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Editorial

This edition of NIU *Journal of Humanities* touches on Youth Advocacy and Pedagogical Instructions, Impact of Orphanage-Based Interventions, Human Resource Management and Artistic Enterprise, Symbology, Identity, and Show as well as Business Paradigm in Contemporary Painting Space.

One of the papers, in this issue, reveals that pedagogical instructions enhanced climate sustainability by equipping youth with appropriate knowledge, skills, and platforms to engage in climate action initiatives. Youth advocacy conclusively, is expected to promote policy changes, community engagement, and sustainable practices while mitigating the impact of climate change. It is therefore, suggested that the holistic and inclusive approach to climate education should foster a generation of climate-conscious and empowered youth who can contribute to a more sustainable future for all.

Another paper also reveals that access to educational resources, teacher quality and availability of school facilities and infrastructures determines Quality Education needed for Economic Growth in Nigeria. It recommends that Government should allocate more funds for public education in order to be accessible to all.

This issue of *NIU Journal of Humanities* features many empirical and theoretical based articles which can be of great benefit to every reader.

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Youth Advocacy and Pedagogical Instructions as Efforts towards Climate Sustainability

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Abstract. Climate change undoubtedly is a pressing global issue which requires immediate attention and collective action. It is believed that youth can play a vital role in promoting sustainability and advocating for climate action. This is the motivation for the study as it x-rayed the impact of youth advocacy and pedagogical instructions on climate sustainability. The study examined the importance of education in empowering youth to contribute to sustainable development efforts. Adopting the theoretical framework of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, the research emphasized the role of education in shaping youth's attitudes, behaviours, and actions towards climate sustainability. A comprehensive review of existing literature was conducted using a systematic review methodology which showed the need for curriculum revisions that centred on Indigenous knowledges, integrated climate justice, and the upholding of relationality to the land. The findings suggested that pedagogical instructions enhanced climate sustainability by equipping youth with appropriate knowledge, skills, and platforms to engage in climate action initiatives. Youth advocacy

conclusively, is expected to promote policy changes, community engagement, and sustainable practices while mitigating the impact of climate change. As an imperative therefore, the holistic and inclusive approach to climate education should foster a generation of climate-conscious and empowered youth who can contribute to a more sustainable future for all.

Keywords: Youth Advocacy, Pedagogical Instructions, Climate Sustainability, Climate Education, Sustainable Development, Indigenous Knowledges, Climate Justice.

1. Introduction

Climate change presents one of the most pressing challenges to human survival, with widespread effects already visible across physical landscapes, agricultural systems, and vulnerable communities. In regions such as Ghana and other parts of Africa, climate variability is contributing to flooding, drought, food insecurity, and livelihood instability. The lived realities of communities exposed to these environmental risks are

compounded by limited policy action and the slow pace of systemic change. O'Brien and Selboe (2015) argue that climate change must be understood not only as an environmental concern but also as a social issue tied to development, justice, and equity. These perspectives suggest that effective responses must incorporate both scientific and civic engagement tools.

Young people on the other hand are increasingly recognised as central players in climate response efforts. Their population size, digital connectivity, and social awareness places them in a strong position to lead sustainability campaigns and demand political accountability. In Ghana for instance, youth organisations such as the Ghana Youth Environmental Movement (GYEM) and the Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO) have led public education, policy dialogues, and clean-up campaigns that directly engage communities. Bandura (2001) explains that people develop a sense of agency when they are able to reflect, plan, and act collectively to influence social outcomes. This form of civic participation is essential if climate advocacy is to achieve meaningful outcomes.

However, youth activism alone cannot resolve the deeper issues tied to climate inaction. Effective advocacy depends on climate literacy and values-based education. Pedagogical instruction provides a structured platform for developing informed perspectives on sustainability and equipping youth with relevant skills. Sterling (2010) observes that education always influences sustainability outcomes, either by reinforcing unsustainable thinking or by nurturing ecological awareness. This means that teaching methods, learning content, and classroom environments all matter in how young people interpret their role in climate solutions.

Across many countries, climate education remains underdeveloped. Existing science curricula often address climate change as a scientific phenomenon without linking it to real-world consequences, social inequality, or environmental justice. Mochizuki and Bryan (2015) point out that many school programs fail to connect climate learning with action-oriented and interdisciplinary thinking. In Ghana for instance as elsewhere, a young person may complete their entire basic and secondary education without exploring how environmental issues connect to local livelihoods, land use, or traditional knowledge systems. This weakens their ability to participate in climate debates or initiate community-level action.

While a growing body of scholarship has captured the importance of Indigenous knowledge in

environmental education, traditional systems of farming, water conservation, and community resilience often reflect long-standing relationships with nature that align with sustainability principles. It is to this end that climate education that incorporates such knowledge can help learners see the connection between their lived experiences and global climate issues. Bang *et al.* (2014) explain that education rooted in Indigenous perspectives allows students to see themselves as participants within ecological systems rather than passive observers. This point is valuable for promoting personal responsibility and environmental stewardship to which this study explores envisioning a climate education model that is youth-led, inclusive, and transformative.

1.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- Examine the role of pedagogical instructions in shaping youth attitudes, knowledge, and actions towards climate sustainability.
- Explore how youth advocacy contributes to climate sustainability through community mobilisation and civic participation.
- Assess the effectiveness of integrating Indigenous knowledge, climate justice, and relationality to land in climate education practices.
- Analyse the connection between transformative learning and the development of climate-conscious behaviours among youth.
- Evaluate how Bandura's Social Learning Theory explains peer influence, modelling, and social behaviour in youth climate engagement.

1.2 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following questions:

- In what ways do pedagogical instructions influence youth attitudes and actions toward climate sustainability?
- How does youth advocacy promote climate sustainability through civic participation and community practices?
- How does the integration of Indigenous knowledge, climate justice, and relationality to land strengthen the quality and impact of climate education?
- What forms of learning experiences reflect transformative learning among youth involved in climate action?

- How does Social Learning Theory explain the development of climate-conscious behaviours among youth through peer modelling and group influence?

2. Literature Review

Climate education plays a pivotal role in shaping young people's understanding of environmental challenges and their potential to influence climate sustainability. Educational systems are key tools for fostering environmental awareness and sustainable behaviour, but they frequently fall short. Monroe *et al.* (2017 p.14) assert that while there is growing support for climate literacy, most educational frameworks still prioritise cognitive knowledge over practical engagement and emotional investment. This limits the ability of learners to see themselves as agents of change. Effective climate education must then go beyond passive knowledge transmission to foster action, creativity, and collaboration. Mochizuki and Bryan (2015) observe that interdisciplinary and participatory learning such as project-based work and experiential methods strengthens environmental commitment and civic readiness. They argue for a reorientation of school culture to enable students to think critically, act collaboratively, and engage with uncertainty. These pedagogical orientations are particularly relevant in African contexts, where climate impacts are felt acutely but educational systems remain rigid.

Asare-Nuamah and Ameyaw (2023) note that environmental issues in the curriculum are often treated as abstract science topics, without sufficient linkage to livelihood realities, cultural systems, or sustainability practices. Young learners frequently complete their education without engaging meaningfully with climate adaptation or mitigation strategies. This disconnect reinforces a theory-practice gap that limits the relevance of school-based climate education. Sterling (2010) emphasises that education always influences sustainability either positively or negatively depending on whether it fosters systems thinking and ethical engagement. Without reforms that carries sustainability into all subjects, not just science or geography, schools risk perpetuating environmental detachment. This becomes even more problematic when learners do not see the climate crisis as personally relevant or socially urgent.

Another pressing concern is that many teachers lack the pedagogical tools, confidence, or professional development needed to deliver climate education effectively. Taber and Taylor (2009) found that even teachers who acknowledge the importance of

sustainability education feel constrained by examination pressures, curriculum overload, and limited institutional support. In Africa, teachers often rely on rote instruction due to systemic limitations and resource constraints. Cebrián and Junyent (2015) argue for a whole-school approach that integrates climate sustainability not only into the curriculum but also into school culture, operations, and leadership. It becomes the case that when students are immersed in environmentally conscious practices such as waste separation, tree planting, or energy-saving initiatives through a functional education, they are more likely to adopt pro-environmental habits.

Kuruppu and Willie (2015) stress that girls and young women in vulnerable regions face unique climate risks but are often excluded from science-based education and leadership opportunities bringing to the fore the importance of gender narratives in environmental advocacy. Youth movements across Africa are using grassroots campaigns, policy dialogues, and digital activism to demand sustainability reforms. Oduro (2018) documents how organisations like the Ghana Youth Environmental Movement and Green Africa Youth Organization mobilise thousands of young people for clean-up drives, public lectures, and governmental lobbying. Advocacy provides an outlet for agency just as Bandura (2001) explains that individuals cultivate a sense of agency when they can reflect, act, and observe the impact of their behaviour.

As a limitation, many advocacy groups lack stable funding, formal recognition, or access to decision-making spaces. Dos Santos (2021) argues that while national policies may mention youth engagement, they rarely provide operational frameworks for enabling this participation. As a result, youth voices are often side-lined in climate dialogues. Despite this, digital tools are expanding youth platforms and Della Porta and Parks (2014) iterate how social media enables young people to form transnational networks, amplify marginalised voices, and organise mass movements with limited resources. Online campaigns also allow youth to challenge dominant narratives, spread local stories, and call out government inaction. In Nigeria, hashtags such as #FridaysForFutureNG and #Youth4Climate have fostered local conversations that connect to global climate justice demands.

When students understand environmental laws, human rights, and governance systems through civic education, they are better positioned to influence policy and hold leaders accountable. Anderson (2012) observes that students exposed to climate and civic education simultaneously are more likely to volunteer, vote, and initiate community projects. This suggests

that integrating advocacy training into school curricula can empower more youth to drive environmental reforms. Yet activism without adequate climate literacy can lead to superficial engagement and Sterling (2010) warns that well-intentioned advocacy may fail to challenge root causes of environmental degradation if not backed by rigorous analysis and systemic awareness.

A very important aspect of this conversation is Indigenous knowledge systems which offer rich resources for sustainable living and environmental management. These systems include traditional farming methods, water conservation practices, communal land governance, and seasonal forecasting. Such knowledge is often marginalised in formal education and Bang *et al.* (2014) argue that curricula rooted in Indigenous perspectives help learners see themselves as actors within ecosystems, rather than external observers. This relational perspective fosters a sense of responsibility and grounded understanding. For instance, in Ghana's northern regions, knowledge about crop rotation, sacred groves, and traditional composting has been passed down for generations.

Educational policies however, often prioritise Western scientific models with Thomas *et al.* (2021) noting that schools across Africa continue to treat Indigenous epistemologies as peripheral, if not irrelevant, to modern education. This results in a disconnect where students are taught to value imported knowledge over the wisdom embedded in their own communities. Integrating Indigenous knowledge requires an epistemological shift that honour different ways of knowing. Dei and Simmons (2010) argue for a decolonised curriculum that balances empirical science with oral traditions, storytelling, and communal learning.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by two theoretical perspectives that explain how young people develop environmental behaviours and values. They are Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. These frameworks support the central argument of the study that youth can be empowered through both what they learn in school and how they participate in climate advocacy. Social Learning Theory, proposed by Bandura, is useful for understanding how youth pick up behaviours by observing others. Bandura (1977 p. 22) notes that "learning would be exceedingly laborious...if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions". Instead, individuals learn by watching others perform actions and then modelling

those behaviours. This is especially relevant in school environments, where peer influence is strong. When young people see their classmates or student leaders taking part in climate clubs, clean-up campaigns, or digital advocacy, they are more likely to engage as well. It is not the information alone that changes behaviour but seeing others doing something with that information.

Bandura also draws attention to the role of self-efficacy, which he defines as people's belief in their capacity to act (Bandura, 2001). A young person is more likely to join a local tree planting initiative or speak at a community meeting if they have been part of a group that values such actions and gives them space to try. This is why peer-led environmental projects in schools often lead to more lasting engagement. They help students feel that their actions matter and are supported. For this reason, schools and communities that encourage collaboration, student voice, and visible climate action tend to produce more climate-conscious youth. While Social Learning Theory explains how youth behaviours are externally shaped, it doesn't fully explain internal changes in values and thinking. This is where Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory comes into play. Mezirow (1997 p.5) argues that learning goes beyond gaining facts as it happens when people "critically examine their assumptions" and shift their perspectives. In climate education, this means helping students to see the deeper causes of climate change, such as patterns of inequality, extractive industries, and political inaction.

Both theories complement each other in this research such as, while Bandura helps explain how youth advocacy spreads through social circles and role modelling, Mezirow helps us see how deep changes in thinking can occur through education and the theories also support the research objectives. For instance, one of the aims of the study is to assess how teaching shapes youth action on climate. Social Learning Theory shows that collaborative and peer-driven methods work well. Another objective focuses on how transformative learning prepares youth for climate leadership and Mezirow's theory directly addresses this by showing how internal reflection leads to public action.

4. Methodology

Adopts a systematic literature review methodology, the study examines how youth advocacy and pedagogical instructions contribute to climate sustainability. This approach allows for a focused, structured analysis of peer-reviewed research that

aligns with the study's objectives and questions. A systematic review is especially relevant where the aim is not to test a specific hypothesis but to synthesise existing findings in order to identify trends, gaps, and implications for practice. The decision to use this methodology is based on the need for both depth and breadth. Petticrew and Roberts (2006) describe systematic reviews as useful when a field is fragmented or evolving, especially in policy-relevant areas like education and environmental sustainability. In this case, youth engagement with climate issues is expanding rapidly, but often studied in separate domains such as education, social activism, or Indigenous knowledge systems. The systematic approach helps to bring these strands together to form a coherent understanding.

4.1 Inclusion Criteria and Scope

The review focused on peer-reviewed academic literature published between 2005 and 2025. This 20-year span was selected to capture both foundational studies and more recent work, especially in light of growing youth climate movements and global education reforms. Only works written in English were considered. The studies reviewed include both theoretical and empirical research, with a focus on those that address:

- Pedagogical approaches to climate education
- Youth-led environmental advocacy
- Indigenous or community-based knowledge in environmental learning

The application of Social Learning Theory or Transformative Learning Theory in education or youth mobilisation

To ensure relevance to the African context, preference was given to studies that discuss climate education in Sub-Saharan Africa, youth engagement in low and middle-income countries, or globally relevant frameworks that have been applied in these settings. Studies that only covered climate science content without discussing education, behaviour, or youth participation were excluded. Likewise, purely technical or policy papers without links to learning or advocacy were not considered.

4.2 Search Process and Databases

The review was conducted through targeted searches in academic databases such as ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, JSTOR, MDPI, Google Scholar, as well as open-access platforms like ResearchGate. Key search terms included:

- i. "climate education" and "youth advocacy"
- ii. "transformative learning" and "climate action"

- iii. "social learning" and "environmental behaviour"
- "Indigenous knowledge" and "sustainability education"
- "Africa" and "climate curriculum" or "youth engagement"

Search results were screened manually by reading titles, abstracts, and keywords. A total of 30 articles were selected based on relevance, credibility, and alignment with the study objectives. To ensure objectivity, the screening process followed a simplified PRISMA flow which are: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Moher *et al.*, 2009, p. 3). Each article was read partially and categorised based on the thematic focus. Key data extracted included the authors' arguments, methods, main findings, geographical focus, and relevance to the five core themes of the study which are pedagogy, advocacy, Indigenous knowledge, social learning, transformative learning.

4.3 Analytical Strategy

The review applied a thematic analysis approach and Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It is flexible and suited for qualitative data such as published literature. The articles were first coded using the study objectives as a guide. Then, themes were developed that reflected how the literature answered the research questions. This method was selected because of its ability to handle both theoretical concepts and practice-based evidence. For instance, some studies explored classroom strategies for climate education, while others reported on youth-led advocacy projects. Thematic analysis helped to organise these insights into coherent categories such as "curriculum and relevance," "peer influence," "activism and agency," and "local knowledge in education." This process was not carried out using a software but through manual reading, coding, and note-taking, a method that Braun and Clarke (2019) argue still holds value when applied rigorously and transparently.

4.4 Limitations

While this methodology offers a structured and reflective approach to literature analysis, it has its limitations. First, it does not include primary data from young people, teachers, or policymakers. This limits the direct applicability of the findings to current field realities in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the literature reviewed covers a wide range of case studies and theoretical arguments that reflect lived experiences in similar contexts.

Second, access to some academic databases was restricted, especially behind paywalls. To address this, the study relied on a mix of open-access journals, institutional repositories, and publicly available research via platforms like ResearchGate. Only fully accessible papers were included to ensure accurate reading and referencing.

Third, while efforts were made to focus on Africa, most literature still originates from Western academic settings. Dei and Simmons (2010) argue that, African scholars are often underrepresented in global education discourses, despite their knowledge being central to sustainability debates. This calls for future research that includes more African-authored work and voices from the Global South. Despite these limitations, the systematic review provides a credible foundation for addressing the study's questions through diverse yet interrelated strands of scholarship to examine how education and advocacy shaped by social and transformative learning can support a generation of climate-conscious youth.

5. Findings

This section presents the results of the systematic literature review, structured around the core themes outlined in the research objectives and questions. The goal is to critically show how pedagogical instructions and youth advocacy are influencing climate sustainability, with emphasis on African narratives, education practice, and Indigenous knowledge. The findings also examine how learning experiences foster climate leadership through reflection, modelling, and collective action.

5.1 Pedagogical Instructions and Climate Understanding

One of the most consistent patterns across the literature is that formal education plays a crucial role in shaping young people's understanding and attitudes toward climate change. However, the quality and content of that education varies significantly. In most West African countries, climate content is present in science and geography syllabi but often presented in abstract, detached ways. Students may learn about greenhouse gases but not explore how drought affects their local food systems. Taber and Taylor (2009) note that when environmental education is overly technical, it fails to connect learners with lived realities.

In Ghana and Nigeria, for example, climate education is often exam-focused, with limited opportunity for critical thinking or community engagement. Asare-

Nuamah and Ameyaw (2023) observe that while youth express concern for the environment, they lack clear guidance on how to translate that concern into action. This gap is partly due to outdated curricula, but also to the way teachers are trained. Dos Santos (2021) found that many teachers lack confidence or competence in delivering climate content, especially through participatory or project-based methods. On the other hand, where pedagogy moves beyond rote instruction to incorporate discussion, storytelling, and local case studies, students develop a stronger emotional connection to climate issues. Sterling (2010) argues that education either reinforces unsustainable thinking or creates new ecological awareness, depending on how it is structured. The literature confirms that effective pedagogy is not just about including climate content, but also about creating learning environments that support inquiry, reflection and dialogue.

5.2 Youth Advocacy and Civic Mobilisation

Across multiple studies, young people were found to play roles as organisers, educators, influencers, and agitators for change. This is especially evident in grassroots movements like the Ghana Youth Environmental Movement (GYEM) or Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO), where young advocates use a mix of physical engagement and digital platforms to raise awareness. Bandura's (2001) theory of self-efficacy is reflected in many of these youth-led projects so that when youth have access to supportive networks and opportunities to speak publicly, their belief in their ability to influence change grows. This finding is supported by Sharma and Ahuja's (2020) case study in India, where school eco-clubs led to increased student confidence and sustained behaviour change.

One of the most important aspects of youth advocacy is how it builds collective identity. McGivney and Barry (2022) found that digital storytelling and campaign-building in South Africa not only educated the public but also gave youth a shared sense of purpose and belonging. These collective spaces foster the type of observation, reinforcement, and modelling that Bandura (1977) describes as core to behaviour change. In such spaces, new norms around climate responsibility can be created and sustained. However, the impact of youth advocacy is limited by structural factors. In Ghana, young people report difficulty accessing policymakers or sustaining attention on climate issues beyond the moment of crisis (Oduro, 2018). Many youth-led organisations are underfunded or operate informally, relying on volunteerism and social media to stay visible. While digital tools provide

reach, they do not always translate into policy shifts or institutional reform.

Despite these challenges, youth advocacy remains a critical force for change. It serves not only as a tool for awareness but also as a platform for developing leadership skills, political literacy, and resilience. When paired with supportive adult allies and clear pathways to influence, youth-led campaigns can help push education systems, local governments, and civil society actors toward more sustainable practices.

5.3 Indigenous Knowledge and Local Perspectives

A key finding in the reviewed literature is that climate education becomes more relevant and effective when it integrates Indigenous and local knowledge systems. Western scientific approaches to climate change though important often fail to capture the relational, lived, and culturally embedded aspects of environmental stewardship in African contexts. Bang *et al.* (2014) argue that education grounded in Indigenous worldviews teaches students to see themselves as part of ecological systems rather than separate from them. This relational understanding fosters responsibility, humility, and stewardship. In many rural communities in Ghana, for instance, children grow up observing rotational farming, seasonal land rituals, and community-based forest management. These practices are rich with sustainability principles, yet they are often excluded from formal classroom learning.

However, the integration of Indigenous knowledge into formal education faces resistance. Some educators view traditional beliefs as outdated or unscientific. Others lack training or resources to bridge the two systems meaningfully. This strengthens the importance of teacher education programs that equip future educators with tools to value and integrate local knowledge, not just transmit content.

5.4 Transformative Learning and Reflective Engagement

According to Mezirow (1997), transformation happens when learners are challenged to reflect on their assumptions, values, and identities. In the context of climate change, this means asking not only what causes global warming but how one's lifestyle, community practices, or national policies contribute to it. Taylor and Cranton (2013) explain that transformative education often begins with discomfort when students encounter perspectives or realities that challenge what they previously believed. For example, students who live in cities may not be aware of how

deforestation affects food security in rural areas. Classroom discussions, documentaries, or community visits can prompt critical reflection and shift thinking.

Monroe *et al.* (2017) found that students involved in climate education programs with real-world application were more likely to develop empathy and a sense of agency. These experiences help learners see climate change not just as a technical problem, but as a moral and social challenge. Fraser (2009) asserts that justice requires both the fair distribution of resources and the recognition of marginalised voices. Transformative learning supports this by encouraging students to see how climate change affects people unequally, and to think critically about systems of power and exclusion. Transformative learning is also essential for leadership development as youth who engage in critical reflection are more likely to speak out, challenge norms, and lead community initiatives. The literature confirms that reflection is not a passive act but a political and personal process that prepares learners for civic engagement.

5.5 Social Learning and Peer Influence

Bandura's Social Learning Theory shows how behaviours are reinforced through group norms, peer modelling, and feedback. Youth are more likely to adopt sustainable behaviours when those actions are seen as normal or valued within their social circles. Schools that promote collaborative activities such as peer mentoring, climate clubs, or joint campaigns help create these norms. Cebrián and Junyent (2015) found that when students work in teams on sustainability challenges, they develop not only knowledge but also a sense of shared responsibility. This also explains why youth-led campaigns are so effective: as they allow young people to learn from each other, take risks, and grow into leadership.

Social learning also extends beyond the classroom as the rise of social media has allowed climate messaging to spread rapidly among youth networks. Young people are now exposed to influencers, storytellers, and activists from around the world. This exposure shapes attitudes, builds solidarity, and creates pressure for local action. Della Porta and Parks (2014) shows that, global frames like "climate justice" are often adopted and localised by youth movements. Social learning also depends on positive role models with adult leaders, teachers, or community elders showing commitment to sustainability while the youths would likely follow.

6. Discussion

While the literature presents encouraging models of education and advocacy, it also reveals serious gaps. Many African schools still lack basic materials, trained teachers, or institutional frameworks to support climate learning. Even where national policy mentions environmental education, implementation is weak. Kuruppu and Willie (2015) note that adaptation plans often fail because education is not treated as a central strategy. In addition, young people face real barriers to participation. Limited access to policy spaces, digital inequality, and adult gatekeeping reduce the impact of youth advocacy. Jabber *et al.* (2023) argue that leadership structures in many institutions do not yet support youth voice or innovation.

The review confirms that pedagogical instruction goes beyond content delivery as it plays a fundamental role in shaping learners' worldviews, behaviours, and agency. Education that is abstract, exam-oriented, and detached from local contexts fails to prepare youth for real-world engagement with climate issues. However, where climate education is interdisciplinary, experiential, and emotionally engaging, students are more likely to develop pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours. This supports Sterling's (2010) claim that education can either reinforce or disrupt unsustainable mindsets, depending on how it is structured. Learning must be active, reflective, and connected to the community. Students who learn about climate impacts in their own regions through farm visits, storytelling, or school-based projects are better able to relate knowledge to action. This aligns with one of the core research objectives which is to examine how pedagogical instructions influence attitudes and actions. It also shows that climate education should not be treated as a stand-alone topic but integrated across subjects such as agriculture, social studies, and civic education.

The literature also raises concerns about teacher preparedness. Many educators lack training in climate education and do not feel confident delivering participatory or interdisciplinary content. This gap undermines the transformative potential of the classroom. Pre-service teacher education must include sustainability education, and in-service teachers should be equipped with the tools and resources to make climate content meaningful and actionable. Youth-led advocacy efforts are not simply extensions of education but spaces of independent agency. In movements such as GYEM and GAYO in Ghana, young people demonstrate initiative, creativity, and commitment in ways that complement formal learning. These platforms provide opportunities for

civic participation, campaign organising, and policy engagement.

Bandura's (2001) concept of self-efficacy explains why participation in youth movements enhances a sense of power and responsibility. Young people who see themselves making a difference even at the community level are more likely to remain engaged and develop stronger leadership identities. Peer learning and collective action, as explained in Social Learning Theory, also reinforce this engagement. When climate-positive behaviours are normalised within youth networks, it creates a ripple effect that encourages broader community participation.

However, youth advocacy is often undervalued or ignored by decision-makers. Many youth leaders operate without formal recognition, and their access to funding or political spaces remains limited. This creates frustration even among passionate advocates. If institutions are to take sustainability seriously, they must include youth perspectives not as symbolic gestures, but as essential contributions to climate governance. This relates to the research question on how youth advocacy contributes to sustainability through civic participation and community mobilisation. The findings show that youth can be effective agents of change, but only when their work is legitimised, resourced, and integrated into broader policy structures.

A recurring theme in the review is that Indigenous knowledge systems offer valuable insights into sustainable living. In African contexts, many of these practices such as seasonal farming, composting, and water conservation are already part of community life. Yet they are frequently excluded from formal education. This exclusion reflects a broader colonial bias in curriculum design, where Western scientific knowledge is seen as superior. Mezirow's (1997) idea of transformation through critical reflection is useful here. When students are encouraged to explore and question dominant narratives, they begin to see the value of their own traditions and practices. This validates local knowledge, builds pride, and supports sustainability from within communities. Bang *et al.* (2014) also argue that Indigenous knowledge allows learners to view themselves as part of ecological systems, fostering responsibility and care.

Another finding from the literature is that education can lead to deep shifts in thinking and behaviour but only when it involves reflection and emotional engagement. Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory helps explain how students develop a new sense of self and responsibility when exposed to

perspectives that challenge their assumptions. These shifts often begin with discomfort but lead to empowerment. This is especially important for climate education, where young people must move beyond technical knowledge to ethical reflection. Learning about deforestation or pollution is not enough as students must be encouraged to ask difficult questions such as: Who is responsible? Who is affected most? What can I do in my school or community? These are the kinds of questions that lead to civic engagement.

Social Learning Theory complements this by showing how peer modelling and group work support behaviour change. Youth are more likely to adopt climate-friendly habits when these actions are normalised in their peer groups. This is visible in school clubs, community campaigns, and digital networks where youth influence one another through shared action. Together, these two theories support the study's findings and provide a solid foundation for interpreting how pedagogy and advocacy interact. They also answer two key research questions which are: how transformative learning influences behaviour, and how social learning explains group dynamics in youth climate action.

Many African education systems however, lack the infrastructure, political will, or funding to implement climate education meaningfully. Even when environmental topics appear in policy documents, they are often not enforced at the school level. Teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms, and rigid curricula all make it difficult to implement participatory or contextualised learning. Kuruppu and Willie (2015) point out that, education is often treated as an afterthought in climate adaptation planning, rather than as a central tool for resilience. Youth-led efforts also face limitations. Many youth organisations operate informally and depend on volunteerism. While this speaks to their passion, it also creates stress on their parts. Without sustainable funding or institutional support, youth advocacy risks becoming loud but ineffective. These challenges reflect the final research question with the answer lying in both policy and practice.

7. Conclusion

This study set out to explore how youth advocacy and pedagogical instruction can support efforts toward climate sustainability. The review and synthesis of literature showed that education and advocacy are not isolated strategies but interconnected tools for building climate consciousness and environmental action among youth. Across African contexts, the findings reveal both the promise and the limitations of

current educational and advocacy efforts. Education, when delivered through participatory, reflective, and context-sensitive methods, has the potential to transform young people's understanding of climate change from a distant, abstract threat to a lived and shared responsibility. This transformation does not occur through content alone, but through how learning is structured via dialogue, storytelling, group projects, and local relevance. The integration of Indigenous knowledge, as shown, makes education more culturally grounded and accessible, helping students to link global climate issues with their lived experiences.

Youth advocacy connects learning with leadership where young people are empowered with the right knowledge and support and do not need to wait for the future. From community clean-ups to digital campaigns, youths across Africa are showing that climate action is not just a policy issue but a personal and generational one. However, systemic limitations such as poor policy implementation, lack of access to decision-making platforms, and under-resourced schools continue to undermine these efforts. This is where theoretical insights from Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory help explain why these dynamics matter. Youth respond to peer influence, role modelling, and shared engagement as they grow when they reflect, challenge assumptions, and are trusted with responsibilities. Education and advocacy, then, are not simply tools but processes that help build a generation of climate-conscious citizens capable of influencing change at both local and systemic levels.

8. Recommendations

Based on the literature and analysis presented so far, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Climate:** Climate education more relevant and responsive to local realities.
- **Training Teachers in Climate Pedagogy:** Inquiry-based learning, storytelling, and project-based learning.
- **Strengthen Youth-Led Advocacy Platforms:** Governments and development partners should invest in youth organisations that focus on environmental issues.
- **Integrate Indigenous Knowledge in School and Community Learning:** Education stakeholders should create bridges between formal schooling and Indigenous knowledge systems.
- **Encourage Peer-Led Learning and Climate Clubs:** Schools should support the formation

of student-led environmental clubs as these clubs provide safe spaces.

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Socio-Economic Status, Determinant of Access to Quality Education and Economic Growth in Nigeria

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Abstract. In Nigeria, socioeconomic disparities often lead to unequal access to education thereby limiting the potential for upward mobility and contribution to persistent poverty. A survey research design was employed in this work as it's a design type that affords the researcher the ability to study a very large population in order to discover varied characteristics. Population comprised staff of Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. A sample of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents was used in the conduct of this work. Through purposive random sampling technique, academic and non-academic staff was selected from various departments across the institution. A self-designed instrument titled, "SESANDAQEENGNO" Socio-Economic Status and Determinant of Access to Quality Education for Economic Growth in Nigeria Questionnaire was used to gather data needed in the study. This instrument was divided into three subscales of 20 items in all. Content and construct validity was determined by two experts in the department of Educational Foundations, Delta State University. Cronbach alpha reliability was used to determine how reliable items in the scale are with r-value of .863, internal consistency was met. Frequency and percentage analysis was used to analyse bio-data of respondents while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used for items and hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed access to educational resources, teacher quality and availability of school facilities and infrastructures determines Quality Education needed for Economic Growth in Nigeria. It then concluded that SES determines the quality of living standard in Nigeria which ultimately impact economic growth. The study recommended that Government should allocate more funds for public education in order to be accessible to all.

Keywords: Socio-Economic Status, Quality Education, Economic Growth, Teacher Quality, Standard

1. Background to the Study

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental pillar for sustainable development and economic growth. In Nigeria, access to quality education remains a significant challenge, with the socioeconomic status (SES) of individuals and households being a key determinant of educational opportunities. Socioeconomic status refers to the social and economic factors that influence the position of individuals or families within society, such as income, education level, occupation, and wealth. Research indicates that socioeconomic disparities often lead to unequal access to education, limiting the potential for upward mobility and contributing to persistent poverty (Koomson, 2020). As Nigeria strives for economic growth, addressing the relationship between SES and education is crucial for unlocking human capital development.

The importance of education in fostering economic growth cannot be overstated, as it is a direct driver of productivity, innovation, and competitiveness (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). However, access to quality education in Nigeria is unevenly distributed, with those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often facing significant barriers in accessing education. This disparity is most apparent in rural areas where poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited educational resources exacerbate the challenges faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Okebukola, 2018). The impact of socioeconomic status on educational attainment is particularly pronounced in Nigeria, where the education system is often plagued by inadequate funding, teacher shortages, and overcrowded classrooms, which disproportionately affect students from lower SES households.

The influence of SES on educational outcomes in Nigeria has been well documented, with studies showing that children from wealthier families tend to perform better academically than their peers from

poorer households (Adebayo, 2021). In Nigeria, children from high SES families are more likely to attend better-equipped schools, receive additional educational support, and have access to opportunities such as private tutoring and extracurricular activities. Conversely, children from low SES backgrounds are often confined to underfunded public schools that lack basic amenities such as textbooks, qualified teachers, and safe learning environments. This unequal distribution of educational resources perpetuates the cycle of poverty, as individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to acquire the skills and qualifications needed to secure well-paying jobs.

The role of government policy in addressing the SES-related disparities in education is critical for fostering equitable access to quality education. Nigeria has made several attempts to address these issues, including the introduction of free education policies and the establishment of various scholarship programs aimed at increasing enrollment in schools. However, these efforts have been largely ineffective due to issues such as corruption, mismanagement of resources, and inadequate implementation strategies (Ademola & Olawale, 2019). Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive data on the impact of SES on educational outcomes has hindered the development of targeted policies and interventions that could effectively address these disparities.

One key challenge in addressing the SES-education gap in Nigeria is the limited role of private sector investment in education. While the private sector plays a significant role in providing educational services, it primarily caters to the affluent, leaving children from lower-income families with limited options for quality education. According to studies, private schools often offer better facilities, teaching resources, and a higher standard of education, but their high tuition fees make them inaccessible to most families (Oluwatayo & Adesina, 2020). This leaves many children from low SES households trapped in a cycle of subpar educational experiences, which significantly limits their future economic prospects.

The impact of low SES on access to education extends beyond the individual level to affect national economic development. Educated individuals are more likely to contribute to economic growth by engaging in productive employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation. In contrast, those who are denied access to quality education are more likely to remain in low-income, unskilled labor sectors, limiting their ability to contribute to the broader economy (Gershberg, 2022). In Nigeria, this

lack of human capital development is one of the factors that has contributed to the country's slow economic growth despite its large population and abundant natural resources. Closing the education gap for low SES children is therefore essential for fostering inclusive growth and reducing poverty.

Furthermore, the gender dimension of SES and education in Nigeria cannot be ignored. In many Nigerian communities, girls from low-income families face additional barriers to education, such as early marriage, cultural norms, and household responsibilities. Studies have shown that girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to attend school and more likely to drop out before completing their education (Adebisi, 2021). Addressing the intersection of gender and SES in educational access is essential for ensuring that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have the opportunity to benefit from quality education and contribute to economic development. Hence, the study tries to investigate socio-economic status and determinant of access to quality education for economic growth in Nigeria, using staff of Delta State University, Abraka.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the socioeconomic status (SES) of individuals significantly influences their access to quality education, which in turn affects the country's potential for sustainable economic growth. Despite efforts to improve the education sector, there remains a stark disparity in educational opportunities between individuals from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Lower-income households often face significant barriers, such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of educational resources, and inability to afford school fees, which limit their access to quality education. This inequality not only hampers the educational outcomes of these individuals but also undermines the nation's overall economic development. Understanding how socioeconomic status impacts access to quality education is crucial for devising policies that can bridge this gap, foster human capital development, and ultimately drive economic growth in Nigeria. Thus, this study seeks to examine how different levels of socioeconomic status serve as a determinant for access to quality education and its implications for economic progress in Nigeria.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to justify how Socio-economic status determines access to quality

education for economic growth in Nigeria. However, its specific objectives are targeted at:

- State how teachers' quality determines the quality of education.
- Narrate how availability of school facilities and infrastructures determine the quality of education.
- Examine if access to quality education has impact on economic growth.

1.3 Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were structured and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₁: Teacher quality will not significantly determine the quality education.

H₂: Availability of school facilities and infrastructures will not significantly determine the quality of education.

H₃: Access to quality education will not significantly have impact on economic growth.

In the course of acquiring quality education which spurs economic growth in Nigeria, unlike other economies, SES has been found to play significant roles, including:

• Access to Educational Resources

Children from higher SES families are more likely to have access to essential educational resources such as textbooks, internet access, and private tutoring. According to the World Bank (2018), students from wealthier households in Nigeria are more likely to perform better academically due to better access to learning materials and supplementary educational support. Conversely, children from lower SES backgrounds may struggle to afford these resources, which significantly affect their learning outcomes.

• School Facilities and Infrastructure

SES also affects the infrastructure of schools. Wealthier areas tend to have better-funded schools with modern facilities, such as libraries, computer labs, and science laboratories, which can enhance the learning experience. In contrast, schools in poorer regions often suffer from inadequate infrastructure and overcrowded classrooms, which can hinder effective teaching and learning.

• Teacher Quality

SES impacts the quality of teachers, as schools in wealthier areas often have access to better-trained and more experienced educators. Teachers in affluent areas are also more likely to receive professional development opportunities, leading to improved teaching practices. On the other hand, schools in economically disadvantaged areas may struggle to

attract qualified teachers, resulting in lower-quality education.

• Parental Support and Involvement

Parental involvement is closely linked to socio-economic status, with children from higher SES families benefiting from more active parental engagement in their academic progress. SES influences parental involvement in a child's education. Higher-income families tend to be more involved in their children's schooling, offering additional academic support and resources, while lower-income families may face challenges in providing similar levels of support due to time constraints or lack of education themselves. This discrepancy can impact student performance.

• Health and Nutrition

Health and nutrition disparities, which correlate with socio-economic status, significantly affect the educational outcomes of children, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Children from higher SES families are more likely to receive proper nutrition and healthcare, which are vital for cognitive development and academic performance. Poor nutrition and health issues are more common among children from lower SES backgrounds, and these factors can negatively affect their ability to focus and perform well in school.

• School Choice and Equity

Families with higher SES have the ability to choose schools with better facilities, more qualified teachers, and a more rigorous curriculum. This creates an educational divide, where children from wealthier families often attend private or well-funded public schools, while children from lower SES families have limited school options, usually attending underfunded schools with fewer resources. Oketch et al. (2010): "Socio-economic status is a key determinant in school choice, with wealthier families able to access better educational institutions and poorer families constrained to low-quality public schools.

• Peer Influence and Social Capital

According to Adegoke (2012), social capital, including peer networks, is strongly linked to socio-economic status, with higher SES students having access to more supportive academic environments and peer groups. Children from higher SES families often benefit from attending schools with peers who share similar social and academic expectations. This positive peer influence can enhance motivation and academic performance. In contrast, students from lower SES backgrounds may face challenges related to peer influence, such as disengagement or lower academic expectations, which can negatively affect their performance.

However, socioeconomic status is a critical determinant of access to quality education in Nigeria, with profound implications for individual and national

economic growth. While various interventions have been made, the persistent disparities in educational access between high and low SES households highlight the need for comprehensive and targeted policy reforms. A focused approach to addressing these inequalities, including improved funding for public education, greater investment in teacher training, and enhanced private sector involvement, is necessary for Nigeria to fully leverage its human capital potential and drive sustainable economic development. Addressing the SES-education link will not only improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children but also contribute to reducing poverty and fostering inclusive economic growth in the country. Again 8 12 targeted policies that ensure more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across different socioeconomic groups should be encouraged.

2. Quality of Education and Economic Growth

In the study of Hanushek and Wobmann (2007), it was observed that role of improved schooling, as a central part of most development strategies, has become debatable, in the sense that expansion of school attainment is yet to promote improved economic conditions. Further, it was evidenced that cognitive skills of graduates, other than mere school achievement correlates with individual earnings, to income distribution, and ultimately to economic growth.

In the same vein, empirical outcomes show the significance of both minimal and high-level skills, the complementarity of skills and the quality of economic institutions, and the soundness of the relationship between skills and growth.

Accordingly, Musibau, Vespignania & Yanottia (2024), investigated the impact of education quality on economic growth in 37 OECD countries, by developing a new dataset that combines mixed-frequency data, including low-frequency data (every three years) from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and annual data from the World Development Indicators (WDI), over the period from 2000 to 2018. It was found that a 1% increase in educational quality contributes to an annual economic

growth rate of 2.8%, which was significantly higher than previous research, resulting on growth rates ranging from 0.4% to 2.3%, based on cross-sectional PISA data.

Growth in economic indicators has been found to determines the future well-being of many societies, although, attempt to influence it has proved to be difficult to many nations (Hanushek & Woessmann (2021). Empirical evidences of different growth rates reach a simple conclusion: long-run growth in gross domestic product (GDP) is largely determined by the skills of a nation’s population (Hanushek, 2015). Furthermore, education according to Khan, Sarwar and Niazi (2023), impacts positively on economic growth in developing countries, owing to investigation carried out on the outcome of education system on economic growth in Pakistan.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed the use of survey research design since this design affords the researcher the ability to study a very large population in order to discover varied observations. Population comprised all married persons in Nigeria as target group consisted of staff of Delta State University, DELSU, Abraka Delta state. The reason for the choice of this group is centred on them been classified as the middle class in the employment chain in Nigeria. A sample of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents was used in the work. With the use of purposive random sampling technique, the researcher selected respondents from both academic and non-academic department of the institution. A self-designed instrument titled, “SESANDAQEEGNQ” Socio-Economic status and determinant of Access to Quality Education for Economic Growth in Nigeria was used to source for data needed in the study. This instrument was divided into three Sub-scale with 20 items in general. Content and construct validity was determined by two experts in the department of Educational Sociology, Delta State University. Cronbach alpha form of reliability was used to determine how reliable items in the scale are. With r-value of .863, internal consistency is met. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) was used to analyse bio-data of respondents while mean and standard deviation was used to analyse items.

4. Presentation of Data and Interpretation

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis on Gender

Variables	Gender	F	Percentage
1	Male	55	46%
2	Female	65	54%
Total		120	100

Source: Field Work (2025)

The above table shows that male participants accounted for 55 (46%) and women 65(54%). It is obvious more female are involved in this study than their male counterpart.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis on designation (Academics)

Variable	Designation	F	Percentage
1	Professor	1	3%
2	Senior Lecturers	5	17%
3	Lecturers I	9	30%
4	Lecturers II	15	50%
	Total	30	100

Source: Field Work (2025)

From table 2, one Professor representing 3%, 5Senior Lecturer (17%), Lecturer1 (30%) and Lecturer II (50%); the data shows that Junior lecturers were mainly involved in this study as they accounted for 80% of the study frame.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis on Designation (Non-Academics)

Variable	Designation	F	Percentage
1	Senior Assistant Registras	8	8%
2	Principal Assistant Registras	12	13%
3	Assistant Registra	30	33%
4	Higher Executive Officers	40	44%
	Total	90	100

Source: Field Work (2025)

Information on Table 3 shows that Senior Assistant Registras accounted for 8(8%), Principal Assistant Registras 12(13%), Assistant Registras 30(33%) and Higher Executive Officers 40(44%). It reveals that lower officers in the non-academic cadres were more involved in this work as they account for 70(77%).

Testing of Hypotheses

H₁: Teacher quality will not significantly determine quality education aimed at economic growth

Table 4: Correlation analysis showing relationship between teacher quality and quality education

Variables	N	Mean	SD	P	r-cal	Sig	Remark
Teacher quality	120	3.62	.87	.05	.842	.004	Significant
Quality education	120	2.96	.69				
Total	120						

Information from Table 4 reveals that 120 respondents were captured in this work as teacher quality maintained a relatively higher mean and standard deviation value than quality education with r-calculatedvalueat.842, it shows positively strong relationship between both variable, howeveratsigvalueat.004lowerthanthe P-value (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative which states that teacher quality will significantly determine quality education aimed at economic growth is retained.

H₂: Availability of school facilities and infrastructures will not significantly determine the quality of education

Table 5: Correlation analysis showing relationship between availability of school facilities and infrastructures and quality education

Variables	N	Mean	SD	P	r-cal	Sig	Remark
Availability of School Resources & Infrastructures	120	3.07	.79	.05	.779	.008	Significant
Quality education	120	2.96	.69				
Total	120						

Information from Table 5 reveals that 120 respondents were captured in this work as availability of school resources & infrastructures also maintained a relatively higher mean and standard deviation value than quality education. With r-calculated value at P-value (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative which .779, it shows positively strong relationship between both variables, however at sig value at .006 lower than the states that availability of schoolresources&infrastructureswillsignificantlydeterminequalityeducationaimedateconomicgrowththis retained.

H₃: Quality education will not significantly have impact on economic growth

Table 6: Correlation analysis showing relationship between educational resources and quality education

Variables	N	Mean	SD	P	r-cal	Sig	Remark
Educational resources	120	3.11	.84	.05	.822	.019	Significant
Quality education	120	2.96	.69				
Total	120						

Also, Table 6 reveals that 120 respondents were captured in this work as educational resources also maintained a relatively higher mean and standard deviation value than quality education. With r-calculated value at .822, it shows positively strong relationship between both variables, however at sig value at .019 lower than the P-value (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative which states that educational resources will significantly determine quality education aimed at economic growth is retained.

5. Discussion of findings

From hypothesis 1 the result revealed that teacher quality will significantly determine quality education aimed at economic growth in Nigeria. Teacher quality is improved when manpower they are privy to in-service trainings, exposure, seminars and workshops. Teachers in rural and low-income areas often face challenges such as low morale, insufficient professional development, and lack of resources, all of which contribute to lower teaching quality. The outcome of this finding corroborates with that of National Teachers Institute (2015) that noted SES impacts quality of teachers in school settings. Schools in wealthier environment often have access to better trained and experienced teachers/educators. Teachers in wealthier climes are more likely to receive professional developed opportunities leading to improved teaching exercises. On the alternative schools in economically disadvantaged environment would likely struggle to attract competent and qualified instructors which of course result in lower quality of education.

Also, in hypothesis 2, the finding revealed availability of school facilities and infrastructures will significantly determine quality of education aimed at promoting economic growth. Economic growth

thrives well when quality education 2 is assured. The disparity in educational infrastructure between urban and rural schools in Nigeria is a result of socioeconomic inequalities, with urban schools typically offering better facilities and teaching resources. The findings conform to a study by UNICEF (2017) who affirmed that availability of school facilities and infrastructures goes a long way to determine the quality of education in a school. They reiterated that wealthier areas and communities tend to have better funded schools with modern facilities such as libraries, computers laboratories and scientific equipment for learners to internalise content mastery. The availability of these facilities and infrastructures enhance learning experience. In contrast, schools located in poorer cities and communities suffer from lack and inadequate infrastructures, overcrowded classrooms among others which can prevent effective teaching and learning exercise. Also in hypothesis 3, the result revealed that access to quality education will significantly has impact on economic growth. These quality education in terms of adequate resources contribute towards an enriched teaching and learning environment which fosters economic growth. Income inequality and the unequal access to education resources are significant contributors to disparities in educational outcomes in Nigeria. The result of this work agrees with that World Bank (2018) that claimed pupils from wealthier homes are more likely to perform better academically due to better access to learning materials and supplementary educational support. Children from higher SES families are more likely to have access to essential educational resources like textbooks, internet access and private tutoring. Meanwhile, children from lower SES would likely struggle to afford these resources which significantly affects their learning abilities and outcomes.

6. Conclusion

Every nation of the world work towards achieving economic growth and development since countries that attain this level often enjoy an improved Socio-Economic Status (SES) through improved quality education, functional security network that guarantees security of lives and properties, quality labour force, robust human resource management system, technology driven economy among others. From this work, the researcher concluded that SES determines the quality of living standard of citizens living in a geographical climate. It also concluded that SES maintains positive relationship with quality education because the spectrum of SES met determines the quality of education to be exposed.

7. Recommendations

At the end of this study the researchers recommended the following:

- Government should allocate more funds for public education so that its reach can be accessible to all
- More investment should be put into teacher training and development so as to improve on quality of teaching and seasoned information.
- More Public-Private Partnerships should be encouraged in the educational sector in order to maximise limited resources.

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Gender Perspectives in Social Exclusion among Persons With Disabilities in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State

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Abstract. Gender inequality is a global phenomenon and has evolved over several years in terms of meaning, relativity, relevance and impact. This paper shows different areas of social exclusion of persons with disabilities through a gender lens. This study was carried out in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, which is part of Benin Metropolis, the capital of Edo State. The study focused on male and female adults with visual, physical, speech and hearing disabilities as well as albinism. Case study design was used and the sampling technique employed was the purposive sampling which helped to identify specific participants for this study. The qualitative data collection approach was used in this study. Data was collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews that gave quality responses to inquiry. The data collection tool that was used in the study was an interview guide for the focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews. Persons with disabilities participated in focused group discussions and in-depth interview and articulated their perceptions and experiences as it relates to this phenomenon. Review of relevant literature as secondary source of data from journals, books and other resource materials in the internet was carried out to provide insight into the gender perspectives of social exclusion among persons with disabilities from the global perspective to the subnational region of Nigeria to give adequate context. Women with disabilities in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria face more social exclusion issues than men with disabilities in Oredo Local Government Area especially as it relates to employment, relationships and socio-economic status. This paper highlights and recommends proper gender mainstreaming for persons with disabilities in Oredo Local Government Area in employment, education, health care and social life.

Keywords: Gender, Women, Social Exclusion, Persons with disabilities, Discrimination.

1. Introduction

The concept of gender has emerged for over thirty years and definitions have evolved over time. In development cooperation, the discussion inspired by feminism centred on “gender”, moved then on to “women in development (WID)” within the eighties and during the beginning of the nineties to “gender and development GAD” (DFID, 2005). On the operational level, most of the development stakeholders developed policies and operational tools with a twin-track approach that includes two elements, gender mainstreaming and specific empowerment of women, in order to achieve gender equality. While the empowerment of women has taken place over time, there was no sufficient implementation of gender mainstreaming, as main stakeholders confirm (Asian Development Bank, 2013). A number of the Nigerian women experience various right issues and prejudices under some existing laws, igniting some critical debates considering the gaping display of socioeconomic deprivation and political marginalization (Omorogiuwa, 2022). Exploring the rights of women in a challenging society such as Nigeria, unearths a lot of issues underpinning to the nation’s socio-legal framework (Omorogiuwa, 2020).

There is a huge gender gap in disability with respect to gender norms and values attributed to women and girls with disabilities which vary enormously depending on the cultural context (Ziegler, 2014). Another gender inequality issue, concerns the role of women and girls as daily caretakers for family members with disabilities (World Report on Disability, 2011). Gender and disability are interwoven in terms of intersectional and multi-discrimination. Both women and men with disabilities face inequalities because of their disability, but their experiences differ depending on their gender. The situation of women with disabilities is especially difficult. They are worse off than women without disabilities and also face more challenges than their male peers because of gender stereotypes that push women and men into traditional

roles (EIGE, 2018). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities UNCRPD (2006) acknowledges, officially, the double discrimination based on gender and disability and confirms that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination.

Equality between women and men (gender equality): refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development (UN Women, 2010).

Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, the relationships between women and men, and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context, time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age (ibid).

Social exclusion refers to the lack of access to resources, social services, information and participation in social activities by persons with disabilities. On the other hand, social inclusion is not just a mere opposite of social exclusion but the deliberate, continuous and sustainable involvement of persons with disabilities through established structures, policies, social investments and interventions. Disability refers to the reduced or non-functioning of certain physical and mental attributes of the human body that limits a person. Disability is defined as a deprivation in terms of functioning(s) and/or capability(s) among persons with health deprivations (Mitra, 2018). Persons with disabilities

are those who have been limited in function to a certain extent based on the deformity or absence of certain features which could be visual, hearing, limb or speech. The nomenclature for persons with disabilities has evolved over time ranging from disabled persons to persons with disabilities so much so that there is a slogan which states that in every disability, there is ability.

2. Gender Perspectives of Social Exclusion among Persons with Disabilities

It is estimated that about one in five women live with a disability. The average prevalence rate in the female population 18 years and older is 19.2 per cent, compared to 12 per cent for males (WHO & World Bank, 2011). In low and middle-income countries, women are estimated to comprise up to three-quarters of persons with disabilities (Plan International, 2011). Women and girls with disabilities face increased risk of violence and abuse, including sexual violence and gender-based discriminatory practices (UN Women, 2018). Systemic and historical marginalization as well as attitudinal and environmental barriers hinder the participation and inclusion in society of women and girls with disabilities on an equal basis with others. These barriers often lead to lower economic and social status, increased risk of violence and abuse, including sexual violence, discrimination as well as harmful gender-based discriminatory practices, barriers in access to education, health care (including sexual and reproductive health), information and services, justice, as well as civic and political participation (ibid).

In many situations these barriers are even more significant for women with disabilities, compared to men with disabilities (WHO, 2011). There is also the issue of marriage rate to be higher for men with disabilities than for women with disabilities. Furthermore, the gender inequality for men and women with disabilities was also expressed by some respondents in Lagos and Kano states in the United Nations Women's 2021 COVID-19 impact survey for women with disabilities, many of whom believed that though men had a harder time during COVID-19, women's voices and perspectives were not listened to by all levels of leadership and society. As a result, this impacted the support and opportunities that they were given. This is usually the situation in a patriarchal society which demonstrates a culture that attributes superiority to one sex over the other and exposes the sex that is considered to be inferior to various forms of discrimination (Ngwankwe, 2002; Yuka & Omorogiuwa, 2022).

Men with disabilities have a lower risk of poverty (19 %) compared to women with disabilities, but they still have a higher risk compared to men without disabilities (15 %). Also, 19% of men with disabilities have access to banking while the proportion for women with disabilities having a bank account stands at a mere 4% (General Household Survey, 2012). Women and men with disabilities have a lower chance of getting employment than women and men without disabilities even if they have the same educational qualifications. They are usually not considered as an option especially when it involves an agile working environment. Women with mental disability irrespective of the severity have no chance at all. Omorogiuwa (2019) stated that mental disability produces characteristic symptoms in which the disturbances of reflex action play a very big role and so affects ability to function effectively. Low participation in the labour market, low work intensity and discrimination are the main factors that lead to a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion for persons with disabilities compared to the rest of the population (EIGE, 2016). Women with disabilities are at greater risk of poverty than men with disabilities, because of lower access to education and vocational skills development opportunities. This negatively affects women with disabilities' possibilities to work and gain their economic independence as compared to men with disabilities and women without disabilities (European Disability Forum, 2023). Although all persons with disabilities face barriers to employment, men with disabilities have been found to be almost twice as likely to be employed as women with disabilities (O'Reilly, 2003).

The Gender Equality Index shows that women do the bulk of the cooking, household tasks and care work. This also applies to women with disabilities, of whom 79 % do housework every day, compared to 41 % of men with disabilities (EIGE, 2018). Women including those with disabilities demonstrate a high level of resilience in difficult situations especially those with social and cultural bearings. Resilience is understood to be the cumulative effect of multiple protective or coping factors that allow women to be successful despite adversity (Campbell-sills et al., 2006; Omorogiuwa, 2017). However, men with disabilities also tend to be stigmatised by society and often socially marginalized due to their "disabled" body (Friedman & Owen, 2017). Furthermore, with respect to social status, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018) stated that although both women and men with disabilities are underrepresented, evidence from 19 countries in 2017 shows that only 2.3 per cent of women with disabilities, compared to 2.8 per cent of men with

disabilities, held a position as a legislator, senior official, or manager.

3. Research Methodology

This study was carried out in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, which is part of Benin City Metropolis, the capital of Edo State. The study focused on male and female adults with visual, physical, speech and hearing disabilities as well as albinism. It targeted individuals within the ages of 18 to 65 years of age; 18 persons from the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities who participated in focus group discussions as well as in-depth interviews of 2 social work professionals from a Non-Governmental Organization and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

Case study design was used and the sampling technique employed was purposive sampling which helped to identify specific participants for this study. The qualitative data collection approach was used in this study. Data was collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews that gave quality response to inquiry. The data collection tool that was used in the study was an interview guide for the focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews. Primary and secondary sources of data were employed to collect data for this study. The primary source was from the use of the interview guide for interviews and focused group discussions of participants, while the secondary sources of data included literature review on information relating to the study topic from journals and articles. The data collected were analysed using the thematic content analysis of the transcript of the responses given at the focused group discussions and in-depth interviews. The study ensured the ethical conduct of the study by obtaining approval and informed consent from the participants.

4. Data Presentation

The study examines the impact of social exclusion on the welfare of persons with disabilities in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section of the in-depth interview guide and focus group discussion guide examines the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, which are essential for understanding the impact of social exclusion on the welfare of persons with disabilities in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State. Key socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, educational

background, and type of disability offer valuable insights into their lived experiences and the extent of their social inclusion or exclusion. Understanding these characteristics helps contextualize the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, particularly regarding access to education, employment, healthcare, and social services. By analyzing socio-demographic data, this study seeks to identify patterns and disparities contributing to social exclusion and marginalization. Furthermore, this information provides a clearer picture of how different demographic groups experience social exclusion, thereby informing policies and interventions aimed at

improving the social and economic welfare of persons with disabilities.

The demographic composition of participants offers crucial insights into their realities. Factors such as the relatively balanced gender representation, the predominance of middle-aged and older participants, the notable level of educational attainment, and the dominance of Christianity all shape the experiences of persons with disabilities in Oredo Local Government Area. These characteristics must be taken into account when analyzing the depth and dimensions of social exclusion they face, as well as in formulating policies and interventions designed to enhance their welfare.

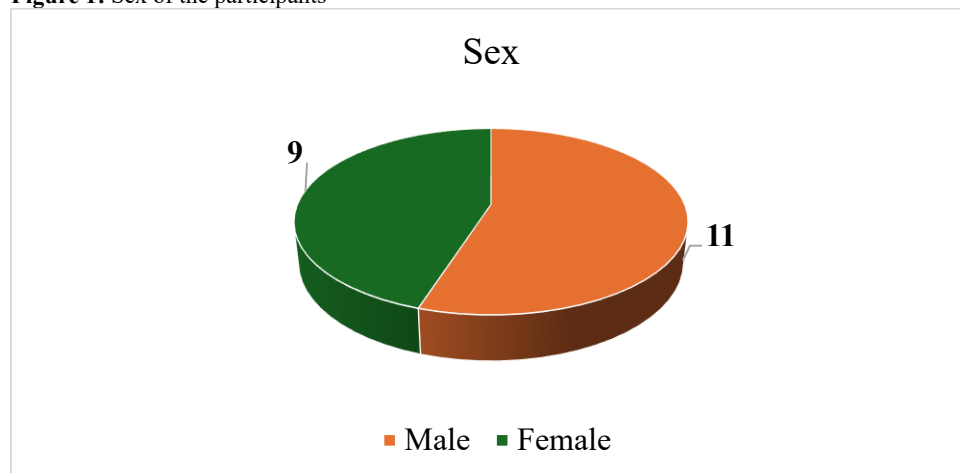
Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=20)

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Males	11	55.0%
	Females	09	45.0%
	Total	20	100.0%
Age	18-32	02	10.0%
	33-47	06	30.0%
	48-62	08	40.0%
	63-77	04	20.0%
	78 and above	-	0.0%
	Total	20	100.0%
Educational Levels	PSLC	02	10.0%
	SSCE/OND	05	25.0%
	BSc/HND	08	40.0%
	MSc	05	25.0%
	Others	-	0.0%
Total	20	100.0%	
Religion	Christian	16	80.0%
	Muslim	04	20.0%
	Others	-	0.0%
	Total	20	100.0%
Type of Disabilities	Speech & Hearing Impairments	03	16.0%
	Physical Disabilities	07	37.0%
	Visual Disabilities	08	42.0%
	Albinism	01	5.0%
	Total	19	100.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants provide a foundational understanding of the individuals involved in this study on social exclusion and the welfare of persons with disabilities in Oredo Local Government Area.

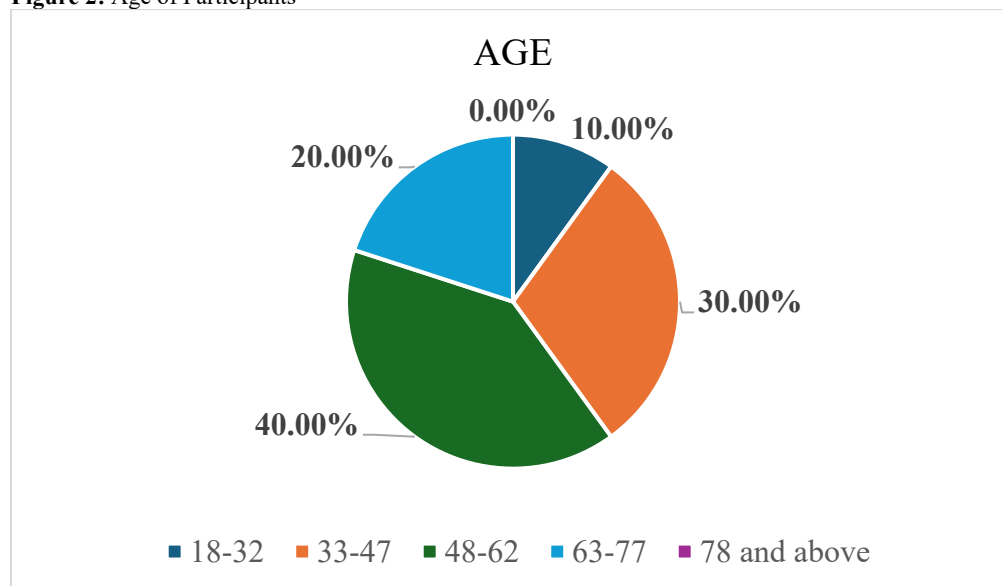
Figure 1: Sex of the participants



Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Figure 1 shows the sex of the participants and the distribution shows a near balance, with males constituting 55% of the sample and females making up 45%. This indicates that both genders are fairly represented, allowing for a more comprehensive exploration of how social exclusion affects men and women with disabilities differently. Given societal expectations and traditional gender roles, men and women may experience exclusion in distinct ways, influencing their welfare outcomes accordingly. The relatively equal representation enhances the validity of the findings by capturing a broad range of lived experiences across gender lines.

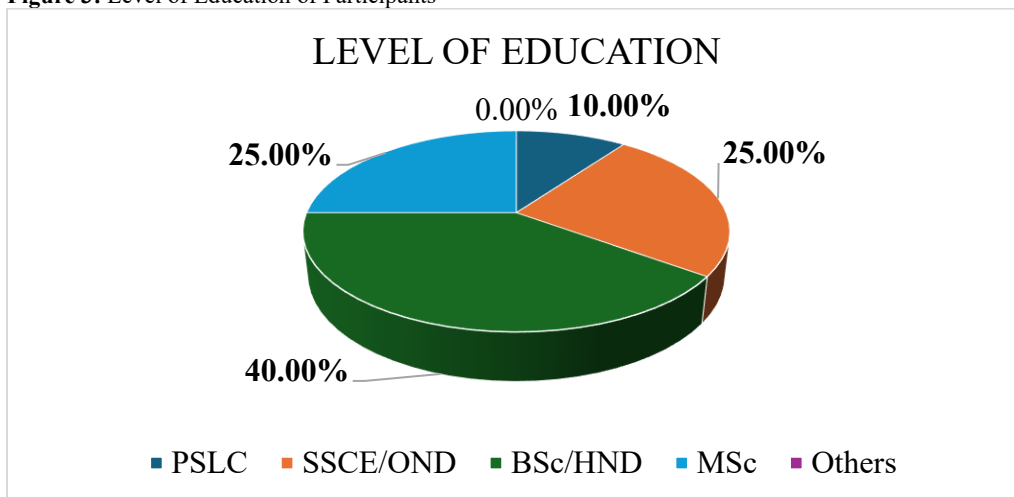
Figure 2: Age of Participants



Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Figure 2 shows the age distribution of participants which indicates that the majority of participants (40%) fall within the 48-62 age bracket, followed by those aged 33-47 (30%). This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents are middle-aged or older, highlighting potential long-term experiences with disability-related social exclusion. The inclusion of younger participants, albeit in smaller numbers, ensures that the study captures intergenerational perspectives on social exclusion and welfare challenges. Notably, there are no participants above the age of 77, which may indicate lower life expectancy among persons with disabilities, possibly due to inadequate access to healthcare and social support. The absence of individuals in the oldest age bracket underscores the potential impact of systemic neglect and poor welfare services on the longevity of persons with disabilities in the area.

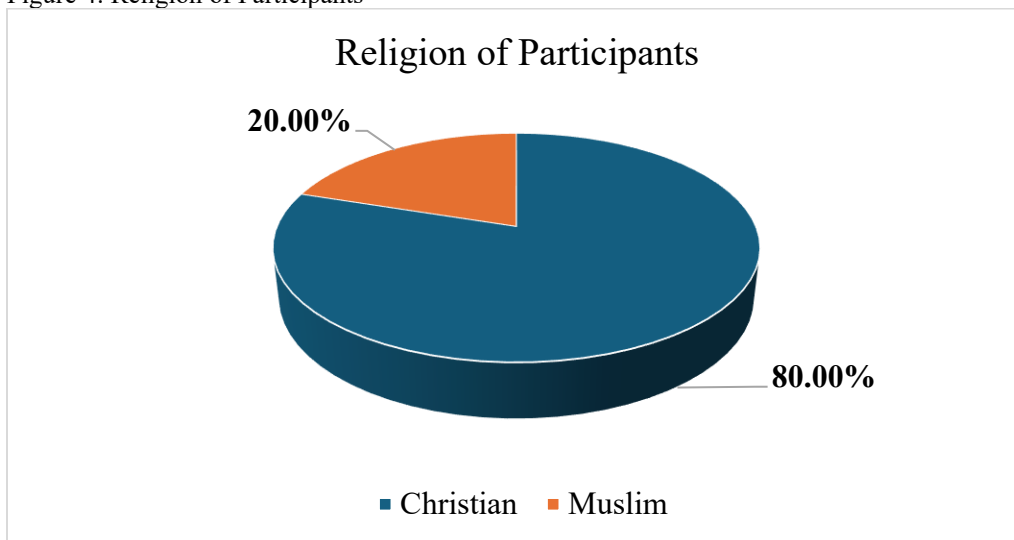
Figure 3: Level of Education of Participants



Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Figure 3 shows educational attainment among the participants which is fairly diverse, with 40% holding a BSc or HND, 25% possessing an MSc, and another 25% have obtained SSCE or OND qualifications. A smaller percentage (10%) have only a Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC). The relatively high proportion of individuals with tertiary education challenges the stereotype that persons with disabilities lack formal education. However, despite their academic qualifications, these individuals may still face significant barriers to employment and social participation, suggesting that education alone does not guarantee social inclusion. This finding underscores the need to examine other structural and attitudinal barriers that hinder the full integration of persons with disabilities into society despite their educational achievements.

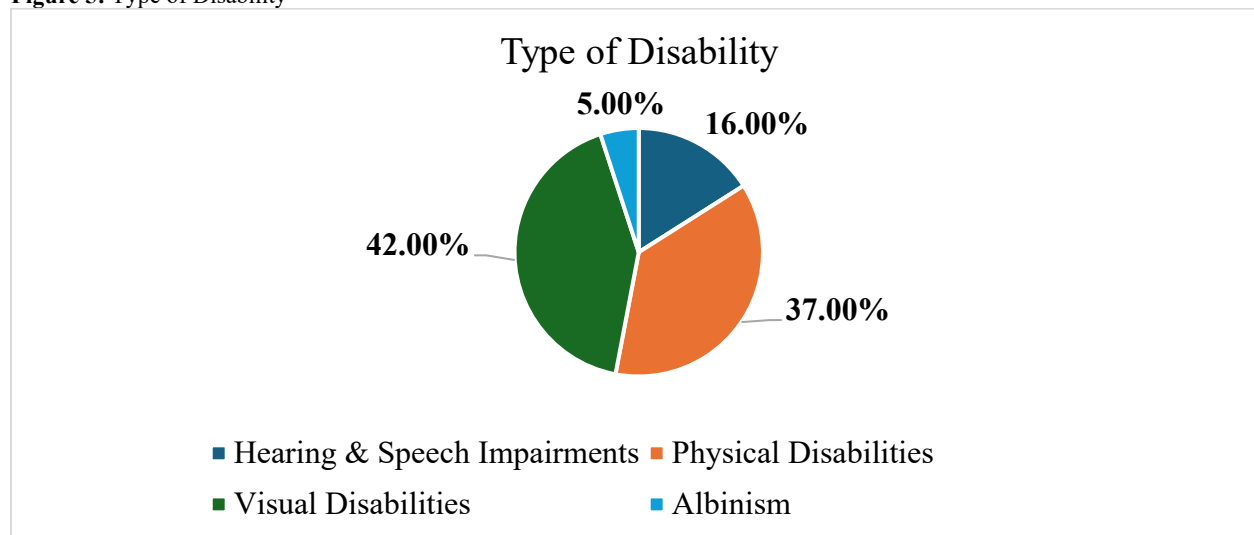
Figure 4: Religion of Participants



Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Religious affiliation is another crucial factor shaping social experiences and figure 4 shows an overwhelming majority (80%) identifying as Christians and the remaining 20% as Muslims. Religion often plays a vital role in social inclusion, as religious institutions can either serve as sources of support or perpetuate exclusionary practices. The dominance of Christianity among the participants reflects broader religious demographics in Benin City, where Christianity is widely practiced. It also raises questions about the extent to which religious organizations actively support persons with disabilities in terms of welfare, inclusion, and advocacy.

Figure 5: Type of Disability



Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The distribution of disability types among participants is shown in figure 5 which indicates a diverse range of impairments, with visual disabilities being the most common (42.0%), followed by physical disabilities (37.0%), speech & hearing impairments (16.0%) while albinism is the least represented, accounting for 5.0% of the sample. The relatively even distribution across different categories suggests that the challenges of social exclusion are not limited to a single type of disability but rather affect individuals with varied impairments in unique yet interconnected ways. Persons with physical disabilities may face mobility restrictions and infrastructural barriers, while those with visual disabilities may encounter difficulties in mobility and access to visual information. Similarly, individuals with speech and hearing disabilities struggle with access to public information where sign interpreters are not present while those with albinism suffer societal attitudes that undermine their intellectual potential, and most times not considered as persons with disabilities who also need such relevant support.

5. Findings

Social exclusion among persons with disabilities is deeply intertwined with gender dynamics, with women experiencing additional forms of discrimination and vulnerability. Women with disabilities often endure what is described as "double jeopardy"—being marginalized both as women and as persons with disabilities. Their exclusion manifests in multiple ways, including limited access to education, higher rates of gender-based violence, reduced economic opportunities, and difficulties in securing marriage and social relationships.

A key informant, the executive director of a local NGO, described how traditional gender norms exacerbate the exclusion of women with disabilities: *"In our society, gender itself is often viewed as a form of disability. There is this longstanding belief that women should not be seen as equals to men. Now, imagine when a woman also has a disability—it means she will face a double disadvantage. When it comes to education, for example, many families believe it is not worth investing much in the education of a child with disabilities, especially if she is a girl. They think, 'What is the point? Will she even be able to use the education?' Men with disabilities tend to receive more support from families and communities than their female counterparts. Women with disabilities are also more vulnerable to gender-based violence, including domestic abuse and sexual exploitation. It's truly a men's world—even in the realm of disability, women still face more discrimination"* (IDI-1/Ugo/Male/Executive Director of an NGO/48-62 years/Christian/MSc/2025)

This statement underscores how societal biases against women extend to those with disabilities, making it even harder for them to access opportunities for education, employment, and independence. The perception that women with disabilities have limited potential leads to systemic neglect, further entrenching their exclusion from social and economic life.

One area where gender disparity is particularly evident is education. Girls with disabilities are less likely to be enrolled in school compared to boys with disabilities. While both genders experience barriers to education, women face additional cultural prejudices that devalue

their education. Gender biases in education contribute to the long-term economic vulnerability of women with disabilities, making it harder for them to secure employment or become self-sufficient. The vulnerability of women with disabilities is further amplified by high rates of gender-based violence, particularly sexual abuse and exploitation. Several participants noted that women with disabilities are more likely to experience sexual violence and, even worse, are often denied justice when they report such incidents. Such responses from law enforcement and society at large create an environment in which perpetrators act with impunity, knowing that their victims are unlikely to receive support or legal protection. This reinforces the social exclusion of women with disabilities, making them feel powerless and abandoned.

One of the most profound ways in which gender influences social exclusion is in marriage and family life. Many respondents noted that while men with disabilities often find it easier to marry women without disabilities, women with disabilities struggle to find partners. The societal expectation that men should be providers makes it difficult for a woman with a disability to be seen as a desirable spouse.

A participant said:

"As a woman with a disability, I know firsthand how difficult it is. Even within the disabled community, boys have more chances of going to school than girls. Parents often prioritize their sons' education, believing that boys will eventually take care of the family, while girls will get married and leave. But for us, marriage is not even guaranteed. Without education, how can we be independent? It is an endless cycle of disadvantage." (FGD1/Hassana/Female/48-62 years/ Christian/ MSc/ 2025)

Another participant said:

"There was a case of a young woman with disabilities who reported being sexually assaulted. When she went to the police, the officer told her, 'You should even be happy that someone wanted to sleep with you.' Imagine that! Instead of protecting her, they mocked her situation. It's heartbreaking. This kind of attitude discourages women with disabilities from seeking justice, and so many cases of abuse go unreported." (FGDI/Obi/Male/48-62 years/Christian/MSc/2025)

A participant in the In-depth Interview said:

"Women with disabilities face double jeopardy. Society already sees women as inferior, and adding a disability makes it even worse. Girls with disabilities receive less support in education compared to boys,

and they are more vulnerable to abuse. We need targeted awareness programs to educate people and protect the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities." (IDI2/Abu/ Official in Ministry of Women Affairs/Male/48-62 years /Christian / MSc/2025)

Other participants stated:

"It is easier for a disabled man to find a wife than for a disabled woman to find a husband. Society still expects men to be providers, and a disabled woman is seen as a burden. Even when a woman with disabilities is beautiful and educated, men still hesitate because they worry about her ability to take care of a home or raise children. It's unfair, but that's the reality."(FGD3/Kosi/Male/48-62 years/Christian/MSc/2025)

"The issue of social exclusion affects both men and women, but one very vital difference is in marriage. A disabled man still has a chance of marrying an able-bodied woman, but for a woman with disabilities, it is much harder. Most men don't even consider them as potential wives. If a woman is disabled, people assume she cannot cook, take care of children, or contribute to the home. This mindset makes it almost impossible for disabled women to have a normal family life." (FGD2/Oduwa/Male/48-62 years/Christian/BSc/2025)

This finding suggests that social inclusion efforts must go beyond economic empowerment and legal rights to address cultural perceptions that devalue women with disabilities in the context of relationships and family life. The intersection of gender and disability creates a complex landscape of social exclusion, with women facing disproportionately higher barriers than men. Participants unanimously agreed that women with disabilities experience more issues than men with disabilities. Women with disabilities experience greater challenges in education, economic opportunities, protection from violence, and social relationships. Traditional gender norms continue to reinforce these disparities, limiting their ability to fully participate in society.

6. Discussion of Findings

One area where gender disparity is particularly evident is education. Girls with disabilities are less likely to be enrolled in school compared to boys with disabilities. While both genders experience barriers to education, women face additional cultural prejudices that devalue their education. Gender biases in education contribute to the long-term economic vulnerability of women with disabilities, making it harder for them to secure employment or become self-sufficient. The

vulnerability of women with disabilities is further amplified by high rates of gender-based violence, particularly sexual abuse and exploitation. Several participants noted that women with disabilities are more likely to experience sexual violence and, even worse, are often denied justice when they report such incidents. Such responses from law enforcement and society at large create an environment in which perpetrators act with impunity, knowing that their victims are unlikely to receive support or legal protection. This reinforces the social exclusion of women with disabilities, making them feel powerless and abandoned.

Social inclusion efforts must go beyond economic empowerment and legal rights to address cultural perceptions that devalue women with disabilities in the context of relationships and family life. The intersection of gender and disability creates a complex landscape of social exclusion, with women facing disproportionately higher barriers than men. Participants unanimously agreed that women with disabilities experience more issues than men with disabilities. Women with disabilities experience greater challenges in education, economic opportunities, protection from violence, and social relationships. Traditional gender norms continue to reinforce these disparities, limiting their ability to fully participate in society.

Gender emerged as a significant factor influencing the extent of social exclusion experienced by PWDs. The study found that women with disabilities face compounded discrimination due to both gender and disability biases. This finding aligns with previous research by Shakespeare (2018) and Groce et al (2020) on "double jeopardy," which suggests that women with disabilities encounter additional barriers in education, employment, and social participation compared to their male counterparts. For instance, the study found that parents are more likely to prioritize the education of male children with disabilities, leaving girls with disabilities at a greater disadvantage.

7. Conclusion

Women with disabilities face social exclusion more than men with disabilities. Women with disabilities are even less likely to get married than men with disabilities yet face more issues of sexual abuse including rape than the latter. Apart from the structural barriers they face as women, their disabilities make them to be subjected to double exclusion on many fronts.

8. Recommendations

There should be deliberate measures for gender mainstreaming in programme interventions as well as increased awareness on the rights of women with disabilities as fundamental human rights so as to eliminate the discrimination and stigmatization that most women with disabilities currently face.

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Divinities as Reservoirs of Supernatural Resources: African Perspective

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Abstract. This paper focuses on divinities as reservoir of Supernatural resources African perspective. In African religious thoughts the divinities are believed to be imbued with inherent supernatural benefits often described as supernatural resources such as rain, bountiful harvest, fertility of soil and reproduction, wealth, etc. This, however, for the Africans described the divinities as reservoirs of supernatural resources. Therefore, for the Africans, these supernatural benefits are often sought for in every aspect of life (before planting, for fruit of womb and success in commercial activities). For the Africans, not everybody is qualified to approach the divinities to tap these benefits rather there are specialists (priests, diviners, medicine men) who are professionally trained or set aside to approach the divinities with rituals, sacrifices, offerings, prayers to access these resources in such places as shrines, grooves, caves often believed to be sacred. The study adopted methodology adopted was phenomenological approach to interpret and describe the roles of divinities as reservoirs of supernatural resources.

Keywords: Divinities, Supernatural Resources and Reservoirs.

1. Introduction

Generally, the divinities represent an important aspect in the traditional religion across African societies. In the hierarchy of power, the divinities stand next to the Supreme Being. Thus, they are believed to be emanations from the Supreme Being, meaning that they are His offspring. They receive sacrifices on daily basis hence; they have shrines and temples dedicated to them. According to African traditional belief, the Africans approach and worship God through the divinities. That is why Anyacho (1994) describe the divinities as intermediaries (p. 245).

Two factors motivated the researcher's interests in pursuing this research. The first was to examine who the divinities are according to African traditional belief and the second was to examine the role of

divinities as reservoirs of Supernatural resources according to African religious thought.

1.1 Methodology

The study relied majorly on secondary sources (published materials) for its data gathering, while phenomenological approach was adopted to interpret and described the role of divinities as reservoirs of supernatural resources.

2. Conceptual Definitions

2.1 Divinities

Divinities, according to Awolalua and Dopamu (1979) are gods with small letter "g", believed to possess divine attributes since they are emanations from the Supreme Deity. They are said to be brought into being by the Supreme Being, hence they have no separate existence, but their existence is as permitted by the Supreme Deity, who cause them into being. As for their position and duties, the divinities were brought into being for a definite purpose, and the purpose of which is to serve the will of God in the theocratic government of the universe. In other words, the divinities serve as intermediaries between God and man. The divinities, therefore, become channels through which sacrifices, prayers, and offerings are presented to the Supreme Being. They have temples, shrines and devotees with priests and priestesses. So, they are means to an end and not an end in themselves (Awolalua and Dopamu, 1979).

As for their census and names, the divinities are many and their numbers vary from locality to locality. Among the Yoruba, for instance, the number varies between 201, 401, 601 and 1700. With regards to their names, each divinity has a name, sometimes, the names are descriptive in the sense that they describe the true nature, character and functions of the divinities. For instance, in Yoruba, Jakuta, the divinity responsible for wrath, i.e. one who fights with stones

is known in Nape as Sokogba, meaning God's axe (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979).

As Imasogie (1981), pointed out, The Supreme Being having created the universe, appointed the divinities to the various departments of nature to carry out its purpose; hence there are, for instance, a divinity in charge of human procreation, a divinity responsible for death, another in charge of food production, yet another charged with the responsibility for bodies of waters, etc. According to him, these divinities have full authority over their respective areas of influence, subject only to the power of the Supreme Being (p. 34):

George Tasia and Chisa Ofuru (2013), observe that the divinities are highly personalized. Some as they noted, are conceived in gender terms as male or female. According to Tasia and Ofuru, the Ashanti, for instance, not only consider the earth to be a female divinity and second to God, but also observe Thursday as her day. Also, the Igbo, as they remarked also regard the earth to be God's daughter who protects people and helps with crops. Some of the divinities according to them are further conceived as having spouses as humans do. For Tasia and Ofuru, a telling example among the Yoruba are the goddess Osun and Oya both of whom are believed to be the wives of Sango, the divinity of thunder and lightning. They further noted that there are other divinities that are believed to be androgynous, possessing male and female characteristics. They pointed to the Egba and the Ewe who conceive Buruku in this manner (p. 43).

2.2 Some Notable Divinities in West Africa

Among the Yoruba Orisa-nla, also known as Obatala, the creator divinity is the most prominent divinity. This divinity, in the words of Mbiti (1969, p. 76) is the supreme divinity in Yoruba land, and one who acts as God's earthly deputy in creative and executive functions. In much the same vein, Idowu (1973, p. 169) also described him as Deity's son or deputy, vested with the power and authority of royal sonship. According to Booth, (1977) "Orisa-nla is believed among the Yoruba to have been the first creation of Olodumare or even his image or symbol on earth" (p. 63).

In the word of Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) Orisa-nla is the creator divinity in that he was commissioned by the Supreme Deity to create the solid earth, to equip it, and mould the physical form of man. Although his role in the creation of man as they noted, is limited to moulding alone, it is believed among the Yoruba that it is Orisa-nla's prerogative to make the human form

shapely or ugly as he wishes. As they further asserted, despite the fact that he is often described as the vicegerent of Olodumare, his role, position and authority are derived from and delegated by God. In consequence of this, Orisa-nla has no absolute power or authority of his own.

They pointed out that, Orisa-nla has certain attributes which tell of his nature and character. For instance, his name Obatela suggests that he is the "King of whiteness" or the "lord of the white cloth", in fact, everything associated with Orisa-nla is usually white, his temple is whitewashed, his emblems are white chalk and white containers, his priests and priestesses are usually clad in white with white ornaments, his sacrifice consists of bloodless snail, and shea-butter, the water in his shrine must be changed every day to retain a degree of absolute cleanness.

In this sense, Orisa-nla is regarded as the god of purity. He therefore, represents the holiness of God. Orisa-nla, as the god of purity and holiness, demands a high sense of morality. As a result, the lives of all his worshippers should be as pure, clean and clear as water drawn early in the morning from undisturbed, unpolluted spring.

According to Awolalu and Dopamu, another attribute of Orisa-nla is *Alabalase*, meaning "He who proposes and also disposes". This title for them only referred to Orisa-nla's great power as the proposer who wields the scepter. For them, the scepter, according to Yoruba belief was passed on to him by God Himself. Despite this, he could not be regarded as the absolute proposer and disposer of things.

Since he received the scepter from God. The human king then becomes derivatively a divine ruler when Orisa-nla passes the scepter on to him. As they further argued Orisa-nla is worshipped in Yoruba land. In many places, one can see his temple, priests and priestesses are dedicated to him. Barren women usually take their petition to him so that they may be blessed with children. In the same way, water taken from his shrine is given to pregnant women so that their children may be shapely molded. Invalids are also treated with such water from his shrine. The water is usually drawn very early in the morning. Awolalu and Dopamu noted that, the drawer must not talk to anybody from the time she rises from her bed until she fetches the water from the spring. Sunday is set aside as his day (p.78).

According to Ajayi (1981) discussion on Yoruba divinities without a remarkable reference to Orisa-nla remains incomplete. This creator divinity, he noted

possessed in him multi-dimensional attributes that sets him apart from other divinities among the Yoruba. For Ajayi, Orisa-nla is regarded among the Yoruba as the father of all the divinities of Yoruba land and one who named them after himself. He is of the view that Orisa-nla represents to the Yoruba, the idea of ritual and ethical purity. In his words, Orisa-nla enjoys monogamy in the sense that it is absolutely, impossible for peace to reign when there is multiplicity of wives (pp. 68- 69).

Another prominent divinity of the Yoruba is Sango, the god of thunder and lightning. Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) observed that there are various legends about Sango as an historical figure. He is believed to be the fourth King (Alafin) of Oyo. He was deified after death as the Yoruba god of thunder and lightning and replaced by Jakuta, one who hurls or fights with stone, the original thunder divinity of the Yoruba. As they noted, Sango represents the divine wrath of the Supreme Being upon which recalcitrants in the society are punished. He is more dreaded than any other divinity. Its presence is manifested in thunder booms and lightning. For them, Sango forbids and punishes lying, stealing and poisoning. Thus, for them, it is believed among the Yoruba that in the flashing of the lightning and in the roaring of the thunder, the Yoruba are constantly reminded of the presence of the God of Judgment. They further remarked that, those who have committed any crime or are not sure of their character usually tremble with emotion of dread or terror when there is lightning or thunder. The victims of Sango, according to them, do not receive normal burial. They can only be buried by priests of Sango. Rituals are also performed on the fateful spot.

Furthermore, they noted that punishments by Sango are regarded as royal punishment, and the victim must not be mourned. It is believed that the victim has been rewarded for his evil deeds since the descent of Sango never occurs except to show his displeasure against those guilty of perjury and misconduct. Also, they noted that when a house is struck by lightning important ceremonies are performed by the priests of Sango. Until the thunder bolt, called *EdunAra*, is dug up and removed from the spot, the inmates of the struck house must not sleep in the affected house but must find temporary accommodation in a smithy or under booths.

Sango as Awolalu and Dopamu further observed is a tutelary divinity having his priests and priestesses. His worshippers wear necklaces of red and white beads. The priest of Sango (Magba) does not usually cut his hair but plaits it in the fashion of women. It is believed

that he can carry fire on his head without suffering harm when he is possessed. There are shrines dedicated to Sango throughout Yoruba land. Each shrine, according to them, consists of a three-pronged stick, in the fork of which is a bowl containing axes and stone celts or the so-called thunder bolts are regarded as Sango's instruments of punishment. The worshippers of Sango offer him sacrifices of cowries, goats, sheep, oxen and fowl. People pray for Sango for peace, long life, prosperity, material well-being and protection against dangers and unseen evils (p.83). According to George Tasie (2013), Sango as the god of thunder and lightning, is by association, the symbol of light (p.63). In description of the structure of the temple of this great god of thunder and lightning, George (1980) noted that:

“The modern temple is crushed in between shops and a shoemaker's room. When dances are held, the dancers jostle around in the cramped space between the vendor stalls. The altar is beyond the screen. It is low and black; made of a carved base bearing a large bowl wherein are celts or so-called ‘thunder-stones’, which are popularly thought to be meteorites, but mostly are ancient implements. Other small figurines stand by the altar, brightly painted or spotted. Above hang leather wallets and calabashes of charms, very dusty. In front may be the offerings of kolos, meal, and oil, according to the day and wealth of offerings. Far from being ‘gorgeous’ the sanctuary is squalid” (p.65).

Also prominent among the Yoruba divinities is Ogun. Ogun according to Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) is the god of iron and of war. He is pre-eminently the patron god of blacksmiths, hunters, warriors and all who deal in iron and steel. They noted that the Yoruba believed that in as much as iron and steel belong to him all surgical operations and all forms of bodily makings like circumcision and tattooing belong to him. According to them, tradition has it that Ogun himself was a hunter who used to come from heaven on a spider's web for hunting activities. And when all the divinities were coming into the world and they could not find the way, it was Ogun who cleared a way in the bush with his magical machetes. In consequences of this, he was hailed by all. This is why he is aptly described today as *Osinmale* meaning chief among the divinities.

Ogun as they further noted, is believed to be very ferocious and bellicose. In this regard, he is an instrument of God's wrath and judgment. Any covenant or oath sealed before him as the presiding judge must be fulfilled. In the court of law, adherents of traditional religion, they noted, take their oaths by kissing a piece of iron. This signifies that they have spoken the truth. For them, people suspected of evil

intentions are made to swear before Ogun, and false swearing is believed to have calamitous consequences because Ogun demands justice, fair play and rectitude.

In addition to this, Ogun they further reported is also worshipped for his benevolence. For them hunters believe that he protects them in their dangerous hunting expeditions. In modern times, drivers and cyclists Awolalu and Dopamu remarked look forward towards him for protection against accidents. His shrine is found in front of houses and at the smithy. The most important symbol of Ogun is iron. Other emblems of his include a rock, the tusk or tail of an elephant, porogun plant, dracaena fragrans and metal-scrap. Dogs are the special food of Ogun while palm wine is his favorite drink. But a fowl, tortoise, ram, kola-nut, bitter kola, yam and palm-oil can also be offered to him (p.81). Explaining further, Idowu, (1962), adds that the shrines of Ogun are also at the approaches to the shrines of other divinities in some parts of the Yoruba land. For Idowu, this is because Ogun is described as the “way”, to and from all the divinities (p. 127).

Mbiti (1969) described Ogun as “chief among the divinities”. According to him, this is as a result of multiplicity of activities associated with him (p.76). According to Booth (1977, p. 170), Ogun is also known as possessor of two machetes. With one he prepares the farm, with the other he clears the road. This for him, explains why offerings are made to him in connection with any sacrifice in that he is responsible for the knife that is used. As he further reports, Ogun is also associated with justice in the sense that oaths are taken in his name over piece of iron.

Ogun, Booth also observed is a rather fierce and unbending deity. He maintains that as a god of iron one is expected to meet him:

In the place of battle, in the place of wrangling, in the place where torrents of blood fills with longing as a cup of water does the thirsty.

He further pointed out that Ogun among the Fon, Gwa, is believed to be not only the child of Mawu and Lisa, but also closely associated with them in the “sky pantheon”.

As regards his festival, Benjamin (1976, pp. 79-80) reports that among the Yoruba, the annual Ogun festival usually takes place in the dry season when there is good hunting. For him, since Ogun is the patron deity of hunters, fresh bush meat is required for his festival.

Although the festival as he further observed is sometimes the affairs of the whole town; it is more often celebrated by individual family compounds whose members are devotees of Ogun. According to him, the festival date is determined through divination in accordance with Ogun’s wishes. Prior to the event the Ogun priest known as *Olade* in conjunction with the officiating family head prepares themselves morally and physically, so that they may be acceptable servants of Ogun.

Benjamin is of the view that in, order to achieve this, they must abstain from cursing, fighting, sexual intercourse and eating certain foods. The day before the festival, Ray noted that men undertake a hunting expedition in the surrounding bush to gather fresh game. In the evening of the next day, an all-night vigil is observed in the shrine of Ogun with some items such as palm-wine and beer to be presented and consumed by the people. Also, Ogun’s special praise chants are sung in the honour of the iron divinity. Significantly, the songs as Ray rightly pointed out not only entertain the people, but also attract Ogun’s attention and induce him to shower his blessings upon the assembled congregation.

This is closely followed by offering of kola nuts to Ogun by each family head on behalf of his households. The kola as he remarked also signify friendship and reconciliation among the people; with this, the devotees of Ogun through the instrumentality of *Olade* (Ogun’s priest) asks for Ogun’s blessings and protection during the year. Since Ogun is the god of iron and steel, he also asks for Ogun’s protection from things made of metal, for instance, from automobiles, bicycles, axes, knives, guns, etc.

The high point of the festival, he noted is marked by formal presentation of sacrificial items before the Ogun shrine by the priest which usually consists of snails, palm wine, pigeons, and dogs. Symbolically, these items, he maintains, not only mediate and control Ogun’s relations with mankind, but also help to establish a bond between the worshippers and the divinity.

Ogun by his nature is fierce, violent and aggressive. In consequence of this, he is considered by the Yoruba as agent of God in the execution of His wrath and judgment. Despite this, people also approach him for his kindness especially, drivers, hunters and all whose profession is associated with iron for protection. Ogun is symbolized by iron. Among his numerous taboos include, palm kernel oil and snake Thursday is observed as his day.

Orunmila is also another remarkable divinity of Yoruba. This divinity, in the words of Mbiti (1969) is reputed to be an Omni linguist divinity who understands every language spoken on earth; and one who represents God's Omniscience and Knowledge. For him, this divinity manifests itself among men through the oracle of divination. He also describes him as the "Word", or "Writing" of God. An essential attribute associated with Orunmila is that he represents the element of order and predictability (p. 76).

For Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) Orunmila or Ifa is the Oracle divinity of Yoruba land. They noted that while Orisa-nia is the deputy of Olodumare with reference to the creation and ordering of the universe, Orunmila is His deputy in matters of wisdom and knowledge. For them, it is believed among the Yomba that Orunmila was present when human destiny was sealed. In consequence of this, he is called *Eleriyipin* that is "the witness or advocate of human destiny". According to them, people say that he was sent into the world together with Orisa-nla in order to protect man. It is also believed that he knows everything about man and can give advice as to any event, be it past, present or future.

Another essential attribute of this divinity they observed, is that people consult him on all occasions, and before any action is taken. Man therefore, seeks his guidance when there is problem, when he is embarking on any project, when choosing the time of marriage, when performing marriage ceremony, when a new baby is born, when laying the foundation of villages, markets or houses, when entering into a covenant, when going to war or making peace, and throughout the passage of life. For them, it is believed among the Yoruba that it is Orunmila who can probe into the dark bosom of the future, and give advice on how to change an unhappy destiny into a happy one.

The priest of Orunmila, as they further noted, is called *Babalawo* "the diviner". Literally, *Babalawo* means "the father who has the secret." *Babalawo* as they inform us is believed to be endowed with the power of esoteric knowledge, with this he can pry into the future and learn the wish of Orunmila. More often than not, he wears white clothes and shaves his head. In consulting Orunmila, the diviner makes use of the geomantic form of divination known as Ifa. The word Ifa according to them is at times referred to as Orunmila.

Orunmila, they further pointed out, is worshipped everywhere in Yoruba land. His shrine is usually situated in the house of the worshippers or priests. His emblems include, palm kernels, cowries, and some graven pieces of elephant tusk. These are held in a

bowl or white plate with a lid. The priest of Orunmila offers sacrifice to him from time to time. Any person can be asked to offer a sacrifice. A simple sacrifice, according to them, may involve pouring of palm-oil and breaking of kola nut and bitter-kola, while an elaborate one may involve killing of a fowl or a pig or he goat depending on the prescription of Orunmila.

In the same order of prominence among the Yoruba divinities is Esu also known as Elegba. As Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) opined, this divinity has been misconceived by Christian missionaries as the same with the Judeo-Christian devil. They noted that Esu, for the Yoruba is regarded as a divinity of mischief and one who makes things difficult for people. But at the same time, he is also regarded as a benevolent divinity who is prepared to answer the call of his devotees who give him his due. According to them, Esu among the Yoruba is believed to be one of the divinities who were closest to Olodumare, the Supreme Deity. For them, just as Orisa-nla was made the deputy of god in matters of creation and government, wisdom and fore knowledge, so also Esu is made God's deputy in matters of ritual and human conduct.

In consequence of this, he is described as the "inspector general" of rituals. Apart from this, it is also his duty to look into the behaviors and conducts of both divinities and men and make a report to Olodumare. Thus, it is believed that Esu can approve or disapprove of any ritual he inspected and it is the recommendation that he makes to Olodumare that will be accepted. As a result, people attribute all their difficulties to the failure of Esu to perform his work. As they further observed, people can invoke him to harm their enemies; they can also invoke him to offer them protection against mischief and mishap. They see him as the go between heaven and earth, and accusing or defending divinities or people before Olodumare. But if he is well fed and respected as they remarked, he becomes protective and benevolent.

An interesting aspect of Esu, which they pointed out is the belief that Esu is both difficult to predict and to placate. According to them, when you think you have given him his due, he might have felt grudgingly unsatisfied and might descend on you maliciously that is why he is held in constant dread, and people at all times seek to be friendly with him. Other divinities, they report, also fear him. As they further explain, it was said that once Sango, the thunder divinity, boasted that there was no divinity he could not subdue. But when Esu confronted him to know whether he included him, Sango in response immediately replied apologetically that he could not have been included. This for them, shows unmistakably that there is an

indisputable element of evil in Esu. In this sense, he is capable of mischief, making havoc of personal relationship, and causing confusion.

Rightly, they further maintain that Esu is not worshipped only out of fear or in order to avoid his malevolence, but he is also approached as a tutelary divinity in many places, just as people approach other divinities. People have believed in his protective and benevolent capabilities, while prayers and gifts are offered to him to secure his favour. His name appears in the names given to children in consequence of the faith reposed on him as a benevolent divinity. Such names as they observed are *Esubiyii* (Esu gives birth to this) and *Esubayii* (Esu accepts or saves life).

The shrine of Esu, according to them, is usually made outside the town or village. It can also be found in the compound or at cross roads. He is symbolized by a stone slab or a piece of rough laterite stuck into the ground slantingly. Sometimes, they are of the view that Esu is represented by an image made of mud or wood. He is worshipped and propitiated throughout Yoruba land as people offer him cowries, cocks, he goat and dogs. Thus, the blood of the animal victim is usually sprinkled on the image or emblem of Esu.

Finally, they pointed out that Esu, not only frequently receives a portion of the sacrifices offered to other divinities; but also in some areas, annual festivals are held in his honor, and people on such occasions ask for his blessing on farming and protection against evil. Esu's sacrifices consist of red palm-oil, red roosters, and he-goats. And Saturday is observed as his day. In spite of his tricky, unpredictability, and sometimes negative character, it is believed that in Yoruba the dominant attitude towards Esu is one of affection rather than of fear.

Sopono is another influential and dreaded divinity of Yoruba in the sense that it is the manifestation of the wrath of God on erring members of the society. Among the Yoruba, it is believed that Sopono is endowed with the powers to inspire terror in all people. He is a divinity responsible for chicken pox. As a god of chicken pox, he punishes offenders with the disease. Because the divinity is terror to people, he is not usually called Sopono but they call him by any of his appellations. For instance, *Olode*, "the lord of open space" or "the owner of the open space". *Obaluwaye*, "the king who is the lord of the earth". *Ile-gbona* the hot earth and *Baba* "The father". Like Sango, Sopono forbids lying, poisoning and bad magic. His punishment is royal punishment which must be accepted with cheerfulness, joy, gratitude without complaint. Thus, when anybody is killed by chicken

pox, people must not mourn the victim, his property is confiscated by the priests, and his body is buried in the bad bush (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979, p. 85).

Awolalu and Dopamu further observed that, that is why Sopono is called *Alapadupe*, "one who kills and is thanked for the killing". According to them, People believe that he wears red apparel and wanders about when the sun is very hot. This is why people are warned to desist from wearing red apparel and wandering about in the sun lest they incur his displeasure. Finally, they noted that the shrine of Sopono is usually found outside the village. At the shrine can be found mound of earth over which is placed a wide-mouthed clay pot called *agbada*. By the side of the *agbada* can also be found a special broom made from *Ose potu (sida Carpinifolia)* which is smeared with Osun (cam wood).

Also remarkable among the Yoruba divinities is Oya, the goddess of the River Niger believed to be the wife of Sango. According to Awolalu and Dopamu (1979, p. 87) Oya wept bitterly when her husband committed suicide that the tears from her eyes formed certain rivers of which River Niger is one. Oya as they further report is worshipped mostly by women who usually carry fire in bowl and parade the street during the festival. For them, wherever Oya is worshipped, a river or lake is dedicated to her.

Moreover, the river goddess is also associated with the winds and tempests. Among the Yoruba, it is believed that Oya in most cases accompany her husband during his thunder storms; ripping up trees, and destroying the erring members of the society. Apart from this, she is also known as a fierce warrior and protectress of women especially those who throng her shrine for help. Also, at her disposal are lightning, tornadoes, and winds. Finally, other names associated with her include, *Oya-ajere* "carrier of the container of fire", *Ayaba mikua* "Queen of death". Among her numerous emblems are sword or matchet, and flywhisk. Her sacrifices consist of egg-plant, red wine, tobacco, purple grape, etc. Her taboos include, palm kernel oil, ram, and pork.

Among the Edo speaking peoples, the most prominent divinity and second only to Osanobwa, the Supreme Being, is Olokun. According to Awolalu and Dopamu, the name literally means "the owner of the sea". Olokun, the divinity of the ocean and the waters, is also believed to be the son of Osanobwa. They further report that like the Yoruba Orisa-nla, Olokun is the arch-divinity of Edo land, and he is vested with His father's royal power and authority. Some people, as they noted, consider Olokun to be feminine, whereas

in some of his temples, he is represented as a woman, usually with a clay image of a woman. But many people also believed that he is male, although he may be symbolized in feminine terms. His worshippers, according to them are mainly women especially among the Urhobo. This is a truism because even when a man is instructed to offer sacrifice to Olokun, his daughters usually perform the sacrifice on his behalf Olokun is regarded as a benevolent divinity. For them he has the entire material well-being at his disposal and can distribute this to men according to his will. He sends the rain, and the fertility of the soil is attributed to him. As a result, people pray to him for riches, success in trade and total well-being. According to him, his emblems include, pots containing water, pieces of white chalk, and white cloth.

Also, his special offerings are white fowl, white pigeon, and white cloth. Like Yoruba Orisa-nla, he represents God's holiness. They also described him as a divinity of inspiration and idealism hence those who come under his tutelage are believed to have powerful, magnetizing mind, over whelming charm, and magnificent accuracy in all things. The priest of Olokun as they finally report is called ohen Olokun, and he serves as a link between the people and the divinity. There are other Edo priests of Olokun, but Ohen Olokun is the head of them all.

Among prominent divinities of Edo is Ogiuwu, the thunder divinity. This divinity, in the words of Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) through thunder and lightning brings punishment on the erring members of the society. He, in this regard, is an expression of divine judgment. As they further observed, like Olokun, Ogiuwu among the Edo people are believed not only to be son of Osanobwa, but also conceived to be very wise and powerful such that he is free to violate the orders of Osanobwa, especially in matters concerning human beings, since he owns the blood with which Osanobwa makes man, and without which it is impossible for man to be made. Also, people according to Awolalu and Dopamu, therefore believe that it was Ogiuwu who brought them into the world. Finally, they pointed out that those who fear his anger and do not want to be summoned prematurely from the world usually pray to Olokun and Ogiuwu. In the past, sacrifice to him included one man, one woman, one cow and one goat. But the items increased when there was pestilence. Today, animal sacrifices are made.

Notable divinity among the Igbo is Agwu. According to Awolalu and Dopamu (1979, p. 94) Agwu is a patron divinity of diviners among the Igbo who seek to discover secrets and give advice on spiritual matters. Remarkable attributes associated with Agwu

as they noted is that people are usually possessed by Agwu. When this occurs, the person so possessed is called to be a devotee or a diviner hence refusal might be greeted with calamitous consequences.

Explaining further Ejizu, (1986, p. 122) described Agwu as "a highly ambivalent and dynamic deity; a spirit force. For Ejizu, it is the patron spirit of diviners and medicine men. As he further noted, specialists excel in harnessing the positive features of Agwu to enhance their practice.

3. Divinities as Reservoirs of Supernatural Resources

In African religious thought, the divinities are believed to be imbued with inherent benefits such as rain, wealth, health, bountiful harvest, fertility of soil and reproduction and even protection for the crops. This, however, explains why the divinities are described as reservoirs of Supernatural resources. Since these resources or benefits are neither artificial nor emanations from man, but emanations from the supersensible world; for the Africans apparently portend the far-reaching differences or gap (powers) in the ontological relationship that exist between this world and the other world. The obvious fact that the Africans strongly believe in the existential reality of two worlds. The physical tangible world and the spiritual invisible world affirm the above assertion.

According to African traditional belief, not everybody is qualified or due to approach these spiritual entities to harness or tap these resources, rather, there are those who are set aside with the responsibility to do so. They are the priest, divines and medicine-men; often regarded as religious specialists, believed to have sound religious, and by extension understand the language and nature of these beings.

Although, there are several ways of approaching these spiritual entities. Some of which are in libation form, rituals, sacrifices, prayers while places such as road junctions, streams, sea shores, groves, shrines, caves, rivers bank are sacred places where the religious specialists are delivered to interface with these spirit beings to harness these resources for daily living Egbucha and Onu, 2010, p. 57.

For instance, among the Yoruba, Osun, the goddess of River Osun is known for her benevolence. She is believed to be goddess of fertility. This means that she is believed to give children to the barren; both men and women. That is why she is called the mother of children. Similarly, among the Akan and Ga of Ghana, Asase yaa, the earth deity is believed to be the guarantor

of good harvest. It is believed that before planting, sacrifices of fowl mixed with cooked plantain or yam are made to the earth deity for abundant harvest. In much the same vein, in Kono, the divinity, Kwigbe is also regarded as the god of fertility especially for barren women. That is why sterile women approach him for the gift of children. In the shrine the sacred stone of Kwigbe is been tied on a woman's back as if she is carrying a baby and this symbolizes his benevolence among the Kono. Among the Igbo, Ala or Ani (the Earth-goddess) is believed to be the spirit of fecundity. This means that she is believed to give children to the barren. In her statue, the Earth-goddess is been carrying a child on her arms or knees and this symbolizes her generosity and benevolence in Igbo traditional religion (Agbo, 1993, p. 8).

Further, among the Igbo, Amadioha, variously called *Kamalu*, *Igwe*, and *Ofufe*, in different parts of the Igbo Land is regarded not only as the god of thunder and lightning but also be lived to be the sender of rain (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979, p. 93). Another remarkable divinity in this regard among the Igbo is Ahanjioku (the yam divinity). Among the people, it is variously referred to as Ahajioku, Ifejioku, Ahanjoku. Among the people, the yam deity is regarded as the guarantor and custodian of fertility land good harvest. It is believed that at the beginning of every agricultural beason, prayers and sacrifices are offered to him to enhance rich harvest (Ugwu and Ugwueye, 2004, p. 45)

4. Conclusion

This essay examined the place of divinities as the reservoirs of supernatural resources according to African traditional belief. For the Africans, the divinities, as earlier noted, are believed to be imbued with inherent resources or benefits often described as supernatural resources such as rain, good harvest, fertility of soil and reproduction, etc. For the Africans, these resources are so significant and that is why the African peoples sought for these resources on daily basis even annually through rituals via the religious specialists (priests, diviners, medicine men) for daily sustenance.

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The Contextualization of Spiritual Warfare in Nigeria: An Assessment of the Ministry of Garrick Braide

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Abstract. Spiritual warfare occupies a central place in Nigerian Christianity, reflecting the complex interplay between African cosmologies, socio-political realities, and Christian theological frameworks. It involves struggles against spiritual oppression and the pursuit of communal well-being, resonating with African religious consciousness where material and spiritual realms are closely intertwined. This study examines spiritual warfare through the prophetic ministry of Garrick Sokari Braide (1882–1918), a pioneer of African Indigenous Christianity whose work emphasized healing, deliverance, and moral reform. Braide challenged colonial missionary authority, affirmed African Christian identity, and framed spiritual engagement as both religious devotion and socio-political resistance. Using a historical-analytical approach that draws on archival materials, oral traditions, and secondary literature, the paper critically assesses contemporary practices that often reduce spiritual warfare to fear-driven rituals or prosperity-focused pursuits prioritizing individual gain. By retrieving Braide’s model, the study proposes a balanced paradigm for contextual Christian praxis that integrates biblical faith, African cosmology, and social responsibility. Revisiting Braide’s legacy offers Nigerian Christianity an ethically informed and socially responsive framework, transforming spiritual warfare from a superficial or exploitative practice into a practice that nurtures communal resilience, moral integrity, and holistic liberation.

Keywords: Spiritual Warfare, Garrick Sokari Braide, Nigerian Christianity, African Indigenous Christianity, Contextual Theology, Communal Liberation.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of spiritual warfare has become a central motif in Nigerian Christianity, shaping liturgy,

theology, and praxis in ways that reflect both the deep religious consciousness of the people and the socio-political challenges that confront them. Spiritual warfare, understood as the confrontation with demonic powers and the struggle for liberation from spiritual and material oppression, has not only permeated Pentecostal and charismatic traditions but has also influenced the historical trajectory of African Indigenous Churches (Kalu, 2008; Ukah, 2020). In the Nigerian context, this motif resonates profoundly with the people’s cosmological worldview, where the material and spiritual are inseparably intertwined (Mbiti, 1969). The ministry of Garrick Sokari Idaketima Braide, often regarded as one of the precursors of African Indigenous Christianity, represents a foundational moment in this contextualization. His prophetic ministry in the early twentieth century emerged as a challenge to colonial missionary Christianity and an affirmation of a distinct African Christian identity that did not shy away from confronting the spiritual realities perceived to underlie human suffering and societal disorder (Ekebuisi, 2015; Karibo, 2022).

The problem this study seeks to address is the tension between the contextual relevance of Braide’s ministry and the subsequent distortion or commercialization of spiritual warfare in contemporary Nigerian Christianity. While Braide’s emphasis on healing, deliverance, and prophetic confrontation with spiritual forces reflected a contextual appropriation of Christian faith in dialogue with African religious cosmologies, many modern expressions of spiritual warfare have drifted into excessive ritualism, fear-based religiosity, and economic exploitation of adherents (Ukpong, 1999; Wariboko, 2014). This raises critical questions such as: To what extent did Braide’s ministry provide a constructive template for contextualizing spiritual warfare in Nigeria? How has his legacy been appropriated or misappropriated in the trajectory of

African Indigenous Churches and Pentecostalism? This study argues that Garrick Braide's ministry offers a nuanced model of contextualizing spiritual warfare that sought to balance biblical faith, African religious consciousness, and social reform. However, the thesis contends that the contemporary Nigerian church has largely departed from Braide's vision, reinterpreting spiritual warfare through lenses of prosperity-oriented theology and commodified religiosity. By reassessing Braide's contributions, this study aims to recover a historically grounded and theologically sound paradigm of spiritual warfare that resists distortion while remaining contextually relevant to the Nigerian socio-religious experience.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

2.1 Contextual Theology and Power Encounter

Contextual theology understands Christian meaning-making as a triadic conversation among text (Scripture and tradition), context (culture/history), and praxis (social action) (Sanneh, 1995; Bevans, 2002). Rather than viewing theology as a universal abstraction, it emphasizes its incarnational dimension where divine revelation interacts with particular cultural and historical settings. In African Christianity, one of the most productive categories for negotiating this encounter has been the notion of "power encounter." This concept has served as a heuristic lens for interpreting the translation of the gospel in settings where spiritual causality is socially dense and religio-cultural universes are saturated with the presence of unseen powers (Kalu, 2008; Ukah, 2020). Warfare spirituality emerges in this theological space as both a hermeneutic and a praxis. It interprets the gospel's confrontation with "powers and principalities" (Eph. 6:12) not merely as an esoteric or metaphysical struggle, but as a lived engagement with socio-religious structures that perpetuate fear, bondage, exploitation, and moral decay (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007; Meyer, 1999). Within this frame, conversion is dramatized as a transfer of allegiance, an existential rupture with oppressive cosmologies and a reorientation toward divine sovereignty mediated in Christ. Thus, power encounter is not reducible to exorcistic displays but is a broader theological grammar of contestation, liberation, and moral transformation that resonates strongly in African religious consciousness.

3. Research Methodology

The methodological approach of this contribution, combines historical-critical synthesis with a

theological-ethical reading of indigenous Christian praxis. Historical-critical synthesis involves a disciplined engagement with secondary sources, reconstructing the social, cultural, and theological contours of Garrick Sokari Braide's prophetic movement within the Niger Delta (Isichei, 1995). This reconstruction is not merely descriptive but interpretive, attentive to how Braide's praxis negotiated the encounter between Christianity and Niger Delta cosmologies. The analysis proceeds by applying theological-ethical criteria namely, Christological Normativity, Communal Flourishing, Moral Transformation, and Justice Orientation as interpretive lenses for evaluating Braide's liturgical and prophetic practices. Christological normativity asks how his ministry was tethered to the person and work of Christ; communal flourishing assesses its contribution to the social well-being of Niger Delta communities; moral transformation considers its ethical depth and transformative potential; and justice orientation examines its response to structures of domination and exploitation (Peel, 2016).

Methodologically, the paper adopts an inductive progression: first, by reconstructing Braide's movement in its historical and religious setting, and second, by evaluating how its liturgy of power rituals, healing, prophecy, and anti-idolatry campaigns mapped onto Niger Delta cosmologies of spirit causality, divine intervention, and communal ethics. In this sense, the method does not impose a foreign theological template but allows the internal grammar of Braide's praxis to speak, while critically engaging it through theological-ethical reflection.

4. The African Cosmological Framework of Spiritual Warfare

African traditional worldviews are characterized by a holistic understanding of existence, in which the visible and invisible realms are mutually constitutive rather than dichotomized (Mbiti, 1969; Idowu, 1973; Kalu, 2008). Within this cosmology, reality is conceived as a continuum where human beings, ancestors, divinities, and spiritual entities interact in ways that directly influence personal and communal well-being. Human life is thus perceived as continuously exposed to both benevolent and malevolent spiritual forces, necessitating rituals of protection, healing, and deliverance, particularly among the Kalabari. This cosmological framework situates spiritual warfare at the center of lived experience. Misfortune, illness, infertility, and social disorder are often interpreted as consequences of spiritual interference, attributed to witches, malevolent spirits, or ancestral displeasure (Awolalu & Dopamu,

1979). Spiritual warfare is therefore a pragmatic strategy for survival and flourishing within a spiritually charged universe. Rituals including sacrifices, incantations, and cleansing rites function as instruments through which individuals and communities seek equilibrium and protection.

The encounter between African cosmologies and Christianity intensified discourses on spiritual warfare. Missionary Christianity, influenced by Enlightenment rationalism, often dismissed African spiritual concerns as “superstition” or “pagan fear” (Walls, 1996). Such dismissals created a dissonance between imported theological frameworks and indigenous existential realities. In response, African independent religious leaders emerged to bridge this gap. Figures such as Garrick Braide in the Niger Delta contextualized the gospel by directly engaging spiritual powers through prayer, healing, and prophetic authority (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013; Deezia, 2021). This contextualization affirmed that Christianity could interact with Africa’s cosmological consciousness without erasing its concern for spiritual causality. This reinterpretation continues in contemporary African Christianity, particularly within Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. These churches have integrated the African worldview of spiritual warfare into their theological praxis, emphasizing deliverance, exorcism, and prosperity as signs of triumph over malevolent forces (Ukah, 2020; Meyer, 1999). Consequently, the African cosmological framework not only persists within Christianity but actively shapes its expressions, producing a distinctive spirituality that fuses biblical motifs with indigenous understandings of power, protection, and divine intervention.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Niger Delta’s religious landscape was pluralistic and contested, shaped by overlapping cosmologies. Indigenous religious systems, centered on shrines, divinities, and riverine cults, governed fertility, trade, and protection for fishing communities. These systems coexisted with the spread of Islam via inland and trans-regional trade routes, as well as Christian missionary incursions initially Anglican and Catholic, followed by other Protestant denominations (Alagoa, 2005). Moral order within indigenous cosmology was ritually secured through sacrifices, oath-taking, and protective objects, all embedded in a metaphysics of reciprocal relations between humans, ancestors, and spirits. Misfortune such as illness, barrenness, or economic decline was interpreted within a moral causal framework, in which breaches of social or spiritual norms invited retribution from unseen agents (Mbiti, 1969; Kalu, 2008; Peel, 2016). Within this framework,

evil was understood both personally, as spirit aggression or witchcraft, and structurally, through disrupted kinship ties or ecological imbalance; rituals served as practical reasoning to restore equilibrium; and leadership was legitimized by the ability to mediate between visible and invisible orders, ensuring protection and collective prosperity.

It was within this complex religious economy that Garrick Sokari Braide’s Christian message gained resonance. His preaching and healing ministry did not present Christianity as an abstract theological import but as a strategic engagement with the spirit forces that structured local life. By translating Christian soteriology into recognizable idioms of power through healing, prophecy, and ritualized renunciation of charms Braide rearticulated the gospel in terms of deliverance, protection, and empowerment (Deezia, 2021). In doing so, he both appropriated and challenged indigenous cosmologies, positioning Christianity as a superior authority within a religious field defined by contestations over power, morality, and cosmic order.

5. Garrick Braide: Historical Background and Ministry

Garrick Sokari Braide’s early Christian experience remains partly obscure. While open-air services were held in his hometown of Bakana as early as 1886, sources suggest that he did not join the catechumen’s class until around 1905, during the tenure of Moses A. Kemmer at St. Andrew’s Church (Tasie, 1978; Western Equatorial African Diocesan Magazine, June 1913). Under Kemmer’s mentorship, Braide received vernacular instruction in line with CMS policy, learned to read, and became familiar with the Ten Commandments, the catechism, and basic doctrine by 1912 (Turner, 1979). His commitment to faith was soon visible: he cultivated habits of prayer, fasting, and evangelistic preaching at fishing ports and trading stations, where he challenged Sabbath violators and debated African traditional religious practitioners. These practices earned him a reputation for extraordinary spiritual gifts, interpreted as evidence of divine empowerment.

Kemmer’s 1909 church report attests to Braide’s zeal, describing him as humble, prayerful, and unusually effective in evangelism. Contemporary accounts also recall moments of possession, interpreted in African religious categories as signs of divine calling. A frequently cited episode narrates Braide’s confrontation with Igbo ritual specialists hired to control the weather for a festival: when he prayed publicly, a storm followed, convincing witnesses of

the superiority of his God (Weekly Record, 1917). Such events, coupled with his intercessory ministry among the sick, enhanced his authority. Even Kemmer relied on Braide's gifts, often accompanying him to pray for parishioners, a relationship further cemented when Kemmer and his wife served as godparents to Braide's child. These testimonies portray Braide not merely as a devout catechumen but as one who embodied traits of African prophetic figures, charismatic authority, spiritual possession, healing, and bold confrontation with indigenous religious powers.

By the early 1910s, Braide, an indigene of Obonoma in the Degema Division of the Niger Delta, had emerged as a charismatic evangelist whose message centered on repentance, prayer, healing, and the rejection of alcohol, charms, and ritual practices. His ministry resonated deeply with communities negotiating the pressures of colonial rule, missionary dominance, and enduring traditional cosmologies (Tasie, 1978; Ekebuisi, 2015). Unlike the mere transplantation of European Christianity, his approach indigenized the gospel, addressing existential concerns through African categories of experience. Public denunciation of charms and intoxicants, combined with an emphasis on prayer as power, positioned him simultaneously as a prophet of deliverance and a reformer of society.

Braide's popularity, however, provoked anxiety among both colonial authorities and missionary leaders, who feared the weakening of European ecclesiastical control. In 1916 he was arrested on charges of subversion and incitement of unrest, reflecting the extent to which his ministry was perceived as a political and religious threat. Although his life was cut short in 1918, his influence endured. His followers established the Christ Army Church, one of the earliest African Independent Churches in the Niger Delta, thereby institutionalizing his vision of a contextualized Christianity (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2019). Braide thus occupies a pivotal place in African church history as a forerunner of the African Independent Church movement and a symbol of indigenous religious agency. His life illustrates the creative appropriation of Christianity in Africa, the interplay between missionary tutelage and African charisma, and the capacity of prophetic figures to challenge both colonial hegemony and ecclesiastical control in the early twentieth century.

6. Spiritual Warfare in Braide's Ministry

Garrick Braide's ministry in the Niger Delta exemplifies a holistic approach to spiritual warfare

that integrates biblical theology with African religious sensibilities. This section examines key dimensions of his praxis: repentance and disenchantment, healing and deliverance, prophetic confrontation, social reform, and liturgical practices grounded in charismatic authority.

6.1 Repentance as Disenchantment

Braide's call to repentance (deep sense of regret, remorse and return to a religious path) functioned as both moral exhortation and theological strategy. Beyond advocating ethical reform, repentance entailed the renunciation of charms, fetishes, and ritual economies that perpetuated communal fears and obligations (Weber, 1946). This withdrawal of symbolic capital from indigenous ritual specialists redirected ultimate allegiance to Christ. Thus, repentance constituted a dual act: the confession of Christ's exclusive lordship and the social disengagement from spiritual marketplaces that thrived on uncertainty and dread.

6.2 Healing and Deliverance as Social Medicine

In regions with limited access to biomedicine, Braide's healing ministry functioned as social medicine. Testimonies of exorcism and miraculous cures extended beyond spiritual spectacle, restoring individuals to productive roles within family, kinship, and worship the core structures of communal life in African societies (Kalu, 2008). Deliverance addressed both metaphysical affliction and material incapacity, illustrating the intersection of spiritual warfare and social health (Ogbu, 1996). By mediating divine power through prayer, touch, and ritual gestures, Braide affirmed Christianity's capacity to engage African spiritual realities on their own terms.

6.3 Prophetic Confrontation and Iconoclasm

Braide's ministry directly challenged sorcery, charms, and idol worship, enacting prophetic opposition to forms of bondage reminiscent of biblical traditions (Jeremiah 10:5–10). The public burning of ritual objects fetishes, charms, and shrines served as symbolic iconoclasm, visually demonstrating Christ's triumph over localized spiritual forces (Ekechi, 1971). However, these acts contained ethical ambiguities, at times coercing or humiliating those invested in indigenous practices, highlighting the contested nature of religious transformation in colonial Nigeria.

6.4 Social Reform and Moral Economy:

Braide extended spiritual warfare into the socio-ethical sphere. Anti-alcohol campaigns exemplified

intervention in the moral economy, where palm wine and gin served both social and economic functions. Followers' abstinence communicated vigilance and temperance, enhancing the movement's moral credibility and countering colonial commerce, while simultaneously attracting scrutiny from colonial authorities (Ekechi, 1971; Peel, 2016). Such initiatives linked personal holiness with communal well-being, reflecting African communal ethics in which individual conduct carries corporate implications.

6.5 Liturgical Simplicity and Charismatic Authority

Braide's liturgy emphasized simplicity, vernacular prayers, Scripture recitation, fasting, and testimonies, displacing elaborate missionary sacramentalism. Authority resided in his charisma visions, prophetic utterances, and healing power mirroring indigenous models of sacred leadership while orienting them toward Christ (Ekechi, 1971; Kalu, 2008). Practices such as fasting, night vigils, and prayer warfare became enduring elements of African Christianity, extending across denominations and contributing to the rise of Pentecostal vigils as national religious phenomena. These practices facilitate communal solidarity, spiritual relief, and engagement with existential anxieties, particularly among urban populations facing economic hardship. Braide's ministry presents a holistic model of spiritual warfare encompassing ethical, social, and spiritual dimensions. Healing, prophetic confrontation, and liturgical practices operated synergistically to address the totality of human existence, bridging biblical traditions with African religious sensibilities. Historical assessments, including Bishop Johnson's critiques, underscore that what contemporaries perceived as ritual excess ultimately constituted a foundational contribution to the evolution of African Pentecostalism and charismatic spirituality.

7. Ecclesial Tensions and Colonial Contestations

The emergence of Garrick Sokari Braide's prophetic movement generated significant tensions within both ecclesiastical and colonial spheres. Mission authorities vacillated between cautious endorsement and outright alarm as Braide's popularity disrupted Anglican structures of discipline, sacramental practice, and property relations. His emphasis on direct charismatic authority challenged the mediating role of European clergy, destabilizing mission control over worship and congregational loyalty (Ayandele, 1966). From the colonial administration's perspective, Braide's revival was less a theological concern than a matter of

governance. Officials perceived mass gatherings, his rapidly expanding influence, and the disruption of palm-wine economies through anti-liquor campaigns as threats to public order and economic stability (Ekechi, 1971). Consequently, missionary anxiety intersected with colonial securitization, creating a coalition of suspicion toward indigenous religious innovation.

Braide's arrest, trial, and imprisonment epitomize the triangular power struggle among empire, mission, and emergent African-led Christianity seeking autonomy within the Niger Delta's religious landscape. For his followers, these confrontations were profoundly spiritual, interpreted as a form of "spiritual warfare" against the liberating force of the gospel. Colonial and missionary opposition was framed as satanic resistance to divine truth, cultivating a consciousness of Christian identity rooted in resistance across ecclesial, political, and theological dimensions. A notable feature of Braide's ministry was his innovative use of Holy Water (*Boma Lika*) and Holy Mud (*Boma Mingi*) for prophylactic and therapeutic purposes (Mpigi & Bob-Manuel, 2025). The ritual digging of a healing well and the subsequent use of these substances elicited religious excitement and reinforced hope among his followers. Devotees employed fasting, prayer, and the ritual application of blessed water and mud to seek empowerment against perceived malevolent forces. Pilgrims traveled from diverse regions to Bakana to collect the water, applying the mud to their bodies, drinking the water, or using it as a medium for divine encounter. In this way, Braide provided a religious resource that addressed existential fears and insecurities. This practice parallels Asamoah-Gyadu's (2005) observations on the use of ritual objects in African Pentecostalism, where such elements democratize access to the sacred and equip ordinary believers to navigate life's uncertainties.

Despite its popularity, the Niger Delta Pastorate Church authorities condemned Braide's innovation as a regression to traditional African religious practices. Nevertheless, his incorporation of local substances into Christian ritual life exemplifies his creative theological approach. This innovation prefigured later Pentecostal practices, where objects such as sand, coconuts, handkerchiefs, brooms, and anointing oil are employed in deliverance and healing services. Healing remains central to contemporary Pentecostalism, constituting both a liturgical focus and an attractive feature that draws large followings (Offiong, 2003, cited in Karibo, 2022). The institutionalization of miraculous healing is evident in weekly miracle and prayer services. Evangelists such as Emmah Isong of

Good Cheer Partners Inc. promote their ministries as venues where Christians from multiple denominations may experience divine intervention. Pentecostal theology often interprets sickness, disease, and misfortune as manifestations of satanic influence, assuring believers that prayer can transform afflictions into breakthroughs. Testimonies of healings from chronic or terminal conditions are presented as evidence of divine action. In these contexts, each healing is celebrated as miraculous, reinforcing faith in the power of spiritual intervention.

However, the proliferation of exaggerated or staged healing claims has generated skepticism. Observers have noted that some miracles appear theatrical, raising concerns regarding the authenticity of such practices. Scholars and ministers caution that imitative styles risk prioritizing spectacle over genuine spiritual engagement. Even ministers outside Pentecostal traditions, such as certain young Seventh-day Adventist pastors, have integrated healing practices into their ministries, reflecting the widespread appeal of ritualized healing in contemporary Nigerian Christianity. This diffusion underscores the enduring human quest for health, security, and divine intervention amid life's uncertainties. Braide's legacy, therefore, illuminates the interplay between indigenous creativity, colonial and missionary tensions, and the enduring significance of healing and charismatic authority in shaping African Christianity. His ministry offers historical and theological insights into the ways African-led movements negotiate spiritual, social, and political challenges, providing a foundation for understanding contemporary patterns of Pentecostal religiosity.

8. Ethical Appraisal: Strengths and Risks

The ethical legacy of Braide's movement reflects both notable strengths and significant risks. Its practices demonstrated considerable contextual efficacy, directly addressing the lived fears, illnesses, and existential anxieties of the Niger Delta people. Healing, exorcism, and deliverance rituals responded to pervasive vulnerability in a society where misfortune was often interpreted in spiritual terms (Deezia, Karibo, & Amakiri, 2025). The movement also emphasized moral reform, promoting sobriety, temperance, honesty, and the denunciation of exploitative economic practices, thus challenging the colonial economy of gin, palm oil, and debt. Moreover, Braide's ministry fostered communal reintegration, restoring the sick, marginalized, and socially ostracized into networks of belonging. Deliverance from affliction became deliverance into community, reinforcing African notions of relational

personhood. The movement further embodied indigenous leadership and theological agency, disrupting missionary paternalism and asserting local capacity to interpret and enact Christian teachings within culturally meaningful frameworks (Kalu, 2008). Nonetheless, these achievements were accompanied by ethical risks. The movement's iconoclastic zeal, manifested in the destruction of ritual objects and shrines, deepened cultural antagonism and threatened the preservation of ancestral knowledge. The concentration of spiritual authority in Braide created potential for authoritarian drift, personality cults, and succession crises. Additionally, the near-total rejection of indigenous rituals as "fetish" or "idolatry" blurred the line between liberation from oppressive practices and alienation from cultural heritage (Ukpong, 2000). This tension illustrates the ethical ambiguity of early African Christianity, negotiating between prophetic renewal and the preservation of communal identity.

9. Braided Heritage and the Rise of Nigerian Pentecostalism

The genealogy of contemporary Nigerian Pentecostalism demonstrates both continuity with and divergence from Garrick Braide's prophetic legacy. Pentecostal warfare spirituality manifested in Night Vigils, Prayer Mountains, Deliverance Liturgies, and Anti-witchcraft rhetoric echoes Braide's emphasis on repentance, healing, and encounters with divine power. His insistence on decisive breaks with sin, the pursuit of healing as a sign of divine presence, and the dramatization of spiritual conflict finds clear antecedents in the performative grammar of modern Pentecostal praxis (Kalu, 2008). However, contemporary Pentecostalism also exhibits notable ruptures. Whereas Braide's reformist ethos aimed to challenge exploitative social structures and promote communal justice, much of today's Pentecostalism prioritizes the commercialization of the sacred. Media-driven spectacles, prosperity-oriented rituals, and the monetization of deliverance services have transformed spiritual warfare into a religious industry, often emphasizing individual success, wealth, and status over collective moral and social reform (Wariboko, 2012). In this context, demons, witches, and territorial spirits operate as both theological constructs and instruments of economic gain, producing a commodification of fear that contrasts sharply with Braide's communitarian focus.

This evolution reflects both the continuity of African cosmological frameworks where invisible spiritual forces are central to human flourishing and the expansion of these motifs within modern Pentecostal

discourse (Marshall, 2009; Ukah, 2020; Wariboko, 2014). Yet, the ethical balance that Braide sought between spiritual confrontation, healing, and social reform has been overshadowed by the pursuit of spectacle, institutional growth, and prosperity. Braide's ministry integrated indigenous religious sensibilities into a critique of colonial domination and ecclesiastical corruption, channeling divine empowerment toward societal renewal. Contemporary deliverance-centered Pentecostalism, by contrast, often enmeshes spiritual warfare in global capitalist logics and religious consumerism, highlighting the tension between the emancipatory possibilities of Pentecostal spirituality and its potential for commodification.

10. Conclusion

The contextualization of spiritual warfare in Nigeria cannot be fully understood without reference to the ministry of Garrick Braide. His pioneering efforts represent an early and significant attempt to articulate a form of Christianity that resonates with African cosmological realities while remaining faithful to the liberative and transformative message of the gospel. Braide's ministry demonstrates that spiritual engagement must extend beyond individual salvation to include communal well-being, social justice, and moral accountability. Contemporary Nigerian Christianity faces a pressing need to recover the theological insights embedded in Braide's approach. Spiritual warfare has frequently been reduced to ritualistic practices, transactional prayers, or prosperity-oriented paradigms that prioritize private gain over collective liberation. A faithful engagement with Braide's vision, however, would promote a spirituality that is both theologically rigorous and socially responsive one that equips believers to address personal, spiritual, and systemic challenges that compromise human dignity. Braide's legacy thus provides not only historical understanding but also a critical ethical and theological framework for contemporary Christian praxis in Nigeria. By revisiting his model, the church can cultivate a spirituality deeply rooted in African realities, oriented toward justice, and capable of addressing the intertwined spiritual and structural dimensions of human suffering. In this context, spiritual warfare transcends ritual performance or material accumulation, becoming a means of fostering holistic liberation, communal resilience, and ethical responsibility.

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Japa (Migration) Syndrome in Nigeria Palace: A Reading of Selected Francophone and Anglophone Literature

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Abstract. The phenomenon of 'Japa' syndrome, characterized by the mass emigration of Nigerians abroad, has emerged as a significant aspect of Nigeria's contemporary landscape. This paper adopts a literary lens to delve into this phenomenon, employing Lee's push-pull theory and Bhagwati's brain drain phenomenon as integral components of its methodology with an interpretive design. Through an analysis of Sanusi's *un nègre a violé une blonde à Dallas (Nègre)* from the French literary bloc and Adichie's "Americanah" from the English literary bloc. This study seeks to unravel the complexities of Japa and its repercussions on Nigerian society. The selected literary works are scrutinized to discern the motivations and experiences driving Nigerians to migrate abroad, shedding light on the social, economic, and political forces underpinning Japa. By employing a comparative framework, the study elucidates the similarities and disparities in the portrayal of Japa across linguistic boundaries. Furthermore, it probes into the potential influence of language itself in shaping perceptions surrounding Japa. The findings of the study reveal that many Nigerians, like most Africans and third-world-nation citizens, experiencing Japa are pushed by factors like limited economic opportunities and political instability while being pulled by the promise of higher wages, better living conditions, and greater opportunities in the West. This trend could lead to brain drain and obstruct the country's advancement as talented people leave. The study contributes to a more complex understanding of Japa syndrome by

elucidating its causes, effects, and position within Nigeria's broader migration and identity narratives.

Keywords: Japa, Emigration, Nigeria, *Americanah*, *Un nègre a violé une blonde à Dallas*

1. Introduction

The recurrent departure of able-bodied young Nigerian youths as it is prevalent in many African countries and third-world nations has consistently been on the rise since the independence of so many nations. In contrast to the West, emigration is the main form of migration in Africa, claims Kuper (2022). Emigration is the act of departing a nation of origin to live perpetually in another (Adam et al., 2020). This is emphasized by Denisenko (2020) as a fundamental aspect of human migration, which entails the deliberate and often permanent departure of individuals from their country of origin to establish residence in a different nation or geographical region. This process involves a significant personal and societal transition, as individuals choose to uproot themselves from familiar surroundings, cultural contexts, and social networks in pursuit of new opportunities, experiences, or a better quality of life in their chosen destination. This is captured as Japa in Nigeria palace, a word originating from the Yoruba ethnic group in South-West Nigeria. Akanle (2023) explicates that the word "Japa" literally means "to run away" or "escape," but in Nigerian slang, it signifies emigration for better opportunities abroad. However, following the recent addition of Nigerian pidgin to the

Oxford dictionary in 2025, The term "Japa" refers to the departure of Nigerians to other nations, particularly those in Global North, in pursuit of economic opportunities, jobs, or more education." (Oxford, 2025) cited in *Punch Newspapers* (2025, January 8). The slang therefore has taken a new meaning in Nigeria palace and the globe to mean the act of emigrating to seek better opportunities abroad.

There exists a dichotomy between emigration conceived as "Japa" in this study and tourism. Tourism encompasses the practice of individuals embarking on journeys for the primary purposes of leisure, recreation, or cultural exploration (Chen et al., 2020). Tourists engage in temporary visits to various destinations, immersing themselves in diverse activities, sights, and experiences that offer relaxation, enjoyment, and opportunities for personal growth. Du Cros & McKercher (2020) explain that these travelers typically stay for a finite period, during which they engage with the local culture, traditions, and attractions before eventually returning to their country of origin, enriched by their encounters and memories from their sojourn. In contrast, emigration is the permanent relocation to another country for work, family, or a better life. Emigrants leave their homes behind to establish a new life elsewhere. While Europeans come in as tourists, Africans (Nigeria) have perpetually taken the route of emigrants. Mokwenye (2013) explicating this reality and linking it to the West Indies explains that the dream of an average young man in the French Caribbean is to go to France and remain indefinitely.

Writers of francophone African descent in the diaspora as well as those at home have consistently foregrounded the concept of "Japa" conceptualized as emigration in this study. Contemporary novelists like Alain Mabanckou, in *Bleu Blanc Rouge* (1998), *Lumière de Pointe-Noire* (2013), *Demain J'aurai vingt ans* (2010), *Black Bazar* (2009) among other novels, has consistently portrayed not just the reality of Africans departure from the continent, but their perception and bias towards their continent. Other current acclaimed writers in the francophone world living in the Diaspora such as Mohammed Mbougar Sarr in *La plus secreete memoire des hommes* (2021) while addressing the reality, go further in refracting the experience of African writers in Europe through the resurrection of Ouloguem's experience of plagiarism. Waberi in *Dis-moi pour qui j'existe* (2022) and *Passage des larmes* (2009) a mixture of nostalgia and resentment is portrayed.

Contrary to many writers from the francophone bloc living in the Diaspora, Nigeria literary creators have

proven to be more engaging with the realities of their nation as portrayed in the thematic and stylistic tropes often deployed in artistic creation to portray socio-political socio-economic realities amongst other concerns of the nation. Olowolagba (2021) submit that dictatorship and lawlessness as demonstrated in Ojo-Ade's *Les paradis terrestres* is a significant factor encouraging the Japa phenomenon in Nigeria. Prominent among the realities captured are the push and pull leading to emigration and brain drainage phenomena in the nation. Push factors are unfavourable conditions of the nation of origin that encourage individuals to go elsewhere. Pull factors are favourable attributes of the country of destination that entice migrants.

2. Literature Review

There are several sorts of migration research in Nigerian scholarship among academics. In their study of Nigerians' college degree student travelling to Canada, Adeyanju and Olatunji (2022), who specifically focus on parent-funded individuals at Canadian universities, make the case that low-income and upper-class Nigerians choose Canadian institutions due to the employment opportunities associated with student visas and the chance they provide for obtaining permanent residency in Canada. The critics suggest that migration for higher education aligns with Canada's neoliberal immigration policies targeting skilled and self-sufficient international students pulled in by the financial benefits for both parents and the Canadian state through higher tuition fees paid by international students. On the other hand, Nwosu et al. (2022) looked at youth migration, focussing on the push factors that encourage juvenile movement in spite of the hazards involved. They specifically looked at the connection between contemporary slavery, illegal migration, and poor governance. Twenty-five young people from the Umuozu community in Isiala-Mbano Imo State, Nigeria, who were chosen by stratified selection, are included in the study using a qualitative research design and in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that while youths are aware of the dangers of illegal migration, many are still willing to take the risk due to strong push-pull factors, potentially leading to voluntary slavery amid increasing poverty rates.

However, for 'Japa' in Nigeria palace, Akanle (2023) submits that there exist various drivers of migration among Nigerians and provides a nuanced understanding of this phenomenon through innovative methodological approaches. By combining primary migratory insights, autoethnography, and empirical engagements with Nigerian migrants across various

countries, the critic uncovers the complex motivations behind Nigerian migration which reveals that there is a significant increase in the number of Nigerians living abroad, with the concept of "Japa" symbolizing the urgent emigration trend. What Akanle portrays as drivers of migration is conceived as the push and pull factors in the framework of the study.

The push-pull theory of Lee (1966) offers a framework for comprehending patterns of migration. It pinpoints the "push" factors—detrimental elements of the place of origin, such as political unrest or poverty—that drive individuals to migrate (Black & King, 2012). On the other hand, "pull" factors are favourable aspects of the country of destination that attract individuals, including better living circumstances or higher earnings (Carli, 2018). Brain drain is the term used to describe the exodus of highly educated or competent people, which may result in a loss of human capital in the country of origin (Docquier & Rapoport, 2013). This is often observed in literary texts through the depiction of characters that possess valuable skills or knowledge and are motivated to emigrate due to a lack of opportunities in their home country. Likewise, the push and pull factors are captured within the experiences and motivations of characters as demonstrated in the selected text analyzed in the exploration of 'Japa' in Nigeria in this study while underlining the interplay of languages in the foregrounding of the "Japa" syndrome.

Furthermore, whereas the limited studies on Japa rely on primary migratory insights, autoethnography, and empirical engagements, this study takes its departure from literary text. The literary exploration investigates the pull and push factors in the selected texts of Sanusi and Adichie written in French and English to establish the reflection of Nigerian writers in the two broadly used languages of artistic creation among academics and writers nationwide.

3. Research Methodology

The study utilizes an interpretive design. Qualitative analysis is deployed to explore how meaning is constructed within literary works (Flick, 2014). A comparative framework is embraced by analyzing two distinct novels: Sanusi's *Un nègre a violé une blonde à Dallas* and Adichie's *Americanah*. The choice of Sanusi's French novel offers a unique perspective, allowing us to see if the portrayal of Japa transcends language and gender or if there are culturally specific nuances within French-speaking Nigerian communities. Adichie's well-established English novel, on the other hand, provides a comprehensive understanding of Japa's motivations and effects,

serving as a strong foundation for comparison. This linguistic diversity acknowledges Nigeria's multilingual landscape of scholarship and explores the potential influence of language on how Japa is portrayed by both male and female genders. This is carried out within the theoretical framework of the push-pull theory and the brain drain phenomenon. Furthermore, both novels demonstrably explore themes directly relevant to Japa, such as migration, economic disparity, and the pursuit of a better life abroad. Through this comparative analysis, we aim to gain a richer understanding of the complex motivations, anxieties, and experiences surrounding Japa in contemporary Nigeria.

4. Push-pull factors propelling Japa in the Selected Texts.

There exists a relationship between how the languages are used and the negative forces depicted in the selected texts of Sanusi and Adichie to illuminate the motivations behind the Japa phenomenon in Nigeria. A reading of the text from Lee's push-pull lens on migratory studies reveals that there exists an abundance of sociopolitical, economic, educational, monetary, and safety factors that propels migration over the years that has culminated into the contemporary "Japa" syndrome experienced in the milieu of the texts (Nigeria). Sanusi's and Adichie's selected fictions, paint a vivid picture of the motivations behind Nigerians choosing to Japa.

Limited economic opportunities in one's home country often act as a significant push factor for migration, driving individuals to seek better prospects and improved living conditions elsewhere. This is captured in the selected texts by both authors in line with Lee's theory of migration. Sanusi, through the narrator in his selected text submits:

Prends ton sac ! Prends ton sac ! Prend ton sac, et va à Lagos te débrouiller comme tes camarades du village, me dit-il. Je n'osai même pas dire un mot. C'était comme un ordre militaire. Il fallait que j'obéisse à la lettre. Sinon, ce serait d'autres coups de pieds lancés sur moi comme sur un chien galeux. Je n'étais rien sous les yeux de mon oncle ... *Nègre*, p.3

"Take your bag! Take your bag! Take your bag and go and hustle in Lagos like your mates", he said to me. I dared not say a word. It was like a military order. I had to obey to the letter. If not, I would receive hard kicks upon me like those thrown upon a dog with scabs. I was nothing before my uncle's eyes.

The protagonist's uncle's commanding tone and the threat of physical violence underscore the power dynamics and lack of agency experienced by the

individual, highlighting the push factor of economic hardship and vulnerability. The directive to go to Lagos and fend for oneself like others from the village suggests a lack of economic opportunities and support in the current environment, pushing the protagonist towards seeking better prospects elsewhere. The fear of repercussions and the dehumanizing treatment, symbolized by being compared to a diseased dog, further accentuate the desperation and marginalization faced by the individual, reinforcing the push towards migration as a means of escaping economic deprivation and mistreatment. The protagonist's sense of insignificance in the eyes of the uncle reflects the deep-rooted economic disparities and power differentials that can drive individuals to pursue migration in search of a more promising future, illustrating how economic inequality and coercion can serve as potent push factors in migration decisions.

Adichie's portrayal of limited economic opportunities is poignant. In *Americanah*, the narrator decries this unpleasant reality in Nigeria as it concerns youth employment and employability in general. The narrator explains in the paraphrased section of the text: He started sending out applications for positions advertised in newspapers, but no one ever invited him for an interview... anxious that he would once again hand over another résumé in vain. One day, Nneoma remarked, "I know a very wealthy man, Chief. He pursued me relentlessly, but I refused. He has a serious weakness for women, and he could even infect someone with AIDS... I usually go to pay him visits. He actually gave me the money to restart my business after those devils stole my savings last year. He still believes that one day I will accept him. Ha, it is laughable, never! I will introduce you to him. When he is in high spirits, the man can be extremely generous. He is well connected in this country. Perhaps he will write us a recommendation to a managing director somewhere." *Americanah*, p.30

In the context of Lee's push-pull migration theory, the character's initial struggle to secure employment despite actively seeking opportunities reflects a push factor compelling individual to consider leaving their current environment due to limited prospects and social isolation. The rejection from potential employers and the avoidance of friends due to job-seeking pressures contribute to a sense of exclusion and frustration, reinforcing the push towards seeking alternative paths for advancement. Also, meeting Chief in the context of the narrative reflects the concept of inequality for individuals who lack connections or referrals. In the above scenario, Nneoma's acquaintance with Chief provides her with access to potential opportunities and resources that are not readily available to those without such

connections. The character's reliance on Nneoma's relationship with Chief to potentially secure a job or financial support highlights how social networks and affiliations can create disparities in access to opportunities. For individuals without influential contacts like Chief, the absence of referrals or connections can exacerbate existing inequalities, limiting their ability to navigate and access avenues for advancement or assistance. The reliance on personal connections to bridge gaps in opportunities underscores the unequal distribution of resources and privileges based on social networks, emphasizing the challenges faced by those who lack the social capital to facilitate their aspirations or address their needs effectively. This ultimately serves as a push factor to those without such connections to consider and undertake the Japa route where such disparity and economic inequality are minimal.

To further buttress this inequality in economic opportunity, the narrator underlines the case of Yemi seeking employment opportunity from Obinze, "I'm not certain about your field of work, sir, but I'm constantly seeking improved employment opportunities. I'm currently finishing my master's degree," (*Americanah*, p.38). The case of Yemi is relatable to lots of Nigerians with higher college degrees. The subordinate clause "however, I still in search of a gainful employment" in the context of the push-pull theory of migration reflects both push and pull factors. The push factors are the limited economic opportunities and dissatisfaction with current employment in the individual's home region, driving them to seek change. Conversely, the pull factors are the prospects of better job opportunities, higher wages, and improved working conditions elsewhere, which attract the individual to migrate to regions offering these advantages.

Corruption acts as a significant "push" factor in the push-pull theory of migration, compelling individuals to leave their home countries in search of more stable and transparent environments. Sanusi and Adichie foreground this reality in the selected text in the reflection of Nigeria's milieu and the reasons for the continuous rise of the "Japa" syndrome. The narrator in *Nègre*, remarks

Le chef de notre gang s'appelait Esu. Il était dangereux comme le diable. Il y avait peut-être de quoi car son nom signifiait DIABLE dans mon parler local. Esu avait des liens très solides avec certains officiers de police avec qui il travaillait en collaboration. Ces derniers lui procuraient des kalachni-kovs et d'autres armes qu'on utilisait dans nos opérations. On aura tout vu. On aura tout appris à Lagos. *Nègre*, p.22

The leader of our gang was called Esu. He was as dreadful as the Devil himself. No wonder, his name signified DEVIL in my local tongue. Esu had some consolidated ties with certain police officers with whom he worked. The latter would procure them with rifles and other arms used in our operations. We had seen it all. We had learnt it all in Lagos.

In the context of the push-pull theory of migration, the narrator highlights how corruption, exemplified by the collaboration between the gang leader Esu and police officers, serves as a significant push factor for Nigerians considering Japa. The dangerous and corrupt nature of Esu, who has strong ties with law enforcement officials, underscores the pervasive influence of corruption in Nigerian society, creating an environment of lawlessness and insecurity. The access to weapons provided by police officers for criminal activities reflects the deep-rooted corruption within the system, leading to a breakdown of trust in institutions and exacerbating the push for individuals to seek better opportunities elsewhere. The mention of learning and experiencing everything in Lagos suggests recognition of the pervasive corruption and criminality in the city, further emphasizing how the prevalence of corruption as a push factor can drive individuals to migrate in search of safety, stability, and a more conducive environment for personal and economic advancement.

Similarly, to the portrayal of Sanusi, Adichie, in *Americanah*, subtly depicts the pervasive influence of corruption and political instability. Halima's remark in the saloon to Ifemelu as she prepares to return to Nigeria underscores corruption. "Yes, Nigeria is extremely dishonest. The most crooked country in Africa. I watched the movie but no, I would never travel to Nigeria!" She gestured faintly with her hand. "I cannot wed a Nigerian and I will not allow anyone in my family to wed one," Mariama declared, casting Ifemelu a regretful look. "Not everyone, but many of them engage in terrible acts—even taking lives for money." *Americanah*, p.189.

Corruption acts as a powerful push factor for migration by creating an environment where trust in institutions and safety is compromised, leading to widespread disillusionment and fear among citizens. In Lee's push-pull theory of migration, push factors like corruption as observed in the submission of the character above, drive individuals to seek better opportunities and security elsewhere. The clause "Nigeria very corrupt" followed by the phrase "Worst corrupt country in Africa" highlights the pervasive distrust and negative perception associated with Nigeria due to rampant corruption and criminal

activities, reinforcing the desire to migrate without an option of return. The stigma attached to Nigerian nationality, as expressed through her refusal to engage with Nigerians, underscores how deeply corruption affects social dynamics and personal decisions. Consequently, the pervasive nature of corruption fuels the urge to leave in pursuit of a more stable and ethical living environment.

Another push factor veritably portrayed in the text is the issue of school inconsistency and personal safety concerns. Sanusi portrayed the issue of insecurity in *Un Nègre a violé une Blonde à Dallas* as protagonist, Ajanaku explained:

À Lagos, on s'est lancé dans des cambriolages et dans des crimes divers : On a cassé les banques à Lekky! On a cassé les maisons à Ikoyi! On a cassé les appartements à Ikeja! On a complètement cassé tout à Surulere! On a même violé les femmes à OPEBI! Vraiment, j'étais devenu un bon cambrioleur comme Agbako. J'étais devenu un cambrioleur de première classe. C'est-à-dire que j'étais devenu un cambrioleur diplômé... *Nègre*, p.20

In Lagos, we were involved in several housebreaking and criminal attacks: We broke into banks in Lekki. We robbed houses in Ikoyi. We burgled apartments in Ikeja. We robbed Surulere completely. We raped women in Opebi. Of a truth, I became a good burglar like Agbako. I became a first-class housebreaker. I mean, I became a certified burglar.

Safety concerns act as a powerful push factor for migration according to Lee's push-pull theory, compelling individuals to leave areas plagued by crime and insecurity. In Lagos, rampant criminal activities such as burglaries, bank robberies, home invasions, and assaults, as described in the excerpt above, create an environment of fear and instability. The pervasive threat to personal safety and property undermines residents' sense of security, prompting them to seek refuge in safer locations. These safety concerns push individuals to migrate to areas with better law enforcement and lower crime rates, where they can live without constant fear of violence. Thus, the desire for a secure and peaceful living environment drives migration away from dangerous locales.

Adichie on the other hand, with less emphasis on security concerns, brings to the fore to her readers the inconsistency of academic programmes and calendars in Nigeria due to the recurrent academic Union Strike. In an exchange between Ifemelu and a friend, the narrator underlined "Ginika asked if you left Nigeria because university lecturers are constantly on strike there.?" (p.150). Focusing on the push factors that drive individuals to leave their home country, the

constant strikes by college professors in Nigeria serve as a significant push factor influencing the decision to migrate. This is because the unreliability and disruption caused by frequent strikes in the education sector create instability and hinder academic progress, leading to a lack of confidence in the educational system and prospects within the country. This push factor is compounded by the impact on students' learning experiences, career opportunities, and overall quality of education, prompting individuals to seek better educational environments and opportunities abroad. The perception of a more stable and conducive academic environment in other countries becomes a compelling pull factor that attracts individuals seeking to escape the challenges and limitations imposed by the persistent strikes and disruptions in the Nigerian educational system

By incorporating these push factors into the storytelling; Sanusi and Adichie skillfully illustrate the internal struggles faced by characters such as Ajanaku and Ifemelu as they navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by their homeland and the prospects of a better life overseas. Through the characters' experiences and decisions, the authors effectively portray the complex dynamics of migration, shedding light on the dilemmas individuals encounter when contemplating leaving their familiar surroundings in search of a more promising future in a foreign land. Ajanaku and Ifemelu's journeys serve as poignant reflections of the broader societal issues and personal aspirations that influence migration decisions, offering readers a nuanced exploration of the motivations and consequences associated with seeking opportunities beyond one's homeland.

5. Brain Drains Phenomenon in the Selected Texts Milieus

The brain drain phenomenon is a resultant effect of the push-pull factors proposed by Lee in migratory studies. Both reflect this reality through the depiction of their characters. Concerning economic inequality, Adichie captures the reality of Brain drain in the conversation between Obinze and Yemi thus:

Yemi had read English at the university ... “but I’m constantly searching for a more rewarding job. I’m finishing my master’s now,” Yemi remarked, in the style of a quintessential Lagosian—forever striving, eyes perpetually watchful for something bigger and better.... *Americanah*, p.38

This precarious situation serves as a push to seek opportunities in the diaspora, ultimately culminating in the ongoing Japa and brain drain as educated and

able-bodied young men take the slightest opportunity to take the ‘Japa’ flight.

More so, the pervasive safety concerns and high crime rates in cities like Lagos as captured in Sanusi’s text discussed above, have had significant impacts on Nigeria as a nation. Firstly, there is outflow of residents seeking safer environments. This migration also leads to brain drain, as skilled professionals and educated individuals leave in search of stability, weakening the country's human capital and economic potential. Additionally, widespread crime undermines foreign investment, as investors are wary of the risks associated with operating in such unstable environments, thereby hindering economic growth. Thus, the social fabric of the nation is strained, with communities living in fear and trust in law enforcement and governance eroding. Overall, the safety concerns contribute to a cycle of instability and underdevelopment, impeding Nigeria's progress and development in the long run.

Furthermore, it is possible to interpret the frequent strikes by Nigerian university lecturers, which force people to relocate abroad, as a form of brain drain, which in this context entails the departure of highly qualified and educated professionals from their nation in pursuit of better opportunities overseas. This tendency has consistently led to the loss of critical knowledge and skills that could have facilitated the nation's development and is likely to do so in the future. The continuous strikes also encourage the driving away of skilled academics that are essential for the country's educational system and overall development. The departure of these professors due to the challenging working conditions and instability caused by the strikes resulted in a loss of valuable human capital and knowledge that could have been utilized for the advancement of education and research within Nigeria. This reflection of Nigeria’s tertiary educational systems reinforces the postulation of Bhagwati's brain drain phenomenon highlighting how systemic issues such as labor unrest and inadequate working conditions can lead to the outflow of skilled professionals, exacerbating the brain drain problem and hindering the country's ability to retain and benefit from its educated workforce.

6. Conclusion

The exploration of the Japa (Migration) Syndrome in Nigeria through a literary lens has provided valuable insights into the complex motivations, experiences, and repercussions of mass emigration among Nigerians. By employing Lee's push-pull theory and Bhagwati's brain drain phenomenon as theoretical

frameworks, this study has shed light on the multifaceted realities propelling young Nigerians to seek better prospects outside and the continuous loss of human capital in the home country. The methodology employed in this study, utilizing an interpretive design and qualitative analysis of selected literary works in both French and English, has allowed for a nuanced understanding of the Japa phenomenon. By comparing and contrasting the portrayals of migration in different linguistic contexts, this research has highlighted the cultural and language-specific nuances that influence how Japa is perceived and experienced by individuals in Nigeria.

The findings of this study have revealed that limited economic opportunities, political instability, corruption, and safety concerns act as significant push factors driving Nigerians to migrate abroad in search of better prospects and improved living conditions. The depiction of characters in the selected texts exemplifies the struggles and aspirations of individuals grappling with the decision to leave their homeland in pursuit of a brighter future. Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the Japa syndrome in Nigeria, elucidating its causative factors, repercussions, and position within the broader tapestry of migration and identity narratives. By delving into the complexities of migration through the lens of literature, this research underscores the importance of considering cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic factors in analyzing the dynamics of emigration and brain drain in the Nigerian context. Moving forward, further research could explore additional literary works, incorporate perspectives from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and delve into the long-term impacts of brain drain on Nigeria's development and societal fabric, thus contributing to informed discussions on migration policies and strategies for sustainable development in Nigeria and beyond.

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Impact of Orphanage-Based Interventions on the Well-Being of Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

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Abstract. The issue of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) remains a global humanitarian concern, prompting interventions to enhance their socioeconomic well-being. This study examined the influence of orphanage-based interventions on OVC in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to examine the effectiveness of orphanage-based interventions in improving the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children in Benin City, evaluate the impact of healthcare services provided to orphans and vulnerable children through orphanage-based interventions in Benin City, lastly to examine the effects of educational and vocational training support provided to orphans and vulnerable children by orphanages in Benin City. Ecological systems theory was used in explanation of the study. Mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected from 384 OVC and 10 informants using a structured questionnaire and in-depth interview guide respectively. The instruments were content-validated, and reliability was determined by pre-test. Member-checking was used to verify the interview findings. Multi-stage sampling techniques including stratified, simple random and purposive sampling were employed. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 22, presented in percentages, tables, and charts, while qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed thematically. The findings of the study revealed significant inadequacies in healthcare and educational opportunities for OVC in orphanages across Benin City. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with existing support services. The study recommends free enrolment of OVC into the Edo State or national health insurance scheme and policy to mandate school proprietors to provide scholarship for the as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: Orphans, orphanage-based intervention, orphans and vulnerable children, vulnerable, well-being

1. Introduction

The issue of orphans and vulnerable children remains a pressing global humanitarian concern, necessitating various interventions to enhance their well-being. In particular, orphanage-based interventions have evolved as a crucial response to the challenges faced by these children, who often lack access to basic needs such as education, healthcare, and emotional support (Nguyen et al., 2016). In the past, orphanages were usually seen as the go-to solutions for caring for orphans, focusing on the provision of shelter, gloomy, austere, and rules rather than on nurturing (Duncan & McMahon, 2017). However, the perception has shifted over the years, recognizing that merely providing shelter is insufficient. Recent decades have ushered in a new era where the focus is on quality care, community involvement and long-term support system, shaping a narrative that these children can indeed thrive with the right support (Kumar, 2012).

Orphanages are seen as life jackets in turbulent waters, offering much-needed support in waves of adversity, encompassing a wide range of services, including education, healthcare, and emotional support (Ogunyemi, 2017). It provides a safety net of resources that can help these children grow into thriving adults rather than just surviving their childhood. Ogunleye (2020) Orphanage-based interventions are structured programmes and services designed to support the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children living in orphanages. In other words, these interventions are provided to orphans and vulnerable children within the confines of orphanages to improve their well-being (Yuka & Omorogiuwa, 2024). These may include educational support,

healthcare services, nutritional assistance, and emotional counseling, all of which aim to improve the overall quality of life of these children.

Orphanage-based interventions have emerged as approaches to address the needs of OVC. The emergence of these interventions has provided valuable insights into the development of targeted and effective support strategies for OVC in most urban settings (Ogunleye, 2020; Yuka & Omorogiwa, 2024). Meanwhile, orphanages often collaborate with local organizations and government agencies to create comprehensive programmes that address not only the immediate needs of children but also their long-term development (Omorogiwa, 2021). In Benin City, where many families struggle with poverty and instability, such interventions have been instrumental in enhancing the overall well-being of these children, allowing them to thrive despite their circumstances (Omorogiwa, 2025). The effectiveness of these interventions extends beyond immediate support, contributing to long-term improvements for orphans and vulnerable children by equipping them with the skills and resources necessary for future independence and success (Okafor, 2021). Meanwhile, understanding the well-being of orphans is essential for developing targeted interventions and it encompasses the overall quality of life of orphans and vulnerable children, including their health, education, and economic stability (Omorogiwa, 2020). Mwoma and Pillay (2016) further asserted that the healthcare services provided to orphans and vulnerable children are also essential for their overall well-being. Access to quality healthcare is critical for preventing and managing health problems among orphans and vulnerable children (Okafor, 2021). Another area of intervention highlighted by Keat (2014) is educational support, such as scholarships and educational resources are crucial for the educational development of orphans and vulnerable children which is a key factor breaking the cycle of poverty and vulnerability, Patel and Lee (2021) and Omorogiwa (2023) posit that orphanage-based interventions are critical not only for the immediate well-being of these vulnerable children but also for fostering their long-term development. However, the effectiveness of these existing orphanage-based interventions to address these needs of OVC remains an under-explored area of study and substantial gap in ascertaining their actual impact on the well-being of these vulnerable children (Patel & Lee, 2021).

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

The increasing number of children lacking care has led to significant disruptions in their social, emotional,

and economic development, making them susceptible to several adverse outcomes including poverty, exploitation, and limited access to education and healthcare services (Omorogiwa, 2020). However, Benin City, Edo State, is perceived to be home to a growing population of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), who often lack access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and psychosocial support (Ogunleye, 2020; Yuka & Omorogiwa, 2024). This was further supported by Situation Analysis and Assessment of orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria in 2018 that Benue and Edo State had the highest prevalence rate of 35 percent orphans in Nigeria (Ladan, 2018). Most of these children face persistent hardships that hinder their ability to thrive and contribute positively to society.

According to researchers, orphans and vulnerable children in Edo State often lack adequate shelter, proper nutrition, and limited access to education and healthcare, including being at a high risk of economic exploitation, physical/sexual abuse, child prostitution, child slavery, child labor and trafficking, and early marriage/pregnancy, among others (Osiruemu, 2007; Eghafona, 2009; Owolabi, 2012; Ehigie & Omorogiwa, 2022; Omorogiwa, 2021). In response, various non-governmental organizations and government initiatives have emerged, focusing on orphanage-based interventions that aim to provide a safe environment, nurture, and resources to support vulnerable children, including existing policies such as the Child Rights Act (2003) and the National Guideline and Standard of Practice (NGSP) for OVC. A cursory look at orphanages in Benin City reveals a diverse landscape of facilities, each with a unique approach to care and support, reflecting the varying needs of the children they serve.

The Ecological Systems Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) established that human development is influenced by the different types of environmental systems that interact with individual (Tudge et al., 2009). The foregoing implies that human development is not solely determined by individual factors, but is significantly shaped by the various layers of the environment surrounding the individual. In relating this theory to this study, the mesosystem and ecosystem layers provide a lens understanding the environmental/ multifaceted influences on the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children in Benin City. The ecosystem highlights the connections between different microsystems, such as the relationship between the orphanage and local schools, healthcare providers (Hogan, 2017). For orphanage-based interventions to be impactful, they must promote collaboration among these institutions. In

other words, partnerships with local schools can facilitate the enrolment of orphanage children in mainstream educational programmes, increasing orphans and vulnerable children access to educational, healthcare and social resources, can in turn enhance their socio-economic opportunities. Exosystem includes external societal factors that indirectly affect orphans' lives. This includes government policies regarding child welfare, funding allocations for orphanages.

Despite the efforts made by these orphanages, many children still face significant challenges in accessing quality education and health care. The effectiveness and sustainability of orphanage-based interventions remain uncertain because of inconsistent funding streams and limited government support (Omorogiuwa, 2025). Many facilities operate with insufficient resources, which affects the quality and consistency of the services provided (Johnson & Lee, 2019). Additionally, the transition from institutional care to independent living presents considerable challenges for OVC aging outside the system, with many lacking adequate preparations for self-sufficiency. This study evaluated the impact of current orphanage-based interventions on the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Benin City, identifying effective practices and areas requiring improvement.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of orphanage-based interventions on the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- evaluate the impact of healthcare services provided to orphans and vulnerable children through orphanage-based interventions in Benin City.
- examine the effects of educational and vocational training support provided to orphans and vulnerable children by orphanages in Benin City.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide this study:

- What are the impacts of healthcare services provided to orphans and vulnerable children through orphanage-based interventions in Benin City?
- How effective is the provision of educational and vocational training to orphans and

vulnerable children by orphanages in Benin City?

2. Research Methodology

This study employed the mixed methods for the data collection, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. For the quantitative aspect of the study, a cross-sectional design was adopted in the collection of the data on the impact of orphanage-based interventions on the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children. The qualitative component of the study adopted the phenomenology research design, focusing on the subjective experiences of the informants to understand common characteristics of the phenomena being studied. For the quantitative aspect of the study, 384 respondents were selected using the stratified random sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of OVC from different orphanages across various locations in Benin City. For the qualitative data, ten (10) informants were selected using the purposive sampling technique, which comprises of two social workers, two Directors in the Edo State Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues, two caregivers, four administrators from the selected orphanages, to gain insights into their experiences and the operational dynamics of orphanages. This comprehensive approach enhanced the richness and robustness of the data collected in the study.

2.1 Methods of Data Collection

Given that this study utilized the mixed method of data collection, two research instruments were adopted for data collection; they were the structured questionnaire (OVC Well-being Assessment Tool, OVC-WAT); that was divided into sections to gather demographic characteristics of the respondents and to assess the impacts of orphanage-based interventions on the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children. This survey tool also utilized Likert scales and dichotomous questions for ease of analysis and measurement of the intensity of the feelings of the respondents towards the given questions. The qualitative data were obtained using in-depth interview guide and audio recorded, this allows the study draw out in-depth insights into the informants' experiences. To ensure efficient data collection, three research assistants were recruited and trained specifically for the quantitative data collection.

2.2 Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through the structured questionnaires were analyzed with the aid of the

statistical packages of social sciences (SPSS) version 22. This choice was based on its versatility in data handling and the ability to break down statistical data in a more understandable way. The quantitative data were also presented using percentages, frequency distribution table, cross-tabulations, and charts. The qualitative data gathered from interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involves coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, including proprietors of orphanages and caregivers of OVC, prior to data collection. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without any repercussions. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

3. Presentation of Results

Research Question One: What are the impacts of healthcare services provided for orphans and vulnerable children by orphanage-based interventions in Benin City?

Items	Questions	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	How adequate are the healthcare services provided to orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages?	Highly Adequate	30	7.8%
		Adequate	90	23.4%
		Slightly Adequate	110	28.6%
		Not Adequate	154	40.1%
		Total	384	100
2	To what extent do you receive regular medical check-ups in the Orphanage?	To a Great Extent	24	6.3%
		To Some Extent	70	18.2%
		To a Limited Extent	200	52.1%
		Not at All	90	23.4%
		Total	384	100
3	How accessible are healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses, therapists) to orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages?	Highly Accessible	44	11.5%
		Moderately Accessible	75	19.5%
		Slightly Accessible	240	62.5%
		Not Accessible	25	6.5%
		Total	384	100
4	How satisfied are orphans and vulnerable children with the quality of healthcare services provided in orphanages?	Very Satisfied	32	8.3%
		Satisfied	40	10.4%
		Slightly Satisfied	92	24%
		Not Satisfied	220	57.3%
		Total	384	100
5		Highly Sufficient	34	8.9%

How sufficient are the healthcare resources (medications, facilities, emergency response) available to orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages?	Sufficient	65	17%
	Slightly Sufficient	100	26.0%
	Not Sufficient	185	48.1%
Total		384	100

Source: Field survey, 2025

Question one in Table One analyzed data on how adequate are the healthcare services provided for OVC. Significant majority of the respondents 154(40.1%) claimed that healthcare services provided are not adequate, this however, indicates a substantial gap in the essential health needs of this vulnerable population, meanwhile 30(7.8%) of the total respondents sampled affirmed that the healthcare services as 'highly adequate, while 90(23%) and 110(28.6%) of the respondents stated adequately and slightly adequate respectively. The analysis reveals a deficiency in the healthcare service quality and availability. These findings suggest that the existing healthcare delivery system in orphanages have not adequately address the complexities surrounding the health challenges faced by OVC. The quantitative data was complemented by qualitative data collected through the study's in-depth interview; the informant's responses were highlighted below.

"Healthcare support services here are almost non-existent. If a child is sick, we have to take them to a distant hospital, which is not feasible for minor issues. They often end up suffering unnecessarily."(Female IDI/54 years/orphanage home proprietor/2025).

"The healthcare resources available in the orphanages are inadequate. We often have to rely on donations or outside help, and that's not a sustainable solution for the long-term healthcare needs of these children." (Male IDI/49 years/Social Worker/2025).

These responses reflect a range of concerns about both the effectiveness of healthcare services and the sufficiency of resources available in orphanages. The analysis of data to ascertain the extent of regular medical check-ups received by OVC in the Orphanage shows that the majority of the children sampled 200(52.1%) felt that regular and routine medical checkups are provided to a limited extent, while 90(23.4%) stated that these medical check-ups are not provided at all. 24(6.3 %) of the respondents believed that these services are available to a great extent. The findings show that orphans and vulnerable children in most orphanages lack of regular medical, meanwhile the absence of which can result in undiagnosed medical conditions, potentially exacerbating health issues of these children.

On whether healthcare professionals are accessible to orphans and vulnerable children, data analysis shows that 240(62.5%) of the children sampled in the study indicated that healthcare professionals are slightly accessible, while 25(6.5%) stated that the health professionals are highly accessible. 44(11.5%) respondents of the total population sampled considered these healthcare professionals as 'not accessible. These findings reveal that the majority of the respondents sampled believed that healthcare professionals are not easily accessed. The perception of limited accessibility may discourage caregivers from seeking necessary medical help, resulting in detrimental health implications for the children in their care.

Analysis of question four in Table one reveals the assessment of satisfaction concerning the quality of healthcare services delivery in orphanages. 220(57.3 %) of the children sampled in the study affirmed that they were not satisfied with the quality of healthcare provided to them, while 32 (8.3 %) respondents indicated being very satisfied. 94(24%) of the sampled respondents stated that they are 'slightly satisfied with the healthcare services. Therefore, the high levels of dissatisfaction expressed by the majority of the respondents highlight the potential deficiencies in various aspects of healthcare delivery in the various orphanages in Benin City, which may include the availability of comprehensive treatment options, and the overall quality of care.

One the sufficiency of healthcare resources, significant majority of the respondents 185(48.1%) rated the healthcare resources as Not Insufficient. This may indicate a pronounced sentiment that the healthcare needs of orphans and vulnerable children are not adequately met. 100(26%) of respondents described the resources as Slightly Sufficient, suggesting that while some resources may be available, they are far from being adequate. Collectively 99(25.9%) of respondents rated the resources as either Highly Sufficient or Sufficient. These findings reveal considerable perception

of inadequacy in the healthcare provision in orphanages in Benin City. The quantitative data was complemented by qualitative data collected through in-depth interview, where the informants responded as follows; *"Honestly, the resources are insufficient. We cannot even keep a consistent supply of basic medications, let alone specialized treatments. It's a constant struggle to find what we need."* (Female IDI/51 years/orphanage home proprietor/2025).

"We have a shortage of medication and medical supplies. We often have to improvise or go without medical essential items, which put the children at risk; also, most orphanages do not have a proper emergency response plan in place. If a child has an acute issue, they scramble to find help" (Female IDI/54 years/orphanage home proprietor/2025).

The data highlights a critical problem in the sufficiency of healthcare resources for orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages in Benin City, with majority of the participants affirming that the availability of medications, facilities, and emergency response among others are inadequate.

Research Question Two: How effective is the provision of educational and vocational training support to orphans and vulnerable children by orphanages in Benin City?

Items	Questions	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	To what extent do you think orphanages have provided educational and skill development opportunities for orphans and vulnerable children	To a Great Extent	23	6%
		To Some Extent	51	13.3%
		To a Limited Extent	271	70.6%
		Not at All	39	10.2%
		Total	384	100
2	How adequate is, the educational support provided to orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages?	Highly Adequate	44	11.5%
		Adequate	42	10.9%
		Slightly Adequate	58	51.1%
		Not Adequate	240	62.5%
		Total	384	100
3	How sufficient are the learning materials and resources (textbooks, technology, and school supplies) available to orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages?	Highly Sufficient	34	8.9%
		Sufficient	90	23.4%
		Slightly Sufficient	110	28.6%
		Not Sufficient	150	39.1%
		Total	384	100
4	How satisfied are orphans and vulnerable children with the quality of education and vocational training support provided by orphanages in Benin City?	Very Satisfied	34	8.9%
		Satisfied	80	20.8%
		Slightly Satisfied	103	26.8%
		Not Satisfied	167	43.5%
		Total	384	100

5	How accessible are higher education opportunities (college scholarships, vocational training) for orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages?	Highly Accessible	44	11.5%
		Moderately Accessible	90	23.4%
		Slightly Accessible	110	28.6%
		Not Accessible	140	36.5%
		Total	384	100

Source: Field survey, 2025

Analysis of question one in Table Two on how effective the provision of educational and vocational training support to orphans and vulnerable children by orphanages in Benin City. Significant majority of respondents 271(70.6%) believe that orphanages provide educational and vocational training opportunities only to a limited extent, and 39(10.2%) of the sampled respondents affirmed that orphanages do not provide educational and vocational training opportunities for OVC at all. In contrast, 23 (6%) and 51(13.3%) felt that educational and skill development opportunities are available to a great extent and some extent respectively. These findings reveal persistent concerns in the ability of orphanages in Benin City to provide for the necessary educational and skill development needs of OVC. This perception may suggest a need for organizations and policymakers to scrutinize and reform policies to address the educational needs of orphans and vulnerable children in Benin City. This was complemented by the qualitative data gathered; interviewees were divergent in their responses as follows;

“We simply do not have the resources or expertise to provide that. Without proper vocational training, I worry that many of them will struggle to find jobs after they leave the orphanage. There’s a real lack of focus on preparing them for the future.” (Female IDI/52 years/Caregiver in an Orphanage /2025).

“The reality is that many orphanages are ill-equipped to provide meaningful vocational skill development opportunities. While some have attempted vocational training programmes, these initiatives are often poorly planned and lack the necessary resources. There is a significant gap between what is needed and what is being provided. Many children leave orphanages without any useful skills, and that is a major concern for us as a ministry.” (Female IDI/52 years/Director /2025).

The qualitative study conduct reflects a more negative outlook on the current state of educational support and vocational skill development for orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages. The lack of comprehensive educational and vocational training

opportunities may severely limit the potential for OVC to build sustainable means of livelihoods in the future, further perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization.

Analysis of how adequate the educational support provided to orphans and vulnerable children in the orphanages. Significant majority of the children in the orphanages sampled 240(62.5%) identified the educational support as not adequate, while 58(15.1%) stated slightly adequate. 42(10.9%) and 44(11.5%) viewed the educational support as adequate and highly adequate respectively. These findings revealed that there are limited opportunities for vocational skill development and inadequate educational support for orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages. This reflect critical shortcomings that need to be addressed. Policymakers, educational authorities, and non-profit organizations need to recognize these gaps and take actionable steps to meet the educational needs of these vulnerable populations. The quantitative data was complemented by qualitative data collected through the study's in-depth interview, to which the informants responded as follows.

“I have to admit that the educational support in many orphanages is inadequate. Some orphanages are in dire situations, lacking textbooks and even basic school supplies. It’s alarming to see children not receiving the education they deserve” (Female IDI/52 years/Director /2025)

“Honestly, the educational support we provide is far from adequate. We have very limited resources, and many of our children are falling behind in their studies. We rely on donations for textbooks and school supplies, and sometimes we simply do not have enough to go around. The local schools we partner with have their issues, and the quality of education is inconsistent” (Female IDI/51 years/orphanage home proprietor/2025).

These perceptions raise concerns on the adequacy of educational support and vocational training received by OVC in Benin City. In otherwords, insufficient educational support may impede academic

achievement and hinder the holistic development necessary for children to thrive. The data analysed on availability of learning materials and resources (textbooks, technology, and school supplies for orphans and vulnerable children) in orphanages revealed that 34(8.9%) of respondents sampled rated the resources as highly sufficient, while 150(39.1%) of the children sampled in orphanages considered the educational learning materials as not sufficient, indicating that a significant proportion of these children may be facing serious educational challenges due to inadequate educational materials. 110(28.6%) respondents rated the resources as slightly sufficient. 90(23.4%) respondents affirmed that the educational resources were sufficient, which indicates that there are orphanages with better provisions of educational materials, but overall, the majority of responses fall on the spectrum of insufficiency. This deficiency could negatively affect the quality of education received and may widen the educational gap between orphans and children in more privileged settings.

Question 4 in Table 2 shows the analysis of data on the level of satisfaction of OVC with the quality of education and vocational training support provided by Orphanages. The majority of the children sampled in the study 167(43.5%) express dissatisfaction with the quality of education and vocational training support provided by Orphanages. 103(26.8%) of the respondents sampled were slightly satisfied quality of education and vocational training, this reinforces concern, that educational arrangements in orphanages may not be meeting expected standards. 80(20.8%) of the respondents sampled claimed they are satisfied with the educational and vocational training support received, while 34(8.9%) respondents affirmed they every satisfied with the training and education provided.

With regards to accessibility of higher education opportunities by orphans and vulnerable children in the orphanages in Benin City, 140(36.5%) respondents identify higher education opportunities, such as scholarships and vocational training as not accessible, while 110(28.6%) respondents stated that these opportunities are only slightly accessible. Collectively, this indicates that (65.1%) of respondents struggle to access post-secondary education and vocational advancement. Conversely, 44(11.5%) respondents describe higher education opportunities as highly accessible, and 90(23.4%) respondents find higher education opportunities moderately accessible this suggests that while some orphans benefit from available pathways to higher education, a large number continues to experience barriers.

4. Discussion of Findings

With regards to the adequacy of healthcare services, the findings clearly show that the majority of the participants were of the perception that the healthcare services for orphans and vulnerable children are inadequate (OVC) in Benin City. This finding highlights a critical gap in healthcare provision, suggesting that the existing frameworks of healthcare may not effectively cater to the health needs of this vulnerable population in Benin City. These findings align with Jones and Green (2016) and Omorogiuwa (2023) finding that reveal the profound implications of inadequate healthcare services, particularly for OVC, who often face other additional socio-economic and health-related challenges. The findings of this study also supported McAuliffe et al. (2022) and Yuka and Omorogiuwa (2024) findings that inadequate healthcare service significantly heightens the vulnerability of OVC faced with various health issues. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address these deficiencies to improve health outcomes for this OVC in Benin City.

The findings regarding regular medical check-ups reveal a grave shortcoming in preventive healthcare measures, which are essential for the health of OVC, with the majority of respondents, affirming that regular medical check-up services they received are provided to a limited extent. The foregoing may imply that the absence of regular check-ups can lead to undiagnosed conditions and untreated health issues, which may escalate into more severe health complications. These findings resonate with Thompson et al. (2021) study that found limited access to routine health assessments by OVC can lead to more severe complications and adverse health outcomes. The findings of this study also corroborate the Chukwu and Uche (2020) and Omorogiuwa (2025) studies, which reveal that barriers prevent OVC from receiving regular medical check-ups, emphasizing that the absence of these preventive services can exacerbate existing health challenges.

On accessibility of healthcare professionals by orphans and vulnerable children, the findings reveal that the majority of respondents consider healthcare professionals as slightly accessible, revealing significant barriers to accessing necessary healthcare consultations and attention. This situation may arise from a shortage of medical staff, inadequate outreach programmes, or logistical challenges in securing transport for OVC to healthcare facilities. The findings of this study align with Eze and Afolabi (2021) findings that identify accessibility in healthcare services for OVC as a challenge that discourages

caregivers from seeking medical assistance. On whether orphans and vulnerable children in Benin City are satisfied with the quality of healthcare received, majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction. This aligns with Ochen et al (2020) study that examined the healthcare experiences of children living in vulnerable conditions and concluded that inadequate healthcare services, including poor treatment quality and limited access to necessary medical interventions, significantly impacted their overall well-being. The findings of this study also lend credence to McAuliffe et al. (2022) and Omorogiuwa (2020) findings, which reveal that OVC faces significant challenges in the healthcare landscape, resulting in considerable dissatisfaction.

The findings of this study also reveal significant concerns regarding the sufficiency of healthcare resources available to orphans and vulnerable children, where the majority of the respondents perceive healthcare resources in terms of essential resources such as medications, medical equipment, and emergency response capabilities among others as slightly sufficient and not sufficient. These findings supported Johnson and Lee (2019) and Omorogiuwa (2023) study that examined the impact of healthcare resource allocation on the well-being of marginalized groups, including OVC. The findings indicated that inadequate emergency response capabilities and insufficient healthcare services have led to increased morbidity and mortality rates among OVC.

On the extent of educational and vocational skill development opportunities for orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages, the findings reveal that the majority of respondents perceive educational and vocational skill development opportunities as limited to an extent and not available at all. These stark findings underscore a fundamental gap in the provision of educational services within orphanages in Benin City, implying that these orphanages often do not prioritize educational needs of OVC in their care or effectively implement programmes that can equip these children with essential skills for independent life in the future. These findings are in consistent with the findings of several authors. This aligns with Sajid et al. (2021) and Omorogiuwa (2025), which established that lack of education vocational training directly correlates with lower employment rates among disadvantaged youth, emphasizing that without substantial investment in the educational needs of vulnerable children, they may face an uncertain future. The findings also align with the World Bank (2016) study that underscores the gaps in educational provisions for OVC, leading to long-term disadvantages.

On whether the educational support provided to OVC is adequate. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents affirm that the quality of educational assistance and resources often falls short of meeting the needs of these vulnerable children. This signifies a profound concern regarding the educational outcomes provided in these orphanages. These findings supported Khan et al. (2020) findings that inadequate educational support can stifle academic success and hinder the holistic development of OVC. The findings also resonate with Apekey et al. (2018) findings that reveal that insufficient educational resources lead to poor academic achievement among OVCs. This research finding indicates that without adequate support, vulnerable children may struggle to meet learning outcomes essential for their long-term success in life.

The findings on learning materials and resources in meeting the educational needs of OVC reveal further deficits in their effective educational experiences, with the majority of the respondents rated the learning materials and resources provided as not sufficient. This clearly shows that OVC are deprived of essential materials that facilitate quality learning. These findings reflected in Jones and Green (2016) study that reveal inadequate access to learning materials and resources by orphans and vulnerable children as barriers to their effective learning.

The findings regarding the accessibility of higher education opportunities pose a daunting challenge, as the majority of the respondents considered higher education opportunities not accessible. This limited access represents a formidable barrier hindering OVC from advancing their education and career prospects. These findings corroborate Mwoma and Pillay (2016) findings that reveal financial constraints as significant hindrance to access higher education by orphans and vulnerable children.

5. Conclusion

This study revealed critical shortcomings in the effectiveness of orphanage-based interventions aimed at improving the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Benin City, Edo State. Current orphanage-based interventions are insufficient in enhancing the living standards of OVCs, leaving them vulnerable in multiple aspects. The study strongly stressed the importance of comprehensive support for orphans and vulnerable children, including access to healthcare, educational, and vocational training. The responsibility to address these issues lies not only with organizations directly involved those directly involved

but also with government and society as a whole on society as a whole. Advocate for and support the rights and needs of these vulnerable children is fundamental in ensuring they have access to the opportunities they deserve for a brighter future.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, study recommends that orphans and vulnerable children should be given free enrolment into the Edo State health insurance scheme or the national health insurance scheme.

On the aspect of access to education, there should be a policy to compel private school proprietors to give scholarships to at least ten orphans and vulnerable children in their locality as part of their corporate social responsibility.

In ensuring adequate funding to meet orphans and vulnerable children's needs the study recommends that one percent of taxes collected by state and local government should be channeled towards meeting orphans' and vulnerable children's needs. This can ensure improved funding and resource allocation to addressing the constraints faced by caregivers/orphanages and NGOs involved in orphans and vulnerable children care

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Art and Knowledge

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Abstract. The question of whether art can provide humans with knowledge remains a subject of sharpest controversy among philosophers, artists, and art critics over time. The controversy is no less complicated now than it was historically, nor is it any closer to being resolved. Recent objection to art's epistemic value maintains the basic line of reasoning that art lacks propositional contents in the sense of propositional knowledge – since works of art do not typically express, clear, explicit propositions in the way that language does. More than ever, this tends to render the epistemic value of art highly questionable. However, a contrary line of response in defense of art's epistemic value involves identifying some other epistemic aims, and showing how art's conduciveness to them justifies its epistemic value. Identifying with this approach, I argue in this paper for the epistemic value of art. Drawing upon Nelson Goodman's Art-symbol-theoretic, I argue that although art may not always provide factual knowledge (in a propositional sense), yet, through its symbolic nature, art is capable of conveying ideas and experiences in a way that shapes our *understanding* of the world – where, besides knowledge, *understanding* is here identified as an epistemic aim.

Keywords: Art, Epistemic Aims, Understanding, Nelson Goodman, Knowledge.

1. Introduction

Over time, the relationship between art and epistemology has been fraught with controversies and debates. Whereas it seems obvious that our interactions with works of art can yield something meaningful in terms of our perceptual and emotional experiences, it does not, however, seem so obvious that such aesthetic experiences and interactions can produce propositional knowledge – where knowledge is often expressed in clear, factual, or declarative propositions. Hence, the question whether art is of any epistemic value has remained controversial in the

history of philosophy of art. Whereas for some philosophers, artists, and art critics, art possesses epistemic values because it contributes to our understanding of the world, others, denying this claim, argue that aesthetic judgments are not only not objectively true but also that art, generally, lacks the sort of propositional content needed for knowledge claims. Hence, works of art do provide us with knowledge about the world, irrespective of the fact that we do respond to works of art, and even commonly believe we can and do learn from such works.

Given such art critics' position, arguing in defense of art's epistemic value appears difficult. It does seem there are only three options available for this basic desideratum: (a) reject the recent analyses of knowledge that make the epistemic value of art questionable, (b) accept the recent analyses of knowledge but argue that they are compatible with the epistemic value of art, or (c) find another epistemic aim (besides knowledge) and show that art is of significant help in achieving this aim. In this paper, I will consider option (c), since the first two options do not seem quite promising to me. I argue that, at least concerning pictorial art, this option seems more promising. By reconsidering some basic insights and ideas from Nelson Goodman, I identify *understanding* as an epistemic aim to which (pictorial) art makes a significant contribution. I argue that insofar as it fosters human's cognitive ability of *understanding* – indispensable for gaining insights about the world in a non-propositional way – art is epistemically significant; for, in this way, it offers some insights about the world in a manner that go beyond purely factual knowledge. Hence, engaging with art is not just a perceptual and emotional activity, but also a fundamentally cognitive experience that yields some basic epistemic aims.

2. Concept and Nature of Art

The term, “art”, has lent itself to diverse interpretations throughout history and across cultures such that there has been no generally accepted definition of what constitutes art. However, for this discussion, I identify with Francis Sparshott’s conception of art as “a diverse range of cultural activity centered around works utilizing creative or imaginative talents, which are expected to evoke a worthwhile experience generally through an expression of emotional power, conceptual ideas, technical proficiency, and/or beauty” (Sparshott 1982: 2). Generally, art encompasses various forms, styles and medium, and often it goes hand in hand with a people’s (cultural) identity: “The arts may embed and embody belief systems ... arts shape identities of individuals and cultures. Art can take the form of rituals; it might incorporate religious symbolism and sometimes it embodies the history of a particular culture or community” (Gulinck 2019: 1).

Three classical branches of art often identified: Visual Art, which includes, painting, sculpture, photography, and graphic design; Performing Art, which includes, theatre, music, dance and film; and Literary Art, which includes, poetry, fiction and non-fiction (Vasari, 2007). However, in recent time, the concept of art has expanded to include: Conceptual Art (that emphasizes ideas over traditional forms), Installation Art (that uses space and environment to create an immersive experience), Digital Art (that uses digital technology to create new forms of expression), and Street Art (graffiti, murals and stencil art, created in public spaces often with a focus on public commentary) (Vasari 2007: 5).

Unlike sunsets, mountains, oceans and other natural elements, works of art are made by man. Joh Hospers observes that “among the things in the world to which we respond aesthetically, works of art are the most important single class” (Hospers 1980: 5). In many cases, there is the temptation to say that works of art are created specifically for the aesthetic experience or being enjoyed aesthetically, and that an aesthetic experience is a non-cognitive contemplation. This is not true in all cases; for, in many cases too, "it is commonly assumed art has the power to inspire, provoke, change our perception about the world or even engender beliefs about the world” (Worth 2000: 1). However, despite this understanding, the questions of what constitute the nature of works of art, remains a matter of debate and interpretations among philosophers. Hence, the nature of art and related concepts, such as creativity and interpretation, are explored in a branch of philosophy known as aesthetics (Kennick 1979: xi–xiii). Richard Wollheim describes the nature of art as "one of the

most elusive of the traditional problems of human culture" (1980: 1).

Philosophers have offered various theories about the nature of art. These include, Art as an Imitation of reality, which has deep roots in Aristotle’s concept of art as *mimesis* or representation (Levinson 2003: 5); Art as Form, which views art as not significant in anything in life, but simply as a set of colours, lines, shapes, textures, composition, sounds, materiality and structure, enjoyable to contemplate in themselves rather than for anything that they may represent (Hospers 1980: 6); Art as Expression, which sees art as a medium for the expression of human feelings (Collingwood 1983: 109-10); and Art as Symbols, which signify human feelings – (not in the case in which dark cloud signify rain), but in the sense that there is an *isomorphism* (similarity of structure) between art and human feelings: “art, especially music, is a highly articulate form of expression symbolizing direct or intuitive knowledge of life patterns – e.g., feeling, motion, and emotion, which ordinary language is unable to convey” (Langer 1953: 24).

3. Knowledge-Claim Controversies about Art

The question whether art can provide knowledge has been a complex and highly debated topic among philosophers, art critics and artists over time. Philosophers have remained divided over the issue, especially since Plato claimed in his *Republic* that artists are twice removed from ideas and can only produce likenesses of nature (597a-598a), as well as warned about the dangers of indulging in both mimetic and narrative representations of the world and of human actions (595-601). The ensuing debate has endured in the contemporary philosophical literature and revolves around such questions as: Can art to contribute to our quest of achieving our most basic epistemic aim, namely, knowledge? Is there any sort of propositional content that art can provide which resembles the content that we claim to need for other kinds of knowledge claims?

Whereas some contemporary philosophers, artists, art-critics, and art-historians answer this question affirmatively, others remain highly sceptical (Briesen 2014: 11). For such sceptics and critics, art is not productive of knowledge because it lacks propositional contents in the sense of propositional knowledge, which epistemology is essentially concerned with. Hence, in the light of the widely accepted analyses of knowledge, as justified true belief, it appears very difficult to see how art might

significantly be considered as a source of knowledge. According to Jochen Briesen, “by the lights of recent epistemology, it is highly questionable whether art is of any epistemic value” (2014: 11).

In its general sense, the term, “knowledge”, which itself, represents a flexible and internally diverse ideas, “relate to how persons can be said to have access to correct information” (Rescher 2003: xvi). Certainly, this can occur in different ways, so that they are various distinguishable sorts of knowledge, depending on what is at issue. Hence, it may be useful to differentiate between adverbial knowledge (e.g. knowing when, how, why, etc.), performatory knowledge (e.g. knowing “how-to” dance), knowledge by acquaintance (e.g. I know the owner of the shirt), and propositional knowledge (knowledge of fact, e.g., knowing-that something or the other is the case). Traditionally, epistemology focuses on propositional or factual knowledge of the sort where “*X* knows that *P*”, is paradigmatic. For this reason, to claim that the epistemic significance of art, the focus ought to be on propositional knowledge rather than the other sorts of knowledge. Propositional knowledge has been traditionally and widely analyzed as “justified true belief” (Dancy 1991: 23).

This definition harks back to Plato’s conception knowledge in his *Theaetetus* as “a true belief, equipped with a suitable rationale” (291c – 210d), in attempt to distinguish between knowledge and opinion. The assumption behind this analysis of knowledge is that for the attribution of knowledge, a *belief* claim is not only necessary, it must be *true* and *justifiedly* held. How *justified* a person is in holding a belief depends not just on what he believes, but on *why* he believes, because, “knowledge is not simply a matter of having a true belief that is *somehow* justified, but rather, knowledge calls for having a true belief that is appropriately justified” (Rescher 2003: 4). Thus, there can be no problem in crediting *X* with knowledge that *P* if and only if *X* believes *P* on grounds sufficient to guarantee and realizes this to be the case.

However, in recent times, the adequacy of this traditional tripartite conception of knowledge has been called to question. Edmund Gettier, who particularly, reflected on the problematic nature of justification in his famous 1963 article, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”, raised the consciousness of epistemologists towards the inadequacy of the tripartite conditions in the analysis of knowledge as justified true belief. With his counterexamples, he demonstrated that knowledge is more than justified true belief; and that it is, indeed, possible for someone not to know even when he has a justified true belief, because of the unreliable nature of justification (1963:

122-23). In the sequel, a flurry of post-Gettier theories of justification have emerged in contemporary epistemology, such as, the defeasibility, causal, reliability, virtue theories, etc. – committed to the search for the supplementing condition (s) for knowledge. William Alston affirms that “the view that knowledge consists of true-justified-belief (+ ...) has been prominent in this century....” (1989: 57).

Notwithstanding these disquisitions concerning the adequacy of the tripartite conditions in the traditional analysis of knowledge, accepting these conditions as necessary for knowledge, seems to make the epistemic value of art questionable. This is because, art does not appear to be propositionally based. That is, “art does not have propositional content that can be learned in a traditional way, even though it can be seen to have effects that promote knowledge and that can either encourage or undermine the development of understand” (Worth 2000: 2). The propositional theory of knowledge, therefore, holds that one must have justified true belief in the content of a proposition to know. This appears reasonable under normal circumstances, but seems not to work at all in the case of art. Those who deny that art is of any epistemic value argue that “there can be no knowledge that is not propositionally-based” (Worth 2000: 2).

Certainly, engagement with works of art might lead to true beliefs concerning the works themselves, such as, their structure and form, who created them, when they were created, etc., but, “can we, thereby, come to know propositions that are not concerned with specific works of art?” (Briesen 2014: 12). For instance, the involvement with art does not produce true beliefs concerning the world we might be interested in. Jerome Stolnitz, for instance, posits that art does not and cannot contribute to knowledge primarily because it does not generate any sort of truths (1992: 191-200). Those who argue along this line want to defend the notion that since art cannot provide facts or generate arguments, then we cannot learn from it; and so, it is of no epistemic significance. Accordingly, art can thus be rejected as a source of knowledge because it does not provide true beliefs, and because it does not and cannot justify the beliefs that it does convey.

Given this circumstance, to insist on the epistemic value of art becomes rather difficult. However, those who insist that we can learn from art generally argue that our engagement with art arouses certain emotions or activities that are able to facilitate or produce knowledge. In other words, they often find another epistemic aim (besides knowledge) and show that art is of significant help in achieving this aim. They maintain that there are some aspects of the artwork

which can help to produce greater understanding of the world around us: “If we can learn from art, we must be able to do so in a manner that diverges from the traditional notion of justified true belief, but that still holds some sort of legitimate ground” (Worth 2000: 4). This is the position I adopt in this paper, which seems promising, at least concerning pictorial art, using the theoretical framework of Goodman's symbol theoretic.

4. Goodman's Art-Symbol-Theoretic

Nelson Goodman (1906–1998) is one of the most influential twentieth-century American philosophers. His theory of art as symbol, outlined in his work *Languages and Art* – considered a major contribution to Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics (Cohnitz and Marcus 2024: 1) – presents the view that art is a system of symbols that convey meaning and reference (1976: 3). Indeed, for Goodman, that aesthetics is but a branch of epistemology, and, works of art are symbols that require interpretation (Elgin 1998: 2). Art can function as a form of symbolic language, and that it does provide knowledge, but in a unique, non-literal way. Paintings, sculptures, musical sonatas, dance pieces, etc. are all made of symbols, which possess different functions and bear different relations with the worlds they refer to. Hence, artworks require interpretation, and interpreting them amounts to understanding what they refer to, in which way, and within which systems of rules (Giovannelli 2017: 3). Understanding works of art is, therefore, not a passive absorption, but of active intellectual engagement with symbols whose syntactic and semantic features are often elusive.

Goodman strongly rejects the idea that art is only emotional or decorative. He insists that art can be cognitive – it can teach and inform us. Hence, concerning art in particular and to symbolic activities in general, Goodman advocates a form of *cognitivism*: by using symbols we discover (indeed we build) the worlds we live in, and the interest we have in symbols—artworks amongst them—is distinctively cognitive (Giovannelli 2017: 3). For him, there are some aspects of the symbolic nature of artwork can help to produce greater understanding of the world around us. Symbolizing is for him, the same as referring; for, the essential nature of symbols is to refer: “to be a symbol means to be a symbol for something, to stand for something, to refer to something” (1976: 5). Furthermore, that something is a symbol, is a symbol of a given kind, only within a *symbol system* of that kind – a system governed by the syntactical and semantic rules that are distinctive of symbols of that kind. Art is a type of symbol system similar to language that conveys meaning through symbols, signs and representations (Briesen 2014: 19).

Just like language uses words and grammar to convey meaning, art uses symbols (like colours, shapes, sounds, etc.) in structured ways to communicate.

Hence, a fundamental notion which is at the core of Goodman's theory of symbols is that of *reference*. He distinguishes between two direct (literally) and distinct modes of symbolic reference, namely: Denotation and Exemplification. In other words, Goodman's theory sees artworks as that which denote and exemplify. Denotation describes reference to something outside the work of art itself, just as in case of a word and what it applies to. An instance of *denotation* is the relationship between a “label,” such as “John F. Kennedy,” or “The 34th President of the United States,” and what it labels (Goodman 1976, Chapter 1). Of course, labels can be particular or general, as reference can be to an individual, as in the “JFK” example above, or, severally, to all the members of a set, as with “blue” concerning all blue items. Just as words could be used to denote either single or several things or individuals (e.g., the word, Jones, may denote a particular individual; and “Black” may denote all black things, pictures (i.e. paintings, drawings, photographs, etc.). Arts are like words in this respect: they refer to something conventionally and not because of certain resemblance relations (1976: 3). In art, denotation can occur through *representation* (artworks can *represent* objects, people or scenes), and *reference* (artworks can refer to ideas, concepts, etc.).

Exemplification, on the other hand, refers to the relationship between a symbol and the properties it possesses or instantiates. This occurs when a symbol (such as an artwork) possesses certain properties or characteristics that it refers to or exemplifies. Goodman sees artworks as not only capable of denoting something else, but also exemplifying the properties they instantiate or possess. Thus, he explains that exemplification is “possession plus reference” (1976: 53). Artworks can possess and so, exemplify *properties* such as colour, shape, texture, or rhythm. They can also *express* emotions, ideas, or attitudes through their properties. By exemplifying some of its properties, an artwork (e.g., an abstract painting) refers (at least) to these properties or to the class of things that instantiate these properties (Briesen 2014: 20). When a feature is referred to in this way, it is “exhibited, typified, shown forth” (Goodman 1976: 86). For instance, while any blue object is denoted by the label “blue,” only those things, e.g., blue color swatches—that also refer to “blue” and analogous labels exemplify such color, are “samples” of it. Thus, in exemplification, a symbol points up and hence refers to features it serves as a sample of.

Besides constituting literally or direct reference-relations, denotation and exemplification, according to Goodman, can occur metaphorically and both ways of referring, can work together in chains of reference (1976: 69). For instance, a painting of a rainy landscape can exemplify sadness (1976: 20). But to exemplify sadness, the painting has to instantiate sadness—that is, the painting has to be sad. Of course, a painting cannot be said to be "sad" in the literally sense, but it can be said to be "sad" metaphorically speaking. Thus, the term "sad" can metaphorically *denote* a picture and a picture can metaphorically *exemplify* sadness. In Goodman's analysis, metaphors, typically bring about rearrangements in a field of reference, which affect several labels at once. It is important to emphasize that, for Goodman, metaphorical usage is no less real or connected to knowledge than literal usage, and metaphorical truth is no less a form of truth than literal truth. Indeed, the literal and the metaphorical in a sense lie on the same continuum. Whether the application of a label (and the corresponding possession of a feature) should be considered literal or metaphorical is just a matter of habit—specifically, a matter of the *age of the metaphor*, for old metaphors lose their metaphorical status and become just literal applications.

But what is it that determines to what a given symbol (such as work of art) refers? This question is important, as it is central to understanding of Goodman's view on how art conveys contextual meaning, and so, possess some level of epistemic significance, against the sceptics charge that art is of no epistemic significance – because is lack of propositional content and that aesthetic experience is non-cognitive. For Goodman, there is nothing internal to the symbol that determines what it stands for. This is instead determined by the symbol-system to which the symbol belongs. In other words, how a symbol refers—whether it denotes or exemplifies, what it denotes or which of its features it exemplifies, whether it does so directly or indirectly, literally or metaphorically—depends on the *system of symbolization* within which the symbol is found (Giovannelli 2017: 3). In Goodman's words: "a symbol is the sort of symbol it is—linguistic, musical, pictorial, diagrammatic, etc.—in virtue of its belonging to a symbol system of a certain kind. And symbols differ from each other according to their different syntactic and semantic rules" (Goodman 1976: 128–130). This is why the same work of art can refer to very different things in different symbol systems. An identical physical mark on the canvas, for instance, might belong to different symbolic systems.

Goodman suggests different *syntactic* and *semantic* parameters by which symbolic systems can be characterized. These include, syntactic and semantic density, as well as repleteness. The syntactic aspect of a symbol system is the "symbol scheme", which consists of a collection of symbols, or "characters," with rules to combine them into new, compound characters—associated to a field of reference. In the English language, for instance, the symbol scheme is made of characters as the letters of the Roman alphabet – "a," "b," "c," etc.—as well as compound characters such as "ape" or "house." Each character comprises all the verbal utterances and ink inscriptions, i.e., all the "marks" that correspond to it (Giovannelli 2017: 3). For Goodman, certain symbols, such as art, are syntactically dense, because they have a dense or continuous range of possible expressions, rather than a discrete set of expressions.

Semantic density, on the other hand, refers to the idea that the meaning of a symbol or an art work is nuanced and context-dependent, with a rich and complex set of possible interpretations. Goodman also believes that works of art are symbols that are "replete" with meanings, in the sense that many aspects of the symbols contribute to their meaning (Goodman 1976: 128–130). This is particularly, because, such symbols are dense (many aspects of the symbols are meaningful), complex (the symbol's meaning is multifaceted), and context dependent (the symbol's meaning depends on context). Thus, understanding an artwork requires considering multiple aspects of the symbol, since the repleteness of an art work contributes to their richness and depth.

Goodman's conclusions, on what roughly could be considered the question of what is art as well as on the question of artistic value, follow from his view that aesthetics is a branch of epistemology (Shottenkirk 2009: 137), and that there is ultimately no sharp division between art and other forms of human knowledge, because, "the arts function cognitively" (Elgin 1993: 171). In his view, art does convey knowledge – but not in a straightforward, factual way of propositional statements. Instead, art functions through complex symbolic systems that we interpret, and in doing so, helps us understand the world in different, valuable ways.

5. Implications for Epistemic Value of Art

Expectedly, Goodman's theory of art as symbol has had a significant influence on the philosophy of art, aesthetics and art criticism. With particular reference to the aim of this paper, his rich and systematic general analysis of art as symbol offers a valuable basis to

appreciate in what way art, especially pictorial art, can be regarded as “epistemic images” that provide a unique avenue for *understanding* the world in a way that goes beyond purely factual knowledge, but which is equally of great epistemic value. Although, art may not be said to be conducive to knowledge in the sense of the widely accepted analysis of propositional knowledge as justified true belief, yet it could be rightly said that art is conducive to *understanding*, where understanding is seen as an important cognitive activity and an epistemic aim, besides knowledge. As a fundamental epistemic aim, understanding involves grasping the relationship, connections, and underlying structures of a subject or the nature of reality whatsoever. Jochen Briesen’s illustration of the difference between understanding and knowledge, particularly, demonstrates *understanding* as an important epistemic aim:

Let us assume that a theory is in part constituted by a set of information. An epistemic subject *S* might well know all these individual items of information, but it seems reasonable to suppose that as long as all these individual items of information are not pieced together in the right way by *S*, *S* does not *understand* the theory. Hence, knowledge of individual pieces in a set of information is not sufficient for *understanding* a theory or a complex phenomenon. What *understanding* a theory or a complex phenomenon requires is the awareness of explanatory or other coherence inducing relationships concerning individual pieces of information (2014: 24).

Thus, *understanding* is a key aspect of knowledge and learning, which involves making sense of complex information, identifying patterns, developing a coherent picture, and, of course, “systematically categorizing and organizing reality by systematically organizing our representations that refer to reality” (Briesen 2014: 24). *Understanding* is, therefore, crucial for critical thinking, analysis and evaluation of information about reality.

Goodman’s idea of denotation and exemplification, certainly, highlight the symbolic nature of art and the importance of *understanding* the relationship between artworks, symbols and reference. His theory lends functional support to the position of this paper that art is of epistemic significance, because it provides us with a powerful source of *understanding* or gaining some clear insights about the world – offering us unique perspective, through their symbolic properties and relationships to enable us relate or function well with reality in any context. Goodman, himself affirms that “the aims of art are the aims of symbolic activity in general, and they have to do with understanding”. Again, he notes that “aesthetic

attitude is not one of passive contemplation, but of active cognitive engagement; its main goal is understanding, not pleasure” (cited in Elgin 1998: 2). Thus, *understanding* is a broader concept than propositional knowledge, one that is not bound by literal truth, and that is thus applicable also to what admits of no formal truth-values: metaphors and paintings for example.

For this reason, artistic symbols are to be judged for the classifications they bring about, how novel and insightful those categorizations are, and for how they change our perception of the world and relations to it. Within this conceptualization, works of art could be conceived as “epistemic images”, capable of conveying ideas and experiences in a way that transcends verbal language and factual knowledge, as well as a window into different cultures, historical period and social contexts. Thus, the artwork can foster emotional *understanding* (can convey complex emotions, fostering empathy), cultural insights, as well as provide fresh perspectives which enable us to challenge assumptions and dominant narratives, promoting critical thinking and reflection. Art, certainly, challenges us to see the world in a new way, and critical perspectives on social issues. It makes sense, then, to agree with Goodman view that aesthetic attitude is not one of passive contemplation, but of active cognitive engagement, whose main goal is *understanding*, not pleasure.

Works of art are taken to possess the ability to give us imaginative and epistemic access to certain kinds of experiences relevant to moral knowledge and judgment. Not only can we respond emotionally to particular moral situations presented through artworks; we cannot help but find ourselves morally outraged or saddened by the plights of certain fictional characters. Sarah Worth submits “that art... can provide experiential and emotional stimulation, and ... moral knowledge is not simply propositional in nature (2000: 5). Works of art can give us examples of, and exercise in, certain morally pertinent activities. Thus, we come across circumstances and situations in art and literature that we might not otherwise come across in our daily lives. If we simulate our reactions to the situations the work presents us with, we have an *understanding* of how we might respond or how we would feel (John 2001: 34). The crucial fact here is that Goodman’s theory of art as symbol challenges to re-examine our presuppositions about what constitutes knowledge in a way that can permit us to reconceive knowledge in such a way that we may eventually come to understand how it can be gained non-propositionally. Hence, epistemology should treat

understanding as a focus of its concern, besides knowledge.

6. Conclusion

Though art may not be conducive for knowledge in terms of the widely accepted conception of propositional knowledge as justified true belief. However, in the light of Goodman's art symbol theoretic, the epistemic value of art can be appreciated, especially from the dimension of its potential as "epistemic images" – containing more than just the visible, but also a symbolic representation and higher understanding of the world, through which man come to understand certain aspects of reality (though in a non-propositional way). Art, particularly pictorial art, can, thus, be seen as a form of knowledge representation, capable of conveying complex ideas and emotions beyond what can be expressed through language alone. The epistemic value of art is by this means, not in doubt; for, art, undeniably, engenders in us the cognitive ability of *understanding* the world, which is a basic epistemic aim. An essential imperative for epistemology, therefore, is to treat *understanding*, besides knowledge as a focus of its concern.

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Human Resource Management and Artistic Enterprise: Evolving the Business Paradigm in Contemporary Painting Space

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Abstract. Artists and art managers are very relevant in the chain of artistic production and distribution. However, the trend in contemporary Nigeria art landscape is different, whilst the artist is solely responsible in an unfair process of managing production, marketing, and the distribution of his/her artistic product. Therefore, the role of art manager is much needed human resource that could and should – shoulder the extracurricular responsibilities in marketing art for profit. Unfortunately, up until now, insignificant efforts have been made by artists, art promoters, art scholars, curriculum planners and the Nigeria government in putting in place appropriate framework to actually help or give artists and artworks the value they deserve. Yet corporate bodies like the Nigeria government and European aesthetic sojourners have persistently used the arts and crafts for positive global reference and promotion of Nigeria’s cultural image. Therefore, this paper is set out to examine the roles that art managers play at the core art profession, the art product industry, and its potency in the value chain of artistic distribution for maximum profit and benefit to the artist. The paper states that optimum art management, if properly channeled and well applied, will reduce stress, create standardization, thus casting positive developmental effect on the nations’ economy, innovation, and boost profit. The paper concludes that the role of arts, artists and the art managers are creatively intertwined in art development for holistic personal, national, and international progress.

Keywords: Arts, Art Managers, Human Resource Management (HRM), and Painting

1. Introduction

In the Nigerian art landscape, there is a noticeable scarcity of professional art managers and artists. This underrepresentation is further compounded by limited engagement of stakeholders in the business sector, government and corporate organizations, who often overlook the arts as viable and impactful field. Despite the growing global recognition of the creative economy, Nigeria’s art (painting) space continues to grapple with challenges such as poor organizational structures, inadequate talent development, and limited professional management practices. Artists often operate in isolation, with little support from formal institutions or corporate investors. At the moment, a lot of people in the business world, such as the government and corporate bodies have an utilitarian recourse to both artists and their artworks — to promote either governmental function, election campaigns amongst politicians during elections periods, and in their respective businesses suggested by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCOTAD). These require that the art (painting) framework can be taken seriously beyond community value — and has to be structured properly, in order to align the reality of contemporary value. Caves’s work (2000a and 2000b) suggests that “philosophical direction of Aristotelian thoughts in the light, artistic insights, and how one can benefit from managing artists and the craft of visual arts”. Caves’s study refers in particular to *techne* (the skill of craftsmanship) and *phronesis* (the practical wisdom of acting well within the social and moral domains). Where *techne* is a form of skill that can be exploited instrumentally using talent to achieve pre-conceived economic ends, while *phronesis* is the disposition to engendering laudable action, grounded in

management of the human resources within the practice of art. *Phronesis* is the capacity to respond to the particularities of experiences, especially in navigating complex social or human issues when it comes to art. One might argue similarly with respect to art management/practice as research, characterizing its epistemological mode as “phronetic” rather than either technical or theoretical. The parallel does, arguably help highlight the importance of dimensions in art-making activity, *insofar* (performance practice) — which can be considered as means of using art to generate money and employment. Thus, the management of art is a lucrative venture and a viable means of generating employment in a space where economic survival are limited. In other words, it can be a veritable means of gaining employment amongst teeming youths, which can also make a significant transformation in their lives, because of its creative nature. Art critics and art lovers have seen its potency as necessity in creating an enabling environment to gain artistic wealth. In recent time, in the vein of managing professional arts and artists in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa — it is observed that the standard is fresh, not properly structured, and it is not encouraging compared to the Western countries. Generally, art management is not new in the creative business industry across the globe, and has always been a special area of humanity designed to cater for the artists and the arts profession needs. Ideally, art management is a special area of humanities (practice) that need great attention from both the government and individuals who make art for livelihood. In the prospect of achieving this, art managers must be endowed with artistic potentials, skills, and interest in projecting art products to the knowledge of the public — thereby improving the recognition and welfare of the artists to a large extent (Byrnes, 2014). Apparently, the art managers can help in the areas of organization, curating, criticism and in the general, overall management of artists’ and their art products, which is a central part of contemporary visual arts. The major management role of the art profession to a large extent is such that planning and staging a standard exhibition engaged in the qualitative and proactive perspectives to improve the life span of the arts profession.

Over the years, art communities and art societies, such as society of Nigerian artists (SNA), visual art society of Nigeria artists (VASNA) have made a robust conscious effort and an elaborate attention in the promotion of artist and in the area of financial assistance to further lift the awareness of art practice in Nigeria. Managers therefore, serve as the risk bearer and promoter, who coordinate between art, artists, and marketing with a view of making profits, enhancing

functionality, and better enlightenment for the entire public. The need to have artistic skills is very necessary in art management — since it further led credence in the aspect of techniques and in the production of what is known as “object of quality art products”. Thus, the contemporary Nigeria artists are increasingly aware of the fact that they need to produce quality art work to engage and encourage the services of prominent art promoters and managers. Today, there is the urgent need for art lovers, promoters, government and entrepreneurs to expand the scope; for recognition by reactivating the aspiration with a view to elevate art — in order to meet with the other areas of human endeavour.

However, drawing on experiences from art hubs such as in Lagos and Abuja; it is imperative to examine how integrating human resource management (HRM) strategies such as talent scouting, skills development, performance management and structured career pathways — will enhance productivity and sustainability in the art sector. This paper also calls to interrogate the cultural and institutional factors that implicate the adoption of human resource management (HRM) practices in the art industry, particularly in painting space. Furthermore, it is principal that; this paper debates for paradigm shift that views artists not merely as creators but as professionals — whose works contribute significantly to national development, requiring strategic human capital investments, and structured management. Ultimately, this paper calls to explore the intersection of human resource management (HRM) and the visual arts, with a focus on the evolving a business-oriented paradigm within the Nigerian painting sector.

2. Who are Art managers?

Art managers are professionals who negotiate contracts within the intellectual property legislation of artists and their art products (Usman, 2021). The arduous work of art management requires the art manager to be professionally grounded, communally connected, negotiationally skillful, ability to take risk, venture into organizing art exhibition — through adequate knowledge of local and international target audience or population. They also function within the informal milieu of educating both the artists and their customers in terms of business transaction. The management of art legacy pieces in museums or galleries, and it is also a prerequisite to becoming a competent art manager. As part of their duties, art managers are also to ensure that — there are sponsors or investors who are keen on funding art project such as exhibition and sales. This managerial expectation enables them to be top-notch logistics mobilizers and

an important value chain to the transaction of art works or art products. Thus, the managing staffs are always in charge of hiring curators and other backroom artisans who take charge of framing and packaging of artworks for private viewing before the declaration of the opening of an exhibition or any official public engagements. Furthermore, an art manager also hires, trains or supervises computer designers who are staffs of that art industry — because design strategy implements the overall methods to make profits. Optimally, the art manager must be keen on research and development i.e. understands trends, diverse taste, current art pricing, and popularity. Moreover, he/she is required to work with clients by answering most of their questions and addressing their artistic concerns. This helps them to plan their budget and connect them to the wider networks of art connoisseur.

3. The Relevance of Art Managers/Management in the Art Industry

Art management is a special area of the art profession that requires basic knowledge of artistic skills and interest to function adequately. Adepegba (2000), stress that the idea of managing artist is a site of contemporary interest wherein trained art educators impact the field diffusing their talent and creativity to benefit of the society. Adepegba further stresses that “professional management constitute a framework of a great advantage to the artist as it places high value on the artist and the artist craft”. This is relevant within the context of human resource management (HRM) — which argues for the sophistication of making the work of art not just a product of creativity but the artist as an integral part of development of the art profession. This apparently enables managers of artists engage in proper evaluation of artists’ works and put face value on the entire art products. According to (Chong, 2009), art managers help maintain the delicate balance between artistic integrity and commercial viability, often acting as mediators between artists creative vision and institutional or market expectations. This function is especially important in a fast-evolving global art market, where visibility and sustainability are key challenges.

Moreover, art managers play a vital role in policy advocacy and cultural leadership. They often engage with government and non-governmental organizations

to influence cultural policy, support emerging artists, promote inclusivity and diversity in the arts sector (Usman, 2021). Art managers have unique skill set — which are indispensable in organizing exhibitions, festivals, performances, and public art projects, thus contributing to the cultural economy and public engagement. Institutionally, art profession faces an increasing pressure to be financially sustainable and socially relevant, this makes the role of art manager very critical to the survival of art marketing, a healthy financial eco-system and geometric cultural expansion (Byrnes, 2014). In Nigeria and wider African scene, art managers perform the role of nurturing artistic talent, shaping cultural discourse, and bridging the gap between local artists, global art market and international audience. As creative industries in Africa continue to gain aesthetic ascendancy, it is the organizational responsibility of the art managers to ensure organic sustainability, inclusivity and proper pricing of the continent’s creative output — most especially in Nigeria, where the art sector is vibrant but facing the problem of underfunded and poorly regulated art activities. However, it is an imperative duty of art managers to take on the challenge of mobilizing resources, curating exhibitions and advocating the world view on African art i.e. turning the world’s attention to African art positively. In that sense, art managers can help build infrastructures that support arts, secure pleasurable venues for meetings and coordinating digital or virtual outreach. On the parallel, the role of art managers is meant to actually combat dangerous trend such as inattentiveness of the governing authorities, piracy and lack of long-term investment in the art. Consequently, it is on record that art managers in Africa double as cultural entrepreneur, creating platforms like the freedom park art meets, Art X Lagos, Dak’Art Biennale and Rele Gallery that bring visibility to local artists on the global stage. Art managers achieve this by organizing partnership, residencies, and art fairs — therefore, aside the much-touted cultural growth, they contribute to local empowerment of artist and local communities. According to (Ayko Agency, 2023) art managers are also important agents of cultural diplomacy, using art to foster dialogue, education and social change. In the context of Nigeria where we have currency instability, environmental undesirability and gross underpricing of art work. The work of art managers becomes even more urgent helping to preserve narratives, resist cultural erasure and provide safe creative spaces.

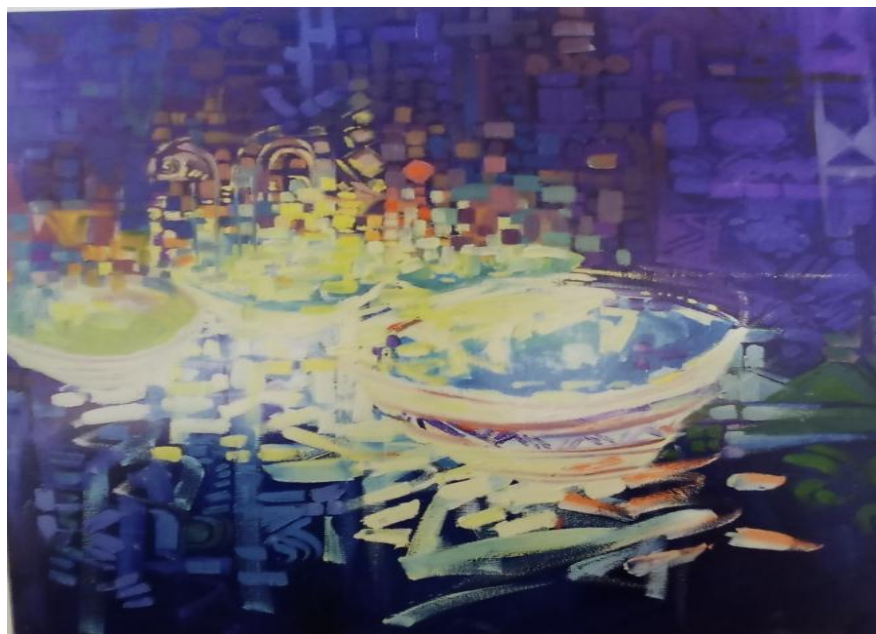


Plate 1 — Assemblage of Culture (Oil on Canvas), 2014 by Abiodun Kafaru

This painting titled “assemblage of culture” — is a reflection of abstraction in Yoruba traditional life style. However, it seeks to showcase the imagery of lonely struggle against the lethargy of the masses and the artists — that abstractions can be acquired. The artwork is remarkable in terms of how much attention art-managers and patrons can give to — acquisition of abstractionism (painting) to make money/wealth by significantly encouraging the artists/patrons (Akatakpo, 1997).

At the turn of the 21st century, this is a key period in the development of several opportunities for painters/art managers, and it is a critical movement that promotes and encourages sales of artwork to generate funds for the artists/art manager and the gallery at large. For art managers, a painting on canvas captures the global value — which reveals that craftsmanship has gone beyond the art of creativity but one that embraces entrepreneurial framework. Painting, a popular form of artistic expression in Africa thus enjoys wide spread form of acceptability and also fantastic collaboration between art collectors, creators, and of course the middleman i.e. the art manager who brings high value to African art in the industry. The creative content in paintings — without doubt arouses the emotion of art lovers, thereby encouraging financial purchase from them. In addition, the strong patronage in painting particularly encourages stronger vitality in paint art-works and birthed multiplicities of style to attract old and new connoisseurs. As Chong (2009) posits:

For a hundred years or more, the vitality of painting had seemed to depend on stripping it conventions and resources in order to isolate some irreducible core or essence. By placing itself in open opposition to this tendency the neo-expressionist movement, does something more than offer itself as a style?

This statement above — establishes painting as a lucrative form of business for artists, art managers and art lovers who may want to key into the lacunae of resource management in the art space. Many young collectors of art and artists — are prepared to explore new mode of transacting art-works particularly paintings via social media platforms, international exchanges between art galleries, and they also double as art manager to fully realize the entrepreneurial advantages which exists in the art space. At the moment, younger generations of art managers are equipped with technical direction, the inspiration to appreciate the business angle of arts, plus global awareness, and knowledge concerning art production. In one sense, art managers open up the pathway to marketing of creativity in the art space. Thus, art managers’ assets of this industry because — they help a lot in creating an enabling market, awareness, and positivity in terms of advertising paintings and other creative art products. The role of the art manager transcends an individual seeking business advantage but someone who brings value to the entire value chain in the art industry (Byrnes, 2014). However, it is noteworthy to incorporate the knowledge of importance of the middleman position that is grounded in the marketing of art works for the artist and the

entire value chain of art — to promote African art in the global recon. As prerequisite for upgrading the skill of student in training, higher school curriculum planners, and research institutes need to include the teaching and learning of art management in the art syllabus, in order to build confidence in students, and assist them in acquiring the necessary skill and exposure needed before getting into the art profession (Athique, 2013).

4. The Factors to be Considered in the Management of Art/Painting and Artists

Art management is a sub-section of the art profession that needs a high level of motivation to lead an artist work — in order to achieve meaningful business output (Nonaka *et al*, 2011). Artists are often concerned about the management of their intellectual products in shows and how to get value for exhibiting their aesthetic ware. Management goes beyond the sales of artistic hardware; it spirals into preparing the consciousness of the artists to responding to societal needs in artistic terms of artistic taste. It is the duty of an art manager to channel the talent of creativity — to the need of the society. This stimulates the market place of the art in such a robust manner that enables the business environment to make profit for the artists and to satisfy the yearnings of the consuming public (Byrnes, 2014). The business of art and its diffusion require specialized kind of division in labor — to be specific, these four personnel have worked hand in hand to bring about headway — of the managers, the curator, the artist and the sponsor needs — to establish line of specialty in terms of their functionality such that, optimum benefit accrues to all of them in the course of managing art product. The art managers brings to the art market — logistics, strategies, coordination and entrepreneurial skills, which are achievement driven — in combination with the technical competence of the artist, human relation, creativity of the curator, and the financial lifeline of the sponsor — to ensures an all-round profits and a win-win situation for everyone.

Byrnes (2014) avers that management experience — is necessary in the business of arts particularly painting to avoid obsolescence of the art work. It is possible for a brilliant conceptualized and well executed painting or any art work to gather moulds on the shelf without proper relation between the artist and the external paraphernalia of the business framework. Artists as matter of compulsion — should engage in prompt feedback of entrepreneurs — to ensure currency of his/her work in order to attain profit and fulfillment. Beyond the personal fulfillment of the artists, art managers are vital artery to galvanizing the

nation in prosperity — the gross domestic product (GDP) of a nation could experience astronomical increment if the art managers are recognized and motivated by the ruling authority of their countries (Adeyemi, 2006). Therefore, it is inevitable and inescapable if artists and art work must thrive for us to have art manager — in order to drive growth, development and highly profitable outcome for their creative value chain. This explains why art management subsection of the art value chain should have the following characteristics for them to function optimally:

Good public relation officers — the managers require a sound human relation skill in arts to attract and maintain both the artists and the art collectors. The public managers however, serve as a middle man between the artists, buyers/art collectors and the art products.

Technical competence — it is expected of art manager to know the wide range of art handling, some are hardware while others are fragile; much is expected of the art managers to know the technical “know-how” of handling such items. He /she are also expected to understand the secret and success of the art business.

He/she need to have artistic skills and tactics in developing business ideas and acts energetically to achieve them. These will-powers to achieve success would help artist to survive and succeed in the art business.

He/she should bring in professionalism and consumer-oriented tactics into the business of art.

He/she must see the art collectors and artists as primary welfare.

He/she should have a strong belief in collectors and artists’ sovereignty, which should be his or her business objective.

He/she should also strive to make profit without profiteering.

5. The Functions of Art Managers

Strategic Planning/Leadership Roles — the art manager draws out plans on what strategies needed to sell artworks, he/she equally serves as mediator in the negotiation of prices and delivery of art products to the door step of the buyer/collector. In the same vein, in order to make profits, an art manager goes all out to call some prominent art collectors and art lovers who

are to visit the art show. In addition, the art managers develop exhibition plans that captures the interest of both the artists, buyers/art collectors and the sponsor at large — they give close marking on customers/buyer to pay for art work (paintings) bought at exhibition. Art manager gives care in a manner that makes the artists and all stakeholders' vision, profits is adequately realized within the plan's framework of a standard art exhibition.

The art managers are tasked with the supervision of any creative products – which in most times extends beyond taking care of the wellbeing of the artist to a more robust all-round supervision of creative events

and as well serves as the links between the artist and its collectors/viewers.

He/she plans, organize, directs, supervise, control, coordinate and promote artistic and cultural policies programme, projects and services. An administrator is involved in ensuring that task and processes at an individual level are completed well and within the stipulated timelines. A manager ensures that goals are met and overall functioning is smooth and profit is achieved optimally.

The art manager engages the press, organize printing of brochures, and also pick suitable venue for holding art exhibition/shows.



Plate 2 — Lagos City-Scape (Oil on Canvas), 2014 by Abiodun Kafaru

Titled “Lagos City scape” — this abstraction shows the movement of the critical mass in a city brimming with productivity where the sole intention of the people is to make money because of the mercantilist nature of the state. This city painting shares the sentiments that are characteristic of most congested cities of the world in places where there is high population density.

Adepegba (2000) contends that art collectors should encourage painters and artist — to “hold on” to producing works of common theme with beautiful variegation to engage the market and the global audience in order to make money. The art managers at times determines — what goes into the canvas and how they fix prices of creative work in an informal *artonomic* (art economics) exercise (Byrnes, 2014). Artists within their creative space — also try to represent the economic chaos that characterizes most metropolitan cities, thereby giving impetus to aligning

their artistic expressionism with existential reality of the art consumers. The visual image, usually of bright colours is a reflection of urbane ruggedity that bears the hallmarks of contemporary experimentation with pictorial rendition which has a great deal of appeal to diverse sections of the society thus generating money for travelers, art hunters, gallery owners, collectors, museums, historians and sellers of creative works. The intention of the artist, beyond financial gains — is to create his/her works into canonical acceptance, ensuring stable customer base which engenders popularity and also advertise the peculiarity of his immediate environment to satisfy new taste of art buyers (Chong, 2009).

The paintings presented in this paper are deliberately planned and executed — to attract inquiry by art managers who are also in search of unique strokes that give satisfaction to target consumers. Most of these art forms, gives vivid description of traditional stillness,

modern motion and aesthetic emotion in a mix that makes an omnivorous consumption out of art lovers. The emphasis on variegated color application is one of the fundamental theories of art which argues that — colour selection in painting is not merely for colour usage's sake, but an artistic expertise used to awaken human feelings. Colours speak the language of love, money, freedom and fortune. Thus, any artist who desires contemporariness of recognition and creative prosperity should as a matter of importance master the desired lines of hues which reflect his/her fierce decision in advancing art business through deployment of brilliant colours. From the paintings displayed above; it may be safe to say that there is a truism — that art is one of the modern umbilical cords which establish universality of human aesthetic unity through local and global merger of different cultural strokes that appeal to human taste of beauty — thus earning handsome income for the artist. Therefore, the integration of African traditions, cultures, and arts into modern contemporary issues is viewed through the lens of western art ideology and computer aided technology, which has become imperative for both the emerging artists and the established ones so that he/she won't be left behind (Athique, 2013). The above shown picture (plate 2) is one of the paintings created in two dimensional formats that inspire artistic development and the use of technology motivated by creativity — which cater for the visual temperament of art lovers. The formalistic approach in the painting is unique as the artists or designer tries to make the surface reflect the tendency with visual image lines that come alive with human feelings — thus attracting criticism, constructivism which popularizes the worth of creativity in relation to its market value. In Nigeria, the concept of art management is nascent — which explains its lukewarm acceptance by creator of artistic works, but hope that it would not only embrace and expand the frontiers of art but assist artist in making money from their labor.

6. Conclusion

This paper highlights the pivotal role of human resource management (HRM) in shaping the sustainability of the painting economy within Nigeria's creative industries. It's quite obvious that the contemporary Nigeria art landscape needs a lot of art managers to help with burdens of marketing, organizing and managing the business of artistic creation. To harness the potentials of the visual artists and the arts, the insignificant attention paid to the management of arts should enter into a higher gear. Beyond creativity, there is need to open the business of arts to the younger generation of artists — who are doing well by leveraging on the excellent production

of their artistic strength in promoting the post-modern Nigeria art. Though, the involvement of western technology, which has seriously assisted in opening up creative spaces — thus creating viable market for paintings, prints and graphics designs at the local, national and international levels, thereby opening pathway to create wealth. Therefore, integrating the principle of art management in the art industry is a great opportunity for artists, gallery owners and others in value chain business — that may likely not be available to monitor sales of artworks during exhibition hours but would love to achieve success after the sales of their art products.

7. Recommendation

Based on the analysis of art management articulated in this paper — therefore, it is highly recommended that visual arts stakeholder' i.e. artists, galleries, associations, and policymakers, should invest deliberately in structured HRM practices. Specifically, art organizations should establish clear systems for recruitment, training, and performance coordination, ensuring that the creative art processes are supported by efficient administrative or managerial frameworks. Also, galleries and artist associations must be encouraged to adopt the capacity of building programs that enhances managerial competencies in fundraising, contract negotiation, and audience development. Optimistically, to strengthen the painting economy and embed human resource management (HRM) more deeply within Nigeria's creative industries, the following actions are highly recommended:

For artists and studio Specialist — they must adopt structured HRM practices, including role definition, task scheduling, and performance tracking for studio assistants and collaborators. Also, they must engage in professional development programs that build business and managerial skills alongside artistic practice.

For galleries and art associations — there must be an establishment of regular training workshops on fundraising, contract management, and audience development that will create mentorship network links for emerging managers with experienced arts professionals, and also standardize HRM practices for recruitment, volunteer coordination, and exhibition planning.

For policymakers and financial institutions — they should expand the Central Bank of Nigeria's *Creative Industry Financing Initiative (CIFI)* to explicitly include the visual arts sector and develop targeted financial products (e.g., grants, low-interest loans, insurance schemes) for painters and visual art

organizations — to integrate HRM frameworks into national cultural policy to encourage a significant professionalism in the arts industry.

For fairs, biennials, and institutional platforms — there must be deep partnerships between institutional platforms such as ART X Lagos, Dak'Art, Rele Gallery, and the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) to build stronger exhibition circuits. This would eventually promote cross-border exchanges to share HRM best practices across Nigeria and other extended West African art-hubs. However, the use of biennials and fairs as training grounds where managers can test and refine HRM practices in real market contexts.

For researchers and academics — this a crucial aspect, scholars should always conduct comparative studies on HRM practices across African art-hubs to broaden the evidence base, by exploring survey-based researches to measure the impact of HRM on organizational sustainability in the arts industry.

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Symbology, Identity, and Show: Critical Analysis of Costume and Make-Up used in Modern-Day Nigerian Theatre Production

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Abstract. The paper examines the role that costume in modern theatre in Nigeria plays as a signifier of identity, heritage, mood and narrative within a play. By use of qualitative, semiotic and case-study perspectives, it parallels the three principal processes, Saro the Musical, Kurunmi, and university theatre festivals, to interpolate how designers and directors deploy visual symbology in performance. The most important findings suggest that costume and make-up are not merely used to distinguish two or more characters, and so much more, they work to negotiate issues of class, ethnicity, gender, and urban/rural identity, and to situate indigenous aesthetics within contemporary design sensibilities. The paper also suggests a cost and materials issues faced by designers and that more documentation and training of designers need to be offered to develop creativity. These emphases on the visual aspects of theatre help to establish the paper within the Nigerian literature on performance, as well as to provide the recommendations on how to approach the need to fill the gap between design creativity and cultural integrity in the process.

Keywords: Nigerian theatre, costume design, make-up, visual semiotics, cultural identity, performance aesthetics.

1. Introduction

Theatre in Nigeria is not just a literary or a verbal art form- it is at essence a visual art form. Recent productions like Saro the Musical have lent prominence to the presentation of costume, make-up, music, and story line as features of dynamic identity within the urban and rural contexts of Nigerians. Costume and make-up can thus be seen as some of the most powerful non-verbal facilitators of communication in Nigerian theatre, yet academic literature in Nigerian theatre studies has demonstrated

little consideration of their role in the communication process in the Nigerian theatre (Asuquo 14).

A growing evidence advocates the relevance of ethnic materials and culturally based aesthetics in the make-up design of plays (Umoh et al. 102). In a similar manner, the discussion of costume authenticity helps to indicate the difficulty of a balance between a historical context and artistic freedom (Okafor 63; Okhaifo and Babatunde 88). However, there is little research to be found as to how visual design factors actively create meaning in stories. This monitoring is counterintuitive since costume and make-up serve the same symbolic purpose as texts do in forming the perception of the audience even before the speaker utters any word (Adeighon 47).

This paper is an attempt at answering the above question by examining the roles played by costume and make-up in the expression of identity and meaning in the narrative of modern Nigerian theatre. Such question can put the following objectives in the following way:

- To examine the symbolic roles of costumes and make-up used in specially chosen theatre productions.
- In order to speak about the place of visual design in negotiating the modernity vindicated through indigenous aesthetics.
- To look at material and practical limitations to the creative part in the Nigerian theatre.

This research presents the case of visual storytelling, in via Saro the Musical (urban migration accounts), Kurunmi (historical and warrior representation), and university-based festivals (experimental design) that enriches meaning-making in the Nigerian performance culture. Analysis not only enshrines design practice but also points to structural issues such as dependence on foreign goods and design education that impede

visual creativity on the domestic platforms (Asuquo 16; Umoh et al. 108).

Through this, the paper identifies the necessity of more training, more of costume heritage being captured in archives, and encouragement of designers who combine the Afrocentrism with the contemporary expertise in theatre. Finally, the research offers contributions to the performance studies and cultural knowledge in terms of positioning costume and make-up at the centre and not at the margins of knowing and transformations of the Nigerian theatre.

2. Theoretical Framework

The interpretation of costume and make-up suggest that the theory of such aspects of the Nigerian theatre remains multiple-faceted and it is quite difficult to encapsulate in theory the symbolic, cultural, and performative aspects of visual narrations. This paper will use four overlapping frameworks, which include semiotic theory, performance theory, identity and cultural representation theory and postcolonial aesthetics. Such views give a collective insight into having a lens to examine the role in which meaningful symbolic representation occurs through the application of costumes and make-up in a theatrical production.

2.1 Semiotic Theory

Semiotics is the study in the view of the Roland Barthes to interpret meaning as conveyed by signs and symbols within the context of culture (Barthes 113). Costumes and make-up are used as systems of signs in theatre, whose variables of color, texture and style indicate such properties as the status quo, the emotions or political affiliation. In the same vein, a warrior attire used in *Kurunmi* conveys authority and customary unaided by words. Patterns and motifs forming cultural encoded signs are usually employed by the Nigerian theatre designers (Adeighon 51). The semiotic analysis will, therefore, help this study make sense of these visual tags or clues as meant to be purposeful story-telling tools and not ornaments.

2.2 Performance Theory

Performance theory locates costume and make-up as part of the process of realization of character and action. Performance, according to Schechner, involves more than a dialog and includes all elements of the visual and physical expression that add character to the meaning (Schechner 89). Today, eye-catching costumes and liberating make-up help determine how the audience assumes the perception and build the

tension in Nigerian theatre. In *Saro the Musical*, the theme of migration and aspiration is actually told using urban fashion, the use of bright color on the face-designs (Okhaifo and Babatunde 92). With the help of the performance theory, this research aims to examine these visual choices as the performative acts, the ones which co-construct the theatrical experience and which are also co-created with the gestures and voices of the actors.

2.3 Identity and Cultural Representations Theory

Costumes and make-up can be seen as one of the visual correlates of ethnicity, gender, and their social belonging. According to the theory of cultural representation as given by Stuart Hall, the identity is made up and transmitted by visual media (Hall 223). Local materials in form of Ankara or Aso-Oke, are regularly utilized in the Nigerian stage production to signify a sense of collective heritage and authenticity (Umoh et al. 110). These factors disrupt the process of homogenization that occurs through globalization by making their cultural particularity visible. This framework justifies the discussion of the interplay of the theatrical design between the traditional representation of identity and adherence to the contemporary aesthetics.

2.4 Postcolonial Aesthetics Theory

Postcolonial aesthetics reads the reclamation and reinvention of culture that is portrayed in the arts in the societies which were previously colonized. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, creativity is a key mechanism through which postcolonial cultures acquire the capacity to resist erasure by achieving a balance between the indigenous customs and modernity (Ashcroft et al. 78). African theatre design practices of costumes and make-up typify such hybridity: the designers combine Western fashion shapes and style with African design features or they restore traditional face painting using modern makeup (Asuquo 18). Postcolonial theory therefore helps in informing the discussion of how the visual design in this exploration tries to move through those relationships of the colonial past, but through it reestablishes Nigerian identity onstage.

All these theoretical lenses, when taken together, can illuminate more about the role of costume and make-up as layered signifiers of meaning, identity and resistance in Nigerian theatre. They present the instruments of interpreting the system of symbolical visibility implemented in the case studies considered in the present paper.

3. Literature Review

The value of costume and make-up in theatre production is hardly considered new, but it is only recently that the elements and functions of this combination have gained sustained attention among scholars of Nigerian theatre where they have been explored in terms of their symbolism and identity construction. This review summarizes previously conducted studies on the historical development of theatrical costume, impact of indigenous aesthetics, fashion movements, and previous studies discussing use of symbology and cultural identity. It also describes the existing gap in the scholarly material that this study aims to fill.

3.1 History of Costume and make-up in Nigerian theatre

In early Nigerian plays, the culture relied largely on traditional ritual theatre, in which costume and body paint had religious and social meaning (Adeighon 56). Literary drama of both colonial and post-colonial times made Western type of costuming in a stage and the form of indigenous dress often displaced by it (Okafor 65). Nevertheless, Hubert Ogunde and Duro Ladipo, led the post-independence movements and revived the authenticity of traditional Yoruba and Igbo costumes (Okhaifo and Babatunde 91). It is in this sense that scholars say that African reclamation was aesthetic, political, being a statement of identity against colonial cultural hegemony (Hall 225). The pattern is maintained in contemporary Nigerian productions that combine traditional dresses with modern fashion and making hybrids of visual languages, the example being *Saro the Musical* (Asuquo 20).

3.2 Indigenous Aesthetics and Symbolism

Studies emphasize the fact that Nigerian costume and make-up is not superficial. It is a symbolic representation. Customary such as Aso-Oke, Ankara, and Adire fabrics carry status, heritage and regional symbols (Umoh et al. 111). Equally, body paint and facial markings, ritual practices in the past, are modified in contemporary theatre to indicate such aspects as character attribute, emotional context or cultural belonging (Adeighon 59). These practices signify a semiotic regime in which the messages of messages are conveyed by the way an object appears and not by the dialogue. According to Barthes, the costumes act as the second skin and convey a story which is read by the audience in an intuitive manner (Barthes 118).

3.3 Global Influences and Contemporary Design Trends

Globalization has brought other materials and techniques to Nigerian design of stage such as synthetic materials, foreign cosmetics, digital projection systems (Okafor 68). As much as these innovations increase visual spectacle, scholars believe that excessive focus on Western aesthetics may erode the cultural authenticity (Ashcroft et al. 80). New designers in Nigeria respond to this juxtaposition by incorporating Afrocentric motifs into what is currently referred to as aesthetic hybridity by scholars (Okhaifo and Babatunde 94). University theatre festivals can become a place to test such innovations and to experiment with sustainable materials and new construction of the silhouette (Umoh et al. 115).

3.4 Symbolism, Identity and Theatrical Meaning

It has been noted in the existing literature that the usage of costumes and make-up are very important in the development of the audience understanding of character identity and tone of the narrative. Examples of how such symbolism can inform other colour senses can be found in the literatures of Yoruba theatre, where the colour scheme, e.g. red belongs to the power, white represents the purity, is used in order to instruct viewers as to how they should interpret dramatic conflict (Adeighon 61). Equally, make-up has been examined in the light of its psychological effects on actors whereby they have the capacity of getting deeper into their characters (Asuquo 23). Nevertheless, little writing links these visual practices closer to more general matters of identity negotiation and postcolonial resistance in addition to intercultural narration in contemporary production.

3.5 Identified Research Gap

Even though costume and make-up as a kind of symbolic instrument gradually gain understanding, the current body of research is frequently descriptive or historically oriented; it is not systematically analysed in terms of its semiotic and identity-bound purposes in the modern Nigerian theatre. However, there is little scholarship on how the field of visual design actively makes meaning in a dialogue with script, music, and performance. Moreover, the interaction of the aesthetics of indigenes and the contemporary art of the theater is not extensively researched (Umoh et al. 118). This research paper fills these gaps by enlisting semiotic, identity and postcolonial theoretical perspectives when examining key Nigerian productions, hence, broadening the scholarship of costume and make-up as a fundamental contributor

towards visualized storytelling within a theatrical setting.

4. Methodology

This paper uses qualitative research design with its focus on the interpretative analysis that can help identify the symbolic and identity-related purpose of the costume and make-up in Nigerian theatre. The use of semiotic and thematic considerations would help the research to investigate the way visual codes convey meaning in stage productions. The methodology includes a combination of the approach of case study analysis, document analysis, and interpretation of the context to guarantee the depth of the analysis of the research subject.

4.1 Design of the research

Since the study is a meaning-making study and not a study of quantifiable variables, qualitative approach is most appropriate. According to Creswell, qualitative researches enable scholars to analyze cultural phenomena in their natural contexts, which help in the further study of symbolic practices (Creswell 42). Such a design allows investigation of costumes and make-up as text in performance, rather than simply as objects of physical design.

4.2 Case Study Selection

The study uses multiple-case study approach to the multiple forms of costume dress and make-up in contemporary Nigerian theatre. The sample of three case studies was selected in a purposive manner:

- Saro the Musical - because of the urban story behind it and the blending of both indigenous and modern design.
- Kurunmi- deriving the name due to historical importance and traditional dressing and make-up of a warrior.
- University Theatre Festivals- the category will be added to feature experimental theatre techniques and new tendencies of design in academic theatre.

These cases with a range of professional and educational productions can make sure that findings will be indicative of both mainstream and grassroots creative practices (Okhaifo and Babatunde 93).

4.3 Data Collection

Multiple sources were employed to attain triangulation and raise reliability of data:

- Script and Production Reviews World known theatre journals and media houses screening of published scripts and review of performances.
- Visual Documentation: Highly detailed images and video recordings of make ups and costumes were captured either via production archives or after the exhibitions at the festival.
- Secondary Literature: the articles in scholarly journals and interviews with theatre directors and costume designers that secondary literature refers to (Asuquo 24; Umoh et al. 112).

4.4 Analytical Approach

The research employs semiotic dissection of costume and make-up, expressed by Barthes, to break the symbolic codes inherent in the makeup and costume (Barthes 116). Cues of appearance (in this case color palette, fabric, and body markings, and props) are explored in terms of their representational value as self-definition, emotional expression, and socio-political statement. A thematic analysis is also used to reveal some repeating patterns and concepts as the concept of hybridity, identity negotiation, and postcolonial resistance (Hall 227).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were observed by ensuring proper attribution of images and avoiding unauthorized reproduction of visual materials. While no direct interviews were conducted for this paper, all secondary data sources were fully credited in accordance with academic integrity guidelines (Creswell 47).

5. Findings and Analysis

A study of costume and make-up use in Nigerian theatre has shown that these visual instruments serve not only decorative functions but rather become the major means of narration, creation of self and making socio-cultural statements. Based on the selected case studies which include Saro the Musical, Kurunmi and university theatre festivals, this section will discuss six of the key findings; the symbolic aspects of costumes, how make-up was used to determine identity, combination of modernization and tradition aesthetics, and how each of the case studies was unique to the Nigerian theatrical practice.

5.1 Symbolic Functions of Costumes

The use of costumes in Nigerian theatre is a non-verbal method of portraying narrative that conveys a meaning even before speaking occurs. This symbolic association makes sense in the context of Barthes theory of clothing as a language in which colors, fabrics, and styles can be used according to the social-cultural codes (Barthes 115). Costume can determine character rank and classes in most of the productions. As an example, in *Kurunmi*, royal characters are embellished with the textile Aso-Oke decorated with a heavy ornamentation of beads, which grants a visual expression of political power and status in history (Okafor 67). Commoners on the other hand use plain cotton wraps which show subordination and obediences.

Theme and emotional tone are communicated through costumes as well. The use of light city style in clothing, including jeans, sneakers, and colored jackets, acts as the attributes of youth and boosting the characters of those who migrate to Lagos in the belief of brighter chances in the *Saro the Musical* (Okhaifo and Babatunde 97). Conversely, the dark earth-toned costumes render elements of desperation or dreams gone sour and narrates the fight of life without the need of lines being said (Adeighon 60).

5.2 Make-Up as Identity Maker

Make-up since Nigerians theatre serves more than just a beautification of the face, it becomes a cultural and psychological embodiment of identity. Face arts and body painting are very traditional arts that were embraced during precolonial rituals but the ritual arts are being transferred to theatrical make-up to express the tribal heritage or spiritual duties (Umoh et al. 113). In *Kurunmi*, men mark their faces with reliance streaks and one uses red paint and white to indicate that they are ready to their God and are their ancestors (Asuquo 22).

In addition to details of cultural cues there is also use of make-up to depict internal character change. Frequently, the specific facial changes on the actors are dramatic to show an old age, emotional scarring, or corruption. To illustrate, when *Saro the Musical* takes place, darkening of shadows continuously on eyes and use of contouring emphasize the transition of the main heroine being naive to a streetwise individual (Okhaifo and Babatunde 99).

It compares with the statement made in performance theory that visceral embodiment is another significant aspect that plays the same role as the spoken lines in a

story telling (Schechner 91). Therefore, make-up is a semiotic transversal between the body of the actor and the emotional dimension of the narration.

5.3 Modern - Traditional Fusion in Design

One of the elements that have been repeated throughout the productions is the integration of indigenous aesthetics and modern theatrical design. Contemporary costume designers in Nigeria have a tendency to take Western shapes (e.g., tailored jackets or stage gowns) and mix with African fabrics (e.g., Ankara or Batik) to create a cross-section of a visual scheme that is universal enough to be understood by a contemporary audience and at the same time, celebrate the tradition (Hall 229).

In university festivals, student designers will play with recycled materials, LED-lit garments, and digital projection mapping of fabrics, but anchor the student designs in Yoruba beadwork or Igbo embroidery as a symbolic anchor (Umoh et al. 117). This hybridity in aesthetics, defined by Ashcroft et al., involves postcolonial creativity that questions the western hegemony in the theatre appropriation and also the adoption of innovation (Ashcroft et al. 82).

5.4 Case Study: *Saro the Musical*

There is also an excellent example of how clothing and make-up can be used to reveal the story of migration and urban change as seen in *Saro the Musical*, directed by Bolanle Austen-Peters. In this production, costumes vary between country simplicity people in conventional wrappers and headscarves, and city flashiness, which indicate high-tempo Lagos way of life (Adeighon 62).

Make-up accentuates the characters switch: the villagers are drawn with little and natural make up whereas the city dwellers are met with thick and glamorized make up to indicate the exposure to the urbanity (Okhaifo and Babatunde 100). The visual contrast supports the major point of the identity negotiation process within the urban reality of the rural migrants and points to the fact that identity is a fluid concept that needs to be negotiated through cultural representations and symbolism (Hall 231).

Survey of audience reception points to the fact that a great number of examinees identified themselves on the stage through familiarity to common costume patterns and street fashion looks (Umoh et al. 119).

5.5 Case Study: Kurunmi

The use of costumes and make-up helps set the context of the story in a play set in the nineteenth century Yoruba warrior culture, Kurunmi by Ola Rotimi. The characters also wear thick handwoven fabric with layers of leather straps and metallic ornaments to indicate the order of hierarchy in the military (Okafor 69). Rulers and warriors are adorned differently with the leaders wearing beaded crowns and warriors wearing cowhide helmets signifying their titles and spiritual protection (Asuquo 26).

Make-up is also an essential part of the ritualistic scenes as the figures are circled in white chalk and with darkened eyes so that the rituals of initiation and preparation to go to a battle are visualized (Umoh et al. 114). These patterns are directly taken up as Yoruba ancestral rites and it makes the culture authentic and raises the dramatic tension.

According to scholars, the visual accuracy of this show assists in reviving collective memory of the precolonial resistance, which renders costume and make-up more than aesthetic decisions, since they provide politics of antihistorical erasure (Okhaifo and Babatunde 101).

5.6 Experimental Aesthetics University Theatre Festivals

New designers break the boundaries in their creativity by using unconventional materials and not-so-conventional methods at university theatre festivals. Environmental awareness takes the form of costumes created with the help of bamboo or recycled plastics or fabrics printed digitally and thus adds to the symbolic alphabet of the Nigerian stage design (Adeighon 64).

The make-up artistry in such festivals is also exceptionally creative with glow-in-the-dark paints, holographic effects, and 3D prosthetics being used to give fantasy-themed play immortal habitats to say the least (Umoh et al. 116). Through these contemporary twists, students still cling on to the indigenous aesthetics with frequent use of natural dyes and patterns, which are based on local folklore (Asuquo 28).

Such grass-root experimentation also makes its contribution to the future of the Nigerian theatre and showcases how costume and make-up can be transformed without losing the cultural traditions. Creative practices are constantly relevant in the reconstitution of cultural identity since they are practices which employ tradition and transformation (Hall 232).

5.7 Synthesis of Findings

Throughout these examples, costume and make-up become focal points of semiotic work which:

- Express the social hierarchy and tone of emotions.
- What are the definitions of character personality and psychological dimensions?
- Modernity and indigenous traditions should be mixed together to negotiate postcolonial aesthetics.
- Exploit the functions of political and cultural statements in histories.
- Inspire new ideas and environmental concern of experimental theatre.

These show that performance theory argument that non-verbal visual elements are not supplementary but formative of theatrical meaning is true (Schechner 93). They also confirm the claim of semiotic theory that costumes are signs and the action means that the audience understands intuitively and adds color to their interpretative experience (Barthes 119).

6. Discussion

The results of the current research support the notion that the costume and make-up of the Nigerian theatre are not marginal additions but an inseparable part of the narration and culture creation. The visual aesthetics of the Nigerian staging can be interpreted as a complex level of meanings beyond the words transferred with the help of the selected theoretical frameworks applied to analyze the mentioned details, including semiotic, performance, identity and cultural representation, and postcolonial aesthetics.

6.1 Semiotics, and the Language of the Visible in Theatre

According to Semiotic theory, costumes and make-up can be regarded as the system of signs that can be interpreted by audiences on a gut level (Barthes 116). These visual codes in both case studies had specific meanings: beaded crowns that Kurunmi wore signified political power, whereas the urban street fashion in Saro the Musical signified migration and social mobility (Okhaifo and Babatunde 97). Audience was able to interpret these signals without necessarily having to be explained verbally and this has shown how Nigerian theatre has come up with its own visual dictionary of language due to familiarity in culture (Adeighon 61).

This is consistent with Barthes argument that clothes could be expressive by the material qualities and social

associations resulting in costumes being considered a narrator as an agent of costume and not a prop (Barthes 118). The results therefore provide semiotics richness of the Nigeria costume design that combines the traditional signs and contemporary fashion to make these significations layered.

6.2 Performance Theory and Embodied Storytelling

According to the performance theory, the task of creating meaning in theatre falls to the tactics of physical actions that comprise costumes, make-up, gestures, and space arrangements (Schechner 92). The results indicate that the production of such films in Nigeria tends to depend on the visual embodiment, therefore, the actors in Kurunmi do not simply dress-up as warriors, they also move with the amorality of the armor and the rhythm of ancient battle chants (Okafor 69). In the same way the transformative make-up in *Saro the Musical* adds to character arcs giving actors the shift between scenes of rural naivety to scenes of urban sophistication (Umoh et al. 119).

These examples highlight how costumes and make-up affect not only the interpretation of the audience but also performance of actors themselves reshaping the posture, gestures and acting of emotions. This argues to the claim of Schechner that theatrical meaning is inseparable to the physical and visual planes of performance (Schechner 94).

6.3 Identity Formation and Representation of Cultures

The discussion shows that costume and make-up are very important in the staging and negotiation of identity. According to the theory of Hall on cultural representation, the cultural representation shapes identity, which does not remain unaltered but is constructed continuously (Hall 229). The use of costumes in Nigerian theatre denotes ethnicity, subclasses and gender along with the depiction of identity changes.

In *Saro the Musical* the costs can actually be seen shaping the migration process as characters change their clothes that define their new roles in the city (Adeighon 63). In Kurunmi, authentic Yoruba warrior outfits reinstate and remind the community of its communal heritage, and the resistance towards colonial encroachment (Asuquo 26). University festivals are one more way of exemplifying how younger designers reinvent identity with the little evidence of experimental and environmentally

friendly costumes containing indigenous motifs (Umoh et al. 117).

These discoveries depict that the stage design in Nigerian theatrical practice is a concept of identity negotiation whereby it counters assimilating impacts of globalization by proclaiming local cultural histories as platforms of negotiating identity via fabric and paint.

6.4 Postcolonial Aesthetics and Hybrid Creativity

The Postcolonial theory puts an emphasis on how the previously colonized communities reinvent cultural expression even as they incorporate the modern influences (Ashcroft et al. 80). The example of Nigerian costume and make-up practices is emblematic of this hybridity: the Western-style tailoring and modern cosmetics are being mixed with the African bead work, tribal marking and traditional fabric to produce the visual culture that is hybrid in nature (Okhaifo and Babatunde 94).

It is an alloy of the current portrayal of colonial theatrical decency, proving that African aesthetics is not as closed to fish as the modern technologies provide. University festivals use experimental costumes, recycled plastics or illuminated with LED strips, to reinvent indigenous aesthetics in a futuristic direction, towards an Afro-futuristic theatrical identity (Adeighon 64). This amount of creativity demonstrates that Ashcroft considers the postcolonial art to be prosperous when it innovates on local tradition (Ashcroft et al. 83).

6.5 Contribution to Theatre Scholarship and Practice

This research helps to answer the question of the costume and make-up as the key semiotic of Nigerian theatre by means of associating semiotics, performance theory, identity studies, and postcolonial aesthetics. In contrast to previous literature in which visual aspects are discussed as supplementary or descriptive, the results indicate:

- Take an active role in making up stories.
- Inhabit socio-political and cultural identities.
- Make a compromise between native and modern theatrical activities.
- Modify the performance of actors and interpretation by an audience.

This contribution covers a gap in Nigerian theatre scholarship by providing a template for future research that would be illustrative of the comprehensive representation of visual semiotics into the theory of identification and performance analysis. In practice,

the suggested study would mean that directors and costume and make-up designers must regard costume and make-up as equally important forms of storytelling, and thus worthy of the same level of conceptualization as screenwriter or choreographer.

7. Challenges and Implications for Practice

Although costume and make-up have revealed to be an effective symbolic language in Nigerian theatre, its capabilities are usually limited by structural, material and institutional problems. These constraints are important areas to understand to further develop the theatrical practice and make the innovation in the Nigerian performance industry sustainable.

7.1 Lack of Financing and Resource Constraint

The lack of funding of theatrical productions turns to be one of the most acute problems that could be outlined in the case studies. Costume design and make-up have its own set of materials to use; quality materials that may often be very costly and unavailable in local markets; such materials include; quality fabrics, beads, dyes, prosthetics, and professional materials used in relation to cosmetics (Okafor 71). The educational institutions and community theatres use a lot of low costs alternatives and those these options decrease visual authenticity and durability (Umoh et al. 120).

Moreover, importation of synthetic material and foreign makeup contributes to raising costs of production and the result is reduction in the budget thus reducing the complexity and novelty of choice of designs (Asuquo 30). Lacking proper investment, the designer has limitations that enforce a restriction of the semiotic richness of costume and make-up.

7.2 Lack of Professional Training and Documentation

The theatre industry in Nigeria is rather lively; however, costumes and make-up designers still lack the special training programs (Adeighon 66). It has also been seen that varieties of designers are self-taught, learned through informal apprenticeship whereas, others having no such exposure to semiotics, fabric, technology and even advanced methods of make-up (Okhaifo and Babatunde 102).

Furthermore, the heritage of the indigenous costume is not well documented, and that is why the knowledge about the traditional dyeing techniques, weaving designs and techniques and the use of the art on the face is lost (Hall 233). Lack of such archival materials creates a problem of reproducing historical aesthetics

or integrating the historical material effectively into modern productions by present-day designers.

7.3 Dependence on Western Aesthetic Norms

Stage cosmetics and the Western influences in fashion which have been brought about by globalization may sometimes cut across the local fashion identity which is part of the theatrical identity (Ashcroft et al. 84). Those productions with commercial inclinations in urban areas find that importation of designs is more relevant than traditional attires, hence homogenized aesthetics that have no cultural specificity (Okhaifo and Babatunde 95).

Such a reliance on Western stylistic conventions indicates more general postcolonial tensions within the Nigerian theatre industry, where market forces and international performance demands tend to encroach upon the local creativity (Adeighon 65).

7.4 Implications on Nigerian Theatre Practice

Breaking these barriers means massive impacts on the development and sustainability of the theatre in Nigeria. One is that more investment in costume and make-up departments would result in a better overall production quality, which would be used to convey a more nuanced symbolic storytelling. The government agencies and cultural funds, as well as individual investors could sponsor fabric production and other cosmetics production facilities locally, and decrease the dependency on importation (Okafor 72).

Second, development of enriched formal training and academic courses in costume design and theatrical make-up would be professionalizing the area, the skill and theory would provide top technical competence to the practitioners. These programs could be incorporated into the department of theatre arts in universities or they may be chairing as specialized diploma programs (Umoh et al. 121).

Lastly, projects to record the costume traditions of indigenous peoples and archive them would prove most useful to contemporary designers. Digital archives, museums, and other research institutes should find a way of preserving the old weaving, dyeing and make up so that they can survive in contemporary times and be incorporated (Asuquo 31). Presenting solutions in funding, training, and cultural preservation, the Nigerian theatre would develop its tradition of visual storytelling, not only advancing local authenticity but also the competitiveness of the sector on the global scale.

8. Conclusion

This paper has shown that costume and make up in Nigerian theatre are not just meant to offer aesthetic beauty but they are vital to narration, creation of character and expression of culture. The examination of *Saro the Musical*, *Kurunmi*, and other university theatre festivals demonstrated that visuals of the design could represent social echelon and emotional complexity and guard the memory of the past at the same time as mediating the dialog between local customs and modern theatre.

As the theoretical perspectives of semiotic, performance, identity, and postcolonial allowed revealing, costume and make-up act as agents of semiotics and contribute to narrative meaning the formation, define the aspect of embodiment of theatre actors, and engage audiences in a more complex way. The issues raised in the findings were an answer to a major gap in literature of the Nigerian theatre scene as this area tends to subordinate the aspect of visual design to dialogue or choreography. Contrarily, the paper has demonstrated that costume and make-up are the key meaning-making aspects of performance in the capacity of developing cultural authenticity, resistance to colonial erasures, and hybrid innovativeness.

To conclude, it is impossible to comprehend the history of the development of Nigerian theatre without referencing the immense impact of using visual representation to convey the story. The future development of this area is determined by continuing to invest in this direction, the professional training of people, and the preservation of the tradition of nationalist costume in order to make Nigerian theatre as original, vibrant and close to its national identity as possible.

9. Recommendations

This paper proposes a proactive employment of visual design on costume, make-up and set piece in the Nigerian theatre in order to reinforce its contribution to the art form. More finances made available by cultural agencies, privately and through theatre companies would improve production and enable the designer to use superior fabrics and cosmetics available within the country. Costume and make-up as an art form will have to take programs of professional training in universities and special workshops, that will help formalize and develop this direction, and it will be at the forefront that the professionals must know not only technical, but also theoretical knowledge of semiotics and cultural aesthetics.

More attention should be paid to the documentation and archiving of the indigenous costume-making and make-up techniques so that future designers could access a vast reservoir of the traditional knowledge. The encouragement and applause of the indigenous aesthetics on the stage will enable cultural integrity and freedom of an artistic contact could be made to the modern sense of fashion. Lastly, the development of collaborative platforms, e.g., national festivals, national exhibitions and design networks would allow theatre practitioners to generate innovation, knowledge sharing and exchange of inter-cultural perspectives.

Adopting these practices, activities in the Nigerian theatre can place costume and make-up in its proper place as agents of the narrative, thereby enhancing performance, maintenance of cultural identity, and maximizing the visibility of its presence in the African and global stages of theatre activities.

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Religious Affiliation and Uniform Men Involvement in Family Planning in Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Male involvement in Family Planning (FP) is crucial to the reduction of maternal infant and neonatal mortality. This study examined religious affiliation and uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State. A descriptive survey research design was used and the population of this study was 3,443. Multistage sampling technique was used to select 494 respondents as sample for this study. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire with two sections. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education. Cronbach Statistical tool was used to analyze the data collected. It yielded an alpha value of 0.78. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics of frequency count percentage and regression. From the findings, it was revealed that majority of the respondents had high involvement in FP, and religious affiliation did not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP. In line with the findings of the study, it was therefore recommended that seminars and workshops should be targeted at uniform men to further improve their involvement in FP.

Keywords: Male Involvement, Family Planning, Uniform Men, Maternal Mortality

1. Background to the Study

Family planning (FP) can help to regulate population increase while also minimizing the number of undesired pregnancies. There are direct and indirect benefits of family planning and they include the reduction in the spread of HIV to newborns, reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality, reduction in neonatal, infant and child mortality, reduction in the recourse to unsafe abortion and improvement in education and employment opportunities for women who are able to delay initiation of childbearing

(Cleland, Conde-Agudelo, Peterson, Ross & Tsui, 2017). Family planning will improve the health status of both the mother and child because it enables the mother to adequately cater to the needs of the child and wean the child properly before becoming pregnant again. Family Planning will also allow the mother to recover properly from the last delivery.

There are different categories of men amongst which are male teachers, doctors, traders, artisans and truck drivers. Uniform men fall in the category of men who work in any of the security apparatus in the State. Uniform men are men from diverse ethnic, religious and social groups. Uniform men in Edo State are men from the six geo-political zones of the country who fall within the reproductive age group. This is the age in which men are mature, sexually active and have the means to procure sex or marry wives. Uniform men are of the age where society and culture permits them to marry and have children. They are seen as mature and responsible to take on the responsibilities of life. From the researcher's personal observation, uniform men tend to have large family size which could be as a result of the close space they live in the barracks. This close spaced arrangement may lead to frequent intercourse by the couple and ultimately more children. In addition, some of the lower cadre staff in the uniform outfits in Edo State are poorly paid and have low levels of education and these could prevent them from utilizing FP.

Male involvement in family planning (FP) means more than an increase in the number of men who use condoms and have vasectomies; male involvement also includes the number of men who encourage and support their partners and peers to use FP and who influence the policy environment to be more conducive to developing male-related programmes. Male involvement should be understood in a much

broader sense than male contraception, and should include all activities aimed at men as a discrete group which have the objective of increasing the acceptability and utilization of family-planning practice of either sex (Manortey & Missah, 2020). Male participation in contraceptive use improves women's uptake and continuity of family planning approaches by increasing spousal coordination and decreasing opposition (Bayray, 2012). Male non-involvement in family planning may lead to a high incidence of contraceptive discontinuation among women, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive where men are key decision-makers in the home and family planning inclusive. Though women bear children and most modern contraceptives are female-oriented, childbearing has a significant impact on men as well. This impact may be felt financially if men are responsible for their children's welfare in any way possible, including the health and well-being of their wives. A man's social status is sometimes affected when he attains fatherhood as a result of the plethora of financial demands the child brings.

The low engagement of males in family planning is attributed to various factors, encompassing their perceptions of family planning, socioeconomic and demographic profiles, prevailing national policies, mass media campaigns, inter personal communication from health workers, advice from family members, spousal communication, and the health systems in place (Arundhati, 2011). According to Ijadunola et al. (2010), there is an urgent need to increase male involvement in family planning in Nigeria. Research by Manortey and Missah (2020) disclosed poor attendance of men at family planning clinics, with the majority (54.61%) attending only once. This aligns with findings in Afar, Ethiopia, where husbands' involvement in family planning stood at approximately 42.2% (Chekole et al., 2019).

Christian ideas on contraception come from interpretations of Church teachings rather than scripture. Although little is explicitly mentioned regarding the use of contraception, the Bible mentions that children are a gift from God and that God's first words to Adam and Eve were, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the Earth" (Genesis 1:28) (McKeown, 2014). Prior to the 20th Century, all Churches disapproved of contraceptive use, since limitation of children was against the main purpose of marriage (to procreate) (Goodson, 1997). In recent times, Protestant Churches have become more liberal in their teachings of family planning. The Catholic Church (i.e. the Vatican and Pope) do not allow the use of artificial methods of contraceptive as these methods are believed to encourage adultery and promiscuity. Only "natural contraception" is permissible, i.e. breastfeeding,

withdrawal (coitus interruptus) and calendar (rhythm) methods (Ignaciuk, 2020). Despite the ban on artificial contraceptive methods, some Catholic Churches silently tolerate the practice (Kok, 2020).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In the early days of FP and even till the present day, family planning programmes have been targeted at women, in order to free women from excessive child-bearing, and to reduce maternal, infant and neonatal mortality through the use of modern contraceptive methods. This focus on the women-folk has strengthened the belief that family planning is largely a woman's prerogative, with the man playing a very minimal role. It is important to involve men and obtain their support and commitment to family planning, given their elevated position in the Nigerian society. Men are the force behind most of the decisions that affect family life. Men are the architects behind most decisions in politics. Key positions of influence and leadership from the family unit to the national level are held by men.

Uniform men are a category of men who perhaps have been associated with large family size. This could be because of the nature of their job where they get transferred regularly to other locations. When this transfer is made these uniform men may not be inclined to go with their families making it easy for them to perhaps have concubines outside their homes. In a situation where the uniform man gets transferred 7 times in his career that means he may have many more children than the one he has with his wife if he is not using any means of protection. Being the key decision-makers in almost all spheres of life, including the utilization of FP (Ndinda et al., 2017); there is a considerable need to include men more frequently in FP services. Most partners who use contraception rely on methods requiring active male participation (Handelsman, 2019); therefore, the involvement of men in FP can have significant benefits to the FP methods acceptance, continuation of utilization, client satisfaction and efficacy. The government and non-governmental organizations like the Society for Family Health have continued to sensitize the populace on the importance of FP and the benefits to both the couple and the child. Despite the abundance of information on print, social and electronic media on the need for family planning, male involvement in FP is still perceived to be low. Could this perceived low involvement be as a result of their religious belief and affiliation? This question prompted the researcher to carry out this study on religious affiliation and uniform men involvement in family planning in Edo State.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What is the level of uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State?
- Does religious affiliation influence uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State?

1.3 Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

- Religious affiliation will not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State.

2. Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey was used to describe characteristics of a population being studied. The population of this study comprised all uniform men in Edo State (Army, Police, Civil Defense, Road Safety and Immigration, Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Correctional Service, etc) with the total population of three thousand, four hundred and forty-three (3,443).

3. Results

Research Question One: What is the level of uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State?

Table 3: Frequency distribution and percentage of level of uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State (n=379)

Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
High	242	63.9
Low	137	36.1
Total	379	100

High knowledge- score of 8 to 16; low knowledge- score of 0 to 7

Table 3 shows the percentage on the level of uniform men involvement in FP. The table reveals that 63.9% have high level of involvement in family planning and 36.1% have low level of involvement in family planning. Hence majority of the respondents have high level of involvement in family planning.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis One: Religious affiliation will not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Religious affiliation on Uniform Men Involvement in FP (n=379)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	47.823	3	15.941	2.209	.087 ^b
	Residual	2705.560	375	7.215		
	Total	2753.383	378			

a. Dependent Variable: Involvement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Muslim, Catholic, Pentecostal

The researchers adopted the multistage sampling technique to select. Firstly, Simple random sampling by balloting with replacement was used to select five (5) uniform outfits out of the eleven uniform outfits. Purposively, 30% of respondents was selected from each of the uniform outfits using the list of staff members. The sample size for the study was therefore four hundred and ninety-four (494) uniform men. A researcher developed questionnaire was used data collection. The instrument was divided into two sections (Section A, sociodemographic characteristics, Section B, male involvement in FP) with 16 items. In order to check the content and face validity of the instrument, the researcher presented the instrument to three experts in the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education, after which their suggestions, corrections and contributions were effected in the final draft of the instrument. In order to establish the internal consistency of the items, the instrument was administered once to twenty (20) uniform men who were not part of the study and thereafter Cronbach Statistical tool was used to analyze the data collected. It yielded an alpha value of 0.78 which warranted the use of the instrument. The instrument was administered by the researcher and the research assistants, and data was collected at the spot to ensure high rate of return. The data collected was analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and regression.

Table 5 shows the Regression Analysis of Religious affiliation on Uniform Men Involvement in Family Planning. From the table $F= 2.209$, $P\text{-Value} = .087$. Testing at alpha level of .05 the $F\text{-Value}$ is not significant ($.087 > .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that says “Religious affiliation will not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP in Edo State” is retained. This implies that, religious affiliation of the uniform men do not determine their involvement in family planning.

4. Discussion of Findings

Regarding the extent of uniform men involvement in family planning, the majority of respondents displayed high levels of involvement. This finding aligns with a study in India where 71.0% of respondents exhibited high involvement in family planning (Rekha et al., 2015). However, it contrasts with studies in by Wondim et al. (2020), Chekole et al. (2019) and Butto & Mburu (2015), where husbands' involvement was approximately 42.2%, 40.0%, and 12%, respectively. Notably, in those studies, 99.0% of males relied solely on condoms for contraception, indicating poor utilization of other male contraceptive methods. Abubakar et al. (2021) suggested that high male involvement in family planning is associated with factors such as respondents' and their wives' occupation and educational level, age, social class, and the use of family planning methods. The proportion of respondents highly involved in family planning was significantly higher among those in the upper social classes (91.9%) compared to the middle (60.0%) and lower social classes (26.5%), as well as those who had ever used a family planning method (85.7%) compared to those who had never used one (13.6%). Urban residence and education were identified by Obilor & Osita-Njoku (2021) as factors that increase contraceptive use due to improved accessibility, awareness, and economic pursuits. In this study, the high level of involvement among uniform men may be attributed to the majority having at least secondary education, enabling them to make informed choices regarding contraceptive use. The reason majority of uniform men have high involvement in FP could be because many of them have had some form of schooling as this may be associated with involvement in FP.

On the influence of religion on uniform men involvement in FP, findings indicated that religion did not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP. The implication is that, religious affiliation of the uniform men does not determine their involvement in family planning. This study is in consonance with Ndakara et al., (2021) who in their study, revealed that

there is no significant relationship between religious belief and attitude of married teachers towards family planning. On the contrary, findings from studies carried out by Igbudu et al (2011), Bojana et al. (2016), reported that significant relationships exist between religious belief and family planning. This study revealed that Catholics were the least involved in family planning. The reason religious affiliation did not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP could be because even though some religious groups do not accept family planning, the adherents decide on their own what works best for them and may actually use FP.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the majority of uniform men reported high levels of involvement in FP. Also, religion did not significantly influence uniform men involvement in FP.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- Seminars and workshops should be targeted at uniform men to further improve their involvement in FP.
- Effort should be made by stakeholders to target men from different religions to make them more involved in FP.

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Exploring the Moderating impact of ICT Infrastructure on Trade Openness-Sectoral Growth Nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

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Abstract. This study examines the moderating role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure in the relationship between trade openness and sectoral growth in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Using balanced panel data for 26 SSA countries from 1992 to 2023, sourced from the Penn World Table, African Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank Development Indicators, the analysis employs the Pooled Mean Group–Autoregressive Distributed Lag (PMG/ARDL) approach. Results show that, in the long run, trade openness has a negative and significant impact on agricultural, industrial, and, in most cases, service sector growth. ICT infrastructure positively influences industrial and service sectors but has limited direct effects on agriculture. Interaction terms between trade openness and ICT variables are predominantly negative and significant, suggesting that higher trade openness reduces the growth-enhancing effects of ICT. In the short run, trade openness, ICT, and their interactions are largely insignificant across sectors. Foreign direct investment emerges as a consistent short-term driver of agricultural growth, while labour force dynamics significantly affect short-term industrial and service performance. The findings underscore the need for policies that integrate ICT expansion with complementary infrastructure, skills development, and targeted trade strategies. Strengthening domestic capacity, enhancing productivity, and ensuring inclusive access to ICT can enable trade openness to translate into sustainable growth across sectors in SSA.

1. Introduction

The relationship between trade openness and economic growth has been a cornerstone of development economics discourse, particularly for emerging economies seeking to integrate into the global marketplace. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), this relationship takes on added complexity as countries

navigate the structural transformation from predominantly agricultural economies toward more diversified industrial and service-oriented sectors. Classical trade theory emphasizes that liberalization enhances efficiency by reallocating resources according to comparative advantage, thereby stimulating growth through greater market access, technology transfer, and capital inflows. However, the empirical evidence from SSA remains mixed. Some studies find that trade openness positively contributes to growth by attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and expanding productive capacity (Çınar & Nulambe, 2018), while others highlight that openness alone often fails to generate sustained growth without supportive institutions and complementary policies (Osuma & Nzimande, 2024).

Nevertheless, the advent of the digital age has fundamentally altered the dynamics of international trade and sectoral development. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure has emerged as a critical moderating factor that can either amplify or constrain the benefits derived from trade openness. This technological revolution has created new pathways for economic integration, enabling countries to participate in global value chains, reduce transaction costs, and facilitate knowledge transfer. Recent scholarship has further underscored the sectoral heterogeneity of trade's impact, demonstrating that agricultural sectors may experience productivity gains from export opportunities, yet remain vulnerable to global price volatility. Manufacturing and services, by contrast, tend to benefit more from openness when combined with technological upgrading and skills development. In view of the foregoing, ICT infrastructure has emerged as a critical enabler, reducing transaction costs, improving access to global markets, and facilitating knowledge spillovers. Evidence from SSA demonstrates that economies with more advanced ICT ecosystems derive stronger growth dividends from trade liberalization, particularly through expanded

intra-regional trade and service exports (Kapingura & Sanusi, 2024; Dumor et al., 2023). This suggests that the trade-growth nexus in SSA is increasingly conditional on complementary factors such as ICT penetration, human capital development, and institutional quality, all of which shape the region's ability to translate openness into sustained structural transformation. However, the extent to which ICT infrastructure influences the trade openness-growth nexus remains underexplored, particularly in the context of SSA's unique economic landscape.

Sub-Saharan Africa presents a compelling case study for examining these relationships due to its distinctive characteristics: rapid technological adoption amid persistent infrastructure gaps, diverse sectoral compositions ranging from resource-dependent to service-oriented economies, and varying degrees of integration into global markets. The region has witnessed remarkable growth in mobile phone penetration and internet usage, yet significant disparities exist in ICT infrastructure development across countries. This heterogeneity provides a natural laboratory for investigating how technological capabilities moderate the relationship between trade policies and sectoral growth outcomes.

Recent empirical evidence reveals conflicting findings regarding the trade openness-growth relationship across different economic sectors. While studies by Shahbaz et al. (2017) demonstrate that trade openness enhances financial development in some emerging economies, others like Tahir et al. (2019) find that trade liberalization positively impacts agricultural and industrial sectors while adversely affecting service sectors. These mixed results underscore the importance of considering sectoral heterogeneity and the role of enabling factors such as ICT infrastructure in shaping trade-growth dynamics. The theoretical foundation for examining ICT's moderating role rests on the premise that technological infrastructure serves as an enabler of trade benefits by reducing information asymmetries, lowering transaction costs, and facilitating market access. From a neoclassical growth perspective, ICT infrastructure enhances total factor productivity (TFP) and enables more efficient allocation of resources across sectors. Endogenous growth theory further suggests that ICT adoption fosters innovation and knowledge spillovers, which can amplify the positive effects of trade openness on sectoral development.

However, the interaction between trade openness and ICT infrastructure is not uniformly positive across all sectors. Recent studies indicate that while ICT development generally promotes economic growth, its

interaction with trade policies may produce sector-specific outcomes. For instance, Huang et al. (2024) found that ICT development significantly boosts economic performance in both short and long run, but the magnitude of this effect varies depending on the level of trade integration. Similarly, empirical literature by Wang et al. (2023) suggests that ICT diffusion enhances inclusive growth, but this relationship is contingent on complementary factors including trade policies and financial inclusion. The agricultural sector, which remains a significant component of many SSA economies, faces unique challenges and opportunities in the digital trade era. Mobile phone adoption and internet connectivity can enhance market information access, improve supply chain efficiency, and facilitate direct marketing channels for smallholder farmers. However, the benefits may be constrained by limited rural electrification, inadequate digital literacy, and insufficient integration with formal market systems. The industrial sector presents different dynamics, where ICT infrastructure can facilitate participation in global value chains, enable technology transfer, and support manufacturing efficiency improvements. However, the interaction effects may be more complex, as increased trade openness combined with inadequate technological capabilities could lead to deindustrialization pressures. The service sector, increasingly recognized as a driver of modern economic growth, is particularly dependent on ICT infrastructure for its expansion and integration into global markets.

Despite the growing importance of these relationships, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how ICT infrastructure specifically moderates the trade openness-sectoral growth nexus in SSA. Most existing studies examine these relationships in isolation or focus on aggregate economic outcomes, failing to capture the nuanced sectoral dynamics that characterize structural transformation processes. Furthermore, the methodological approaches used in previous studies often overlook the potential for cross-sectional dependence and heterogeneity that are characteristic of panel data from African economies. This study addresses these gaps by empirically examining the moderating role of ICT infrastructure in the relationship between trade openness and sectoral growth across 26 SSA countries over the period 1992-2023. Specifically, the research investigates how different components of ICT infrastructure, including internet penetration, mobile subscriptions, and fixed-line telephone density, as well as the influence the effectiveness of trade policies in promoting growth across agricultural, industrial, and service sectors.

The study contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, it provides sector-specific evidence on the trade openness-growth relationship, moving beyond aggregate analyses to capture the heterogeneous impacts across different economic activities. Second, it explicitly models the moderating role of ICT infrastructure using interaction terms, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how technological capabilities influence trade benefits. Third, it employs advanced panel data techniques that account for cross-sectional dependence and heterogeneity, addressing methodological limitations in previous studies. Finally, it offers policy-relevant insights for SSA countries seeking to maximize the development benefits of trade liberalization through strategic investments in ICT infrastructure.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a review of the relevant literature, Section 3 outlines the data and methodology, Section 4 presents the empirical results and analysis, and Section 5 concludes with policy implications and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Trade Openness and Sectoral Growth

Trade openness has emerged as a fundamental factor influencing economic growth across various sectors, particularly in developing economies. Shahbaz et al. (2017) conducted a comparative analysis of financial development in India and China, highlighting the role of trade openness in shaping economic trajectories. Their findings suggest that while trade openness enhances financial development in India, it has a counterproductive effect in China. This divergence underscores the importance of contextual factors in understanding how trade policies can differentially affect sectoral growth within emerging economies. Tahir et al. (2019) further explored the sectoral implications of trade openness, revealing that it positively impacts the agricultural and industrial sectors while adversely affecting the service sector. This understanding of sectoral dynamics is crucial for policymakers, as it indicates that trade strategies should be tailored to the specific needs and capacities of different sectors to maximize overall economic growth. The negative impact on the service sector suggests that trade policies may inadvertently favor traditional sectors over more modern service-oriented industries. Monyela and Saba (2024) examined the relationship between trade liberalization and economic growth in South Africa, particularly in the BRICS countries. Their research employed a Vector Error

Correction Model (VECM) to establish a long-run equilibrium relationship among trade openness, GDP growth, and economic development. The study found a significant positive association between trade openness and GDP growth in the post-BRICS period, reinforcing the notion that trade liberalization can serve as a catalyst for economic expansion. This finding is particularly relevant for emerging economies seeking to enhance their growth trajectories through increased integration into the global economy. Huang et al. (2024) focused on the impact of financial development and trade openness on China's economic growth from 1990 to 2021. Their analysis employed various econometric techniques, revealing that trade openness significantly boosts economic development in both the short and long run. This validates the trade-led growth hypothesis and emphasizes the importance of fostering an open trade environment to stimulate sectoral growth. Varriale et al. (2024) investigated the role of renewable energy consumption, technological innovation, and export diversification in the economic growth of seven emerging economies known as the E-7. Their findings indicate that trade openness has a negative and significant effect on economic growth, which contrasts with the generally positive associations found in other studies. This highlights the complexity of the trade-growth nexus and suggests that trade policies must be carefully crafted to align with broader economic objectives, particularly with renewable energy and technological advancement. Asada (2022) analyzed Thailand's outward-oriented industrialization strategy, emphasizing the role of foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade openness in driving economic growth. The study found that trade openness and human capital development positively contributed to Thailand's GDP growth in the long run, while FDI inflows had a negative impact. This finding underscores the importance of human capital in maximizing the benefits of trade openness, suggesting that investments in education and skills development are essential for sustaining growth in an increasingly globalized economy. The foregoing demonstrates that trade openness generally promotes growth in agriculture and industry, its effects on the service sector can be detrimental. Moreover, the impact of trade policies is often mediated by other variables, such as financial development, human capital, and technological innovation.

2.2 ICT Infrastructure and Sectoral Growth

The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure in fostering economic growth across various sectors has garnered significant attention in recent years. This literature review

synthesizes findings from multiple studies to elucidate the relationship between ICT infrastructure and sectoral growth, particularly in developing regions and industrialized economies. Bahrini and Qaffas (2019) conducted a panel analysis of selected developing countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) regions, revealing that while fixed telephone services lagged, mobile phones, Internet usage, and broadband adoption emerged as pivotal drivers of economic growth from 2007 to 2016. Their findings underscore the necessity for policymakers to enhance ICT infrastructure investments to harness these technologies' potential for economic advancement. The study highlights that the MENA region outperformed SSA in Internet usage and broadband adoption, suggesting a regional disparity in ICT development that could influence overall economic performance. In a contrasting framework, Kurniawati (2020) explored the interconnections among ICT, innovation, globalization, and economic growth in OECD countries from 1996 to 2017. Utilizing sophisticated econometric methodologies, the study found that ICT and innovation positively contributed to economic growth, with strong endogenous relationships observed among ICT usage, innovation, and globalization. This suggests that developed economies have yet to fully capitalize on ICT infrastructure expansion, indicating a need for continued investment in technology and innovation to sustain economic growth.

Huang et al. (2024) scrutinized the impact of financial development, ICT, labour force, and trade openness on China's economic growth from 1990 to 2021. Their findings revealed that while financial and ICT development positively influenced economic growth, adverse shocks in ICT could also spur growth, indicating a nuanced relationship. This highlights the importance of a balanced approach to ICT investment, where potential negative impacts are mitigated through strategic planning and policy formulation. In the framework of South Africa, Semenya and Ogujiuba (2024) identified inefficiencies in various sectors, including ICT, as significant barriers to economic growth since the 1980s. Their analysis pointed to the need for increased public infrastructure investment and research and development financing to stimulate growth. This study reinforces the notion that ICT infrastructure is not merely a facilitator of growth but a critical component that requires comprehensive governmental support and strategic investment to overcome historical inefficiencies. Matsvai and Hosu (2024) examined the impact of ICT on agricultural development in South Africa from 1995 to 2022. Their findings indicated that mobile phone subscriptions and

Internet usage positively affected agricultural output and total factor productivity (TFP) in both the short and long run. However, they also noted that fixed telephone subscriptions had a negative impact on TFP in the long run, suggesting that the type of ICT infrastructure deployed can significantly influence sectoral growth outcomes. The study advocates for the digitalization of the agricultural sector to leverage ICT's potential fully.

Wang et al. (2023) critically analyzed the connection between ICT diffusion and inclusive growth in top African nations. Their research employed an improved Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) technique to assess the interactive impacts of trade openness, foreign direct investment (FDI), and financial inclusion on inclusive growth. The study concluded that while ICT diffusion significantly enhances inclusive growth, inflation acts as a hindrance. This finding highlights the importance of creating a conducive environment for ICT development, which is essential for achieving broader societal benefits beyond mere economic expansion. Lastly, Vu (2024) utilized growth accounting to quantify the contributions of the ICT manufacturing sector to value-added and labour productivity growth across 13 industrialized economies from 2000 to 2015. This analysis underscores the critical role of the ICT manufacturing industry in driving economic performance in developed countries, suggesting that sustained investment in this sector is vital for maintaining competitive advantage in a rapidly evolving global economy. In conclusion, the literature indicates that ICT infrastructure enhances sectoral growth across various regions and economies. While the positive impacts of ICT on economic growth are well-documented, the studies also reveal complexities and potential drawbacks that necessitate careful consideration in policy formulation. As such, policymakers need to prioritize investments in ICT infrastructure while addressing accompanying challenges to maximize the benefits of ICT in fostering sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

2.3 The Moderating Role of ICT on Trade Openness and Sectoral Growth Nexus

The interplay between information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, trade openness, and sectoral growth has garnered significant attention in recent research, highlighting its multifaceted implications for economic growth. Xiao et al. (2024) explore the relationship between technological innovation and income inequality, revealing that while technological advancements can enhance communication and operational efficiency,

they may inadvertently exacerbate income disparities, particularly in developed economies. This underscores the importance of robust ICT infrastructure as a moderating factor that can either buffer or amplify the effects of trade openness on sectoral growth. In the perspective of Mediterranean countries, Demircan Çakar et al. (2021) investigate the impact of innovation on carbon emissions from the transportation sector, emphasizing the role of ICT in facilitating sustainable practices. Their findings suggest that innovation, particularly in developed nations, correlates positively with carbon emissions when driven by trademark increases, indicating that ICT infrastructure can influence the environmental outcomes of trade activities. This relationship highlights the potential for ICT to mediate the effects of trade openness on sectoral growth by promoting environmentally friendly innovations. Furthermore, Danish (2019) examines the nexus between ICT and carbon emissions, considering the moderating effects of international trade and foreign direct investment (FDI). The study finds that both international trade and FDI intensify the positive impact of ICT on CO₂ emissions, suggesting that robust ICT infrastructure is crucial in shaping the environmental and economic dynamics of trade. This evidence points to the need for further research into how ICT infrastructure can effectively moderate the relationship between trade openness and sectoral growth, particularly in the framework of sustainable development.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data and Variables

The study employs panel data from 26 Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries covering the period 1992–2023, drawing from robust international datasets including the Penn World Table, African Development Bank (ADB) database, International Monetary Fund (IMF) statistical database, and World Bank Development Indicators (WDI). Data availability dictated the choice of economies and periods. Exogenous variables to the sectoral growth process are included in the study. The major variables of interest are trade openness, sectoral output growth, and ICT infrastructure. The sectoral economic growth measures the contribution of agricultural, manufacturing and service sector toward GDP respectively. This is in line with Tahiret al., (2019).

The dependent variables of interest are sectoral growth rates: agriculture, industrial, and services, which capture the structural transformation pathways of SSA economies. The key independent variable is trade openness, measured as the ratio of total trade (exports plus imports) to GDP, widely used in growth empirics to assess integration into the global economy. A moderating variable, ICT infrastructure index, is constructed as a composite indicator of internet penetration, mobile subscriptions, and fixed-line telephone density. ICT acts as a technological enabler that may amplify or constrain the benefits of trade openness by lowering transaction costs, improving market access, and fostering innovation (Kapingura & Sanusi, 2024).

The study account for heterogeneity and capture the structural drivers of long-run growth in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) by incorporating control variables. These variables reflect both neoclassical growth theory and endogenous growth perspectives, ensuring that sectoral growth dynamics are not mis-attributed solely to trade openness or ICT infrastructure. In this study, GDP per capita serves as a measure of the initial level of development and economic well-being. Human capital, typically measured through education is a cornerstone of endogenous growth theory. Higher levels of education enhance productivity, facilitate technology adoption, and improve the efficiency of labour and capital utilization. Labour participation rates on the other hand capture the demographic and labour market dynamics of growth. SSA is characterized by a young and rapidly expanding population, but with significant underemployment and informal sector dominance. Hence, including labour participation, the model accounts for the quantity dimension of growth. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) represents a critical channel for capital inflows, technology transfer, and integration into global value chains. In SSA, FDI has historically been directed towards resource extraction, but recent trends show diversification into manufacturing and services. The inclusion of FDI as a control variable recognizes its role in augmenting domestic investment and fostering structural transformation. Empirical evidence confirms that trade openness, when coupled with FDI inflows, enhances productivity and growth outcomes in SSA (Babatunde, 2011). Table 1 presents a summary of the variable sources and measurements.

Table 1: Data Description, Measurement, and Sources

Variables	Description	Data Sources
Sectoral output growth (<i>y</i>)	Agriculture, manufacturing, and services sectors	WDI (2024)
ICT infrastructure (<i>ict</i>)	ICT infrastructure index	Author compilation
Mobile users (<i>mcs</i>)	Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people)	WDI, ITU (2024)
Fixed telephone users (<i>fts</i>)	Fixed telephone subscriptions per 100 people	WDI, ITU (2024)
Individual internet (<i>iui</i>)	% of the population using the Internet	WDI, ITU (2024)
Trade openness (<i>to</i>)	Ratio of total trade to GDP	WDI (2024)
Human capital investment (<i>k</i>)	Gross fixed capital formation to GDP	WDI (2024)
Labour participation (<i>lb</i>)	Ratio of the labour force to working-age population	WDI (2024)
Foreign direct investment (<i>fdi</i>)	Foreign direct investment to GDP (% of GDP),	WDI (2024)
Income (<i>inc</i>)	Gross domestic product per capita	WDI (2024)

Source: Author's Compilations (2025)

Furthermore, the study measured the ICT infrastructure using ICT infrastructure index. This index was created using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) technique by allowing us condense a large dataset into a smaller set while keeping the original information's quality. The composite index incorporated variables such as individuals using the Internet (% of population), mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people), and fixed telephone subscriptions (per 100 people). The study measured the eigenvalues of each component, and components with eigenvalues greater than one were retained as they explained a significant amount of the dispersion in the principal component. The results of the principal components of the ICT infrastructure index, derived from the three variables included in the model, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Principal Component Analysis for ICT Infrastructure

Principal Components	ICT infrastructure index			Proportion	Cumulative Proportion	Eigen value
	Component Matrix					
	IUI	MCS	FTS			
First PC	0.6564	-0.2462	0.7131	0.6530	0.6530	1.9591
Second PC	0.6486	-0.2987	0.7001	0.2779	0.9309	0.8336
Third PC	0.3854	0.9220	0.0364	0.0691	1.000	0.2071

Source: Author's compilation (2025)

3.2 Theoretical Framework and Model specification

The analysis builds on the neoclassical growth model (Solow, 1956; Swan, 1956), in which output depends on capital, labour, and technology. ICT infrastructure is treated as a component of technological capability, potentially enhancing total factor productivity (TFP) and facilitating sectoral structural transformation. This fundamental neoclassical production function, applicable to a single sector, is represented as follows:

$$Y_t = AK_t^\alpha L_t^{1-\alpha} \tag{1}$$

where Y represents the sector's total output; A denotes total factor productivity (TFP), which represents technology and efficiency. K signifies the capital stock in the sector; L represents the labour force employed in the sector; α is the output elasticity of capital, indicating the share of output attributed to capital. Consequently, to analyze the impact of trade openness and ICT infrastructure on sectoral growth, the study incorporates two additional variables, TO and ICT into equation (1). Expanding and modifying the analysis in equation (1), it now encompasses the impacts of trade variables on sectoral growth, resulting in the following formulation:

$$Y_t = AK_t^\alpha L_t^{1-\alpha} TO_t^\theta \tag{2}$$

The study argues that A in equation (2) represents technology, resource endowments, and policy framework which differ across countries. Thus, in order to capture the different initial levels of technology efficiency across countries, a measure of ICT infrastructure is added to the model to become:

$$Y_t = A.K_t^\alpha L_t^{1-\alpha} TO_t^\theta ICT_t^\gamma \tag{3}$$

The natural logarithm of both sides is taken in order to linearize the equation (3):

$$\ln Y_t = \ln A + \alpha \ln K_t + (1-\alpha) \ln L_t + \theta \ln TO_t + \gamma \ln ICT_t \quad (4)$$

The model presented in equation (3.4) above places its emphasis on four key variables: sectoral output (Y), capital (K), labour (L), ICT infrastructure (ICT), and trade openness (TO). Also, α represents the elasticity of output with respect to physical capital (K_t), $1-\alpha$ represents the elasticity of output with respect to labour (L_t), θ represents the elasticity of output with respect to trade openness (TO_t), and γ represents the elasticity of output with respect to ICT infrastructure (ICT_t). This signifies that, at any given point in time, the economy possesses specific quantities of capital, labour, trade activity, and ICT infrastructure, all of which are typically combined to generate sectoral output. As a result, this study specifies the following model:

$$Y_{it} = a_0 + a_1 TO_{it} + a_2 ICT_{it} + a_3 L_{it} + a_4 K_{it} + a_5 Z_{it} + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (5)$$

where; Y_{it} is the sectoral output under investigation which are the agriculture, manufacturing, and service sectors. TO_{it} is trade openness, ICT_{it} is the ICT infrastructure index, Z is a vector of control variables, ε_{it} is the idiosyncratic error term; μ_i represents unobservable country specific effects and it is time invariant, i and t are the cross-sectional and time series components respectively, and a_0 is the fixed effect intercept. Further, the study establishes the relationship between the term interacting ICT infrastructure with trade openness is stated as follows:

$$Y_t = \rho_0 + \rho_1 k_{it} + \rho_2 to_{it} + \rho_3 ict_{it} + \rho_4 (ict \times to)_{it} + \rho_5 lb_{it} + \Omega ctv_{it} + v_{it} \quad (6)$$

Where: Y is sectoral growth; k denotes capital investment; to represents trade openness; ict denotes ICT infrastructure; and lb is labour force participation rate. Other control variables (ctv) in a row vector form are: gross domestic product per capita (inc); and foreign direct investment (fdi). The stochastic term is represented by v ; t denotes time; ρ_0 is

constant; and ρ_{1-5}, Ω are the coefficients of the variables. The net effect of the interactive variable in equation (7) is calculated as:

$$\frac{\partial(y_t)}{\partial(to_t)} = \rho_2 + \rho_4 ict \quad (7)$$

This revealed the net effect of trade openness on sectoral growth at the average value of ICT infrastructure. It equally denoted the financial elasticity of sectoral growth at the mean value of ICT infrastructure. Afterwards, the interaction of ICT infrastructure and trade openness on sectoral growth are conditional on the parameters: ρ_2 and ρ_4 in equation (7). Thus, if the net effect value is negative, it means that ICT infrastructure and trade openness are substitute, while complement if the net effect value is positive. Similarly, it suggests that trade openness has a favourable impact on sectoral economic growth, and the ICT infrastructure improves and supplements the direct impact if $\rho_2 > 0$ and $\rho_4 > 0$. Also, trade openness contributes positively to sectoral economic growth, but the ICT infrastructure acts as a drag, leaking out the beneficial impact if $\rho_2 > 0$ and $\rho_4 < 0$.

3.3 Estimation Techniques

To comprehensively examine the impact of trade openness and ICT infrastructure on sectoral growth across 26 SSA countries spanning from 1991 to 2022, pooled mean group (PMG) techniques was employed to achieve objectives 1, 2 and 3. The examination of the relationship among trade openness, ICT infrastructure, and sectoral economic growth is conducted in four steps. First, the data set was tested for the existence of cross-sectional dependence, which is a common issue in cross country analysis. Second, second-generation unit root tests-augmented IPS (CIPS) developed by Pesaran (2007) which is the average of individual cross-sectional augmented ADF (CADF) statistics, and CADF test for stationarity, were employed since there may be unit root problems when the large time dimension exists. Third, the panel co-integration test was used to control the long-run relationship among variables. Fourth, panel Autoregressive Distributive Lag Approach (ARDL) with second-generation estimators (i.e., PMG.ARD) was applied. The PMG/ARDL model allows for capturing both short-run and long-run dynamics, accounting for potential endogeneity, and accommodating heterogeneous country-specific effects. This approach is suitable when the long-run equilibrium relationship is expected to be similar across countries, but the short-run adjustment may differ. The panel ARDL model estimation is specified as:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_{1i} + \beta_{1i}TREND_t + \sum_{k=0}^a \lambda_{11ij} Y_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m1} \lambda_{12ij} TO_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m2} \lambda_{13ij} ICT_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m3} \delta\lambda_{14ij} L_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m4} \lambda_{15ij} K_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m5} \lambda_{16ij} Z_{it-1} + \mu_{1it} \quad (8)$$

where $i = 1, 2, \dots, "n"$ represents the number of countries; $t = 1, 2, \dots, "t"$ is the number of periods; set of explanatory variables stands as previously defined with the $b \times 1$ vector of endogenous variables ($b = 6$); λ_{xij} are $k \times 1$ coefficient vectors. δ_{1i} is the vector of scalars, and μ_{it} is an error term distributed with a zero mean and a finite variance. Thus, the study modelled the short-run dynamic nexus among the selected variables, equation (9) is written as follows:

$$\Delta Y_{it} = \alpha_{1i} + \beta_{1i}TREND_t + \sum_{k=0}^a \lambda_{11ij} \Delta Y_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m1} \lambda_{12ij} \Delta TO_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m2} \lambda_{13ij} \Delta ICT_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m3} \delta\lambda_{14ij} \Delta L_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m4} \lambda_{15ij} \Delta K_{it-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{m5} \lambda_{16ij} \Delta Z_{it-1} + \lambda_{12ij} TO_{it-1} + \lambda_{13ij} ICT_{it-1} + \delta\lambda_{14ij} L_{it-1} + \lambda_{15ij} K_{it-1} + \lambda_{16ij} Z_{it-1} + \mu_{1it} \quad (9)$$

where α_{1i} is the intercept, λ_{2i} , δ_{2xij} , $x = 1, \dots, 4$, and λ_{2wi} , $w = 1, \dots, 4$, are the parameters estimate, and μ_{2it} is the disturbance term. The above model is a prototype of Pesaran et al. (2001).

4. Results and Discussion

This section unfolds with the presentation and discussion of the empirical estimations, offering insights into the findings derived from the specified empirical models outlined in Section 3. It details the outcomes of pre-estimations and main estimation techniques. Subsequently, the section delves into an extensive discussion of the estimation results, providing thorough explanations and interpretations.

4.1. Summary Statistics, Correlation and Variance Factor Analysis (VIF)

Table 3 presents the results of the summary statistics. These findings reveal key characteristics of trade openness, ICT infrastructure, and sectoral economic growth in SSA. Agriculture growth (AGRV) shows a mean of 21.3%, indicating resource reallocation toward industry and services sectors. The services sector leads with the highest average growth rate of 45.9%, compared to agriculture (21.3%) and industry (26.1%), highlighting its role in economic expansion. Services demonstrate the lowest volatility with a standard deviation of 9.2, versus agriculture (12.4) and industry (11.3), indicating a more stable growth trajectory. Services growth (45.9%) correlates positively with ICT variables including internet usage (IUI), mobile subscriptions (MCS), and ICT infrastructure index (ICTINF), emphasizing technology's role in sector expansion. Agriculture's high standard deviation of 12.4 relative to its 21.3% mean indicates significant volatility. This sectoral shift signals a modernizing economy, though the high agricultural volatility suggests continued food security and rural income risks. The services sector's stability and growth indicate increasing urbanization and potential for formal employment, while also highlighting opportunities for economic diversification. Further, Table 3 presents the sector's right-skewed distribution (skewness: 0.22), suggesting periodic booms and contractions. Services growth maintains symmetrical distribution (skewness: 0.22), while industry's right-skewed pattern (skewness: 1.4) aligns with historical industrialization phases. ICT infrastructure index shows near-normal distribution (skewness: 0.83, kurtosis: 2.5), suggesting consistent technological development patterns across countries.

Table 3: Summary statistics

	Mean	Max.	Min.	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Agric. sector value added (agrv)	21.3032	61.4162	-2.5136	12.364	0.2227	2.3678
Ind. sector value added (indv)	26.0880	73.3508	0.0000	11.283	1.3967	5.3879
Serv. sector value added (serv)	45.8963	77.0200	20.992	9.2109	0.2217	2.8386
Trade openness (to)	64.4358	175.798	20.722	26.278	0.9612	3.7486
Labour parti. (lfp)	46.1520	79.6380	16.653	15.516	0.2649	2.2647
Human capital investment (k)	21.1025	93.5474	2.0004	8.1968	1.4361	10.775
Individual internet (iui)	9.51736	80.8740	0.0000	15.638	2.1114	7.0198
Mobile cellular sub. (mcs)	42.0644	174.025	0.0000	46.805	0.8345	2.5031

ICT infra. index (ictinf)	1.20E-10	2.81937	-0.8987	1.0000	0.8345	2.5031
Fixed telephone sub. (fts)	2.64335	36.8847	0.0000	5.2975	4.1507	21.803
Foreign direct investment (fdi)	2.58747	46.2752	-11.191	4.0120	4.0010	34.929
Inflation (inf)	21.063	4145.1	-11686	182.24	18.340	374.06

Note: Std. dev. is standard deviation; Min: minimum; Max: Maximum; Obs.: observation; sub: subscriptions; infra: infrastructure.
Source: Authors computation, 2025.

Correlation analysis is reported with Table 4. Table 4 reveals several significant relationships: agriculture and services value-added show negative correlation (-0.47), indicating resource shift from agriculture to services. Industrial value added positively correlates with trade openness (0.51), highlighting trade-oriented growth. Services value added correlates positively with internet usage (0.36) and mobile subscriptions (0.32), demonstrating ICT's impact. The strong correlation between services growth and ICT variables demonstrates technology's role in economic development. The positive relationships with internet usage, mobile subscriptions, and ICT infrastructure (correlations of 0.36, 0.32, and positive respectively) suggest digital technology is enabling service sector expansion. This digital transformation has critical inferences for workforce development, educational priorities, and infrastructure investment needs across SSA countries. The normal distribution of the ICT infrastructure index (skewness 0.83, kurtosis 2.5) indicates relatively predictable technology adoption patterns, though varying significantly across countries. A significant negative correlation (-0.47) between agriculture and services value-added as reported in Table 4 reflects ongoing structural transformation. This transition, while potentially improving overall economic productivity, raises concerns about rural development and income inequality as labour shifts from agriculture to services. The positive correlation (0.51) between industrial value-added and trade openness suggests that manufacturing growth is closely tied to international trade engagement, emphasizing the importance of export-oriented industrialization strategies.

However, the correlation coefficients reported in Table 4 are generally low to moderate in magnitude, suggesting limited linear associations among the variables. Most coefficients fall within the range of -0.5 to 0.5, indicating weak to moderate relationships. Notably, the strongest correlation is observed between IUI and MCS/ICTINF (0.792), which may raise concerns about multicollinearity if these variables are included together in a regression model. Several coefficients are statistically significant at the 1% and 5% levels; however, statistical significance does not necessarily imply a strong relationship. The foregoing suggests that multicollinearity is unlikely to pose a serious problem for most of the variables, though further verification using variance inflation factors (VIFs) is provided in Table 5. The findings of the VIF shows values ranging from 1.09 to 2.89, well below the critical threshold of 10. The minimum tolerance value of 0.346 exceeds the 0.10 requirement, confirming absence of multicollinearity among variables. These results validate the model's specification for analyzing relationships between trade openness, ICT infrastructure, and sectoral value added. The findings suggest that while services-led growth presents immediate opportunities, policymakers must carefully manage the transition to minimize disruption to agricultural communities while promoting industrial development and digital infrastructure.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Correlation	AGRV	INDV	SERV	TO	LFP	K	IUI	MCS	ICTINF	FTS	FDI	INF
AGRV	1.000											
INDV	-0.597*	1.000										
SERV	-0.472*	-0.288*	1.000									
TO	-0.527*	0.515*	0.031	1.000								
LFP	0.384*	-0.231*	-0.213*	-0.395*	1.000							
K	-0.118*	0.359*	-0.263*	0.219*	-0.062	1.000						
IUI	-0.374*	0.074**	0.361*	0.087**	-0.351*	0.023	1.000					
MCS	-0.381*	0.074**	0.319*	0.122*	-0.385*	0.091*	0.792*	1.000				
ICTINF	-0.381*	0.075**	0.319*	0.123*	-0.385*	0.091*	0.792*	1.000	1.000			
FTS	-0.488*	0.022	0.497*	0.441*	-0.187*	-0.024	0.30*	0.265*	0.265*	1.000		
FDI	-0.037	0.113*	-0.084**	0.214*	-0.072**	0.309*	0.035	0.104*	0.104*	-0.012	1.000	
INC	-0.088**	0.255*	-0.136*	0.101*	0.059	0.120*	-0.043	-0.067	-0.067	-0.035	0.061	1.000

Note: ***P < 0.01, **P < 0.05

Source: Authors computation, 2025

Table 5: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Variable	VIF	Tolerance (1/VIF)
IUI	2.89	0.346
MCS	2.86	0.349
LnTO	2.19	0.455
FTS	1.88	0.531
LnINDV	1.81	0.551
LnSERV	1.79	0.558
LnLFP	1.46	0.684
LnK	1.32	0.759
LnFDI	1.17	0.853
LnINC	1.09	0.915
Mean VIF	2.06	

Source: Authors computation, 2025.

4.2. Results of Panel Unit Root, Cross-sectional dependence, and Cointegration Analysis

Cross-sectional dependence emerges as a critical consideration in panel data analysis of macroeconomic studies, particularly due to common shocks affecting different countries and regions. Table 6 presents the results of the Pesaran CD test. The results reject the null hypothesis of no cross-sectional dependence at the 1% significance level, confirming substantial dependency among variables across SSA nations. This finding aligns with Dong et al. (2018) and Grossman and Krueger (1995), who warn that ignoring cross-sectional dependence leads to inconsistent estimates and potentially misguided policy decisions. Pesaran (2006) further emphasizes the risk of biases and size distortions when cross-sectional dependence is overlooked, necessitating the use of estimators that account for both cross-sectional dependence and heterogeneity.

Table 6: Results of cross-sectional dependence

Pesaran (2004) Cross-sectional dependence test		
Variables	CD-Test	abs (Corr.).
LnAGRV	32.78 ***	0.489
LnINDV	-0.75	0.363
LnSERV	7.63 ***	0.434
LnTO	5.85 ***	0.328
LnLFP	61.24 ***	0.676
LnK	1.64 ***	0.332
IUI	91.93 ***	0.901
MCS	96.52 ***	0.946
FTS	36.68 ***	0.483
ICTINF	91.93 ***	0.901
LnFDI	12.97 ***	0.254
LnINF	31.19 ***	0.376

Source: Author's computation (2025)

The presence of cross-sectional dependence necessitates second-generation unit root tests, specifically Pesaran's (2007) CIPS and CADF tests, as supported by research from Swammy & Dharni (2020) and Hussain et al. (2021). The CIPS test, as reported in Table 7, with critical values of -2.04, -2.11, and -2.23 at 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels respectively, reveals varying stationarity patterns. Agriculture value added (AGRV), services value added (SERV), foreign direct investment (FDI), and inflation (INF) exhibit I(0) stationarity at levels, while industry (INDV), trade openness (TO), and ICT infrastructure (ICTINF) demonstrate I(1) stationarity after first differencing, indicating the need for different treatment of variables in subsequent analyses.

Table 7: Results of panel unit root test

Variables	CIPS			CADF		
	Level	1 st Difference	Integration order	Level	1 st Difference	Integration order
lnAGRV	-2.326 ***	-5.742 ***	I_0	-2.201 **	-4.322 ***	I_0
lnINDV	-1.942	-5.322 ***	I_1	-1.610	-3.851 ***	I_1
lnSERV	-2.130 **	-5.186 ***	I_0	-2.120 **	-4.013 ***	I_0
lnTO	-1.957	-5.196 ***	I_1	-1.809	-4.078 ***	I_1
lnLFP	-1.354	-2.704 ***	I_1	-2.079	-2.403 ***	I_1
lnK	-1.752	-5.286 ***	I_1	-1.844	-4.194 ***	I_1
IUI	-0.401	-3.239 ***	I_1	-1.199	-2.757 ***	I_1
MCS	-1.860	-4.278 ***	I_1	-1.961	-3.279 ***	I_1
FTS	-1.511	-4.619 ***	I_1	-1.806	-3.787 ***	I_1
lnICTINF	-0.401	-3.239 ***	I_1	-1.199	-2.757 ***	I_1
lnFDI	-3.104 ***	-5.773 ***	I_0	-2.373 ***	-4.434 ***	I_0
lnINF	-3.641 ***	-5.686 ***	I_0	-3.803 ***	-4.695 ***	I_0

p < 0.05; *p < 0.01; critical values: -2.04, -2.11, -2.23 for 10%, 5%, and 1% significance level respectively.

Source: Author's computation (2025)

Further, the cointegration analysis employs both Pedroni (1999, 2004) and Kao (1999) techniques to examine the long-run relationship among trade openness, ICT infrastructure, and sectoral growth in SSA. These tests, according to Table 8, specifically designed to address cross-sectional dependence, heterogeneous effects, and non-stationarity, reveal significant cointegrating relationships at the 5% level. The rejection of the null hypothesis of no cointegration, supported by coefficients and variance ratio probability values significant at 1%, confirms the existence of a long-run equilibrium binding the non-stationary series. This finding has important implications for understanding the sustainable relationships between trade, technology, and sectoral development in SSA economies.

Table 8: Results of panel co-integration test

Pedroni (1999, 2004)			Kao (1999)	
Tests	Within dimension	Between dimension	Tests	Statistics
v-statistic	-2.405 ***	--	Modified DF t	-3.0545 ***
rho-statistic	-2.814	3.288 ***	DF t	-2.9278 ***
PP-statistic	-3.620 ***	-3.751 ***	Augmented DF t	-2.1656 ***
ADF-statistic	-4.099 ***	-4.7972 ***	Unadjusted modified DF t	-4.9257 ***
--	--	--	Unadjusted DF t	-3.7572 ***

Note: v: variance; PP: Phillips-Perron; ADF: Augmented Dickie Fuller; DF: Dickie Fuller; *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

Source: Author's computation (2025)

4.3 Regression Results

The paper answered the question in this study by using panel Autoregressive Distributive Lag Approach (ARDL) with second-generation estimators (i.e., PMG/ARDL). The PMG/ARDL model allows for capturing both short-run and long-run dynamics, accounting for potential endogeneity, and accommodating heterogeneous country-specific effects. It estimates the interactive effect of ICT infrastructure on trade openness with agriculture, industrial, and service sector in SSA are presented in Table 9, 10, and 11, respectively. Specifically, four ICT infrastructure indicators are evaluated individually as interactive variables: Internet users (IUI), mobile cellular subscriptions (MCS), fixed telephone subscriptions (FTS), and an overall ICT infrastructure index (ICTINF).

4.3.1. Interactive Effect of Trade Openness and ICT Infrastructure on Agricultural Sector Growth in SSA

Table 4.10 presents the long-run and short-run results for the interaction between trade openness (LNTO) and ICT infrastructure in explaining agricultural sector growth in SSA. In the long run, LNTO consistently shows a negative and statistically significant coefficient across all model specifications, with a 1% increase in LNTO associated with a 0.13–0.18% decline in agricultural sector growth. This finding suggests that greater trade openness, in the absence of complementary structural reforms, can exert downward pressure on agricultural performance. Such a trend aligns with

arguments that trade liberalisation can expose domestic producers to external competition without necessarily improving productivity in resource-constrained economies (see Hossain and Mitra, 2013). Among the ICT variables, fixed telephone subscriptions (FTS) alone exert a negative and significant effect on agricultural growth in one model, while its interaction with trade openness (TO_FTS) is positive and significant at the 5% level. This indicates that when integrated with trade, even basic ICT infrastructure can facilitate agricultural growth, possibly by improving market access and coordination. This outcome is consistent with Ngwenyama et al. (2006), who highlight the role of basic telecommunications in supporting agricultural productivity in developing economies. However, the insignificance coefficient for interactions involving mobile subscriptions (MCS) and internet use (IUI) contradicts Hossain and Mitra (2013), suggesting that the benefits of advanced ICT adoption may not automatically materialise in SSA without parallel investments in enabling infrastructure. Aker and Fafchamps (2015) similarly note that rural electrification deficits limit effective ICT utilisation in SSA, reinforcing the importance of foundational infrastructure.

Table 9: Result of the Interactive Effect of Trade Openness with ICT Infrastructure on Agricultural Sector Growth in SSA.

Variable/Column	1	2	3	4
Long Run				
LNT0	-0.1807*** {0.0361}	-0.0921** {0.0364}	-0.1325*** {0.0400}	-0.1278*** {0.0401}
IUI	-0.0086 {0.0091}			
MCS		0.002184 {0.0023}		
FTS			-0.1113*** {0.0333}	
ICT_INF				0.102197 {0.1103}
TO_IUI	0.0017 {0.0021}			
TO_MCS		-0.0008 {0.0005}		
TO_FTS			0.0182** {0.0073}	
TO ICTINF				-0.0397 {0.0254}
LNLFP	-0.1146 {0.0738}	-0.1485* {0.0795}	-0.0598 {0.0741}	-0.1485* {0.0795}
LNK	0.1133*** {0.0213}	0.1129*** {0.0205}	0.1500*** {0.0263}	0.1129*** {0.0205}
LNFDI	-0.026983 {0.0076}	-0.0291*** {0.0073}	-0.0337*** {0.0085}	-0.0291*** {0.0073}
LNINC	-0.2741*** {0.0214}	-0.1880*** {0.0286}	-0.2930*** {0.0226}	-0.1880*** {0.0286}
Short Run				
COINTEQ01	-0.5283*** {0.0531}	-0.5525*** {0.0513}	-0.5260*** {0.0502}	-0.5525*** {0.0513}
LNT0	0.0940 {0.0781}	0.1066 {0.1128}	0.0768 {0.1445}	0.1232* {0.0701}
IUI	0.0042 {0.0263}			
MCS		-0.0031 {0.0098}		
FTS			-0.6424 {0.7777}	
ICT_INF				-0.1458 {0.4623}
TO_IUI	-0.0009 {0.0070}			
TO_MCS		0.0003 {0.0022}		
TO_FTS			0.1835 {0.1974}	
TO ICTINF				0.0184 {0.1048}
LNLFP	-0.6466 {0.8220}	-0.5647 {0.7818}	-0.4163 {0.6728}	-0.5647 {0.7818}
LNK	-0.0616 {0.0600}	-0.0450 {0.0554}	-0.0312 {0.0639}	-0.0450 {0.0554}
LNFDI	0.0191***	0.0208***	0.0237***	0.0208***

LNINC	{0.0072} 0.0716	{0.0071} 0.0601	{0.0068} 0.0741***	{0.0071} 0.0601
Constant	{0.0454} 2.9520*** {0.3084}	{0.0473} 2.6584*** {0.2646}	{0.0393} 2.7724*** {0.2734}	{0.0473} 2.7091**** {0.2690}
Diagnostics				
CD Stat.	0.2650	0.5189	0.1817	0.0700
CD Prob.	(0.791)	(0.603)	(0.855)	(0.944)
Residual	I (0)	I (0)	I (0)	I (0)
RMSE	0.994	0.992	0.994	0.991
Adjusted R2	0.967	0.989	0.985	0.990
No. of Obser.	832	832	832	832

Note: *p < 0.10; **p < 0.05; *p < 0.01. Standard errors in parentheses {}**

Source: Author's compilation (2025)

Other control variables reveal that labour force participation (LNLFP) and GDP per capita (LNINC) have significant negative long-run effects, possibly reflecting the sector's vulnerability to labour shifts and structural transformation pressures. Conversely, capital investment (LNK) and foreign direct investment (LNFDI) display significant positive effects, underscoring their role in enhancing agricultural capacity. The error correction term (−0.5283 to −0.5525) is negative and significant in all models, confirming a stable long-run relationship. In the short run, trade openness, ICT variables, and their interactions are largely insignificant, suggesting limited immediate responsiveness of agricultural growth to changes in these factors. However, LNFDI is consistently positive and significant, indicating that foreign capital inflows provide short-term support for agricultural output. This pattern implies that while trade–ICT synergies may shape agricultural trajectories over the long term, FDI remains a key short-run driver.

4.3.2 Interactive Effect of Trade Openness and ICT Infrastructure on Industrial Sector Growth in SSA

Table 4.12 shows a consistent and statistically significant negative long-run effect of trade openness (LNT0) on industrial sector growth in SSA, with coefficients ranging from −0.09% to −0.29% for every 1% increase in LNT0. This finding suggests that liberalisation, in the absence of robust industrial competitiveness, may expose domestic firms to external pressures that hinder growth. Such a pattern aligns with structuralist perspectives on premature deindustrialisation in developing economies. ICT infrastructure (ICT_INF) emerges as a positive and significant driver in model 4, with a 1% improvement linked to a 0.26% increase in industrial growth. This supports Mbarika and Byrd (2009), who emphasise ICT as a catalyst for Africa's industrial development. However, the interaction terms between trade openness and ICT variables (TO_IUI, TO_MCS, TO_FTS, TO_ICTINF) are negative and significant in the long run. This indicates that the growth-enhancing effects of ICT are dampened in more open trade environments, possibly due to technology spillovers favouring external rather than domestic producers. This outcome contrasts with Hur et al. (2011), who suggest that trade openness can amplify technology adoption benefits, but aligns with Atsu et al. (2018), who stress the need for complementary human capital and infrastructure investments to fully leverage ICT in industrialisation.

Table 10: Result of the Interactive Effect of Trade Openness with ICT Infrastructure on Industrial Sector Growth in SSA.

Variable/Column	1	2	3	4
Long Run				
LNT0	-0.2914*** {0.0626}	-0.0396* {0.0222}	-0.1151*** {0.0280}	-0.0978*** {0.0194}
IUI	0.0645*** {0.0145}			
MCS		0.0055*** {0.0013}		
FTS			-0.0061 {0.0086}	
ICT_INF				0.2594*** {0.0617}
TO_IUI	-0.0154*** {0.0033}			
TO_MCS		-0.0013*** {0.0003}		
TO_FTS			0.0026 {0.0019}	
TO_ICTINF				-0.0648***

LNLFP	-0.2942** {0.1436}	-0.0172 {0.0466}	-0.0067 {0.0328}	{0.0145} -0.0172 {0.0466}
LNFDI	0.0339*** {0.0093}	0.0030 {0.0023}	0.0058* {0.0031}	0.0030 {0.0023}
LNINC	0.1053*** {0.0319}	0.0456*** {0.0062}	0.0607*** {0.0097}	0.0456*** {0.0062}
COINTEQ01	-0.1667*** {0.0335}	-0.2562*** {0.0432}	-0.2310*** {0.0295}	-0.2562*** {0.0432}
D(LNTO)	-0.0362 {0.0428}	-0.0379 {0.0522}	0.0085 {0.0597}	-0.0634 {0.0419}
D(IUI)	-0.0105 {0.0153}			
D(MCS)		0.0031 {0.0032}		
D(FTS)			0.1759 {0.3218}	
D(ICT_INF)				0.1481 {0.1501}
D(TO_IUI)	0.0031 {0.0035}			
D(TO_MCS)		-0.0006 {0.0008}		
D(TO_FTS)			-0.0295 {0.0772}	
D(TO ICTINF)				-0.0283 {0.0386}
D(LNLFP)	-0.6644 {0.5375}	-0.4353 {0.3318}	-0.8164** {0.3728}	-0.4352 {0.3318}
D(LNFDI)	0.0015 {0.0026}	0.0032 {0.0029}	0.0017 {0.0025}	0.0032 {0.0029}
D(LNINC)	-0.0339 {0.0392}	-0.0249 {0.0382}	-0.0206 {0.0422}	-0.0249 {0.0382}
Constant	0.8821*** {0.1756}	0.9524*** {0.1628}	0.8924*** {0.1171}	1.0121*** {0.1729}
Diagnostics				
CD Stat.	0.2340	0.1131	0.0028	0.1078
CD Prob.	(0.814)	(0.909)	(0.997)	(0.914)
Residual	I (0)	I (0)	I (0)	I (0)
RMSE	0.997	0.993	0.997	0.992
Adjusted R2	0.979	0.984	0.982	0.985
No. of Obser.	832	832	832	832

Note: *p < 0.10; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Standard errors in parentheses Source: Author's compilation (2024)

Control variables show mixed effects: labour force participation (LNLFP) has a significant negative coefficient in one model, pointing to workforce-related challenges, while FDI (LNFDI) and income per capita (LNINC) generally support industrial growth. The error correction term (−0.1667 to −0.2562) is consistently negative and significant, confirming long-run cointegration between industrial growth and its determinants. In the short run, the majority of trade openness and ICT variables are insignificant. A notable exception is the change in labour force participation (D(LNLFP)) in model 3, which has a large and negative effect (−0.8164), suggesting that sudden declines in labour availability can quickly constrain industrial output. The generally insignificant short-run interaction effects indicate that ICT–trade linkages operate more slowly in industry, requiring sustained investment and policy coordination to yield measurable results.

4.3.3 Interactive Effect of Trade Openness and ICT Infrastructure on Service Sector Growth in SSA

Table 4.13 presents the findings of the interactive effect of trade openness and ICT infrastructure on the service sector. The long-run effect of trade openness is mixed: positive and significant in model 1 (0.2427) but negative and significant in models 2–4 (−0.10% to −0.12%). This variation suggests that the impact of openness depends on underlying structural conditions, market integration, and competitive capacity in the service sector. The ambiguity mirrors findings in trade–services literature that highlight both market expansion opportunities and displacement risks. ICT infrastructure (ICT_INF) again plays a positive and significant role in model 4, with a coefficient of 0.2594,

indicating that a 1% improvement in ICT can raise service sector growth by around 0.26%. This aligns with Gosavi (2018), who emphasises ICT's potential to enable service innovations and efficiency gains. However, the negative and significant interaction terms between trade openness and ICT variables (TO_IUI, TO_MCS, TO_FTS, TO ICTINF) suggest that greater openness reduces the net benefits of ICT for services. Specifically, each 1% increase in openness lowers ICT's contribution to service growth by 0.03%–0.06%. This finding contrasts with Andrianaivo and Kpodar (2011), who argue that ICT and openness can be mutually reinforcing, and echoes Foster and Azmeh (2019), who warn that without domestic capability strengthening, openness may primarily benefit foreign service providers.

Table 11: Result of the Interactive Effect of Trade Openness with ICT Infrastructure on Service Sector Growth in SSA

Variable/Column	1	2	3	4
LNT0	0.2427* {0.1301}	-0.0396* {0.0222}	-0.1151*** {0.0280}	-0.0978*** {0.0194}
IUI	0.1436*** {0.0300}			
MCS		0.0055*** {0.0013}		
FTS			-0.0061 {0.0086}	
ICTINF				0.2594*** {0.0617}
TO_IUI	-0.0328*** {0.0068}			
TO_MCS		-0.0013*** {0.0003}		
TO_FTS			0.0026 {0.0019}	
TO ICTINF				-0.0648*** {0.0145}
LNLFP	0.5183** {0.2503}	-0.0172 {0.0466}	-0.0067 {0.0328}	-0.0172 {0.0466}
LNFDI	0.0148 {0.0157}	0.0030 {0.0023}	0.0058* {0.0031}	0.0030 {0.0023}
LNINC	0.2102*** {0.0292}	0.0456*** {0.0062}	0.0607*** {0.0097}	0.0456*** {0.0062}
Short Run				
COINTEQ01	-0.1196*** {0.0425}	-0.2562*** {0.0432}	-0.2310*** {0.0295}	-0.2562*** {0.0432}
TO	-0.0814* {0.0448}	-0.0379 {0.0522}	0.0085 {0.0597}	-0.0634 {0.0419}
IUI	-0.0199 {0.0157}			
MCS		0.0031 {0.0032}		
FTS			0.1759 {0.3218}	
ICT_INF				0.1481 {0.1501}
TO_IUI	0.0052 {0.0036}			
TO_MCS		-0.0006 {0.0008}		
TO_FTS			-0.0295 {0.0772}	
TO ICTINF				-0.0283 {0.0386}
LNLFP	-1.8572** {0.7555}	-0.4353 {0.3318}	-0.8164** {0.3728}	-0.4352 {0.3318}
LNFDI	0.0025 {0.0025}	0.0032 {0.0029}	0.0017 {0.0025}	0.0032 {0.0029}
LNINC	-0.0362	-0.0249	-0.0206	-0.0249

	{0.0432}	{0.0382}	{0.0422}	{0.0382}
Constant	-0.1120**	0.9524***	0.8924***	1.0121***
	{0.0439}	{0.1628}	{0.1171}	{0.1729}
Diagnostics				
CD Stat.	0.0995	0.2687	0.2161	0.2170
CD Prob.	(0.920)	(0.788)	(0.828)	(0.828)
Residual	I (0)	I (0)	I (0)	I (0)
RMSE	0.991	0.993	0.995	0.994
Adjusted R2	0.955	0.959	0.981	0.988
No. of Obser.	832	832	832	832

Note: *p < 0.10; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Standard errors in parentheses

Source: *Author's compilation (2025)*

Labour force participation (LNLFP) has a positive and significant effect in model 1 (0.5183) but is generally insignificant in other models. In the short run, LNLFP shows large negative effects in models 1 and 3, indicating adjustment frictions in labour deployment. FDI remains mostly insignificant, while income per capita (LNINC) consistently supports service growth. Short-run effects of ICT and trade openness on services are limited, supporting Sassi and Goaiad's (2013) conclusion that ICT benefits in services take time to materialise. Maswera et al. (2008) emphasise that bridging the digital divide in services requires not only access but also skills development, a point reinforced here by the stronger long-run compared to short-run impacts of ICT.

5. Conclusion, Policy Implications, and Future Research

This study examined the moderating role of ICT infrastructure in the relationship between trade openness and sectoral growth across 26 SSA countries from 1992 to 2023. The results indicate that ICT infrastructure generally supports industrial and service sector growth in the long run, while its benefits for agriculture are more closely linked to basic connectivity such as fixed-line access. However, the negative long-run interaction effects between trade openness and ICT suggest that in the absence of sufficient absorptive capacity, trade liberalisation can weaken the growth-enhancing potential of ICT adoption. These effects vary across sectors, underlining the need for differentiated policy approaches.

From a policy standpoint, trade liberalisation in SSA should be carefully synchronised with the expansion and upgrading of ICT infrastructure. Simply opening markets without ensuring that domestic producers and service providers have the technological capacity to compete risks eroding local industries and limiting the developmental gains from openness. Governments should prioritise investments in affordable, high-quality digital infrastructure, with particular emphasis on broadband connectivity, last-mile access, and

integration of ICT into production and distribution systems. At the same time, policies must address human capital constraints by promoting digital skills training, vocational education, and innovation support programmes. These measures would strengthen firms' capacity to adopt ICT productively, enabling them to respond effectively to competitive pressures in liberalised markets and to exploit export opportunities more fully.

In addition, sector-specific strategies are needed to reflect the heterogeneous ICT–trade dynamics revealed by the study. In agriculture, expanding rural connectivity and embedding ICT tools into extension services, market information systems, and supply chain management can enhance productivity and market access for smallholder farmers. For industry, targeted support should encourage the adoption of advanced manufacturing technologies and participation in higher-value segments of global value chains, coupled with incentives for research, development, and industrial innovation. In the services sector, where digital platforms and data networks are core enablers, policies should foster competitive domestic service providers, ensure fair market conditions, and safeguard data security. Regional cooperation—through cross-border ICT infrastructure projects, harmonised regulations, and joint capacity-building initiatives—would further lower costs, improve interoperability, and strengthen SSA's collective ability to capture value in global trade.

The study has certain limitations. The ICT infrastructure index includes fixed-line subscriptions, which, although historically relevant, may overstate their current economic importance in the digital era. The trade openness measure aggregates goods and services trade, limiting the ability to distinguish between their potentially different impacts. Although the PMG/ARDL method accounts for cross-sectional dependence and heterogeneity, the results remain correlational and cannot establish definitive causality. Furthermore, the use of country-level data may mask significant subnational differences in ICT access and sectoral performance. Future research could address

these limitations by disaggregating trade into merchandise and services components, constructing ICT indices that place greater emphasis on mobile broadband and emerging digital platforms, and using instrumental variable or quasi-experimental methods to strengthen causal inference. Incorporating firm- or household-level microdata would capture heterogeneity in ICT adoption and sectoral responses more accurately.

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Analysis of Fictional and Journalistic Intersect of Africa Positioning in Global Judicial System

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Abstract. Power distribution has long been at the heart of postcolonial studies, both in literature and in mass media like newspapers. The way that fictional and journalistic discourses intersect to place Africa within global justice has received little attention, despite the fact that scholarship has examined African responses to Western judicial authority. Therefore, this study examines the intersect of language in literary and journalistic writing in Femi Ojo-Ade's fictional critique of judicial authority in *Les paradis terrestres* and the Vanguard newspaper headlines "Canadian court declares APC, PDP terrorist organisations – Soneye, PDP react." Employing Rom's positioning theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study explores how media and literary discourses shape African reactions to Western decisions in the act of repositioning Africa. The findings of the study reveal that the Nigerian media portrays the Canadian decision as prejudiced, ignorant, and diplomatically destabilising, emphasising concepts of resistance and delegitimisation, while Ojo-Ade uses satire and irony to highlight Western philosophical arrogance and dramatise Africa's ruptured place in global justice. Linguistic lexicons in both headings of the *Vanguard* Newspaper, including the selected text, foreground that words are not merely descriptive but act as a tool for power in legitimizing and delegitimizing entire political entities. Through the integration of journalistic discourse and literary imagination, the paper illustrates how African narratives of disapproval are expressed in various registers, establishing literature as a platform for reinventing justice and independence beyond the homogenising rhetoric of the "global village" and as a mirror of resistance.

Keywords: Postcolonial Discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Positioning Theory,

Judicial Power and Legitimacy, African Resistance Narratives

1. Introduction

Africa and Africans in the global justice order and proceedings have often been in a position of defending and reacting to Western perceptions and decisions over the years. This remains one of the most common debates in the modern postcolonial era, as reflected in different fictional works by writers and critics in portraying the experience of immigrants in the diaspora, as examined in Mabanckou's *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge* (1998), *Verre Cassé* (2005) and Ade-Ojo's *Les paradis terrestres*, investigated in this study. Reflecting on the legal system that affects immigrants with respect to western-centrism, Caserta (2021) observes and outlines three approaches to addressing international legal scholarship, which include critical readings of law as power and domination, sociological institutionalism emphasising culture and global scripts, and post-Bourdieuian reflexive sociology analysing transnational legal elites in colonial and postcolonial contexts. The first pillar of Caserta (op. cit.) is examined in this study.

The power play in international law affecting immigrants is often manifested in the rulings of international courts (Kalpouzos, 2020). This is veritably portrayed in the trial of immigrants in deportation processes as obtained in the aforementioned literary pieces. However, this representation is also common in journalistic write-ups and headlines, as found in the Nigeria Vanguard examined alongside the selected fictional work in this study. Thus, the practices of immigration tribunals as captured in the selected text for the study and the

reaction of Nigerians in the selected journalistic publication underscore that the distribution of judicial authority continues to reveal asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and the Global South.

Fiction and journalism, though two divergent fields, have become more intertwined in the wake of the 21st century as a double-edged sword of resistance and reimagining among Africans despite the varying degree of differences that exists in their deployment of registers in underlining the representation of inequalities within the scope of the global justice systems affecting Africans (Van Krieken & Sanders, 2021). Additionally, whereas literary and figurative devices like satire, metaphors and narrative techniques are deployed in literary pieces to foreground Africans' position and criticism of global justice systems towards Africans, pungent headlines serve as veritable tools in journalistic writings.

These divergent approaches are evident in the juxtaposition of Ojo-Ade's paradis terrestres and Soneye's reaction in Vanguard to the 2025 Canadian Federal Court ruling that designated Nigeria's two dominant political parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), as terrorist organisations. Thus, a close reading of the selected materials for the study foregrounds how fictional and journalistic writing interrogates the legitimacy of Western legal frameworks, the construction of expertise, and the contested positioning of African voices in the global judicial space through the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Positioning Theory.

2. Literature Review

Scholarship on Africans' reaction to Eurocentric laws considered to be internal abounds over the years as both players continue in the dynamics of power interplay in postcolonial polity. Eslava & Pahuja (2012) submit that postcolonial and TWAAIL (Third World Approaches to International Law) scholars and critics have been engaged in a protracted dispute on the legal framework of international law with respect to the continuous promotion of colonial goals by the global north in the global south. Expanding on this framework of international law, Chimni (2022) argues that the main elements that propelled the evolution and development of the foundational principles, rules and practices of jurisdiction ensued from contemporary capitalist and modern states. This reality therefore gives rise to non-neutral judicial proceedings that continue to project uneven power relations among

states in the global north and south, particularly in asylum and immigration rulings.

Beyond the fact that international laws ensue from the global capitalist and imperialist north, arguments about the legitimisation of the legal provisions have also ensued in the polity of power relations. This is particularly witnessed in the interrogation of the expertise of the global powers and their authority of nomination. Baker (2015), investigating "the use of argumentation, legitimation, and othering in debates on refugees in the Canadian House of Commons", argues that cultural hegemony is largely motivated by viewpoint that is not adequate to articulate how the Conservatives are able to spread this viewpoint. This position is a representation of the global south in contending against the global north's polity with respect to immigration and asylum proceedings, where the designation of not individuals but organisations has become a daily reality.

The act of naming and designation has become a veritable platform where divergent points of view are expressed as a reaction by the global south to the proceedings of the global north. This especially has been investigated through the plethora of deployments of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Firdous et al. (2025) submit that through the application of CDA, formality, nominalisation, and modality obscure institutional agency and turn political opinions into seeming realities. Omidian Sijani, N. (2024) reflection on the portrayal of migrants in Canadian print media emphasises that representation of refugees and the Canadian government varied among newspapers according to political affiliations, coverage, and stylistic features. Thus, applying CDA to the newspaper publications from 2015-2017, the critic reflects on how newspaper headline syntax, lexical selection, and sourcing practices frame actors as perpetrators, victims, or threats, often reproducing racialised or civilisational hierarchies.

In foregrounding the African context, Kihato (2025) explains that media studies note persistent patterns of securitisation and deficit framing that marginalise local epistemologies. An analysis of media representation of migrants often reflects the different levels of positioning with respect to how rights and duties are assigned. Prominent among the various labelling over the years is the designation of groups in the global south by executive and judicial arms of the government in the global north as "terrorists" (Furtado, 2017). This is replicated in the 2025 Canadian high court ruling designating Nigeria's two main political parties as terrorist organisations during immigration and asylum proceedings. The reaction

from the newspaper reply, in line with earlier literary portrayals, underlines the intersection between journalistic media representation and literary narrative. This is in consonance with Mariano's (2011) submission on the role of literature as not a reflection of the society but a tool aimed to actively reshape perception on global polity by reshaping consciousness as captured in Ojo-Ade's selected text investigated in this study.

Conclusively, whereas works of scholarship have foregrounded the contribution of TWAIL, CDA, media framing, and law and literature in the discourse of the power polity between the global north and south in the postcolonial era, there exists limited study on how asylum and immigration court proceedings position Africans and their organisation. Hence, through the adoption of CDA and the theory of positioning, analysis of Canadian court decisions and Nigerian reportage alongside Ojo-Ade's novel is carried out with the overall goal of depicting how fictional and journalistic discourses intersect to contest Africa's positioning within the global judicial system.

3. Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

In a bid to underline Africa's discursive positioning in fictional and journalistic texts that interact with the international judicial in this study, Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the theory of positioning are adopted as methodology in projecting nuance understanding of how rights and duties are negotiated between the global north and south. As a theory that operates at textual Level (Micro-analysis), Discourse Practice (Meso-analysis) and Sociocultural Practice (Macro-analysis), CDA is deployed in the interpretation of the language power and ideology in the selected excerpt form Ojo-Ade's *Les paradis terrestres* and the *Vanguard* publication in shaping reality and existing power structures in line with (Darmayanti & Riyanto, 2013). Thus, analysis of the vocabulary, grammar and rhetorical structures at the micro level of analysis amongst others, the language deployed in the investigated documents depicts how words reproduce power relations, and how meanings are contested across interwoven discourses.

In the analysis of the materials in the study, Positioning Theory complements CDA by focusing on how discourse assigns dynamic "subject positions" and corresponding rights/duties within unfolding storylines (Davies & Harré, 1990; Van Langenhove, L. (2021). The application of this theory helps in depicting how court proceedings and the legal -media

controversies positions Africans and the designated African organisations- the Nigeria's All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Through the lens of the theory of positioning, the right of the Canadian court to define and how Nigerian actors react is brought to the fore through the first and second level of positioning in line with Otegbale and Iyiola (2024) submission. The core interest of the theory in the analysis thus foregrounds "who may speak, name, and judge" and with what moral compass as readers are made to see how identities are constructed, legitimized, or delegitimized through language

The analysis of the study drawn from two distinct but interwoven corpora is interpretive with data subjected to textual analysis through the method of close reading. With emphasis on the excerpt drawn from Ojo-Ade's text, special attention is given to the deployment of the satirical style and the Nigerian press's rhetorical defense of political legitimacy against Canadian judicial narratives. Additionally, the analysis at the discursive level examines the Canadian court's legal framing of African political organizations as "terrorist" and Nigerian media's counter-framing that delegitimizes Canadian authority. It also reflects at the level co social practice the broader structures of power, including postcolonial continuities in legal domination, epistemic hierarchies, and Africa's struggles for recognition and autonomy in international justice systems. Thus, how Western Courts position themselves as universal experts on democratic legitimacy while positioning African political actors as dangerous or illegitimate is highlighted.

4. Interrogation of Western expertise in *Les Paradis Terrestres*

In *Les paradis terrestres*, reiteration is used to foreground international relations and diplomacy among countries. This is brought to the fore in an interaction between Ayo and the immigration officer as Ayo tries to acquire a permanent citizenship in Concorde:

Il est dommage que vos experts ne sachent rien de ce qui se passe chez moi. Le sujet est fort complexe croyez-moi, et on aura besoin d'innombrables experts pour le dénouer. Comment définir un expert d'ailleurs? *Paradis* p.148

It is a pity that your experts know nothing about what is happening in my place. The situation is more complex believes me, and we are going to need innumerable experts to unfold it. How do you define an expert anyway?

The above scene is an argument between Ayo and the immigration officer on his return to Concorde to continue his studies with his wife, after fleeing the terror of his country's dictator. The use of *expert* thrice in the sentence is for emphasis, on the role of the country's ambassadors in reporting happenings around the globe to their home country. By constant affirmation of expert preceded by the possessive adjective, vos (yours), in the first mention of the word above, the writer presents a dichotomy between the means and usage of human resources in the acquisition of information in the developing country and the Western Euro-America Eldorado. On a linguistic point of view, in the sentence "Il est dommage que vos experts ne sachent rien de ce qui se passe chez moi" (It is a pity that your experts don't know anything happening in my place), the writer emphasises the fact that false information and misinterpretation of event by the foreign asylum in a new country is also a reality. Due to their ignorance of certain fundamental issues and certain historical happenings, the foreign experts could be led astray through what they gather from opinion polls concerning some delicate issues of the new country they operate from. Hence, the writer proposes with the expression "on aura besoin d'innombrables experts pour le dénouer" (we shall need uncountable experts to unfold it). The importance of several agents comprising recruited nationals of the receiving country in question, with in-depth knowledge of socioeconomic and political and historical background of the people with the specialised skills of the foreign experts, to analyse delicate issues such as the case of the coup d'état and opposition of the government as is the case of Ayo's brother in the text which leads to the quotation above. The use of the conjunction, *et*, placed in opposition to the expression *Le sujet est fort complexe croyez-moi* is an additive tie, furnishing additional information. Through the use of this additive tie, the narrator foregrounds the incompetence of some international journalist by insisting that more experts would be needed to actually realise the nitty-gritty of the current situation in his home country.

Additionally, it is evident that from the above excerpt, the use of "Il est dommage que vos experts ne sachent rien de ce qui se passe chez moi... Comment définir un expert d'ailleurs?" carries an undertone of denigration. In the context of presentation, the Western specialist referred to as "expert" is positioned at the second level of position that entails refusal and acceptance of previous designation (Otegbale & Iyiola, 2024) as a novice by the African immigrant,

depicting him as one speaking without practical knowledge of the reality and expertise of the subject matter about the African continent. This repositioning automatically reverses the previous established order with the African immigrant asserting epistemic power in the conversation. This reassertion of right for reimagining by the African therefore positions the Western expert as the representative of the global north as usurpers of authorities in designation of Africans without due diligence on the subject matter. Thus, through the employment of irony in this context, Ojo-Ade stylistically dismantles the previously established discursive positions and puts the African voice in the forefront in lieu of the background.

From Critical Discourse Analysis point of departure, the repeated usage of the word "expert" underlines a lexical irony with each repetition undermining its meaning rather than affirming. Additionally, the deployed linguistic lexicon "expert" in "vos experts ne sachent rien" (*your experts know nothing*) is a deliberate inversion that exposes the hollowness of Western technocratic authority. Through the metadiscursive question "Comment définir un expert d'ailleurs?" (*How do you define an expert anyway?*) the writer critiques the Western epistemology, challenging the credibility of the western expert. Additionally, the usage of "fort complexe" (extremely complex) and "innombrables experts" (countless experts) to underline the ridiculousness of the situation parodies the Western fixation with technological solutions while suggesting that local reality cannot be converted to foreign analysis. Thus, from the textual level (micro level analysis), in line with Mariano's (2011) submission on the role of literature, words the selected and conscientious usage of the vocabulary "expert" underscores the ideology of both global north and south with respect to positioning and repositioning in global power dynamics in the postcolonial polity.

5. Analysis of Africans positioning from Vanguard Newspaper headlines

In line with the analysed excerpt from *Les paradis terrestres* in the above session, the analysis of the Vanguard newspaper's headline in this session foregrounds the ongoing discuss of power play between the global north and the global south with the designation of the tow dominant Nigerian political party, the All Progressive Congress (APC and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). This is captured in the image below:



“Canadian court declares APC, PDP terrorist organisations”

“The Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, has condemned the decision of a Canadian court declaring Nigeria’s two major political parties, the PDP and the ruling All Progressives Congress, APC, as terrorist organisations”

In line with principles of positioning, both headlines fall within the categories of first and second level of positioning respectively. In the first headline, first order of positioning is evident in the designation of the APC and PDP as terrorist in the caption *“Canadian court declares APC, PDP terrorist organisations”*. This designation depicts the African continent as a place where illegitimacy in governance is propagated and accepted, thus making the environment one void of true democracy. The declaration also positions the Canadian court as well as Western powers as the moral arbiters of global politics with the sole authority to designate which organization can be classified as terrorist groups by their western compass. Contrary in the second *“The Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, has condemned the decision ...”* the second order of position is applied with the reactions from the African players (Otegbale, 2024). The response of the PDP with lexicons, including, “misinformed, biased, lacking evidence” in challenging the imposed label of the first order of positioning, ensue a repositioning of itself as victim of misrepresentation and defender of democratic process.

In line with the second order of positioning in the second headline, the reaction of the PDP through Olufemi Soneye, depicts the ruling by the Canadian court as a political earthquake on the African continent with the singular goal of destabilizing global in what could be considered as an over reach and a threat to Nigeria’s democracy. This discourse in the Vanguard Newspaper and the presentation of Ojo-Ade’s *Les paradis terrestres* project Africa as a continent in context against western hegemonic influence. Canada and the Western expert in both context claiming to be arbiters faces similar oppositions with Africans invoking the second order of positioning to reposition themselves as the true *knowledge-holders, democrats, and victims of epistemic misrepresentation* in both contexts. This positioning of “expert” and “Canada

court ruling proceedings” on immigration and asylum depicts their act as mere performative contrary to the neutrality intended in the first order of positioning. Thus, they are depicted as mere conferring stigma, stripping rights from asylum seekers and challenging authorities counterproductive to the global order. This presentation therefore dramatizes the clash between Western technocratic authority and African experiential knowledge. Through irony, repetition, and rhetorical questioning, Ojo-Ade dismantles the authority of the “expert” as a colonial and neocolonial construct. CDA reveals how the text operates at multiple levels:

From the textual level (Micro-analysis) of the CDA, the term “declares” in heading 1 underscores the authority of the Western court and depicts it as the final authority whose verdict must go uncontested while reducing the APC and the PDP to a single label of “terrorist organisation”. Contrary, the lexical choice of “condemn” in “The PDP has condemned...” by the Nigerian player brings to the fore resistance depicting the Nigerian agency reaction as a rebuttal. Both headlines therefore foreground how powers, especially at the global level operates linguistically. Both headlines bring to the fore the capacity of a single linguistic lexicon, in this case a verb, “declares” and “condemns” respectively cannot only transform a complex political entity into a fixated category with the first verb, but signals resistance while positioning Africans as reactive rather than proactive agents of discourse. Thus, the deployment of the linguistic lexicons in both headings of the Vanguard Newspaper, including the selected text, underscores the fact that words are not merely descriptive but act as a tool for power in legitimizing and delegitimizing entire political entities.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates how the intersection of literature and media not only reflects Africa's marginalization within transnational justice but also opens imaginative and discursive avenues for rethinking authority, legitimacy, and justice in an unevenly structured global order structured by asymmetry. Thus, this intersectional reading not only enriches our understanding of Ojo-Ade's aesthetics but also reveals how postcolonial resistance is performed across fictional works and political journalistic writings in the ever-evolving negotiation of Africa's place within global systems of power and expertise. Drawing upon the principles of the theory of positioning and critical discourse analysis, the study underlines how Western legal proceedings and media discourses seek to define, constrain, and delegitimize African actors. From fictional point of departure through Ojo-Ade's *Les Paradis Terrestres*, the study interrogates western authorities through the usage of paradoxes and exclusion encountered by the African migrant in the text within the projected legal framework. Additionally, the reportage of the Canadian Federal Court's 2025 ruling classifying Nigeria's major political parties—the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP)—as terrorist organizations in the *Vanguard Newspaper's* coverage "Canadian court declares APC, PDP terrorist organisations" and its follow-up report featuring Nigerian reactions and condemnations underline how the context of political legitimacy, defense and delegitimization in transnational legal discourse. Together, these textual sites underscore that the struggle over Africa's position is not confined to legal frameworks but is actively negotiated across cultural and media forms. Also, despite the delimitation of this study to a single literary text and media coverage, future research in this area could delve into other African texts comparatively with insights from other literary voices to give greater and deeper insights not covered in this paper into how cultural and media texts participate in shaping global imaginaries of justice. Conclusively, it is evident that this study goes beyond a mere depiction of current global order where Africa is positioned as passive recipient, but as a continent seeking to redefine itself in the global order through the resistance in fictional and journalistic publications.

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An Examination of the Role of the Church on Indigent Nigerian Children

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Abstract. This study critically examines the role of the Nigerian church in addressing the health needs of indigent Nigerian children through the perspective of James 1:27, which stresses caring for “orphans and widows in their distress. Indigent children in Nigeria are confronted with issues such as poor health, inadequate education and emotional trauma, being aggravated by poverty and underdeveloped healthcare systems. While the church plays a key role in assisting those children, its solutions typically lack the convergence of spiritual, physical and social care needed to address these difficulties all-inclusively. The study therefore examines the theological foundation of the church’s mandate, appraise the impact of its initiatives and identifies gaps in addressing indigent Nigerian health needs. Content analytical approach was adopted. Findings accentuate the necessity for combining spiritual and social care, adopting evidence-based intervention strategies and mobilizing resources to increase the church’s competence. Recommendations include creating alliances, using technology, and improving lobbying for legislation that protect indigent Nigerian children’s rights. This research highlights the potential of the Nigerian church as a life-changing force in strengthening indigent Nigerian children's health and well-being, linking its practical efforts with its theological duty.

Keywords: Examination, Church, Nigerian, Indigent and Children

1. Introduction

The predicament of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in Nigeria is a critical issue that necessitates immediate attention. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Nigeria estimates that there are 17.5 million orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The health and well-being of these children are severely undermined by several factors, including poverty, limited access to healthcare, and

lack of social support networks. The church, being a prominent institution in Nigerian society, has been in the forefront in resolving societal issues. James 1:27, a Bible passage, stresses the need of providing care for orphans and widows as a fundamental element of pure and unblemished faith. This phrase has been interpreted by many scholars as an exhortation for the church to participate in social welfare and community development. (Daniel Dei, 2015)

Indigent children in Nigeria face serious health and social challenges, which include limited access to healthcare, poor nutrition, lack of education, and psychological trauma. These issues are exacerbated by poverty, weak healthcare systems, and social stigmatization (Stephen S. Ojo, et al, 2019). While the Nigerian church, guided by the biblical mandate in James 1:27, actively supports indigent Children, its interventions often lack a complex approach, focusing majorly on spiritual care and neglecting physical and psychological health needs. In addition, lack of coordination with healthcare providers, financial constraints, and inadequate training for church leaders hinder the effectiveness of these interventions. In spite of the churches’ significant presence in Nigerian communities, its potential to address gaps in child welfare programs remains underutilized. This mismatch between theological commitments and practical implementations raises crucial questions about its role in incorporating spiritual care with health and social services to improve indigent children's well-being. Confronting this dilemma requires a critical evaluation of the theological and practical components of the church’s responsibility in these children healthcare, as spelt out in James 1:27, to develop sustainable, impactful and context-specific interventions.

2. Overview of James 1:27 and the Church's Mandate

James 1:27 states, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained. This verse highlights the essence of genuine religion as a life of service and personal sanctity, without hypocrisy or mere ritualism. It buttresses two aspects: (1) compassionate care for society's most vulnerable, especially orphans and widows, and (2) a dedication to moral integrity in a morally demanding world. The Church, as the embodiment of Christ's teachings, is called to model this ideal. This means not just advocating for justice and giving practical aid but also embracing an active, transforming role in the lives of vulnerable communities. The verse serves as both a descriptive and prescriptive standard, encouraging Christians to reflect God's heart for the downtrodden and to engage in real acts of love that mirror Christ's compassion (Guest, 2025)

Within the Nigerian environment, where these children confront systemic neglect, the Church's responsibility widens to meet both acute and structural needs. This includes providing immediate care such as housing, food, and education, and lobbying for institutional reforms to tackle the core causes of vulnerability. The phrase does not propose a specific methodology but rather highlights the heart posture of Christians and their dedication to societal regeneration. This dual role connects with the goal of the church being salt of the earth and light in the world, ensuring that its religious practices translate into meaningful societal effect. By prioritizing care for orphans and widows, it does not only fulfill a biblical responsibility but also tackles important areas of need in Nigerian society (GotQuestions.com 2024).

The Church plays a significant role in society, typically operating as both a spiritual and social institution committed to comprehensive human development. Its responsibilities beyond religious traditions to embrace the promotion of inclusiveness, equality, and dignity, especially for the less privilege. Therefore, the Church is a critical partner in tackling societal concerns, with a special focus on health and social welfare. The Church takes its duty from passages like as James 1:27, emphasizing care for the marginalized, including orphans and widows. Practically, the Church's involvement has to do with offering direct interventions such as healthcare, education, and economic support to improve communities. Churches often function as advocates for justice, tackling systemic injustices that promote poverty and vulnerability. (J.P. Sele et al, 2024)

In the Nigerian context, where the issues encountered by orphaned and vulnerable children are pronounced, the Church's commitment in health and social welfare is paramount. By using its wide network and influence, the Church provides crucial services such as shelter, healthcare, and psychosocial assistance. Moreover, the Church encourages community development programmes that increase the quality of life and generate sustainable solutions for long-term well-being (David Siampondo, 2024). Mostly churches often operate as facilitators of policy change, fostering for the inclusion of vulnerable people in national development strategies. This dual method of direct intervention and systemic advocacy coincides with the biblical vision of complete care, ensuring that spiritual values translate into real societal advantages. Thus, the Church's engagement in health and social welfare is both a moral obligation and a practical need, stressing the immediate and structural needs of orphaned and vulnerable children in Nigeria. (Lanre Ade, 2024)

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach behind this study focuses on the interaction of theology, social responsibility and practical solutions for indigent children in Nigeria, as guided by James 1:27. This verse provides a theological mandate for the Church to engage in acts of compassion, stressing caring for widows and orphans as a pure manifestation of faith. James 1:27 is positioned as a prescriptive paradigm for Christian social responsibility, offering a framework where religion is justified via action, particularly in aiding neglected populations. This concept stresses the Church's responsibility in correcting systematic injustices and establishing circumstances where vulnerable children can thrive. The verse operates as a theological lens that supports the practical application of faith through service to mankind. (GotQuestions, Ibid.)

The descriptive aspect of James 1:27 underlines the Church's duty in interpreting scriptural ideas into actionable frameworks. Theoretical arguments from this source underline the Church's obligation to provide grace and advocacy, ensuring that the well-being of children is prioritized. It stresses fostering comprehensive care that incorporates spiritual growth with physical and emotional assistance. (Guest, Ibid.) The social systems theory is crucial to understanding the Church's role in resolving vulnerability. This idea suggests that the Church acts as a subsystem within society, engaging with other institutions (such as health and education) to form a network of support for indigent children in Nigeria. The framework promotes

for multi-sectoral collaboration and capacity building, perceiving the Church as a mediator that bridges institutional barriers. (D.O. Jegede, 2023)

The family systems theory informs Church initiatives, emphasizing the need of family-based care above institutional settings. This approach reflects a theological commitment to safeguarding the dignity and sanctity of family institutions. It theorizes that a caring familial environment is vital for the psychological and emotional stability of children, coinciding with biblical ideas of communal care¹¹. The conflict hypothesis stresses the difficulty faced by the Church in resolving vulnerabilities amidst societal concerns. It emphasises systemic challenges, such as corruption and inequality, as key obstructions to achieving the mandate of James 1:27. This perspective frames the Church's duty as both an advocate for justice and a giver of direct help, needing a deliberate response to external pressures. (Church-Hill Amadi-Nche, 2020)

The theoretical foundation for this study mixes religious imperatives from James 1:27 with sociological theories, such as social systems theory, family systems theory, and conflict theory. These perspectives jointly reveal the Church's dual mission as a spiritual leader and a practical support system for orphaned and vulnerable children. By linking faith and social science, the framework provides a complete perspective to study the Church's initiatives within the Nigerian context.

4. Health and Well-being of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria

The health and well-being of indigent children in Nigeria are profoundly influenced by poor healthcare systems and restricted access to universal health coverage. Research demonstrates that these children face heightened vulnerability due to poverty, poor nutrition, and lack of access to vital healthcare services. Confronting these gaps necessitates integrating targeted interventions into Nigeria's healthcare policies to enable equitable access to health services and promote overall well-being (M.K. Aladegboye et al, 2023). The psychological well-being of the indigent children also known as orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) is also seriously damaged by the absence of parental support. Studies show that children who experience the death of a parent are at a greater risk of emotional and behavioural issues, including withdrawal, self-isolation, and despair. These mental health challenges are aggravated by the lack of familial or community support structures, making it crucial for interventions

to address both mental health and psychosocial needs completely (Busisiwe Ntuli, 2020).

A startling 18 million orphans in Nigeria are reported to live in conditions of great poverty, loneliness, and uncertainty about their future. These children are routinely denied the basic requirements such as food, shelter, and education, which further exacerbates their vulnerability. The problems experienced by these youngsters emphasise the critical need for structural solutions, including community-based support structures and policies to relieve poverty and ensure sustainable development¹⁵.

5. Previous Studies on Church Interventions for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children

The Catholic Church has long been involved in projects assisting orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs). Recent studies show a shift toward family-based care models, replacing institutional orphanages with foster care and kinship networks. The objective of the church is to ensure that children grow up in supportive situations that closely mimic traditional family structures, aligning with its fundamental commitment to human dignity and community. This method emphasizes long-term sustainability by integrating economic empowerment programmes for caregivers and promoting school access for children.

In Nigeria, CRS has undertaken community-centered interventions addressing OVCs. With relationships across educational and health sectors, the group provides life skills training, healthcare access, and educational support. CRS harnesses the Church's wide network to identify disadvantaged children and connect them with resources. Programmes such as the Kids' Clubs have been crucial in building a feeling of belonging, developing resilience, and addressing psychosocial issues. These efforts are aimed to not only address urgent difficulties but also empower children and their communities for long-term growth. (Michael Stulman, 2015)

Research underlines the complex function of the Church in minimising vulnerabilities among children. Studies underline the usefulness of faith-based groups in addressing both spiritual and material needs. In particular, churches in sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria, provide vital support such as scholarships, mentorship programmes, and medical services. These initiatives sometimes extend beyond individual needs to community-level development, with churches acting as advocates for governmental reforms tackling systemic poverty and child welfare issues. The Church and Society Network stresses collaborative ways to

assist OVCs. By partnering alongside governmental and non-governmental organizations, churches magnify their effect in delivering care and tackling structural hurdles such as access to education and healthcare. Programs focus on capacity building for caregivers, child protection efforts, and the establishment of community-based child welfare groups. These activities underline the need of partnerships in implementing sustainable interventions and empowering local communities to serve their disadvantaged people (Adebola A. Adejimi et al, 2019)

Previous studies suggest that the Church has a transforming role to play in meeting the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children, notably in Nigeria. From family-based care models to large-scale community interventions, the Church's activities reflect a dedication to comprehensive care that blends spiritual teaching with practical help. Faith-based organizations thrive in utilising their wide networks to deliver targeted services, including education, healthcare, and emotional support. Moreover, coordinated initiatives with government organisations and NGOs have been helpful in resolving systemic difficulties, enhancing the Church's potential to engage as a significant stakeholder in child welfare. These studies reinforce the applicability of James 1:27, stressing the Church's biblical obligation to care for society's most vulnerable people.

6. Challenges Facing the Nigerian Church in tackling Vulnerability

The Nigerian Church faces tremendous challenges in confronting the problems of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs). These include increased insecurity, political instability and religious intolerance, which often adversely affect the capability of the church to effectively meet the needs of OVCs. The persistent danger of violence, especially in places afflicted by terrorism, destroys community support networks, making it harder for the Church to deliver important services like healthcare and education. One key problem is the Church's engagement in curbing insecurity while simultaneously correcting weaknesses. The disproportionate focus on security issues often diverts money and attention from social welfare activities. Furthermore, the lack of proper finance, coupled with widespread corruption, hinders the Church's ability to undertake sustainable initiatives for OVCs. The limited coordination between the Church and government further exacerbates these challenges.

Institutional difficulties, such as inadequate infrastructure and skilled personnel, also hinder the outreach of the church to vulnerable population. Many rural communities lack churches or faith-based groups qualified to provide healthcare or social support. In addition, societal stigmatization of orphaned and vulnerable children further complicates intervention efforts, as families are typically unwilling to engage with Church programmes owing to fear of prejudice²². Cultural and customary customs often collide with the Church's mission to care for OVCs. Practices such as child labour and early marriage, prevalent in many communities, hinder the Church's support for child welfare. Furthermore, internal factors such as ideological disputes and competition among denominations weaken the impact of Church-led activities. These problems underline the need for a cohesive, strategic approach to tackling vulnerability in Nigeria (Cletus Tanimu Gotan, 2011).

6.1 Impact of Church Interventions on Health Outcomes

The responsibility of the church in addressing the health and welfare of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) in Nigeria is strongly founded in its spiritual mandate as expressed in James 1:27. This role has delivered significant beneficial health results for OVCs through multiple interventions, which include access to healthcare, mental health assistance, and sustainable community-based care models.

6.2 Improved Access to Healthcare

Churches have been crucial in overcoming gaps in healthcare access for OVCs. Many establish medical outreaches and partnerships with healthcare practitioners to give services such as immunisations, treatments for common ailments, and nutritional supplements. These projects frequently target underserved communities, addressing inequities in healthcare access and contributing to improved health indicators for vulnerable children.

Community health education programs, frequently sponsored by churches, reduce the prevalence of avoidable diseases such as malaria and respiratory infections, greatly improving health outcomes among OVCs.

6.3 Nutritional Support

Malnutrition is a significant issue among OVCs in Nigeria, worsening their sensitivity to illnesses and developmental delays. Churches have stepped in by starting feeding programs and donating nutritional

materials. Such activities not only alleviate immediate hunger but also stimulate healthier physical development, which is crucial for the long-term well-being of OVCs.

6.4 Mental and Emotional Well-being

The psychological toll of losing parents or living in precarious conditions can be significant. Churches provide structured counseling programs, mentorship, and community assistance to address these difficulties. Church-led programs build a sense of belonging and enable emotional healing through mentorship efforts and peer engagement opportunities. (Dave Meritt, 2012)

Through these interventions, churches contribute to improved mental health outcomes for OVCs, reducing occurrences of despair and anxiety by fostering a loving environment.

6.5 Addressing HIV/AIDS Risks and Stigma

Churches have a key role in fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS among OVCs and decreasing associated stigma. By delivering education on HIV prevention, churches provide children and caregivers with necessary knowledge to decrease risks.

Additionally, programs such as antiretroviral medication support and advocacy campaigns help mainstream talks surrounding HIV/AIDS, ensuring that afflicted children receive the care and community support they need.

6.6 Sustainable and Community-Based Support

Church programs frequently stress sustainability by empowering communities to take an active role in OVC care. These approaches include training caregivers, supporting economic empowerment programs, and creating child-focused ministries that address systemic challenges like poverty and education gaps. Such approaches ensure that interventions are not merely short-term but lead to long-lasting gains in health and social outcomes for OVCs.

Church efforts have had a dramatic impact on the health outcomes of Nigerian OVCs by addressing important areas such as healthcare access, nutrition, mental health, and disease prevention. Rooted in the biblical requirement of James 1:27, these efforts provide holistic treatment that improves not just physical health but also emotional and social well-being. However, the success of these treatments

depends on continuous efforts to incorporate sustainable models and collaborations that address systemic issues. Further studies underline that theology influences the church's engagement with excluded communities. For example, Magezi notes that the essence of the church must involve a balance of evangelism and social action, reflecting the inseparability of faith and good acts. (Rei Lemuel Crizaldo, 2017)

7. Conclusion

The biblical injunction in James 1:27 stresses the responsibility of the church to care for indigent children. In the Nigerian context, this means addressing health, emotional and spiritual needs comprehensively. Church-led programmes have shown great potential in fostering the well-being of OVCs, but challenges such as inadequate resources and insufficient teamwork persist. A collaborative effort including churches, policy leaders and researchers is needed to establish lasting, evidence-based treatments. By merging spiritual and social responsibilities, advocating for systemic changes and regularly analysing impact, the church can fulfill its divine mandate while contributing to national progress.

8. Recommendations

The following Recommendations are made:

Churches should incorporate spiritual care with extensive social interventions that address the health, emotional, and educational needs of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs), in collaborations with health providers and community organizations.

Training programmes should be established in order for the church leaders to be equipped with the knowledge and capacity to handle difficult health care being encountered by these children. Policy makers should adopt favorable policies to encourage faith-based organizations in getting resources.

Churches should actively fight for policies that protect the rights of OVCs, ensuring access to healthcare, education, and protection against exploitation. Collaboration between religions and policy officials is important to impact national child welfare policies effectively. Both churches and policy officials should provide monitoring approaches to assess the impact of initiatives on the health and well-being of the orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs).

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Menace of Poverty and Education on the Mental Health Outcomes of Children in Benin Metropolis

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Abstract. The primary aim of the study is to examine the menace of poverty and education on the mental health outcomes of children. It equally considers the impact of socio-economic status of the parents' education, and family environment. Ecological theoretical framework was adopted in this study. The literature established that children growing up in poverty are at a higher risk of experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression; it can retard their opportunities for rapid growth and development; and the lack of access to basic necessities and opportunity for education and personal development can further exacerbate mental health issues among children. The research design that was adopted in this study was the phenomenological research design and a qualitative methodology. A purposive sampling technique was employed, and 10 participants were recruited for this research study. Data was gathered through interviews and was thematically analysed. The study revealed inability of the parents to take care of their wards/children's basic needs, pushed the parents to engage them in child labour to augment income in their families and such labour increased their vulnerability and negatively impacted their overall quality of wellbeing. Similarly, it was also noted well-trained teachers are paramount to be able to manage children mental health issues. The study recommends the implementation of policies and programs aimed at enhancing the socio-economic conditions of families in Benin Metropolis. These initiatives could include providing financial aid, creating job opportunities for parents, offering educational support for children.

Keywords: Children, Education, Poverty, Mental health, Benin Metropolis

1. Introduction

Mental health problems in children encompass a variety of psychological and emotional complications that affect the well-being and functioning of individuals during their developmental years (Omorogiuwa, 2021). Children facing mental health

challenges might display signs like persistent feelings of sadness, irritability, changes in behaviour, trouble focusing, disruptions in sleep patterns, and thoughts of self-harm or suicide (Omorogiuwa, 2019). According to a survey conducted in Nigeria, the prevalence of mental health problems among children ranges from 10% to 37%, which could be linked to their functional impairments (Zaharaddeen, 2020). Thus, mental health problems in children have increasingly been recognized as a global health concern, with a growing body of evidence highlighting the impact of socio-economic factors such as poverty, education and the host of others on the well-being of children (WHO, 2022). Ogboghodo et al. (2018) asserts that 17.3% of the mental health burden in Benin City, Edo State, is attributed to childhood mental health issues, such as depression.

Smith and Jarden (2017) noted that poverty, parental unemployment, and limited access to quality housing as well as lack of quality education of parents contribute to stress, anxiety and other mental health issues among children, potentially leading to long-term psychological effects. Similarly, the development of childhood disorders is associated with a multitude of factors, including economic, neighbourhood, and environmental, social, and structural elements. Children experiencing these challenges may face heightened stress, anxiety, and depression due to the strain of living in such circumstances (WHO, 2022). The socio-economic landscape of Benin Metropolis, characterized by diverse and complex challenges such as poverty, urban stress, and educational pressures, presents a unique backdrop against which children's mental health issues may manifest and evolve (Okeke, 2018).

In a society where mental health is not given the adequate attention it deserves, individuals suffering from mental health issues may face stigma and discrimination, leading to isolation and a lack of support (Omorogiuwa, 2017). This can, in turn, hinder their ability to contribute to the social and economic

growth of the nation. Additionally, mental health issues can have a significant impact on children's education. Children and adolescents with mental health problems may struggle to learn effectively in school, leading to poor academic performance, limited opportunities for social and economic advancement, and widen the poverty cycle of such family. Furthermore, untreated mental health issues can also have long-lasting effects on an individual's ability to maintain stable employment and achieve financial security (Sutherland, 2018).

Despite the growing study and interest in mental health outcomes of the children, there is a dearth comprehensive discourse focused specifically on the impacts of poverty and lack of adequate education on the mental health issues of children. Furthermore, the etiology of these factors on the affected families in the study area remains unexplored especially in heterogeneous setting with diverse socio-cultural and economic context.

1.1 Research Questions

- How does poverty influence the mental health of children in Benin Metropolis?
- What are the educational influences on the mental health of children in Benin Metropolis?

2. Review of the Literature

Social determinants such as poverty, and education play a crucial role in mental health. As highlighted by Patel and Goodman (2018), factors such as socio-economic status, education, employment, family environment, and cultural influences can significantly impact mental health. These determinants can either pose risks or provide buffers against mental health problems, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to mental health that considers the broader social and economic context. Poverty is a significant socioeconomic determinant of mental health issues among children in Nigeria (Mustapha & Ebomoyi, 2022). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2022, reported that a large percentage of Nigerian children live below the poverty line, lacking access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and mental healthcare (Multidimensional Poverty Index, 2022).

Children growing up in poverty are at a higher risk of experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression due to their living conditions and limited opportunities for growth and development (Omorogiuwa, 2021). Poverty also limits access to mental health services and support systems, further exacerbating the issue.

According to Smith and Foster (2022), children living in impoverished household are more likely to experience mental health issues due to factors like violence, instability, and limited access to quality health and educational services. The persistent high rate of unemployment and extreme poverty in Nigeria can create an environment of economic instability, insecurity and poor mental health for families. Children growing up in such conditions may experience heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty about their future (Mustapha & Ebomoyi, 2022).

The lack of access to basic necessities and opportunities for education and personal development can further exacerbate mental health issues among children. Socioeconomic disadvantage often leads to reduced employment opportunities and lower wages when individuals are employed. Limited access to quality education and training programs can result in a lack of skills necessary for securing stable employment (Ayeni, 2021). Individuals facing socioeconomic disadvantage often encounter barriers that hinder their educational progress. These barriers can include limited access to quality education, inadequate resources, and a lack of support systems (Johnson & Tyler, 2020). The relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance has been extensively studied and consistently shown to be associated across international studies (Johnson & Tyler, 2020).

The school environment has a significant impact on the mental well-being of young learners (Martin & Marsh, 2020). It encompasses various factors such as the physical infrastructure, social dynamics, and overall atmosphere within the school (Akpede & Omi-Ujuanba, 2018). Academic pressure is one of the most prominent educational factors affecting children mental health. According to Martin and Marsh (2020), a positive school environment, characterized by supportive teachers, inclusive practices, and a safe and nurturing atmosphere, can significantly enhance students' mental well-being. Thompson and Haines (2021). found that positive teacher-student relationships are strongly associated with lower levels of depression and higher self-esteem in students. Moreover, the inclusivity and adaptability of the education system play a significant role in mental health. Inclusive education, which addresses the diverse needs of all students, including those with learning difficulties or mental health challenges, is crucial (Akpede & Omi-Ujuanba, 2018).

3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted social ecological systems theory which was developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). The theory premised on the assumption that the environments or contexts in which children grow up have a significant impact on their development. According to this theory, the family, including parent-child subsystems, is the most important system. Additionally, there are five other systems that are critical in influencing and being influenced by a child's behaviour, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). **Microsystem** represents the immediate environment in which an individual lives and interacts. For children, this includes their family, school, peer group, and neighbourhood. These settings are where the most direct interactions with social agents occur. **Mesosystem** encompasses the interconnections between the microsystems. It represents the linkages between home and school, family and peers, and other combinations of direct environments. For example, a child's academic performance may be influenced by the degree of involvement and communication between their parents and teachers.

Exosystem includes the broader social systems that do not directly include the individual but still exert an influence on them. This can include a parent's workplace, community-based services, or neighbourhood policies. For example, a parent's work stress can indirectly affect a child's well-being. **Macrosystem** consists of cultural values, customs, laws, and resources that shape the larger society in which an individual lives. It reflects the overarching cultural or societal blueprint that influences all the other systems. For instance, a society's views on child-rearing practices or education can profoundly influence a child's development. **Chronosystem** dimension encompasses the dimension of time, reflecting the life transitions and environmental events that occur during an individual's lifetime, including socio-historical contexts.

This framework provided a solid basis for exploring the experiences of children as it considers the numerous systems that consciously and unconsciously impact their families and environment. This perspective is particularly useful in studies focusing on childhood development, as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the various

environmental influences that shape a child's growth and development.

4. Methodology

Area of study and Population

The areas under study included Ogbe, Ugbowo, Uselu, Eviemwen, and Oka community in the Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. These communities were situated in Benin metropolis and were among the most populated communities in Edo State. Benin City, the capital of the ancient Benin kingdom, had undergone significant transformation over the centuries. The total population of Benin Metropolis, according to the National Population Commission (2006), was 1,086,882; however, the NPC projection for the year 2024 was 1,973,000. The population for this study consisted of parents/guardians and children between the ages of 10-17 years, with a total projected population of 1,973,000 (NPC, 2024) in the Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State.

Research Design, Sample Size and Technique

The phenomenological design was adopted for the qualitative data. In the context of studying the impact of poverty and education on mental health outcomes of children, this approach helped uncover how social and economic factors shaped children's mental well-being. It enabled researchers to explore the meanings children attributed to their experiences and how these meanings were influenced by their socio-economic environment. The study adopted a purposive sampling technique for the qualitative data, which allowed the researcher to select 10 participants, comprising 5 parents/guardians and 5 children, including both male and female participants. This approach helped the researcher gather insights from both generations and explores their perspectives on the research topic. The inclusion criteria for the participants were both male and female parents or guardians and children residing in the targeted communities within Benin Metropolis. The parents or guardians were required to have children between 10-17 years of age or have raised children within this age bracket who suffered from mental health issues due to socio-economic factors. These sampling strategies were employed since the researcher did not have a thorough understanding of all potential study participants and because it was preferable to meet the needs of the study.

5. Results

Background Information of Interviewees

Demographic characteristics of interviewees

S/N	Participants	Age	Gender	Religious Affiliation	Occupation	Educational Background
1	Mrs Anita	65	Female	Christian	Self-employed	Tertiary
2	Mr Bamilola	40	Male	Christian	Civil Servant	Tertiary
3	Miss Cellina	16	Female	Christian	Student	Secondary
4	Miss Daniella	15	Female	Christian	Student	Secondary
5	Mrs Esther	57	Female	African Religion	Trader	Secondary
6	Mr Fred	38	Male	Christian	Public Servant	Tertiary
7	Master Gideon	16	Male	Christian	Student	Secondary
8	Master Harris	15	Male	Christian	Student	Secondary
9	Master Iyobo	15	Male	Christian	Student	Secondary
10	Mr Joel	45	Male	Muslim	Civil Servant	Tertiary

Field Survey, 2024

Age distribution of participants ranges from 15 to 65 years, comprising adolescents (15–16 years), middle-aged adults (38–45 years), and older adults (57–65 years). Gender distribution of participants includes 5 males and 5 females. Religious Affiliation of the participants indicated that Christians were 8 with 1 Muslim and 1 African Traditional Religion adherent. Occupation of the participants revealed that civil/public servants were 3, self-employed/traders were 2, and students were 5. Educational background of the participants show that 4 adults possess tertiary education, 2 have secondary education, while all (4) the adolescents are currently at secondary school level.

Theme 1: Poverty and Mental Health outcomes among Children in Benin Metropolis

Majority of the Participants noted that: Poverty can significantly impact a child's mental health in several ways. For instance, financial instability which can often leads to stress and anxiety within the family, this can be overwhelming for children. Lack of basic resources like adequate food, shelter, and healthcare can contribute to feelings of insecurity and deprivation. Additionally, poverty can limit access to quality education and healthcare, which are essential for a child's overall well-being. To effectively address the mental health needs of children living in poverty, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. This includes: Community-based programs such as free mental health counselling, School-based Programs such school feeding schemes, and skill acquisition initiatives are essential. Establishing community centres for recreational activities and ensuring accessible healthcare can significantly mitigate the mental health challenges children face. One participant remarked:

"Okay, you see, due to poverty parents are not able to take care of their children's basic needs, and most of these children, because they don't have access to basic needs, are mentally stressed. In the sense that they are introduced to child labour, where the children are now asked to fend for themselves and their parents. I suggest a support system to provide the needs of these children either by the family, government, or well-meaning Nigerians and ensure that these needs get to them." (MRS Anita, 65 years, female, 27/11/24).

This emphasizes how poverty negatively affects the overall emotional well-being of children and how the lack of access to basic resources due to poverty contributes to increased stress and anxiety among children. Another participant remarked:

"I feel stressed because of my parents' financial status. I have to help my mother sell pure water at the market after school hours and sometimes during school hours. This has deprived me of so many things." (MISS Daniella, 15 years, female, 27/11/24).

This illustrates how financial instability and lack of access to basic needs negatively impact the mental health of children. Consequently, poverty emerges as a critical issue affecting the overall well-being of children residing in Benin Metropolis.

Theme 2: Education and Children's Mental Health in Benin Metropolis

Majority of the Participants pointed out that: From their interactions with teachers and school staff, it's clear that they recognize the significant impact of education on children's mental well-being. They also believed that, a positive and supportive learning environment can boost self-esteem, reduce stress, and promote social and emotional development among children. Several factors within the educational system can influence children's mental health; such as teacher

qualifications and training, class size and student-teacher ratio, bullying prevention programs and mental health awareness and training for school staff. All these will generally impact the quality of teaching. Well-trained teachers can create positive learning environments and identify children who may be struggling. While smaller class sizes can allow for more individualized attention and support. Implementing effective bullying prevention programs can create a safer and more inclusive school environment. Educating school staff about mental health can help them recognize signs of distress and provide appropriate support. One participant remarked,

"Now, from my own interaction, I can't profess to be an expert in this area, but from my interactions with teachers and school staff, it was clear that they recognized the significant impact of education on children's mental health. A positive and supportive learning environment can boost self-esteem, reduce stress, and promote social and emotional development." (MR Bamilola, 40 years, male, 27/11/24).

This response indicates that well-trained teachers can create positive learning environments and identify children who may be struggling. The data further reveals that individuals with a higher level of education, particularly those with tertiary education, appear to have a better understanding of how to manage children's mental health issues. A participant noted:

"Teachers' qualifications and training are crucial. Not just somebody who finished SSCE and does not have a job, then just starts teaching. Somebody who is properly trained on how to manage children will be able to impact better. A well-trained teacher will easily spot out certain characteristics which call for attention." (MR Fred, 38 years, male, 27/11/24).

This highlights the role of education in enhancing awareness and access to healthcare. Educating school staff about mental health can help them recognize signs of distress and provide appropriate support.

6. Discussion of Finding

The findings of research question one reveals significantly on the influence of poverty on the mental health of children. The data from the analysis underscores a strong consensus among participants regarding the correlation between poverty and children's mental health. Respondents agree that children living in poverty are more susceptible to psychological distress, which can negatively affect their emotional well-being. This finding resonates with the research by Omorogiuwa (2021) and Mustapha & Ebomoyi (2022), which identified

poverty as a significant socioeconomic determinant of mental health issues among children in Nigeria.

The lack of access to basic resources resulting from poverty is highlighted as a pivotal factor contributing to heightened stress and anxiety among children. As poverty limits access to necessities like adequate food, shelter, healthcare, and quality education, children are more likely to experience feelings of insecurity and deprivation, which can impact their mental health adversely. The studies by Omorogiuwa, (2021) and Mustapha & Ebomoyi, (2022) support this notion, emphasizing how poverty can elevate the risk of mental health disorders in children. To address the mental health needs of children affected by poverty, the analysis suggests a multi-faceted approach involving community-based programs, school-based initiatives, and accessible healthcare services. These interventions align with the recommendations put forth by Omorogiuwa (2021) and Mustapha & Ebomoyi (2022) to mitigate the negative impact of poverty on children's mental health in Nigeria.

The participant testimonials further underscore the dire consequences of poverty on children's mental well-being. The accounts of children being forced into child labour due to financial instability and lack of basic needs vividly illustrate the detrimental effects of poverty on their mental health. These narratives mirror the findings of the aforementioned studies, emphasizing how poverty undermines the overall emotional and psychological welfare of children.

The overall responses of research question two indicate a strong consensus among respondents regarding the impact of education on children's mental health, emphasizing the critical role of quality education in shaping their well-being. This finding resonates with the research by Martin & Marsh (2020), Lee & Larson (2019), and Onolemhemen & Ekhenlen (2022), which demonstrated that excessive academic demands and pressure to succeed are linked to heightened levels of stress and anxiety among students. Participants emphasize the importance of a positive and supportive learning environment in boosting self-esteem, reducing stress, and promoting social and emotional development among children. Factors within the educational system, such as teacher qualifications, class size, bullying prevention programs, and mental health awareness for school staff, are identified as key determinants of children's mental health. These insights align with the studies by Martin & Marsh, (2020); Lee & Larson, (2019); Onolemhemen & Ekhenlen, (2022), which highlighting how educational factors can significantly influence students' well-being.

The remarks from participants underscore the significance of well-trained teachers in creating positive learning environments and identifying children who may be struggling. Educators with proper training and qualifications are better equipped to manage children's mental health issues, thereby enhancing the overall quality of teaching and support within schools. This aligns with the studies by Martin & Marsh, (2020); Lee & Larson, (2019); Onolemhemhen & Ekhenlen, (2022) which emphasis on the role of teacher qualifications and training in addressing students' mental health needs. Educating school staff about mental health is recognized as a crucial step in helping them recognize signs of distress and provide appropriate support to students. This highlights the importance of enhancing awareness and access to mental health resources within educational settings, as emphasized by the studies of Martin & Marsh, (2020); Lee & Larson, (2019); Onolemhemhen & Ekhenlen, (2022) linking educational factors to students' stress and anxiety levels

7. Conclusion

The study conclusively demonstrates that children mental health is not solely a function of individual or biological factors but is profoundly influenced by their socio-economic context (poverty and education inclusive). The significant role played by socio-economic factors, poverty, educational pressures, and the host of others in shaping the mental health of children in Benin Metropolis has been clearly established. The interconnectedness of these factors suggests that the mental health of children is a multifaceted issue, deeply embedded in the broader socio-economic and environmental fabric of their lives. This realization calls for an integrated approach in addressing child mental health, one that goes beyond traditional healthcare interventions and encompasses improvements in living conditions, educational reforms, and support for positive family dynamics.

8. Recommendations

The government and relevant stakeholders should implement policies and programs aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of families in Benin Metropolis. This includes providing financial assistance, job opportunities for parents, and educational support for children. They should encourage schools to balance academic rigor with mental health support. Implement programs that promote positive teacher-student relationships, provide mental health education, and offer counselling

services. They should develop community-based programs that offer parenting workshops and family counselling services to promote positive family dynamics and effective parenting practices.

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Divorce in Islam: Legal, Social, and Ethical Perspectives

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Abstract. This paper investigates divorce (talaq) in Islam by discussing legal aspects, social implications and ethical dimensions. Based on Classical Islamic Jurisprudence (fiqh), modern legal theories and empirical research, this book examines the complexities of role-relations between the husband and wife in various Muslim environments and countries. The study finds marked differences in divorce process and gender-based guidelines and social consequences among the various religious-legal traditions of Islam and current Muslim-majority countries. From a comparative analysis of legal systems of various countries including Morocco, Egypt, Malaysia and Pakistan, this study depicts the transformation from classical jurisprudential principle to modern statutory law in divorce matters. The results suggest that although Islam allows divorce, it does so within a complex of ethical, procedural, and social restrictions intended to preserve the family while respecting individual rights. The project is situated within a wider academic debate on Islamic family law reform, gender equality and the relationship between religious authenticity and modern legal norms.

Keywords: Islamic Divorce, Talaq, Islamic Family Law, Gender Equality, Jurisprudence, Muslim Societies

1. Introduction

Islamic divorce is one of the most complex and disputed topics in Islamic law (Sharia), both doctrinally and civilly, since it involves not only religious but also social, personal, moral and other issues for more than fourteen centuries of development. The Islamic attitude toward divorce is pragmatic that they recognized not all marriage could be maintained, yet they promote it as a sanctuary and impresses the significance of family maintenance (Nasir, 2021). That more

general evidence also explains the tension between what I have called legal permissibility and moral preference that is now working its way through the law and practice of Muslim divorce (as in, for example, PP vMI). The Prophet Muhammad's own description of divorce as "abghad al-halal" (the most detested of permissible things) lays down this fundamental tension in Islam that it has not been effective until now to resolve (Al-Qaradawi 2019).

Modern Muslim societies have a greater task of harmonizing Islam's divorce law with modern demands for gender equality, children welfare, economic justice and commitment to religious authenticity and cultural legitimacy. These Health Milahı and Laçın (2016) obstacles are further complicated by the pluralism of methods for interpreting Islamic doctrine within different madhabs, the cultural heterogeneity in practices and habits, and conflicting religious law vis-à-vis civil-law dimensions in modern nation-states Al-Hibri (2019).

Relevance: Study of Islamic divorce is not merely of the academic interest, as c.1.8 billion Muslims worldwide are potentially affected by Islamic family law, while many Muslim-majority nations actualise principles of Islamic divorce within the national legal order (Baderin 2020). Today's controversies over Islamic divorce law raise critical issues of gender equality, children's rights, economic fairness, and the uneasy tension between religious laws and human rights norms—questions that can contribute to reconfiguring debates around legal reform, policy development, and human rights shifts within Muslim societies.

This volume addresses this shortcoming through a selection of innovative research articles, survey studies and book reviews designed to promote discussion on the ethics of divorce in Islam. The study is based on the following research

questions: How are divorce procedures conceptualized and regulated in different schools of Islamic jurisprudence? What is the main legal, social and economic problems around Islamic divorce law in Muslim societies today? How do contemporary applications of Islamic divorce reconcile tension between gender justice and the interests of children with religious credibility?

2. Classical Jurisprudential Foundations

2.1 Quranic and Prophetic Sources

Islamic divorce Based on Quran and Hadith Difference between Islam and Other Religions What is Islamic divorce The Islamic law of divorcing a wife or woman varies from other religions as, it has some more moral aspects. The Quran 2:229 verse, which states “Divorce is twice; then either keep in ‘acceptable manner’ or release with good treatment,” lays down the basic framework of Islamic divorce process and advocates for dignity of Muslim women, fairness and multiple chances to be reconciled (Rahman, 2020).

The Quranic attitude to divorce has therefore shown a good understanding of the psychological, social and economic features related to its dissolution, as it gives an elaborate guideline on waiting period (iddah), payments, and child welfare issue (Tucker, 2018). Prophet Muhammad forbade the practice of impulsive "triple talaq in one sitting and called it sinful in the eyes of Almighty Allah." The Quranic verse: "And when you divorce women, make proper provision for them at their prescribed periods and take two witnesses from among you, and give witness as to injustice," (Quran 65:1) makes procedural requirements so that due attention is given to ensure reconciliation is attempted before deciding to pronounce final judgment by counting number of divorce declarations made.

The prophetic traditions build on divorce laws and ethics with the Prophet Muhammad stressing the need to refrain from divorce, if possible, while also encouraging individuals to treat ex-wives compassionately and respectfully (Esposito & DeLong-Bas, 2021). The prophetic saying reported in the hadith that “Of all the things permitted by law, divorce is most hated by Allah” provides further evidence of prioritizing marriage-rescue over dissolving it, though divorce is admitted under certain conditions (Abu

Dawud 9th century/1992 as cited in al-Bukhari 2019).

The prophetic sunna also sets several precedents for other forms of divorce such as dissolving the marriage by mutual consent (mubarat), wife-initiated divorce (khula) and a court-mandated dissolution of the marriage due to harm or inability to provide (faskh) indicating practicality and comprehensiveness of Islamic system of divorce process (Mir-Hosseini, 2019). These multifarious divorce processes illustrate the acknowledgment by the Islamic legal tradition that marital breakdown can result from multiple causes and necessitate distinct procedural measures for justice and safeguarding of interests of all parties.

2.2 Development Across Schools of Thought

It's also important to understand the four dominant Sunni legal schools -- Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali – developed their respective divorce jurisprudence in ways that continue to shape modern courts across a wide range of Muslim societies. These jurisprudential divergences are mainly the result of different methodological styles of interpreting Islamic sources, differing sociocultural contexts and temporal exigencies developed through centuries of legal growth (Hallaq 2018).

The school of Hanafi which was dominant in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent had an elaborate classification of different types of divorce and procedure, such as revocable (talaq raj'i), irrevocable or triple (talaq ba'in) and innovative (talaq bid'i) with a detailed set of rules for each type (Fyzee, 2018). Hanafi law also spelt out detailed provisions for divorce settlements, alimony and custody which still affects legislatures in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan and parts of India.

The Maliki school, which held sway in north and west Africa, stressed the need for judicial review of divorce cases and devised extensive protections for women on divorce—seeking to increase the circumstances available as grounds upon which a (Muslim) wife can seek a khula' divorce, to go along with rigorous nafaqah maintenance (Coulson 2021). The Maliki reliance on consensus and analogical reason introduced systematization of the circuit courts for reconciliation, a practice which had in fact developed with strong influence from the jurists

in both the Muslim world and other religious communities (see mediation).

The Shafi'is formulated detailed conditions for the validity of divorce and made much of witnesses and writing in (the material) recording divorce proceedings, see Kamali 2020. Shafi'is, in addition to codifying such enabling laws for divorcees and their children, also focused on various aspects of women's remarriage rights and *iddat*. The traditionalist Hanbalis, were quite strict concerning the formal aspects of divorce but developed strong rules on family preservation and child welfare (Brown 2019). Hanbali was the legal system in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states (among segments of its population south Yemen, east Africa) that popularity paid more than lip service to concerned family and community participation in divorce decisions, attempts at reconciliation.

These classical jurisprudential achievements have laid down some basic principles that have remained relevant in the present-day enactment of Islamic law on divorce, including the preference for reconciliation, requirement of procedural safeguards, acknowledgment of female initiated rights to divorce and paramountcy of child's welfare during marital dissolution (Masud: 2019). Yet the actual application of these principles has been more complex in different cultural and legal environments, resulting in continuing discussions about how to interpret, apply and improve the law.

3. Contemporary Legal Frameworks

3.1 Reformist Morocco and Gender Equality

Morocco's 2004 Family Code (*Moudawana*) stands as one of the most wide-ranging and liberal reforms to Islamic divorce law in the modern Muslim world, revealing how classic Islamic legal principles may be adapted to respond to contemporary concerns regarding gender equality without compromising religious integrity (Buskens, 2021). What is challenging about Moroccan laws, however, is they are effective decades ago and apply equally to men and women in (gender-neutral) divorce trials carried out under Islamic legal form of jurisprudence with full cultural validity.

Under the Moroccan code, spouses cannot unilaterally invoke a divorce, bringing an end to the male unilateral prerogative of divorce (*talaq*) and putting in place court proceedings with safe-

guards against miscarriage of justice without providing for due process as well as financial settlements and children's rights protection (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2019). This method is based on modern reading of Islamic tradition in which focus is ed, by shaping a new set of rules governing the rights and duties of marriage parties that balance interests without losing sight of marriage's contractual nature envisaged in classical *fiqh*.

The Moroccan divorce law also includes extensive provisions on financial considerations, including novel methods for property division that takes into consideration women's contribution to family assets and introduces an equitable scheme of distribution (Sadiqi, 2020). The statute requires virtually full financial disclosure, and it allows courts to fashion equitable settlements tailored to the parties' particular situations, reflecting a keen appreciation of the economic realities involved in most divorce cases.

Between 2005 to 2020, research by the Moroccan Ministry of Justice (2021) shows that because of the Freedom of negotiation principle in Islam and the strengthening rights for both men and women; Morocco has witnessed fairer divorce settlements with 78% of cases divorces exceeding minimum legal requirements. Yet, challenges to implementation remain especially in rural and urban poor areas where social norms and low availability of legal services may stark the effectiveness of forward-looking legal instruments.

3.2 Egypt: Striking the Right Balance between Traditional and Contemporary Approaches.

The case of Islamic divorce law in Egypt demonstrates that spoken English can be used to negotiate the tension between updating traditional juristic rules for a modern world, while also retaining religious authority and catering for the diverse socioeconomic needs of a wide spectrum of Muslim society in Egypt (Sonbol, 2019). Successive reforms to the Egypt's Personal Status Law preserve gender-based grounds for divorce but incorporate procedural adjustments that work both to safeguard women's rights and ensure they are treated fairly.

Divorce in Egypt is legally permitted under four categories: *Talaq* (initiated by the man), *Mubarat* (consensual divorce), *Khula* initiated by the woman and *Faskh* which is court ordered, with

varying legal process and financial implications for each type (Bernard-Maugiron, 2020). The approach is also robust enough to respect the variety of reasons that couples might seek divorce, and offer reasonable legal routes for differing circumstances.

The Egyptian code has implemented novel khula provisions whereby a woman can petition for the dissolution of marriage on judicial grounds, without her husband's consent (although she must pay compensation in *badl al-khula*) and waive financial rights in order to obtain a divorce (Welchman, 2018). It thus both gives women greater independence to decide when to end their marriages and preserves certain aspects of the traditional jurisprudential context by recognizing the contractual aspect of marriage.

Analysis of Egyptian court records shows that about 35% of divorces filed during the period from 2015 to 2020 were initiated by women, with include khula" procedures constituting 68 percent of wife-initiated cases (Egyptian Ministry of Justice, 2021). These statistics indicate that legal reforms have, indeed, given women effective access to divorce; but questions remain about the sufficiency of financial safeguards and the impact of reparations conditions on a woman's decision to seek divorce.

3.3 Malaysia: Islamic Modernism and Legal Change

The Islamic divorce law in Malaysia is a good example of traditional Islamic principles being seamlessly integrated with modern legal standards to form a complete model that can satisfy the needs of today's society, reflecting the real situation and changes in society as well as economic aspects, while ensuring faithfulness to its religious roots (Ahmad & Ibrahim, 2020). The Islamic Family Law Act 1984, as modified by number of reforms provides a set of procedural requirements and creative safeguards well above similar minimums produced in traditional jurisprudence.

In Malaysian's Islamic law, couple could only be compulsorily registered with a court for divorce and there are mandatory counseling and reconciliation schemes in place to keep marriages together whenever possible, but also guiding the way both parties should be treated when marriages do not work out (Mohamad & Ali, 2021). The system also offers a full array of dispute resolution mechanisms, including

mediation and Family Courts manned by judges with expertise in both Islamic law and modern family dynamics.

The Malaysian system and is as such allowing the incorporating of innovative ways of settlement and financial obligations which touch on aspects touching financial settlements in business valuation, retirement fund division and long-term arrangements of maintenance to cater for current economic happenings" (Hassan et al., 2021). These reforms show a thoughtful understanding of contemporary family economics and the need to provide a floor of financial security for divorced women and children.

A study by the Malaysian Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM, 2020) showed that divorce prevalence among Malaysian Muslims had decreased by 23 percent since they started improving their counseling and mediation gears in determining divorce cases as well as quality services for socio-legal aspects; meanwhile satisfaction with the outcome of divorces increased by 41 percent for both male and female. Conclusion These results demonstrate that procedural interventions may enhance marriage preservation and divorce justice when implemented effectively and adequately resourced.

3.4 Pakistan: Tradition, and Modern Challenges

The way in which Pakistan tackles Islamic divorce law may be seen as representative of ongoing difficulties experienced by post-colonial Muslim societies in tailoring classical jurisprudential models to modern social and legal environments (Lau 2018). The MFLO of 1961—subsequently reformed on several occasions—preserves the traditional Hanafi doctrinal classification but provides procedural formulations adjusted to accommodate contemporary fears relating to women's rights and the welfare of children.

Traditional forms of divorce such as *talaq*, *mubarat* and *khula* are all types of divorce which are recognized by the law with different procedural obstacles and legal consequences (Shah & Khan, 2019). The mechanism preserves an aspect of traditional male authority over the initiation of divorce, while instituting safeguards such as mandatory notification and waiting periods to promote reconsideration and fairness.

The problem is not new. While hearing cases involving crimes and cross-border disputes, including clashes between two regulatory traditions within Pakistan's jurisdiction was not mission impossible for the Pakistani legal anarchy (Ahmed, 2020). According to the studies by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, without any other regional or social differences between women's prospects after divorce, urban and educated women are in fact better equipped than non-urban and uneducated women in getting justice through other means.

In Pakistan, recent legal reforms involved the creation of special family courts and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to ease access to justice and reduce litigation costs (Ministry of Law Pakistan, 2020). But the challenges in implementation are enormous, especially making sure women of all socio-economic and educational levels have access to legal protections.

4. Gender Dimensions and Women's Rights

4.1 The Historical Background of the Right to Divorce for Women

The history of women's rights to divorce in Islamic law illustrates how textual sources, juristic interpretation and social practice entered into dialect as Islamic society developed (Mernissi 2020). Classical Islamic sources articulate specific provisions for the right of women to divorce such as through a judicial process (faskh) or by mutual consent in divorce agreement (mubarat), though implementation of these rights has differed and changed between different historical periods and cultural contexts.

Historical examination of the early Islamic divorce rights shows that women's rights to divorce were often broader than those provided in many contemporary systems at that time, as early Islamic law granted women property holding and maintenance, authority over child custody which went even further than Byzantine, Sassanian, or Arab traditions (Wadud 2018). However, as judicial practices evolved and were influenced by cultural norms, these rights at times became restricted, making a separation between the ideal Islamic view of justice and the actual practice of law.

The classical juridical category of khula (a wife's initiation of divorce) illustrates how the legal culture allows women agency in the context of marriage, although its conditions and procedures have varied within madhahib and over time (Barlas, 2019). Modern feminist Muslim scholars maintain that true Islamic sources offer considerably better resources than the tradition has admitted concerning women's right to divorce, calling for contemporary laws to recover and build on these classical models.

Studies by prominent Islamicists also suggest that women's access to divorce in pre-modern Islam was much wider than our assumptions allow for; medieval court records of Islamic societies reveal vast numbers of divorced women having taken recourse through numerous legal devices (Ali, 2020). These historical discoveries have profound contemporary implications for legal reform, proving that alternative readings are accessible to traditional texts in a manner consistent with religious authenticity even while they empower women.

4.2 Contemporary Challenges and Legal Reforms

Contemporary Muslim societies struggle with the compliance of cultural resistance and practical obstacles that undermine the impact of legal provisions in granting women access to divorce (Sonbol, 2019). Studies from various Muslim countries suggest that women can experience significant barriers to obtaining divorce such as economic constraints, social ostracism, and lack of information on legal rights and rules.

Reform in Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan has been legal: newly promulgated laws have improved women's rights to divorce utilizing mechanisms such as the simplified khula procedure, greater court scrutiny of divorce applications and increased financial protections (Welchman 2018). Such reforms commonly follow patterns of broadening the grounds for wife-initiated divorce, reducing procedural obstacles and providing differential financial settlement provisions set on women's situation of economic weakness in process of divorce.

Current challenges include the intersection of religious law with customs that deny women rights, access to legal representation and support for women seeking a divorce, and the promotion of counter-stigma culture towards divorce by

reducing stigma against divorced women (UN Women, 2021). Studies show that legal reforms alone are ineffective in providing meaningful access to divorce without social changes, such as altering cultural norms and economic cost.

Research carried out by women's rights groups in the Muslim world reveals wide divergences between women's experience of divorce according to their education, income levels, family ties and region (Badran, 2019). These results stress the value of an integrated reform approach that includes a range of aspects within the dimension of gender parity, as opposed to merely passing legislation in this field.

4.3 Economic Dimensions of Divorce

Economic dimensions of Islamic divorce constitute complex problems that interact with wider topics such as the role of women, family economy and social welfare in modern Muslim societies (Tucker, 2018). Traditional Islamic law mandates an array of financial responsibilities for men after divorce, such as the obligation to provide for a divorced woman during the waiting period (*nafaqat al-iddah*), maintenance or compensation upon the early termination of marriage (*mut'ah*), and ongoing child maintenance. The effective implementation and adequacy of these obligations are highly variable across legal systems and economic urban contexts.

There is current evidence to suggest that across much of the Muslim world, divorced women are significantly economically disadvantaged as in many contexts, and analyses reveal that the household income declines by 30-50% when a woman is divorced; for men, their economic situation can actually increase following divorce (World Bank 2020). These inequalities in economic autonomy are such as to reproduce, on a larger scale, the gender wideness that are characteristic of labor market performance and ownership of property, difficult access to financial independence. It thus becoming increasingly evident - if only still sweeping under the carpet - some of the darker side more pressing divorce.

In fact, legal changes in places such as Malaysia and Morocco have attempted to confront economic challenges posed by these conditions with broader property rights, more generous maintenance rules, and creative asset divisions

that acknowledge women's share of household wealth (Charrad, 2019). Such reforms usually carry a mandate for extensive financial disclosures, judicial discretion in assessing settlements and enforcement tools to guarantee paying-of child support.

But money is the most problematic aspect of agreements for a significant number of women in many Muslim societies (Faqr & Shirinbahi-Shaikh, 2008), with studies showing that up to 4060% of divorced women do not collect court-awarded financial support because they face difficulties in doing so – be it due to weak enforcement mechanisms, economic constraint or societal influence (Hassan, 2019). These problems confirm the importance of holistic approaches that interrecognize legal systems and practical implementation including court practice, social support and women's economic empowerment schemes.

5. Social and Cultural Implications

5.1 Stigma and Social Consequences

The source of stigma is greater for women, who generally experience harsher and more enduring social penalties (in terms of earning opportunities, friendships and future remarriage) in case of a divorce (Hoodfar, 2018). The social impact of divorce could be interpreted within the broader cultural context of attitudes towards women's role, family honour and social expectations that probably clash with the legal rights and individual freedom.

Studies comparing several Muslim societies reported that divorced women experience serious social problems such as unemployment, difficulties in finding accommodations and participating in community activities, lower status within society and inadequate social support (Al-Khayyat, 2020). These social effects are often long-term and often continue through the period where after women divorced to improve their social life and community acceptance during years after divorce.

Children too are affected by the stigma of divorce and may experience prejudice and difficulty to their own social opportunities due to their parents being divorced (UNICEF, 2021). Research shows that children of divorce in Muslim societies face educational, social and psychological difficulties

which mirror wider societal ideas about family formations and their stability.

Modern-day social reform that has sought to reduce the stigma of divorce through campaigns of information, support and initiatives targeting culture change as being attitudes more favourable towards both divorce and those who have experienced it (UNESCO, 2021). Typically, these campaigns are led by religious leaders, community groups, and women's rights organizations that seek to engender greater knowledge around how Islamic divorce ought to function and to confront cultural practices that go above and beyond what is traditionally accepted as within the realm of religion.

5.2 Effects on Children and Family Life

The concern for the welfare of children in cases of divorce is a pivotal issue which cuts across the legal, social and ethical edges of Islamic family law (Quraishi & Vogel, 2020). There is extensive provision in classical Islamic law for child care (hadanah) that has an overarching onus for the welfare of children, respect and obligation to both parents (however each individual system utilises these principles may differ).

Conservative Muslim custody practices commonly grant maternal custody for the very young with paternal custody settling in at older ages, while legal systems have adapted these rules for more modern ideas of child development and family life (Esack, 2019). In some Muslim societies today, however, "best interests of the child" type-approaches are followed where custody decision-making is based on a consideration of each individual case and not necessarily swept by overarching general principles cutting across all cases.

Studies on the experiences of children in Islamic divorce situations suggest a nuanced set of results, depending for example on the type of process invoked to obtain divorce and the nature of post-divorce family relationships as well as supports services (World Bank, 2020). Research indicates that divorce is positive for the welfare of children under certain conditions, including minimizing conflict, retaining good relationships with each parent and ensuring appropriate levels of financial and emotional support throughout the process.

Modern issues include, among others, the resolution of international child custody disputes;

adequate enforcement of child support obligations; and consistent psychological and educational support services for children who undergo family reorganization (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2019). These challenges demand comprehensive responses which combine legal orders, social support and international mechanisms of cooperation.

5.3 Community and Extended Family Roles

The involvement of relatives and the extended community in Islamic processes of divorce are an example of broader cultural patterns, such as the overall collective responsibility and humane support systems that set Muslim societies against codified individualistic legal and social orders (Masud & Salvatore, 2021).

5.4 Traditional Islamic methods on divorce

The traditional Muslim attitude to divorce, however, does assume that efforts will be made by the family and community for mediation (and would respond with disapproval to an 'I don't like it – too bad behaviour when) And let's play some IM: Tactics#TurkishVictory vs 666Tactics - pgn here.

Contemporary Muslim communities vary in how they negotiate the balance between individualism, autonomy, responsibility and authority when dealing with divorce issues; some continue to adhere closely held traditions where families are deeply involved in decision-making while others follow more liberal models favouring individual choice and legally sanctioned rights (Khan, 2018). These changes are indicative of larger forces such as social change and modernization, which impact family forms and community ties throughout the Muslim world.

It has been found that meaningful support from the family or community can enhance divorce outcomes for all involved, and in fact a number of investigations have reported that divorced people with supportive family networks have better economic, social, and psychological conditions than those who do not enjoy such support (Hassan et al., 2021). Nevertheless, family can also have a downside in that family concerns can clash with individual rights or family pressure can lead to divorce-related difficulties.

Modern challenges include the need to reconcile respect for culture traditions with the protection of

individual rights and to ensure that community initiatives do not undermine but rather reinforce legal protections, as well as modifying traditional supports to fit modern families and social environments (An-Na'im, 2018). These challenges demand continuous conversation between clerics, jurists and society leaders to find a common way of respecting individual rights while nurturing shared values.

6. Ethical and Moral Considerations

6.1 Religious Ethics and Moral Guidance

The moral components of Islamic divorce highlight the dynamics between individual and group interests in Islam that are reflected, laterally, in justifying both the permission for necessary divorce (*horma*) and the preference to morally prefer marriage preservation and reconciliation (*mankān*) (al-Qaradawi 2019). Islamic morality and ethics concerning divorce are based on the justice (*adl*), compassion (*rahma*), and safeguarding of vulnerable interests, especially those of women who may be economically or socially disadvantaged as a result of the termination.

The Quranic command to “retain them with kindness or release them with kindness” (Quran 2:229) provides a basis for ideal conduct in the divorce process, which stresses the necessity of treating spouse fairly and compassionately through dignity and respect (Rahman, 2020). This ethical paradigm transcends the legal conditions to assume a moral responsibility and relationship that do not expire once the divorce is finalized, but remain in place for children’s care as well as relationships with past spouses.

Islamic ethics also stress the significance of honest efforts seeking reconciliation and community and family engagement in mediation to save a marriage, where possible (Mir-Hosseini, 2019). The Quranic process of arbitration by family members (Quran 4:35) sets a moral precedence of communal responsibility in mediation of marital problems, and signals Islam’s attention to joining the community in public welfare as far as the issues of family life are concerned.

Modernist interpreters of Islamic law have developed complex instruments for addressing contemporary divorce issues, such as in national child custody disputes, inter faith marriages and the rights of non-married or mar-

ried—marrying late-divorced women in social change contexts (Kamali). Such models generally stress the necessity of a reinterpretation and modernization of relevant sources in order to adequately respond to contemporary challenges, at the same time keeping with basic rules and values of Islam including justice, compassion, and protection of those who are rendered vulnerable.

6.2 Reconciliation and Mediation Ethics

Tellingly, the Islamic emphasis on reconciliation (*islah*) indicates Islam’s sophisticated appreciation of psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of marriage relationships as well as the value of leaving no stone unturned in attempting to preserve marriages before considering divorce (Abou El Fadl, 2021). To repeat, the Qur’an’s setting forth of a “cooling-off” period reflects the religion’s prescient understanding that marital distress can be time-specific and, by intervening somewhat force-fully in these conflicts – at least up to a certain point--the family can often be restored to calm.

Islamic classical law lays down elaborate procedures for reconciliation efforts, which entails waiting-periods (*iddah*) intended to allow for reflection and possible reunion; family mediation mechanisms; and the involvement of community in attempts at resolving matrimonial conflicts (Jackson, 2020). These practices correspond to the Islamic belief that divorce should be a final solution, used only after all reasonable attempts at reconciliation are unsuccessful.

Modern applications of Islamic reconciliation rules have generated novel mediation and counseling services, that combine traditional Islamic tenets, with cutting-edge psychological theories (Ahmad et al., 2020). Usually staffed by mediators who are trained in Islamic law, but have knowledge of the local family context and can provide mediation services that address both religious and social considerations.

Studies of Islamic mediation programs suggest considerable success in preserving marriages, with evidence that 60-70% of couples who engage in formal Islamic mediation process are able to resolve their marital issues and avoid divorce (Malaysian Department of Islamic Development, 2020). Based on these results, the conclusion can be drawn that thorough reconciliation works to curtail divorce rates as they deal with underlying issues of marriage.

6.3 Children's Welfare and Ethical Obligations

The Islamic value of the best interests of the child (*maslaha al-tifl*) in divorce matters are illustrative of such religious tenets on protection, and importance of preserving family relationships that satisfy children's developmental needs (Doi, 2018). According to classical Islamic law, there are practical arrangements for child custody and support, as well as keeping alive the link between parent and child, which is written around promoting a child's physical health, emotional health and spiritual growth.

Modern applications of Islamic principles concerning children's welfare have manifested in progressive custody and support practices above the traditional jurisprudential minimums, such as joint custody plans, greater levels of financial support, and specialized court practices to mitigate harm to children in the context of divorce (Bowen, 2021). These interventions are developmentally informed, sensitive to family dynamics and connected to Islamic values at the core.

"Moral Obligations" As divorced parents, there are moral obligations that can and should extend beyond the legal requirements of "doing your part." — being honest, supportive to the relationship with both mom & day, protecting from the negative impact of parent conflict – At what age Israel's notion? Islamic morals stress the necessity of prioritizing children's rights over personal grievances and establishing positive co-parenting bonds post-divorce.

Studies on children in the context of Muslim divorce show that children generally benefit from settlement systems that keep conflict low and promote stability, but take into account continuing positive relationships with both parents (UNICEF, 2021). These results are in concordance with the traditional Islamic values relative to child labor, emphasizing child rights, social care for children and back current situation in the divorce laws.

7. Contemporary Reforms and Future Directions

7.1 Legal Reform Movements

Current reform movements in Islamic law and family law in Muslim communities around the world continue to adapt Islamic divorce laws to

modern concerns for gender equality, children's welfare, and social justice while preserving religious authenticity (*ibid.*) They also echo other historical adaptations of norms to changing circumstances, including patterns of Islamic family law from medieval times. These reform efforts have commonly brought together legal experts, women rights activists, religious leaders and policy makers seeking to produce a progressive reading of Islamic sources that includes greater protection and more equitable process.

In such Islamic countries as Morocco, Tunisia, or Malaysia successful legal reforms have shown that improvements in divorce law can be made without abandoning the Islamic legal system (Buskens, 2021). These measures are always in the form of a whole-package reform covering many different dimensions of divorce law at once, such as procedural obligations, financial rules, custody solutions, and enforcement tools (no piecemeal strategies as usually opted for).

'Modern reformation' efforts also focus on the interface between Islamic law and international human rights norms, through advancing arguments for progressive readings of Islamic norms that are entirely women-friendly and child-rights compliant but simultaneously carry religious authenticity (Baderin 2020). This work often demands close "word by word" readings of texts, comparisons between juridical systems and wide-ranging consultations with various actors in order to draft reforms that could enjoy a large consensus.

Reform similarly confronts obstacles, such as conservative religious opposition, cultural barriers to change and the problem of how to "write" legal codes that seeks cohesion in societies with multiple traditions and relatively constrained institutional capacity (Hallaq 2018). Meeting these challenges demands sustained commitment, mass coalition building, and engaging in cultural sensitivity and religious legitimacy.

7.2 Technology and Legal Innovation

Further, recent innovations in technology are presenting fresh possibilities and challenges that arise under Islamic divorce law for online arbitration, electronic forms of court procedure and computerized system of documentation that have the potential to improve access to justice but

also question many traditional formal requirements (Hussain, 2020). Such technology developments are especially promising when it comes to breaking geographic barriers, cutting costs and easing efficiency in divorces.

Online mediation and counselling provide the potential of culturally competent family support in line with integration of traditional Islam with contemporary clinical practice, especially among Muslims communities in the non-Muslim world where professionally-oriented services might be scarce (Al-Rashid, 2021) These services can enable geographically-dispersed Muslims to receive Islamic legal advice, mediation and counseling that they would not otherwise have access to.

The use of digital documentations and case managements system would speed up the process and reduce error in divorce cases as well as providing better records for enforcement action by the practitioners and statistical analysis (Khan & Ahmed, 2020). They can also play an important role in promoting international cooperation on cross-border divorce and custody matters, which are becoming more common among globalised Muslim communities.

But the surge in technological advancement is also generating concerns regarding privacy, security, and whether remote operations are sufficient for addressing complex family dynamics and achieving proper consent and understanding (Rahman et al., 2021). These concerns necessitate careful thinking about how traditional Islamic procedural protections may be ported to the digital space whilst preserving their protective potential.

7.3 International Cooperation and Harmonization

The growing globalization of Muslim society means that there are increasingly greater demands for cooperation and coordination in the area of divorce and custody across diverse national legal systems (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2019). Muslim families increasingly move across national borders to seek employment, education or join family members leaving it difficult to determine which court should exercise jurisdiction when divorce happens and different national laws may apply to various aspects of the same family situation.

International Islamic legal bodies have initiated the process of creating model laws and best practices for Islamic family law that could lead to a more harmonization among different country systems, while at the same time respecting local cultural differences and legal histories (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, 2020). Such efforts tend to emphasize general principles and processes, rather than specific provisions, in order to allow for local adaptation while ensuring common approaches to basic protections and rights.

For its part, regional cooperation in the form of family law coordination and enforcement of divorce and child-custody decisions is developing in organizations such as the Arab League, Southeast Asia and West Africa (African Union, 2019). These localized strategies are better-suited to Muslim communities living in various geographic locations and culture than the homogenous global international law mechanisms they would be replacing.

However, international cooperation initiatives also encounter a number of obstacles with regard to issues of sovereignty, legal systems and interpretive traditions, and the practical problems related to enforcement and coordination (Bowen 2021). Meeting these challenges will depend on diplomatic action over the long term, technical legal cooperation and practical mechanisms that can operate in practice in diverse political and legal systems.

8. Conclusion

This work, a detailed study of divorce in Islam, highlights the diverse aspects of Islamic family law and its ever-changing relationship with respect to legal, societal, and ethical concerns within the modern Muslim world. The analysis reveals that Islamic divorce law consists of complex systems which juggle between individual freedom and family maintenance, gender-specific norms and concerns for equality, religious integrity and contemporary social demands.

A study of classical legal principles shows that Islamic texts offer an extensive treatment of divorce regulation in which nothing on the permissibility of marriage termination is overstated ... the moral preference for family preservation and spousal reconciliation also is prioritized. The subsequent evolution of diverging

interpretive methodologies within the main schools of Islamic law illustrates both the adaptability and limitations of Islamic legal methodology.

Modern systems of law in Morocco, Egypt, Malaysia, and Pakistan provide examples of different means of incorporating classical Islamic ideas into modern legal frameworks. The most effective of these reforms seem to be those that preserve close links with Islamic legal heritage but bring in substantive and procedural changes responsive to the concerns about gender equality, children's best interests and access to justice.

The gendered nature of Islamic divorce law, therefore raises specific challenges and opportunities for change. Classical Islamic sources make clear that women have rights and protections, but in reality, these have frequently been constrained by custom, poverty, and law. Current reform initiatives have a strong potential to enhance women's rights within the framework of Islamic law, but an integrated approach on both legal and social levels is required so that these reforms can lead to measurable change.

The social consequences of divorce in Muslim societies emphasize the role of reform needing to address wider societal attitudes and support structures and not just be limited to legal provisions. The presence of the stigma of divorce, its impact on children and family structures, and the importance of community and extended families are important factors that shape the terms and consequences of divorce, all needing careful consideration in any programmatic reform.

The ethical and moral concerns raised by Islamic divorce illustrate the kind of nuanced balancing that may be done, in terms of both competing goods and harms, in which justice, mercy-driven-compassion and protection of vulnerable people are taken into account. Modern practical applications of Islamic morals to divorce scenarios are evidence for the continuing applicability and flexibility of these traditions within contemporary families.

Next steps in the development of Islamic divorce law may include further legal reform efforts to fortify protective measures, secure fair procedures, and develop and disseminate technological advancements that can make justice more accessible as well as streamline process by

which it is offered along with international mechanisms for co-operation to address challenges posed by Muslim communities on the move. All of these are developments that we need to reckon with—and whose trajectories challenge scholars, activists, policymakers, religious figures and actors in civil society.

The search results of this review have implications for service providers, policy makers, legal practitioners and religious figures when working with Muslim families and communities. The successful cases of legal innovation and social change that this study uncovered offer a blueprint for other Muslim countries attempting to reform their family law systems, but the ongoing challenges also underscore the importance of integrated strategies that tackle different aspects of family law reform.

This empirical study concludes that Islamic divorce law is dynamic, constantly changing to meet new social realities but with links to fundamental religious principles 'which preserve their integrity'.

The evolution of Islamic divorce law in different Muslim communities also gives reason for hope about the possibility for further progress to secure the protection provided through family laws and honour religious and cultural difference.

In addition to its significance as a foundation for future research and policy, the study offers a larger contribution toward academic debates in Islamic law on gender equality and legal reform by analyzing recent changes – and challenges – within Islamic divorce practices. The comparative lens of this paper demonstrates the variety of approaches across Muslim societies as well as the common challenges and opportunities involved into reforming and modernizing Islamic family law systems.

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