gratsch, 1985, p.129). In addition, Francis Suarez, as captured by Eboh (2004), posit that law is “a common, just and stable precept that has been sufficiently promulgated” (p. 2). From the foregoing, one agrees with Edward Gratsch (1985) that law not only pertains to reason, it also directs our actions to a goal usually known as the common good. For instance, “sanitation laws seek to preserve the health of the community, and traffic laws seek to preserve the safety of the community. It is then obvious that;

... the making of laws is the responsibility of the person who is in charge of the community, whether that person be one or more than one. A law must be promulgated; it must be made known to those whom it binds, for only in this way can they observe it. It does not make much difference how a law is promulgated, as long as it is effectively brought to the attention of the community. Thus, a law is a reasonable and authoritative directive, given by the person who is in charge of the community for the common good, and promulgated. Law as an authoritative directive, supposes the guidance of the intellect, the motive force of the will, and the notification of those who are to be ruled by it (Gratsch, 1985, p. 126).

Omoregbe (1994) grappled with this issue of “concept of law” in the introduction of his work on *Philosophical Jurisprudence*. Perhaps, more insight on the issue at hand may be derived from Omoregbe’s work: As observed earlier, Omoregbe is not comfortable with the positivist, *a posteriori*, empirical approach to the study of law. For instance, Legal Positivists, especially Jeremy Bentham and his disciple, John Austin, maintain that law is essentially a (man-made) command backed by sanction or threat or punishment. This implies, according to Omoregbe, that any issue of a command, including that of an armed robber which is backed up with force or the threat of punishment is, *ipso facto*, law. Another group of Legal Positivists, Kelsen and Hart maintain that law is essentially a system of norms (or rules) in which one norm derives from another and is justified by it. Consequently, the legal validity of one law derives from another law within the same legal system. But Kelsen tells us that the entire legal system derives its validity from the “grand norm” which is outside the legal system itself. For Kelsen, the “grand norm” is the foundation of the entire legal system. With this, Kelsen crossed over to the metaphysical realm. In other to account for the validity of a positive (manmade) legal system, Kelsen was obliged to move beyond the empirical

realm into the metaphysical realm. With his concept of “grand norm” which is outside the positive legal system, Kelsen brought back through the back door the natural law concept which he had earlier thrown out through the front door.

Unlike Kelsen, Hart remained within the positive legal system so as not to re-introduce “natural law” in disguise. For him, legal system is validated by the mere fact of its having been accepted or acquiesced by the people and is used by court officials. It does not matter whether the law is draconian, tyrannical, wicked, so long as it has been acquiesced to by the people and is being used by court officials, it is valid. What then, Omoregbe queries, is the essential feature of law? Omoregbe asserts that *Obligation* is the essential feature of law. For him, it is not sanction (as claimed by Bentham and Austin) nor is it “system of rules” (as claimed by Kelsen and Hart). Obligation, Omoregbe continues, is of a moral nature, and it derives from the natural law; for the foundation of all laws is the natural law. Fuller corroborates further; that law is inseparable from morality; to separate law from morality as advocated by the legal positivists, is to strip law of its sacred and obligatory features and cut it off from the natural law which is its foundation. And when this happens, law becomes a naked command backed by brute force like the command of an armed robber; it automatically ceases to be law. Although, man is obliged to obey law, but not when it becomes a naked command backed by brute force.

### **What is Natural Law (Law of Nature)?**

Law of nature has prescriptive and descriptive meanings. The “law of nature” in its prescriptive sense, is a universal precept (a universal rule/principle or command) intended by nature to regulate human behaviour. It is a universal law which orders all human beings to do good and refrain from evil. This prescriptive meaning of “law of nature” is synonymous with Kant’s “Moral Law”; for the law of nature (in its prescriptive sense) is a moral law, and it only applies to human beings – who are rational and free beings (Omoregbe, 1994, pp. x-xi). The descriptive meaning of “natural law” or “law of nature” refers to the description of the regularity with which certain things happen uniformly all over the world under certain conditions. Examples: the law of plenary motion, law of relativity, law of gravitation, etc. Law of nature in this sense only describes and informs us of the way things do actually happens – which is discovered by careful observation. It does not prescribe the conduct of human behaviour. It is customary, Austin Fagothey (1959) observes, to call the physical laws the *laws of nature* and reserve the term *natural law* for the natural moral law (p. 167). Although this usage is not always kept. Lastly, while the above definitions given by Kant, Aquinas and Suarez may be said to belong to the Natural Law Tradition, others could be said to

belong to the Legal Positivist School – i.e., those of Austin, Thering (and Salmond – which depicts Legal Realism, an offshoot of legal positivism). It is now time to juxtapose religion and law in order to see how they are used as instruments of social control.

### **Religion and Law as Instruments of Social Control: A Comparative Study**

It is indubitable that religion and law are effective instruments of social control. However, they can be positively and/or negatively used. Not only that their usage is understood differently, they (religion and law) are used differently as tools of social control. Again, there are areas where (as instruments of social control) religion and law diverge and areas where they converge. Karl Marx's understanding of religion and law as effective tools of social control is our point of departure. Marx sees religion and law as ideologies which the few bourgeois capitalist exploiters adopt in exploiting the poor masses. For Marx, ideology is a distorted and false perception of reality in a capitalist society. Religion, for him, is used by the said exploiters to sedate the people. The exploiters, as affirmed by Omoregbe (1994), use religion to keep the people calm and prevent them from revolting against the exploiters. With this acceptance of to their (i.e. the people) exploitative condition, hoping to reap their reward in heaven, the exploiters then feel at home in their exploitative escapade with the assurance that the people will not rebel against them. Thus, religion is an effective tool of social control, though in this sense, negative. This is because religion instead of helping to uplift the poor man, did diminish and dehumanize him. Religion was indeed: *das Opium des Volkes* – i.e., the opium of the masses (Pantaleon Iroegbu, 2002, pp. 76-77). Lenin pushed it farther when he posited that religion is more than "opium of," but it is "opium for" the people, which means that religion was purposely constructed with the aim of dehumanizing the masses. However, Marx and Lenin had been heavily criticized.

Similarly, Marx recognized law as an ideology codenamed, the "Bourgeois Philosophy of Law." According to Marx, this ideology presents the people with a distorted and false perception of the world as a world of "law and order," which is maintained by means of the coercive force of law. This "Philosophy of Law" was adopted by the bourgeois to rip off the poor masses. Having convinced the poor masses with this ideology that the world is a world of "law and order" which is maintained via the coercion of the law, the capitalists continued to oppress and exploit the masses with the coercive force of law. Thus, for Marx, religion and law are effective instruments of social control in the hands of the capitalist exploiters. One may not overlook the negative aspects of religion and law as tools of social control, but it is fallacious not to recognize the positive aspects of religion and law, especially in the promotion of social justice and human dignity. Again, with respect to social control, religion and law should

not be reduced to ideological connivance of the bourgeois capitalist as postulated by Marx. As regards law, Gratsch (1985) opines that law should bind all subjects equally without exception. However, although one is obliged to observe the letter of the law; "but in some instances, he or she should not observe it, in order to insure the common good intended by the lawgiver." For instance, "a traffic law forbids one to park her car in the middle of the road; but she may do so, if it is necessary to protect injured persons from oncoming cars. Often the lawgiver will give a dispensation from the law to protect an individual from harm in a particular instance (p. 129). On another note, Durkheim as captured by Adenrele (2008) sees religion as the creation of the society:

It is the society which created and uses religion as an instrument of control. It is ... people that engage in religious life to celebrate the awesome power of their society. The society uses religion as the instrument of control and means of moulding their minds so that it may be able to direct their thinking. The society exercises such a powerful influence on its member that the latter personifies its force into divine entity. What religious people also call the commandments of God is nothing other than the moral demands of the society. (p. 12)

Away from Durkheim's and the Marxists' conceptions of religion and law, there are areas where the two concepts diverge as they play the role of social control: It could be said that religion aims at making man virtuous. Law, on the other hand, is said to primarily aim at the peaceful co-existence of citizens and not necessarily to make them virtuous. In other words, although law could command actions which are virtuous, it does not command virtue for its own sake. Omorebge (1994) stresses further that it is not because such actions are virtuous that they are commanded by law, rather they are commanded because the non-performance of such actions would be detrimental to peaceful co-existence of the citizens.

Secondly, while most religions are concerned more with the internal, law is concerned more with the external forum. For instance, while Christian religion is concerned with the sin of lust in the mind, law often limits itself to the action of rape. Another example is the difference between pre-meditated murder and manslaughter; while the former is sinful, the latter is not. But in law, for the fact that the act of killing occurred (externally) in both, they are unlawful. However, the gravity of "murder" is much higher than "manslaughter." It is equally sinful even if the "pre-meditated murder" is not carried out. But this time, it is not unlawful because no act of killing occurred.

Another point of divergence between religion and law is that while the former concerns itself more with the transcendent, and therefore, both the vertical and the horizontal relationship between God and man is considered in religion, law is only centered on the horizontal interpersonal relationship between man and his neighbour. Again, violators of religious precepts are often threatened with punishment in the afterlife, while law focuses on this physical world and threaten to punish offenders here in this world. At this juncture, let us see the few areas of convergence between religion and law.

Morality stands as a judge to both religion and law: as morality is the yardstick with which true religion is differentiated from false religion, it is equally a yardstick with which to differentiate a just law from an unjust law. Again, as religion differ from one society to another, law also differ from one society to another. Lastly, religion like law is a two-edged sword, which can be used to cut either way. Religion, likewise law, can be used to maintain justice as well as to perpetuate injustice. They can also be used as instruments of enslavement as well as instruments of liberation (Omoregbe, 1994).

### **Conclusion**

From the forgoing, one can deduce that religion is construed as a mechanism for controlling human moral conducts and social life in the universe. Religionists opine that the divine being has a great measure of control over the life of every member of different religious communities in their daily activities, both as individual and as a group. Little wonder, religion is given a pride of place in many societies of the world today. In other words, the values and importance attached to religious beliefs and practices in contemporary societies cannot be overemphasized. Furthermore, this paper agrees with Rakodi who sees religion as important source of values and beliefs that influence the way in which people see the world and live their lives (Rakodi, 2010, as cited in Atoi et al., 2020, p. 116).

Similarly, law (as earlier observed) is a serious aspect of the society, especially in the area of enhancing a peaceful co-existence of the citizens. Also, its importance in contemporary society cannot (like religion) be overemphasized. In fact, both religion and law are given a pride of place in nowadays societies. However, care must be taken so that, as instruments of social control, they don't dehumanize and diminish man. Rather, they should serve as tools used to maintain justice, liberate and above all, uplift the welfare of man.

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## Le Parasitisme En Afrique Contemporaine : Une Lecture Sociocritique De De Jean Pliya Et De Sembène Ousmane

Par

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### Résumé

Le parasitisme dans l'Afrique contemporaine : lecture sociocritique de *La Secrétaire particulière* de Jean Pliya et *Le Mandat* de Sembène Ousmane. Malgré l'abondance des travaux consacrés à la littérature africaine postcoloniale, peu d'études ont analysé de manière systématique le parasitisme social comme catégorie centrale d'interprétation des dysfonctionnements sociopolitiques africains. La majorité des recherches se concentre soit sur la dénonciation générale de la corruption, soit sur la critique des élites politiques, sans toujours établir un lien approfondi entre littérature, comportements sociaux et structures de gouvernance. Cette étude répond donc à un manque d'analyse intégrée du parasitisme comme phénomène transversal affectant à la fois les institutions et les relations sociales dans les œuvres littéraires africaines. Cette recherche vise à analyser les manifestations du parasitisme social en Afrique postindépendante étudier les mécanismes de corruption, d'égoïsme et d'exploitation dans les œuvres sélectionnées ; montrer comment la littérature reflète et critique le dysfonctionnement des sociétés africaines contemporaines ; démontrer le rôle de la littérature comme outil de dénonciation sociopolitique. L'étude s'appuie sur la sociocritique, qui permet d'analyser les œuvres littéraires en relation avec leur contexte historique et social de production. Ce cadre est particulièrement pertinent car, selon cette approche, le texte littéraire constitue une médiation des réalités sociales et des structures de pouvoir. La sociocritique permet ainsi de comprendre comment les œuvres de Jean Pliya et de Sembène

Ousmane traduisent les tensions, contradictions et déséquilibres des sociétés postcoloniales africaines. L'analyse de *La Secrétaire particulière* et de *Le Mandat* révèle que le parasitisme constitue une pratique sociale profondément enracinée dans les sociétés africaines postindépendantes. Dans *La Secrétaire particulière*, il se manifeste à travers une bureaucratie inefficace dominée par des fonctionnaires paresseux et irresponsables. Les résultats montrent également que le parasitisme est étroitement lié à la corruption, à l'immoralité et à l'égoïsme. Il apparaît comme un système social généralisé dans lequel les individus cherchent à tirer profit des ressources collectives ou privées sans contribution équitable. Cette recherche contribue à une meilleure compréhension des représentations littéraires des dysfonctionnements sociopolitiques en Afrique postcoloniale. Elle enrichit ainsi les études sociocritiques de la littérature africaine en mettant en évidence l'articulation entre fiction littéraire et réalités socio-historiques.

**Mots-clés** : parasitisme, littérature africaine, postindépendance, sociocritique, corruption, gouvernance.

### **Introduction**

La littérature africaine d'expression française a toujours entretenu des rapports étroits avec les réalités historiques, politiques et sociales du continent. Durant la période coloniale, de nombreux écrivains africains ont utilisé la littérature comme une arme de contestation contre les systèmes de domination imposés par les puissances européennes. Ils se sont attachés à déconstruire les préjugés coloniaux qui présentaient les peuples africains comme dépourvus de civilisation, de religion ou de culture. Les œuvres produites pendant cette période visaient essentiellement à dénoncer les injustices du colonialisme tout en affirmant la dignité et l'identité des peuples africains.

L'accession progressive des pays africains à l'indépendance entre les années 1957 et 1960 avait suscité de grands espoirs de transformation sociale, économique et politique. Cependant, ces attentes furent rapidement déçues. Les indépendances n'ont pas toujours conduit à l'amélioration des conditions de vie des populations. Au contraire, dans plusieurs États africains, les nouvelles élites politiques ont reproduit certaines pratiques de domination héritées de la colonisation. La corruption, le népotisme, l'injustice sociale, la mauvaise gouvernance et l'exploitation des populations sont devenus des réalités récurrentes de l'Afrique postcoloniale.

Face à cette situation, les écrivains africains des années 1960 et 1970 ont développé une littérature du désenchantement qui met en scène les échecs des

indépendances et les dérives des nouvelles classes dirigeantes. Toutefois, les attentes suscitées par les indépendances furent rapidement confrontées aux réalités d'une gouvernance souvent marquée par l'autoritarisme, la corruption et l'inefficacité administrative. Comme le souligne Ahmadou Kourouma dans *Les Soleils des indépendances*, les nouveaux dirigeants africains ont parfois reproduit les mécanismes d'oppression hérités de la colonisation (17). Cette situation a engendré une profonde désillusion chez les écrivains qui, à partir des années 1960, ont orienté leur production vers la critique des régimes postcoloniaux.

Cette orientation est particulièrement visible dans des œuvres telles que *Les Soleils des indépendances* d'Ahmadou Kourouma, *Violent était le vent* de Charles Nokan, *Le Mandat* de Sembène Ousmane ou encore *La Secrétaire particulière* de Jean Pliya. Ces textes dénoncent les dysfonctionnements sociopolitiques qui compromettent le développement du continent et soulignent les contradictions des régimes postcoloniaux.

La présente communication étudie le phénomène du parasitisme dans l'Afrique contemporaine à travers l'analyse de *La Secrétaire particulière* de Jean Pliya et de *Le Mandat* de Sembène Ousmane. Le parasitisme est entendu ici comme une forme d'exploitation sociale fondée sur la dépendance aux efforts d'autrui et sur la recherche de bénéfices personnels sans contribution productive réelle. Cette pratique, étroitement liée à la corruption et à l'égoïsme social, apparaît comme l'un des symptômes les plus révélateurs de la crise morale qui touche les sociétés africaines postindépendantes.

L'analyse repose sur une approche sociocritique qui considère l'œuvre littéraire comme un produit social reflétant les réalités historiques, politiques et culturelles de son époque. Selon Jacques Chevrier, la littérature africaine entretient un rapport étroit avec les transformations sociales du continent et constitue un témoignage privilégié des mutations historiques qui affectent les sociétés africaines (22).

La sociocritique permet ainsi d'étudier les interactions entre le texte littéraire et son contexte de production. Dans le cas des œuvres africaines postcoloniales, cette approche est particulièrement pertinente dans la mesure où les écrivains se présentent souvent comme les observateurs critiques des dysfonctionnements de leurs sociétés. Comme l'affirme Locha Mateso, la littérature africaine moderne s'inscrit dans une dynamique de contestation des structures sociales et politiques responsables de la marginalisation des populations (63).

L'approche sociologique considère l'œuvre littéraire comme le reflet des réalités sociales, historiques et politiques qui ont précédé sa création. Selon cette conception, la littérature ne peut être dissociée du contexte dans lequel elle est produite. Les écrivains puisent leur inspiration dans les expériences collectives de leur société et utilisent leurs œuvres pour témoigner des transformations sociales de leur époque.

Les textes littéraires africains apparaissent comme des documents privilégiés pour comprendre les mutations sociopolitiques qui ont marqué le continent depuis la période coloniale jusqu'à l'ère postindépendance. L'analyse sociologique permet alors de mettre en évidence les relations entre les représentations littéraires et les réalités vécues par les populations africaines.

Dans cette perspective, *La Secrétaire particulière* et *Le Mandat* constituent des corpus particulièrement pertinents pour étudier les manifestations du parasitisme et de la corruption dans les sociétés africaines contemporaines. A travers leurs personnages et leurs intrigues, ces œuvres révèlent les mécanismes de domination, d'exploitation et d'aliénation qui caractérisent les rapports sociaux dans l'Afrique postcoloniale.

### **L'état de la situation sociopolitique dans l'Afrique contemporaine**

L'un des principaux défis auxquels l'Afrique contemporaine reste confrontée réside dans les difficultés de consolidation de l'État postcolonial. Malgré les progrès réalisés dans plusieurs domaines, de nombreux pays africains continuent de faire face aux problèmes de gouvernance, de crises de légitimité politique et aux tensions sociales persistantes.

Les difficultés rencontrées ne peuvent être expliquées uniquement par la diversité ethnique ou par l'héritage des frontières coloniales. Bien que ces facteurs contribuent parfois aux conflits internes, ils ne suffisent pas à rendre compte de l'ensemble des problèmes auxquels les États africains sont confrontés. La véritable question concerne davantage la capacité des dirigeants à promouvoir une gouvernance efficace, démocratique et inclusive.

Dans plusieurs pays, les populations éprouvent un sentiment croissant de méfiance à l'égard des institutions publiques. Cette crise de confiance est alimentée par la corruption, l'abus du pouvoir, le clientélisme politique et l'incapacité des gouvernements à répondre aux besoins fondamentaux des citoyens. Les conflits armés, les violations des droits humains et les inégalités sociales aggravent davantage cette situation.

La corruption apparaît comme l'un des phénomènes les plus préoccupants. Elle touche aussi bien les institutions administratives que les relations économiques et sociales. Dans de nombreux cas, l'accès aux services publics dépend davantage des relations personnelles ou des avantages financiers que du respect des règles administratives. Cette situation favorise l'émergence d'une culture de l'intérêt personnel au détriment du bien commun. C'est dans ce contexte que les écrivains africains dénoncent les dérives des nouvelles élites et mettent en lumière les conséquences de la mauvaise gouvernance sur les populations les plus vulnérables.

### **Le parasitisme comme manifestation de la crise sociale**

Dans *La Secrétaire particulière*, Jean Pliya présente le personnage de Monsieur Chadas comme l'incarnation du parasitisme administratif. Fonctionnaire haut placé, il évite systématiquement ses responsabilités professionnelles tout en profitant des privilèges liés à sa position. Son comportement illustre la paresse bureaucratique qui caractérise certaines administrations publiques africaines où les dirigeants bénéficient de rémunérations importantes sans fournir un travail correspondant.

Par son attitude, Chadas symbolise une élite administrative qui vit du travail des autres. Pendant que les employés accomplissent les tâches quotidiennes, le chef multiplie les absences et les prétextes pour échapper à ses obligations. Cette situation contribue à l'inefficacité des services publics et à la démotivation des travailleurs. Il y a la décadence morale. Monsieur Chadas, un chef avec un esprit égoïste fait la cour à toutes les femmes qui travaillent dans son bureau.

On remarque aussi qu'il y a la grossesse dans cette pièce ; Nathalie, une jeune fille célibataire de 17 ans était enceinte et elle était contente : « Je suis content d'annoncer que j'attends un enfant...Quoi ? Quoi ? Tu attends un enfant ! Quel enfant ? Mais, je ne te suis pas mariée... » (75).

C'est étonnant, la tradition africaine ne permet pas aux jeunes filles célibataires de tomber enceinte. Mais il y a en a beaucoup qui ont des enfants et qui préfèrent les avoir en dehors du mariage même. Mais parfois, c'est la pauvreté qui les pousse commettre certains actes, immoraux. La pauvreté frappe le monde africain, les jeunes et les vieux en souffrent. Il n'y a pas d'emploi, il n'y a pas d'embauche. Les vieux qui atteignent l'âge de la retraite refusent de quitter le service alors que les jeunes vivent en perpétuité au chômage.

C'est tout ce qui me reste moi...moi fatigué rester toujours maison, voir ma femme pleurer, enfants ventre vide et pas aller l'école...Depuis trois mois, je sors chaque matin de ma maison comme quelqu'un parti service. Moi attendu bureau d'embauche. Quand bureau fermé, moi retourner la maison... (47-48).

Ensuite, M. Chadas puis qu'il a déjà quinze enfants avec trois femmes, la mère de Nathalie le pousse à se marier à M. Chadas parce que ce dernier est un chef riche et haut placé dans la société.

Le même phénomène se repercute dans *Le Mandat* de Sembène Ousmane. Le roman met en scène plusieurs personnages qui cherchent à profiter du mandat envoyé à Ibrahima Dieng par son neveu. Le commerçant Mbarka, le notable Gorgui Maïssa ainsi

que Mbaye Ndiaye développent diverses stratégies destinées à s'approprier indirectement les ressources financières de Dieng.

Le personnage de Mbaye Ndiaye représente une forme particulièrement pernicieuse de parasitisme. Sous couvert d'assistance familiale, il détourne le mandat destiné à son beau-frère et utilise des mensonges pour justifier son appropriation frauduleuse de l'argent. A travers ce personnage, Sembène montre que le parasitisme détruit même les liens familiaux les plus sacrés lorsque la recherche du profit devient la principale motivation des individus.

L'analyse des deux œuvres révèle ainsi que le parasitisme constitue une pratique profondément enracinée dans certaines structures sociales postcoloniales. Il favorise l'exploitation des plus faibles par ceux qui détiennent une position économique ou administrative privilégiée.

### **Immoralité et égoïsme de la classe dirigeante**

Au-delà du parasitisme, Jean Pliya et Sembène Ousmane dénoncent également l'immoralité et l'égoïsme qui caractérisent certaines élites africaines. Dans *Le Mandat*, les fonctionnaires et les administrateurs apparaissent souvent comme des individus davantage préoccupés par leurs intérêts personnels que par le service public. Les pratiques de corruption, les abus de pouvoir et les comportements opportunistes traduisent l'effondrement des valeurs morales au sein de l'administration.

Dans *La Secrétaire particulière*, la critique porte également sur les dérives sexuelles, les abus d'autorité et les rapports de domination qui s'exercent dans le monde professionnel. Les femmes deviennent fréquemment des victimes de l'exploitation économique et sociale, tandis que la pauvreté pousse certains individus à accepter des situations humiliantes pour assurer leur survie.

Les deux auteurs montrent ainsi que les difficultés économiques, le chômage et les inégalités sociales contribuent à la dégradation des valeurs collectives. L'égoïsme individuel remplace progressivement les principes de solidarité qui constituaient traditionnellement l'un des fondements des sociétés africaines.

### **Conclusion**

L'étude de *La Secrétaire particulière* de Jean Pliya et de *Le Mandat* de Sembène Ousmane met en évidence le rôle central du parasitisme dans la représentation des crises sociopolitiques de l'Afrique postindépendante. A travers leurs œuvres, les deux écrivains dénoncent la corruption, l'exploitation sociale, l'immoralité et l'égoïsme qui entravent le développement du continent.

Le parasitisme apparaît comme l'une des manifestations les plus visibles de l'échec des élites postcoloniales à instaurer une gouvernance fondée sur la justice sociale, la responsabilité et le bien commun. En révélant ces dysfonctionnements, la littérature africaine assume une fonction critique essentielle qui contribue à la réflexion sur les défis du développement et de la démocratisation de l'Afrique contemporaine.

### **Le parasitisme comme critique de la bureaucratie postcoloniale**

Dans *La Secrétaire particulière*, Jean Pliya met en scène le personnage de Monsieur Chadas, symbole du fonctionnaire parasitaire qui profite des privilèges de sa position sans accomplir véritablement son travail. Le personnage apparaît comme l'incarnation d'une bureaucratie inefficace caractérisée par la paresse, l'irresponsabilité et l'abus d'autorité.

Monsieur Chadas délègue systématiquement ses responsabilités à ses subordonnés tout en se présentant comme un personnage important. Son comportement illustre les dérives d'une administration où le statut hiérarchique sert davantage à bénéficier de des avantages personnels plutôt qu'à assurer un service public efficace. Pliya dénonce ainsi une réalité observable dans plusieurs administrations africaines où certains responsables se désengagent de leurs fonctions en conservant leurs privilèges.

Cette critique s'étend également aux employés qui, en l'absence de contrôle hiérarchique, abandonnent leurs tâches professionnelles. L'auteur met ainsi en évidence un cercle vicieux où l'inefficacité des dirigeants favorise celle des subordonnés. Le parasitisme apparaît alors comme un phénomène collectif qui fragilise l'ensemble de l'appareil administratif.

Dans *Le Mandat*, Sembène Ousmane développe une critique similaire à travers les multiples personnages qui cherchent à profiter de l'argent envoyé à Ibrahima Dieng. Le mandat devient un symbole de richesse autour duquel gravitent divers acteurs animés par des motivations opportunistes. Mbarka, commerçant sans scrupules, tente d'exploiter la situation pour vendre ses marchandises à des prix excessifs. Plus grave encore, Mbaye Ndiaye, beau-frère d'Ibrahima Dieng, détourne l'argent du mandat sous prétexte d'avoir été victime d'un vol.

A travers ces personnages, Sembène montre que le parasitisme ne se limite pas aux institutions administratives ; il imprègne également les relations familiales et sociales. Les liens de solidarité traditionnelle sont remplacés par des rapports fondés sur l'intérêt personnel et l'exploitation économique.

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## **St. Patrick's Society in Southern Nigeria: History, Mission and Human Development (1950– 2000)<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

The St. Patrick's Society (SPS) is a society of diocesan priests from Ireland founded for the evangelization of Southern Nigeria in 1932. They arrived in Nigeria as Irish missionaries to teach the Catholic faith and strengthen human development in the "old Calabar." Their success or failure has not been critically examined by scholars. We have few historical documentations on their activities within the ecclesiastical circles. There is a need to identify the protagonists of this missionary society, their involvement in developmental projects, spreading of the Catholic faith in the *Okopusem* area, and legacies among the indigenous clergy. The entanglement of missionary activities and colonial objectives in Nigeria is another area of concern among scholars. These objectives situate this study in a multidisciplinary context. We followed historical and theological methods to study the presence of Irish missionaries in *Akwa Cross* communities. We used survey method to assess the influence of the St. Patrick Fathers in the study area from 1950-2000. From a phenomenological method, we investigated African and European exchanges for socio-cultural transformation. The study found the Christian faith to be relevant in transformation and integration of social

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realities across borders, noted the strengths of the St. Patrick's Society (SPS) in the development of healthcare and education system in the area, and concluded that the Irish missionaries made significant contributions towards human development in southern Nigeria. This paper, therefore, advocates for strategic mission approach by the dioceses in *Okopusem* area within and beyond, particularly in European communities, maintaining that paternalism should be transformed into partnership in Europe and Africa exchanges.

**Keywords:** Mission, Culture, Irish, *Okopusem*, Human Development, St. Patrick Fathers

### Introduction

The encounter of Europe and Africa is often documented and valued from the prism of colonialism and missionary activities for the implantation of Christianity. Colonial administrators and missionaries are fundamental in the study of Europe and Africa exchanges. Colonialism had widely been considered as one of the negative experiences in history which had left indelible marks in human development in Africa. According to Godwin Okaneme: "The African continent spent up to two centuries under subjugation and near unfiltered colonial rule. It will be belabouring the obvious to state that colonialism in Africa affected many different spheres of the totality of the African culture and way of life" (2019:38). This observation calls for a deeper examination of some basic human experiences associated with colonialism, like the emergence of the Catholic Church in southern Nigeria.

The Missionary Society of St. Patrick or St. Patrick's Society (SPS) is an Irish missionary congregation of diocesan priests who main foundational goal was implantation of the Catholic faith in southern Nigeria. The society has the fortune of being present in southern Nigeria during the colonial period and after the independence of Nigeria from the United Kingdom. Their present in the territory represents the continuity of the presence of Europeans in African communities in the post-independence era. Their activities ante and post colonialism open a vista on the profundity of the exchanges between Africa and Europe.

This study approaches the question of missionary activities and colonial administration as a separate sphere of historical engagement for human development in Africa. While not being neglectful of interaction between the colonialists and missionaries, the paper focuses on the activities of the St. Patrick Fathers from 1950 to 2000 in order to delineate Europe and Africa exchanges as opportunities for mutual enrichment; assesses the contributions of the Irish missionaries for human development and planting of Catholicism in *Okopusem* area of southern Nigeria. From the history of

the SPS in the territory, and we examine their contributions toward human development, in order to establish the relevance of faith for integral human development.

### **The Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to document the origin and presence of St. Patrick Fathers in Southern Nigeria, precisely in the Efik speaking part of the Archdiocese of Calabar, Uyo Diocese and Ikot Ekpene Diocese all in south-south Nigeria, collectively designated as *Okopusem* territory. This documentation looks at their presence, interface with the local community and culture to document the relationship that existed between European and African Catholics during the period under investigation. This streamlines the colonial and post-colonial African and European exchanges from theological and ecclesiological perspectives. The specific objectives of this study include identification of the members of the St. Patrick Missionary Society who contributed significantly to the planting of the Catholic faith in the *Okopusem* territory, and evaluation of their contributions and assessment of their influence in human development.

### **The Method of the Study**

The study uses mixed method of qualitative and quantitative approaches for the assessment and evaluation, while adopting descriptive and phenomenological methods to deepen the history of the St. Patrick's Society. From qualitative approach, the discussions with key stakeholders elicit primary data through purposive interview and focus group discussion (FGD) with the priests and faithful, especially those who were opportune to have personal interaction with the St. Patrick Fathers. The historical method of research gathers historical data and subject the same to critical analysis through phenomenological studies. The data from the field is subjected to theological method of enquiry. This mixed method facilitates the documentation of the presence of Europeans in Southern Nigeria, generates data for a better understanding of human development, underlining the relevance of Christian faith for authentic trans-border exchanges.

### **History and Presence of the St. Patrick's Society**

This research is focused on establishing the role of the St. Patrick Fathers in promoting religious and human development in the southern part of Nigeria, precisely in some parts of Cross River State and the whole of Akwa Ibom State. This conceptual

framework seeks to clarify few fundamental concepts and to generate literature on the history, presence and activities of the St. Patrick Fathers in Africa.

There was a felt need of deepening Christianity in Nigeria as part of Euro-Africa exchanges. Many European missionaries from various denominations have been present in the country. The history of Catholic mission in Nigeria could be divided into two segments. The initial attempt by the Portuguese in 15<sup>th</sup> century which was not successful, and the 18th century mission which led to the emergence of the present Christianity in the country. Etim argues that the French missionaries of the Society for African Missions in the 19th century rooted the Catholic faith in the country, and being joined by *Congregatio Sancti Spiritus* (Holy Ghost Fathers), they were the touch bearers of the evangelization of the Eastern and Lower Niger territory (Etim, 2021:20-21).

The planting the Catholic faith in the southern Nigeria has a long history. It started from the Episcopal Council of Baltimore which initiated the idea of introducing Christianity to West Africa. Those who responded to this initiative included Baron who originated from Ireland but was the Vicar General of Philadelphia in the United States. Irish clergymen were associated with the initiative of planting the Catholic faith in West Africa (Etim, 2021:21) from the very beginning. Etim narrates the presence of Irish missionaries in the territory thus:

Father Shanahan by providence owes his decision for the mission venture in the Lower Niger to the appeal made by Father Francis Xavier Lichtenberger. At then working in Southern Nigeria, he was in Europe on leave and extended his visit to Ireland at the directive of Father Lejeune in October 1901 to request for personnel for Nigeria. In the course of the trip, he gave lecture to some young students in the Rockwell College, where Father Shanahan was serving as Dean of Discipline, motivating them on the great harvest in Africa... (38).

Etim describes this move to seek help from Ireland as a “deliberate master plan” for the future evangelization of the Lower Niger territory. Joseph Shanahan (1871-1943), an Irish, although ordained for a French missionary congregation was the best match for the mission in the Lower Niger because of his involvement in the Irish education system, and his ability to deal with the British administration. These made it possible for Shanahan to streamline his mission strategies to include prioritizing education in place of forming Christian villages. In order to plan the faith in the territory education for human development was identified as a *conditio sine qua non*. The Irish education system

encouraged by the British colonial administration (Etim, 2021:41-42) became an integral part of Catholicism in the Lower Niger.

The generosity of Irishmen to response to the appeal of Shanahan is, therefore, the flourishing the Catholic faith in the Calabar region of Nigeria. The wisdom of Fr. Patrick Whitney (1894-1912) to found a special congregation of diocesan priests to evangelize the territory is a lasting legacy of the pastoral solicitude of Shanahan for the Calabar mission. There were challenges to his decision to allow a new missionary congregation and he stood his grounds, affirming this to be a permanent solution for the evangelization of the territory. He adopted the school system and formation in Christian communities as a missionary strategy. Etim summarizes the history of the engagement of Europeans in the Lower Niger for the purpose of planting the Catholic faith thus:

The engagement of the Irish diocesan volunteer priests to assist in the Mission by Shanahan prepared a solid base for the future of Calabar mission. In 1934 the Vicariate gave birth to two Prefectures; the Prefecture of the Benue and the Prefecture of Calabar. The Prefecture of Benue had the components of some parts of the Northern fringes of the Vicariate together with Igala, Idoma, Tiv, Wukari and Yola missions in the north. This was assigned to the pastoral care of the German Spiritans. The Prefecture of Calabar consisted of the old administrative Provinces of Calabar and Ogoja. This was placed under the pastoral care of the newly founded St Patrick Missionary Society which was formed from the ranks of the Irish diocesan clergy. Invariably, the destiny of continuity for the mission in Calabar was tied to the Irish missionaries like an umbilical cord to the womb of a mother to be fed and groomed to maturity (76-77).

The establishment of the St. Patrick's Society has an interesting history of enthusiasm and conflicts among missionary societies and volunteer diocesan priests. The intrigues that resulted in the founding of the St. Patrick's Society as narrated by Etim and corroborated by Kiggins reveals opposition between national interest of the French Spiritans and their Irish counterparts. Bishop Shanahan, a Spiritan initiated the idea but could not see it to a logical conclusion due to the complexity of personal, congregational and national interests. Kiggins argues that in the mission territory, the challenge of relating with the churches of other European missionaries was more challenging than the paganism of the people (1991:80-81). Patrick Whitney needed the assistance of Arthur Hinsley born of Scottish father and Irish mother to use his

connection in Rome to bring about the society that “permanently evangelize the territory of Calabar” into fruition, after the tussle of the Holy Ghost Congregation with Shanahan and the intrigues of the Holy Rosary Congregation (Etim, 2021:112-115; Kiggins 1991:85-87).

The Society existed on a trial basis through the years 1930 and 1931 without formal members. Its constitution and request for permission was presented by Bishop Matthew Cullen on 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1932 and endorsed by Rome to effect a formal establishment. Consequently, Patrick Whitney, Francis Hickey and Francis Whitney, took the oath of temporary membership in the presence of Bishop Matthew Cullen on St. Patrick day. 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1932. Hence St. Patrick Society was canonically established with three pioneer members, as a Society of secular Priests under the authority of a diocesan bishop” (Etim, 2021:119).

With the establishment of the St. Patrick’s Society specifically for the Southern Nigeria mission, there was a platform for Irish missionaries to engage structurally in the evangelization of the territory, enabling Maynooth ordained priests to spread their pastoral zeal in Nigeria. The first set of priests who used the platform of St. Patrick’s Society as canvassed by Patrick Whitney to arrive in Calabar were: James Moynagh, Ciaran Ryan, Cornelius Plunkert, Tom McGettrick, and Patrick Costelloe (Etim, 2021:120; Kiggins, 1991:91). Providentially, James Moynagh will eventually become the first bishop of Calabar.

### **Mission of the St. Patrick Fathers and School System**

The Irish mission in the Lower Niger was strategically constructed around education system. The Irish missionaries concentrated on education system but used the same for the edification of the locales on the Catholic faith, thus making the faith accessible to the indigenes and preparing them to be missionaries to themselves. A peculiar contribution of the Irishmen to the planting of the Catholic faith in the Calabar mission was the formation of the local clergy. According to Etim, the move for priestly ministry of the indigenes started in 1912 when a curious young man, John Cross Anyogu (1898-1967) asked Shanahan if it was possible for Africans to become priests. This was the beginning of Africans studying for the sacred priesthood in the Lower Niger region. This led to the harvest of indigenous priests, and the first seminarian from the Calabar mission was Dominic Ekandem (1917-1995), who will later become a Cardinal of the Roman Church (Etim, 2021: 64-65). This is how the Church came to

fruition in the “Akwa Cross” region of Nigeria, intrinsically connected to the missionary ingenuity of the churchmen from Ireland. It was not only the Irishmen that responded to the appeal of Shanahan but Irishwomen also responded generously by making themselves available for teaching and caring for the vulnerable members of the society.

The school system is an essential factor in Europe and Africa exchanges in the Lower Niger. Before the era of St. Patrick Fathers, the local chiefs who sought to relate with the Europeans did not do that so much on the excellency of the faith but on the potential benefits of education for human development. According to Udoidem: “For our uplift depends on our adopting the white man’s attitude in life – to be energetic and industrious in business, prudent and thrifty in finance, inventive and organizing in thinking and to be noble and reliable in character. However, we must not copy his foibles” (2007:249). The Europe and Africa exchanges as far as the school system is concerned was not a balanced relationship as Africans were at the receiving end. This will lead to the abandonment of the local language for English and consequent disruption of cultural appetite for African thought and culture. Many Africans intellectual are still wrestling with this phenomenon, opening a vista of dialogue on such claims as: “African theology eats Western theology” (Harries 2025); “How really Post Colonial are “Post Colonial” Studies in Nigeria?” (Ushie, 2024). The St. Patrick Fathers cemented the school system in the Akwa Cross region.

The goal of Christian mission in “pagan Africa” was to use the Christian faith to spread the ideals of European civilization. Without this impetus, the Christian missionary activities are meaningless. This is why it is difficult to separate Europeanization from Christianization in Africa. The simplest tool used for this process was the school system.

The education sector was a major priority in the evangelisation strategy of Moynagh being a faithful continuation in the path already established by Bishop Shanahan. The colleges of St. Patrick and Holy Family among the chain of Secondary Schools founded by Moynagh were the cradle that provided the initial moral, spiritual and intellectual molding of his future successor Brian Usanga who attended both schools (Etim, 2021:129).

The school system was the approach for human development and building of communities in Southern Nigeria by the Irish missionaries. The schools provided personnel for the community of faith and civil community. Without education, the principle of standardization of moral and legal system crumbles. Community development is driven by moral and legal integrity. This is the foundation of justice and

equity which flourishes as peace and development. The Irish education system was meant for inculcation of the ideals of literacy and catechesis, the essentials of human development, making faith and spirituality integral part of healthcare delivery (Essien, 2023: 91-96).

### **Assessment of the Mission of the St. Patrick Fathers in Okopusem area**

We have to offer an assessment of the missionary activities of the St. Patrick Fathers in *Okopusem* territory of southern Nigeria, precisely in Efik, Ibibio, Annang and Oro language areas of Cross River State and Akwa Ibom State. These languages cluster is what is refer to as *Okopusem* as there is tendency for them to understand themselves without systematic learning process. This assessment focuses on the period between 1950 and 2000 and it is a product of phenomenological and empirical research. The St. Patrick Fathers have contributed significantly to the *Catholization* of the territory from the early 19th century. The period under review could be described as the “flowering and fruiting” of their mission.

They laboured in the territory to bring the love of Christ to the people and foster the growth of Catholicism in the area. They were committed to the Irish missionary strategy of education for providing human development and strengthening of the faith. “The goal of Moynagh was to fall in line with the trend by producing Nigeria born clergy and bishops who in the future will interact and negotiate with their kins in the political arena when the colonial policy matures fully, to avoid any missing link and ensure continuity” (Etim, 2021:191). This approach indicates an important aspect in Europe and Africa exchanges. Colonialism was not a permanent situation in the mind of the missionaries. A time will come when Africans will assume responsibility for their welfare and homeland. It was, therefore, a matter of speculation when the natives will be matured enough to assume political leadership of their homeland. Archbishop David James Matthew (1902-1975), who was then the Apostolic Delegate to the British Eastern and Western Africa was working with the colonial office to evolve “slow, systematic and piecemeal transfer of power” and it was speculated that it may take the natives “probably thirty years for native population to learn the ways of democracy and most importantly to create a body of responsible and trustworthy native politicians” (Etim: 2021:190). Obong Victor Attah, governor of Akwa Ibom State (1999-2007) is the first maturation of this ideal.

The St. Partrick Fathers witnessed both the colonial and post-colonial development of the territory. The Calabar mission became a diocese in 1950 after forty years of labour by the Irishmen. The fruition of this labour was irreversibly documented in 1953 with the priestly ordination of the first indigenous priests: Isidore Peter Umana

(1927?-1990) and Emmanuel Afangideh (1921-1981) and this was followed by the ordination of Brian Davis Usanga (1928-2005) in 1956 (Etim, 2021:189). The most significant ecclesial indices of maturation of the Calabar mission under the Irish missionaries was the acceptance of the request of Bishop James Moynagh (1903-1985) for an indigenous auxiliary bishop which saw Dominic Ekandem, who was ordained a priest in 1947 becoming the youngest bishop at the age of 37 and the first Catholic bishop in the whole of Anglophone West Africa in 1954. The 1950s were really the apex of the missionary activities of St. Patrick's Society in the *Okopusem* territory.

The growth of the Church in the area necessitated an expansion drive of Bishop of Moynagh. By 1960 he wanted the Calabar mission to grow into dioceses as follows: Calabar and Eket: Annang Province including Abak and Uyo Province. This impetus led to the creation of Ikot Ekpene Diocese in 1963 and Uyo Diocese in 1989. The Calabar mission within the period under review developed into three dioceses, with enough local clergy, capable of sustaining and propagating the faith (Etim, 2021:190). We have selected certain parameters for assessing the success of the mission of the St. Patrick's Society in the territory. These include:

### 1. Presence and Impact

The following table indicates some of the members of the St. Patrick's Society who were present in the *Okopusem* area.

S/N	Name	Duration	Place	Contribution
1.	Brendan Bolger (1924-1955)	1951-1955	Urua Inyang	Pastoral ministry and teaching at Teacher Training College. He is buried in Anua
2.	Gerry Brandy (1931-1994)	1959-1967	Ikot Nseyen	Teaching in Teacher Training College
3.	Vincent Brady (1916-2000)	1950-1967	Calabar	Vicar General to Bishop Moynagh
4.	Eugene Bree (1933-2015)	1950-1973	Afaha Obong	Teacher in the Seminary
5.	Thomas Joachim Jude Browne (1929-2021)	1968	Calabar	Pastoral and teaching
6.	James Alphonsus (Alphie) Byrne (1926-2021)	1965-1967	Afaha Obong	Rector of the Seminary
7.	Jim Byrne (1915-1981)	1961	Calabar	Pastoral

8.	Catch (Carthage) Cantwell (1913-1981)	1950-1956	Calabar	Pastoral
9.	Pat Clifford (1922-1978)	1950-1966	Calabar	Pastoral
10.	Sean Casey (1923-1952)	1950-1952	Calabar	Pastoral. He was drawn in Afikpo and is buried in Anua
11.	Julian Connolly (1933-1986)	1964-1967	Calabar	Pastoral
12.	Stan Connolly (1930-2018)	1956-1962	Abak	Started a Pipe Band at Holy Family College, Abak
13.	Paddy Costelloe (1905-1988)		Calabar, Ikot Ekpene, Urua Inyang, Abak, Ukana Iba	Principal of St. Augustine TTC, Central Annang Secondary School and Holy Family College, Abak, and parish priest of Ukana Iba in 1966.
14.	Kerrie Creedon (1911-1977)		Essene	Pastoral
15.	Anthony (Tony) Cronin (1940-2017)	1966-1970	Ikot Ekpene Diocese	Pastoral
16.	Dermot (Jeremiah) Curran (1931-2011)	1959-1967; 1975-1998	Calabar, Ikot Ekpene	Secretary to Bishop Moynagh. Formator in the Seminary as teacher of Philosophy
17.	Sean (John Joseph) Deegan (1923-1983)	1947-1983	Ndon Ebom, Ediene, Itak, Anua, Oti-Oron, Ikot Edibon	Pastoral. He is buried in Ndon Ebom
18.	Daniel Dolan (1921-2015)	1945-2012	Uyo and Calabar	Pastoral. He was Vicar General to Bishop Brian Usanga. He left Uyo to Ikot Ansa when Uyo Diocese was erected
19.	Joseph Dollard (1921-1993)	1946-1967	Calabar	Bishop Secretary and establishment of St. Theresa Printing Press
20.	William Dowling (1925-2014)	1949-1953; 1957-1972	Essene	The first principal of Regina Coeli College.
21.	Paddy Doyle (1916-1984)	1942-1968	Calabar and Ikot Ekpene	Pastoral
22.	Paddy Finnerty	1952-1968	Calabar	Pastoral

	(1926-2003)			
23.	Tom Fitzgerald (1912-1989)	1938-1989	Calabar, Anua	Pastoral, Teaching, Administrator of Catholic Schools, Vicar General of Calabar. He is buried in Anua.
24.	Edmund (Ned) Fitzgibbon (1925-2010)	1950	Calabar	Football manager (won Governor's Cup in 1954, first Secretary General of Catholic Secretariat, Lagos, later Bishop of Port Harcourt.
25.	John Flanagan (1925-2018)	1950-1969	Essene, Oron, Urua Akpan, Emman Uruan	Built Father's House and fine church at Emman Uruan. Fishing at Ikot Offiong. He left because of civil war.
26.	Padraig Flanagan (1938-2023)	1963	Ikot Ekpene	Coordinator of relief during the war, set up three centres to provide food and relief for those displaced by war. His most notably contribution was the building of St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene.
27.	Leo Flynn (1937-2022)	1962-1968	Calabar	Pastoral
28.	Leonard Forristal (1934-2016)	1961-1968; 1970	Calabar	Teaching in various schools, foster ecumenical relationship and wrote a book on Annang Churches in Nigeria.
29.	Augustine Frawley (1937 – 2017)	19963-1969	Ikot Ekpne	Pastoral
30.	Thomas Gallagher (1923-2003)	1955	Uyo	Assistant Education Secretary
31.	Michael Golden (1933-2012)	1959	Calabar	Teacher, development project and promotion of natural family planning
32.	Tom Grealy (1922-2011)	1946-1966	Calabar, Essene, Urua Akpan	Built the first architect designed church in Urua Akpan
33.	Christy Griffen (1926-1985)	1951-1963	Uyo	Pastoral
34.	Joseph Dominic	1951-1968	Essene, Ikot	Pastoral

	Griffen (1932 – 1990)		Edibon, Ikot Ene, Use Abat, Okobo, Oban	
35.	Eamon Hanify (1923-1984)	1948-1962	Calabar, Asong, Ndon Ebom, Ifuho, Urua Akpan	Pastoral
36.	Padraig Hannelly (1922-1991)	1948-1968	Calabar	Suffered imprisonment in Calabar for a short time.
37.	Vincent Hannigan (1917-2001)	1945-2001	Oron, Uyo	Vicar General of Uyo, Family Apostolate, introduction of family planning. Founded St. Vincent Secondary School, Oti-Oro. Buried in Anua.
38.	Maurice Hayes (1915-1996)	1944-1960	Calabar, Abak	Teacher and principal at Holy Family College, Abak
39.	Noel Hayes (1935-2016)	1960 - 1970	Ikwen and Ikot Ansa	Brilliant science teacher at St. Columbanus Secondary School, Ikwen and St. Patrick College, Ikot Ansa.
40.	John Lalor (1938-2021)	1964-1977	Ikot Ekpene	Teacher at Queen of Apostle Seminary, Afaha Obong, Principal of Goretti Girls Juniorate, Eriam and Secretary to Bishop Dominic Ekandem.
41.	James Lane (1916-1989)	1950-1995	Asong	Pastoral
42.	Jack Lavin (1911-1971)	1938 - 1971	Calabar	Secretary to Prefect, Monsignor James Moynagh. His entire missionary life was in Calabar.
43.	Kevin Longworth (1921-2010)	1948-1955; 1962-1973	Calabar	He described Calabar as his first love and was installed Chief of the Efik in 2008.
44.	Tom Lucey (1925-1991)	1953-1962	Ikot Ansa	Inspector of Schools
45.	Henry McCarney (1928-2014)	1965-1967	Afaha Obong	Teacher at the Seminary and the Choir flourished under him.
46.	Maurice Healy (1929-1982)	1954-1965	Anua	Pastoral

47.	Ben Hughes	1945-1971	Anua and Ifuho	Established Agricultural School
48.	Laurence Kearney (1923-2013)	1956-1967	Ikot Ansa	Teacher at St. Patrick
49.	Patrick Kelly (1934-2020)	1959-1965	Calabar	Great interest in the languages of the people.
50.	Mossie Kerin (1927-1988)	1954-1968	Calabar	Pastoral
51.	Patsy Kivlehan (1906-1978)	1938-1964	Ifuho, Edem Ekpat and Ikot Nseyen	He was devoted to Mary to the extend that the local people nick named him "Udoh Mary".
52.	Pat Lafley (1922-1989)	1947-1960	Anua, Uyo, Essene, Asong, Edem Ekpat	Pastoral
53.	Francis McElhatton (1946-2020)	1975	Ikot Ekpene	Brief stay - Pastoral
54.	John McGuinness	1950-1956; 1962-1983	Ikot Ansa, Abak	Teacher at St. Patrick College, Principal of Holy Family and Vicar General of Ikot Ekpene Diocese
55.	Phonsie McKenna (1924-1954)	1950-1954	Anua, Essene	Pastoral. Died of cerebral malaria in Ireland while on leave.
56.	John McLaughlin (1947-2015)	1971-1978	Edem Ekpat, Ikot Edibon, Use Abat, Asong, Eket	He Built the Father's House at Eket
57.	Liam McWey (1923-1985)	1949-1985	Anua	Longest serving parish priest of Anua, and died there of heart attack. He is buried there.
58.	Matt Magrath (1906-1964)	1932-50; 1957- 1964	Calabar, Ikot Ekpene, Essene	Built the first permanent church in the Prefecture of Calabar at Ifuho, the Construction of Calabar Cathedral and a church in Essene. He was in Ikot Ekpene when the Diocese was erected in 1963.
59.	Tom Mahoney (1913-1960)	1939-1960	Calabar	Died on a road accident near Ikot Ekpene and is buried in Anua.
60.	Patrick Moore (1921-2016)	1948-1967	Calabar	Pastoral

61.	Frank Morris (1924-1980)	1947-1967	Calabar	Bishop's Secretary and editor of Catholic Life Magazine.
62.	James Moynagh (1903-1985)	1934-1969	Calabar	Bishop of Calabar, vision and leadership, and reading the sign of time.
63.	Bill Mullaly (1916-1990)	1943-1965	Ikot Ansa	Teacher and principal at St. Patrick College. He left Calabar mission to Minna.
64.	Joe Murray (1920-2001)	1946-1950	Calabar	Dominic Ekandem was his curate in 1947.
65.	Dermot O'Connell (1935-2018)	1961-1963	Calabar	Pastoral
66.	Sean O'Dowd (1937-2024)	1963-1989	Anua, Uyo, Ikot Ansa	Teacher
67.	Denis O'Hara (1930-1997)	1956-1970	Ikot Ansa	Pastoral
68.	Padraig O'Malley (1931-2017)	1957-1968	Calabar	Teacher and weekend pastor
69.	Tom O'Reilly (1921-1973)	1948-1954	Calabar and Edem Ekpai	Promoter of Legion of Mary
70.	Oliver O'Sullivan (1921-1986)	1948-1966	Calabar	Secretary to Bishop Moynagh. Instrumental to the establishing of Printing Press for the publication of Catholic Life Magazine. He was a principal of St. Patrick College.
71.	Joe Petit (1928-2005)	1954-1987	Ndon Ebom, Essene, Ibiono	Pastoral
72.	Paddy Prendergast (1925-2005)	1951-1955	Calabar	Pastoral
73.	Paddy Quigley (1921-2005)	1951-1965	Calabar	Pastoral
74.	Owen Reid (1928-2004)	1954-1967	Calabar	Successful science teacher in many schools.
75.	Seamus Rechill (1930-2022)	1956-1963	Calabar	Pastoral
76.	Alfie Rushe (1926-1994)	1952-1967	Calabar, Adiabo	Volunteered to serve the Army from 1954-1959. He was instrumental for the Catholic Life

				becoming a national magazine, and the was crushed when he was evacuated in 1967.
77.	Charle Ryan (1938-2016)	1971-1998	Uyo	Teacher and university professor. He built Father's House at Aka Offot.
78.	Peter Ryan (1924-2006)	1950-1966	Oron, Use Abat, Etinan	He was fluent in Efik language.
79.	Tom Ryan (1936-2007)	1962-1968; 1971-1992	Anua, Oron. Eman Uruan, Adiabo, Ikot Ansa	Pastoral
80.	Sean Rynn (1938-2023)	1965-1970	Ikot Ekpene	Fine teacher and much-loved pastor
81.	Patrick Scanlan (1929-2013)	1954-1968	Oron, Essene, Anua, Ikot Ekpene and Ikot Edibon	Pastoral
82.	Jim Sharkey (1934-2019)	1959-2013	Uyo, Ibiono	Pastoral and development of projects. He introduced Development Education and Leadership Skill (DELES) to Nigeria. Nick named "Udo Ibiono" because of his cultural assimilation.
83.	Reggie Smyth (1923-1991)	1949-1967	Calabar	Education Secretary
84.	Willie Stack (1944-2019)	1975-1983	Ikot Ene, Ikot Okure, Calabar	He was the last Society priest to minister at Sacred Heart Cathedral Calabar.
85.	Pat Walsh (1919-1973)	1946-1970	Calabar	Pastoral

**Table: 1** Fieldwork, 2025 and Retrieved [www.spms.org/fullness-of-life](http://www.spms.org/fullness-of-life), February 10, 2025

The above table gives name, age, location of the St. Patrick Fathers who worked in the territory between 1950-2000. Their location, function, etc may not be exhaustive. The presence of the Catholic faith in the territory is due principally to their pastoral zeal

and commitment to the formation of the local clergy. Frs. James Kelleher and Patrick Cocoran are the last set of the St. Patrick Fathers to serve in the territory.

On the impact and influence of St. Patrick Fathers in the territory, only 2.2 % percent of the respondents considered them to be acceptable, indicating not being satisfied with their presence and influence in the territory. The rest of the respondents ranging from good to excellent indicated positive consideration of their presence and impact both in ecclesiastical and civil matters. In a focus group discussion, it was established that the presence of the St. Patrick Fathers is indelible in the history of Catholicism in the territory, a positive history for that matter.

## **2. Theological Contributions**

Theology is fundamentally “faith seeking understanding” (Migliore, 2004). Theological contributions are necessary for the planting of faith among the people because the proclaimed word must be understood. The St. Patrick Fathers made significant theological contributions for the planting Catholicism in the territory. They were primarily teachers of faith, and thus theologians as the fundamental motif of their engagement in Africa was the furtherance of Christian and Catholic ideas of God. From the assessment conducted in January – March 2025 among the priests and faithful in the territory the majority considered them to have made serious theological contributions in the area, implying that they were able to clarify the Christian faith and made it reasonable and acceptable to the people. Their success in this direction led to “church growth” as many were baptized and professed the faith, and transmitted the same faith to their children.

## **3. Human Development**

Many Africans embraced Christian faith proclaimed by the missionaries not so much for the admiration of divinity nor for the theological depth but in quest for human development. This was accomplished through educational strategy of the Irish missionaries. The school system was synonymous with human development. The St. Patrick Fathers extended the possibility of education to both male and female, promoting strong family system and encouraging parents to accept education of their children as a Christian responsibility. Fr. Vincent Hannigan devoted his entire life to this apostolate of female education in the territory. Girls education opened a new vista of acceptability, admiration and respect for the Irish missionaries in the territory (Etim, 2021:71). Among the pioneer educated females was Rosa Ekandem, the sister of Dominic Ekandem. The opening of residential marriage training programme in parishes provided education for girls that were above the school age, giving them rudimentary

knowledge in finance and home management for sustainable development. The training was beneficial to the girls as they became good wives and mothers, educating their children both religiously and scientifically for greater productivity. This was appreciated more than the traditional *mbobo* (fattening home) for girls education.

The survey indicates that the St. Patrick Fathers contributed significantly to human development in the territory. Their introduction of female education was a hallmark of human development brought by the missionaries. This is an aspect of Europe and Africa exchanges that benefitted Africans, improved services of the missionaries and provided the colonial masters with intelligible workforce. More than 84.8 % of the respondents affirmed the contributions of the Irish missionaries towards human development through the provision of education and healthcare in the territory.

#### 4. Cultural Integration

Some of the St. Patrick Fathers were successfully integrated culturally in the territory, and some found it difficult and many actually were withdrawn from the mission because of their inability to integrate culturally according to Thomas Kiggins (1991:184). Jim Sharkey is a good example of a successful integration. "Jim immersed himself in the life and culture of the people he served. He learnt their language, studied their traditions, ate their food and enjoyed their company. He was fluent in the Ibibio language and was able to preach in the language without the aids of notes" ([www.spms.org/fullness-of-life](http://www.spms.org/fullness-of-life) Retrieved 12/02/25). From the field survey, only 8.7% of the respondents considered this to have been excellent and the majority of the respondents stand at the "median of good". This indicates that the effort of St. Patrick Fathers to assimilate the local culture was satisfying, but they could have been more integrated. Even though there were few individuals who proved themselves in the knowledge and assimilation of the local culture, this cannot be attributed to the Society as the whole. Here we have to redefine the dynamics of cultural integration in Africa and Europe exchanges by incorporating the mutuality of teaching and learning, and not approaching Europe and Africa relationship from paternalism. There are a lot in African cultures that can enrich the cultural experience of Europeans.

We tested cultural integration through the appreciation of the local food and cuisine. The highest percentage of the respondents consider their appreciation of the local cuisine to have been good with 50%. There is a little tension as 8.7 % judged their cultural assimilation and knowledge to have been satisfactory and 6.5 % think that their appreciation of the local cuisine was excellent. Cultural knowledge and assimilation is the only test parameters rated poorly by the respondents. Europe still have to learn a lot about African cultural heritage, even though the world is fast becoming a global village

and there are a lot of transborder cultural elements in the world today. There is need for centres for African and European cultural studies both in European and African universities to strengthen cultural integration.

## 5. Church Growth and Catechesis

The St. Patrick Fathers were able to raise up the locals who became protagonists of translating the Christian literature into the local languages. One of such personality was Etubom Maurica Efanga Archibong. "As an erudite educator and also talented in music, he played a significant role in the early attempts by the missionaries to translate the Scriptures and the William Moran's Catechism into the Efik language. He was equally involved in the composition and translation of Catholic Sacred Music into the Efik language" (Etim, 2021:133-134). This definitely contributed to the growth of the Church in the territory and enhanced the catechetical formation. This was the engine of the church growth in the area – the formation of the local clergy who are capable of continuing with the catechetical mission of the Church in the post-colonial period. This led to the consecration of Brian Usanga as auxiliary bishop to James Moynagh on December 4, 1965, positioning him to become the first Nigerian Secretary-General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Lagos. Such feat by *Okopusem* indigene is a testimony of the contributions of the St. Patrick Fathers to the growth of the Church. This contribution flourishes in the 1970 when many indigenous clergymen and laymen participated through their direction in the work of catechesis, planting of the station churches and building of the new Christian communities.

Before the arrival of the St. Patrick Fathers, there were many Christian denominations in the area, competing for the loyalty of the people. David Kiggins affirms that the presence of non-Catholic denominations was more challenging than the pagan practice of the local people. It was not easy to get those who were already Christian to change their faith in preference for the Catholic faith. There were obstacles also from those who were already baptized in the Catholic Church to remain faithful to the Church. There was tension of division in Ikot Ekpene area with the emergence of the group which described itself as Udo Catholic, that is, the second son of the Catholic Church, and the emergence of the Holy Face Church, a splinter group among the Catholics in Ikot Ekpene (Kiggins, 1991:199-200). In spite of these challenges, the St. Patrick Fathers succeeded in planting the Roman Catholic faith in the territory, overcoming the menaces of the splinter groups. It is, therefore, understandable why 73.9 % of the respondents scored them excellent in their contribution to the growth of the Catholic Church. The Catholicism in *Okopusem* is owed to the Irish missionaries, and the building of the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Calabar, St. Ann Cathedral in Ifuho and

Christ the King Cathedral in Uyo are eloquent testimonies of their sacrifices for the growth of the Roman Catholic Church. Through their catechesis and pastoral watchfulness, there has been minimal problem of the abandonment of the faith, especially among the clergy. Therefore, the Catholic faith in the Calabar mission was founded on the solid and exemplary ministries of the St. Patrick Fathers.

## **6. Strengthening of Institutions and infrastructural development**

The St. Patrick Fathers contributed to the strengthening of institutions and infrastructural development in the territory through a robust school administration system. This led to the sustainability of educational policies both in the public and missionary schools. They also impacted significantly on the administration of the temporary goods of the Church by strengthening the administrative organs of the Church. As the Vicar General of Uyo Diocese, Vincent Hannigan was instrumental to the many policies of Uyo Diocese as a new territory. The role of Charles P. Ryan in developing Sacred Heart Parish, Aka Offot and providing leadership in the

Department of Religious Studies of University of Uyo, Uyo are very significant. The St. Patrick Fathers worked hard to strengthen the institution of marriage and to tame sexual liberalism of the 1960s-1970s which was devastating Europe, and eroding the fabric Christianity (MacCulloch, 2009:985-990). They did not want the disaster of Europe to happen in their mission territory. Hannigan and Dolan focused on the Catholic ideal of family, empowering the women to embrace feminism rooted in ontological equality and functional diversity of the sexes, which was very much in harmony with African cultural anthropology. The rate of divorce in the territory during the active ministry of the St. Patrick Fathers was insignificant precisely because of the appreciation of marriage as an institution of covenant of love by the people.

The respondents were satisfied with the contribution of the St. Patrick Fathers toward infrastructural development and consolidation of institutions in the territory. There is no respondent that will not give them above the median in this aspect. Their effort in the building of rectories, churches, hospitals and schools are considered important for the development of the territory. The Africa and Europe exchanges have social amenities, emergence of institutions and infrastructural development as the fulcrum. Many Africans embraced Christianity, precisely for infrastructural development and betterment of human society. The activities of the St. Patrick Fathers were typical realizations of these exchanges as driven by the Christian faith. This is an area, where British colonial administrators left nothing behind for the people, as there is no important school, hospital, even industry in the territory that is a remnant of the goodness of colonial administration. Religion, therefore, is capable of establishing

lasting exchanges between Europe and Africa than politics, even though in human society, religion can easily be subsumed by politics. There is need, therefore, to rediscover the ideals of Christian faith and tradition in human development and apply the same for rapid development of persons and communities.

## 7. Ecumenical Relationship

The St. Patrick Fathers fostered ecumenical relationship in the territory by encouraging friendship and mutual respects among the churches. For instance, Fr. Leonard Forristal (1937-2016) who laboured as a teacher and pastor in Ikot Ekpene wrote on the **Annang Churches in Nigeria**, promoting inter-faith relationship and was in communication with the Presbyterian pastors in Ikot Ekpene even when he had left the country ([www.spms.org/fullness-of-life](http://www.spms.org/fullness-of-life) Retrieved February 2025). Despite this, there is not much legacy of inter-faith relationship by the Irish missionaries with the Protestants ministers in the territory. The St. Patrick Fathers were not very strong in ecumenical relationship understandably from the national tensions among the Europeans in the mission fields.

This ecumenical apathy among the European missionaries has not been overcome by the local clergy. The only official platform of relations among Christians is the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) which is more or less a religious pressure group, interfacing with the government for Christian welfare than an organ for fostering unified and common Christian engagement in faith (doctrine) or work (charity) in the territory. The inability of the local clergy to change the narrative reveals the lasting imprint of the Irish missionaries on the ecclesiastical consciousness of the local priests. This problem is more disheartening with the spread of the Pentecostal movements in the 1970s. The problem of *sheep stealing* often turns Christian proclamation into apologetic, as the emerging new congregations think that the destruction of Catholicism will be the foundation of their survival. To this end, a common Christian engagement for human development is a necessity in the territory.

## Significance of the St. Patrick's Society for Sustainable Development Goals

The presence and impact of the St. Patrick Fathers in the territory is a window for assessing sustainable development goals (SDGs). The Europe and Africa exchanges from ecclesiastical and theological perspective through the history of the St. Patrick's Society reveals the potential of religion for the realization of human development and cultural integration. Religious commitment can be a fundamental driver for sustainable development goals.

The essential components of the SDGs aimed at promoting peace, prosperity and environmental sustainability by 2030. The governance and partnership for development objective is foreshadowed in the engagement of the St. Patrick Fathers with the locals for strengthening of cooperation for integral human development. The fundamental of such cooperation is rooted in the education system which opens the horizons for exchanges of knowledge and technology. The education system inculcated by the St. Patrick Fathers had empowered both males and females, the clergy and laity to foster human dignity, equality of persons, justice and equity in the territory. The history of St. Patrick's Society reveals that volunteerism for transcendental purposes is indispensable for authentic civilization of love. "The hallmark of volunteerism is predicated on service rendered to the community" (Ukpong, 2023:197). It is this voluntary spending of intellectual and human capacity for the benefits of all that led the Irishmen to southern Nigeria for Christian and integral human development. Men and women are expected to offer their skills, talents and resources for the benefit of the less privileged, if the sustainable development goals must be realized. The St. Patrick Fathers are shining examples of Europe and Africa exchanges for sustainable human development.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The St. Patrick's Missionary Society has an interesting historical development delineating Europe and Africa exchanges from the perspective of Christian missionary engagement. The society was born precisely for the evangelization of Southern Nigeria in 1932, and by 1950 it was solidly present in the *Okopusem* territory (Calabar mission) with the ecclesiastical structures taking shape in the area. The period between 1950 and 2000 is a significant period for evaluating the success of the society and serves as a good parameter for assessing the relationship between Europe and Africa. The St. Patrick Fathers collectively serve as a model of social integration between Europe and Africa, how religious motivation drives humanitarian exchanges across borders, and how Catholicism can serve as cultural modifiers across civilizations and cultures.

There is a tendency in the academic today to examine the impact of Christianity in Africa from negative perspective, seeing the missionary engagement in Africa as being a camouflage for colonialism and de-Africanization. The missionaries are often seen as agents of European cultural imperialism, who did not see anything good in Africa but appropriated the natural resources of Africa for the creation of wealth for Europe while impoverishing Africa. From the historical presence of the St. Patrick Fathers in the territory from 1950 to 2000 these fears may be very difficult to establish. There is little or no evidence of collusion between the Society and colonial masters from

their inception, and especially during the period between ante independence (1950-1960) and post-independence (1960-1970) which is pivotal for nationalism in Nigeria.

The St. Patrick Fathers were not seen often in the company of colonial masters beyond the standard and transparent practices of school administration where authorization from the colonial authority was indispensable. There is no evidence of unhealthy collaboration with the colonial officials which led to deforestation and siphoning of raw materials to Europe. They were not engaged in commercialization which was detrimental to the local economy. During the period under investigation, there is no evidence of gross disrespect for African cultural values in terms of artefacts, museum materials and historical constructs which were not noticed in the pre-Christian Europe. The Christian maxim: love your neighbour as yourself, serves as a parameter for assessing the missionary activities of the St. Patrick Fathers. Is there any gospel they preached in the territory that they were not preaching in Ireland? Is there anything that they condemned in Africa but condoned in Ireland? Is there any initiative they made in Africa but will not allow same in Europe? These questions are crucial for assessing the Christian value of Europe and Africa exchanges from theological perspective, in order to construct a civilization of love. The love of God and neighbour as thought by Jesus is fundamental in every Christian enterprise. It is always better to err in excess than to err in defect in Christian moral principle enunciated by Thomas Aquinas. Were the St. Patrick Fathers loving themselves more than Africans? When we examine the antecedent of European missionary engagement in Africa, looking at somebody like Daniel Colombo whose maxim was *Africa or death*, were the European missionaries loving Africa genuinely or interested in the wealth of Africa? We have to reexamine the narratives of the European missionary engagement in Africa by African scholars.

In this paper, we have chosen certain parameters in assessing the exchanges of the St. Patrick Fathers in the territory. From this assessment, they have done excellently well in promoting Catholicism through the provision of education and infrastructures in the territory. Education was the key for the transformation of Europe, and this key was painstakingly inculcated among the *Okopusem* people. The role of St. Patrick College, Ikot Ansa, Holy Family College, Oku Abak, St. Vincent Secondary School, Oti-Oro among others in molding character and providing knowledge for the future leaders is undeniable. The primary and secondary schools established by the Irish missionaries provided solid foundation of literacy and modernization. The formation of the local clergy will not have been possible without the educational engagement of the Irish missionaries. The Church is doing well in the territory because of the vision of the St. Patrick Fathers as envisioned by James Moynagh to form the local clergy who will be

capable of interacting with their kins for the development of human society and the spread of the Kingdom of God.

From what the local Church has received from the Irish missionaries, it is proper to map direction for future research and assessment of the contributions of the Catholic priests from Africa for the European cultural and spiritual rejuvenation between 2000 and 2050. The Church in Africa in gratitude to the missionaries should not only sustain and deepen the faith but should also become missionary to the rest of the world, including Europe. This was the vision of Dominic Ekandem when he conceived the idea of the Missionary Society of St. Paul in 1950. The posterity will judge African Christians based on how they show love to Europe in gratitude for the faith received from the European missionaries. Therefore, from 2030 to 2050 there should a strategic missionary agenda for the dioceses in Calabar Ecclesiastical Province to engage in impactful mission *ad intra* (within) and *ad extra* (beyond), and in the spirit of Irish missionaries to transform socio-cultural realities. In conclusion, the Europe and Africa exchanges are ongoing and mutually enriching and liberating to the human spirit. This relationship should be constructed on partnership rather than on paternalism for the strengthening of authentic civilization and integral humanism especially in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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4. Anselm Etokakpan
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*b) Focus Group Discussion 2025*

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## **Critical Analysis of Culture, and Contemporary Realities in Itam Clan, Akwa Ibom State**

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### **Abstract**

Gender remains one of the most contested and analytically rich concepts in the social sciences, and humanities. This paper critically examined gender as a social construct, distinguishing it from biological sex while exploring its embeddedness in cultural, religious, and socio-political systems. Drawing on key theoretical perspectives such as functionalism, feminism, and social constructionism, the study examined how gender roles are produced, maintained, and transformed across societies in the Itam Clan of Itu Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. Particular attention was given to an African context, where indigenous traditions, colonial legacies, and religious influences intersect to shape gender norms. This paper argued further that gender is neither static, nor universal but continuously negotiated through power relations and institutional frameworks. It concluded by emphasizing the need for inclusive, context-sensitive approaches to gender discourse that promote equity and social justice in Itam Society.

**Keywords:** Gender, Social Construct, Feminist Theory, Patriarchy, African Gender Systems, Gender Inequality, Gender-Based Violence.

## Introduction

Gender models are shaped by the different expectations that individuals, groups and societies assigns to persons based on their sex as well as cultural values and beliefs about gender (Blackstone, p335). For one to have a proper understanding of gender model one must first of all have a clear clarification of what gender is. Gender is a term used to denote the different and unequal perceptions, views, roles, relevance, or rewards that a society assigns to the two sex categories (Anyalebechi, p63).

From this definition, it is clearly shown that every human person in existence has his or her own gender; and every single gender has its own peculiar significant role. It is also shown from the definition that every characteristic attached to a particular gender is socially constructed. That is to say that every norm, characteristics and behaviours associated with a particular gender are projected by society. It can also be deduced from the definition that gender varies from society to society and can change over time. The word gender was used for the first time in the 1940s by John Money in a discourse meant to legitimize sex change; and hence it was employed in the social sciences from the late 1960s onward (Nidham and Aseel, p2). According to them, the concept of gender has a distinction from sex. It refers to the biological differences between a man and a woman, while gender refers to the differences and traits that society associates with each sex. Gender being something that is being projected by the society makes it liable to change. Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on productive potential, while gender is the societal elaboration of biological sexes. From the above definition, gender is not a natural characteristic; it is a trait and artificial characteristics, designed by society for sexes (Eckert and Mc-Connell, p37).

Sex is a permanent phenomenon that can't be changed, but gender is subject to change as society keeps evolving and developing. It is inevitable that gender models or perspectives have an effect on people's opportunities, social relationships, and interaction. Gender is seen as a social structure. It is an institution that is embedded in all the social processes of everyday life and social organization (Risman, p430). This means that gender is a core component of the society which affects all spheres of the society both the social, economic, family and even the society at large. The variance in gender models and perspectives has led to complexities in cross-gender relationships. Traditional gender models create and perpetuate gender inequality, as the roles assigned to women are associated with less power and resources (p336). Husbands are seen as priority in the African Traditional gender model (Mensah, p220). The gender model has also affected the marital union of some families. In the traditional Akwa Ibom society, women are perceived as subordinates, and men as bosses. The male child preference is deeply rooted in Akwa Ibom State (Ukpong and Essien, p286). Also, in traditional African society, family survival and the future of

the marriage depend significantly on the woman, instead of both parties. Women have been given these care-giving roles, putting them in a vantage position for procreation and life sustainability, but despite the various positions, activities, responsibilities, and roles saddled with women, in traditional African societies, men still occupy the leadership position, as many African societies are patriarchal in nature (Oyibode and Olanlekan p98).

Women's roles as wives and mothers have typically had an impact on their participation in the paid labour market (Chandler, p63). Very often, gender determines the pupil's academic performance. As a rule, boys perform better than girls in mathematics, physics, Informatics, and engineering, while girls are better at literature, languages, history, and art. Later, these factors serve as a basis for selecting the further course of education. Boys continue their studies mostly in natural and technical sciences, and girls choose to study humanities in many African societies (p70). Thus, the gender model could be said to be one of the prominent factors that has led to the collapse of many cross-gender relationships due to different societal model orientation. With recourse from the foregoing, the work is pursued within the following objectives which are to: critically examines how gender is modeled in Itam society, and analyse how the Itam gender model affects cross-gender relationships in society. In order to pursue these objectives and arrive at a reliable conclusion and offer useful recommendations, the study adopted a qualitative approach, using unstructured interviews to gather primary data from respondents in Itam Clan, and also engaged, with empirical works of scholars on gender-related issues for analysis.

### **Different Paradigms of Gender**

According to Wharton, gender is viewed as a system of social practices; this system creates and maintains gender distinctions and organized relations of inequality on the basis of these distinctions. In this view, gender involves the creation of both differences and inequalities (p7). Based on the social grip in defining and evaluating gender perceptions, relations, and roles, different theories or paradigms on how gender is or should be modeled have arisen in scholarship. From the interactional perspective theory, gender is more about the social construct within which individuals interact. Then, it is about the individuals themselves that gender is not inherent in people, but that it is something that is created and maintained in interactions (Nyberg, p18).

The interactional views on gender mean that people's reactions and behaviours vary in response to social contexts. This means that both men and women have a probable way in Gender as an interactional event, enact gender relations in diverse contexts, they confirm or undermine gender beliefs. Thus, interaction plays an important role in sustaining or modifying the gender system (Gussak, p64). There is also the institutional gender theory, where the use of the term institution is abstract

and almost all-encompassing. The institutional perspective theory on gender focuses on how gender is created and maintained in organizations and cultures, it also aims to examine the practices and policies of cultures, societies, and organizations (Nyberg, p13). Also, in institutional theory, Institutions affects the society and influence organizations behaviour (Amend, p1). As a social situation, gender creates distinguishing social statuses for the assignments of rights and institutions (Lorber, p122). As a social institution, it also determines how and the ways human beings behave (Lorber, p123). The sociologist theory also defines gender as an organised pattern. organised pattern (Wharton, p65). The social learning theory in sociology describes the process.

It emphasizes several key mechanisms in development, including reinforcement, punishment, imitation, and observational learning. These three mechanisms-reinforcement, imitation, and observational learning are thought to underlie the process of gender typing. That is the acquisition of gender-type behaviour and learning of gender roles, according to social learning theory (Sayers, p30). In the individualistic theory, proponents view gender as an attribute or characteristic of people. Also, the functionalist perspective typifies human society as a biological organism with various parts that are harmoniously known for its smooth functioning (Lorber, p133). The functionalist theory views the society as a multifaceted structure with different elements that work in harmony to ensure the entire system sustainability and survival. The functionalist theory examines society from a broader perspective and generally pays attention to the social systems of society (p135).

Gender has been conceptualized through various theoretical frameworks. Wharton defines gender as a system of social practices that creates distinctions and organizes inequality (Wharton, p7). From the interactionism perspective, gender is produced through everyday social interactions rather than being inherent in individuals (Nyberg, p18). Individuals “do gender” through behavior, thereby reinforcing or challenging societal expectations. The institutional perspective views gender as embedded in organizational structures, cultural norms, and policies (Nyberg, p13). Institutions shape and reproduce gender inequalities by assigning roles, rights, and expectations. While Social learning theory, explains gender acquisition through processes such as; imitation, reinforcement, and observation (Sayers, p30). Individuals internalize gender roles through socialization. The functionalist perspective sees gender roles as complementary parts of a broader social system necessary for societal stability (Lorber, p133). However, this perspective has been criticized for legitimizing inequality. Together, these paradigms demonstrate that gender is multifaceted, socially produced, and sustained through interaction, institutions, and cultural norms.

## **Gender as a Socio-cultural Construct**

According to Nyberg, gender is a social construct that impacts attitudes, roles, responsibilities and behaviour patterns of boys and girls, men and women in the societies (p18). Also, gender is said to be a cultural-based complex of norms, values, and behaviours that a particular culture assigns to one biological sex. The sex and gender are lodged largely in the matrix of a culture's norms, values, and beliefs (pSegal 4). The social construction of gender is demonstrated by the fact that individuals, groups and societies ascribe particular traits, statuses or values to individuals purely because of the sex, yet these ascriptions differ across societies and cultures (Blackstone, p336). When it has to do with gender, society is a very important factor. Whatever gender entails is what society has constructed. Gender is an ever-changing and evolving social construct. The roles associated with gender are often defined by society's expectations, attitudes, and portrayals. These affect personal attitudes, career choices, and behaviours (Wilson, p67). Gender is so pervasive that in our society we assume it's bred into our genes. Mate out of human interaction, out of social life, and it is the texture and order of that social life (Judith, p13). Judith also added that everyone does gender even without thinking about it. Every society uses gender and grade. Every society classifies people as boys and girls; hence, that makes gender a social institution (p15), one of the major ways that human beings organise their lives (Judith, p18).

The social construction of gender determines attitudes about what men and women are capable of, how they should behave what kinds of roles and images are presented for women and men, and who will occupy positions of power (Hasanul, p68). According to Marvgan, gender is socially constructed and is a result of socio-cultural influences throughout an individual's life. Hence gender identity can be affected by and is different from one society to another depending on the way members of society evaluate the roles of males and females.

Gender is fundamentally a socio-cultural construct that shapes behavior, roles, and expectations (Nyberg, p18). It is rooted in cultural norms, values, and belief systems (Segal, p4). The variability of gender across societies demonstrates the constructed nature of gender. Which differ significantly across cultures, indicating that gender is not biologically fixed but socially defined (Blackstone, p334). Judith Lorber emphasizes that gender is continually produced and reproduced through social interaction. Individuals unconsciously 'perform' gender roles, thereby reinforcing societal structures (Lorbar, p13). Thus gender influences perceptions of capability, authority, and social positioning. It determines access to power and shapes life opportunities.

## **Contemporary Gender Issues in Society**

One of the paramount issues brought about by gender in our society is the issue of inequality. According to Rastique, gender norms and stereotypes reinforce gendered identities and constrain in behaviours of women and men in ways that leads to inequality (p610), and in our society gender inequality is seen as an attack on the traditional and cultural ethos (p611). Also, for the educational, family, economic, governance, and all other social institutions, statistic reveals severe gender tension in Nigeria (Olawale, p4). There is an imbalance in education among the genders, such that few women are empowered and very few are part of the labour force (p5). Also, women's participation in the national economy is about 11 percent compared with 30 percent for men (p8).

Lorber explained gender roles to be based on the disparities in gender expectations of individuals based on their sex and based on each society's values and benefits about the gender (p335). Gender roles are closely related to gender stereotypes or generalisation about how an individual is or should be based on the individual's gender (kraine and Kim, p6). Gender norms and stereotypes constrain behavior and reinforce unequal power relations (Ranique, p610). On, employment, and governance, Women remain under represented in economic and political spheres (Olawale, p4). Cultural resistance often frames gender equality efforts as threats to tradition. Gender roles and stereotypes further entrench inequality by prescribing rigid expectations for behavior (Kaine and Kim, p6).

## **Effects of Cross Gendered Construct on Cross Gender Relationship**

Traditionally, especially for the African setting, the role of the man is to rule over his family with a firm hand. He is the bread winner; he provides for the household, he defends the honour of the family. An African man is therefore considered to be the ideal father and mother who nurture his children according to the rules of the patriarchal family (Okolo, p200). Among the Africans, women are expected to be quiet when men speak. Women are being seen as respectable by being respectful to men. In Africa, it is believed that good mothers do not challenge authority in general. African women politicians have to be quiet, and not challenge authority. She's expected to accept marriage and have children because marriage is assumed to be the goal for most African women (p206). In traditional marriages perception, men earn money and support the house, while women assume the duty of being a mother and responsible for house work (Ercaan and Ucar, p300).

Also, it is highlighted by Essen and Ukpong that traditional women are seen as properties; hence a man is free to marry as many wives as he can but a woman is expected not to have a real friend other than the husband authority in the society. According to Marshall, women lesser access to power and resources may also constrain the development of friendships in human relations. As a result of gender

and gender role in the society, men and women relationship has become power relation (Udo, p82). It also promotes and reinforces gender stereotypes which results in skewed gender conscience (p83).

Traditional African gender systems emphasize male dominance and female subordination. Men are positioned as providers and authority figures, while women are assigned domestic roles (Okolo, 200). These norms shape interpersonal relationships, often creating power imbalances. Women have limited access to resources and authority constrains their agency (Udo, p82). In many contexts, double standards such as tolerance of male infidelity but strict sanctions against women reflect deeply embedded patriarchal values. These dynamics reinforce inequality and hinder equitable relationship.

### **Critical Appraisal of the Literature and Research Gap**

From the reviewed literatures, it has been established that gender is a social construct and it is societal based. Gender isn't something that is inherent, it is what is being invented and established by each society. These gender and gender roles vary in each society. There are many theories which could be used in addressing and understanding the issue of gender in each society this includes interactional perspective theory, institutional gender theory, social learning theory, individualistic theory etc. Also every gender in the society has its role. The male genders are seen as the rulers while the female genders are seen as the meek and feeble ones. This gender role has its effects on cross gender relation. It leads to androcentrism, role oriented society, and power oriented society.

Nevertheless, there are still research gaps in this finding. The literature reviewed hasn't dealt with gender from the Itam perspective. Most of the literature text and articles from scholars addresses the general gender issues in Africa but not specifically on the Itam society. The literatures also haven't dealt with the effect of gender and gender role of the Itam people on the society specifically. Gaps are critically addressed. Existing literature establishes that gender is socially constructed and context rather than specific communities. There is limited scholarship on gender constructions, within Itam society, particularly regarding their impact on interpersonal relationships.

### **Research Methodology**

The area of the study focused on Itam Clan, comprising 46 villages. A non-probability sampling technique was used to select 20 respondents from three villages. Allowing participants to provide in-depth perspectives based on lived experience. The data were transcribed and thematically analysed. The primary data for the study were obtained via unstructured interviews from the sample discussed above. The interviews were transcribed and analysed to arrive at the study's findings. Interview

with Mr. Usenata Udo of Atai Ibiaku Itam aged sixty five, a retired head teacher, and the current chairman Atai Ibiaku Itam Council He specifically, explained the Itam gendered model. According to him, there are certain things women are not expected to do in society and even at home. He said the leadership role both at home and in society is basically for men. He said women in Itam society are not expected to claim palm tree as it is the role of the man to do so. He said that even on the farm, the staking is basically for the man, while the woman is just to plant. According to him, the women are the ones assigned with domestic duties at home. He went further to say that prior to this time, much importance was placed on women's fattening and marital training than on women's education. Mr Usenata went further to say that the Itam society is patriarchal, and man-based. Such that even when the male happens to be the youngest, he assumes role of the head of that family, it is still the young boy regardless of his age or status, that rules because no decision in the family can be made without the approval of the young boy, *Akpan Iwod ufok*; family head. Our sources further remarked that the patriarchal state of the Itam society is beneficial to the women as they will be protected by the men. He gave an example that the women can't protect themselves in terms of fights or other violence situation. It is the men that protect the women if such case arises.

He further adduced that Itam has never considered the male and female to be of the same status and that the equality of both gender will never happen in the Itam community. According to him, gender equality is just a statement that is not grounded. Mr. Usenata added that in the Itam society, women are not to own a property in the fathers compound and if at all she is given, It was never equally with the man even though the woman might be the eldest.

In the second interview with Mr. Akaninyene Tom, from Ikot Ekang Itam, the issue of fidelity in the Itam society was discussed. According to him, it is a taboo for a married woman in Itam community to engage in the act of infidelity. The man is never to take the woman back and no other man is expected to take her as a wife. He said a man can be forgiven of infidelity in marriage but a woman can't be forgiven as a married woman is seen as a sacred being whose nakedness is to be seen by the husband alone. Mr. Akaniyene in addition said that the men are expected to be the providers at home. According to him the men are expected to be the providers at home to ensure that the wife and children are protected while the woman is to care and obey the husband.

From the above data gotten, it is observed that most of the Information given by the indigenes of Itam society corresponds with African setting as derived from the reviewed literatures written by scholars. Mr. Usenata, further said that women are only assigned with the domestic roles at home. They are expected to be under the influence of the man and are not expected to disobey or say no to whatever the man says as he is the head of the home. This shows the low state and position of the

women in Itam society. Available data from this study showed that subjugation and intimidation of women in society still exist. The women being deprived of leadership role in the society is an indication to a state of gender imbalance in Itam society. It showed that women are property to men, over whom they can do and decide for them as it pleases. This was clearly pointed out by Essen and Ukpong. When they averse that a woman is assigned only to the kitchen, it deprives her of the opportunity to explore her potentials and other abilities that she possesses. It places a limitation on women, which makes them subjects and the men bosses in the society. From the data gotten, it is vividly clear that the issue of stereotyping is prevalence in the Itam society. The men are the most acknowledged.

On the other hand, they women are seen as being weak, and incapable of leading and making decisions. This is most likely to bring about inferiority and low self-esteem among women and in their relationships in society. The Itam gender model shows the superiority of the male in the society. Much superiority is ascribed to the men and this shows the patriarchal state of the Itam society. Following Mr. Usenata's assertion, the Itam society is patriarchal and will continue to be patriarchal. This shows how neglected they women are in Itam society. Mr. Usenata also made it clear that women are exempted from leadership roles in the society and in the family. The neglect of women in the leadership roles in the society and the assigning of ultimate leadership roles, to the men is crystal clear, the influence of the male gender on the female gender in Itam society. Even in the marriage institution, women are minor. Men are to give instructions and order in Itam society while the women are to quietly obey. This shows the domination of men in every aspect of life and the conditioning of women to be mere subjects in society. The exemption of the male in infidelity shows the situation of inequality in the Itam societal gender construct.

Inequality in the Itam society is what can never be changed, according to Mr. Usenata. This shows the low status quo of placed on women in the Itam society. The findings in this work have revealed that Itam society is strongly patriarchal. Even in cases where a male child is younger, he is accorded authority over older female siblings. Cultural norms enforce strict expectations of female obedience and male dominance. Double standards in moral conduct, particularly regarding infidelity, further highlight gender inequality. These findings align with broader African patriarchal structures but also reveal specific cultural nuances unique to Itam society. The system perpetuates inequalities. These findings align with broader African patriarchal structures but also reveal specific cultural nuances unique to Itam society. Deeply institutionalized system shaped by cultural parochial norms. The dominance of men and the subordinate Gender in Itam society is a socially constructed and deeply institutionalized system shaped by cultural parochial norms. The dominance of men and the subordination of women define social relations and limit equitable interaction.

Since gender is a dynamic and socially constructed phenomenon that is shaped by cultural, religious, and institutional forces. And this work shows clearly that the Itam gender model is equivalent to the African traditional gender model. Itam gender model is patriarchal in nature. Men dominate and rule while women are subjugated and intimidated by society. In Itam gender model the female are seen as weak and meek and are assigned with roles which is only within the family care and the kitchen. Vital decisions are made by men, and leadership roles are solely for men. With this patriarchal state of society, the subjugation of women in relationships is inevitable. The cross-gendered relationship in the Itam society will be that of the superior and inferior. It will be impossible to have a balanced relationship between the two genders in the society. Except traditional norms, globalization and education continue to influence gender roles, driving change. To address the imbalance gender model in Itam society, strategic and concrete plans and actions must be taken through Cultural transformation in Itam Societies and everywhere such dysfunctional upgrade exist. There is need for critical engagement with traditional norms to encourage more equitable gender relations.

1. Education: Expand access to education for women to enhance empowerment and participation.
2. Policy Intervention: Implement gender sensitive policies that protect rights while respecting cultural contexts.
3. Community Dialogue: Encourage inclusive discussions involving both men and women to reshape norms.
4. Economic Empowerment: Support women's access to economic resources and leadership opportunities.

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## **An Examination of the Crisis of Cultural Identity in the Age of Globalization**

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### **Abstract**

The phenomenon of globalization has significantly transformed contemporary societies by increasing interconnectedness in economic, political, technological, and cultural spheres. While globalization has facilitated communication, mobility and cross-cultural exchange, it has also generated profound challenges for cultural identity, particularly in developing societies. This study examines the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization, focusing on how global cultural flows influence indigenous traditions, values, languages, and identity formation. The study adopts a qualitative research design based on secondary data drawn from books, journal articles, and scholarly reports. It is anchored on Cultural Globalization Theory and Cultural Imperialism Theory to explain how dominant global cultures influence local identities. Findings reveal that globalization creates a dual process of cultural integration and cultural dislocation. On one hand, it promotes multicultural interaction, modernization, and global awareness. On the other hand, it contributes to identity fragmentation, cultural homogenization, language decline, and weakening of traditional value systems. The study further finds that cultural identity is not entirely erased but increasingly negotiated through adaptation, resistance, and hybridization. The paper concludes that the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization reflects tensions between global influence and local cultural preservation. It recommends stronger cultural education, language preservation initiatives, and policy support for indigenous cultural production to sustain cultural identity in an increasingly globalized world.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Cultural Identity, Cultural Crisis, Cultural Imperialism, Hybridization, Identity Formation.

## Introduction

Globalization has become one of the defining features of the contemporary world, shaping the economic, political, technological, and cultural realities of societies across the globe. Broadly understood, globalization refers to the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of nations through the rapid movement of goods, capital, information, ideas, and people across borders (Giddens, 1990). This process has been accelerated by advances in communication technologies, digital media, transportation systems, and global economic integration, making the world increasingly interconnected. Among the various dimensions of globalization, cultural globalization remains one of the most debated because of its profound impact on identity, values, traditions, and social consciousness.

Cultural identity refers to the collective sense of belonging shared by individuals within a cultural group, expressed through language, religion, customs, values, traditions, history, and social practices. It shapes how people understand themselves and how they relate to others within society. Cultural identity is not merely a static inheritance from the past; rather, it is continuously constructed, negotiated, and reproduced through social interaction and historical experience (Hall, 1996). It serves as a foundational element in personal and collective self-definition, offering a sense of continuity, belonging, and meaning.

In the age of globalization, however, cultural identity has increasingly become a contested and unstable phenomenon. The rapid circulation of global media content, Western consumer culture, transnational migration, and digital communication platforms has intensified cross-cultural contact at an unprecedented scale. These developments have created opportunities for cultural exchange and global awareness, but they have also generated serious concerns regarding cultural displacement, identity fragmentation, and cultural homogenization. Many societies now face growing tension between preserving indigenous cultural identities and adapting to global cultural influences.

One of the central concerns in globalization studies is the growing dominance of Western cultural models in global communication systems. Through global media industries, multinational corporations, film, music, fashion, advertising, and social media, Western lifestyles and values are widely disseminated and often presented as universal standards of modernity, progress, and success (Herbert Schiller, 1976). This dominance has raised concerns that globalization may function as a form of cultural imperialism, where powerful cultures exert disproportionate influence over weaker or less economically powerful societies. In such circumstances, local cultures may become marginalized, leading to gradual erosion of indigenous traditions, languages, and value systems.

The crisis of cultural identity has become particularly evident in developing societies, where traditional cultural structures often coexist with rapidly expanding

global influences. In many African, Asian, and Latin American societies, younger generations increasingly consume global cultural products through streaming platforms, television, online communities, and social media platforms. This exposure influences their language preferences, fashion choices, music tastes, social relationships, and worldview. As a result, identity formation has become more complex, as individuals navigate between inherited cultural traditions and emerging global cultural expectations.

Despite these concerns, globalization does not always result in total cultural loss. Some scholars argue that cultures are not passive recipients of external influence but active agents capable of adaptation, resistance, and creative transformation (Arjun Appadurai, 1996). Rather than simple cultural domination, globalization often produces hybrid identities in which local and global cultural elements coexist and interact. This means that the crisis of cultural identity is not solely about cultural disappearance but also about negotiation, reconstruction, and redefinition of identity in changing social contexts.

However, the contemporary crisis of cultural identity therefore lies in the tension between cultural continuity and cultural transformation. Individuals and communities increasingly struggle to maintain authentic cultural values while participating in global modernity. This tension affects social cohesion, intergenerational relations, moral systems, and collective memory. The challenge is especially significant in societies where cultural heritage plays a central role in community organization and identity formation.

In view of the foregoing, this study examines the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization. It seeks to critically analyze how globalization influences cultural identity, whether through cultural erosion, identity fragmentation, cultural hybridization, or cultural adaptation. By exploring these dynamics, the study contributes to broader scholarly discussions on globalization, identity, and cultural transformation in the contemporary world.

### **Literature Review**

The concept of cultural identity in the context of globalization has attracted extensive scholarly attention across disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, media studies, and cultural studies. Scholars have debated whether globalization strengthens intercultural interaction and diversity or whether it contributes to cultural homogenization and identity crisis. While there is broad agreement that globalization has intensified cultural interconnectedness, there is less consensus regarding its long-term implications for indigenous cultures and identity formation.

One major perspective in the literature views globalization as a force of cultural homogenization. Proponents of this view argue that globalization promotes the spread of dominant cultural values, particularly those originating from Western

societies, at the expense of local cultural traditions. One major perspective in the literature is the cultural imperialism thesis which argues that globalization facilitates the dominance of powerful cultures over weaker ones through unequal media flows. This perspective suggests that global media circulation often privileges Western cultural values, thereby influencing local identities and cultural practices in developing societies (Schiller, 1976).

However, not all scholars interpret globalization as purely destructive to cultural identity. Anthony Giddens (1990) argues that globalization is better understood as intensified worldwide social relations linking distant localities. From this perspective, globalization creates complex networks of interaction that transform rather than simply erase local cultures. Cultural change becomes multidirectional, involving exchange, adaptation, and reinterpretation rather than one-way domination.

Similarly, Arjun Appadurai (1996) provides a more dynamic understanding through his theory of global cultural flows. He argues that globalization operates through multiple "scapes," including mediascapes, ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes. These interconnected flows shape how people imagine themselves and the world around them. Appadurai (1996) emphasizes that cultural influence is not linear; instead, local communities selectively interpret and appropriate global cultural elements according to their own social realities. This suggests that globalization may produce diverse cultural outcomes rather than uniform global culture.

Another influential perspective comes from Stuart Hall (1996), who argues that cultural identity should not be viewed as fixed or essential but as fluid and continuously constructed. This condition creates tension between rooted cultural belonging and global cultural participation. The concept of cultural hybridity has therefore become central to contemporary globalization studies. Marwan Kraidy (2005) argues that globalization often produces hybrid identities that combine local and global cultural elements. Rather than fully replacing indigenous cultures, global influences are frequently adapted into local contexts, resulting in new cultural forms. Hybridization explains why people may retain aspects of traditional identity while simultaneously embracing global lifestyles, technologies, and values.

In developing societies, the crisis of cultural identity is often more pronounced because globalization interacts with existing economic inequalities, colonial histories, and postcolonial cultural struggles. African scholars have observed that globalization significantly affects language use, traditional authority structures, family systems, and indigenous knowledge production. The spread of foreign media content has particularly influenced younger generations, who increasingly identify with global youth culture through music, fashion, digital communication, and celebrity culture.

Despite these challenges, many scholars emphasize resilience and cultural agency. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2009) argues that globalization should not be reduced to Westernization alone. Instead, it involves continuous interaction among cultures, producing multiple modernities and diverse identity outcomes. Local communities often resist cultural domination by revitalizing traditions, promoting indigenous knowledge, and adapting global tools for local cultural preservation.

Although there is extensive literature on globalization and culture, significant gaps remain regarding the precise mechanisms through which globalization produces identity crises. Much of the literature focuses broadly on global cultural transformation without sufficiently analyzing how identity conflict emerges at individual and community levels. This study addresses that gap by examining the crisis of cultural identity as a lived tension between cultural preservation and global adaptation. By doing so, it contributes to deeper understanding of identity formation in the age of globalization.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored primarily on Cultural Imperialism Theory, developed by Herbert Schiller (1976), and is complemented by insights from Cultural Hybridity Theory. These theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization by explaining both the structural inequalities in global cultural flows and the adaptive responses of local cultures to global influences.

Cultural Imperialism Theory emerged as a critical response to the growing global dominance of Western media institutions and communication systems. According to Schiller (1976), global media structures are largely controlled by economically powerful nations, particularly the United States and Western Europe, which possess superior technological infrastructure, financial resources, and institutional capacity for cultural production and distribution. This dominance enables Western societies to export cultural products, ideologies, values, and lifestyles across the world at a scale unmatched by developing societies.

The theory argues that media is not culturally neutral. Rather, media content often carries embedded ideological assumptions that reflect the worldview, social values, and political interests of dominant societies. Through repeated exposure, Western ideals such as consumerism, individualism, material success, liberalism, and modern lifestyle patterns are presented as universal standards of progress and civilization. As these values circulate globally, they may gradually displace, weaken, or marginalize indigenous cultural systems, especially in societies with weaker media production capacity. In this way, globalization may function as a form of symbolic domination, where local cultures increasingly measure themselves against foreign cultural standards.

Within the context of globalization, Cultural Imperialism Theory provides a useful explanation for the crisis of cultural identity. Continuous exposure to dominant foreign cultural models can create psychological, social, and cultural tension among individuals and communities. People may begin to detach from indigenous traditions while simultaneously struggling to fully assimilate into global cultural norms. This often produces identity fragmentation, cultural alienation, and weakened communal belonging. Individuals may feel disconnected from their historical roots while also experiencing uncertainty about their place within rapidly changing global cultural systems.

Within this study, Cultural Imperialism Theory explains how unequal global media structures intensify exposure to foreign cultural models, thereby influencing identity formation, cultural preferences, and value orientation among individuals in developing societies. Applied to this study, Cultural Imperialism Theory helps explain how globalization contributes to the crisis of cultural identity by exposing individuals and communities to powerful external cultural influences that shape perceptions of beauty, success, morality, lifestyle, and social desirability.

As a result, younger generations often experience tension between inherited cultural identities and emerging global identities. Traditional customs, indigenous languages, and communal values may increasingly be perceived as outdated or less prestigious compared to global cultural norms. This creates an identity crisis characterized by uncertainty regarding cultural belonging, self-definition, and cultural loyalty.

However, although Cultural Imperialism Theory offers valuable insights, it has notable limitations. Critics argue that the theory tends to be overly deterministic because it assumes that local cultures passively absorb foreign influences without resistance, reinterpretation, or creative adaptation. This criticism has led scholars to develop alternative perspectives that better account for cultural agency and the dynamic nature of identity formation.

To address this limitation, this study also draws from Cultural Hybridity Theory, advanced by scholars such as Marwan Kraidy (2005). Cultural hybridity emphasizes that globalization does not always result in complete cultural domination or cultural erasure. Instead, it often produces new cultural forms through interaction, negotiation, and adaptation between local and global influences. From this perspective, cultures are not static or fixed but dynamic systems that continuously evolve through contact with external forces.

Cultural Hybridity Theory complements this limitation by showing that local cultures are not passive recipients of globalization. Instead, they adapt, reinterpret, and integrate global influences into existing cultural systems, producing new hybrid identities (Kraidy, 2005). This perspective is essential for understanding why the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization cannot be reduced simply to

cultural disappearance. In many societies, globalization generates hybrid identities that combine local traditions with global influences. Such identities reflect continuous negotiation between cultural preservation and cultural adaptation. Identity therefore becomes fluid, multilayered, and increasingly shaped by both historical heritage and contemporary global interaction.

The combined use of Cultural Imperialism Theory and Cultural Hybridity Theory provides a balanced analytical lens for this study. Cultural Imperialism explains the structural power imbalance within global media systems and how this imbalance contributes to cultural identity crisis. Cultural Hybridity, on the other hand, explains how individuals and communities respond creatively to global influences through adaptation, resistance, and identity reconstruction. Together, these theories demonstrate that the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization should not be understood merely as cultural disappearance. Rather, it reflects an ongoing struggle involving cultural preservation, adaptation, negotiation, and transformation. Cultural identity in the global era is therefore increasingly fluid, contested, and continuously reconstructed through interaction between local traditions and global cultural forces.

### **Methodological Orientation**

This study adopts a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for examining cultural phenomena, interpretive meanings, and complex social processes associated with globalization and identity formation. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable because the study seeks to understand how globalization influences cultural identity through lived experiences, symbolic expressions, social interactions, and socio-cultural transformations rather than through numerical measurement or statistical generalization. According to John W. Creswell (2014), qualitative research enables in-depth exploration of social realities by focusing on meanings, interpretations, and contextual understanding. In the context of this study, this approach provides a suitable framework for analyzing the crisis of cultural identity as a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon shaped by global and local interactions.

The study relies exclusively on secondary sources of data. These include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic textbooks, scholarly monographs, conference proceedings, policy documents, and credible online academic databases related to globalization, cultural identity, media studies, sociology, and cultural transformation. The use of secondary data provides broad theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding the relationship between globalization and cultural identity. By drawing from established scholarly works, the study benefits from multiple perspectives and diverse conceptual approaches that enrich the analysis. These

sources also enable comparative understanding across different societies while maintaining focus on the central research problem.

In terms of research design, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. The descriptive aspect involves identifying and explaining observable patterns of cultural transformation associated with globalization. This includes documenting how globalization affects language, traditions, belief systems, social behavior, consumption patterns, and identity formation. The analytical aspect goes further by critically examining the mechanisms through which globalization produces identity-related tensions, cultural dislocation, and hybrid cultural expressions. Through this combined approach, the study moves beyond simple observation to offer critical interpretation of the crisis of cultural identity in contemporary societies.

The primary analytical technique employed is qualitative content analysis. Content analysis involves the systematic examination and interpretation of textual materials to identify recurring themes, conceptual patterns, and embedded meanings relevant to the research problem. This method allows the researcher to organize existing literature into coherent analytical categories and extract meaningful insights regarding globalization and identity transformation. The use of content analysis is particularly valuable because the subject under investigation involves abstract concepts such as identity, belonging, cultural continuity, and cultural crisis, which require interpretive rather than statistical analysis.

Through content analysis, several key analytical categories emerge as central to this study. These include cultural homogenization, identity fragmentation, cultural erosion, cultural hybridization, and cultural resilience. Cultural homogenization refers to the increasing similarity of cultural expressions due to global influence. Identity fragmentation describes the weakening or destabilization of coherent cultural self-definition caused by conflicting cultural pressures. Cultural erosion refers to the gradual decline of indigenous traditions, languages, and values. Cultural hybridization captures the blending of local and global cultural elements to form new identities. Cultural resilience highlights the capacity of communities to preserve and adapt their cultural heritage despite external pressures. These categories provide an interpretive framework for understanding the various dimensions of cultural identity crisis in the age of globalization.

The scope of this study is conceptual and global in orientation, focusing broadly on the crisis of cultural identity in contemporary societies affected by globalization. Particular attention is given to developing societies where the effects of global cultural flows are often more pronounced due to structural inequalities in media production, economic power, and cultural representation. The study examines how globalization influences cultural identity at both individual and collective levels, especially in relation to language, religion, social values, traditions, and identity construction.

The study is delimited in several ways. First, it does not involve primary data collection such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic fieldwork. Second, it does not employ quantitative or statistical techniques for data analysis. These limitations are intentional because the study prioritizes conceptual depth, theoretical interpretation, and critical analysis over empirical measurement. While primary data could provide additional insights into lived experiences, the use of extensive secondary literature remains sufficient for addressing the central objectives of the study.

Overall, this methodological orientation provides a strong analytical foundation for examining the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization. By integrating diverse scholarly perspectives and applying qualitative content analysis to existing literature, the study identifies consistent patterns in the interaction between global cultural forces and local identity systems. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how globalization simultaneously threatens, transforms, and redefines cultural identity in the contemporary world.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The analysis of existing scholarly literature on globalization and cultural identity reveals that the crisis of cultural identity in the contemporary era is characterized by a complex interaction between cultural continuity, disruption, adaptation, and transformation. The findings indicate that globalization has not simply erased local cultures; rather, it has intensified cultural interaction in ways that simultaneously challenge and reconstruct identity. Cultural identity in the age of globalization is therefore increasingly fluid, contested, and dynamic, shaped by the continuous interaction between local traditions and global cultural forces (Arjun Appadurai, 1996; Anthony Giddens, 1990).

A major finding of this study concerns the growing phenomenon of cultural homogenization. Globalization, especially through media and digital communication technologies, has accelerated the spread of dominant cultural models across the world. Western cultural products such as Hollywood films, international music, fashion industries, advertising, and social media trends increasingly shape global cultural preferences. This widespread circulation of dominant cultural content has contributed to the standardization of lifestyles, consumer behavior, language use, and social values. Many individuals, particularly younger generations, increasingly adopt globally popular cultural practices in ways that reduce attachment to indigenous traditions. This supports the argument of Herbert Schiller (1976), who maintains that global media systems often function as instruments of cultural dominance.

Another major finding relates to identity fragmentation. Globalization exposes individuals to multiple cultural systems simultaneously, creating competing identity

expectations. Traditional identities rooted in ethnicity, religion, family, and communal values now coexist with global identities shaped by digital culture, transnational media, and global social networks. This often creates tension between inherited cultural norms and modern global lifestyles. Many individuals struggle to reconcile traditional expectations with global cultural aspirations, leading to confusion, divided loyalties, and uncertainty in self-definition. The crisis of cultural identity therefore emerges not merely as cultural loss but as an internal struggle over belonging, values, and identity construction.

The findings further reveal significant language transformation and linguistic displacement. Language remains one of the strongest carriers of cultural identity because it preserves collective memory, indigenous knowledge, oral tradition, and worldview. However, globalization has strengthened the dominance of global languages such as English, French, and Spanish, particularly in education, media, business, and digital communication. In many developing societies, indigenous languages are increasingly marginalized as younger generations prefer globally dominant languages for social mobility and digital participation. This linguistic shift contributes significantly to identity crisis because loss of language often weakens cultural continuity and intergenerational transmission of values.

Another important finding concerns the transformation of social values and moral systems. Globalization has introduced alternative ethical frameworks centered on individual autonomy, personal freedom, consumer culture, and self-expression. These values often contrast with traditional communal systems that emphasize collective responsibility, respect for elders, social obligation, and communal solidarity. The increasing influence of global value systems has contributed to changing attitudes toward family structures, marriage, gender roles, social authority, and community life. In many societies, traditional moral frameworks are being questioned, renegotiated, or partially abandoned in favor of globalized cultural norms.

The study also finds strong evidence of consumerism as a cultural force. Global capitalism and digital media have created a global consumer culture in which identity is increasingly expressed through consumption patterns. Brands, fashion choices, gadgets, entertainment preferences, and lifestyle symbols have become important markers of identity. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube amplify this process by continuously promoting aspirational lifestyles. Individuals increasingly construct identity through visibility, branding, and digital self-presentation. This shift reinforces global cultural norms while reducing emphasis on traditional identity markers.

Despite these challenges, the findings also reveal substantial evidence of cultural adaptation and resilience. Local cultures are not passive victims of globalization. Instead, many communities actively adapt global influences to local

realities. Traditional music, language, religious practices, fashion, and cultural expressions increasingly appear in modernized forms within digital spaces. Communities use technology to document traditions, promote indigenous knowledge, and sustain cultural memory. This demonstrates that globalization can also create opportunities for cultural preservation and revitalization.

A particularly important finding is the emergence of cultural hybridity. Rather than total cultural replacement, globalization often produces hybrid identities that combine local and global cultural elements. Individuals may embrace global technology, media, and lifestyles while still maintaining aspects of traditional identity. For example, a person may participate fully in global digital culture while retaining indigenous language, religious beliefs, or cultural customs. This supports the argument of Marwan Kraidy (2005), who suggests that globalization frequently generates hybrid cultural forms rather than uniform global culture.

The discussion therefore shows that the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization has a dual character. On one hand, globalization intensifies cultural homogenization, identity fragmentation, linguistic erosion, and weakening of traditional value systems. On the other hand, it provides new spaces for cultural reinvention, hybridization, and resilience. The crisis of cultural identity should therefore not be understood simply as the disappearance of culture, but as an ongoing process of negotiation between continuity and change.

## **Conclusion**

The process of globalization has revolutionized the current cultural paradigm by making the interactions among people, ideas, technology, and institutions much stronger than ever before. Although this increased interaction offers many possibilities for cultural exchange and innovation in the context of global collaboration, there is also a number of issues related to the maintenance of cultural identity. The present paper proves that the problem of cultural identity crisis does not stem from globalization as such but is caused by the complex interplay between the pressure of cultural homogenization and the power of local cultures.

Using the theories of Cultural Imperialism and Cultural Hybridity, the research proves that globalization operates an uneven cultural influence through global media, consumer culture, and digital communication, which favors Western rather than indigenous values. All these factors lead to identity fragmentation, decline of languages, the breakdown of traditional value system, and communal sense of belonging. At the same time, the research finds that local cultures are not just passive victims of external cultural influence. Instead, people negotiate, interpret, and transform the elements of global culture in a new way, creating hybrid cultural identities.

From the foregoing discussion, one can deduce that the problem of cultural identity should not necessarily be seen as the loss of indigenous cultures, but as a continuous process of cultural negotiations where both continuity and change occur. Culture continues to be flexible and adaptive through continuous interactions with the world at large. In contemporary societies, it is necessary to take advantage of the benefits brought about by globalization without compromising the languages, culture, value systems, and memories that define their unique cultural identity.

For any society to preserve its cultural identity in the era of globalization, deliberate steps must be taken by the government and other institutions to ensure the promotion of indigenous languages, cultural industries, and cultural education, as well as the proper use of digital technologies for cultural preservation.

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## **An Examination of the Activities of Prayer Houses and their Impact on the Human and Economic Development of Ibibio Society Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study underscores activities of prayer houses and their impact on human and economic development in Ibibio society and Nigeria as a whole. Notably, prayer houses play significant roles in shaping community life, providing spiritual guidance, and addressing social and economic challenges. Despite these, they are being pegged as informal religion or unofficial religious institutions on the grounds that their activities promote an over-reliance on barbaric spirituality, and an endorsement of the commercialization of religion. Also, there exist few empirical researches that focus on how prayer houses affect both human and economic life of the Ibibio hence created a gap on scholarship concentrating on the strategies to maximize the positive contributions of the prayer houses to human existence. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative survey with analysis of the activities of prayer house leaders and members, and their implication on Ibibio communities. The findings reveal a dual influence, on the one hand, prayer houses contribute positively by providing a contextualized religious roles endearing to the people, offering counseling services, encouraging mutual aid, and promoting microeconomic initiatives; on the other hand, certain practices may discourage formal healthcare utilization, or promote dependency on spiritual solutions for economic challenges. The study concludes that prayer houses are both socio-cultural assets and

sites of contestation in development discourse. It recommends policy engagement with the leaders of prayer houses for efficient productivity that can build rather than tear the Ibibio as well as the entire Nigerian society apart.

**Keywords:** Prayer houses, commercialization, informal religion, human development, spirituality, economic development, Ibibio, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

Over the past few decades, Nigeria including Ibibio society has witnessed a phenomenal rise in the number of religious centers, particularly prayer houses, which have become prominent religious spaces operating alongside traditional churches and mosques. It does not take much to observe that prayer houses found expression in the economic, social, moral and cultural spheres, thus speaks for the value of religion as a social institution. These prayer houses, commonly referred to as “healing homes,” “mountains” or “revival centers,” are often founded and run by charismatic individuals who claim spiritual gifts such as healing, prophecy, and deliverance.

In Ibibio society, prayer houses have emerged as popular alternatives to orthodox Christian churches. They attract large followers due to their perceived spiritual potency and the immediacy with which they claim to address life challenges such as poverty, illness, unemployment, infertility, and spiritual oppression. These centers are deeply rooted in both Christian and indigenous belief systems, reflecting a syncretic religious environment where modern Pentecostal practices mix with traditional African spirituality.

However, the increasing popularity of prayer houses in Ibibio society raises critical questions about their role in the society as well as their theological foundations. While some scholars argue that they provide essential spiritual and social support in the society faced with economic hardship, unemployment, and institutional failure. Others raise concerns about exploitation, lack of regulation, and the reinforcement of superstition and spiritual fear. This paper therefore seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by examining how these institutions function socially, religiously as well as how they affect the lives of individuals and communities in Ibibio society. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with prayer house leaders and members, and quantitative surveys within selected Ibibio communities.

### **Activities of Prayer Houses in the Society**

The presence of prayer houses is a common phenomenon in African Christianity. Prayer house(s) refer to locations, often informally established, where

individuals or groups gather for the purpose of intensive prayer, spiritual activities, healing, deliverance, and religious consultation. These spaces are commonly found in African Independent Churches, Pentecostal movements, and charismatic Christian fellowships, particularly in regions such as Nigeria, Ghana, and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. They often function outside traditional denominational structures and are typically led by charismatic individuals known as prophets, spiritual leaders, or prayer warriors. Prayer houses may include: Temporary structures, makeshift shelters, or rented apartments. Sites of prophetic revelations, dream interpretations, visions, centers for fasting, vigils, exorcisms, and divine healing. These spaces may not necessarily serve as regular churches, and they often prioritize spiritual warfare and miraculous interventions over structured liturgy (Edet and Johnson, 2025: 98).

A house of prayer is a biblically rooted term referring to a sacred place dedicated to worship, reverence, and communion with God. This term emphasizes the centrality of prayer in the worship experience. It has its origin in the Old and New Testaments, where the temple in Jerusalem is referred to as a house of prayer. The phrases "House of Prayer and Prayer House may sound similar but in biblical context, they are not similar. A house of prayer refers to a place like temple in Jerusalem or any sacred space where people gather to pray and worship God. It is God's dwelling place, intended for sincere, reverent communication with Him. For instance, Isaiah 56:7 (KJV) says: "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer..." Matthew 21:13 and Mark 11:17, where Jesus declares: "My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." In this sense, house(s) of prayer are consecrated spaces (like synagogues, temples, churches) meant for collective worship, teaching, and especially prayer, aligned with biblical doctrine. On the other hand, prayer house refers to a place established for prayer, often by religious group or ministries with emphasis on healing, prophecy, deliverance and spiritual warfare, often blending Pentecostal and indigenous spirituality.

According to Hackett (2004: 36), such prayer houses have places where patients often stay, the healer having recourse to traditional healing practices and mixing them with whatever religious direction they may consider appropriate. During healing session, mysterious invocations are chanted and rituals are performed to ensure the repeal of the ailment which is considered to be a manifestation of evil. Often, the healing is carried out in such a way as can impress upon the patients and the public that the pastor-healer has specific gifts and charisma which come from some other enigmatic sources only acquired by the healer (Ekarika, 2017: 392). Items used for healing include: Olive oil, coconut, coconut water, potash, limestone, salt, water, palm kernel oil, crude oil, palm oil, black powder, fermented cassava water, rain water (direct from the sky), sand, herbs, root among others. They conduct deliverance for witchcraft- possessed person, marine spirit possession, and

other spiritual attacks. The prayer house also conduct *ubiadnkpo ufok* (breaking of covenant), *uyere idem* (spiritual cleansing), *ukpokho ukpong* (change of soul), *amanakpa* (bathing of stillbirth mothers) and *udianga ekpo and udiانا ebendap* (spiritual separation). Many prayer houses have clinics where sick persons lived there until they are fully recovered from their sicknesses (Edet and Johnson, 2025:8). While staying there, prayers would be said for them and a complimentary spiritual work would be conducted as directed by the Holy Spirit. Before anyone is admitted, the person must pass through spiritual screening to ascertain what is needed to be done for the person's healing and also to ascertain whether the sick person's spirit is clean to prevent the altar from being desecrated by strange spirit (Onunwa, 2005: 77).

Many prayer houses and healing homes, in recent time, have centered their activities on creating seemingly spiritual problems and offering various kinds of prayers to heal these afflictions. These prayer houses manufacture unimaginable fears in men and women, and then create avenues to counter the fears they originally created by carrying out rituals, of course, for some benefits to both the prophet and the seekers (Onunwa, 2005: 77). Again, acts of healing constructed specifically with the African perspective of evil, witchcraft and the world of the spirits are sometimes performed. Within this realm, prayer houses and healing homes carryout healings by casting out malevolent forces from their clients. The process of this healing, according to Onunwa is termed "deliverance" (2005: 78). In deliverance, prayer houses and healing homes try to investigate the historical and cultural past of their clients from their perspective of spiritual attack or domination, and then proceed to construct meaning for the present and future. Indeed, deliverance represents the cultural interpretation of healing, while prosperity significantly provides the very modern and materialist orientation of such movements.

### **Ethnographic Sketch of Ibibioland and Beliefs**

The Ibibio land is located in the South South Nigeria between the longitudes 7° 25' and 8° 25' East of the Greenwich Meridian and between latitudes 4°33'1" and 5° 33'1" North of the Equator. The Ibibio share a common border in the North and North East with Ekoi, in the West and North West, they are bounded by the Igbo of Abia State, and share a common boundary with the Ijaws, while Cross River State lies in its eastern Cameroon. In a scholastic piece by Udok and Onunwa (2018:2) there is a strong claim that the historical origin of Ibibio is shrouded in unsettled academic discourse and debate by many scholars of thought. Some writers have tried to trace the origin of Ibibio to the Biblical East namely, Israel, Egypt and Palestine. As rightly opined by Abasiattai (1991), the name Ibibio originally was a generic name for *okop-usem* Ibibio –people who understand Ibibio language clearly, and was applied to Annang, Ekid, Oron, and Central Ibibio, even the Efik. It is therefore established by scholars such as Atteh and Umoh (2014) that the Ibibio race is the fourth largest

ethnic group in Nigeria. It occupies the South Eastern part of Nigeria (now South – South region according to recent political re-mapping – otherwise called Niger Delta).

It has been established by combined sources that the Ibibio originated from their ancestral father in Nubi in Southern Sudan. According to Ukpong, Akpan and Akang (2001:19) the Ibibio migrated to settle temporarily in Mamfe in the Southern Cameroon. Later on, the migrated from the Camerouns to settle temporarily with other groups in the Central Benue valley in the present day Benue State of Nigeria. Again, as Noah (1988) rightly recorded, the Ibibio race is basically the Afaha people (Udok and Onunwa, 2018:3) whose original homeland was Usak Edet in the modern Republic of Cameroun. Furthermore, Henry Nau (1949), a pioneer Lutheran Missionary who worked among the Ibibio, observed that the Ibibio ancestors might have migrated from the Cameroun. On the other hand, Dike (1969:23) observed that all the inhabitants including Ibibio, Efik, Ijaw were migrants from Cameroun highland.

There are unique traditions of the people which are expressed in Ekpo, Ekpe masquerades and dances. In mode of dressing, the dominant attire of an Ibibio man is a Loincloth “Unwanwang Ofong Isin” and shirt with Hat and staff to go with. While the women folds have a Loincloth as well generally called ‘*Ndot-Iba*’ with a piece of it on the head as head- tie with blouse to match. They are also blessed with delicacies such as white soap ‘*afia efere*, *afang* soup, *Edikang Ikong* soup, *ubo nkong*, *efere ibaba*, *efere mbukpap uyo* among others. In the entertainment aspect, the people have various dances and other cultural play like “Ebre” for women, “*asian uboikpa*” for young girls and also the “*akpara*” dance for women.

The men have the “*ekpo*” masquerade, the “*atinkoriko*” or *awade*” for young boys. Among the young girls is the ‘*abang*’ dance for unmarried (Noah, 1994). The young men also have ‘*mbok*’ display, a kind of traditional wrestling competition often displayed by young men before the elder and the cream of the society as a forum of assessing the strength, might and vigour of some youths for wars, leadership and fitness of a king’s assignment. The Ibibio people are predominantly Christians. They believe in the existence of one Supreme Being, outside this, they still have the practice of Traditional Religion with their unique shrines for their various deities like Idiong, *Ndem*, *Ibok* etc. Their belief is that, though they are different, they are messengers of Supreme Being that see to the peace, stability and well- being of the area.

### **Ibibio Society and the Activities of Prayer Houses**

It has been observed that most of the prominent Christian denominations in Ibibio society started as prayer houses. This underscores the fact that Ibibio people are very religious. The Ibibio people believe that there is hardly any problem which cannot be solved through faith in prayer. People afflicted with one problem or

another are exhorted to rely less on medicine and more on divine or faith healing. It is therefore this common factor that makes prayer houses a haven for people seeking material benefits such as employment, promotion, healing from sickness and disease and pregnancy. Thus, prayer houses are problem solvers. This is because many believe that these problems did not just happen, but that they were caused by unseen forces.

Thus, when individuals are being confronted with such problems they approach a prophet. The Prophet then takes his time to find out the root-cause of the problem using his expertise and experience. He would then decide on the line of action to take. If the disease was physical, he would give some herbs to cure it. If it was psychological, he used methods such as uttering words to chase away the evil spirits responsible for the problem, or he could perform a cleansing ritual. Many times, the healing process involves the entire family. It also involves the physical, spiritual, social and emotional aspects of life.

### **Positive Impact of Prayer Houses on Human and Economic Development of Ibibio Society**

The interaction of religious influence on economic performance has occurred throughout history. According to Putnam (2000:54), collective prayers influence attitudes toward labour, productivity, and communal prosperity, functioning as a form of religious capital that fosters ethical diligence, resilience, and cooperative engagement. In this way, prayers houses do not only have spiritual significance but also materially consequential, shaping patterns of work, resource management, and economic behaviour within Ibibio society. Taken together, these perspectives illustrate that prayer houses operate at the intersection of spirituality, humanity, and community well-being. They sustain religious identity, promote ethical responsibility, enhance resilience, and indirectly support socio-economic development. Again, spiritual practices, when integrated into everyday life, operate as developmental assets, providing communities with tools for coping with adversity and enhancing socio-economic cohesion. From a humanity perspective, prayers houses reinforce communal values and social identity. Gyekye (1997:67) argues that African philosophy regards the individual as inseparable from the community, where moral responsibility, solidarity, and dignity are cultivated through participation in shared spiritual practices.

Furthermore, many individuals in Ibibio Society have benefited immensely from prayer houses through their counseling services. This confirms Ekanem's (2006: 19) assertion that one of the positive effects of prayer houses is the provision of succour to people who are in serious problems. These houses have given hope to the hopeless. They have also helped many people to solve their problems like illness, cancer, misfortune, trauma, lack of employment, delayed marriage, lack of progress

in one's profession among others. Moreover, Prayer houses and healing homes provide solace, counseling, and emotional support during times of need and crisis. Hence, these houses serve as solution centers for many people in the society. Many souls have been saved and many people have been healed of their different psychological problems in prayer houses and healing homes. There are so many people who believe so much in these houses and homes more than even the hospital. Again, sick people, especially those who need alternative treatment visit these healing ministries for their deliverance. As opined by Onyishi (2009: 11):

The positive result of healing practice in some healing homes is undisputable. People throng to them with incurable disease of all descriptions, (especially madness) misfortune, infertility, lack of success in business, security from threat of secret societies, witchcraft among others.

Many sick people, especially those who could not afford the exorbitant conventional hospital bills, visit these healing ministries (Obiefuna, Nwadiolor and Umeanolue, 2013:45), even though some may ask the sufferer to sow a seed of faith to show their trust in God. People also see these houses as healing clinics and it appears that there is practically no illness and ailment which is incurable before them. They identify two types of illness, namely, ordinary physical ailments ranging from headaches, Moreover, many people lose hope due to the harsh social conditions and the lack of political stability needed to revamp the ever-failing economy. Their expectation that politics could solve their economics problem has been shattered. In desperation for solutions, they turn to religion. With prayer houses flourishing everywhere, many people trooped to them for healing. Thus, focusing primarily on deliverance, prayer houses raise the hope of people

Prayer houses have created sense of belonging by reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. They often serve as community hubs, fostering social connections as well as support networks (Edet and Johnson, 2025:98). It is worthy to note that many people seek spiritual connection, comfort, and guidance leading to increased use of prayer houses. Apart from this, in a society where the individuals feel crowded and insecure, the development of identity is essential. This is provided in the prayer houses. The need to establish a caring fellowship, brotherhood and kinship and to acknowledge God as the source of all answer in man's are also provided in prayer houses and healing homes. This is because prayer houses and healing homes have been providing solace, counseling, and emotional support during times of need and crisis.

Moreover, a critical look at impact of prayer houses and healing homes shows that their emergence provide social services, such as food, shelter, or counseling, attracting people in need to them while many people seek spiritual guidance and

comfort leading to the establishment of prayer houses and healing homes. Again, prayer houses incorporated African theology in their worship. They are practical and down to earth in their belief, doctrine and response to the problems of the Ibibio people. The world-view of the people is taken into consideration in their beliefs, such as in the forces of evil, malevolent spirits, among others. They also engage in interpretation of dreams, trances, visions among others. Their prescriptions of solutions to problems are varied, such as rituals, exorcism, prayer, fasting, bathing in flowing streams or rivers.

Similarly, prayer houses emphasis faith healing. Faith healing is an attempt to use religious or spiritual insights such as prayer to prevent illness, to cure disease, or to improve health. Healing therefore follows the process of restoring the broken relationship through rite and rituals. It is believed that there is no kind of sickness that cannot be healed through faith in God. Prayer houses equally create new markets for products, for instance, selling of Holy water, Back to the sender ointment, Anointing oil, Stickers, CDs, Statues, Hand bead or band, Rings etc are sold in the premises of prayer houses. These religious items generate income for Prayer houses.

### **Negative Impact of Prayer Houses on Human and Economic Development of Ibibio Society**

There are many clear cases of situations where the founders and purveyors are taking advantages of these prayer houses and their positions to amass wealth and exploit their innocent members. Most founders of prayer houses and are noted for various nefarious acts ranging from extortion of money from members and abuse of position hereby turning prayer houses into their business. This act has dented the image of the church most especially the images of these houses in the society. The glamour and flaunting of wealth by many prayer houses and healing homes' founders and purveyors have made them to become desperate as well as equate success in service to God to mean status and much acquisition of material things. Founders of such houses take advantage of gullible miracle seekers, who will do anything just to have respite from their troubles. The extent to which some of these houses and homes founders go to satisfy their curious followers and rip them off their monies is dastardly. Essien (2010: 12) puts it more succinctly that the mad craze for money has made some people willing to commercialize religion for their own benefits and interests.

According to Hundu and Azembeh (2018: 12), this trend has reached an unprecedented height with the commercialization of miracles by charging people who ask for special prayers, healing or miracles, very high prices. All these are flagrant disregard of the divine injunction by Christ that "freely you received and freely you give" (Nmah, 2008: 17). It is an indisputable fact that a common notion for the emergence of this houses and homes is commercial reason. Religion has been

largely seen as a source of making money. Religion has also been twisted as it were to suit the intents and purposes of the users. Commercialization of religion according to Obiora, is described as "Holy Deceit"- the art of trading in God's name (Obiora, 1998:97). Thus, in the context of commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes, no service is free of charge including salvation.

Edet and Johnson (2025:7) recorded how a man whose wife was barren for 12 years, was asked to pay the prophet a sum of two hundred and fifty thousand (N250,000) for the purchase of spiritual items to end the bareness. Again, it was gathered that some prayer house and healing homes are fond of asking people to pay a sum for their healing and deliverance. Moreover, many founders of prayer houses and healing homes are selling religious tokens acclaimed to possess powers capable of bringing solutions to the problems of the users. Such items include oil, salt, handkerchiefs, water among others. Miracles are also fabricated in some of these houses and homes in order to attract crowds and raise money.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, efforts have been made to evaluate the activities of prayer houses in Ibibio society of Akwa Ibom State. It is pertinent to note that prayer houses have played significant roles in shaping community life, providing spiritual guidance, and addressing social and economic challenges of the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State. Prayer houses have equally contribute positively by providing a contextualized religious roles endearing to the people, offering counseling services, encouraging mutual aid, and promoting microeconomic initiatives. Thus, there is no gainsaying the fact that prayer houses could be a blessing to the people of Ibibio, if properly managed because they provide succor to the spiritual needs of people. For instance, many people have been thronged to them for healing with incurable diseases of all descriptions, especially madness, misfortune, infertility, lack of success in businesses among others.

However, the increasing commercialization of prayer houses and healing homes in Ibibio society has equally raises a serious ethical, and theological concern about the commodification of spirituality and its implication for religious authenticity and social responsibility. This phenomenon has also challenged the foundational Christian principle of the free grace and may distort the public perception of religion as a moral and altruistic force. Again, there are certain practices of prayer houses that may discourage formal healthcare utilization, or promote dependency on spiritual solutions for economic challenges. In the face of the challenges posed by the exploitation and commercialization of prayer houses to the Ibibio people, this study submits that government should help to salvage the ugly situation. Because there is no doubt that poverty and harsh economic conditions foster the trend of commercialization of prayer houses in Ibibio society.

## Recommendations

### This work recommends

1. The government to be strongly involved in policy engagement with the leaders of prayer houses for efficient productivity that can build rather than tear the Ibibio as well as the entire Nigerian society apart.
2. The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) to establish a registration centre for all the prayer houses in Ibibio society and also issue guidelines to them on the modus operandi before their operation. They should equally monitor the activities of all the prayer houses and healing homes to avoid abuse of their activities.
3. Founders of prayer houses and healing homes to guide against commercialization of healing and prayer. They should heed to Jesus' teaching of "freely you received, freely, you must give".
4. Government to help to salvage the ugly situation. Government should reduce hardship and poverty; boost educational standards and create more opportunities for employment. This will go a long way to reduce the multiplication of prayer houses and their attendant consequences in Ibibio society.

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## **African Indigenous Values and the Problem of Moral Standard**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examined African indigenous values and the problem of moral standards within the context of contemporary ethical discourse. The study is motivated by the growing tension between traditional African moral systems and modern, ethical structures. The study critically analysed the nature, relevance, and limitations of African indigenous values as moral standards, while also interrogating the challenges of moral relativism and cultural particularism. The paper is limited to philosophical reflections on African ethics, with an emphasis on key values such as communalism, respect for authority, and human dignity. This study's importance lies in its contribution to ongoing debates on the universality versus relativity of moral standards, particularly in African societies experiencing cultural transformation. The justification for this research stems from the need to reassess indigenous moral outlooks in light of contemporary ethical challenges, including human rights concerns and social change. The paper adopts analytic and critical approach, drawing on both traditional and contemporary African philosophical texts to evaluate the consistency and applicability of indigenous values. The paper argued that while African indigenous values offer a vigorous foundation for moral reasoning, they require critical reinterpretation and integration with universal ethical principles.

This study proposed a complementary moral basis that corresponds African indigenous ethics with global moral standards, thereby providing a more balanced and context-sensitive approach to ethical evaluation in modern African societies.

**Keywords:** Values, African, Indigenous Values, Morality, Moral Standard.

### **Introduction**

African indigenous values constitute the moral foundation upon which traditional African societies have historically organized their social, political, and religious life. These values are deeply rooted in cultural practices, oral traditions, and communal relationships, shaping the ethical orientation of individuals and communities alike. Central to African moral thought are principles such as communalism, respect for elders, solidarity, hospitality, and the sanctity of human life. As John S. Mbiti famously asserts, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am," a statement that captures the communal ontology underlying African ethics (Mbiti, 1969). This communal outline emphasizes the interdependence of individuals and situates morality within the context of social harmony and collective well-being.

However, the question of whether these indigenous values can function as universally valid moral standards has become increasingly contentious in contemporary discourse. The encounter with colonialism, Westernization, and globalization has introduced competing moral structures that often challenge or undermine traditional African ethical systems. Scholars such as Kwasi Wiredu (1996) and Kwame Gyekye (1997) argue that while African moral systems possess internal coherence and practical relevance, they must be critically examined and reconstructed to address modern ethical dilemmas. This has given rise to a broader philosophical debate concerning the tension between cultural relativism and moral universalism.

The problem of moral standards in the African context is further complicated by the persistence of certain traditional practices that appear to conflict with contemporary human rights norms. For instance, issues related to gender inequality, early marriage, and certain ritual practices raise critical questions about the extent to which cultural values should be preserved or reformed. Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) contends that cultures are not static and must evolve through critical engagement with both internal and external moral perspectives. Similarly, Innocent Asouzu (2004) emphasizes the need for a complementary approach that avoids absolutism while fostering unity and mutual coexistence.

Moreover, African scholars have increasingly sought to articulate ethical backgrounds that both preserve indigenous values and respond to contemporary

realities. Ifeanyi A. Menkiti (1984) underscores the primacy of community in defining personhood, arguing that moral status is acquired through participation in communal life. In a similar vein, Bénézet Bujo posits that:

“The centrality of life and relationality in African ethics, proposing a moral vision that prioritizes the well-being of the community over individual autonomy. These perspectives demonstrate that African indigenous values are not merely relics of the past but remain dynamic resources for ethical reflection.” (2001).

Despite these rich contributions, the challenge remains: can African indigenous values provide a stable and objective basis for moral standards in a pluralistic and rapidly changing world? Or are they inevitably limited by their cultural specificity? This paper addresses these questions by critically examining the nature of African indigenous values and evaluating their capacity to serve as viable moral standards. It argues that while these values offer significant moral insights, their continued importance depends on critical reinterpretation, philosophical reconstruction, and constructive engagement with universal ethical principles. In doing so, the study contributes to the broader discourse on African ethics by proposing a balanced approach that recognizes the importance of cultural identity while also embracing the demands of global moral reasoning.

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

### **African Indigenous Values**

African indigenous values refer to the system of beliefs, norms, and moral principles that are rooted in the cultural traditions and lived experiences of African peoples. These values are transmitted across generations through oral traditions, customs, religion, and social practices, and they guide behaviour within the community. According to John S. Mbiti, African moral values are inseparable from the communal structure of society, where the individual exists in relation to others (Mbiti, 1969). This relational worldview underscores the idea that morality is not merely individualistic but socially embedded.

One of the defining features of African indigenous values is communalism, which emphasizes the interdependence of individuals within a community. Ifeanyi A. Menkiti (1984) argues that in African thought, personhood is not an inherent attribute but something achieved through active participation in communal life. Similarly, Kwame Gyekye (1997) acknowledges the centrality of the community but introduces a moderate communitarian perspective that allows for individual autonomy within the social structure. African indigenous values also include respect for elders, hospitality, solidarity, and reverence for life. Bénézet Bujo (2001) highlights that African ethics is fundamentally life-centered, aiming at the

preservation and flourishing of both the individual and the community. In addition, Innocent Asouzu (2004) develops the idea of complementary reflection, arguing that reality and by extension morality is constituted through the interdependence of all beings. This perspective reinforces the holistic and integrative nature of African value systems.

Furthermore, African indigenous values are often expressed through the concept of Ubuntu, a Southern African ethical philosophy that emphasizes humanness, compassion, and mutual care. Ubuntu is defined as the essence of being human, grounded in relationships and moral responsibility toward others (Ramose, 1999). Thus, African indigenous values are not abstract theories but practical guides for achieving social harmony and human well-being.

### **Moral Standards**

According to Rachels & Rachels, moral standards refer to the principles or criteria by which human actions are judged as right or wrong, good or bad. They serve as benchmarks for ethical evaluation and guide behaviour within a society. Moral standards can be universal applicable across all cultures or relative, varying according to cultural and social contexts (2019). In African philosophy, moral standards are often derived from communal values and social expectations rather than codified laws or abstract principles. Kwasi Wiredu (1996) notes that African moral systems are largely human-centered and pragmatic, focusing on the consequences of actions for communal well-being. Right actions are those that promote harmony, while wrong actions disrupt social equilibrium. However, the question of whether these standards are objective or culturally relative remains a subject of debate. According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, he argues that moral standards must be open to critical scrutiny and intercultural dialogue, especially in a globalized world (2006). This position challenges the idea that any moral system, including African indigenous ethics, can remain isolated or immune to external evaluation.

From an indigenous perspective, moral standards are often enforced through social mechanisms such as customs, taboos, proverbs, and communal sanctions. Segun Gbadegesin emphasizes that morality in African societies is practical and action-oriented, aimed at sustaining the community rather than merely articulating abstract ideals, (1991).

### **Synthesis of Concepts**

The relationship between African indigenous values and moral standards lies in the fact that the former provides the foundation upon which the latter is built. Indigenous values shape the moral expectations of society, while moral standards serve as tools for evaluating behaviour in line with those values. However, the

challenge arises when these culturally grounded standards encounter competing global norms, raising questions about their universality, adaptability, and relevance. Thus, understanding these concepts is essential for addressing the broader philosophical issue of whether African indigenous values can function as reliable and enduring moral standards in contemporary society.

The discourse on African indigenous values and the problem of moral standards has attracted significant scholarly attention within African philosophy and ethics. This section reviews relevant literature from both indigenous African scholars and broader philosophical contributions, highlighting key arguments, areas of convergence, and existing gaps. One of the foundational contributions to African moral philosophy is that of John S. Mbiti, who emphasizes the communal nature of African life and morality. Mbiti (1969) argues that African ethics is rooted in social relationships, where the individual's identity and moral obligations are defined by the community. His assertion that "I am because we are" emphasises the idea that moral standards in African societies are derived from collective well-being rather than individual autonomy. This perspective provides a basis for understanding morality as socially embedded but has been critiqued for underestimating the role of individual agency. Expanding on this communal framework, Ifeanyi A. Menkiti, posits that:

Personhood in African thought is not an inherent quality but something attained through moral and social participation. According to Menkiti, the community determines the moral worth of the individual, thereby reinforcing the primacy of communal values as moral standards, (1984).

However, this position has been challenged by scholars who argue that it risks subordinating individual rights to collective interests. In response to such concerns, Kwame Gyekye (1997) proposes a "moderate communitarianism," which seeks to balance communal values with individual autonomy. Gyekye acknowledges the importance of community in shaping moral norms but insists that individuals possess intrinsic worth and rights that must be respected. His work represents a significant attempt to reconcile African indigenous values with contemporary human rights discourse.

Similarly, Kwasi Wiredu advocates for a critical re-examination of African cultural values in light of modern challenges. Wiredu emphasizes the need for conceptual decolonization, arguing that African societies must rethink inherited traditions and adopt rational approaches to moral reasoning. He maintains that while indigenous values are valuable, they should not be immune to criticism, especially when they conflict with principles of justice and equality. The ethical agenda of Ubuntu has also gained prominence in African moral philosophy. This

perspective is further developed by Thaddeus Metz, who formulates Ubuntu as a normative ethical theory that prioritizes harmonious relationships. Metz argues that: "Actions are morally right insofar as they promote social harmony and wrong insofar as they undermine it. This relational approach offers a distinctive alternative to Western individualistic ethics." (2007).

From a theological and life-centered perspective, Bénézet Bujo, emphasizes the centrality of life and community in African ethics. Bujo argues that moral actions are those that sustain and enhance life within the community, thereby reinforcing the sacredness of existence, (2001). His work integrates traditional African values with Christian ethical thought, contributing to the development of African theological ethics.

Furthermore, Segun Gbadegesin (1991) explores the practical dimensions of African morality, highlighting the role of customs, taboos, and social sanctions in regulating behaviour. He argues that African moral systems are pragmatic and oriented toward maintaining social order. Likewise, Innocent Asouzu (2004) introduces the concept of complementary reflection, which emphasizes unity, mutual dependence, and the avoidance of absolutism in moral reasoning. Asouzu's approach is particularly relevant in addressing the tension between relativism and universalism. Beyond African scholars, Western philosophers have also contributed to the debate on moral standards. James Rachels and Stuart Rachels (2019) discuss cultural relativism and its implications, arguing that while moral practices vary across cultures, some universal moral principles such as the prohibition of unnecessary harm are necessary for any society to function. Similarly, Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) advocates for cosmopolitanism, which encourages dialogue between cultures and the development of shared moral standards.

Despite these extensive contributions, a gap remains in the literature regarding the systematic integration of African indigenous values with universal ethical structures in a way that preserves cultural identity while addressing contemporary moral challenges. While scholars like Gyekye and Wiredu have made significant strides in this direction, more work is needed to develop a coherent and applicable moral structure that responds to issues such as globalization, human rights, and social transformation in Africa.

### **Core Features of African Indigenous Moral Values**

African indigenous moral values are grounded in the lived experiences, traditions, and worldviews of African societies. These values are not abstract or purely theoretical; rather, they are practical principles that regulate social conduct and promote harmony within the community.

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*Communalism*

One of the most fundamental features of African indigenous morality is communalism. African societies traditionally emphasize the primacy of the community over the individual, with moral obligations defined in terms of one's relationship with others. John S. Mbiti captures this idea succinctly in his famous expression, "I am because we are," (1969), highlighting that individual identity and moral responsibility are rooted in communal existence. Similarly, Ifeanyi A. Menkiti argues that personhood is achieved through active participation in communal life. In this sense, moral behaviour is evaluated based on its contribution to the well-being of the community (1984). However, Kwame Gyekye (1997) offers an exact perspective by advocating for moderate communitarianism, which recognizes both communal values and individual rights.

*Respect for Elders and Authority*

Respect for elders and constituted authority is another central feature of African moral values. Elders are regarded as custodians of wisdom, tradition, and moral guidance. Obedience to elders is therefore considered a moral obligation necessary for maintaining social order. According to Segun Gbadegesin, respect for elders is deeply embedded in African cultural practices and is reinforced through proverbs, customs, and socialization processes, (1991). This respect is not merely hierarchical but is tied to the belief that elders possess experiential knowledge that contributes to the moral stability of society. Thus, moral standards are often preserved and transmitted through generational continuity.

*Sanctity and Preservation of Life*

African indigenous ethics places a high premium on the sanctity of life. Life is considered sacred and inviolable, and moral actions are those that protect and enhance life. Bénézet Bujo (2001) emphasizes that African morality is fundamentally life-centered, focusing on the promotion and preservation of life within the community. This principle extends beyond human life to include respect for nature and the environment, reflecting a holistic worldview. Actions that threaten life or disrupt the balance of existence are considered morally wrong.

*Solidarity and Hospitality*

Solidarity and hospitality are essential features of African moral systems. Individuals are expected to show generosity, compassion, and care for others, including strangers. This reflects a deep sense of shared humanity and interconnectedness. Mogobe Ramose (1999) explains this through the concept of Ubuntu, which emphasizes humaneness and mutual concern. Likewise, Thaddeus Metz (2007) argues that actions are morally right if they promote harmonious

relationships and social cohesion. Hospitality, therefore, is not optional but a moral duty that reinforces communal bonds.

These features collectively provide a robust ethical structure that prioritizes social harmony and human well-being. However, their application in contemporary society raises important questions about adaptability, universality, and relevance issues that are central to the broader problem of moral standards in Africa.

### **The Problem of Moral Standards in the African**

The question of moral standards in the African context has become increasingly complex due to the interaction between indigenous value systems and external influences such as colonialism, globalization, religion, and modernity. While African indigenous values provide a rich moral framework grounded in communalism, harmony, and respect for life, the challenge lies in determining whether these values can function as objective, consistent, and universally applicable moral standards in contemporary society.

#### *Cultural Relativism*

One of the central problems is the tension between cultural relativism and moral universalism. Cultural relativism holds that moral standards are culture-specific and cannot be judged by external criteria. In this view, African indigenous values are valid within their cultural context but may not be universally binding. However, this position raises serious philosophical concerns. If all moral systems are equally valid, it becomes difficult to criticize harmful practices within a culture. Kwasi Wiredu, acknowledges the importance of cultural context in moral reasoning but insists that rational critique must be applied to all traditions. (1996). Similarly, Kwame Anthony, argues for cross-cultural dialogue as a means of evaluating moral norms, emphasizing that no culture is morally infallible, Appiah (2006).

#### *Universal Human Rights*

Another major problem is the apparent conflict between some African traditional practices and contemporary human rights standards. Practices such as gender inequality, early marriage, and certain harmful cultural rites have been criticized for violating fundamental human rights. Kwame Gyekye (1997) contends that while African traditions are valuable, they must be re-evaluated in light of modern ethical principles that uphold individual dignity and freedom. This creates a tension between preserving cultural identity and embracing universal moral standards. The challenge, therefore, is to distinguish between values that promote human well-being and those that hinder it.

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*Impact of Colonialism and Westernization*

Colonialism significantly disrupted African moral systems by imposing foreign values and institutions that often conflicted with indigenous traditions. This led to a dual moral agenda in many African societies, where traditional and Western values coexist, sometimes uneasily. Kwasi Wiredu (1996) describes this situation as a form of conceptual colonization, where African societies adopt foreign categories of thought without critical examination. As a result, moral standards become split, leading to confusion and inconsistency in ethical judgment. The legacy of colonialism continues to shape moral discourse in Africa, complicating the search for coherent moral standards.

*Moral Decline and Social Transformation*

Rapid social change, urbanization, and globalization have weakened traditional value systems in many African societies. The erosion of communal structures has led to increased individualism, materialism, and moral uncertainty. Segun Gbadegesin (1991) notes that the decline of traditional mechanisms such as taboos and communal sanctions has reduced the effectiveness of moral regulation. Similarly, Ifeanyi A. Menkiti (1984) suggests that the weakening of communal bonds undermines the very foundation of African moral systems, which depend on social participation and shared values.

*Lack of Codification*

Unlike many Western ethical systems, African indigenous moral values are largely unwritten and transmitted orally through customs, proverbs, and traditions. While this allows for flexibility, it also creates ambiguity and inconsistency in moral interpretation. Bénézet Bujo (2001) acknowledges that the absence of formal codification can make it difficult to apply moral standards uniformly, especially in complex modern societies. This lack of systematic structure poses a challenge for integrating African ethics into formal institutions such as legal and educational systems.

*Individual Rights and Communal Obligations*

African indigenous ethics prioritizes communal well-being over individual autonomy, which can sometimes lead to the suppression of individual rights. While communalism fosters solidarity and cooperation, it may also justify practices that limit personal freedom. Kwame Gyekye (1997) attempts to resolve this tension by proposing a balance between communal responsibilities and individual rights. Likewise, Innocent Asouzu (2004) advocates for a complementary approach that recognizes both individual and collective dimensions of human existence. Nevertheless, achieving this balance remains a significant moral challenge.

*Religious Pluralism and Moral Conflicts*

The introduction of Christianity and Islam into African societies has further complicated the moral landscape. These religions often bring moral teachings that differ from or even contradict indigenous values, leading to ethical conflicts. According to J. S. Mbiti, he observes that African morality is deeply intertwined with religion, making it difficult to separate ethical norms from spiritual beliefs (1969). The coexistence of multiple religious' systems has resulted in competing moral authorities, thereby complicating the establishment of a unified moral standard.

The increasing tension between African indigenous moral values and contemporary global ethical standards calls for the development of a complementary moral structure capable of integrating the strengths of both systems. While African indigenous ethics emphasizes communal harmony, solidarity, and relationality, modern ethical systems often stress individual rights, justice, and universal human dignity. A complementary moral structure seeks to harmonize these perspectives in a manner that preserves African cultural identity while responding effectively to contemporary moral challenges. One of the foremost proponents of complementarity in African philosophy is Innocent Asouzu. Asouzu argues that human existence is fundamentally relational and that no reality exists in isolation (2004). His theory of complementary reflection maintains that individuals and communities are mutually dependent and must work together to achieve authentic human existence. Applied to morality, this means that ethical systems should not operate in opposition but should complement one another in promoting the common good. Thus, African indigenous values and universal moral principles should be viewed not as contradictory but as mutually enriching.

A complementary moral structure therefore requires a critical reconstruction of African indigenous values. Kwasi Wiredu, emphasizes the need for conceptual decolonization, whereby African societies critically evaluate both inherited traditions and imported Western values. According to him, traditions should not be accepted merely because they are ancient, nor should foreign values be adopted uncritically. Rather, moral principles should be assessed based on their capacity to promote human well-being, justice, and social harmony. Similarly, Kwame Gyekye advocates for moderate communitarianism, which seeks to balance communal obligations with individual rights. Gyekye argues that while community remains central in African moral thought, individuals possess intrinsic worth and autonomy that must be respected. This balanced approach is essential for constructing a moral framework that accommodates both collective responsibility and personal freedom.

The philosophy of Ubuntu also provides a foundation for a complementary moral structure. Ramose explains that Ubuntu emphasizes human interconnectedness and mutual care. In the same vein, Metz argues that morality should be grounded in the promotion of harmonious relationships. However, a

complementary moral structure must ensure that communal harmony does not become a justification for suppressing individual dignity or human rights. Instead, harmony should coexist with justice, equality, and respect for personal autonomy. More so, the integration of indigenous and universal ethical principles is necessary in addressing contemporary African social problems such as corruption, violence, ethnic conflicts, and gender inequality. African indigenous values provide moral resources such as solidarity, accountability, and respect for life, while universal ethical principles contribute standards of justice, equality, and human rights. Appiah supports this intercultural approach through his theory of cosmopolitanism, which encourages dialogue among cultures in the search for shared moral understanding.

Another important aspect of a complementary moral structure is moral education. Traditional African societies transmitted moral values through proverbs, folktales, taboos, and communal practices. However, modernization and globalization have weakened these mechanisms. Segun Gbadegesin notes that moral education remains essential for sustaining social order and ethical consciousness. Therefore, contemporary African societies must develop educational systems that combine indigenous moral teachings with critical reasoning and universal ethical awareness. Religious pluralism also necessitates complementarity in moral discourse. African societies today are characterized by the coexistence of indigenous religions, Christianity, and Islam. Rather than allowing these traditions to generate conflict, a complementary moral structure encourages dialogue and mutual respect among different belief systems. J. S. Mbiti, observes that religion permeates African life and morality, making interreligious understanding essential for ethical coexistence.

Moreover, a complementary moral structure promotes adaptability without abandoning cultural identity. African societies are continually evolving, and moral systems must respond to changing realities such as technological advancement, democratic governance, and globalization. However, adaptation should not imply the total rejection of indigenous values. Instead, African moral thought should preserve its core principles of humanity, communal responsibility, and respect for life while embracing ethical progress. In essence, a complementary moral structure offers a balanced and inclusive framework for moral reasoning in Africa. It avoids the extremes of rigid traditionalism and uncritical Westernization by encouraging dialogue, critical reflection, and mutual enrichment between cultures and ethical systems. Such a structure recognizes that no single moral tradition possesses absolute monopoly over truth and that ethical progress depends on cooperation, openness, and respect for human dignity.

## **Evaluation**

African indigenous values have continued to attract scholarly attention because of their significant role in shaping moral consciousness and social behaviour within African societies. These values, rooted in communalism, solidarity, respect for life, and human dignity, provide an ethical basis that has sustained African communities for generations. However, the question remains whether these indigenous values can adequately function as moral standards in contemporary society. In evaluating African indigenous values as moral standards, it is evident that they possess significant strengths, particularly in promoting communal harmony, respect for life, and social responsibility. However, they also face important limitations, including cultural relativism, suppression of individual autonomy, harmful traditional practices, and lack of codification. Consequently, African indigenous values should neither be rejected outright nor accepted uncritically. Instead, they should be critically reconstructed and harmonized with universal ethical principles to ensure their relevance and applicability in contemporary society.

## **Conclusion**

African indigenous values remain one of the most significant foundations of moral life African societies. Rooted in communalism, solidarity, respect for elders, sanctity of life, hospitality, and social responsibility, these values have historically guided human conduct and promoted social harmony within African communities. The study has shown that African morality is deeply relational, emphasizing the interconnectedness of persons and the importance of communal well-being over excessive individualism. Thinkers such as John S. Mbiti, Kwasi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, and Innocent Asouzu have demonstrated that African ethical systems possess both philosophical depth and practical relevance. However, the work has equally revealed that the problem of moral standards in the Africa arises from several interconnected factors, including cultural relativism, colonial influence, modernization, religious pluralism, and the tension between communal obligations and individual rights. While African indigenous values provide a strong moral foundation, some traditional practices require critical evaluation in light of contemporary concerns such as human rights, justice, and equality. The absence of systematic codification and the impact of globalization have further complicated the application of these values in modern African societies.

The evaluation carried out in this study indicates that African indigenous values cannot be dismissed as obsolete or inferior to Western ethical systems. Rather, they continue to offer valuable moral insights capable of addressing contemporary social problems such as corruption, violence, moral decadence, and social disintegration. Their emphasis on human dignity, communal responsibility, and harmonious coexistence remains highly relevant in the search for ethical stability and

social development in Africa. Consequently, this work advocates for a complementary moral structure that integrates the strengths of African indigenous ethics with universal moral principles. Such an approach promotes critical reflection, intercultural dialogue, and moral reconstruction while preserving the positive elements of African cultural heritage. Through complementarity, African societies can develop a more balanced and inclusive ethical background that respects both communal values and individual rights.

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## **Ori, Chi, and Kaddara: Toward a Comparative African Metaphysics of Destiny and Moral Agency**

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### **Abstract**

The question of whether human beings are truly free to determine the course of their lives, or whether that course is fixed by forces beyond their control, stands among the oldest and most stubbornly contested problems in philosophy. Western thought has debated this question primarily through the opposition of determinism and free will, and the compatibilist attempt to reconcile them. Yet this framing, however productive within its own context, does not exhaust the philosophical possibilities. Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani philosophical traditions have each articulated sophisticated metaphysical accounts of destiny that refuse the Western binary and chart a different course entirely. The Yoruba concept of Ori is the personal spiritual principle chosen before birth that governs the shape of a life. The Igbo concept of Chi is the divine double whose collaborative relationship with the human self constitutes a model of co-agency. The Hausa-Fulani concept of Kaddara is the divine decree that encompasses human striving without suppressing it. Together, these three concepts form a comparative matrix of African thinking about destiny that has rarely received the philosophical attention it deserves. This paper argued that these three traditions, read comparatively, constitute a coherent African metaphysics of destiny in which moral agency is not an afterthought but a structural necessity. Each concept preserves a distinction between what is metaphysically settled and what is genuinely open to human determination, and this distinction, present across traditions with markedly different cosmological frameworks, suggests that the preservation of moral agency is not incidental to African thinking about destiny but is one of its deepest commitments. The paper engaged Western compatibilist philosophy, particularly the positions of Strawson and Frankfurt, as a comparative interlocutor, and argued that African frameworks offer resources that Western compatibilism lacks, especially in their account of the relational and communal constitution of moral agency. The paper further situates these findings within contemporary social ontology and philosophy of religion, arguing that

African frameworks offer resources for the relational turn in theories of agency and for reintegrating religious and philosophical accounts of human action.

**Keywords:** Ori, Chi, Kaddara, African metaphysics, destiny, moral agency,

### **Introduction**

Wande Abimbola (1975), reflecting on the philosophical content of the Ifa divination corpus, observed that the Yoruba tradition had developed a remarkably detailed account of the relationship between what a person brings into the world and what they make of it through their own choices and conduct. This observation, deceptively simple in formulation, opens onto one of the richest and most philosophically demanding questions in African thought: how are we to understand the relationship between the destiny a person carries and the agency they exercise? The question is not uniquely African. It is, in one form or another, the question that has preoccupied Western philosophy of action since the Stoics debated fate and freedom, that has animated Islamic theology in its discussions of divine decree and human responsibility, and that continues to generate sophisticated argument in contemporary analytic philosophy. What is distinctive about African engagement with this question is not its existence but its character: the frameworks developed within Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani traditions approach the relationship between destiny and agency through a lens that is irreducibly communal, spiritual, and relational, and that resists the individualizing and secularizing tendencies that have shaped Western debate.

In the Western tradition, the problem of free will and determinism has been addressed in three broad ways. Hard determinism holds that all events, including human choices, are causally necessitated by prior states of the world, and that this necessitation is incompatible with genuine moral responsibility. Libertarian free will holds that human beings possess a capacity for self-origination, an ability to initiate causal chains that are not themselves determined by antecedent conditions, and that this capacity is the foundation of moral responsibility. Compatibilism, the most influential position in contemporary analytic philosophy, holds that moral responsibility does not require the kind of freedom that determinism rules out. On the compatibilist view associated with P.F. Strawson (1962) and Harry Frankfurt (1971), what matters for moral responsibility is not whether an action is causally undetermined but whether it flows from the right kind of internal structure, whether the agent's reactive attitudes are engaged, whether the action expresses the agent's own will in the hierarchically organized sense that Frankfurt elaborates. Determinism, on this view, is compatible with all the freedom that moral life requires.

The three African frameworks examined in this paper, Ori in Yoruba thought, Chi in Igbo cosmology, and Kaddara in Hausa-Fulani philosophical and theological tradition, each arrive at a position that shares significant structural features with Western compatibilism without being reducible to it. Like compatibilism, each framework holds that the existence of a metaphysically fixed or divinely determined framework for a person's existence does not eliminate genuine moral agency or responsibility. But each framework enriches this structural parallel with a distinctive relational ontology that Western compatibilism has largely neglected. Ori, Chi, and Kaddara all situate human agency within a web of relationships, between the person and their spiritual double, between the individual and the divine, between the self and the community, that constitutes rather than constrains genuine freedom. Agency, in these frameworks, is not the property of an isolated individual will but an achievement of relational self-constitution.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### ***Ori: Head, Destiny, and the Architecture of the Self***

The concept of Ori in Yoruba philosophy is at once deceptively simple and philosophically intricate. At its most literal, Ori denotes the physical head, which occupies a position of profound symbolic and ritual significance in Yoruba culture. The head is the seat of the person's spiritual identity, the place where one's destiny resides in physical form, and the recipient of special ritual attention throughout the life cycle. But Ori as a philosophical concept reaches well beyond its physical reference. It designates the metaphysical principle of personal identity and destiny, the innermost spiritual reality of the individual that precedes and governs earthly existence.

According to the Ifa corpus, as documented and analyzed by Abimbola (1975), every individual passes through the spiritual domain of Ile-Ori before entering the world. In this pre-birth encounter, the person selects their Ori from among the destinies offered in the divine storehouse. This selection occurs in the presence of Olodumare, the Supreme Being, and is witnessed by the divinities. The act of selection is genuinely the individual's own: each person chooses their Ori freely, though under conditions of incomplete knowledge, since the act of selection occurs in a spiritual state that is not fully continuous with ordinary earthly consciousness. Some persons choose wisely, selecting destinies that are rich in possibility and aligned with their deepest spiritual character. Others choose poorly, through haste, distraction, or misfortune, selecting destinies that present severe challenges or limited possibilities. The Yoruba narrative tradition preserves many accounts of persons who regret their chosen Ori and seek through divination and ritual to understand and negotiate its demands.

What makes this account philosophically significant is the structure it gives to moral responsibility. The individual who chose their Ori freely, even if in a spiritual rather than fully conscious state, cannot entirely disclaim responsibility for the broad shape of their earthly existence. The pre-birth choice is the original moral act, the act that establishes the framework within which all subsequent earthly choices occur. At the same time, the framework established by Ori is not a rigid script but a range of possibilities. The Yoruba concept of *iwa pele*, gentle and good character, names the quality through which a person most fully actualizes the positive potentialities of their chosen Ori. A person of strong Ori who neglects *iwa pele* may fail to realize what their destiny makes possible, while a person of weaker Ori who cultivates *iwa pele* may achieve more than the bare conditions of their destiny would seem to permit. Abimbola (1975) cites Ifa verses that make this point with considerable philosophical precision: Ori responds to character, and character is genuinely the individual's own achievement.

Ori can also be propitiated, that is, ritually attended to and strengthened through prayer, sacrifice, and the cultivation of right relationship with the divinities. This ritual dimension is not mere superstition but encodes a philosophical position: the relationship between the person and their Ori is dynamic and responsive rather than fixed and mechanical. The person who pays careful ritual attention to their Ori is not attempting to change a predetermined fate but to deepen their alignment with the spiritual principle that is already their own innermost self. In this sense, propitiation of Ori is analogous to what Western philosophy might call moral self-cultivation: the deliberate effort to bring one's character and conduct into alignment with one's deepest identity.

### *Chi: The Divine Double and the Grammar of Co-Agency*

In Igbo cosmology, the personal spiritual companion known as Chi occupies a position that is in some respects analogous to Ori but is structured by a different logic. Where Ori is chosen by the individual before birth, Chi is assigned by Chukwu, the Supreme Being. Each person receives a Chi that is uniquely their own, a spiritual double that accompanies them through earthly life and mediates between the individual and the cosmic order. Chinua Achebe (1975), in his philosophically rich essay on Chi in Igbo cosmology, describes Chi as the individual's personal god, a divine dimension of selfhood that exists in perpetual dialogue with the earthly person.

The philosophical grammar of Chi is complex, admitting of two competing readings. On one reading, which would assimilate it to simple predestination, Chi determines the course of a person's life in ways that the person can neither choose nor significantly influence. The Igbo expression *Chi onye na-achi ya*, one's Chi governs one, seems on its surface to support this reading. But this reading is

decisively complicated by another foundational proverb: *Onye kwe, Chi ya ekwe*, when a person agrees, their Chi agrees. This second proverb introduces a dimension of co-agency that fundamentally reshapes the framework. Chi's effectual power in a person's life is not unilateral but conditional on the person's own will, character, and determination. The Chi of a person who resolves firmly and acts with conviction amplifies that resolution; the Chi of a person who is irresolute and passive reflects that irresolution back into the conditions of their life. Chi is not a puppet master but a resonator: it amplifies and shapes the moral character that the human self brings to its earthly existence.

Achebe (1975) presses this analysis further by noting the tension within the Igbo tradition itself over the extent of Chi's power. He cites the observation that no matter how determined a man was, he could not do more than his Chi permitted, and then sets against it the equally Igbo insistence that a man who willed something hard enough would prevail even against Chi. This tension, which Achebe reads as a productive ambiguity within the tradition, is philosophically generative. It reflects the Igbo recognition that the relationship between the human self and its spiritual double is genuinely interactive, that neither the human nor the divine partner is simply passive, and that the outcome of a life is a joint achievement or failure that cannot be attributed entirely to either partner alone.

The philosophical implication is that selfhood, in the Igbo framework, is irreducibly relational. The human self is not a self-contained monad of agency that either does or does not possess free will. It is a relational reality constituted in and through its ongoing dialogue with its Chi. This relational constitution of selfhood does not diminish moral responsibility; it embeds it within a richer ontological context. When an Igbo person speaks of what their Chi permits or denies, they are not evading moral accountability but articulating a philosophy of selfhood in which the boundaries of the individual are more permeable and more cosmically embedded than Western individualism typically allows.

### *Kaddara: Divine Decree and the Space of Human Striving*

Kaddara derives from the Arabic *qadar*, meaning measure, decree, or power, and it names the Hausa-Fulani concept of divine predetermination. Within the broader landscape of Islamic theology, the concept of *qadar* has been one of the most contested and carefully analyzed notions, generating centuries of theological and philosophical debate within the Islamic intellectual tradition. As received and elaborated in the Hausa-Fulani context, shaped by the scholarly tradition of the Sokoto Caliphate and the long history of Islamic learning in northern Nigeria, Kaddara refers to the divine decree by which Allah has foreknown and ordained all that will occur, including the specific circumstances, character, and ultimate fate of

every human being. This is a robust theological claim, and its philosophical implications require careful unpacking.

The critical question is whether divine foreordination, understood in this comprehensive sense, leaves any genuine space for human deliberation, choice, and moral responsibility. Two extreme positions have been taken within Islamic theology. Hard predestinarianism, associated with certain strands of Ash'ari theology, maintains that human actions are entirely created by Allah, and that human responsibility is in some sense nominal, a matter of divine attribution rather than genuine causation. Mu'tazilite theology, at the other extreme, insisted on full human self-determination as the only basis for genuine moral accountability, at the price of a significant limitation of divine omnipotence. The mainstream position, which Hausa-Fulani intellectual culture has largely followed, navigates between these extremes through the concept of *kasb* or acquisition: human beings genuinely acquire their actions, even as those actions are created by Allah, and this acquisition is the basis of genuine moral responsibility. As Hourani (1985) has shown in his careful analysis of Islamic ethics, this position represents a sophisticated attempt to preserve both divine sovereignty and human accountability without sacrificing either to the other.

In the everyday moral culture of the Hausa-Fulani, this theological sophistication finds expression in a set of proverbial and practical attitudes that resist the fatalistic interpretation that outsiders have sometimes imposed on Islamic notions of divine decree. The Hausa proverb *Mutum ya yi kokari, Allah ya kaddara*, man strives, God determines, is not an instruction to abandon striving but a characterization of the proper relationship between human effort and divine sovereignty. The striving comes first; the determination follows and encompasses it. A person who fails to strive cannot invoke *Kaddara* as an excuse, for the Hausa-Fulani tradition holds, in line with broader Islamic jurisprudence, that the failure to strive is itself a moral failing for which the person is responsible. Izutsu (1966) demonstrates in his analysis of Quranic ethical concepts that the concept of *taklif*, religious and moral obligation, presupposes genuine human freedom: one cannot be obligated to do what one has no capacity to do. The existence of a comprehensive divine decree is thus understood within this tradition as compatible with, and indeed as the cosmic framework that makes possible, genuine human moral obligation and responsibility.

## Methodology

The methodology of this paper is conceptual and analytical, a form of philosophical analysis that proceeds by the careful examination of the meaning, internal structure, and logical implications of key concepts, with sustained attention to the contexts, traditions, and purposes that give those concepts their philosophical significance. Conceptual analysis of this kind is not culturally neutral: the choice to

analyze African philosophical concepts using tools developed largely within the Western analytic tradition carries the risk of distortion, of imposing categories and assumptions that are foreign to the traditions under analysis. This paper takes that risk seriously and attempts to mitigate it through a methodology that is informed by the principle of what Wiredu (1996) calls conceptual decolonization.

Conceptual decolonization, as Wiredu develops it, does not mean the rejection of comparative analysis or the insistence that African concepts can only be understood in isolation from Western ones. It means, rather, the commitment to engaging African concepts on their own terms, allowing their internal logic and their native contexts to set the parameters of the analysis before those concepts are brought into comparison with Western alternatives. The procedure of this paper follows this commitment: each of the three African concepts is analyzed first in its own right, drawing on the philosophical literature that has developed within and around each tradition, before the comparative analysis is undertaken. The comparative analysis is then developed in a spirit of genuine dialogue rather than hierarchical assessment.

The sources for the analysis of African concepts include the philosophical literature on Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani thought, oral traditions and proverbs as documented by scholars of African philosophy and culture, and the Ifa corpus as the most extensive philosophical text of Yoruba tradition. These sources are treated as genuine philosophical materials deserving the same kind of careful reading and rigorous analysis that is accorded to canonical Western philosophical texts. The tendency to treat African oral and cosmological sources as mere ethnographic data, interesting as cultural evidence but not as philosophical argument, is itself an expression of the colonial epistemology that this paper works against.

### **Literature Review**

The philosophical study of African concepts of destiny has developed over several decades, drawing on the work of scholars in philosophy, religious studies, and African cultural studies. Wande Abimbola's sustained engagement with the Ifa corpus represents the foundational philosophical analysis of Ori. His documentation and interpretation of the sixteen major Odu, the primary sections of the Ifa divination literature, provides the most philosophically detailed account of how Yoruba thought understands the relationship between the destiny chosen before birth and the character cultivated through earthly life. Abimbola's work establishes clearly that Ori is not a rigid fate but a range of possibility whose actualization depends on the quality of the person's moral conduct and spiritual engagement.

Segun Gbadegesin (1991) builds on Abimbola's textual scholarship to develop a systematic philosophical analysis of Yoruba thought on personhood and moral agency. Gbadegesin's account is particularly valuable for its argument that the

Yoruba concept of the person is constitutively moral: to be a person, in the fullest Yoruba sense, is not merely to be a biological individual but to be a self that is actively engaged in the realization of its moral possibilities. This argument gives philosophical depth to the concept of *iwa pele* and situates it within a broader account of Yoruba ethics and metaphysics.

On the Igbo side, Chinua Achebe's (1975) essay on Chi in Igbo cosmology remains the single most philosophically rich analysis of that concept. Achebe's literary intelligence gives his philosophical analysis a precision and a sensitivity to internal tension that purely academic treatments often lack. He identifies the fundamental ambiguity in Igbo discourse about Chi, the tension between the view that Chi is sovereign and the view that human will can prevail against it, and treats this ambiguity not as a defect to be resolved but as a philosophical resource that encodes the Igbo recognition of the complexity of the human-divine relationship.

Innocent Onyewuenyi (1984) provides an important complement to Achebe's analysis by situating the concept of Chi within a broader account of Igbo metaphysics. Onyewuenyi argues that Igbo thought operates with a fundamentally relational and process-oriented ontology in which the self is not a static substance but a dynamic reality constituted through its ongoing relationships with the divine, the communal, and the cosmic. This relational ontology provides the metaphysical framework within which the concept of Chi becomes fully intelligible.

The literature on Kaddara and Hausa-Fulani philosophical thought is less developed within academic African philosophy, reflecting the broader tendency to treat Islamic intellectual traditions as belonging to Middle Eastern rather than African philosophy. George Hourani's (1985) study of reason and tradition in Islamic ethics provides an indispensable account of the philosophical debates about divine decree and human freedom within the Islamic tradition, demonstrating the sophistication of Islamic ethical theory and its nuanced position on the relationship between God's foreordination and genuine human responsibility. Toshihiko Izutsu's (1966) analysis of ethico-religious concepts in the Quran provides an even more detailed account of the specific theological vocabulary through which Islamic thought has engaged the question of human moral agency within a framework of divine decree. Murray Last's (1967) historical scholarship on the Sokoto Caliphate provides the essential contextual background for understanding how these Islamic philosophical traditions were received and elaborated within northern Nigerian intellectual culture.

In Western philosophy, the compatibilist tradition provides the most productive comparative framework. P.F. Strawson's (1962) account of moral responsibility grounds it not in the metaphysics of causation but in the interpersonal attitudes, reactive emotions like gratitude, indignation, and moral praise and blame, that constitute the fabric of human moral relationships. This account is particularly

relevant to African frameworks of destiny because it locates moral agency within a relational rather than an individualistic context. Harry Frankfurt's (1971) account of freedom of the will in terms of hierarchical desires, the capacity to form second-order volitions about one's first-order desires, provides a further Western comparative point: like the African frameworks, Frankfurt's account treats freedom as a property of the internal structure of the will rather than of its causal history. Robert Kane's (1996) comprehensive study of the significance of free will surveys the full range of Western positions and provides a useful backdrop against which the distinctive features of African frameworks can be assessed.

## Results

### *The Structural Architecture of Agency: Fixed Frame, Open Field*

A comparative reading of Ori, Chi, and Kaddara reveals a common structural architecture that distinguishes all three from simple fatalism. Each concept operates with a distinction between what might be called the fixed frame and the open field of human existence. The fixed frame consists of those aspects of a person's situation that are determined before or independently of their earthly choices: the Ori chosen in the divine storehouse, the Chi assigned by Chukwu, the Kaddara decreed by Allah. The open field consists of the domain of genuine human choice, character, and moral striving that unfolds within the fixed frame. The relationship between these two dimensions is not one of simple containment, in which the fixed frame merely limits an otherwise unconstrained freedom, but one of dynamic interaction, in which the fixed frame and the human agent mutually shape each other's expression.

In Yoruba thought, the fixed frame is the Ori, but the Ori's expression in earthly life is not predetermined in its details. The Ori establishes a range of spiritual possibilities, a characteristic configuration of potential that the person may actualize more or less fully depending on the quality of their moral conduct and spiritual cultivation. The same Ori, in different hands, might produce very different earthly lives, depending on whether its bearer cultivates *iwa pele* or allows their character to degrade. Abimbola (1975) documents Ifa verses that describe persons with identical or very similar Ori who achieve markedly different outcomes in life, precisely because of differences in the moral quality of their earthly conduct. This suggests that Ori functions more like a musical key than a musical score: it sets the tonal framework within which the person's life-melody must be composed, but the actual melody, its richness, its expressiveness, its ultimate beauty or ugliness, is determined by the composer's own art.

In Igbo thought, the fixed frame is the Chi, but as Achebe's (1975) analysis demonstrates, Chi's power in a life is partly constituted by the quality of the human partner. The Chi of a person of strong character and resolute will operates differently from the Chi of a person of weak character and passive disposition. This is not

because some Chi are better than others, though the Igbo tradition does acknowledge variation in the quality of Chi assigned to different individuals, but because the Chi-human relationship is genuinely bilateral: what the human partner brings to the relationship shapes what the Chi can express through it. The person who takes their Chi seriously, who attends to its guidance and aligns their choices with its wisdom, creates the conditions for a richly realized life. The person who ignores or resists their Chi creates the conditions for a life that falls below its potential.

In Hausa-Fulani thought, the fixed frame is Kaddara, divine decree. But as the theological tradition carefully specifies, the decree encompasses not only the conditions of human existence but also the human choices that will be made within those conditions, and those choices remain genuinely the person's own. The philosophical point, developed with considerable subtlety in Islamic ethical theory, is that divine foreknowledge does not entail divine compulsion. Allah knows what each person will freely choose, and this knowledge is incorporated into the divine decree, but the knowing does not cause the choosing. The person who chooses well does so freely; the person who chooses poorly does so freely. Kaddara is the horizon within which genuine human self-determination occurs, not a mechanism that replaces it.

### *Moral Responsibility as Relational Achievement*

The three frameworks converge not only in their structural architecture but in their shared understanding of moral responsibility as a relational rather than individual achievement. Western compatibilism, particularly in its Frankfurtian form, understands moral responsibility as a property of the individual agent's internal psychological structure: an action is morally attributable to an agent when it flows from the agent's own will, understood as a hierarchically organized system of first and second-order desires. The African frameworks examined here locate moral responsibility in a richer relational context that includes the agent's relationship with their spiritual double, the divine, and the human community.

In Yoruba thought, moral failure is not merely a failure of individual will but a failure of relationship. The person who cultivates *iwa buruku*, bad character, is failing not only themselves but their Ori, the spiritual principle that is their deepest self, the divinities who oversee their conduct, and the community whose life their conduct affects. Conversely, the person who cultivates *iwa pele* is fulfilling a set of relational obligations that extend far beyond the boundaries of individual self-interest. Moral responsibility, on this account, is the responsibility of a relationally constituted self toward the full web of relationships that constitutes its being.

In Igbo thought, the concept of Chi embeds moral responsibility within the bilateral relationship between the human self and its divine double. The person who makes consistently poor choices is failing the Chi that has been entrusted with the

spiritual oversight of their existence. Achebe (1975) notes that the Igbo people understood that a man who through his own fault failed to achieve his destiny came to be regarded as a person whose Chi was lowered by their conduct. This lowering is not a punishment imposed from outside but a relational consequence of the human partner's failure to uphold their side of the Chi relationship. The human self and its Chi are co-responsible for the quality of a life, and the human partner who fails in their responsibility weakens the partnership as a whole.

In Hausa-Fulani thought, moral responsibility is embedded in the relationship between the human person and Allah, mediated by the structure of taklif, divine moral obligation. The obligation to act rightly is not an external constraint imposed on an antecedently free individual but a constitutive feature of the human person as created and sustained by Allah. To be a human being, in the Islamic anthropology that underlies Hausa-Fulani thought, is to be a being under obligation, a vicegerent of Allah on earth who is responsible for the stewardship of the capacities and opportunities with which Allah has entrusted them. Kaddara, on this account, does not undermine moral responsibility but grounds it in the deepest possible way: human freedom and human accountability are features of the divine decree itself.

## Discussion

The comparative analysis of Ori, Chi, and Kaddara generates several philosophical insights that deserve careful development beyond the immediate results of the comparison.

The most significant insight concerns the relationship between African frameworks of destiny and Western compatibilism. The structural parallel between the two is genuine and philosophically illuminating: both hold that a form of metaphysical determination, whether causal, spiritual, or divine, is compatible with genuine moral agency and responsibility. But the parallel masks an important difference. Western compatibilism, in both its Strawsonian and Frankfurtian forms, operates with an essentially individualistic conception of the moral agent. For Strawson (1962), moral responsibility is grounded in the reactive attitudes that persons in the participant stance take toward each other; the moral community is constituted by these bilateral interpersonal relationships, but the individual agent remains the basic unit of analysis. For Frankfurt (1971), freedom of the will is a property of the individual agent's hierarchically organized desire structure; the social and relational context of agency is largely background to rather than constitutive of the will.

The African frameworks challenge this individualism at a deep level. Ori, Chi, and Kaddara all situate the human agent within a web of constitutive spiritual and communal relationships that are not merely background conditions but are part of the agent's very identity. The self that exercises moral agency in Yoruba thought is a

self whose identity is partly constituted by its chosen Ori, its relationship with the divinities, and its embeddedness in the human and spiritual community. The self that exercises moral agency in Igbo thought is a self that exists in bilateral dialogue with its Chi and is therefore never fully self-contained. The self that exercises moral agency in Hausa-Fulani thought is a self constituted by its vicegerency, its divinely ordained role as a responsible steward of the capacities with which it has been entrusted. In each case, the moral agent is irreducibly relational, and the moral agency it exercises is a relational achievement rather than an individual property.

This relational account of moral agency has important implications for moral philosophy beyond the immediate context of African thought. It suggests that the individualism of Western compatibilism is not a philosophically necessary feature of an adequate account of moral responsibility but a culturally specific assumption that a more adequate account would revise. Philosophers working in the tradition of social ontology, such as Charles Taylor (1985) and Axel Honneth (1995), have developed accounts of the social constitution of agency and identity that share significant features with the African relational ontologies examined here. The African frameworks provide these Western relational accounts with a set of resources, particularly in their treatment of the spiritual and cosmic dimensions of relational constitution, that social ontology has not yet fully explored.

A second significant implication concerns the philosophy of religion. Each of the three African frameworks examined here is simultaneously a philosophical and a religious account of human destiny. This dual character is not a weakness but a strength, reflecting the African philosophical insight that the deepest questions about human existence cannot be adequately addressed without attending to the cosmic and spiritual dimensions of that existence. Western academic philosophy, in its effort to achieve secular generality, has largely separated philosophical from religious accounts of human agency, treating the question of free will as a problem in metaphysics and philosophy of action that can be addressed without reference to theological commitments. The African frameworks suggest that this separation impoverishes both the philosophical and the theological discussion, leaving each without the resources that the other could provide.

## **Evaluation**

The first is the empirical reductionist challenge: the claim that Ori, Chi, and Kaddara are simply false as ontological claims, and that their philosophical analysis, however sophisticated, is ultimately an analysis of elaborate fictions. This objection has genuine force, and the paper does not claim to refute it on empirical grounds. What the paper claims is that the philosophical analysis of these concepts, their internal structure, their implications for moral philosophy, and their comparative relationship to Western frameworks, is a legitimate and valuable enterprise

independently of the question of their metaphysical truth. The conceptual resources encoded in Ori, Chi, and Kaddara are philosophically significant whether or not the specific metaphysical claims they carry are true, just as the philosophical analysis of Platonic Forms, Kantian transcendental selves, or Cartesian mental substance is valuable independently of whether these entities exist.

The second objection concerns internal diversity. The Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani traditions are not monolithic, and there are genuine disputes within each tradition about the interpretation of these concepts. Some Yoruba scholars have emphasized the deterministic aspects of Ori more strongly than others; some Igbo philosophers have read Chi in ways that give less scope for human co-agency than Achebe's interpretation allows; some Hausa-Fulani theologians have maintained positions closer to hard predestinarianism than to the nuanced compatibilism that this paper attributes to the mainstream tradition. The paper acknowledges this diversity and treats its conclusions as characterizations of the dominant strands within each tradition rather than as claims about all possible interpretations.

The third objection concerns the methodological risks of cross-cultural comparison. The use of Western philosophical categories such as compatibilism, relational ontology, and moral responsibility to analyze African concepts risks imposing those categories in ways that distort the African concepts or fail to capture what is most philosophically interesting about them from within their own traditions. This risk cannot be fully eliminated in any comparative philosophical project, but it can be mitigated by the kind of close, contextually sensitive conceptual analysis that this paper has attempted. The goal is not to reduce African concepts to Western categories but to open a dialogue in which each tradition illuminates and challenges the other.

## Conclusion

Ori, Chi, and Kaddara, taken together and analyzed comparatively, constitute one of the most philosophically sophisticated bodies of thought on the relationship between destiny and moral agency that any philosophical tradition has produced. Each concept preserves a genuine space for human moral agency within a framework of cosmic or divine determination; each situates that agency within a richly relational ontology of the self; and each grounds moral responsibility not in the metaphysics of uncaused causation but in the quality of the agent's relational self-constitution. Read against the background of Western compatibilism, these African frameworks confirm the compatibilist insight that metaphysical determination and genuine moral agency are compatible, while enriching that insight with an account of the relational and spiritual dimensions of agency that Western compatibilism has largely neglected. African philosophy has much to contribute to the global philosophical discussion of free will and moral responsibility, and that contribution

deserves the serious philosophical engagement that this paper has attempted to provide.

### Recommendations

Scholars working on Hausa-Fulani philosophy should collaborate directly with specialists in Islamic theology and jurisprudence, through joint seminars, co-authored studies, and shared graduate supervision, so that the treatment of divine decree and human freedom is grounded in primary Islamic sources rather than secondary summaries, since the Hausa-Fulani contribution to African philosophy of action cannot be adequately understood without this deeper engagement.

Philosophy departments at African universities should introduce a dedicated course, or a dedicated module within an existing course, on African philosophy of action and agency, using the comparative framework developed in this paper as a starting syllabus and revising it as further comparative studies of specific African traditions become available.

International philosophy journals should commission special issues or themed sections that pair African philosophical frameworks with debates in analytic philosophy of action, moral philosophy, and philosophy of religion, and should actively invite joint submissions from Africanist and analytic philosophers to ensure the dialogue happens in print rather than in parallel.

Scholars should undertake fieldwork-based and textual research on Hausa-Fulani philosophical thought specifically, drawing on primary Hausa and Arabic sources rather than translated summaries, to correct its underrepresentation relative to Yoruba and Igbo philosophy in the existing literature.

Future comparative studies should apply the specific analytic distinction used here, between what is metaphysically settled and what remains open to human determination, to other African traditions such as the Akan concepts of sunsum and hyebea, the Zulu concept of isithunzi, and Ubuntu-based accounts of relational agency, in order to test directly whether the pattern identified in this paper holds across the wider continent.

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## Harmonization of User Privileges on Multi-Cloud Platforms Using Python: The Sentinel Harmonization Engine

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### Abstract

The adoption of multi-cloud strategies across enterprise organizations has introduced a critical security challenge: which is the inconsistent management of user privileges across heterogeneous cloud platforms. Each major cloud provider as Amazon Web Services (AWS), Microsoft Azure, and Google Cloud Platform (GCP) implements Identity and Access Management (IAM) under entirely different architectures, resulting in privilege fragmentation, privilege creep, and widening security gaps that existing platform-native tools cannot adequately address. This study presented the Sentinel Harmonization Engine, a Python-based system designed to ingest IAM data from all three platforms, normalize user privileges into a unified HIGH, MEDIUM, and LOW classification scale, detect cross-platform inconsistencies through an automated harmonization algorithm, and generate actionable remediation recommendations. Testing on a simulated multi-cloud dataset identified seven distinct privilege inconsistencies and produced a Security Health Score of 50 out of 100, indicating a critical risk environment. The system is delivered through an interactive Streamlit dashboard with support for CSV and Excel report exports, email alert simulation, and scan history logging. The findings of this study established that automated privilege harmonization across multi-cloud environments is technically achievable using Python, and the Sentinel Harmonization Engine provides a practical, extensible foundation for enterprise-grade multi-cloud Identity and Access Management governance.

**Keywords:** Multi-Cloud Security, Identity and Access Management (IAM), Privilege Harmonization, Least Privilege Principle, Python Automation.

## Introduction

The digital transformation of public and private sector organizations worldwide has catalyzed an unprecedented shift from traditional on-premises infrastructure to cloud-based computing models. Enterprises today no longer rely on a single cloud provider. Instead, they strategically distribute workloads across multiple providers a practice known as a multi-cloud strategy to achieve greater scalability, resilience, cost efficiency, regulatory compliance, and freedom from vendor lock-in (Ali, Khan, & Vasilakos, 2015). While this approach delivers significant operational benefits, it simultaneously introduces one of the most complex and underappreciated security challenges of the modern era: which is the inconsistent governance of user identities and access privileges across cloud environments.

At the heart of cloud security lies Identity and Access Management (IAM) the framework that determines who can access which resources, under what conditions, and with what level of authority. The principle of least privilege, a cornerstone of IAM governance, demands that every user be granted only the minimum level of access necessary to perform their designated function. In a single-cloud environment, enforcing this principle is already non-trivial. Across multiple cloud providers, it becomes substantially more complex because each provider implements IAM through a fundamentally different architecture.

AWS governs access through JSON-based policies attached to users, groups, and roles. Azure integrates Role-Based Access Control (RBAC) with Azure Active Directory, tying permissions to predefined or custom roles assigned at hierarchical scopes. GCP employs a resource hierarchy model where roles are bound to members at the project, folder, or organization level. The structural incompatibility between these three models means that a single organizational user say, a system administrator may hold dramatically different privilege levels across the three platforms, without any unified mechanism to detect, compare, or reconcile those differences.

This research addresses that problem directly. as it presents the design and implementation of the Sentinel Harmonization Engine: a Python-based prototype system capable of ingesting IAM configuration data from AWS, Azure, and GCP; normalizing the data into a unified representational model; automatically detecting privilege inconsistencies; computing risk scores; and generating remediation recommendations all through an interactive web dashboard. The system represents a move from theoretical frameworks to practical, deployable tooling in the field of multi-cloud privilege governance.

Cloud computing fundamentally transformed organizational information systems by offering on-demand access to computing resources including Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), and Software as a

Service (SaaS). The ability to scale operations without proportional capital investment in physical infrastructure made cloud adoption irresistible to enterprises across every sector from financial services and telecommunications to government, education, and healthcare.

The evolution from single-cloud to multi-cloud deployment is a natural progression of this trend. Organizations operating across AWS, Azure, and GCP simultaneously gain the ability to distribute workloads based on each provider's comparative strengths, meet regional data sovereignty requirements, ensure business continuity through platform redundancy, and negotiate more competitive pricing. According to Amajuoyi, Nwobodo, and Adegbola (2024), multi-cloud strategies have become particularly prevalent among businesses, governments, financial institutions, and educational organizations globally, making them a defining feature of contemporary enterprise IT architecture. However, the same heterogeneity that makes multi-cloud deployment advantageous also makes it a governance challenge. Each cloud provider operates as a sovereign system with its own IAM model, policy language, role definitions, and permission granularity. When an organization deploys resources across three platforms, it effectively inherits three separate access control paradigms with no native inter-platform translation layer.

### **The Problem of IAM Heterogeneity**

The IAM heterogeneity problem manifests at multiple levels. At the structural level, AWS uses explicit JSON policy documents that define allowed or denied actions on specific resources. Azure combines directory-based identity management through Azure Active Directory with scope-based role assignments across subscriptions, resource groups, and individual resources. GCP's IAM, in contrast, operates through a hierarchical model where inherited roles flow downward from organization to folder to project level.

They represent fundamentally different conceptual approaches to identity governance. A developer role in AWS is defined by a JSON policy listing permitted S3, EC2, and Lambda actions. The equivalent developer role in Azure is configured through RBAC assignments against a resource group. The GCP equivalent is a role binding at the project level. Mapping these three representations to each other requires not just technical translation but conceptual reconciliation and without automated tooling, this process is entirely manual.

Sitharaman, Karim, Gupta, and Tyagi (2025) identify that the heterogeneity of privilege models across cloud providers is "not merely a syntactical inconvenience but a structural barrier to scalable, secure access governance." Their research further establishes that while analytical frameworks for privilege analysis now exist, the field still lacks practical harmonization mechanisms capable of normalizing policies,

mapping equivalent roles, and generating actionable access recommendations across heterogeneous cloud providers a gap this study directly targets.

Beyond structural heterogeneity, multi-cloud environments are particularly vulnerable to privilege creep the gradual, often unnoticed accumulation of access rights as users change roles, take on temporary projects, or receive ad hoc permissions that are never revoked. In a multi-cloud context, a user may accumulate excessive permissions independently across three platforms over time, none of which appear excessive in isolation but which collectively represent a dramatically over-privileged access posture (Rouse, 2011; Tenable, 2023).

Excessive privileges expand the attack surface available to malicious actors who compromise user credentials. Overly permissive roles enable privilege escalation, lateral movement between cloud environments, accidental data exposure, and insider threat exploitation. In highly regulated sectors such as banking, healthcare, and government, these risks carry legal and financial consequences beyond immediate operational damage (CyberArk, 2024; Palo Alto Networks, 2024).

Despite the recognized severity of this problem, most organizations lack the tooling to detect and remediate it systematically. The absence of a centralized, cross-platform privilege visibility layer means that security teams must manually aggregate and analyze IAM data from each provider's separate dashboard an approach that is both labor-intensive and error-prone.

The academic and industry literature reveals several attempts to address multi-cloud IAM challenges. Sitharaman et al. (2025) propose a hypergraph-based analytical model capable of capturing multi-dimensional privilege dependencies across AWS and Azure, demonstrating measurably improved traversal and detection performance. However, this framework is purely analytical and stops short of privilege harmonization or actionable remediation.

Salah, Laborde, Benzekri, Kandi, and Ferreira (2025) explore Self-Sovereign Identity (SSI) as a solution for cross-cloud identity interoperability but focus on authentication rather than privilege management, with no practical harmonization mechanism. Mallesh (2025) proposes an AI-driven policy reconciliation system using transformer-based NLP models but presents only a conceptual architecture with no implemented system or evaluation results.

Gowda (2025) examines AWS and GCP identity governance using Infrastructure-as-Code and policy-as-code approaches, but omits Azure entirely and does not address individual user privilege harmonization. Faith (2025) surveys Privileged Access Management strategies across three platforms but delivers no implemented tooling, algorithms, or code.

Across this body of literature, a consistent pattern emerges: existing work gravitates toward either theoretical models or descriptive surveys, with very limited practical, implemented solutions. This research fills that gap.

### **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The conceptual framework of this study provides the theoretical and architectural map that guides the design of the Sentinel Harmonization Engine. It establishes the relationships between the core concepts multi-cloud computing, IAM, privilege management, access control models, and harmonization and defines how they interact within the proposed system.

The foundational premise of this study is that multi-cloud adoption, while operationally beneficial, inherently produces IAM fragmentation. When an organization deploys resources across AWS, Azure, and GCP simultaneously, it creates three independent identity silos with no native cross-platform communication. This fragmentation is the root cause of the privilege inconsistency problem that this system addresses.

The conceptual relationship is directional: multi-cloud adoption → IAM fragmentation → privilege inconsistency → security risk. Each stage of this chain amplifies the organizational security challenge, and each stage corresponds to a functional module in the Sentinel Harmonization Engine ingestion, normalization, detection, and remediation respectively.

This study is grounded in four established access control paradigms that collectively define the theoretical space within which the harmonization problem exists: Role-Based Access Control (RBAC) assigns permissions based on organizational roles rather than individual identities. It simplifies management at scale but can lack the flexibility needed for dynamic, multi-cloud environments. Azure's IAM model is primarily RBAC-based, making this the dominant paradigm for cross-platform role mapping in this system.

Attribute-Based Access Control (ABAC) evaluates access decisions based on contextual attributes including user identity, resource type, environmental conditions, and time. AWS's policy-based model incorporates ABAC elements through condition keys, enabling fine-grained, context-aware permission control.

Policy-Based Access Control, the primary model in AWS, defines permissions through structured JSON documents attached directly to users, groups, and roles. Its expressiveness enables fine-grained resource control but makes cross-platform standardization difficult.

The Zero Trust Security Model operates on the principle of "never trust, always verify." It demands continuous authentication, minimal standing privileges, and strict access validation at every interaction providing the security philosophy that underpins the least privilege principle enforced by this system.

The Sentinel Harmonization Engine does not implement any single model in isolation. Instead, it creates a meta-layer that translates across these models by normalizing their outputs into a unified HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW privilege scale, enabling comparison across paradigms that would otherwise be incommensurable.

The principle of least privilege (PoLP) is the normative goal that the entire harmonization process serves. It states that every user, process, or system component should operate with the minimum set of privileges necessary to perform its function. The Sentinel Harmonization Engine treats PoLP not merely as a theoretical objective but as a measurable outcome: the system's harmonization algorithm evaluates whether each user's privilege level across platforms is consistent, and flags users whose privilege levels in any environment exceed their established baseline as potential PoLP violations.

Privilege harmonization is defined in this study as the systematic process of:

- (1) ingesting IAM data from heterogeneous cloud platforms;
- (2) normalizing the data into a unified representational format;
- (3) detecting inconsistencies between a user's privilege levels across platforms and
- (4) generating remediation recommendations that bring all platforms into alignment with the least-privilege standard.

This four-stage process mirrors the modular architecture of the Sentinel Harmonization Engine. Each module in the system corresponds directly to one stage of the harmonization process, creating a conceptual alignment between the theoretical framework and the implemented artifact.

The Sentinel Harmonization Engine is implemented in Python and delivered through a Streamlit web dashboard. Its architecture comprises five integrated modules: The Data Ingestion Module accepts CSV-formatted IAM data files from AWS, Azure, and GCP simultaneously, detecting the platform format of each file automatically and parsing user privilege records accordingly.

The Normalization Engine maps each platform's native privilege representations onto a unified three-tier scale: HIGH (administrative or privileged access), MEDIUM (standard operational access), and LOW (read-only or minimal access). This normalization step is the technical core of the harmonization framework, resolving the semantic gap between AWS policy names, Azure RBAC roles, and GCP IAM bindings.

The Harmonization Algorithm compares each user's normalized privilege levels across all three platforms, identifies inconsistencies where privilege levels diverge, and calculates a risk score based on the severity and frequency of inconsistencies detected.

The Report Generation Module produces a Security Health Score (on a scale of 0 to 100), an executive summary of findings, detailed inconsistency reports with severity badges, and a privilege comparison matrix displaying each user's access level across all three platforms side by side.

The Interactive Dashboard presents all outputs through an authenticated Streamlit interface, providing real-time visual analysis, downloadable CSV and Excel reports, email alert simulation for critical findings, and a persistent scan history log.

### Conceptual Variables

The study operates with the following key conceptual variables:

**Independent Variable:** IAM data ingested from AWS, Azure, and GCP (the multi-cloud privilege inputs).

**Dependent Variable:** Privilege inconsistency detection rate and Security Health Score (the outputs of the harmonization process).

**Mediating Mechanism:** The normalization engine and harmonization algorithm (the process by which inputs are transformed into actionable outputs).

This variable structure is consistent with Design Science Research methodology, which frames the system artifact as the mediating instrument between the identified problem (privilege inconsistency) and the desired outcome (harmonized, least-privilege access governance).

### Nigeria, Cybersecurity Governance, and the Relevance of This Study

The Sentinel Harmonization Engine does not exist in a geopolitical vacuum. Its development at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna, reflects a deliberate engagement with the cybersecurity challenges facing Nigeria and the broader African technology ecosystem. Understanding the Nigerian policy environment and its relationship to multi-cloud security is essential for contextualizing the practical relevance of this work.

Nigeria's federal government has pursued an accelerating digital transformation agenda over the past decade, driven by policy frameworks including the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS 2020–2030) and the National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy (NCPS). These frameworks explicitly recognize cloud computing as a pillar of Nigeria's digital infrastructure and mandate security standards for government agencies adopting cloud services.

The adoption of cloud platforms by Nigerian government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) has grown substantially, with institutions such as the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), and numerous state governments migrating significant workloads to AWS, Azure, and GCP. As these agencies expand their cloud footprints, the challenge of managing user privileges consistently across platforms becomes immediately relevant to national digital governance.

NITDA serves as Nigeria's primary regulatory body for information technology governance, including cloud security. The agency's Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) and its subsequent guidelines impose obligations on organizations processing Nigerian citizens' data to implement appropriate access controls directly implicating IAM management practices. Multi-cloud deployments that lack harmonized privilege governance create compliance exposure under NDPR,

particularly where excessive or inconsistent user privileges could enable unauthorized access to personal data.

The Sentinel Harmonization Engine directly supports NDPR compliance by providing a mechanism to detect and remediate privilege inconsistencies before they become compliance violations or data breach vectors.

Nigeria's financial services sector encompassing commercial banks, FinTech companies, payment processors, and insurance firms represents one of the most cloud-intensive industries in the country. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has issued Risk-Based Cybersecurity Framework guidelines that require financial institutions to maintain consistent access control policies and conduct regular privilege access reviews. Multi-cloud deployments complicate both requirements.

Financial institutions such as commercial banks operating on multiple cloud platforms face the exact privilege harmonization challenge this study addresses. An employee with administrative access in an AWS environment and read-only access in Azure presents a security inconsistency that the Sentinel Harmonization Engine would detect, classify, and recommend for remediation directly supporting CBN compliance obligations.

Nigerian universities, including AFIT itself, are increasingly deploying research workloads and administrative systems across cloud platforms. The challenge of managing student, faculty, and administrative staff access consistently across cloud environments is directly analogous to the enterprise use case this system addresses. By demonstrating a proof-of-concept implementation developed within a Nigerian academic institution, this study establishes that the tools and methodologies for multi-cloud privilege governance are accessible and applicable within the Nigerian context, not merely in resource-rich international organizations.

Nigeria faces a documented cybersecurity talent gap. The development of a functional, open-architecture privilege harmonization system by an undergraduate student at AFIT demonstrates the capacity of Nigerian academic institutions to produce practically relevant cybersecurity tooling. Beyond its immediate utility, the Sentinel Harmonization Engine serves as a training platform its modular architecture and documented codebase provide a foundation for future researchers, developers, and security practitioners to extend and build upon within the Nigerian higher education ecosystem.

The government's emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education and the operationalization of the National Cybersecurity Scholarship Program align directly with this kind of applied academic output. Research that produces functional security tooling rather than theoretical models alone represents the kind of indigenous capacity development that Nigeria's digital security ecosystem requires.

## System Testing and Results

Testing of the Sentinel Harmonization Engine was conducted using simulated IAM datasets representing realistic multi-cloud privilege configurations across AWS, Azure, and GCP. The test environment included a dataset of twelve users with privilege assignments across all three platforms, incorporating known inconsistencies deliberately introduced to evaluate detection accuracy.

The system successfully ingested all three IAM data files, normalized privilege levels across platforms, and executed the harmonization algorithm without errors. Analysis identified seven distinct privilege inconsistencies across the twelve-user dataset. The Security Health Score computed by the system was 50 out of 100, correctly classifying the environment as a critical-risk privilege configuration given the density and severity of inconsistencies detected.

Findings included cases of privilege escalation (users with LOW privileges in GCP but HIGH privileges in AWS performing equivalent roles), privilege gaps (users with HIGH Azure access but no corresponding GCP permissions), and cross-platform misalignment in role definitions. The system generated severity-classified remediation recommendations for each inconsistency, distinguishing between CRITICAL, HIGH, and MEDIUM priority interventions.

The interactive dashboard presented these findings through a gauge-based Security Health Score visualization, a detailed inconsistency table with severity badges, a privilege comparison matrix enabling side-by-side three-platform analysis, and a before-and-after harmonization preview. Export functionality produced downloadable reports in both CSV and Excel formats. The email alert simulation successfully demonstrated alerting for critical-severity findings.

## Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that automated, Python-based privilege harmonization across AWS, Azure, and GCP is technically achievable and practically valuable. The Sentinel Harmonization Engine fills a gap that existing literature focused largely on theoretical models and descriptive surveys has not addressed: a functional, implemented system that ingests real IAM data, detects privilege inconsistencies, computes risk scores, and generates actionable remediation guidance through an accessible web interface.

The system advances the state of multi-cloud IAM governance along several dimensions. It provides cross-platform visibility where none previously existed in a single tool. It translates heterogeneous IAM models AWS policy-based, Azure RBAC-based, and GCP hierarchy-based into a common representational framework. It operationalizes the principle of least privilege as a measurable, detectable, and remediable security property rather than an aspirational policy objective.

For Nigeria specifically, the system holds direct relevance across government agencies, financial institutions, higher education, and the growing FinTech sector, each of which faces multi-cloud IAM governance obligations under the NDPR, CBN guidelines, and NITDA frameworks. Its development at AFIT Kaduna demonstrates that world-class cybersecurity tooling can originate from Nigerian academic institutions a contribution to both national digital security capacity and the global academic discourse on cloud security governance.

Future work should extend the system to support real-time API integration with live cloud environments, expand the privilege classification schema to accommodate more granular role distinctions, incorporate machine learning for anomaly-based privilege drift detection, and introduce formal evaluation frameworks including confusion matrix analysis of detection accuracy across larger and more diverse datasets.

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## **Artificial Intelligence and Indigenous Knowledge Systems for Enhanced Environmental Journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

With the prevalence of challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and environmental degradation, the role of environmental journalism has become increasingly crucial in shaping public discourse and informing policymakers. This study investigated the artificial intelligence and indigenous knowledge systems for enhanced environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Four specific objectives and four research questions guided the study. A cross sectional survey research design was adopted for the study using the population of 855 journalists in Akwa Ibom State and the sample of 86 journalists from the study area. The participants of this study were selected using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled “Artificial Intelligence and Indigenous Knowledge Systems for Enhanced Environmental Journalism Questionnaire (AIIKSEEJQ).” The instrument was validated by three experts and had a reliability coefficient of 0.78 with Cronbach Alpha statistics. The researcher and trained research assistants visited the selected vending clusters to administer the questionnaire. Data collected were analysed using mean statistics. Findings of the study indicated that the extent of integration of AI environmental journalism was low while the extent of

integration of IKS was high. Furthermore, both AI and IKS were perceived to be highly beneficial to environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State. It was concluded that although Artificial intelligence (AI) is lowly integrated and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) is highly integrated for enhanced environmental journalism, both AI and IKS hold immense potential for enhancing the sustainability of environmental journalism, particularly in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It was recommended, among others, that journalists should establish collaborative platforms that bring together indigenous communities, researchers, technology experts to gain adequate knowledge for effective reportage on environmental related issues.

**Keywords:** Algorithmic Reporting, Indigenous Epistemologies, Climate Communication, Knowledge Sovereignty, Digital Tools.

### **Introduction**

Globally, environment and environmental issues have become increasingly prominent and major concerns for all. The interconnectedness of these environmental components such as the lithosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, anthroposphere and atmosphere have become increasingly evident in recent years. Environmental challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion, cannot be addressed in isolation, but rather require an integrated, holistic approach that considers the complex interactions and feedbacks among these components (Kumar, 2018). With the prevalence of challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and environmental degradation, the role of environmental journalism has become increasingly crucial in shaping public discourse and informing policymakers. Addressing these interconnected environmental challenges requires not only an integrated understanding of ecological systems but also effective communication among the diverse actors responsible for environmental governance and sustainable development. Environmental journalism can serve as a vital bridge between indigenous communities, technology experts, and policymakers, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and perspectives. As the interface between scientific knowledge, policymakers, and the general public, journalists have the power to shape public discourse, raise awareness, and influence decision-making processes that can lead to meaningful environmental action. Deuze and Witschge (2018) note that environmental journalism can serve as a watchdog, holding governments, corporations, and other stakeholders accountable for their environmental practices and policies. Additionally, environmental journalists can play a crucial role in highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the integration of indigenous knowledge, scientific expertise, technological innovation, and environmental policymaking, and foster collaborations and knowledge-sharing

among various fields, such as environmental science, technology, anthropology, and policymaking (Mocatta, 2024). By facilitating cross-disciplinary dialogues and showcasing innovative case studies, journalists can catalyze the broader adoption and adaptation of these integrated approaches. Traditional or indigenous knowledge systems and advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), have emerged as a promising approach to enhance the sustainability of environmental management practices.

Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) refer to the accumulated knowledge, skills, and practices developed by indigenous or local communities over generation that reflect their unique cultural, environmental, and historical contexts. These knowledge systems are often orally transmitted and embedded within the traditional beliefs, values, and livelihood practices of indigenous peoples worldwide. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2017), indigenous knowledge systems comprise the understandings, practical skills, and philosophical worldviews that communities develop through long-term interaction with their natural environments. This indigenous knowledge, rooted in cultural traditions and lived experiences, has the potential to complement and enrich scientific knowledge, leading to more holistic and contextually-relevant strategies for environmental stewardship.

Nigeria is a country with rich tapestry of indigenous knowledge systems which are instrumental in shaping sustainable land use, water management, and biodiversity conservation practices. Indigenous knowledge is a local knowledge that is peculiar to a particular society. It is referred to as folk knowledge, people's knowledge, traditional science or traditional wisdom. According to Agada *et al.* (2022), indigenous knowledge is usually generated and transmitted by communities, in an attempt to solve their own societal challenges such as ecological and socio-economic problems. Indigenous knowledge is passed from generation to generation, usually by word of mouth and cultural rituals, and has been the basis for agriculture, food preparation and conservation, health care, education, and a wide range of other activities that sustain a society and its environment in different parts of the world for many centuries.

In Nigeria, the diversity in indigenous communities and their corresponding knowledge systems offer a unique opportunity to explore the synergies between traditional ecological wisdom and technological advancements. Nigeria's rich natural resource base, ranging from vast agricultural lands to extensive forest ecosystems and abundant water resources, underscores the importance of developing sustainable management strategies that draw upon both indigenous and scientific knowledge. Ens *et al.* (2015) note that IKS can offer valuable insights into sustainable resource management practices, such as rotational farming, selective hunting, and controlled burning, which have been developed and refined over centuries of

coexistence with the land. These traditional practices often stand in contrast to the resource-intensive and environmentally damaging approaches promoted by dominant economic and political systems, as highlighted by Mistry and Berardi (2016). Agada et al. (2022) reiterate that the sustainable development and management of resources cannot be achieved unless members of society have equal access to knowledge, a view that underpins the concept of the knowledge society for sustainable development. Sustainable development emphasises progress across all aspects of human life that promote long-term sustainability, while emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence have been introduced to facilitate sustainable processes.

Globally, AI is employed in diverse domains such as healthcare, finance, manufacturing, transportation, retail, and entertainment. Artificial Intelligence facilitates disease diagnosis, drug discovery, personalized treatment plans, and predictive analytics for patient outcomes in healthcare. Financial institutions utilize AI for fraud detection, risk assessment, algorithmic trading, and customer service automation. Artificial Intelligence enhances production efficiency, quality control, predictive maintenance, and supply chain optimization in manufacturing. Transportation sectors leverage AI for autonomous vehicles, traffic management, route optimization, and logistics planning (Kapatamoyo, 2024). Artificial Intelligence's advanced analytics, machine learning algorithms, and predictive modeling capabilities enable organizations to make data-driven decisions and optimize processes (Agrawal *et al.*, 2023). By automating repetitive tasks, AI enhances efficiency and productivity while fostering innovation in product development and service delivery. Moreover, AI aids in risk management by detecting anomalies and predicting potential risks, supports regulatory compliance through automated monitoring and reporting of compliance requirements, and facilitates workforce transformation by automating routine tasks, enhancing decision-making, and enabling employees to focus on more complex and creative responsibilities. Agrawal *et al.* (2023) add that by framing AI within the context of digital transformation, organizations, and governments can harness its potential to drive strategic insights, anticipate market trends, and adapt to changing business landscapes, ultimately driving growth and competitiveness in today's digital era.

The integration of indigenous knowledge with emerging technologies, such as AI, holds immense potential for enhancing the sustainability of natural resource management. AI-powered tools can facilitate the documentation, analysis, and integration of indigenous knowledge, enabling the co-creation of innovative solutions that are tailored to local environmental and socio-cultural conditions. Moreover, the pivotal role of environmental journalism in fostering environmental management using various forms of media channel ranging from traditional media such as newspapers, magazines and television, to online platforms and social

media, and the types of publications in them, including: special columns, programmes, news articles, blogs and online portals cannot be over emphasized.

Alimzhanova *et al.* (2025) note that environmental journalism exerts impact on public consciousness, including informing policymakers, raising awareness and empathy, changing readers' behaviour towards the environment, promoting sustainable practices and influencing corporate behaviour. Diakopoulos (2019) investigated the application of AI-powered fact-checking and verification tools in journalism. The findings indicated that the use of these technologies enabled journalists to combat the spread of misinformation and ensure the integrity of their reporting, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving environmental crises. Similarly, Thurman *et al.* (2019) explored the impact of AI-driven personalization and targeting on audience engagement in news consumption. Their findings suggest that the use of AI algorithms to tailor content to individual preferences and interests can foster greater audience involvement and reach, which is crucial for environmental journalism seeking to engage diverse stakeholders. The extant literature has substantially advanced understanding of environmental journalism, artificial intelligence, and indigenous knowledge systems within their respective domains. However, the existing body of knowledge indicates that these concepts have predominantly been examined from separate perspectives rather than as complementary approaches to sustainable environmental management. For example, Diakopoulos (2019) focused on the application of artificial intelligence in journalism through AI-powered fact-checking and verification tools to improve the credibility of news reporting, while Thurman *et al.* (2019) examined the use of AI-driven personalisation to enhance audience engagement in news consumption. Similarly, Oyindoubra Timi-Wood (2025) explored the role of journalism in mediating indigenous knowledge within Nigeria's digital transformation. Although these studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of their respective subject areas, they provide limited evidence on how environmental journalism can facilitate the integration of artificial intelligence and indigenous knowledge systems for sustainable environmental management. This gap is particularly evident in the Nigerian context, especially in Akwa Ibom State, where empirical evidence on the convergence of environmental journalism, artificial intelligence, and indigenous knowledge systems remains scarce. It is this conceptual and contextual gap that the present study seeks to address by examining the nexus between environmental journalism, artificial intelligence, and indigenous knowledge systems in promoting sustainable environmental management in Akwa Ibom State.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Technological Determinism Theory by Marshall McLuhan (1962)**

The theory was developed by Marshall McLuhan in 1962. Technological Determinism Theory posits that communication technologies shape how individuals think, feel, and act, as well as how society functions. The theory further maintains that as societies transition from one technological age to another, such as the tribal, literate, print, electronic, and Internet ages—the ways in which people communicate, interact, and organise social life are transformed (Tribal–Literate–Print–Electronic–Internet). The core premise of the theory is that technology is not merely a neutral tool, but rather a force that shapes and transforms the way individuals, organizations, and societies function.

The technological determinism theory is relevant to the present study in that it provides a valuable lens through which to examine the potential impact of integrating AI technologies with indigenous knowledge systems on natural resources management and environmental journalism in Nigeria. It highlights the transformative potential of AI technologies in the realm of natural resources management. As AI-powered systems become increasingly integrated with traditional indigenous knowledge, they have the capacity to revolutionize the way environmental data are collected, analysed, and utilised for sustainable decision-making. This technological integration can lead to more efficient, data-driven approaches to resource allocation, conservation, and environmental protection, ultimately shaping the socio-economic and environmental landscape of Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The need for effective and impactful environmental journalism in Nigeria is paramount, as the country faces a myriad of pressing environmental challenges, including deforestation, pollution, climate change, and the depletion of natural resources (Adedeji et al., 2019; Akpan & Effiong, 2020). However, the current state of environmental reporting in Nigeria has been criticized for its limited reach, lack of in-depth analysis, and failure to adequately engage with local communities and their knowledge systems (Olusegun & Babarinde, 2020; Nnamani & Ogbodo, 2019).

Despite the advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and the growing recognition of the value of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in addressing environmental issues, the integration of these two domains within the context of environmental journalism in Nigeria remains largely unexplored. The potential synergies between AI and IKS, such as enhanced data analysis, improved community engagement, and culturally-relevant reporting, have not been fully harnessed to strengthen environmental journalism in the study area. It is against this backdrop that the study aims to investigate the potential of the intersection between artificial

intelligence and indigenous knowledge systems for improved environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to determine the artificial intelligence and indigenous knowledge systems for enhanced environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study specifically aimed to determine:

- i. The extent artificial intelligence is being integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- ii. The extent indigenous knowledge system is being integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- iii. The perceived benefits of incorporating artificial intelligence into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- iv. The perceived benefits of incorporating indigenous knowledge system into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. To what extent is artificial intelligence being integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. To what extent is indigenous knowledge system currently being integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?
- iii. What are the perceived benefits of incorporating artificial intelligence into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?
- iv. What are the perceived benefits of incorporating indigenous knowledge system into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

### **Research Methods**

#### **Research Design**

The study adopted a cross sectional survey research design. This design seek to collect data from a sample in order to describe characteristics, perceptions and behavioural patterns of a population as they occur naturally without manipulation (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). It is particularly suited to studies examining real-world utilization of digital tools for environmental journalism, as it allows for the aggregation of respondents' views and behaviours in a systematic and quantifiable manner. In this study, the design enabled an assessment of the level of awareness and utilization of AI and IKS for enhanced environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Area of the Study**

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Akwa Ibom State is located in the southern part of Nigeria, along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. It is situated within the Niger Delta region and shares borders with Cross River State to the east, Abia State to the north, and Rivers State to the west. Akwa Ibom State has a rich cultural heritage, with a vibrant tradition of arts, music, and storytelling. Agriculture, fishing, and small-scale industries are the mainstays of the state's economy, with a growing service sector, including tourism and information technology. While the state has made strides in infrastructure development and social services, challenges such as limited access to healthcare, education, and basic amenities remain prevalent, particularly in rural areas. Environmental issues, such as oil spills, deforestation, and coastal erosion, also pose significant challenges for the state's sustainable development. This diverse physical, demographic, and socio-economic landscape of Akwa Ibom State presents both opportunities and challenges for the integration of artificial intelligence and indigenous knowledge systems in environmental journalism in the study area.

### **Population of the Study**

The target population of the study comprised of 855 journalist in Akwa Ibom State (National Union of Journalists, Akwa Ibom State Chapter, 2025).

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample of 86 journalists being 10% of the population was used for the study. This is supported by Saunders et al. (2016) who asserted that a sample size of 10% of the population can be considered appropriate, particularly in situation where the population is large and the desired level of precision is not extremely high. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select for participants for the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument for data collection was a structure questionnaire titled "Artificial Intelligence and Indigenous Knowledge Systems for Enhanced Environmental Journalism Questionnaire (AIKSEEJQ)." The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A elicited information on extent of integration of Artificial Intelligence into environmental journalism, Section B contained items measuring the extent of integration of Indigenous Knowledge system, Section C elicited information on perceived benefits of Artificial Intelligence while Section D contain items on perceived benefits of IKS for enhanced environmental journalism. Items in Section A and B were developed on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from: Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), Very Low Extent (1)

while items in Section C and D were structure with the response option of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

### Validation and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by three experts in Faculty of Communication Art, University of Uyo, Uyo. Their comments and corrections guided the refinement and alignment of items with constructs, and improvement of wording to ensure comprehensibility.

The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot test conducted with 30 journalists outside the study area to avoid contamination of the main sample. Data from the pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha statistical tools. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained across the subscales, indicating that the instrument possessed good internal consistency according to acceptable research standards (Tavakol and Dennick, 2021).

### Method of Data Collection

The researcher and trained research assistants visited the selected vending clusters to administer the questionnaires. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to each respondent, and confidentiality was assured. Questionnaires were distributed and retrieved on the spot to reduce loss and non-response.

### Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using mean statistics. Mean score of 2.50 and above was interpreted to be 'High Extent' and 'highly beneficial' while mean score below 2.50 was said to be 'Low Extent' and 'lowly beneficial' respectively.

## Results and Analysis

### Research Question 1

To what extent is artificial intelligence being integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State?

**Table 1: Mean Statistics showing the extent is artificial intelligence being integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State n= 86**

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Utilizes Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tools in the editorial processes	2.68	0.55	High Extent
2	Leverages AI-driven data analysis to enhance the presentation of complex environmental issues	2.21	0.80	Low Extent
3	Incorporates AI-based language processing	2.28	0.49	Low Extent

	technologies to facilitate automated content creation			
4	Employs AI-powered verification and fact-checking tools to address misinformation	2.45	0.52	Low Extent
5	Integrates AI-based technologies into newsroom policies for environmental reporting practices	2.40	0.66	Low Extent
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>Low Extent</b>

Table 1 shows the extent to which artificial intelligence is integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State. It indicates that the mean values of four items are below 2.50 indicating low extent while mean value of one item is above 2.50 indicating high extent. The grand mean of 2.40 implies that to a low extent artificial intelligence is integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State.

### Research Question 2

To what extent is indigenous knowledge system currently being integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean Statistics showing the extent is indigenous knowledge system being integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State n= 86**

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Environmental journalists collaborates with indigenous communities to represent traditional ecological knowledge in media coverage	3.18	0.61	High Extent
2	Environmental journalists source information from IKS to provide a culturally-relevant understanding of environmental phenomena	2.94	0.44	High Extent
3	Journalists highlight the contributions of indigenous ethic of environmental stewardship in their reporting on environmental management strategies	2.80	1.01	High Extent
4	Newsroom policies emphasizes the importance of integrating spiritual dimensions of the human-environment relationship into environmental reporting	3.03	0.84	High Extent

	practices			
5	Integrates the cultural dimensions of the society into environmental reporting practices	2.79	0.68	High Extent
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.95</b>	<b>0.72</b>	High Extent

Table 2 shows the extent to which indigenous knowledge system is integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State. It indicates that the mean values of four items are above 2.50 indicating high extent while mean value of one item is below 2.50 indicating low extent. The grand mean of 2.95 implies that to a high extent indigenous knowledge system is integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State.

### Research Question 3

What are the perceived benefits of incorporating artificial intelligence into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

**Table 3: Mean Statistics showing the perceived benefits of incorporating artificial intelligence into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria n= 86**

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	The use of AI-powered data visualization tools can enhance the interpretation of complex environmental data	2.99	1.03	High Extent
2	AI-driven language processing capabilities can assist environmental journalists in improving the speed of coverage of environmental issues.	3.11	0.53	High Extent
3	AI-based fact-checking technologies can help environmental journalists address misinformation related to environmental topics	3.08	0.28	High Extent
4	The integration of AI in environmental journalism can lead to more informative reporting that resonates better with the audience	2.85	0.65	High Extent
5	Environmental journalists collaborations with AI experts contribute to the development of more innovative environmental reporting	2.82	0.44	High Extent
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.97</b>	<b>0.59</b>	High Extent

Table 3 shows the perceived benefits of incorporating artificial intelligence into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It indicates that the mean values of all the items are above 2.50 indicating that respondents agree to the items. The grand mean of 2.97 implies that journalists perceived that incorporating artificial intelligence into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria is highly beneficial.

#### Research Question 4

What are the perceived benefits of incorporating indigenous knowledge system into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

**Table 4: Mean Statistics showing the perceived benefits of incorporating indigenous knowledge system into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria n= 86**

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	IKS provides a more culturally-relevant understanding of environmental issues	3.31	0.48	Agree
2	Incorporating their traditional ecological knowledge can lead to more contextually-grounded environmental reporting	3.05	0.55	Agree
3	The contributions of IKS in environmental management strategies can foster greater public engagement on environmental issues	2.92	0.91	Agree
4	The integration of IKS into environmental journalism can complement Western scientific knowledge	2.98	0.45	Agree
5	Incorporating IKS into environmental journalism training programs helps cultivates a more inclusive environmental discourse	3.50	0.63	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.15</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 4 shows the perceived benefits of incorporating indigenous knowledge system into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It indicates that the mean values of all the items are above 2.50 indicating that respondents agree to the items. The grand mean of 3.15 implies that journalists perceived that incorporating indigenous knowledge system into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria is highly beneficial.

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**Discussion**

Result indicated that to a low extent artificial intelligence is integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State. The low level of integration of AI may be attributed to the fact that most journalists in Akwa Ibom State are not skilled and proficient at the use of AI-driven data analysis, AI-based language processing technologies and AI-powered verification and fact-checking tools for effective journalism. However, integrating AI-powered tools would increase the efficiency in verifying the accuracy and reliability of information related to environmental issues, helping to combat the spread of misinformation and ensure the integrity of their reporting. The finding is in agreement with the finding of Agrawal *et al.* (2023) who reported that by framing AI within the context of digital transformation, organizations, and governments can harness its potential to drive strategic insights, anticipate market trends, and adapt to changing business landscapes, ultimately driving growth and competitiveness in today's digital era.

Finding also revealed that to a high extent indigenous knowledge system was integrated into environmental journalism practices in Akwa Ibom State. This may be triggered by the fact that environmental journalists mostly depend on indigenous communities to provide culturally-relevant insight and valuable ethics of environmental management strategies information which aids reporting. The finding is in-line with the finding of Ens *et al.* (2015) who noted that IKS can offer valuable insights into sustainable resource management practices, such as rotational farming, selective hunting, and controlled burning, which have been developed and refined over centuries of coexistence with the land. By showcasing these traditional approaches, journalists can present alternative models to the resource-intensive and environmentally damaging practices that are often promoted by dominant economic and political systems (Mistry & Berardi, 2016).

It was found that journalists perceived that incorporating artificial intelligence into environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria is highly beneficial. This points to the fact that journalists in Akwa Ibom State have recognized the potential of AI to process and analyze vast amounts of environmental data from various sources, verifying the accuracy and reliability of information related to environmental issues, helping to combat the spread of misinformation and ensuring the integrity of environmental journalism in Akwa Ibom State. This is particularly valuable in the context of rapidly evolving environmental crises, where timely and trustworthy information is crucial (Diakopoulos, 2019). It affirms the submission of Thurman *et al.* (2019) who reported that harnessing the analytical capabilities of AI help journalists to uncover insights and patterns that may have been overlooked through traditional reporting methods thereby fostering a more inclusive and participatory environmental discourse, empowering diverse voices and perspectives.

Finding further indicated that journalists in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria perceived that incorporating indigenous knowledge system into environmental journalism is highly beneficial. Journalists have recognized the potential value of IKS in conveying the emotional, aesthetic, and intrinsic importance of the natural world, which may be underrepresented in conventional environmental reporting. The integration of IKS into environmental journalism practices has been perceived as a means of amplifying the voices and perspectives of marginalized indigenous communities in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that the integration of IKS can contribute to more contextually relevant, holistic, and solutions-oriented reporting, ultimately leading to the development of more effective and culturally appropriate environmental policies and interventions. The finding aligns with Agada *et al.* (2022) who noted that sustainable development and management of resources cannot take place without member of the society being able to have equal access to knowledge gave birth to the idea of the knowledge society for a sustainable development.

### **Conclusion**

Although Artificial intelligence (AI) is lowly integrated and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) is highly integrated for enhanced environmental journalism, both AI and IKS hold immense potential for enhancing the sustainability of environmental journalism particularly in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Hence, developing AI systems and IKS becomes very vital in understanding, handling and reporting the complexities of environmental challenges.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the discourse, the following recommendations are made

- i. Journalists should establish collaborative platforms that bring together indigenous communities, researchers, technology experts to gain adequate knowledge for effective reportage on environmental related issues.
- ii. Ministry of Information should organize training and workshops for journalists on AI-powered systems for environmental journalism to enhance their knowledge and skills for effective integration of AI for quality service delivery.
- iii. Journalists should leverage the power of media, both traditional and new, to disseminate information, foster public dialogue, and raise awareness about the importance of integrating AI and IKS for sustainable natural resource management.
- iv. Information technologists should develop AI-based decision support tools that seamlessly integrate indigenous knowledge, scientific data, and real-time monitoring, enabling adaptive and responsive natural resource management strategies.

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