



INTERCULTURALITY:

AN ONLINE JOURNAL OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Vol. 1, No 1, January, 2026

**Published by:
Scholarly Hub for
Intercultural Philosophy**



INTERCULTURALITY:

**(An Interdisciplinary Online Journal of Concerned African
Philosophers & Scholars of Culture and Social Development)**

Vol. 1, No 1, January, 2026

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RHYTHMS OF INFLUENCE: THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN CULTURES ON GLOBAL POPULAR CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of African cultures on global popular culture, with a particular focus on music, fashion, language, and performance art. Set against the backdrop of globalization and the increasing interconnectedness of cultural spaces, the research addresses the persistent issue of Africa's cultural contributions being undervalued, misrepresented, or appropriated without adequate recognition. The objective is to critically examine the ways in which African cultural forms—rooted in diverse indigenous traditions and diasporic experiences—have shaped and continue to influence contemporary global pop culture trends. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study integrates cultural analysis, historical review, and case studies of African influence in global media, music genres (such as Afrobeats and hip-hop), and fashion. Interviews with cultural practitioners and scholars will complement the analysis, alongside content analysis of media and

artistic outputs. The research is grounded in postcolonial and Afrocentric theoretical frameworks. The expected findings suggest that African cultures have not only contributed significantly to the global cultural economy but have also redefined dominant narratives about identity, aesthetics, and creativity. The study aims to promote a deeper appreciation of Africa's cultural agency and advocates for equitable recognition of African contributions within global cultural discourse and production systems.

Keywords: *African cultures, Global popular culture, Cultural influence, Afrobeats, Cultural recognition*

INTRODUCTION

The enduring legacy and evolving dynamism of African cultures have profoundly shaped global popular culture, influencing domains such as music, fashion, film, and digital media. Scholars such as Gilroy (1993) and Mbembe (2001) have explored the diasporic movements and postcolonial conditions that enabled African cultural forms to traverse borders. Gilroy's (1993: 73) notion of the “Black Atlantic” underscores how cultural expressions—particularly music and performance—served as tools of resistance and identity among enslaved and colonized African communities. Similarly, Mbembe (2001: 125) critiques the tension between visibility and commodification, asserting that global consumption often strips African culture of its contextual meanings. While the visibility of African aesthetics—such as the syncopated beats of Afrobeat, the diffusion of Amapiano, or the global adoption of Ankara prints has grown significantly, the academic discourse often fails to critically engage with the complex sociohistorical and political processes that underpin these global flows. Scholars like Appiah (2006) argue that this contextualization leads to a flattening of African identities and facilitates the commodification of culture devoid of its original meaning (p. 136). Furthermore, Bunce, Franks, and Paterson (2017, cited in Ayeni & Ousmanou, 2025: 52) highlight how global media narratives continue to rely on Eurocentric perspectives, distorting African stories and undermining local agency. Despite a growing body of literature on globalization, postcolonial theory, and cultural hybridity, there remains a notable gap in the analysis of African agency in shaping global cultural production. Much of the existing scholarship privileges Western validation and consumption of African forms, rather than centring African creators and communities as active producers and curators of cultural meaning.

Hence, Ayeni & Umukoro (2025:12) observe that Africa's diverse cultural landscape has always been dynamic, yet colonial rule introduced systems that disrupted traditional expressions and imposed foreign norms. Colonial governments deliberately organized societies in ways that emphasized difference,

using policies such as indirect rule and the drawing of arbitrary borders. These strategies reshaped identities and power relations, leaving behind structures that later postcolonial states inherited and often reproduced, thereby normalizing exclusion and marginalization (Ayeni, Ben & Oshie, 2025: 151). Moreover, the economic dimensions of global cultural exchange—specifically regarding authorship, ownership, and profit distribution—remain underexplored in relation to African creators. This research is therefore premised on the need to critically investigate how African cultural elements have influenced global popular culture, the mechanisms that have facilitated their dissemination, and the degree to which African agents retain narrative and economic control over their creations. It asks: How have African cultural forms evolved and circulated globally? Through which platforms and processes have they been transmitted? And to what extent are issues of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation addressed? By drawing attention to these gaps, the study contributes to broader conversations on cultural equity, postcolonial identity, and globalization. It emphasizes the importance of ethical engagement with African creativity, advocating for a model that recognizes African cultural producers as architects—not just symbols—of contemporary global culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study explored how African cultures have shaped global popular culture, focusing on the influence, appropriation, and contextualization of African music, fashion, language, and performance in diverse global contexts. Adopting a qualitative methodology grounded in interpretivism, the research sought to understand cultural meanings and experiences from the perspectives of African creatives and international audiences. Fieldwork was conducted between August and December 2024 in Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, the UK, and France, enabling a rich comparative perspective.

A multi-method qualitative research design was employed, integrating interviews, content analysis, and case studies. The study focused on four key themes: African cultural production and dissemination, global reception and representation, cultural ownership and appropriation, and the role of digital platforms in cultural exchange. Data sources included semi-structured interviews, field observations at cultural events such as Afro Nation in Ghana and Africa Fashion Week in London, and digital content analysis of music videos, fashion campaigns, and viral social media trends. Secondary sources included academic literature, reports from institutions like UNESCO and WIPO, and media platforms such as Spotify and Netflix.

Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling, with 42 individuals interviewed: musicians, fashion designers, cultural scholars,

performance artists, and digital influencers. Data collection involved in-depth interviews (conducted both in person and virtually), lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. The interviews addressed themes such as cultural authenticity, experiences with appropriation, and global perceptions of African culture. Content analysis covered music videos, fashion campaigns by international brands referencing African aesthetics, and viral social media clips showcasing African cultural expressions. NVivo 12 was used to code and analyse data thematically.

Three case studies provided deeper insights: Burna Boy's global career as a lens into Afrobeats' international rise, Africa Fashion Week London as a diasporic fashion hub, and the Amapiano movement in South Africa as an example of local-to-global cultural diffusion. The analytical framework combined cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and critical discourse analysis. Theoretical tools included Stuart Hall's representation theory, Appadurai's concept of global cultural flows, and Afrocentricity. The research also prioritized cultural sensitivity, involving local collaborators to ensure accurate representation and ethical engagement with African cultural heritage.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and globalization theory to explain how African cultural forms circulate globally, acquire new meanings, and become sites of contestation over identity, authenticity, and ownership. Together, these perspectives illuminate both the creative vitality of African cultural production and the power relations embedded in its global reception.

Cultural studies: Stuart Hall's work on representation provides a foundational lens. Hall (1997) argues that cultural meanings are not fixed but are continuously produced and negotiated through discourse. This insight is crucial for understanding how African cultural products such as Afrobeats, Amapiano, or traditional dress—are framed, interpreted, and sometimes distorted on global platforms. Hall's “encoding/decoding” model (1980: 128) is particularly relevant, as it explains how African creators encode culturally grounded meanings into music, fashion, or performance, while global audiences decode these texts through different cultural frameworks. This process helps account for the varied interpretations, reappropriations, and commodifications of African cultural elements beyond their original contexts.

Postcolonial theory: Postcolonial theory deepens this analysis by foregrounding the historical and political conditions that shape African cultural circulation. The enduring legacy of colonialism continues to influence how African cultures are exoticised, consumed, and valued within global markets. Edward Said's (1978)

concept of orientalism, though originally applied to the East, offers a useful parallel for understanding Western constructions of Africa as “exotic” or “primitive.” Homi Bhabha's (1994: 88) notions of hybridity and mimicry further illuminate how African and global cultural forms intersect to produce hybrid expressions that unsettle rigid binaries such as original/copy or centre/periphery. These ideas underscore that African cultures are not passive exports but are actively reshaped through dialogue, resistance, and adaptation. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) call for the decolonisation of culture and language is particularly salient in debates on cultural ownership, stressing the need for African creators to retain authorship and autonomy within global cultural economies.

Globalization theory: Within globalization theory, Arjun Appadurai's model of global cultural flows offers a multidimensional framework for analysing cultural circulation. His concept of overlapping and disjunctive “scapes”—including ethnoscares, mediascares, and technoscares—captures the non-linear and decentralized movement of African cultural forms (Appadurai, 1996: 33–34). Through digital platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, and TikTok, African music and performance bypass traditional gatekeepers, challenging older centre–periphery models of cultural flow. Complementing this, Pieterse's theory of globalization as hybridization (2004: 64–68) frames cultural exchange as mutually transformative rather than unidirectional. While this study supports Pieterse's emphasis on creative hybridity, it also complicates his optimism by highlighting persistent power asymmetries rooted in colonial legacies and economic inequality (Pieterse, 2004: 83).

AFRICAN CULTURES: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

African cultures have historically been defined by diversity, movement, and adaptation rather than uniformity or stasis. Long before colonial encounters, African societies evolved within distinct ecological, linguistic, and spiritual contexts, producing a wide range of social and political systems. As Davidson (1994: 27) notes, these ranged from highly centralized states such as the Ashanti and Zulu to more decentralized and egalitarian societies like the Igbo and Berbers. These varied structures nurtured rich cultural expressions visible in oral literature, architecture, music, and dress. Oral traditions, preserved by cultural custodians such as West African griots, played a vital role in transmitting history, philosophy, and communal values, thereby sustaining collective memory across generations (Finnegan, 2012: 89). Rather than fading, these traditions continue to shape contemporary cultural production, particularly within digital and media spaces.

In the contemporary media environment, popular culture has become a major arena for the transmission of values. Nollywood films, modern music, and digital

storytelling increasingly reinterpret indigenous beliefs while engaging themes of modernity, material success, and moral complexity (Ayeni et al.: 3). Recent scholarship challenges outdated representations of African culture as static or premodern, instead highlighting its capacity to adapt to urbanisation and technological change (Falola & Salm, 2021: 6). Cultural heritage, according to Ayeni and Lori (2025: 259), functions not only as a link to ancestral identity but also as a resource for social cohesion and resilience. Consequently, contemporary African identities are actively negotiated at the intersection of tradition and modernity, particularly through youth-driven digital creativity.

Spiritual belief systems remain influential, shaping artistic and social life while blending with global religions through syncretism (Mbiti, 1990: 32). In the diaspora, Afro-Atlantic religions such as Santería and Candomblé exemplify this continuity and reinvention (Thompson, 1984: 19). Although colonialism imposed Eurocentric values and marginalized indigenous systems, it also generated enduring traditions of resistance, evident in the works of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986: 85) and the cultural nationalism of Senghor and Nkrumah. Today, African cultural expression reflects a dynamic renaissance marked by hybridity, digital innovation, and global visibility. Globalization, while often criticized for homogenization, also enables African creators to exercise agency within global cultural flows (Giddens, 1990: 64; Appadurai, 1996: 33). The worldwide success of Afrobeat, Amapiano, and Nollywood demonstrates this negotiated engagement (Collins, 2012: 90; Jedlowski, 2012: 106), even as challenges such as cultural appropriation and unequal power relations persist (Ziff & Rao, 1997: 3). Overall, the study aligns with glocalization theory by showing how African cultures adapt global influences to local priorities while asserting visibility and agency within an unequal global system (Robertson, 1995: 30).

AFRICAN INFLUENCES IN MUSIC, FASHION, LANGUAGE, AND PERFORMANCE

In recent decades, the growing global visibility of African-inspired creative expressions has highlighted the continent's vibrant cultural energy, challenging reductive stereotypes and reshaping how Africa and its diasporas are perceived worldwide. Across music, fashion, language, and performance, African creativity increasingly asserts influence, agency, and innovation on a global scale.

Music remains one of the most powerful vehicles of African cultural impact. Rooted in rhythmic complexity, call-and-response patterns, polyrhythms, and improvisation, African musical traditions have long shaped global genres such as jazz, blues, reggae, hip hop, and electronic dance music (Chernoff, 1979: 41). In the twenty-first century, genres like Afrobeat, Afropop, Amapiano, and Gqom have achieved remarkable international success, propelled by digital platforms and

cross-border collaborations. Afrobeat, pioneered by Fela Kuti through a fusion of Yoruba musical forms with jazz and funk, continues to inspire contemporary artists such as Burna Boy and Wizkid, who maintain strong African identities while reaching global audiences (Veal, 2000: 111). Burna Boy's Grammy-winning album *Twice as Tall* (2020) exemplifies this synthesis, blending Nigerian rhythms with global sounds and affirming African music's commercial and artistic relevance (BBC, 2021). Streaming and social media platforms have further decentralized cultural power, enabling artists from Lagos, Accra, and Johannesburg to bypass traditional Western gatekeepers (Ncube, 2020: 97).

African fashion has similarly gained international recognition through its bold aesthetics and deep cultural symbolism. Contemporary designers reinterpret traditional textiles such as Ankara, Kente, Aso Oke, and Mudcloth, merging heritage with modern design. Figures like Duro Olowu, Thebe Magugu, and Imane Ayissi have challenged Eurocentric fashion standards on global runways (Allman, 2004: 173). At the same time, the global popularity of African-inspired designs has raised concerns about cultural appropriation and unequal economic benefits, prompting designers to use fashion as a tool for political expression, cultural affirmation, and resistance (Rovine, 2015: 138). Beyond style, African dress communicates identity, status, spirituality, and social belonging.

Language also plays a central role in Africa's cultural influence. Indigenous languages and vernaculars such as Yoruba, Swahili, Zulu, and Nigerian Pidgin increasingly shape global popular culture through music, film, and digital media. Expressions popularized through Nollywood and music circulate globally without translation, reflecting growing linguistic confidence and cultural authority (Igboanusi, 2008: 85). Many artists intentionally incorporate local languages into their work to assert identity and challenge the dominance of colonial languages (Bamgbose, 2011: 40).

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION, REPRESENTATION, AND OWNERSHIP: RECLAIMING AFRICAN CULTURAL AGENCY

The increasing global circulation of African cultural forms in music, fashion, and art has sparked renewed debates about appropriation, representation, and cultural ownership. This research interrogates these issues not merely as by-products of globalization but as continuities of historical power imbalances rooted in colonial and postcolonial encounters. While previous studies have examined appropriation largely from a Western-centric view of cultural borrowing, this study foregrounds African perspectives on loss, resistance, and reassertion of agency.

Cultural appropriation in the African context has long been characterized by unequal exchanges, in which dominant cultures extract and repackage African

symbols without context or compensation. Ziff and Rao (1997: 3) highlight the historical exoticisation and commodification of African traditions under colonialism—a dynamic that persists today. This research echoes their critique but extends it by showing how African designers and artists are now challenging this extractive model. For instance, global fashion's uncredited use of Ankara motifs or Maasai beadwork (Rovine, 2015: 145) is being countered by African creatives who are reclaiming authorship through branding, digital advocacy, and intellectual property innovation.

In contrast to older scholarship that saw African cultures as passive victims of misrepresentation, this study affirms recent scholarship (e.g., Hall, 1997; hooks, 1992) by revealing how African creators are actively reshaping narratives from the margins. Representation is no longer merely about visibility; it is also about narrative sovereignty. Artists like Burna Boy and Sho Madjozi, and platforms such as Nollywood, exemplify how African voices are reclaiming space to tell authentic stories that challenge reductive portrayals of primitiveness or exoticism (Ebron, 2002: 64). Yet, this study goes further by demonstrating that representation also requires structural change—ensuring African creators have access to global platforms, funding, and policy frameworks to exercise autonomy.

On the question of cultural ownership, this study builds on Brown (2003: 15) and Hafstein (2009: 79), who point out the limitations of Western intellectual property regimes in protecting African communal knowledge. While previous research has focused on legal shortcomings, this study highlights emerging strategies of cultural self-determination. Through initiatives like the African Union's Model Law on Cultural Expressions (AU, 2017), communities are asserting legal and moral claims over their heritage. Moreover, the digital age offers new tools—storytelling, community-led documentation, and blockchain—for asserting ownership in innovative ways. Ultimately, this research reinforces the historical resilience of African cultures while offering a contemporary vision of cultural agency—one where African creators resist appropriation, reclaim representation, and redefine ownership on their own terms.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Data generated through semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and selected case studies were thematically organised into five interconnected categories. Interpreted through postcolonial and Afrocentric frameworks, the findings illuminate both the global reach of African cultural production and the persistent inequalities shaping its circulation, ownership, and representation. A dominant theme across interviews was the deliberate preservation of African cultural identity in the face of global pressures to conform to Western aesthetics. Musicians and fashion designers consistently framed authenticity as both a creative anchor and a strategic asset. One Nigerian Afrobeats producer explained: “We don't just borrow

from tradition, we live it. My beats come from Yoruba drums, and my lyrics carry the proverbs I grew up with. That's my brand, and that's my heritage” (Participant M03, 2024). This perspective reflects Asante's (2003) Afrocentricity, which centres African agency in cultural and knowledge production (47). Authenticity was not viewed as cultural isolationism but as a competitive advantage in global markets that increasingly seek what is perceived as “original” or “exotic” content (Mbembe, 2001: 242). Closely linked to this is the role of digital platforms in amplifying African cultural visibility. Content analysis revealed that platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Spotify, and Instagram have been instrumental in global dissemination. Nigerian Afrobeats artists, including Burna Boy, Tems, and Rema, collectively surpassed 1.5 billion global streams in 2023, while the TikTok AmapianoChallenge generated over 900 million views worldwide. These figures support Chikafa-Chapiro's (2022) assertion that digital spaces have become “participatory arenas” where African youth assert cultural presence and agency (13). However, participants also expressed concern that algorithm-driven platforms frequently fail to credit or fairly compensate original African creators, particularly when their content is repackaged by non-African influencers.

Cultural appropriation emerged as a particularly emotive issue. Many creatives described instances where their work had been reproduced or monetized without consent or acknowledgement. A Ghanaian fashion designer recounted seeing her Kente-inspired textile patterns featured in a Paris fashion show without attribution: “They didn't ask. They didn't credit. They just took the pattern and made it 'haute couture” (Participant F05, 2024). This experience echoes Ziff and Rao's (1997) concerns about the unregulated exploitation of indigenous cultural property (8). Discourse analysis of campaigns by brands such as Dior and Stella McCartney further revealed vague references to “tribal inspiration”, a practice that strips African designs of cultural specificity and historical context. Despite the global success of African cultural products, stark economic inequalities persist. Participants highlighted how African creators often receive minimal financial returns compared to their global collaborators. Interviews with copyright lawyers and cultural economists identified weak intellectual property enforcement and inadequate royalty-tracking systems as major barriers. Spotify's artist payment data accessed during the study indicated that over 70% of revenue from top-streamed Afrobeats tracks in 2023 flowed to offshore distributors and major labels outside Africa. As Ncube (2020) observes, global circulation does not automatically result in economic empowerment for African producers (97). Nevertheless, the data also point to growing cultural resilience and resistance. African creatives are increasingly reclaiming ownership through decentralized production models, independent labels, and locally grounded platforms such as Boomplay and Audiomack Africa. Campaigns like #OwnYourCulture and policy frameworks such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 reflect renewed

commitments to cultural sovereignty. As one cultural policy expert noted: “We are no longer just exporting culture; we are building systems to protect it, monetize it, and teach it in our own languages and values” (Participant S02, 2024). This shift aligns with Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013) call for epistemic and cultural decolonization as a foundation for genuine African empowerment (102). The findings affirm the global ascendancy of African cultural aesthetics while exposing the contradictions between visibility, representation, and economic justice. As Appadurai (1996) suggests, African actors are now active agents within global “ethnoscapes” and “mediascapes” (33). Yet, as Mbembe (2001) warns, visibility without control can lead to commodification devoid of context (242). Bridging Africa's cultural prestige with economic equity therefore requires robust institutional support, fair copyright regimes, and sustained investment in cultural infrastructure. Without these, African creators will continue to shape global popular culture while remaining marginal beneficiaries of its rewards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations aim to promote equitable cultural exchange, safeguard African cultural heritage, and enhance the agency of African creators in global cultural industries.

1. *Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Cultural Protection:* One of the foremost recommendations is the urgent need to strengthen intellectual property (IP) laws and enforcement mechanisms tailored to African cultural contexts. As Ncube (2020) emphasizes, many African countries lack adequate copyright infrastructure that recognizes communal cultural expressions and traditional knowledge (102). Governments and regional bodies such as the African Union should prioritize developing legal frameworks that protect indigenous designs, music, and performance from unauthorized commercial use, ensuring creators receive fair royalties. Joint efforts involving policymakers, cultural organizations, and legal professionals can contribute to aligning intellectual property laws across African nations, thereby minimizing the loopholes often taken advantage of by multinational companies.

2. *Supporting African-Led Digital Platforms and Distribution Networks:* Given the transformative role of digital media in cultural dissemination, investments should be channeled into African-owned and -controlled digital platforms. Platforms such as Boomplay, Audiomack Africa, and indigenous social media networks must receive financial, technical, and policy support to expand their reach and offer equitable monetization for creators (Chikafa-Chipiro, 2022:18). Such platforms can serve as vital counterbalances to dominant global streaming services, ensuring that African creators retain greater control over distribution, audience engagement, and revenue streams. International development agencies and private investors should recognize the cultural and economic potential of these platforms in their funding strategies.

3. Promoting Cultural Literacy and Ethical Engagement Globally: To address issues of appropriation and misrepresentation, there is a critical need to promote cultural literacy and ethical engagement among global consumers, artists, and corporations. Educational programmes, both within Africa and internationally, should include curricula that teach the histories, meanings, and protocols associated with African cultural forms (hooks, 1992: 35). Media organizations, fashion houses, and music labels must adopt codes of ethics that mandate transparent crediting, fair collaboration, and culturally sensitive representation. Voluntary certification schemes or cultural labels—similar to fair trade models—could be introduced to recognize ethical use of African cultural elements.

4. Fostering Pan-African Cultural Networks and Collaborations: Enhancing intra-African cultural collaborations is essential to building regional solidarity and amplifying the global impact of African creativity. Cultural festivals, artist residencies, and cross-border co-productions should be expanded to facilitate exchange of knowledge and resources (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013: 105). This is echoed by Ayeni & Umukoro (2025b: 12) where they observed that: The interaction among diverse cultures not only fosters an appreciation of diversity but also contributes to breaking down stereotypes and forging connections. The African Union's Agenda 2063 and cultural diplomacy initiatives can provide strategic frameworks for promoting pan-African identity and cultural sovereignty on the world stage. Supporting networks of cultural entrepreneurs and creative hubs will also help decentralize cultural production away from a few urban centres.

5. Research and Documentation of African Cultural Contributions: Further research is needed to document the evolving influence of African cultures in global popular culture comprehensively. Academic institutions, cultural organizations, and funding bodies should prioritize longitudinal studies, ethnographic research, and archival projects that capture diverse African cultural expressions and their diasporic trajectories (Mbembe, 2001: 250). Documenting case studies of successful models of cultural ownership and exchange will provide evidence-based strategies to guide policymakers and practitioners.

6. Integrating Cultural Rights into Economic Development Policies: Lastly, policymakers should integrate cultural rights and cultural economy considerations into broader economic development strategies. Culture should not be viewed as a peripheral sector but as a central component of sustainable development, job creation, and social cohesion (Pieterse, 2009: 112). Investments in education, infrastructure, and market access for cultural industries can generate multiplier effects, especially for youth employment. Inclusive policies should aim to reduce the economic disparities highlighted in this study by creating equitable value chains that benefit African creators directly. ECOWAS and the African Union promote cultural exchange and heritage preservation to foster unity among member states, while also addressing the socio-political challenges linked to Africa's rich and diverse cultural landscape (Ayeni & Ellah, 2025: 3).

CONCLUSION

From music and fashion to language and performance, African cultures have not only enriched global popular culture but have also reshaped prevailing narratives about creativity, identity, and cultural power. The findings reveal a dynamic interplay where African cultural forms travel beyond their geographical origins, inspiring new artistic movements and influencing global trends. However, this influence is accompanied by significant challenges. Issues of cultural appropriation, misrepresentation, and inequitable economic returns underscore persistent power imbalances rooted in historical and structural inequalities. While digital platforms have offered new opportunities for African creators to reach global audiences, they have also reproduced some of these inequalities through algorithmic biases and limited monetization avenues. The research underscores the urgency of creating frameworks that protect cultural ownership, promote ethical engagement, and empower African creators. Strengthening legal protections, supporting African-led digital platforms, fostering pan-African collaborations, and integrating cultural rights into economic policies are vital steps towards ensuring that African cultures are not only influential but also respected and fairly compensated. Ultimately, this study calls for a reimagining of global cultural exchange—one that centres African agency, recognizes the continent's rich heritage, and fosters equitable partnerships. In doing so, it affirms the transformative potential of African rhythms not only as cultural expressions but as catalysts for social justice, economic empowerment, and intercultural understanding in an increasingly interconnected world.

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BEYOND ANTHROPOCENTRIC COMMUNICATION: INTERCULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL NARRATIVES AND THE ETHICS OF ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Environmental crises are commonly framed as technical failures or policy challenges, obscuring the communicative, cultural, and ideological conditions through which ecological destruction is rendered normal, inevitable, or manageable. This article argues that contemporary ecological crisis is also a crisis of communication: a crisis in how nature is symbolized, whose knowledge is authorized, and how ethical relations between humans and the more-than-human world are constituted. Drawing on critical communication scholarship, environmental humanities, and postcolonial social theory, the article critiques the persistence of anthropocentrism within environmental communication and examines how dominant media and governance discourses marginalize intercultural ecological epistemologies. Advancing a conceptual and qualitative argument, the article reframes intercultural environmental narratives as epistemic interventions that disrupt dominant discourses of nature, development, and governance rather than as cultural supplements. It further theorizes arts and cultural practices as counter-mediations capable of rendering slow violence perceptible and expanding ecological imaginaries beyond technocratic and human-centered frameworks. Methodologically, the article adopts a reflexive, interpretive stance that treats critique itself as ethical practice. It concludes by

proposing an ethics of ecological transformation grounded in intercultural dialogue, relational accountability, and more-than-human coexistence, conceptualized as an ongoing, contested communicative practice oriented toward ecological justice rather than consensus.

Keywords: *Environmental communication; intercultural communication; environmental humanities; more-than-human theory; ecological ethics; postcolonial theory; decoloniality; epistemic justice; slow violence; environmental governance*

1. INTRODUCTION: ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AS A CRISIS OF COMMUNICATION

Environmental crises are routinely framed as technical failures or policy challenges, yet such framings obscure the communicative, cultural, and ideological conditions that make ecological destruction appear normal, inevitable, or manageable. Climate disruption, biodiversity loss, and environmental toxicity are not only material processes but also discursive formations sustained through media representations, institutional languages, and dominant epistemologies. From this perspective, ecological crisis is inseparable from crisis in communication: a crisis in how nature is symbolized, whose knowledge is authorized, and how relations between humans and the more-than-human world are ethically configured (DeLuca, 2018; Cox & Pezzullo, 2016).

Critical communication scholarship has long demonstrated that environmental discourse is never neutral. It is shaped by relations of power that privilege particular forms of knowledge while marginalizing others, often in ways that reproduce colonial and capitalist logics of extraction (Nixon, 2011). Yet even within critical strands of mass and environmental communication, anthropocentrism frequently remains an unexamined norm. Nature is positioned as a resource, risk, or communicative object rather than as a relational presence implicated in meaning-making itself. Environmental communication thus risks reinforcing the human exceptionalism that underwrites ecological violence, even as it seeks to address environmental harm (Milstein et al., 2021).

These limitations become particularly visible when environmental communication is detached from intercultural analysis. Environmental crises are unevenly distributed and differentially experienced, yet dominant media and policy discourses continue to privilege Western scientific rationalities and managerial frameworks. Such discourses often marginalize indigenous, local, and postcolonial ecological epistemologies that conceptualize human–nature relations as reciprocal,

historical, and ethical rather than instrumental (Dutta, 2018). In African contexts, including Nigeria, environmental communication is deeply entangled with colonial histories of resource extraction, postcolonial state formation, and global media economies that shape how ecological harm is narrated and governed (Bassey, 2012; Adesokan, 2019).

This article intervenes in these debates by arguing for a shift beyond anthropocentric communication toward an intercultural and more-than-human critical framework. Drawing on environmental humanities and critical social theory, it treats communication not simply as human symbolic exchange but as a site where relations among humans, nonhuman life, land, and power are discursively constituted. The “more-than-human” turn challenges nature–culture binaries that structure much communication theory, insisting instead on relational ontologies that foreground entanglement, responsibility, and ethical accountability (Haraway, 2016; Rose et al., 2017). When combined with intercultural communication theory, this approach exposes how environmental meaning is shaped by coloniality, ideology, and struggles over epistemic authority.

The purpose of this article is to theorize environmental crisis as a crisis of communication and to examine how intercultural environmental narratives can contribute to the ethics of ecological transformation. Rather than offering empirical case studies, the article advances a conceptual and qualitative argument grounded in critical communication scholarship, environmental humanities, and postcolonial theory. Its contribution lies in reframing environmental communication as an ethical and political project concerned with power, relationality, and the limits of human-centered discourse.

The analysis is guided by three interrelated research questions:

1. How do anthropocentric assumptions in mass and environmental communication constrain critical and ethical responses to ecological crisis?
2. In what ways do intercultural environmental narratives disrupt dominant discourses of nature, development, and governance?
3. How might communication ethics be reimagined through intercultural and more-than-human frameworks to support ecological transformation?

The article contributes to *Interculturality* by extending critical communication theory into dialogue with environmental humanities and by foregrounding environmental discourse as a site of ideological struggle. It situates ecological communication within broader critiques of power, coloniality, and knowledge production, thereby challenging instrumental and depoliticized approaches to environmental meaning-making.

This article adopts a critical–interpretive stance informed by mass communication

studies, environmental humanities, and postcolonial social theory. It treats environmental narratives as culturally situated and politically consequential, recognizing that academic scholarship participates in the very power relations it critiques. The analysis does not claim to speak for indigenous or marginalized communities; instead, it engages with their intellectual traditions through existing scholarship, emphasizing reflexivity, epistemic humility, and resistance to extractivist knowledge practices (Smith, 2012; Dutta, 2018).

The article proceeds by outlining its conceptual and theoretical framework in Section 2. Section 3 examines intercultural environmental narratives and contested knowledge systems. Section 4 explores arts and cultural mediation of ecological relations. Section 5 addresses methodological orientation and research ethics. Section 6 advances an ethics of ecological transformation grounded in intercultural dialogue. The conclusion synthesizes key arguments and outlines directions for future critical inquiry.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article advances an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that brings environmental humanities into critical dialogue with social theory and intercultural communication. Rather than positioning these traditions as complementary literatures, the framework mobilizes them as resources for a sustained critique of anthropocentric communication and its role in normalizing ecological domination. The framework treats environmental communication not as a neutral conduit of information but as a site of ideological struggle in which relations among humans, nonhuman life, and environments are discursively constituted and ethically delimited.

2.1 Environmental Humanities and the Critique of Anthropocentrism

Environmental Humanities has emerged as a critical interdisciplinary field concerned with the cultural, ethical, and epistemological dimensions of ecological crisis. Spanning philosophy, cultural studies, history, anthropology, and geography, the field challenges technocratic and managerial responses to environmental degradation by foregrounding questions of meaning, responsibility, and relational ontology (Rose et al., 2017). For critical communication scholarship, environmental humanities is significant not simply as an adjacent field, but as a challenge to communication theory's own anthropocentric foundations.

Central to environmental humanities is a critique of anthropocentrism—the assumption that humans occupy a privileged ontological and epistemic position separate from, and superior to, the nonhuman world. Rooted in Enlightenment rationalism and consolidated through colonial modernity, anthropocentrism has structured Western epistemologies by positioning nature as inert matter available for human use, representation, and control (Plumwood, 2002). Communication theory has often reproduced this logic by treating nature as an object of discourse

rather than as a relational presence implicated in meaning-making itself. In doing so, communication scholarship risks reinforcing the very hierarchies it seeks to critique, framing communication as a corrective to ecological crisis rather than as one of its constitutive conditions.

Environmental humanities scholars argue that anthropocentrism functions as an ethical failure as much as an epistemological one. Dominant communicative frameworks render ecological others silent while legitimizing extractive relationships (Haraway, 2016) by privileging human interests, temporalities, and voices. Environmental communication grounded in persuasion, behavior change, or risk messaging often remains tethered to human utility, thereby limiting its capacity to confront the deeper relational conditions of ecological harm.

The “more-than-human” turn intensifies this critique by rejecting the assumption that meaning-making is an exclusively human activity. Drawing on relational ontology and materialist theory, more-than-human scholarship conceptualizes agency as distributed across assemblages of humans, nonhuman organisms, technologies, and environments (Bennett, 2010). For communication theory, this represents not an expansion but a rupture: without a more-than-human orientation, environmental communication remains structurally incapable of accounting for ecological agency, multispecies vulnerability, and temporally uneven harm (Milstein et al., 2021). This turn destabilizes sender–receiver models and foregrounds communication as an emergent process shaped by material, ecological, and historical entanglements.

Incorporating environmental humanities into critical communication scholarship therefore demands a reorientation of analytical priorities—from effectiveness and persuasion toward questions of relational accountability, ethical implication, and power. Communication is understood here as a practice through which ecological hierarchies are either reproduced or contested.

2.2 Social Theory and Intercultural Communication

If environmental humanities foreground relational ontology, critical social theory provides the analytic tools necessary to interrogate how environmental meanings are structured by power, ideology, and historical inequality. Political ecology, postcolonial theory, and decolonial scholarship have demonstrated that environmental crises are inseparable from colonial histories, capitalist accumulation, and global regimes of governance (Nixon, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Environmental communication, from this perspective, is not merely cultural expression but a mechanism through which ecological relations are normalized, obscured, or contested.

Political ecology exposes how dominant environmental narratives depoliticize ecological harm by framing it as technical mismanagement or individual failure rather than structural violence. Media and policy discourses frequently displace responsibility away from corporate and state actors, particularly in the Global

South, where extractive economies are sustained through communicative regimes that naturalize inequality (Bassey, 2012). Environmental governance thus operates ideologically through communication, producing consent, deflecting accountability, and rendering extractive relations commonsensical.

Postcolonial and decolonial theories further complicate environmental communication by revealing how Western epistemologies continue to structure whose knowledge is recognized as legitimate. Indigenous and local ecological knowledge systems are often appropriated, instrumentalized, or dismissed unless translated into dominant scientific frameworks, reproducing epistemic hierarchies rooted in colonial power (Smith, 2012). Communication is central to this process, functioning as the terrain on which epistemic authority is negotiated and contested. Critical intercultural communication scholarship rejects essentialist conceptions of culture as static or homogeneous. Instead, it conceptualizes interculturality as a dynamic, contested, and power-laden process shaped by historical asymmetries, institutional structures, and media infrastructures (Dutta, 2018). Intercultural communication is central here not because environmental crises are culturally diverse, but because communication itself is the site where epistemic hierarchies are stabilized or disrupted. Treating intercultural environmental communication as a problem of translation or mutual understanding risks reproducing the very inequalities it seeks to address.

Integrating critical social theory with environmental humanities allows this article to conceptualize environmental communication as a site of governance where ideology, culture, and ecological relations converge. Environmental narratives do not simply reflect ecological realities; they actively constitute relations among humans, nonhuman life, and territories. Ethical ecological transformation therefore requires confronting the communicative structures through which environmental domination is sustained.

3. INTERCULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL NARRATIVES AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Intercultural environmental narratives are often invoked as corrective alternatives to dominant ecological discourses, yet such invocations risk reproducing the very hierarchies they seek to unsettle if they remain descriptive or celebratory. This section approaches environmental narratives not as culturally distinct stories to be added to existing frameworks, but as epistemic interventions that contest how nature, knowledge, and authority are communicatively constituted. From a critical communication perspective, narratives function as sites where environmental meaning is negotiated, legitimacy is conferred or denied, and ethical relations to the more-than-human world are articulated under conditions of unequal power.

3.1 Situated Ecological Epistemologies and Epistemic Struggle

Indigenous, local, and marginalized ecological knowledge systems are frequently framed within environmental discourse as sources of “traditional wisdom” or cultural heritage. While such framings appear affirming, they often domesticate these knowledge systems by positioning them as supplementary to Western scientific rationality rather than as epistemologies with their own ontological and ethical foundations (Smith, 2012). Critical scholars have argued that this incorporation operates through what can be understood as epistemic enclosure: alternative ways of knowing are rendered legible only insofar as they can be translated into dominant communicative regimes.

From a communication standpoint, epistemologies are not merely systems of belief but communicative practices embedded in social relations, land-based histories, and cosmological orientations. Many indigenous ecological epistemologies conceptualize humans as relationally embedded within land, water, and nonhuman life, rejecting the nature–culture divide that structures Western environmental discourse. These epistemologies challenge anthropocentric communication not by offering alternative “messages,” but by destabilizing the ontological assumptions that underwrite dominant forms of environmental meaning-making.

Intercultural environmental narratives thus operate within fields of epistemic struggle. Their marginalization is not accidental but structurally produced through colonial histories, media institutions, and governance frameworks that privilege particular forms of abstraction, quantification, and expert authority (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Communication plays a central role in this process by determining which narratives are amplified, which are silenced, and which are reframed as anecdotal or symbolic rather than epistemically authoritative.

3.2 Narrative, Relational Ontology, and More-Than-Human Meaning-Making

Narrative is a key mode through which ecological relations are rendered meaningful. However, dominant environmental narratives—particularly those circulating through mass media and policy discourse—tend to reproduce linear, human-centered temporalities that frame environmental change as a future risk or managerial challenge. Such narratives often erase slow, cumulative forms of ecological harm and obscure multispecies entanglements (Nixon, 2011).

Intercultural environmental narratives frequently disrupt these conventions by foregrounding relational ontology and cyclical temporality. Rather than positioning humans as external observers or managers of nature, these narratives articulate ecological relations as reciprocal, ethical, and historically situated. From a more-than-human perspective, narrative becomes a communicative practice through which humans and nonhumans are co-constituted as ethical subjects within shared environments (Haraway, 2016).

Importantly, this does not imply that nonhuman entities “speak” in human

language, but rather that communicative meaning emerges through embodied practices, place-based memory, and material interaction. Rivers, forests, and land are not passive settings but active participants in narrative systems that organize responsibility and belonging. Communication theory, when constrained by anthropocentric assumptions, struggles to account for these forms of meaning-making, reducing them to metaphor or belief rather than recognizing their ethical and political force.

3.3 Dominant Media Discourses and the Politics of Environmental Legibility

While intercultural environmental narratives articulate alternative ecological relations, their circulation is constrained by dominant media and governance discourses that define what counts as legitimate environmental knowledge. Media representations often translate complex relational epistemologies into simplified tropes of tradition, spirituality, or resilience, stripping them of their critical and political content. This process of translation is not neutral; it reflects communicative regimes that privilege spectacle, immediacy, and human interest over relational complexity.

Environmental governance further reinforces these hierarchies by privileging forms of knowledge that align with managerial and technocratic rationalities. Policy discourse frequently invokes participation and inclusion while retaining epistemic authority within expert-driven frameworks. As political ecology has demonstrated, such practices enable the symbolic inclusion of marginalized voices without redistributing communicative power or challenging extractive logics (Bassey, 2012).

From a critical communication perspective, this tension reveals how representation itself becomes an ethical problem. Visibility does not necessarily entail recognition, and amplification can function as appropriation. Intercultural environmental narratives are often circulated in ways that neutralize their capacity to contest dominant development paradigms, transforming them into cultural resources rather than political critiques.

3.4 Ethics, Epistemic Authority, and Intercultural Narratives as Communicative Intervention

The question of voice is central to intercultural environmental communication, yet it cannot be addressed through representational inclusion alone. Critical scholars caution that efforts to “give voice” risk reproducing extractivist logics when narratives are treated as resources to be mined rather than as situated expressions embedded in ongoing struggles over land, sovereignty, and survival (Smith, 2012). From this perspective, communication ethics demands attention not only to who speaks, but to the conditions under which speech is authorized, circulated, translated, and rendered intelligible within dominant communicative regimes.

Ethical engagement with intercultural environmental narratives therefore requires sustained reflexivity regarding epistemic authority and scholarly positionality. For

communication scholars, this entails resisting the impulse to translate all narratives into dominant theoretical vocabularies or policy-relevant idioms and acknowledging the limits of academic interpretation. It also requires recognizing that some forms of ecological knowledge are not oriented toward visibility or circulation within global media systems, and that ethical restraint—refusal, silence, or non-translation—may be as important as amplification in resisting epistemic enclosure.

Rather than seeking to resolve tensions between dominant and marginalized environmental narratives, this article treats such tensions as analytically productive. They expose the communicative structures through which environmental governance operates and reveal how epistemic hierarchies are stabilized through seemingly inclusive practices. Visibility does not necessarily entail recognition, and inclusion does not guarantee a redistribution of communicative power. Intercultural environmental narratives thus illuminate the ethical stakes of dialogue under conditions of historical inequality, where power shapes not only whose voices are heard, but how environmental problems themselves are defined.

When approached critically, intercultural environmental narratives function as ethical interventions that unsettle anthropocentric and colonial assumptions embedded in environmental communication. They challenge dominant narratives of progress, development, and sustainability by foregrounding relational accountability, historical responsibility, and more-than-human coexistence. Their critical force lies not in offering alternative content to be incorporated into existing frameworks, but in disrupting the communicative assumptions that delimit what counts as environmental knowledge, whose temporalities matter, and which forms of life are rendered expendable.

Situating environmental narratives within struggles over epistemic authority and governance extends critical communication theory beyond questions of representation toward an ethics of relationality. Intercultural environmental narratives invite a rethinking of communication not as a tool for managing ecological crisis, but as a contested site where ecological futures are ethically negotiated. In doing so, they underscore that ecological transformation cannot be separated from communicative transformation, nor from the ethical responsibility to confront power, coloniality, and the limits of representation itself.

4. ARTS, CULTURE, AND THE MEDIATION OF ECOLOGICAL RELATIONS

If Sections 2 and 3 establish environmental crisis as a struggle over ontology, authority, and governance, this section examines how arts and cultural practices mediate ecological relations in ways that exceed the limits of policy and informational discourse. The point is not that art “raises awareness” in a generic

sense, but that aesthetic forms unsettled dominant communicative regimes—reworking what counts as evidence, whose suffering becomes perceptible, and how ethical responsibility is imagined. Cultural practice is treated here as a site of contestation where extractive common sense can be interrupted and alternative ecological imaginaries can be staged (DeLuca, 2018; Nixon, 2011).

4.1 Cultural Production as Environmental Communication Beyond Instrumentality

Mainstream environmental communication often privileges clarity, immediacy, and policy legibility. Arts and cultural practices frequently operate otherwise: through ambiguity, affect, metaphor, temporality, and embodied experience. These modes matter because ecological crisis is not only a deficit of information but also a crisis of attention, sensation, and ethical orientation—conditions shaped by media infrastructures and political economies that reward speed and spectacle over slow, relational understanding (Nixon, 2011).

From a critical perspective, cultural texts and practices can function as “counter-mediations” that resist the managerial grammar of environmental governance. They do so by reframing environmental harm as lived, historical, and unequal; by making visible what extractive discourse renders ordinary; and by destabilizing anthropocentric habits of perception. In this sense, art is not supplemental to environmental politics. It is a communicative arena in which the terms of ecological intelligibility are contested and reconfigured.

4.2 Aesthetic Intervention, Affect, and the Politics of Perception

Aesthetic interventions can reorganize the “distribution of the sensible”—the perceptual and affective boundaries that determine what is seen, felt, and recognized as politically salient (Rancière, 2004). This matters for ecological politics because many forms of environmental harm are structurally hard to perceive: gradual, dispersed, normalized, and unevenly experienced. Communication that depends on event-based visibility often fails to register slow violence, cumulative toxicity, and the everyday realities of extraction (Nixon, 2011). Cultural practice can intervene by rendering perceptible the temporalities and materialities that dominant media tend to obscure.

Within more-than-human frameworks, aesthetic form also challenges the presumption that only human interests and experiences anchor meaning. Story, image, sound, and performance can stage relationality—inviting audiences to apprehend land, water, and nonhuman life not as backdrop but as ethically consequential presences. This does not “give voice” to nature in a naïve way; rather, it reorients perception toward entanglement and implication, pressing audiences to confront how their everyday comforts may be secured through distant and racialized ecological harm.

4.3 Place, Heritage, and Environmental Memory in Intercultural Discourse

Intercultural environmental narratives frequently draw on place-based memory,

heritage, and embodied practices of dwelling. These are not merely identity claims; they are communicative resources for contesting dispossession and asserting ecological belonging under conditions of uneven power. In postcolonial contexts, heritage discourse can expose how environments are historically produced through regimes of extraction, state violence, and epistemic domination. The “environment” is not a neutral container but a contested archive of colonial and postcolonial transformation.

Cultural production—especially when rooted in community memory and local histories—can therefore function as environmental historiography, rendering visible the *longue durée* of ecological transformation that policy discourse often abstracts away. This is where interculturality becomes analytically central: place-based narratives confront the universalizing tendencies of global environmental governance by insisting on situated histories of harm and responsibility, including those that link environmental degradation to colonialism, petro-capitalism, and racialized development (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Nixon, 2011).

4.4 Analytical Illustrations From Existing Cultural and Scholarly Texts

To avoid extractivist appropriation and empirical overreach, the following illustrations are offered as *bounded engagements with widely available texts* rather than claims about communities or “what people believe.” They function as conceptual anchors for how arts and cultural production can mediate ecological relations.

Slow violence and narrative form. Nixon's (2011) theorization of slow violence clarifies why conventional media logics struggle with environmental harm that is delayed, dispersed, and attritional. Cultural forms—especially literary and visual narratives—can counter this failure by developing representational strategies for long-term toxicity, gradual dispossession, and uneven vulnerability. The conceptual value here is not any single text's “accuracy,” but the way aesthetic form can render structural harm narratable and ethically apprehensible.

The climate crisis and the crisis of representation. Ghosh (2016) argues that climate change strains dominant realist conventions and political imaginaries, partly because modern narrative forms have been shaped by assumptions of stability, probability, and human-centered agency. For critical communication, the significance is that ecological crisis is also a crisis of genre: what our dominant forms of storytelling can plausibly represent shapes what publics can imagine as real, urgent, and actionable.

African cultural critique and global aesthetics. Adesokan's (2019) work on postcolonial cultural production and global aesthetics is useful for theorizing how African cultural texts navigate and contest global regimes of visibility. Read alongside environmental discourse, it underscores that cultural mediation is structured by unequal circuits of value and attention—conditions that can shape which environmental narratives become globally legible and which remain

localized or misrecognized. The analytic point is not that cultural production automatically resists domination, but that it operates within contested economies of representation. These illustrations support the broader argument: arts and cultural practices can function as critical infrastructures for ecological communication by challenging the ontological, temporal, and affective limits of dominant environmental discourse.

4.5 Ethical Stakes: Against Appropriation, Toward Relational Accountability

An ethical approach to arts and ecological communication must resist treating cultural forms as resources to be mined for sustainability messaging or institutional legitimacy. Cultural narratives are embedded in histories of dispossession and struggle; they cannot be abstracted from land, sovereignty, and political economy without reproducing extractivist logics (Smith, 2012).

Accordingly, this article frames aesthetic mediation as ethically consequential practice rather than communicative “tool.” The central question is not how art can be used to persuade audiences, but how cultural practice can disrupt dominant communicative regimes and reconfigure responsibility—opening space for more-than-human, intercultural, and justice-oriented ecological imaginaries.

5. METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH ETHICS

This article adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and theoretically driven methodological orientation. The purpose is not to generate new empirical data or to evaluate communicative effectiveness, but to critically interrogate the epistemological, ethical, and ideological foundations of environmental communication. Method, in this sense, is understood not as a set of techniques, but as a reflexive orientation toward knowledge production, power, and responsibility.

5.1 Interpretive and Interdisciplinary Orientation

The analysis is grounded in interpretive critical inquiry, drawing from environmental humanities, critical communication studies, political ecology, and postcolonial theory. This interdisciplinary orientation reflects the argument that ecological crises cannot be adequately understood within the confines of a single discipline or methodological tradition. Environmental communication is approached as a cultural and political practice that operates across texts, institutions, and historical contexts, rather than as a bounded object of measurement.

Rather than pursuing empirical generalization, the article advances theoretical synthesis and conceptual critique. It engages selectively with established scholarly and cultural texts to illuminate how anthropocentric assumptions, intercultural power relations, and more-than-human ontologies shape environmental meaning-making.

5.2 Reflexivity and Scholarly Positionality

Reflexivity is central to the methodological stance adopted here. Communication

scholarship is not external to the phenomena it analyzes; it participates in shaping environmental discourse by legitimizing certain questions, vocabularies, and modes of explanation. This article therefore treats theory itself as a communicative practice with ethical consequences.

The author's positionality—as an academic trained within mass communication and social theory—necessarily shapes the interpretive lens of the analysis. Acknowledging this positionality does not resolve power asymmetries, but it makes them visible and contestable. Reflexivity here involves recognizing the limits of academic interpretation, resisting claims to epistemic authority over indigenous or marginalized knowledge systems, and remaining attentive to how critical scholarship can inadvertently reproduce extractivist logics through abstraction and citation.

5.3 Ethics Beyond Procedural Compliance

Research ethics in this article are not framed as compliance with institutional review protocols, but as an ongoing ethical orientation toward knowledge production. In the context of intercultural environmental communication, ethical concerns extend beyond harm minimization to questions of epistemic justice, representation, and relational accountability (Smith, 2012).

Extractivist research practices—where knowledge is appropriated, decontextualized, and circulated for academic gain—have been widely critiqued in indigenous and postcolonial scholarship. This article responds to those critiques by avoiding empirical claims about communities, beliefs, or practices and by engaging only with publicly available scholarly and cultural texts. Where indigenous and local epistemologies are discussed, they are treated as intellectual traditions with their own theoretical rigor, not as data sources or illustrative examples.

5.4 Boundaries, Limitations, and Analytical Responsibility

The conceptual scope of this article is both its strength and its limitation. The analysis does not offer case-based validation or policy prescriptions in prioritizing theoretical critique. This is a deliberate choice consistent with the article's aims toward critical theory. However, the absence of empirical cases means that the arguments advanced here should be understood as heuristic rather than exhaustive.

Analytical responsibility also requires acknowledging what this article does not do. It does not seek to resolve tensions between dominant and marginalized environmental narratives, nor does it propose a universal ethical framework applicable across contexts. Instead, it foregrounds these tensions as productive sites for critique, insisting that ethical ecological transformation cannot be separated from struggles over communication, power, and meaning.

5.5 Method as Ethical Practice

The methodological orientation of this article treats critique itself as an ethical practice. The article opens space for alternative ways of thinking about ecological relations by interrogating the assumptions that structure environmental

communication - anthropocentrism, cultural neutrality, and instrumental rationality. Method, in this sense, is inseparable from ethics: how scholars ask questions, frame problems, and engage with knowledge systems shapes the ecological futures that become imaginable.

6. TOWARD THE ETHICS OF ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

If the preceding sections have argued that ecological crisis is inseparable from communicative power, epistemic hierarchy, and anthropocentric ontology, this section advances a normative intervention: the need to rethink communication ethics in relation to ecological transformation. Rather than treating ethics as an abstract moral code or a set of professional guidelines, this article conceptualizes ethics as a relational and political practice embedded in communicative processes that shape how humans relate to nonhuman life, land, and each other. Ecological transformation, from this perspective, is not achievable without ethical transformation in communication itself.

6.1 Rethinking Communication Ethics Beyond the Human Subject

Traditional communication ethics has largely been grounded in human-centered assumptions, prioritizing values such as dialogue, mutual understanding, and democratic participation among human actors. While these principles remain important, they are insufficient for addressing ecological crises that implicate nonhuman life, future generations, and unevenly distributed harm. Anthropocentric ethics presumes that moral consideration begins and ends with human subjects, rendering ecological others relevant only insofar as they affect human well-being.

Drawing on environmental humanities and more-than-human theory, this article argues for an expanded ethical horizon that recognizes humans as embedded within ecological relations rather than positioned above them. Communication ethics, in this framework, must grapple with how discourse authorizes extraction, normalizes environmental sacrifice zones, and renders some lives—human and nonhuman—disposable. Ethical communication is not simply a matter of fairness or inclusion, but of questioning the ontological assumptions that make environmental domination communicatively intelligible.

Such a reorientation challenges instrumental models of environmental communication that emphasize persuasion or behavioral change without interrogating the values and power relations they reproduce. Ethical ecological communication demands attentiveness to relational accountability: how communicative acts bind speakers, audiences, institutions, and environments into asymmetrical relations of responsibility.

6.2 Intercultural Dialogue as Ethical Practice, Not Consensus

Intercultural dialogue is often framed within communication studies as a normative ideal aimed at mutual understanding or consensus. In contexts of ecological crisis, however, such framings risk obscuring structural inequalities and historical

violence. Intercultural environmental communication unfolds within conditions marked by colonial legacies, epistemic injustice, and unequal access to media and political power. Treating dialogue as symmetrical exchange can therefore depoliticize conflict and naturalize inequity.

This article reconceptualizes intercultural dialogue as an ethical practice grounded in tension rather than harmony. Ethical intercultural communication does not presume equivalence among participants; instead, it requires confronting how power shapes who speaks, who is heard, and whose knowledge is institutionalized. Dialogue becomes ethical not when differences are resolved, but when communicative practices remain open to contestation, refusal, and accountability.

From this perspective, ethical ecological transformation cannot be reduced to participatory inclusion within existing governance frameworks. It requires reconfiguring the communicative conditions under which environmental decisions are made, including whose narratives define problems, whose temporalities matter, and which forms of life are deemed worth sustaining.

6.3 Communication, Responsibility, and Ecological Justice

An ethics of ecological transformation must be inseparable from questions of justice. Environmental harm is unevenly distributed along lines of race, class, geography, and colonial history, and communication plays a central role in legitimizing these inequalities. Media narratives that frame environmental degradation as unfortunate but necessary, or as the cost of development, contribute to the normalization of sacrifice zones and the displacement of responsibility.

Critical communication scholarship reveals how responsibility is communicatively managed—shifted onto individuals, naturalized as inevitability, or deferred into the future. Ethical ecological communication requires disrupting these narratives by foregrounding historical accountability, structural causality, and relational obligation. This includes recognizing that environmental justice is not only about protecting vulnerable human communities, but also about sustaining multispecies relations and ecological systems upon which life depends.

In this sense, ethics is not an add-on to environmental communication; it is constitutive of how ecological futures are imagined and pursued. Ethical failure occurs not only through misrepresentation, but through silence, abstraction, and the refusal to acknowledge entanglement.

6.4 Implications for Scholarship, Media Practice, and Governance

Reimagining communication ethics through an intercultural and more-than-human lens has implications across scholarly, media, and policy domains. For scholars, it calls for reflexive engagement with theory and method, resisting extractivist knowledge practices and remaining attentive to how academic discourse participates in environmental governance. Critical scholarship must interrogate its own categories, assumptions, and institutional positioning.

For media practitioners and cultural workers, this ethical framework challenges

dominant storytelling conventions that privilege immediacy, spectacle, and human-centered drama. Ethical ecological communication may require slower, more situated forms of narration that acknowledge uncertainty, complexity, and responsibility without offering premature closure.

For policy actors and institutions, an ethics of ecological transformation demands more than inclusive rhetoric. It requires restructuring communicative processes to recognize plural epistemologies, address historical injustice, and confront the limits of technocratic governance. Communication, in this context, is not merely a tool for policy implementation but a site where ecological values and priorities are negotiated.

6.5 Toward Transformative Ecological Imaginaries

Ultimately, the ethics of ecological transformation proposed here is oriented toward the cultivation of alternative ecological imaginaries. These imaginaries are not blueprints for consensus, but openings for rethinking how humans live with, rather than over, the more-than-human world. Intercultural environmental narratives, arts, and critical communication practices can contribute to this process by unsettling dominant assumptions and expanding the ethical scope of environmental discourse. Transformation, in this sense, is neither immediate nor guaranteed. It is a contested process shaped by communicative struggle, historical memory, and ethical negotiation. This article argues that the future of environmental politics depends as much on how we communicate as on what we do by foregrounding communication as a central terrain of ecological ethics.

7. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that contemporary ecological crises cannot be adequately understood or addressed without confronting their communicative dimensions. Environmental degradation is not only the outcome of material exploitation or policy failure; it is sustained through dominant systems of meaning-making that normalize anthropocentrism, marginalize alternative epistemologies, and delimit ethical responsibility. The article has positioned environmental communication as a central terrain of struggle over how ecological relations are imagined, governed, and lived by reframing ecological crisis as a crisis of communication, culture, and power.

Drawing on environmental humanities, critical social theory, and intercultural communication, the article advanced a conceptual intervention that challenges anthropocentric paradigms within mass communication scholarship. It showed how human exceptionalism is embedded not only in philosophical traditions but also in communicative models that privilege persuasion, management, and human-centered agency. The “more-than-human” turn, when taken seriously, requires a reorientation of communication theory itself—one that recognizes meaning-making as relational, distributed, and ethically consequential across human and

nonhuman worlds.

The analysis further demonstrated that intercultural environmental narratives are not merely alternative stories to be incorporated into dominant frameworks, but epistemic interventions that contest the communicative foundations of environmental governance. In foregrounding power, coloniality, and epistemic authority, the article resisted celebratory or extractivist approaches to indigenous and marginalized knowledge systems. Instead, it treated intercultural communication as a dynamic, conflictual process in which environmental meanings are negotiated under conditions of historical inequality.

Arts and cultural practices were examined as critical sites of ecological mediation capable of disrupting dominant temporalities, perceptual regimes, and affective orientations. Rather than functioning as instruments of awareness or persuasion, cultural practices were theorized as counter-mediations that expose slow violence, reconfigure responsibility, and expand the ethical imagination. This move underscored the limits of technocratic and policy-centered approaches to environmental communication and highlighted the importance of aesthetic and narrative forms in ecological politics.

Methodologically, the article advanced an interpretive and reflexive orientation that treats critique itself as ethical practice. And, in rejecting extractivist research logics and procedural notions of ethics, it emphasized epistemic responsibility, positionality, and the limits of academic authority. Ethics, in this article, was conceptualized not as a set of rules but as a relational commitment embedded in communicative practice.

Putting these arguments together, it is proposed that an ethics of ecological transformation grounded in intercultural dialogue, relational accountability, and more-than-human coexistence be conceptualized as a reflexive communicative practice that confronts power, resists anthropocentric and colonial logics, and remains open to contestation rather than closure. Such an ethics does not seek consensus or universal solutions; rather, it foregrounds tension, contestation, and historical responsibility as necessary conditions for ecological justice. Communication, in this framework, is not a neutral medium for managing crisis but a constitutive force in shaping ecological futures.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRAXIS

The theoretical intervention offered here opens several directions for future interdisciplinary research. First, critical communication scholars can further interrogate how anthropocentrism operates within specific media genres, platforms, and institutional contexts, particularly in relation to environmental governance and development discourse. Second, there is a need for carefully designed, ethically grounded engagements with intercultural environmental narratives that avoid appropriation while remaining attentive to power and

epistemic justice. Third, greater dialogue between communication studies and environmental humanities can deepen understanding of how affect, aesthetics, and materiality shape ecological politics.

For praxis, the framework advanced in this article invites scholars, media practitioners, cultural workers, and policy actors to rethink the ethical assumptions embedded in their communicative practices. It calls for forms of communication that resist extractive logics, acknowledge more-than-human relations, and remain accountable to histories of environmental injustice.

This article contends that ecological transformation is inseparable from communicative transformation. How societies narrate environmental crisis, whose knowledge is recognized, and how ethical responsibility is framed will shape not only environmental policy but the very conditions of coexistence on a damaged planet. A focus on interculturality, power, and more-than-human relationality allows critical communication scholarship to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing struggle for ecological futures that are not only sustainable, but just.

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AN EXAMINATION OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria's security challenges are affecting human development in many parts of the country, leading to the destruction of lives and property, with negative impacts on the economic, environmental, social, political, and religious life of the nation. There has been persistent militancy, kidnapping, Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herdsmen attacks, piracy, and armed robbery. These have hampered human development, causing an unimaginable level of poverty, unemployment, inequality, poor infrastructure, lack of social amenities, and negligible development in our nation. The literature review shows that the recent establishment of zonal Ministries of Regional Development across Nigeria and policies adopted to address security challenges have failed. This study investigated the major causes of security challenges, their implications for human sustainable development, in light of the Ubuntu Philosophy. The methodology is critically explorative, with findings revealing that security challenges in Nigeria are a result of years of deficit in governance and leadership by successive governments. As a recommendation, increased political will, collaboration, accountability, and transparency among security agencies are needed. The federal, state, and local governments should implement targeted policies and

intervention programs in addressing the root causes of security challenges in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Human Development, Panacea, Security Challenges, Human Nature, Transparency and Accountability*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, over the years, has witnessed diverse security challenges that warrant academic discourse like other Nations of the World. Unfortunately, there has been continued militancy, kidnapping, Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herdsmen, piracy and armed robbery, oil bunkering, communal disputes, and cultist activities, among other social vices. These security challenges affect human development in our society, leading to destruction of lives and property worth millions of naira; with its impacts on the economic, environmental degradation, social, political, and religious life of the Nation (Umoh, 2023:185; Olusakin *et al*, 2023: 57-58). These security challenges have led to poverty, unemployment, inequality, poor infrastructure, and limited development in the Nigerian society (Uyanga, 2019: 97-98). The Nigerian government has been criticized for its lack of a coherent strategy to address the complex, multidimensional security challenges in the country. A comprehensive framework addressing the underlying drivers of these challenges, such as lack of economic opportunities for young people, drug abuse, the absence of the rule of law, corruption in public office, unfair electoral processes, and environmental pollution, is needed. The Nation's security challenges have serious implications for human sustainable development. Despite the abundance of natural resources, we have in Nigeria, there has been an unimaginable level of poverty, unemployment, inequality, poor infrastructure, lack of social amenities, and negligible development (Oko, 2020:187). The security challenges in Nigeria are the implications of several years of defective governance by successive governments and ineffective leadership (Ikenga, 2022:251). To address these challenges, the formulation and effective implementation of policies capable of addressing the root causes of security challenges are crucial (Asouzus, 2007:11).

THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022), human development is about creating an environment where people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative, and fulfilling lives, or achieve specific goals, but also about creating opportunities for individuals to pursue their own goals and aspirations. In light of the above, human development is increasingly recognized as a crucial factor in addressing security challenges in Nigeria. The interplay between governance, human security, and national development reveals

that improving human conditions can significantly mitigate the various forms of security challenges plaguing the nation (Ikengaet *al.*, 2022:252). Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, governance has faced significant challenges, including corruption and inadequate infrastructure, which have severely undermined human development and security. The state has often become a source of security challenges rather than a protector, leading to heightened violence and instability (Sachs, 2015:115). Considering the above, effective governance is essential for ensuring human security, as it directly impacts citizens' welfare and their ability to live without fear of violence or deprivation.

Youth empowerment is identified as a pivotal strategy for enhancing national security and human development. By equipping young people with skills and opportunities, the government can reduce unemployment—a major driver of crime and security challenges. Programs focusing on education, skill acquisition, and socio-cultural values are essential for transforming youthful potential into productive contributions to society (Orji, 2012:198). This empowerment can help to alleviate issues such as unemployment, poverty, and social injustice, which are deeply intertwined with security challenges.

The relationship between security and development is reciprocal; security challenges hamper development, while a lack of development fosters security challenges. National security cannot be achieved without addressing fundamental social issues such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate healthcare services (Omede, 2011:90). The failure to provide basic social amenities has led to increased violence and unrest, further complicating efforts to foster sustainable human development.

HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES

The United Nations General Assembly (2012) Resolution 66/290 defines human security as an approach to assist Member States in recognizing and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their people. Human security in Nigeria refers to the well-being and protection of individuals and communities from various threats, including environmental degradation, oil spills, pollution, and ecosystem destruction. Violence, conflict, militancy, kidnapping, communal clashes, poverty, and inequality before the law, limited access to basic services, economic opportunities, and social amenities usher in unrest and security challenges in Nigeria, which have affected human security and lead to health risks, exposure to toxic substances, poor healthcare infrastructure, and disease outbreaks.

Equally, political marginalization, community structure, and resource governance hinder human security in some regions in Nigeria. To mitigate these challenges,

sustainable development, economic opportunities, environmental protection, and social services are urgently needed from the government, oil multinational companies, and other sectors of the Nation. Conflict resolution through dialogue with Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* Philosophy, mediation, and peace-building initiatives, in addition to community empowerment, capacity building, social mobilization, advocacy, good and effective governance, accountability, transparency, and effective leadership, are crucial in this direction. The goal is to ensure the well-being, dignity, and safety of individuals and communities in Nigeria. The Nation is rich in oil and gas resources, yet it remains one of the most underdeveloped and unstable countries of the World (Wangbu, 2005).

In line with the above, Edet Amana, Matthew Unanaowo, and Victor Etefia (personal communication on August 8, 11, and 2024) remark that the Nation Nigeria has experienced significant challenges related to human security, violence, environmental degradation, economic underdevelopment, and a lack of access to basic needs. The impacts of oil exploration, pollution, and activities of militant groups, Boko Haram and Herdsmen in Nigeria, have further exacerbated these issues, leading to threats to human security in the society. In support of this, Ajala 2016:81 declares that:

The Niger Delta Region in Nigeria has witnessed widespread violent conflicts between the government, multinational oil corporations, and militant groups. This conflict was widely attributed to deplorable human security, which deprived the indigenes of the region access to their sources of livelihood due to pollution.

The Nation's history of conflict, violence, and marginalization in some regions underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of security challenges, promoting sustainable development, and ensuring inclusive governance to achieve lasting peace and stability. Efforts to address human security in our society include initiatives such as the Amnesty Programme aimed at disarming militants and promoting peace. By focusing on addressing political marginalization, promoting economic diversification, and enhancing social development, stakeholders can work towards improving human security in the various regions and foster a more stable and prosperous environment for its inhabitants (Imongan & Ikelegbe, 2016: 62).

However, the effectiveness of such programs has been mixed, with challenges persisting because of the complex interplay of factors affecting human security in the Nation. Scholars have highlighted the importance of community-driven initiatives and the need for good governance, economic, environmental, and food security to enhance human security in all regions of Nigeria.

SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

The word security has to do with freedom from danger, anxiety, and fear; a situation that shows that a country is not exposed to internal sabotage or external attack. In the broader sense, security is seen as the struggle to secure the most necessities of life, such as shelter, food, water, medicine, and fuel (Obafemi, 2006:3). Any social unrest arising from the absence of these facilities can lead to human security challenges. (Gbenda, 2006:119). Security challenges in any nation constitute a threat to lives and properties, hinder business activities, and discourage local and foreign investors, which invariably slow down economic growth and human development (Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, 2021 August, 8). Which means that the security challenges of a Nation could be internal or external? The research will focus on internal ones in Nigeria, such as challenges of Militancy, kidnapping, Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herdsmen, armed robbery, sea piracy, suicide bombing and other forms of man's inhumanity to man (Ikenga, 2022:251). Nigeria in West Africa is the largest black Nation in the world with a population of about 180 million people. The 1914 amalgamation of Nigeria into a British protectorate gave Nigeria the three distinct regions of North, West, and East. Contemporary Nigeria is made up of 36 States with its Capital in Abuja (Federal Capital Territory).

Over the past two decades, Nigeria has grappled with multiple and complex National security threats each posing significant challenges to its stability, as witnessed in the Niger Delta Region and other regions of Nigeria in recent times. In confirmation of the above, the managing director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Ogbuku, 2024:1, declares that:

Development and security are intertwined because without security, there will be no development, and where there is security and development, there will be prosperity. For the Niger Delta to be peaceful, we need both development and security. Incidentally, the foundation for development is security; hence, there is a need for collaboration between the NDDC and security agencies.

The aforementioned stance is in support of the Ubuntu Philosophy theorized in 1980 by Stanlake J. W. T. Samkange from South Africa. This theory suited this study because it is rooted in African humanism that emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and the importance of community. It promotes the idea that individuals are defined by their relationships with others, highlighting shared responsibility, trust, and cooperation within a community. Ubuntu advocates for a communal ethos where the well-being of the group is prioritized over individual interests, fostering a sense of collective humanity and emphasizing the value of relationships and interconnectedness for complementary ontology between units and segments of reality (Hailey, 2018:9-10).

In affirmation of Ogbuku's stance, Aboh (2024:2) observes that “the nation finds itself fighting a violent militancy in the Niger Delta Region, conflicts between farmers and herders across multiple Regions, terrorism and insurgency in the North East, banditry in the North West and secessionist campaigns by groups such as the indigenous people of Biafra in the south East”. Judging from the above statement, the entire nation is seriously affected by security challenges. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to mitigate this menace before things fall apart. In light of the above, cultism is a common trend across all the states in the Nation, and cult groups function as fraternities that engage in public violence. These groups are believed to receive support from some of the political class, who use them to carry out acts of violence during elections. Internet fraud syndicates also contribute to violence in the country, with some engaging in ritual killings to influence their victims. Armed gangs involved in the control of public spaces, such as markets and vehicle loading points, make local people pay to use these spaces, contributing to high unemployment and further driving crime and security challenges in Nigeria. To address these challenges, the Nigerian government must be sensitive enough to address issues that are urgently begging for attention, while a subtle but discreet military approach will suffice a method to resolve the contemporary phase of security challenges in Nigeria. The federal government must also make more efforts to improve the quality of human lives in Nigerian society. In agreement with the above views, President Bola Tinubu has called for the “Collaboration of Traditional Rulers in the Niger Delta and other regions of Nigeria in maintaining enduring peace and security in the land (Ogunyemi, 2023:1).

Citing the above views, a comprehensive framework addressing the underlying drivers of security challenges, such as lack of economic opportunities for young people, drug abuse, the absence of the rule of law, corruption in public office, unfair electoral processes, and environmental pollution, is needed in Nigeria. In the Light of above, Omemma(2017:126) opines that:

Security challenges have assumed a monstrous dimension in Nigeria, both in the frequency of occurrence and the sophistication in character, especially since the return to civilian regime in 1999. Hitherto, security challenges in the country were infrequent and restricted to armed robbery and ethno-religious violence, but since the democratization of the Nigerian political landscape with its attendant rights and freedom of expression and association, the trend of security challenges has attained a bewildering dimension. Therefore, the Nigerian State is currently enmeshed in a myriad of security challenges that pose a threat to the consolidation of democratic governance in Nigeria.

According to Akinola (2019:3), most of these security challenges “have emerged partly as a result of multiple socio-economic injustices, including but not limited to

marginalization, social inequality, political exclusion, corruption, economic deprivation, unequal allocation and distribution of state resources.” Despite strong optimism that the return to a democratic system of government in 1999 would abolish ethnicity and ethno-religious strife, the country continues to be driven by tides of ethnic hostilities with devastating consequences. Oghuvbua(2021:324) enumerated such consequences as “a waste of enormous human and material resources leading to fragility of the economy and its political process.” However, Nigeria is not alone in the confrontations of security challenges. The fact remains that security challenges have become one of the complexities confronting virtually all Nations, governments, security institutions, and agencies. These challenges are diversified in forms and approaches to control of the situations Ogu *et al*, 2014). This is witnessed in the dynamics of security approaches, which have shifted from the military-centred perspective to an all-encompassing one. By implication, this presents the need to recognize national security as a business of all, for all, and by all.

In Nigeria, several decades of neglect of some Regions has created restiveness among various groups Onigbinde, (2008:5). The Niger Delta Region for example, in attempts to fight for their rights against the multinational oil companies and the federal government has resulted in large-scale violence, crises, social tension, hostage taking, manslaughter, kidnapping and other social vices in the Region and beyond. The aftermath of these vices is the high degree of security challenges in the Region which has led to the withdrawal of major oil-producing companies from the Nigerian state.

In recent times, Nigeria is confronted with daunting developmental challenges that pose a serious threat to socio-economic development and national security. These developmental challenges include endemic rural and urban poverty, a high rate of unemployment, debilitating youth unemployment, low industrial output, unstable and deteriorating exchange rate, a high inflation rate, inadequate physical and social infrastructure, very large domestic debt, and a rising stock of external debt. Indeed, Nigeria has witnessed various forms of militancy, violence, and crime (Fidelis &Egbere, 2013:87-96). From the foregoing, the threat to Nigeria's national security is real, as the international community has declared Nigeria a failing state in several circles, as well as in policy papers. For instance, the Fund for Peace (FFP) in its 2012 report, ranked Nigeria as one of the top 10 failed states in Africa and 14th in the world because of a growing wave of security challenges and endemic violence. Adebakin(2012:3) further explains that:

Evidence that lends credence to the fact that security challenges is nose-diving in Nigeria can be found in the 2010 survey report published by the Business Environment in Nigerian State, which highlights the deplorable security challenges in Nigeria along with other environmental components. For 2007, the

survey rated national security in Nigeria 62.69%, as against 49.49% in the 2010 report. This represents a significant fall in the national security rating by 13.2%.

To address the threat to national security and combat the increasing waves of crime, the federal government in the 2013 budget made a huge allocation to security, and the national assembly passed the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011. Despite these efforts, the level of security challenges in the country is still high, and a confirmation of this is the low ranking of Nigeria in the Global Peace Index (Ewetan & Urhie, 2014:41). Despite the plethora of security measures taken to address the daunting challenges of security in Nigeria, government efforts have not produced the desired positive result. For decades, issues relating to security were on the front burner in the development discourse. Several attempts have been made since the Cold War ended to redefine the concept of security. At the heart of this debate, there have been attempts to deepen and widen the concept of security from the level of the states to societies and individuals, and from military to non-military issues (Nwanegbo&Odigbo, 2013:285).

According to Williams (2008:6), security as an essential concept is commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to cherished values, especially the survival of individuals, groups or objects in the near future. Adebakin (2012:8), however, defines security as activities that ensure the protection of a country, persons, and properties of the community against future threats, danger, mishaps, and all other forms of perils. Babangida, (2011:3) on the other hand views national security “as the physical protection and defence of our citizens and our territorial integrity and also the promotion of the economic wellbeing and prosperity of Nigerians in a safe and secure environment that promotes the attainment of our national interests and those of our foreign partners.” Furthermore, Otto &Ukpere(2012: 67) assert that “security means protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life in homes, offices or communities. Security must be related to the presence of peace, safety, happiness, and the protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis, threats to human injury, among others” (Chris, 2012:244).

The national security of any nation encompasses other vital areas such as environmental protection, social and food security, and, more especially, the prevalence of internal peace. Without adequate security of lives and property, the system will be rife with lawlessness, chaos, and eventual disintegration. It might be military, economic, ideological, or cultural. The people must not only be secured from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals, unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation, pollution, and socio-economic injustices. This means that security is vital for national cohesion, peace, and human sustainable

development. It is therefore apparent that national security is a desideratum, sine qua non for economic growth and human development of any Nation (Ewetan&Urhie, 2014: 43).

MAJOR FACTORS OF SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

The security challenges in Nigeria are multifaceted and have great implications for human development. For instance, militancy in the Niger Delta region due to the presence of oil and gas, secessionist agitations by groups like the indigenous persons of Biafra in the South East, terrorism and insurgency in the North East, banditry in the North West, and farmer-herder clashes in several Regions. Here are the major factors contributing to these security challenges. They include, but are not limited to, marginalization, economic, environmental, political, religious, social, and leadership.

MARGINALIZATION FACTOR

The marginalization of any region of Nigeria has significant implications on human development, including feelings of exclusion and neglect that have fueled social unrest in many regions. Economic underdevelopment and lack of investment in infrastructure, education, and healthcare have hindered economic and human development. For example, the reckless exploration of natural resources has led to environmental degradation, affecting the livelihoods and health of the citizenry in the Niger Delta region. Perceived marginalization has eroded trust in government institutions, making it challenging to implement development initiatives. Frustration and disillusionment among youth have made them susceptible to radicalization and recruitment by militant groups. Marginalization has contributed to humanitarian crises, including displacement, human rights abuses, and health challenges. The region's economic instability affects Nigeria's overall economy and national development. Marginalization perpetuates social injustice and exacerbates unemployment, inequality, and poverty (Olusakin *et al*, 2023:59). To curb these challenges, implementing inclusive development initiatives that address the needs of all communities could help reduce marginalization.

ECONOMIC FACTOR

The Nigerian society faces significant economic challenges, despite being an oil-rich country. The Nation's economy is heavily dependent on oil production, which has led to the neglect of other sectors, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. The absence of economic diversification makes the Nation vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices and contributes to poverty and unemployment. Inadequate infrastructure, including power supply, hinders the growth of small-scale businesses and entrepreneurship in the Country. Oil exploration and

exploitation have caused severe environmental damage in the Niger Delta region, affecting livelihoods and exacerbating poverty (Nwagboso, 2012:43-44). To address these challenges, it is essential to promote economic diversification.

POLITICAL FACTOR

Significant political factors that contribute to instability in Nigeria include the democratic system being undermined by political patronage; using money and violence to achieve and retain power, leading to major fraud and violence during elections. The ruling class in Nigeria exploits the Nation's natural resources, perpetuating a system of marginalization and oppression (Olusakin *et al*, 2023:58-59). A situation where the country that ought to allow a multi-party system to flourish is taken over by two political parties is ominous. The APC and PDP hold a monopoly on the political environment, and election rigging has become the most essential resource that dictates victory in elections. The Nigerian economy and government are manipulated by the Northerners, who are predominantly Muslims, as we can see in the Muslim-Muslim ticket in the ruling party about the 2023 Presidential general election in Nigeria, a clear case of injustices (Oko, 2020:187). The Nation experiences escalating armed and violent conflicts between gangs and government security forces (Dambazua, 2014:108). The federal government's attitude contributes to security challenges with a lack of responsiveness to the needs and concerns of the Nation's inhabitants. In addition, many politicians these days change parties, from APC to PDP or vice versa, becoming political sycophants and courtiers of the ruling party. They usually consider elections as a "do or die" affair, and this has turned them to political militants.

RELIGIOUS FACTOR

The Nigerian community is threatened by security issues that are significantly affected by religious considerations. Nigeria's religious context is characterized by an intricate relationship between Islam, Christianity, and the traditional African religion, which tends to be a source of social tension. The struggle for political influence tends to overlap with religion, widening ethnic and regional conflict. This has resulted in a culture of violence and distrust, under which political and religious affiliations are necessarily tied together in the fight for resources, and the influence of religious fanaticism is now a leading factor in the Nation's security challenges (Labeodan, 2014). In essence, Christians in Northern Nigeria face security challenges amidst sectarian and inter-religious violence, as well as religious security challenges and fear.

LEADERSHIP FACTOR

Leadership has been defined in many ways, and it has become almost impossible to come up with a single definition that is acceptable to scholars of various

disciplines. In the words of Okaneme(2017:114), leadership is defined as the capacity of a person or a group of persons to inspire confidence. Robert *et al.*, cited in Ulu *et al*(2022:3663-3664) affirms that leadership involves a complex interaction among leaders, followers, and situations. Leadership is a critical part of Nigeria's problem of governance because the educational qualification prescribed for our political leaders by Section 131 (d), as amended by the National Assembly in 2010, and Section 318 (1) of the Constitution, does not equip our political leaders to be able to combine ideas and power, intellectualism and politics. A semi-literate president or governor is what the prescription tantamounts to (Umemezia, 2023:107).

The above assertion is relevant considering the nature of policy implementation, as well as the inability of certain political leaders in Nigeria to communicate ideas and think rationally. Since the constitution does not permit highly educated persons to hold elective offices and leadership, there is no doubt that the leaders will continue lacking ideas and rational thoughts that will push the country ahead. The kind of leadership needed in Nigeria is visionary leadership, a leadership that is detribalized, such that it has at a leadership position only people who can inculcate in their people or followers the ideals of common citizenship as a transcendent factor among all Nigerians. We cannot discuss good leadership and governance when we are still struggling to conduct free and fair elections in a democratic government. Identified free, fair, and credible election environments as the first step towards good governance. Furthermore, when there is no free and fair election, there can be no political, social, religious, economic, and societal stability.

EVALUATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

Security threats in Nigeria have far-reaching implications, not only for the concerned local communities but also for the country as a whole. The implications of security threats in the Nation include immense and cross-cutting economic stability, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and governance. Overcoming these challenges requires an all-round strategy with inclusive policies, local participation, and sustainable human development interventions to achieve peace and security in Nigeria.

The most devastating effect of security challenges is that they lead to a generous loss of lives and properties worth hundreds of millions of naira. Security challenges in recent times have touched on all aspects of life. Equally, security issues have largely resulted in setbacks to social infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, health centers, and facilities, which are largely the target time of destruction. In most cases, efforts to reconstruct destroyed buildings have become

a daunting task for both Federal and State governments (Ogunyemi, 2023:1). Sustainable economic development and job opportunities can reduce or eradicate these challenges.

The studies maintain that, for instance, the Niger Delta provides over 85% of Nigeria's government revenue and is vital for foreign exchange earnings. Ongoing security challenges, including oil theft and sabotage, disrupt production and significantly reduce government income, thus affecting national economic stability. Persistent violence and instability discourage both local and foreign investments in the region. Companies are often reluctant to operate in an environment characterized by violence, such as kidnappings, vandalism, and protests, which can lead to economic stagnation and job loss. The crisis resulted in widespread human rights violations, including kidnappings for ransom, security challenges, and loss of livelihoods. Local communities suffer from a lack of access to necessities, such as clean water, healthcare, and education, exacerbating poverty and social unrest (Wangbu, 2005:21). Therefore, to address this security challenges is the concern of all.

Political Marginalization is a persuasive determinant accounting for security concerns in some Regions in general, especially the Niger Delta region in Nigeria. Political Marginalization is a process whereby specific groups of people or parts of a nation are intentionally deprived of their entitlements to the natural resources available to them. Describing the Niger Delta Region, whose natural endowments account for over eighty-five percent of Nigeria's revenue? (Ogunyemi, 2023:1). Sadly, the region is the most underdeveloped in terms of economic and human developments. The same is true of South East region in Nigeria, which has not produced a president of Nigeria many years after the civil war; thereby agitating for their self-governance.

Security challenges have affected religious practices in several ways. Like Muslims and traditional religions, some people are running away from their faith for fear of being kidnapped and killed. Many religious buildings have been destroyed by these security challenges. An informant told the researcher that following the attack on some traditional rulers, medical personnel, religious leaders, businessmen, and political personalities in Oro Nation between April and May 2024, many people no longer go to Church on Sundays, especially in the township areas. Security challenges have affected the growth of the Church due to the inability of Christians to gather in places of worship. Many Churches have dropped all night program and can no longer hold night prayers or cross-over services (Olusakin, 2023:66-67). In fact, many churches hold their crossover services during the day and crossover spiritually at night in their various homes, which has impacted the rapid growth and finances of the Church due to security

challenges in society. Cancellation became necessary because many people were killed in such a program.

Security challenges have affected educational activities in many parts of the country; some students remain at home during official school hours. For example, many parts of the southeastern states of Nigeria are at home on Mondays, all in the name of “stay at home”, agitation for self-independence. In an area where the security challenges are high, parents are withdrawing their wards from such an environment, and staff are seeking transfers to safer places. As a result of these challenges, the teaching and learning processes are poor compared to other secure and free zones (Oghuvbu, 2021:324). The kidnapping of Chibok schoolgirls and other related experiences on April 14, 2014, are evergreen in the memories of some parents.

CONCLUSION

Security challenges in Nigeria hamper human development, causing an unimaginable level of poverty, unemployment, inequality, poor infrastructure, lack of social amenities, and negligible development in the nation. The Nigerian policies and intervention programs adopted to address these challenges have had some influence in mitigating security challenges, but they have not fully resolved the root causes of security challenges in the country. The efficacy of these policies and intervention programs has also been hindered by challenges such as deficient governance and defective leadership by successive governments, insufficient funding, corruption, and faulty institutional systems. Prioritizing human development through good governance, youth employment, empowerment, and infrastructural investment is essential for tackling Nigeria's security challenges. By addressing the underlying socio-economic factors contributing to these challenges, Nigeria can pave the way for a more stable and prosperous future of human development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The federal, state, and local governments should implement targeted policies and intervention programs in addressing the root causes of security challenges in Nigeria. There should be a strong political will, collaboration, accountability, and transparency among the government and non-Governmental security agencies in addressing security challenges in Nigeria. Government at all levels should invest in and develop critical infrastructure that will enhance economic opportunities and improve the living conditions of the citizens. The government should focus on education and skill development programs aimed at youth empowerment and employment in order to mitigate the root causes of security challenges. The government should foster dialogue between different community groups so as to help resolve security challenges in Nigeria peacefully.

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CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN DEVELOPING SOCIETIES.

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the world and providing both opportunities and challenges, especially in developing countries where the level of technological infrastructure is low. This paper discusses the ethical consequences of AI in the perspective of Christian ethics, with a focus on human dignity, justice, and accountability. Based on the postulation that humans are created in the likeness of God (Imago Dei), the Christian ethics maintain that AI must be used to maximize human welfare with marginalized communities being the biggest beneficiaries. Although AI has been of great promise in other areas of life, including the healthcare and education sectors, it has brought about threats like job losses, invasion of privacy, and the perpetuation of social disparities due to its intensive pace of development. The paper explores how these ethical issues might be applied to developing societies, where the unequal application of AI would only reinforce the economic inequalities that already exist. Christian doctrine promotes openness, justice, and responsibility in the construction of AI, asking the policy-makers and developers to make sure that people can use technology fairly. The paper draws attention to the fact that AI can be implemented to the common good through a prism of Christian principles of love,

justice and stewardship. The Christian community can help to create an inclusive and fair technological future by recommending responsible AI usage and helping vulnerable populations. Finally, in this paper, the author suggests the need to incorporate Christian ethics in AI policies and states that technology should be used to enhance human flourishing and support the dignity of all people, especially those who are disadvantaged.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century, influencing virtually every sector of society. Its development and deployment have raised significant ethical concerns, especially in the context of developing societies where technological access, resources, and infrastructure may be limited. Christian ethics, rooted in the teachings of the Bible and emphasizing the inherent dignity of human beings as created in the image of God (Imago Dei), offers valuable insights into the ethical implications of AI (Kayode et al., 2024). While AI has the potential to revolutionize industries and improve the quality of life, it also poses risks, such as exacerbating economic inequality, replacing human labor, and undermining privacy. In developing societies, where many are already marginalized, the ethical application of AI becomes crucial to ensure that these technologies do not worsen existing disparities.

Christian ethics emphasizes human dignity, responsibility, and justice in the development and utilization of technology. Although AI is a human-made tool, it must be used in a manner that encourages human flourishing, as opposed to reducing it. Christians would view the role of AI as part of supporting human prosperity, especially its advantage to the vulnerable (Chukwuka, 2025). Moreover, the Christian doctrine promotes equity, openness, and responsibility in the application of AI and calls upon developers and policymakers to look beyond the immediate societal effect (Tandana, 2023). With the ever-evolving nature of AI, Christian ethics is crucial in ensuring that its application in society is guided to ensure that technological development promotes the common good, human dignity, and justice.

The research follows a qualitative research approach in examining the ethical aspects of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Christian light. The study starts with an in-depth literature review that focuses on scholarly articles, theological sources, and reports concerning AI ethics and Christian ideals. It is concentrated on such concepts as human dignity, justice, and the Imago Dei to determine its applicability in AI development. The case studies about AI influence in the developing societies are to be analyzed theologically with their positive and negative sides. The results

are observed and summarized to suggest ethical principles and policy proposals, which will make AI support human welfare, in particular, vulnerable populations. The study will offer a Christian ethical approach to the use of AI, which honors human dignity, promotes justice, and avoids further marginalization of people in developing countries. Such a solution enables to address the potential of AI and its threats in a balanced way in the perspective of Christian ethics.

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN THE CONTEXT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Christian ethics, based on biblical teachings, emphasizes the inherent dignity and worth of human beings, rooted in the belief that humans are created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*). This foundational concept asserts that every person has inherent value, regardless of their background, abilities, or status (Tandana, 2023). As Artificial Intelligence (AI) advances rapidly, Christian ethics is faced with new moral challenges, particularly regarding the autonomy, accountability, and dignity of human beings. These concerns arise as AI systems increasingly perform tasks traditionally reserved for humans, such as decision-making, problem-solving, and even emotional intelligence, thereby reshaping how we understand humanity's relationship with technology (Kayode et al., 2024).

From a Christian ethical standpoint, autonomy is a crucial issue when it comes to AI. The autonomy of individuals, or their ability to make free, morally responsible decisions, is a key tenet of Christian ethics. As AI systems become more capable of making decisions without human intervention, questions arise about the loss of individual agency. The potential for machines to replace humans in decision-making roles, such as in healthcare, justice, and military applications, threatens the notion that human beings, as moral agents, should remain the ultimate decision-makers. In Christian ethics, maintaining human autonomy aligns with the belief that humans, created in the image of God, must retain the ability to make choices that reflect their moral responsibility (Burdett, 2023).

Another critical ethical concern raised by AI is accountability. In Christian teaching, individuals are held accountable for their actions, a concept rooted in the idea of divine judgment and moral responsibility. As AI systems take on more decision-making functions, determining who is accountable for the outcomes becomes increasingly complex. Is it the developers, the users, or the AI system itself that bears responsibility for decisions made by AI? From a Christian perspective, the ethical responsibility of those creating and using AI must be emphasized, ensuring that machines are used in a way that aligns with moral principles of justice and accountability (Veiga & Costa, 2024).

The third major concern is the preservation of dignity. Christian ethics underscores

that all humans have inherent dignity because they are created in God's image. The rapid advancement of AI has the potential to diminish this dignity, especially if AI is used in ways that objectify or dehumanize individuals. For example, AI-driven surveillance systems or robots replacing human workers in critical sectors could lead to situations where human value is overlooked or diminished. Christian ethics demands that AI be used to enhance human dignity, ensuring that technology serves the well-being of humanity and does not replace the fundamental human qualities of relationship, empathy, and creativity (Okoronkwo & Dike, 2025). Christian ethics offers a robust framework for addressing the ethical challenges posed by AI. By emphasizing human dignity, autonomy, and accountability, Christian teachings guide ensuring that AI serves humanity in a way that respects the inherent worth of every individual. As AI technology continues to evolve, Christian ethics must be incorporated into the development and deployment of AI to safeguard human dignity and promote the common good.

IMPLICATIONS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN DEVELOPING SOCIETIES

Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds the potential to transform economies, industries, and societies, but its impact in developing nations raises significant ethical concerns. From a technological, economic, and social perspective, AI's effects on labor, technology access, and social structures present both challenges and opportunities. The Christian ethical framework, grounded in the principles of human dignity, justice, and compassion, provides valuable insights into addressing these concerns in developing societies.

One of the primary concerns related to AI in developing countries is its impact on labor. In many of these nations, a large segment of the population depends on manual labor, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing, and service industries, for survival. As AI technologies advance, the automation of tasks traditionally performed by humans could result in the displacement of workers, particularly in sectors like agriculture and factory-based production (Chukwuka, 2025). This technological disruption could worsen economic inequality, as workers in these regions may lack the skills and resources necessary to transition to new roles that require advanced technological knowledge. Christian ethics, which emphasizes the care and protection of the vulnerable, stresses the importance of ensuring that AI does not exacerbate poverty or deepen existing social divisions (Kayode et al., 2024). The ethical response would be to advocate for policies that prioritize economic justice, training, and education to prepare workers for the AI-driven economy, while ensuring that technological progress does not lead to widespread unemployment.

Access to technology is another critical issue. In many developing nations, the

infrastructure necessary to implement AI technologies is lacking, and there is a risk that AI adoption will be uneven, with wealthier nations or regions benefiting more from AI advancements. The Global North, which has the economic resources to invest in AI research and development, could leap ahead in AI capabilities, further deepening the technological divide between rich and poor countries (Burdett, 2023). Christian ethics, which advocates for equity and stewardship, would call for greater international cooperation and investment in AI infrastructure in developing countries to ensure that they are not left behind. The church, based on principles of solidarity and global justice, could play a key role in advocating for ethical AI policies that encourage shared benefits across borders (Tandana, 2023).

In addition, the implementation of AI will certainly affect the culture and social life, especially privacy, social justice, and relationships. The ubiquity of AI systems in surveillance, data gathering, and decision-making can affect privacy and disrupt individual autonomy, especially in societies where no legal protections exist against a person. Moreover, the predictive, control, and influence features of AI may also lead to the further disenfranchisement of vulnerable groups, further contributing to social injustice and strengthening the mechanisms of inequality (Veiga and Costa, 2024). In a Christian ethical perspective, AI has to be created and implemented in a manner that empowers the vulnerable communities instead of taking advantage of them. The Christian doctrine of the dignity of the human person, the preferential option of the poor, and social justice promote the responsible application of AI that safeguards the rights and freedoms of everyone, particularly those who are at the greatest risk. The effects of AI on the developing communities have both ethical dilemmas and prospects. Christian ethics offers an ethical system that focuses on the dignity of every individual, justice, and the obligation to utilize technology in the welfare of the common good. The development and application of AI technologies must be done with fairness, accountability, and stewardship in order to ensure that AI is used to the advantage of the entire human race, and not to widen the disparity.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

As a result of biblical teachings, Christian ethics can be used as a powerful tool to tackle the ethical dilemmas brought about by the new technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). Human dignity, responsibility, stewardship, love, and justice are important Christian values that can be used to assess how AI is to be structured and used, especially in a manner that conforms to the teachings of the Christian tradition of morality, fairness, and concern for others. Due to the fast development of AI technologies, it is important that they are applied in a manner that will promote human prosperity but not undermine the basic ethical principles.

Christian ethics makes human dignity the center of the belief and emphasizes the thought that all humans were created in the image of God (Imago Dei), which gives

them intrinsic value and moral agency. Even though AI is progressing society in various fronts, it must never be utilized to substitute or diminish human agency or devalue human beings. The Christian ethical perspective holds that the creation of AI must be in line with the procreation of the flourishing and dignity of man. With the increased application of AI technologies in different industries, Christian ethics would warn against the possibility of AI replacing human labor or undermining human relationships, particularly in vulnerable populations (Okoronkwo & Dike, 2025). Rather, AI must be used as a supplement to the human abilities of the people, enabling them to serve their roles in respect of their God-given capabilities.

Responsibility and stewardship is another major Christian ethical issue. According to Christian beliefs, human beings are given a duty to take care of the creation of God (Genesis 1:28). This is also applied to technology, where AIs must be applied responsibly to preserve and advance human well-being. The advancement of AI should thus be pegged on moral responsibility; such technologies should be used in a manner that does not breach human rights as well as the environment. Responsible use of AI requires accountability especially in the context of making decisions that affect the lives of the people using AI. It is a moral responsibility of the developers and policymakers to ensure that AI is developed in a manner that does not harm human dignity and respects ethical norms (Burdett, 2023). Christian ethics is focused on accountability, and the creators and users of the AI should be accountable to the consequences on society.

Lastly, love and justice are foundational Christian values that should guide AI's role in society. The Bible emphasizes the need to love one's neighbor and care for the marginalized, especially the poor, oppressed, and vulnerable. AI technologies should not exacerbate social inequalities, but rather serve to uplift and empower underprivileged communities. Christian ethics advocates for fairness in the development and deployment of AI, ensuring that all individuals have equal access to the benefits AI offers. Moreover, the church and Christian organizations can play a key role in advocating for AI policies that prioritize social justice, equality, and the well-being of the disadvantaged (Chukwuka, 2025). Through Christian ethical principles, AI can be harnessed as a tool for love and justice, used to serve humanity by promoting positive social change and helping to reduce inequalities.

Christian ethics offers a valuable perspective on the ethical implications of AI. By focusing on human dignity, responsibility, and justice, Christian teachings provide a moral framework for ensuring that AI technologies are used in ways that promote human flourishing, protect the vulnerable, and contribute to a just society. As AI continues to evolve, Christian ethics can guide its development to ensure that it serves humanity ethically and responsibly.

AI AND CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a challenge and an opportunity for the Christian ministry. AI has the potential to accelerate Gospel work, improve teaching, and supplement pastoral care, though its implementation should be carefully managed to ensure it does not obscure the spiritual and relational elements central to Christian ministry. With the increasing role of AI technology in ministry work, it is worthwhile to balance the advantages of advancing the technology with the church's original role in promoting genuine human relations.

One of the most promising areas of application of AI is its use in the spread of the Gospel. AI-based language translation applications, such as these, can be used to translate Christian texts and scriptures to a range of languages, which will allow the Gospel to be made available to a larger range of listeners (Tandana, 2023). In the digital creation of content, including sermons, podcasts, and educational content, these tools may aid in their creation as well, making Christian teachings more accessible. Automating the process of sharing information, AI enables spreading Christian content quickly, particularly in areas where the availability of clergy or the physical church could be restricted. Nevertheless, it is essential to ensure that the implementation of AI in these situations is made in a manner that honors the personal relationship that is in faith. Christian ministry is a human relationship, and although AI can help in sharing content, it cannot be used to substitute the human touch that is required to provide meaningful spiritual guidance (Chukwuka, 2025). AI can be used in teaching to make Christian education more personalized and accessible. The AI-driven services will be able to cater to each person, and thus, have people learn about theological content in a way that is personalized to their needs. It is especially useful in such places where formal theological education is not readily available. AI technology can be used to train pastors as well, to provide resources and interactive education. However, Christian ethics would warn against over-dependence on technology to mentor or disciple oneself, as these aspects need serious spiritual commitment (Beheshti and Kerridge, 2025). AI may be helpful, and human leaders are still obligated to lead people through all the issues of faith.

In terms of pastoral care, chatbots or other AI-based virtual assistants are becoming more common to provide emotional support in the moment or answer questions regarding faith and spirituality. These tools may become a means of initial contact and provide a degree of consolation to those who require guidance or a prayer. Nevertheless, pastoral care is a relational and empathetic process that demands the human touch that is compassionate and cannot be transferred to AI. AI must not come in place of the human touch that is the fundamental part of Christian ministry (Veiga & Costa, 2024). The pastors are not only called to teach but to listen, to empathize and pray with people and to provide a place where faith and love are

practiced face to face. The church should come up with ethical standards of using AI to make sure that AI can be useful in the Christian ministry. These principles must underline the fact that AI must not substitute the individual side of the ministry, but rather assist it. The church ought to come up with explicit ethical systems to regulate the use of AI, whereby technology might be used to uplift the relationship and spiritual aspects of ministry, but not dominate it (Burdett, 2023). In addition, AI must be employed to serve other people, particularly the marginalized ones. The code of ethics must champion the application of AI to maintain social justice and equality, and the technological innovations must be in line with the Christian principle of loving a neighbor and taking care of the poor (Okoronkwo and Dike, 2025).

While AI offers substantial potential for Christian ministry, it is essential that its application is guided by Christian ethics. The church must ensure that technology enhances the work of ministry and does not diminish the human relationships that are fundamental to the Christian faith. By creating strong ethical guidelines, the church can responsibly integrate AI in ways that further the mission of the Gospel, improve teaching, and provide pastoral care while upholding the core values of love, justice, and human dignity.

CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO AI DEVELOPMENT

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) becomes an increasingly integral part of modern society, its ethical implications raise significant concerns. Christian ethics, with its emphasis on human dignity, justice, and the common good, offers valuable guidance in navigating the development and use of AI. Christians can contribute to ensuring that AI serves as a force for good, advocating for its deployment in ways that benefit healthcare, education, poverty alleviation, and global justice. Moreover, fostering dialogue between theology and technology can ensure that AI is developed not solely for profit but grounded in values that align with the Christian faith.

AI has immense potential to be a tool for good by improving human well-being in various sectors. In healthcare, for example, AI can assist in diagnosing diseases, predicting patient outcomes, and managing resources, making healthcare more accessible and efficient (Tandana, 2023). In education, AI-powered platforms can provide personalized learning experiences, helping students in underserved areas access high-quality education. Moreover, AI can be used to address social inequalities by identifying areas of poverty, enabling more targeted interventions, and facilitating global humanitarian efforts (Kayode et al., 2024). From a Christian perspective, these applications align with the principles of love, justice, and stewardship. The Bible calls for Christians to love their neighbors, particularly the marginalized, and using AI to reduce poverty and improve health is consistent with this moral imperative (Okoronkwo & Dike, 2025). Furthermore, AI should be

utilized to promote global justice, ensuring that technological advancements contribute to a more equitable world.

The dialogue between theology and technology is essential for ensuring that AI serves humanity's best interests. While technological advancements often prioritize efficiency and profitability, Christian ethics advocates for the responsible use of AI that upholds moral values such as human dignity, accountability, and compassion (Veiga & Costa, 2024). The church, alongside theologians and ethicists, can play a crucial role in guiding AI development to ensure it is not purely driven by commercial interests or power dynamics. Christian theologians, ethicists, and AI developers must collaborate to create ethical frameworks that promote justice and prevent the misuse of AI, such as discrimination or exploitation, which can further marginalize vulnerable groups (Burdett, 2023).

The Christian community's role in AI development is to ensure that this powerful technology aligns with the values of human flourishing and ethical stewardship. By advocating for policies and practices that prioritize human dignity and justice, Christians can guide AI development to reflect values that align with the gospel message. The ethical use of AI must emphasize transparency, equity, and accountability to ensure it serves the common good, enhances human life, and promotes a fairer society (Chukwuka, 2025).

AI has significant potential to improve society, but it must be developed with Christian ethical principles guiding its implementation. By using AI as a tool for good, advocating for ethical guidelines, and fostering dialogue between theology and technology, Christian communities can ensure that AI serves to enhance human dignity, advance global justice, and empower marginalized populations. This collaborative effort will help AI become a tool that reflects the core values of love, fairness, and human flourishing.

POTENTIAL ETHICAL CHALLENGES AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSES

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to develop at a rapid pace, it presents both immense opportunities and significant ethical challenges. These challenges are particularly pronounced in the context of power dynamics and inequality, which, if not addressed, could lead to the exploitation of vulnerable populations and exacerbate existing societal divides. From a Christian ethical perspective, it is essential to consider how AI can be used to promote justice, fairness, and human dignity, ensuring that its benefits are distributed equitably and that its potential harms are mitigated.

AI and Power Dynamics

One of the most pressing ethical challenges associated with AI is its concentration in the hands of a few powerful corporations or governments. AI technologies are primarily developed and controlled by large tech companies and state actors, which

raises significant concerns about the centralization of power and the potential for exploitation. As AI systems become more integral to various aspects of society, such as healthcare, finance, and law enforcement, the risk of these systems being used to infringe on privacy and violate individual rights becomes more pronounced. Christian ethics, with its emphasis on accountability, transparency, and justice, provides a moral framework for addressing these issues. The Bible's teachings on justice call for fairness and equitable access to resources, highlighting the importance of holding powerful entities accountable for how they use technology (Burdett, 2023). Christians are called to advocate for transparency in AI development, ensuring that these technologies are not exploited for profit or control, but rather are used to promote the common good. Furthermore, AI developers should be required to adhere to strict ethical guidelines to protect the rights of individuals, particularly in contexts where their personal data and privacy could be at risk (Tandana, 2023).

The Christian response to the concentration of AI power would involve advocating for democratized access to these technologies. This could be achieved by pushing for policies that promote inclusive development, ensuring that both large corporations and developing nations have access to AI tools that can help them thrive. The church, with its focus on serving the vulnerable, has a moral obligation to challenge the monopolization of AI and advocate for equitable technology access for all, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographical location.

AI and Inequality

Another critical ethical challenge is the potential for AI to exacerbate inequality. If AI benefits are not distributed fairly, the gap between the rich and poor, both within nations and globally, could widen. Wealthier nations and large corporations have the resources to leverage AI for their own gain, while developing nations, with limited access to AI technologies, may be left behind. This technological divide could further entrench social and economic inequalities. The Christian ethical perspective, which advocates for justice, equality, and solidarity, emphasizes the need for AI to be used in ways that promote social good rather than further inequality. The Christian faith advocates for the fair distribution of resources and opportunities, ensuring that marginalized and disadvantaged communities are not excluded from the benefits of technological advancements (Chukwuka, 2025). Christian responses to AI-driven inequality could involve both advocacy and action. The church can play a vital role in ensuring that developing nations are not left behind in the AI revolution. By promoting inclusive development and capacity-building in AI-related fields, the church can help bridge the technological divide.

Additionally, the church can advocate for policies that ensure AI's benefits are distributed more equitably, focusing on poverty alleviation, education, and economic empowerment in developing societies (Kayode et al., 2024). Christian ethics calls for the preferential treatment of the poor and vulnerable, and the church

can help ensure that AI is harnessed in ways that align with this principle. This includes ensuring that AI technologies are used to address global challenges such as poverty, healthcare access, and education in underprivileged regions, making sure that these advancements contribute to the common good and do not exacerbate existing disparities. AI presents both ethical challenges and significant opportunities for positive change. Christian ethics, with its emphasis on justice, equity, and human dignity, provides a robust framework for addressing the potential ethical pitfalls associated with AI. By advocating for accountability, transparency, and inclusive development, the Christian community can contribute to ensuring that AI is used to promote fairness, alleviate poverty, and empower marginalized communities. AI must be developed and deployed with careful attention to its ethical implications, ensuring that it serves the common good and upholds the values of love, justice, and equality.

CONCLUSION

Christian ethics is one of the most important frameworks to consider the ethical aspect of Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially in third-world countries. Ethical issues of autonomy, responsibility, and human dignity arise as AI technologies become more common. Christian ethics refer to the fact that, although AI can become a potent means of benefiting society, it has to be compatible with such values as love, the principle of justice, and stewardship, which are the key principles of the Christian faith. Such values are used to ethically apply technology to make sure it enhances human flourishing and not harm or worsen already existing inequalities. Christian ethics can be fundamental in ensuring that AI is developed and used in a manner that do not violate the natural dignity of all individuals, especially vulnerable groups within society. Social justice, equitable access, and human well-being are AI policies that should be advocated by the church and Christian ethicists to ensure that power is not centralized and that technology is used to the common good. Finally, good ethics of Christians can influence the AI future as it should be utilized with responsibility and ethically as well as with empowerment, equality, and with compassion towards any person and the oppressed ones in particular.

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FUNCTIONAL DYNAMICS OF TIVGBASEELA THEATRE

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ABSTRACT

African indigenous performances are many and are found to perform many functions for the societies that birth them. This is contrary to the earlier fallacious notion by Eurocentric scholars that Africa cannot boast of indigenous literature. Closer home, there are many theatres that are indigenous to the Tiv people of central Nigeria, and Gbaseela (hyena) is one of them. Moulded in line with the cannibalistic nature of the hyena, the performance mirrors the life of some Tiv people and satirizes it to elicit the desired change. The theatre started after the two Tiv riots of NandeNande (burn burn) and AtemTyo (breaking of heads) of 1960 and 1964, respectively, that saw the Tiv people destroy and kill themselves for political reasons. Gbaseela is a metaphor for the Tiv people in this regard because the animal kills and eats its kind, just like the Tiv people kill and destroy themselves. Using functionalism, a theory that insists on the function of every art in society, the study shows that Gbaseela theatre is highly functional, and the functions keep evolving as time goes on. Apart from mirroring and satirizing the Tiv society, especially at the time of its inception, it entertains and unites the people. Furthermore, it presents and preserves the Tiv culture as well as serving its therapeutic purpose.

Keywords: *Functionalism, Dynamics, Gbaseela, Theatre, Tiv.*

INTRODUCTION

Tiv *Gbaseela* theatre is one of the numerous African indigenous performances that litter the Tiv landscape. These generally are enactments of African life and

experiences, and such is what is obtained in almost all Tiv oral performances. Some of these oral performances are dramatic while others are not, and as such, there is every need to reiterate this. Consequently, Ganyi and Okpiliya (2019) aver that:

It becomes pertinent for Africans to define concretely what constitutes African traditional drama against the backdrop of Western concepts, which are not necessarily sacrosanct yet have seemingly become yardsticks for the measurement of all forms of dramatic enactment (p. 120).

If drama can be said to be “an imitation of life”, it can be realized in various forms and various cultures based on the way of life of the people who produce the drama. If African oral performances have the underpinnings of drama, which are dialogue, characters, storytelling, costume and props, stage, and others, the hitherto held negative argument by some Eurocentric scholars about the existence and viability of theatre in Africa should therefore be put to rest. Even those performances that are not dramatic, such as folksongs, are functional enough to be studied for their value in society. Consequently, Asagba (1986) thinks that approaches that condemn the viability of African oral literature either reveal the ignorance of the writer of the culture concerned, or represent a calculated attempt by the critic to create stereotypes, or misrepresent a virile and sustaining dramatic and theatrical tradition

The fallacious perception of African oral literature by some Eurocentric scholars can, however, be excused to an extent because its enactment is the totality of African life, and its orality is not fixated. This means that Africans hardly have generic names or titles that designate these performances apart from the general descriptive term of “storytelling”. (Ganyi and Okpiliya). Mande (2020) adds that they simply “live it”, i.e. the experiences. According to him, “...African traditional culture is inaccessible because most of it is oral rather than written and lived rather than formally communicated in books or journals and other sophisticated media technology” (p. 23). It therefore becomes difficult to understand these indigenous theatres without a careful study of the way of life of the people. Nobody can therefore write better about African oral performances than the Africans or people who live them. The onus now falls on the indigenous African writers to propagate performances as being artistic enough to rub shoulders with the Western version of drama and theatre, and being functional enough to advance the causes of the people. The challenge, however, presents itself in the fact that even among the African critics, many do not believe in the viability of these oral performances and have consequently failed to delve into their study, thereby neglecting African oral performances to the background. Consequently, these oral performances, which are dynamic both in component and function, are gradually going into oblivion and with them their cultural values. This study therefore seeks to study one of the African oral performances, *Gbaseela*, which is theatrical, paying closer attention to

its functional components. This is a venture that seems not undertaken anywhere in Tivland. This will add a voice to the already established voices on the viability of African oral literature. Furthermore, there is a need to make a protectionist study of these performances and document them for the sake of posterity, considering their importance to the Tiv society, just like it is done for other Tiv oral performances of *Kwagh-Hir* and others.

THE TIV PEOPLE

The word “Tiv” has a tripartite meaning. It connotes an ethnic group predominantly found in central Nigeria, the language spoken by that ethnic group, and the name of the man who is believed to be the progenitor of the ethnic group. Many scholars have researched the origin, migration, and settlement of the Tiv people, and as such, there are more than one account of their history of migration and settlement. Iorngurum (2017) is of the view that two perspectives represent the origin of the Tiv people: the linguistic perspective and the migration perspective. The linguistic perspective is made popular by R.C Abraham, who says the Tiv language has close affinity with the Bantu Nyaza. Based on this, Tiv origin has been traced to southern Africa, the ancestral home of the Bantu peoples. This view is also corroborated by Makar (1994), while the second perspective, which is that of migration, is found in Gbor (2006) and Okogwu (2008). All the authors are in agreement with Downes (1933). These authors say that there are cultural ties between the Tiv and the Zulu people of southern Africa. The leaning of the authors is that during the reign of the Zulu warlord, Chaka, the Zulu wars compelled the Tiv people to move from southern Africa through the Congo region of central Africa, across the Cameroun Mountains, to the Benue valley where they presently inhabit. Considering their love for farming, they found the fertile land of the Benue valley a good ground for farming.

Before settling in the Benue valley, the Tiv people wandered through many forests and briefly settled in a place called “Swem”, whose exact location is shrouded in mystery because of the numerous accounts about its location. Although different scholars have different opinions as to the exact location of Swem, it is noteworthy that all their suggestions fall within the area adjoining southeastern Tivland at the point where it is flanked by the Cameroon Republic. This view holds that the Tiv later left Swem probably as a result of a shortage of farmland, attacks by other ethnic groups, and internal strife. Whatever their reasons, it is recounted that the Tiv moved from Swem to Ibenda hill, from where they spread to various parts of the Benue Valley, their present-day settlement. While Sai (1965) says *Swem* is located on a hill in the Iyon area of Ikyurav-ya, a southern part of Tivland, Bohannan and Bohannan (1996) claim that it is located at Ngo Keju hill in Bameda highlands in south-western Cameroun. Makar (1994) thinks that it is located in Nyiev-Ya, in present day Kwande local government area of Benue State, while Gbor (2006) and

Orkar(1979) are not specific about the location of Swem but document that it is a hill located on the Nigeria-Cameroon border in the South-East of Tivland. Dzurgba (2007) records that *Swem* is located at the Akwaya subdivision of the Cameroun. This is a mountainous area and is also called *Swem* by the Akwaya people, who include Iyon, Ugbe, and Utanga. These tribes also claim to be Tiv and have their fellow tribesmen resident in the Moon district in the Kwande local government area of Benue State in Nigeria.

The Tiv form the largest ethnic group in Central Nigeria. Nomishan (2020) states that they are found in large numbers in Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Cross-River, and the F.C.T. They are, however, mainly found in Benue State, where they are the majority. Despite being found in all the places mentioned above, they all speak one language called the Tiv language. In Benue State, they live on both banks of the River Benue, about 150 miles from its confluence with the Niger. According to the 2006 census figures, the Tiv occupy a total land mass of about 22, 004 sq. km. As to the population of the Tiv people, there are various estimates. The Tiv people, going by the 2006 Census figures, have a population of about 1, 244, 183. Shishima (2005) has estimated the Tiv population to be above 3 million, and Tiv is now said to be the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria, after the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo.

Tiv are a homogenous entity, with a common worldview, religious system, economic system, myths of origin and rituals, festivals, and a seat of central authority known as Tor-Tiv, located in Gboko, Benue State (Chia 2013)

The total land area occupied by the Tiv is known as *Tar-Tiv* (Tiv land). It is made up of clans occupied by lineages usually named after their common ancestral grandfather, eg Ukum, Jechira, Ugondo, Iwarev, etc. These groups have smaller units known as *Upyaven*, and these are further broken down into *Ityo*, which is the patriarchal lineage from which one actually comes.

The *Ityo*, Rubingh (1969) is made up of compounds that consist of residential houses and each person's farmlands too. This makes the settlement of the Tiv people sparse compared to other people like the Idoma, Igede, and the Yoruba. The oldest living member of the family has authority as the head of the compound and is known in Tiv as the *orya*. This position is one that inspires fear in the younger members of the family to ensure discipline and order. The elders in a group of families form what is known as *Mbayaav*, or the Council of Elders. All members of this council share a close blood relationship based on a common male ancestor. Before the advent of colonialism and Christianity, this council presided over cases of adultery, land disputes, witchcraft, and other similar cases. In authority over this council was the *Ityo*, which consisted of representatives of various Councils of Elders. Before the advent of colonialism, the *Ityô* was the most significant body of authority in Tiv land. They presided over cases of murder, witchcraft, theft, and other difficult cases that the *Mbayaav* could not handle. The most senior member of the *Ityô* is said to

hold the land of the people in trust; he also owns the women, children, and is said to be responsible for the welfare of every member of the *Ityô* (Rubingh 1969)

Today, we encounter the Tiv people, a tribe that, apart from their predominantly farming activities, are in love with music, songs, and dance, and showcases it in every aspect of their lives.

THE TIV *GBASEELA* THEATRE

Gbaseela dance performance is said to have originated in the Sankera axis, Benue North East senatorial district, shortly after the *NandeNande* and *AtemTyo* riots of 1960 and 1964, respectively. It is believed that the theatre started in the Ukum Local Government Area in a village called Anam Utsar.

The theatre is both symbolic and satirical, moulded to represent the part of life of the Tiv man, particularly his aggressive nature, especially between him and his kin. *Gbaseela* is an animal which is called in English hyena, an animal known for its carnivorous and cannibalistic tendencies. The Tiv man's life is equated to that of *Gbaseela* (hyena) because, just like the hyena, he can kill and destroy his own people without a second thought, in order to achieve a desired purpose. Consequently, the Dance moves are aggressively performed by every performer to scare another fellow performer from coming closer. Just like the hyena, the characters come on stage in a single file, periodically turning to check their backs to ensure that no fellow hyena is coming to pounce on them from behind. Though no physical harm happens to the characters, they all act in a fierce manner reminiscent of a wild animal that is ready to pounce on its attacker. In the course of the dance, the performers constantly kick their legs sideward and behind to ensure that no fellow hyena is coming close to eat them.

Two prominent events in Tivland are adjudged to, in a way, be responsible for the advent of this dance performance. They are the *NandeNande* (1960) and *AtemTyo* (1964) riots. They are discussed below for a clearer understanding of the Tiv *Gbaseela* theatre.

THE *NANDENANDE* RIOT OF 1960

NandeNande is a Tiv concept literally interpreted to mean “burn burn”. In some quarters within the Tiv society, it is called *NandeIor*. We shall therefore use the expressions interchangeably. *NandeIor* was a movement that pitched the Tiv against their kith and kin who were NPC (Northern People's Congress) supporters. During the First Republic, the Tiv people were predominantly UMBC (United Middle Belt Congress) supporters, and they considered anyone outside this political party a betrayer; thus, their anger against their NPC brothers. The *NandeNande* aggression started at a town called Agasha, some twenty or so kilometres east of the present-day state capital of Benue State, Makurdi. UMBC supporters held a protest meeting

in the area in reaction to the so-called oppression and wrongful arrests and imprisonment of UMBC members by the NPC-led government, both in Tivland and beyond. The meeting, according to Akombo (2005)

was attended by some Tiv political and opinion leaders...Among other resolutions, the meeting resolved in favour of the adoption of harsh measures against Tiv elements identified to have enlisted their support for the *Baja* party, the NPC. It is important to stress that the Agasha protest meeting was a milestone in shaping Tiv-Tiv... socio-political relations in the first half of the 1960s. Some Tiv elders argue that the phenomenon arising from the meeting aggravated the already strained relationship between Tiv UMBC supporters and the Tiv elements in the NPC. Apart from the fury exerted on the latter, they were not only disowned by the generality of the Tiv nation, but also referred to as “*baja*”, a derogatory appellation for the NPC and its supporters (p. 193).

By extension, the movement was obviously to affect the Tiv relationship with their kith and kin, who were largely in the NPC. One important fact to be noted about the *NandeNande* episode is that it mostly targeted houses and property for destruction. In most, if not all, cases, Tiv NPC supporters were always forced out of their homes before their properties were burnt. People who did not want to give immediate compliance were thoroughly beaten and forced out before setting their belongings ablaze. The whole concept of this riot was to burn down properties of NPC supporters, thus the derivation of the name *Nande Nande*.

Fortunately, the *NandeNande* was short-lived, but the phenomenon portrayed some Tiv people as people who were aggressive and without love for their own. It portrayed the people as a selfish group who could kill and destroy their own to achieve their set target. Both from within and afar, people watched and judged.

THE ATEMTYO RIOT 1964

The non-satisfactory settlement of parties after the *NandeNande* gave rise to the *AtemTyo* riot in 1964. Akombo (2005) is of the view that the uprising, according to Tiv sources, was politically motivated. Among other major factors, the *AtemTyo* aggression resulted, in part, from the harsh treatment the NPC government exerted on the Tiv people for their role in the *NandeIor* settlement. Some Tiv sources argued that the main cause of the *AtemTyo* was the strong feeling among the people that the *NandeIor* operation had failed, and that, other than compel the NPC government to positively re-examine its attitude and policies towards the Tiv people, the government became more punitive and repressive. The protection and favour enjoyed by Tiv elements in the NPC was, however, the overriding determinant. Some Tiv sources maintained that the instrumentality of the *AtemTyo* was the only

way the Tiv nation thought they could exert deadly blows on the NPC and its supporters in Tiv land. This explained why the *AtemTyo* operation, literally translated to mean “head breaking”, spread like wildfire in Tiv land. The operation was not only intended to destroy life and property, but also to wipe out NPC followership in Tiv land.

These two political riots in Tivland caused a satirical reaction from a group of Tiv performers who started a satirical dramatic dance called *Gbaseelato* showcase to the Tiv people and the world generally the nature of the life of the Tiv man who does not spare his kith and kin in the arena of survival.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FUNCTIONALISM

Bronislaw Malinowski's functionalist theory, a seminal contribution to anthropology, posits that cultural practices and institutions serve essential functions, ensuring the survival and well-being of individuals and societies. Emerging from his groundbreaking fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands during World War I, Malinowski's theory revolutionized the discipline, shifting focus from evolutionary and diffusionist perspectives to the integral role of culture in shaping human behavior. By contextualizing cultural phenomena within their social milieu, Malinowski's functionalist approach illuminated the intricate relationships between cultural norms, social structures, and individual agency.

Malinowski's work was influenced by his experiences as a Polish expatriate in England, his interactions with prominent anthropologists, and his exposure to various philosophical traditions. His critique of traditional anthropological approaches and his emphasis on empirical research paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics. Functionalist theory, as articulated by Malinowski, has had far-reaching implications for anthropology, sociology, and related disciplines, shaping research agendas, informing policy decisions, and influencing contemporary debates. His observations of indigenous cultures led him to question traditional evolutionary and diffusionist perspectives, instead emphasizing the integral role of culture in shaping human behavior (Malinowski 1944).

Functionalist theory emerged as a response to the limitations of earlier anthropological approaches, seeking to understand cultural phenomena within their social context. The concept of "function" is central, referring to the role or purpose served by cultural practices and institutions. Malinowski argued that these functions are essential to maintaining social order, promoting individual well-being, and ensuring cultural continuity. Functionalism is therefore based on the premise that all aspects of society serve a purpose in that society. Used in oral

literature, it is concerned with the functions that oral literature plays in society. It is a theory that insists on the functional benefits of an oral rendition. The leading scholars of this approach are Bronislaw Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, who emphasize the function of any art form in society. Malinowski defines the function of 'anthropological facts' as the parts which they play within the integral system or culture and the manner in which they are related to each other within the system; Radcliffe –Brown, his contemporary, has it that the function of any recurrent activity is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity. What this means is that everything a society does (e.g., storytelling, marriage, commerce) has a practical use for its citizens, and a specific place within the fabric of social norms. Such a fabric, the total of needs, individually and collectively, is known as the functional unity of society. Functionalism is therefore a theory that examines the peculiar network of needs in every society and the way in which this network ensures the contentment and survival of the social system (Okpewho 1992).

The functionalists' approach observes that if an aspect of social life does not contribute to the society's survival or if it does not serve some identifiably useful functions that promote the values among members of the society, it is of no use. The theory came about as a reaction to the excesses of the evolutionary and diffusionist theories of the 19th century and historicism of the early 20th century (Goldschmidt 1996). These ideas were considered outdated, and as such, there was a need to move away from “evolutionism and diffusionism that dominated American and British anthropology at that time (Lesser 1935; Langness 1987). Similarly, Young(1991) says that it was a shift in focus from the speculatively historical or diachronic study of customs and cultural traits as survival to the historical, synchronic study of social institutions within bounded functioning societies. Functionalists believe that the realities of events are no longer historical but are found in their manifestations of the present.

Authors have made inroads into the study of functionalism, but have only ended up going around it. Parsons (1967) and Alexander (1985) both point to societal interactions and their functions within those societies.

The crux of functionalism in oral performance is that every oral performance must have a function in society. The theory avers that performances are meaningful only when they relate to the present way of life of the people who own such performances. Consequently, *Gbaseela* in this framework is not out of place since it performs various functions within the Tiv social milieu. Moreover, the functionalist approach has gained popularity among many Tiv oral literature scholars among whom are Keil (1979), Hagher (2003), Adeiyongo (1986), Ker (2001) and Nyitse (2006) among others.

FUNCTIONAL DYNAMICS OF GBASEELA THEATRE

The Tiv *Gbaseela* theatre performs many functions both within societies it is found and beyond. Some of its functions are discussed below, laying credence to the use of functionalism as a theory.

Mirror to the society

As a genre of literature, this aspect of Tiv oral literature serves as a mirror to the Tiv society, strengthening the use of functionalist theory. The Tiv people, believed to be violent and aggressive towards their kind, are likened to the animal called *Gbaseela* (hyena), bearing in kind its aggressive nature. This dance performance is therefore performed in the likeness of the hyena, being aggressive and defensive whenever it comes close to its kind. Coming at the heels of the *NandeNande* and *AtemTyo* riots of 1960 and 1964, respectively, where the Tiv people killed themselves and destroyed properties among themselves due to political differences, the *Gbaseela* performance serves as a satirical dance, metaphorically referring to the people as hyenas, and aims at ridiculing the people for a positive change. As a mirror, it reflects the people's actions to elicit a change.

Entertainment

Gbaseela is artistically entertaining. The performance gathers people together to savour its beauty. A combination of drumming, singing, dancing, together with other rhythmic body movements and gestures give the performance its aesthetic value, which the audience finds alluring. They thus gather to enjoy themselves anytime the performance calls. This can be at celebrated events such as weddings, festivals, and or dance competitions.

Unity

Gbaseela creates bonds and unity among community members. During performance, people who are not even close turn to come together, and this creates bonds on common grounds. Groups of interest are created along farming lines, schooling lines, and age grade lines, all depending on the societal needs. These groups function beyond the performance and outlive it. Moreover, music, songs and dance have the propensity to congregate people and this is evident in the Tiv *Gbaseela* theatre.

Therapy

The therapeutic nature of the *Gbaseela* dance performance cannot be overemphasized. When people come together to watch the performance, they are ecstatic and immersed in it to the extent that they forget about whatever ailment they have. It is noted that people with high blood pressure find the performance quite therapeutic. It is argued in some quarters that this performance cannot be said to be therapeutic since it does not completely cure ailments like other ritual performances among the Tiv. Some proponents of the same line of argument again acknowledge that *Gbaseela* only provides a temporary therapy for people who completely immerse themselves in the performance. However, it does not matter whether the

therapy is temporary or permanent. As long as there is a form of therapy, the performance can be said to be therapeutic.

Cultural Identity

Gbaseela presents the cultural identity of the Tiv people to the world. It is said earlier that dance is part of the Tiv culture. Consequently, performing the *Gbaseela* dance entails presenting the Tiv culture to the world. The beautiful cultural attire of the Tiv, the *anger*, with its black and white stripes, looking like a zebra, is also presented as a result. This also shows the cultural pride of the people.

Cultural Preservation

Gbeetse helps in preserving the culture of the Tiv people through continuous presentation, which is passed on from one generation to another. Without the continuous practice, the performance would not have survived to this day. Continuous presentation of the performance, therefore, sustains it and passes it onto the next generation, and this trend keeps the culture alive.

CONCLUSION

Gbaseela Theatre is one of the numerous African indigenous theatres that have been in existence for quite some time. It serves many purposes, which it is meant to serve the communities that own it. Studies have shown that African indigenous performances are functional in nature and can stand shoulder to shoulder with any dramatic performance anywhere in the world.

Gbaseela originated in Ukum Local Government Area, all of Benue State, as a satiric dramatic performance satirizing the Tiv riots of *NandeNande* and *AtemTyo* of 1960 and 1964, respectively.

Findings of this study show that *Gbaseela* is functionally dynamic. Prominent among them is cultural presentation. It is a part of the culture of the Tiv people, and as such, presenting it to the world is tantamount to presenting the culture of the people. Dance performances are part of the Tiv culture as well as their traditional attire called *anger*. These are the things that are aesthetically presented to the world for purposes desired by the people. Closely related to cultural presentation is cultural preservation. The continuous practice and performance of the theatre, passed on from generation to generation, amounts to cultural preservation owing to the fact that it is a cultural artefact of the Tiv people. This function is protectionist in nature and must be upheld by all means.

Gbaseela serves an entertainment purpose. As dance aspects of oral literature, its entertainment value is enormous. People turn out in large numbers to watch and amuse themselves, considering the fact that it is high in aesthetics.

In addition, the performance serves as a source of income to the communities in which the troupe is domiciled and the individual characters that perform. Sometimes, the troupe is paid to travel to faraway lands to perform for a fee, while at

times, the characters are sprayed with money during performances. *Gbaseela* also attracts tourists to the local governments that host them. All these are avenues where the performance generates income.

These dance performance bonds and unify people in their communities. It plays a vital role in fostering a sense of community cohesion and solidarity. It provides opportunities for people to come together, share experiences, and reinforce social bonds, thus strengthening the fabric of society. Music and dance have remarkable power to bring people together, transcending age and religious barriers and fostering a shared emotional experience. This creates unity among community members.

In Tiv cosmology, it is believed that dance performances have healing and therapeutic properties. People who ail in one way or another, by watching these performances, are temporarily relieved of their ailments because it takes their minds away from their afflictions. *Gbaseela* performs this function.

Teasing out the functions that *Gbaseela* theatre performs in society gives an insight into the cultural significance of the performance. Considering the positive functions recorded, it is not out of place to say that the theatre is one of the many in Tiv society that should be constantly enacted, considering its value, so that it will not go extinct.

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COUPS AND THE VOLATILITY OF POLITICS IN THE WEST AFRICAN SUB-REGION: IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

While other continents are strategically positioning themselves to harness the advantages of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) that is sweeping globally, Africa appears to be lacking in readiness. Unprepared due to the lack of fundamental elements for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as a stable governance and political structure is notably absent in a context where coup d'états have become commonplace. This pertains specifically to three nations within the ECOWAS region: Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. One might contend that these issues are unique to these nations and should not be imposed upon the endeavours of other countries in their pursuit of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This study challenges the notion that such a perspective is accurate. This phenomenon arises from the intricate interconnections these nations share in trade and commerce, to the extent that neighbouring countries experience consequential effects. Furthermore, the recent surge of coups has prompted various African nations to reevaluate and reorganise their military structures to preempt the potential occurrence of similar upheavals. In light of this, the pivotal inquiry arises: given the initiatives aimed at military standardisation and the objectives to avert the descent into military governance, are African nations

genuinely prepared to harness the potential advantages of the Fourth Industrial Revolution? Using the critical and analytical methods of philosophical inquiry, the paper argues that the coups occurring in these nations will result in a significant realignment of power on the global stage.

Keywords: 4IR, Coup d'états, Democracy, Development, Contemporary African political system

INTRODUCTION

Only a limited number of countries in Africa have been fortunate enough to maintain their democratically elected governments without experiencing the upheaval of coups d'état. In their 1982 discourse, Thomas Johnson, Robert Slater, and Pat McGowan elucidate that from 1960 to 1982, nations in sub-Saharan Africa encountered 52 successful military coups, 56 attempted coups, and an additional 102 documented plots (refer to Johnson et al 1982). The report indicates that “38 of the 45 countries (84%) experienced some form of military intervention from the start of 1960 to the conclusion of 1982” (Johnson et al 1982, 622). Since 1982, it is evident that the statistics concerning coups on the continent have not diminished. This observation holds particularly true for the most recent developments on the continent: Gabon, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. On January 28, 2024, these nations declared their intention to withdraw from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Wahab 2024).

At first glance, one might assume that these landlocked countries lack significant political and economic ramifications, not only for West Africa but for the African continent as a whole. The argument may encompass the perspective that, should these countries choose to withdraw from ECOWAS and establish a bloc, they might inadvertently consign themselves to a state of isolation within the realm of political economy. Upon careful consideration, it is essential to highlight that the repercussions stemming from ECOWAS present at least three significant implications for both the region and the continent in 2024. The departure of these nations from ECOWAS indicates significant economic and security dilemmas for the region. Furthermore, the triumph of these coups is poised to incite or cultivate an increase in the occurrences or manifestations of coups in various nations. This is particularly evident in the instances of Cameroon and Rwanda, which have had to reorganise their military structures to prevent a situation similar to that of Gabon (Daily Trust, 2023).

This is against the backdrop of their conviction that ECOWAS has failed to effectively confront the challenges posed by insurgents and activities related to

terrorism in the region. The justifications presented now diverge from those initially offered for the engagement in the coups. Naturally, each individual articulated their rationale for the dismantling of the preceding political administrations. In addition to the pervasive corruption and the dictatorial regimes where familial ties govern the nation's affairs (as seen in Gabon), the rationale for dismantling the existing political structure is not primarily centred on safeguarding democracy. Rather, it emphasises the pursuit of genuine freedom and self-determination, liberated from French influence. If this were incorrect, the concept of “French colonial tax” would not have emerged in the discourse to begin with.

Evidence suggests that France exerts economic dominance over fourteen African nations through the imposition of a colonial tax, prompting many of these countries to explore avenues for disengagement from the West African CFA union (Hundeyin 2019). The report reveals that these nations are remitting approximately five hundred billion dollars each year to the French treasury as a form of colonial debt subsequent to their independence. When one considers the historical context of pillaging and exploitation that defined the colonial era, which significantly contributed to the continent's underdevelopment, the rationale for dismantling governments that remain subservient to France appears to hold merit. While this is not intended to condone the coups in Africa, it is essential to recognise that these actions serve as mechanisms for asserting self-determination and achieving total freedom (Rodney 1972). Nonetheless, the pivotal inquiry to contemplate at this moment is: What implications do all of these hold for the political terrain of the continent in 2024? This is the paramount inquiry that the current study grapples with.

To address the aforementioned research question, the initial step is to gain a succinct understanding of the motivations behind the overthrow of the previous administrations in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the primary political frameworks and characteristics of the administrations that provided a rationale for the actions of the coup leaders. Subsequently, the focus transitions to the implications of the coups in these nations on both the regional (ECOWAS) and continental stages. The emphasis here is to contemplate the ramifications that this 'wind of coup' signifies for the nation as a whole. This research in the final section examines whether the evaluation of democratic gains or self-determination serves as the most appropriate framework for analysing the exploration of coup options by these nations.

The paper is divided into five segments. The first segment introduces the main gist of the engagement. This is followed by an in-depth justification for the coups in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso Coups that prepares the ground for inquisition into the essence of coups and Africa's political stability in 2026. Building on this, the

paper enters a discursive fray on consolidating democratic gains and the quest for self-determination for Africa in 2026. This is followed by the conclusion.

The paper is divided into six segments. The first segment introduces the main gist of the engagement with an insight to the meaning and nature of coup and politics. This is followed by an avid justification for the Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso Coups that prepares the ground for inquisition into the essence of coups and Africa's political stability in 2026. Building on this, the paper enters a discursive fray on consolidating democratic gains and the quest for self-determination for Africa in 2026. This is followed by the conclusion.

UNDERSTANDING COUP AND POLITICS

A military coup is an unpopular 'political phenomenon' that eventually gets legitimacy through the citizens' acceptance of it. This is at variance with the Platonic idea of governance as articulated in his classical work *Republic*, where he advanced a division of labour between three major classes of the individual in the state. It becomes more puzzling in Huntington's (1957, 38-39) view when he contends that Politics is beyond the scope of military competence, and the participation of military officers in politics undermines their professionalism, curtailing their professional competence, dividing the profession against itself, and substituting extraneous values for professional values. One wonders why the military ventures into political leadership, even when it is considered unprofessional and damaging to military interests to do so. Various reasons have been advanced for the occurrence of a military coup d'etat. Some of the fundamental reasons often referenced in justifying the phenomenon vary from socioeconomic and political development factors to variables concerning the military establishment itself.

Politics is one of the fundamental phenomena that sustain humanity and social coercion. It emplaces social order when it is entrusted in the hands of rational beings, while it goes the other way if given to corrupt individuals. This idea is properly captured in Steinmetz's (2021, 7) thought that "politics governs our social relations and our relationship to goods and resources to effect improvements on society. This is a recalibrated view earlier articulated by Socrates that humans do not merely want to survive, but to live well. This understanding suggests politics as a tool of social betterment. For the ancient Greeks, particularly Aristotle, politics cuts even deeper—it is central to the very purpose of what it means to be a human being. For Aristotle, the highest virtue was living a life of politics. "For as a human being is the best of animals when perfected," observes Aristotle, "so when separated from law and justice he is worst of all" (Aristotle, 1998, 5). This is fundamental to understanding politics, because human beings cannot understand each other outside their interpersonal relations; the activity that governs these relations is the most virtuous of activities. This is what politics should connote in its ideal sense.

JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE MALI, NIGER AND BURKINA FASO COUPS

This section evaluates the circumstances in each of these nations to comprehend the existing status quo that ostensibly warranted a coup. Beginning with Mali, it is essential to note that the coup in Mali was based on specific factors that can be addressed as a result of ineffective democratic governance.

In 1991, the people of Mali adopted a non-violent strategy to challenge the prevailing party system in the country, a movement subsequently supported by the Malian military under the leadership of then-Lieutenant Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré. This action led to the arrest of the president and the suspension of the constitution for two months, facilitating the introduction of a multi-party system, which also contributed to the peaceful conflict resolution in the northern regions (Emily & Emily 2020).

Furthermore, preceding the coup on 18th August 2020, the people of Mali, in conjunction with the military, engaged in a protracted period of peaceful protest lasting three months, which ultimately did not yield significant political results. This could be considered as one of the underlying reasons for the coup. The leaders of the coup assert that their 'action' was a response to the government's inefficacy and corruption in managing the conflict in the northern and central regions of the country (Emily & Emily 2020). An intriguing occurrence relates to the populace's perception that Keita's administration represents a paradigm of failure, characterised by prevalent instances of corruption and a backdrop of political instability (Ena & Joseph, 2021). The government's inability to uphold democratic principles, address conflicts, and supply essential services to its citizens incited widespread discontent, ultimately leading to the coup.

In accordance with the preceding discussion, the research conducted by Emily & Emily (2020) reveals certain inconsistencies within the Malian democratic government, which facilitated the alignment of discontented Malians with a coalition of entities, including the June 5 Movement and a network of social organisations, alongside the influence exerted by supporters of Imam Mahmoud Dicko, the former leader of Mali's high Islamic Council. The pursuit of genuine democracy by the people of Mali has been undermined, a fact that the coup leaders cite as a rationale for their intervention.

Niger, conversely, is a landlocked nation situated in a region historically linked to political instability and insecurity. The coup in Niger occurred on July 26, 2023, resulting in General Abdourahamane Tchiani proclaiming himself as the new head of state (Ajala 2023; Yabi 2023). At this point, it is important to note that preceding this successful coup, there was an unsuccessful attempt that took place forty-eight hours after the 2021 Niger election, which proclaimed Bazoum as the president-

elect. However, the presidential military guards successfully thwarted this coup (Ajala 2023). Their return in 2023 was a requisite for achieving success.

Certainly, akin to the Mali coup, the Niger coup possesses its own set of justifications. France has been identified as the European nation that has consistently shaped the political landscape of Niger (Yabi, 2023). The motivations for their overthrow, which they believe serve the interests of the citizens of Niger, include the increase in insecurity alongside the economic downturn (Ajala 2023). The situation in Niger can be succinctly characterised as a reaction to ineffective governance and the ongoing military involvement of France in the region. The presence of French and United States military forces in the country has been regarded as detrimental to its stability and self-determination. Similar to Mali, it is important to note that another rationale presented by the coup leaders is that Niger has not succeeded in delivering the benefits of democratic governance to its populace (Ajala, 2023). The state was identified as lacking in the provision of adequate health care facilities, access to pipe-borne water, and essential infrastructure, among other critical needs. In addition to the aforementioned points, the possibility of resource exploitation remains a consideration.

Ajala (2023) highlights the exploitation of Niger's uranium resources by France, noting that this has resulted in minimal benefits for Niger's economy, where poverty remains a pervasive issue. Ultimately, one might ponder whether the triumph of this coup in Niger could have laid the groundwork for a transition in allegiance from France to Russia, akin to the situations observed in Mali and Burkina Faso, which we shall now examine.

In January 2022, Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba executed a coup d'état against the administration of Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. He rationalises the coup as an essential measure in light of the government's failure to effectively address the jihadist insurgency in Burkina Faso, which began in 2019. Another rationale for the coup, as articulated by Damiba, pertains to the pervasive influence of France in nearly all facets of Burkina Faso's political economy, with the Kaboré administration being viewed as under French control (Al Jazeera News, 2022). Despite the support for this overthrow, the Burkinabe military executed a counter-coup on September 30, 2022, led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré. Traoré articulates his rationale for the counter-coup by asserting that Damiba failed to effectively address the Islamic insurgency and various non-governmental entities within the country, resulting in a significant loss of 40% of the nation's territory to non-state actors (Ndiag&Mimault 2022; Bado 2022). Moreover, it was indicated that Damiba did not comply with military recommendations and guidance, instead of persistently clinging to ineffective strategies utilised by the preceding administration. Ultimately, this, along with the preceding justifications, constituted the basis for the

coup in September, as the nation's military endured significant losses at the hands of insurgents (Ndiag&Mimault 2022).

In his evaluation of the coups in Mali, Niger, and Burkina, Lawal (2024) posits that it is debatable how France, which does not inherently possess gold as a natural resource, has acquired it through its engagements in West Africa. To put it differently, these francophone nations have consistently faced exploitation, yielding no tangible advantages attributable to their national economies. This perspective supports the belief that Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali are actively involved in a struggle for self-determination, emphasising the pressing need to sever ties with French influence over their political and economic systems.

Despite the well-documented reality that these nations are embroiled in a struggle for self-determination and genuine independence from France, it is important to note that domestically, these three countries persistently grapple with insecurity, poverty, and political and economic instability. This tumultuous environment has fostered a propensity for coups aimed at displacing ineffective democratic governments that have not fulfilled the needs of their citizens. The subsequent section will delve into the ramifications of the recent declaration by these three nations from ECOWAS, particularly concerning the political stability of West Africa and the broader African continent.

COUPS AND AFRICA'S POLITICAL STABILITY IN 2026

The occurrences of coups in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have illuminated the profound nature of the political instability in these nations, which is not merely a contemporary phenomenon but rather a persistent challenge that has afflicted them since their political independence in the last century. The recent coups d'état carry significant implications not only for the nations involved but also for their regional organisations and the broader context of Africana as a whole.

The repercussions of the coups in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso carry significant implications for both the African continent and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The situation arises from the fact that the coups erode the legitimacy of ECOWAS, particularly in light of the recent declaration of withdrawal from the regional organisation (Wahab 2024). The 2001 ECOWAS protocols on democracy and good governance explicitly reject the legitimacy of coup d'états (Edu-Afful 2021). The occurrence of coups in these countries serves as a clear indication of their inability to adhere to the principles established by ECOWAS. Furthermore, despite the appeals from the international community, the African Union, and ECOWAS urging these nations to revert to democratic governance, the evident disregard for such entreaties underscores a lack of respect

for these organisations. Their announcements regarding the withdrawal from ECOWAS serve as unequivocal indicators of this lack of consideration (Wahab 2024).

The recent surge of coups d'état in Africa has elicited a measured response both within the continent and internationally. The recent declarations of withdrawal from ECOWAS by Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger warrant a thorough examination of the political and economic ramifications these departures entail for both West Africa and the broader African continent. It appears that these nations recognise the strategic benefit of their coalition of non-ECOWAS states within West Africa, as any military action directed at one would implicate the entirety of the group. Nonetheless, in light of the recent military upheavals in Cameroon and Rwanda, two nations situated in Central Africa, it becomes evident that other countries exhibit a greater apprehension towards military coups than towards the fortification of democratic principles. This presents arguments suggesting that ECOWAS lacks the capacity to effectuate a return to democratic governance in these nations. It is certainly possible for a critic to argue that this perspective is limited to Central Africa, while the situations in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger pertain to West Africa. The reaction from these nations—Cameroon and Rwanda—pertains to the coup in Gabon (Daily Trust 2023). This study posits that, in the near future, one cannot dismiss the possibility of analogous military upheavals or even successful coups occurring not only in other West African nations but also in various regions across the African continent.

Undoubtedly, the recent increase in coups within Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso has significantly undermined democratic advancements, including efforts towards poverty alleviation, electoral participation, and access to quality healthcare, among other political considerations. The ramifications for security and the political economy in West Africa warrant serious attention (Edu-Afful, 2021). The security implications of these two are particularly significant. The success of these coups in various countries creates an opportunity for violent non-state actors, such as Jihadists, to exploit this situation to launch attacks, consequently undermining peace, potential development, and stability in the region and across Africa as a whole (Edu-Afful, 2021). The outcome is that the actions of violent non-state actors may escalate and evoke fear, subsequently influencing the political economy of these nations.

Another conceivable scenario is that, although these Francophone coupists may have been driven by a desire for self-determination and liberation from French colonial taxation, the role of democracy as the most appropriate form of governance will persist in undergoing scrutiny and reassessment. This reassessment is likely to create a division within the ECOWAS region, as the secessionist trio may face

stringent economic penalties. The central inquiry is: with Russia now involved, what will be the durability or efficacy of the sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and its allies from the global north for these nations? While this intriguing inquiry will be addressed by future developments, it is important to note that the authority and influence of ECOWAS have come under scrutiny.

Regardless of the prevailing circumstances, it is evident that the departure of these three nations or blocs from ECOWAS will adversely affect the organization's revenue streams. This situation is not insurmountable, as the revenue generated by ECOWAS through this avenue is likely to decline due to the significant reduction in contributions from Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso to the regional trade quota. Moreover, the departure of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso could potentially pose significant challenges for regional trade integration, given their crucial roles in trade and flight routes. This situation warrants careful consideration in light of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCTA) and other regional trade dynamics (see Edeh & Abe, 2024). Ultimately, this will undermine the economic integration of Africa, which stands as one of the fundamental purposes for the establishment of ECOWAS from the outset.

BETWEEN THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRATIC GAINS AND THE QUEST FOR SELF-DETERMINATION FOR AFRICA IN 2026

Upon reflecting on the rationales behind the coups in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, along with their repercussions for the stability of the ECOWAS region and the continent at large, this section transitions to examine whether the advancements in democracy outweigh the pursuit of genuine self-determination unencumbered by external influences.

Obviously, it is one matter to be influenced by democratic principles or ideals as a nation; and it is, assuredly, a distinctly separate endeavour to ensure that these principles are manifested and evident in the lives of the populace. Hence, in addition to acknowledging fundamental rights and ensuring access to accountable governance, democracy must also serve to enhance both political and economic advancements (Bisong & Asira, 2020). Fundamentally, the core principle of democracy is to address and mitigate infrastructural issues, poverty, social dislocations, elevated unemployment rates, and violent crime (Thank God 2018). When these issues are adequately tackled, the outcome would be a manifestation of democratic progress.

Although the benefits of democracy include infrastructural development, access to quality healthcare, education, fair elections, and equitable economic opportunities, it is crucial to acknowledge that these three nations have come to realize and understand that achieving these goals remains elusive if democracy is constrained (Bisong & Asira, 2020) or limited to its dividends. In a pertinent observation,

ThankGod (2018) indicates that in numerous African nations, the judiciary, which is expected to function as the ultimate refuge for the ordinary citizen and to administer appropriate penalties for public officials involved in economic offences, has been undermined (Bisong& Asira, 2020).

Initially, one might infer that democracy was adopted in Africa during the quest for independence as a means of escaping the adversities of the colonial era, characterised by “authoritarianism, political assassinations, military coups and subjugation of individual rights” (Bisong& Asira, 2020). Nonetheless, the historical prevalence of coups across the continent, coupled with the lack of accountability among democratic governments in Africa, raises significant doubts about this ideal.

The focus on self-determination, coupled with the imperative to diminish France's influence over the independence of these nations, serves as a more compelling motivation than the preservation of democratic ideals. The recent coups in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso present a critical juncture for examining the excessive influence exerted by France on the economic and political landscapes of these nations, as well as other Francophone countries.

The rationale behind the situations in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso is, in part, rooted in the consequences of insecurity that have resulted in the loss of lives and property, including that of the national military forces (Ajala 2023). This arises from the government's inadequacy in implementing appropriate security measures, which are integral to the achievements of democracy. It is important to remember that one of the propositions articulated by John Locke in the Second Treatise is the notion that a government deemed unjust may be subject to rebellion. Regrettably, advocates for the global implementation of democracy remain conspicuously quiet regarding the provision that legitimises rebellion when the populace loses faith in their government and when that government fails to fulfil its commitments to the citizenry (Warburton 1999). It can be posited that the fundamental nature of democracy is rooted in the benefits it distributes and maintains for the populace. When these dividends or democratic gains are not forthcoming or are being withheld, the populace is warranted in questioning the government. The persistent inability to provide a meaningful enhancement may incite insurrection, as evidenced by the recent coups (Edu-Afful, 2021). It appears that coups d'état serve as Africa's mechanism for exercising the right to resist a malfunctioning democratic regime.

In various regions, it is often observed that government officials choose to resign in order to preserve their dignity upon recognising their failure to serve the populace effectively. In the context of Africa, such a change is often sought only in the lead-up to the subsequent electoral year, contingent upon the absence of electoral manipulation and deceit. In the cases of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, the

'rebellion' sparked by the coups serves as a clear indication of the inadequacies of democratic governments in confronting the significant accountability deficit that has escalated to a critical and intolerable extent.

Secondly, the francophone countries under examination are being subjected to exploitation by their former colonial powers and various international entities. For example, Niger possesses substantial uranium reserves, ranking as the third largest exporter of uranium to France and the second largest to the European Union (Yabi, 2023). Similarly, Mali is abundant in gold and various precious stones. Nevertheless, the extraction of these minerals and elements has primarily served the interests of France rather than those of the African nations. The recent coups and the choice to withdraw from ECOWAS evidently stem from a pursuit of self-determination and genuine independence, rather than the assertion that democracy has been undermined.

Thirdly, these nations perceive the substantial presence of foreign military personnel and installations within their borders as a potential threat, leading to a generally unfavourable reception. This situation is particularly evident in Niger (Ajala 2023). Despite their significant presence and influence, the military forces of France and the United States have been unable to effectively quell the insurgencies in the region. The assertion that the colonial power's efforts to address the security issues in the region amount to little more than superficial gestures is underscored by the reality that their presence primarily serves the purpose of exploiting natural resources (Ajala 2023).

The pursuit of self-determination and liberation from external influences, alongside the government's inability to uphold democratic achievements or maintain accountability to the populace, serve as justifications for the occurrence of coups. Moreover, their declaration to disengage from ECOWAS and establish an independent bloc carries significant security and economic ramifications for the equilibrium of power in Africa, particularly with the increasingly evident presence of Russia. Although the previous leaders in these three nations were unable to reject external influence that precipitated the coups, the focus on democratic advancements remains a superficial concern, as genuine independence has eluded the populace, with France's presence continually hovering in the background. This clearly reminds one of Walter Rodney's (1972) affirmation concerning how African accomplices participate in the business of subjugating the continent for external benefits. In a worthy passage of his masterpiece, Rodney (1972, 33-4) tenders:

The presence of a group of African sell-outs is part of the definition of underdevelopment. Any diagnosis of underdevelopment in Africa will reveal not just low per capita income and protein deficiencies, but *also the gentlemen*

*who dance in Abidjan, Accra and Kinshasa
when music is played in Paris, London and New
York. (italicized emphasis mine).*

The narrative surrounding corruption, capital flight, and the embezzlement of African funds—often concealed in nations that profess to aid Africa in combating these very issues—has been characterised by Ofuasia (2022) as a striking example of political hypocrisy. Therefore, it is reasonable to propose that the implications of all these factors for Africa in 2024 can be distilled into the following propositions:

- (1) A growing number of African nations might consider orchestrating coups to dismantle democratic regimes, particularly if their rationales align with those presented by Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali;
- (2) This could lead to a realignment of power dynamics within West Africa. This indicates that the sway of the United States and its allies, including France, will diminish in light of Russia's involvement. A greater number of African nations might express a readiness to participate in and contribute to the expansion of BRICS. Regardless of the circumstances, the impact of Western influence on Africa is poised to diminish.

CONCLUSION

To date, this research has successfully evaluated the coups occurring in Mali and Burkina Faso, and Mali. The justifications for participating in these coups are intricately linked to the failures of democracy and the persistent influence of France in their affairs. In light of this rationale, this study posits that such coups are warranted, as even the principles espoused by John Locke permit insurrection against a democratic regime that has not fulfilled its obligations. It is, nonetheless, regrettable that the recourse to coups has become Africa's method of opposing a faltering democratic governance. The coups occurring in these nations will result in a significant realignment of power on the global stage. As we approach 2026, the possibility of additional coups cannot be dismissed, particularly given the underperformance of democratic governments and the lingering influence of former colonial powers in the governance of their erstwhile colonies.

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FROM MARGINS TO MAINSTREAM: SOCIAL MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF NUDITY AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF CULTURAL VALUES

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of social media has significantly altered patterns of visibility, representation, and cultural meaning-making. Practices that were previously marginalized or socially restricted, such as public displays of nudity and sexualized self-presentation, have become increasingly visible within digital platforms. This shift raises important questions about how social media representations contribute to changing cultural values and norms of acceptability. Despite growing concern around these developments, scholarly attention has often focused on moral debates or psychological effects, leaving the communicative and representational processes underexplored.

This study examines how social media representations of nudity contribute to the reconfiguration of cultural values through processes of normalization, visibility, and routine exposure. It explores how platform logics, visual cultures, and user-generated content shape what is constructed as acceptable, respectable, or transgressive in contemporary society. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative research design, combining discourse analysis and visual framing analysis of selected social media content across major platforms with interpretive examination of captions, comments, and engagement patterns. Drawing on mediatization, normalization, and framing theories, the analysis focuses on how nudity is represented, contextualized, and legitimized

within digital public spaces. The findings indicate that social media platforms play a central role in shifting nudity from the margins to the mainstream by framing it as self-expression, empowerment, aesthetic practice, or lifestyle branding. Repeated exposure to such representations contributes to desensitization and the gradual reconfiguration of traditional boundaries of shame and propriety, reinforced through algorithmic amplification and audience validation. The study concludes that social media function as powerful cultural intermediaries that actively reconfigure value systems by redefining norms of visibility and acceptability. The implications underscore the need for critical media literacy, reflexive content moderation, and sustained scholarly engagement with the cultural consequences of platform-driven representation.

Keywords: *social media; nudity; cultural values; normalization; media representation; digital culture; communication studies*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

Social media platforms have emerged as some of the most influential spaces of cultural visibility in contemporary societies (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Hjarvard, 2013). Unlike earlier forms of mass media characterized by centralized gatekeeping, social media enable continuous, user-driven circulation of images, narratives, and performances (Couldry, 2012). These platforms function not merely as channels of communication but as cultural environments in which norms of identity, respectability, and acceptability are produced and negotiated. Visibility within these environments increasingly confers legitimacy, shaping what is seen, discussed, and normalized in public discourse (Hall, 1997; Silverstone, 2005).

Historically, nudity and explicit sexual display occupied marginal positions in public life, regulated through cultural norms, religious doctrines, legal frameworks, and media censorship (Foucault, 1977). Although meanings attached to nudity have varied across cultures and historical periods, public exposure of the unclothed body was commonly framed as taboo, indecent, or morally transgressive outside narrowly defined artistic or ritual contexts (Bauman, 2003). Shame and restraint thus functioned as social mechanisms governing bodily display and sexual expression (Swidler, 1986).

In the contemporary digital era, these boundaries have undergone substantial transformation. Social media platforms have enabled unprecedented levels of everyday visibility, allowing practices once socially restricted to circulate widely and routinely (Illouz, 2007; Gill, 2007). Nudity and sexualized self-presentation

now appear not only in explicit content spaces but also within lifestyle, fashion, fitness, art, and influencer cultures (Negra, 2009). What was once exceptional has become embedded in ordinary digital consumption, prompting critical questions about how cultural values are reshaped through mediated visibility.

1.2 Social Media and Changing Cultural Boundaries

The reshaping of cultural boundaries through social media is closely tied to platform logics and attention economies (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X prioritize content that attracts engagement, circulation, and affective response. Within these environments, visibility becomes a form of symbolic value, while visual intensity often translates into algorithmic amplification (Hjarvard, 2013).

Visual culture is central to this process. Images and short-form videos dominate social media communication, positioning the body as a primary site of meaning-making (Gill, 2007). Nudity, when framed as self-expression, empowerment, aesthetic practice, or lifestyle branding, is detached from earlier moral prohibitions and repositioned within culturally valued narratives (Illouz, 2007). Through repetition and circulation, such representations lose their sense of transgression and become familiar and socially acceptable (Entman, 1993).

Social media also collapse the boundary between private and public display. Practices previously confined to intimate spaces are now performed before networked audiences (Livingstone, 2009). This transition from restricted visibility to routine exposure occurs incrementally through normalization, as users encounter similar representations across platforms and genres (Hjarvard, 2013). Social media therefore, do not merely reflect cultural change; they actively participate in redefining public acceptability.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The increasing visibility of nudity on social media raises significant questions about norm formation and cultural change. Practices once regarded as socially inappropriate are increasingly framed as ordinary, expressive, or empowering (Gill, 2007). Public discourse often responds to this shift through moral or psychological frames, obscuring the communicative mechanisms through which normalization occurs (Bauman, 2003).

A central gap lies in the limited number of communication-centered studies examining how representation, framing, and algorithmic circulation actively contribute to cultural value reconfiguration. Existing research frequently emphasizes individual behavior or moral decline rather than media processes (Bandura, 2001), limiting understanding of how repetition, visibility, and framing reshape societal perceptions of acceptability and respectability.

1.4 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine how social media representations of nudity contribute to the reconfiguration of cultural values through processes of mediatization, normalization, and framing.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the dominant visual and discursive frames through which nudity is represented on social media platforms.
2. Analyze how platform affordances and algorithmic amplification shape the visibility and circulation of nudity-related content.
3. Explore how repeated exposure to these representations reshapes cultural thresholds of shame, propriety, and acceptability within digital public spaces.

1.5 Research Questions

Guided by the above objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How is nudity represented and contextualized across social media platforms?
2. What visual and discursive frames contribute to the normalization of nudity in digital environments?
3. In what ways do these mediated representations participate in the reconfiguration of cultural values and norms of acceptability?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to media, communication, and journalism scholarship by positioning social media as active cultural intermediaries (Couldry, 2012). It advances debates on representation and normalization by foregrounding communicative processes rather than moral evaluation (Hall, 1997). The findings also hold practical relevance for media literacy, journalism ethics, and platform governance within increasingly visual digital environments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Media Representation, Visibility, and Cultural Meaning

Media scholarship has long established that representation is not a neutral process but a central mechanism through which social meaning and cultural norms are produced (Hall, 1997). Media representations actively shape how realities are perceived, interpreted, and evaluated by audiences, influencing collective understandings of identity, morality, and acceptability (Silverstone, 2005).

Within this framework, visibility functions as a form of cultural power (Couldry,

2012). Media systems determine not only what is shown but how it is framed, contextualized, and repeated (Entman, 1993). Repetition plays a crucial role in stabilizing meanings, as recurrent representations gradually lose their sense of novelty or transgression (Gerbner et al., 2002). In this sense, media operate as key sites where cultural boundaries are drawn, challenged, and reconfigured.

The rise of digital and social media has intensified these dynamics. Unlike traditional mass media, social media allow for continuous, user-generated circulation of content, dramatically expanding the scope and speed of visibility (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). This shift has prompted scholars to reconceptualize representation as participatory and algorithmically shaped rather than purely institutional (Hjarvard, 2013).

2.2 Social Media, Visual Culture, and Sexualized Self-Presentation

A growing body of scholarship examines social media as a fundamentally visual medium (Gill, 2007). Visual culture scholars note that social media prioritize the body as a primary site of meaning-making through self-presentation and performative display (Negra, 2009).

Research on sexualized self-presentation highlights how nudity and bodily exposure are increasingly framed as confidence, authenticity, empowerment, or lifestyle branding (Illouz, 2007). Influencer culture has been identified as a key driver of this shift, as visibility and monetization become intertwined with bodily display (Lewis, 2010).

However, scholars caution against interpreting these developments solely through individual choice. Platform affordances and algorithmic systems actively shape which forms of self-presentation gain prominence (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Content that generates affective engagement is more likely to be amplified, reinforcing dominant representational norms.

2.3 Nudity, Shame, and Cultural Norms

Sociological and anthropological scholarship emphasizes that nudity acquires meaning through cultural interpretation rather than inherent moral value (Swidler, 1986). Across societies, bodily exposure has been regulated through shame, modesty, and respectability norms (Foucault, 1977).

Public nudity has traditionally been framed as deviant except in controlled contexts such as art or ritual (Bauman, 2003). Media representations historically reinforced these boundaries through moral framing and censorship. However, contemporary research suggests that these norms are destabilized in digital environments where bodily display becomes routinized (Illouz, 2007).

Repeated exposure reduces emotional charge, contributing to desensitization and shifting thresholds of acceptability (Gerbner et al., 2002). In this process, nudity moves from moral deviance to cultural normalization.

2.4 Normalization, Repetition, and Desensitization in Media Studies

Normalization refers to the process through which practices become perceived as ordinary through sustained representation (Entman, 1993). Media scholars emphasize that normalization occurs cumulatively rather than episodically (Hjarvard, 2013).

Desensitization literature complements this perspective by demonstrating how repeated exposure reduces emotional and moral sensitivity (Bandura, 2001). In social media environments, algorithmic repetition accelerates this process, making normalization pervasive.

Importantly, normalization operates at the level of meaning rather than behavior. Media reshape interpretive frameworks through which practices are evaluated (Hall, 1997).

2.5 Social Media, Cultural Change, and the Global Context

Research increasingly highlights tensions between traditional value systems and digitally mediated norms (Adebanwi, 2017). In many non-Western societies, global platforms introduce competing moral frameworks that generate negotiation rather than uniform erosion (Nyamnjoh, 2017).

However, much scholarship remains Western-centric and psychologically framed. There is limited communication-focused analysis of how media representations reshape cultural values in Global South contexts.

2.6 Research Gap and Contribution

Few studies systematically examine how social media representations of nudity contribute to cultural value reconfiguration through visibility, framing, and repetition. This study addresses this gap by positioning social media as cultural intermediaries and focusing on communicative mechanisms rather than moral judgment (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in an integrative theoretical framework drawing on mediatization theory, normalization theory, and framing theory to examine how social media representations of nudity contribute to the reconfiguration of cultural values. Together, these perspectives enable a multi-layered analysis of how digital media environments shape visibility, meaning, and norms of acceptability. Rather than treating nudity as a moral or psychological issue, the framework positions it as a mediated cultural phenomenon, produced and stabilized through communicative processes.

3.1 Mediatization Theory and Cultural Transformation

Mediatization theory provides a foundational lens for understanding how media

increasingly shape social institutions, cultural practices, and everyday life. Scholars of mediatization argue that media are no longer external channels through which social realities are communicated; instead, they function as structuring environments that reorganize how social practices are performed, understood, and valued. As social life becomes increasingly dependent on media technologies, institutions and cultural norms adapt to media logics such as visibility, immediacy, personalization, and circulation.

In the context of social media, mediatization operates through platform affordances that prioritize constant visibility, visual self-presentation, and engagement metrics. Practices that align with these logics are more likely to gain prominence and legitimacy. Nudity and sexualized self-presentation, when framed as aesthetic, expressive, or empowering, become compatible with platform logics that reward attention and interaction. Over time, these practices are incorporated into routine digital communication, contributing to broader cultural shifts.

Mediatization theory is particularly useful for this study because it explains why social media have become powerful agents of cultural transformation.

3.2 Normalization Theory and the Politics of Visibility

Normalization theory complements mediatization by explaining how repeated visibility translates into cultural acceptance. In media and communication studies, normalization refers to the process through which ideas, practices, or representations move from being perceived as marginal or deviant to being understood as ordinary, acceptable, or expected. This process is driven not by singular acts of representation but by sustained repetition across media contexts.

Within social media environments, normalization operates through continuous exposure. As audiences repeatedly encounter representations of nudity embedded in everyday content, the representations gradually lose their sense of transgression. What once provoked discomfort or moral concern becomes familiar and unremarkable. In this way, visibility functions as a form of cultural legitimation.

3.3 Framing Theory and the Construction of Meaning

While mediatization explains the structural conditions of influence and normalization explains the process of acceptance, framing theory provides the analytical tools to examine how meaning is constructed within media representations. Framing theory posits that media shape interpretation by emphasizing certain aspects of reality while downplaying others. Frames organize discourse by defining what an issue is about, how it should be understood, and what evaluative judgments are appropriate.

In social media representations, nudity is rarely presented as a raw or neutral act. Instead, it is framed through narratives of self-expression, empowerment, artistry, wellness, or lifestyle branding. These frames detach nudity from earlier moral

discourses of shame or indecency and reposition it within culturally valorized narratives. Framing theory allows this study to analyze how captions, hashtags, visual composition, and contextual cues work together to normalize nudity as meaningful, legitimate, or even aspirational.

3.4 Integrating Mediatization, Normalization, and Framing

The integration of these three theories provides a robust analytical framework for examining the reconfiguration of cultural values in digital spaces. Mediatization explains the structural dominance of media environments, normalization explains the process through which repeated visibility reshapes acceptability, and framing explains the discursive mechanisms through which meaning is assigned.

Together, these perspectives allow the study to conceptualize social media as active cultural intermediaries that do not simply reflect existing values but participate in their transformation. Nudity, within this framework, is understood not as an isolated behavior but as a mediated practice whose meaning is continuously negotiated through visibility, repetition, and framing.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

This framework advances existing theory by:

1. Linking mediatization to intimate and moral domains of social life.
2. Conceptualizing normalization as a communicative and representational process rather than a moral outcome.
3. Demonstrating how framing operates in decentralized, user-driven media environments.

In doing so, it provides a theoretically coherent foundation for analyzing how social media representations reshape cultural values in the digital age.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design, appropriate for examining how social media representations contribute to cultural meaning-making and norm transformation. Given the study's focus on representation, visibility, and normalization, a qualitative approach allows for in-depth analysis of symbolic, visual, and discursive processes that cannot be adequately captured through purely quantitative measures. The design is situated within established traditions in media and communication research that prioritize meaning, context, and interpretation over causal inference.

Rather than assessing the moral correctness or psychological consequences of nudity, the study examines how media representations function communicatively to reshape cultural values. This approach aligns with mediatization, normalization, and framing theories, which conceptualize media influence as cumulative,

discursive, and embedded within everyday practices.

4.2 Research Context

The study is situated within contemporary social media environments, understood as digital public spaces where cultural norms are produced and contested. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) were selected due to their emphasis on visual communication, high levels of user engagement, and centrality in debates around bodily visibility and self-presentation. These platforms exemplify the convergence of visual culture, algorithmic amplification, and participatory communication that characterizes contemporary digital media.

4.3 Data Sources

Data for the study were drawn from publicly accessible social media content, focusing on posts that feature nudity or sexually suggestive self-presentation embedded within non-explicit contexts such as lifestyle, fashion, fitness, art, and influencer branding. The data corpus included:

1. Visual posts (images and short-form videos)
2. Accompanying textual elements such as captions, hashtags, and embedded narratives
3. Patterns of audience engagement, including comments and visible interaction cues (e.g., likes, shares).

The inclusion of both visual and textual elements enabled a holistic analysis of how meaning is constructed through multimodal communication.

4.4 Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select content that was thematically relevant to the study's objectives. Sampling criteria included:

1. Explicit or implied bodily exposure framed as acceptable, expressive, or aesthetic
2. High levels of visibility or engagement, indicating circulation within mainstream digital spaces
3. Representation across different genres of content (e.g., influencer posts, artistic imagery, lifestyle branding)
4. Temporal relevance, focusing on recent content to capture contemporary representational trends.

Sampling prioritized analytical relevance over representativeness, consistent with qualitative media research norms. The aim was not to generalize statistically but to identify dominant patterns of representation and framing.

4.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through systematic observation and archiving of selected posts

over a defined period. Visual materials were saved in secure research folders, and accompanying captions, hashtags, and comments were transcribed where necessary. Care was taken to preserve contextual information, including posting date, platform type, and visible engagement metrics, to support interpretive analysis.

Only content available in the public domain was included. Usernames and identifiable personal information were anonymized during analysis to maintain ethical standards and reduce potential harm.

4.6 Analytical Procedures

The study employed a combination of visual framing analysis and discourse analysis, guided by the integrated theoretical framework.

1. **Visual Framing Analysis:** Visual framing analysis focused on how nudity is aesthetically composed and contextualized. This included examination of body positioning, camera angles, visual emphasis, accompanying symbols, and the presence or absence of contextual cues that frame nudity as artistic, empowering, casual, or normalized.
2. **Discourse Analysis:** Discourse analysis examined captions, hashtags, and user comments to identify recurring narratives, justificatory strategies, and evaluative language. Attention was paid to how nudity was linguistically framed as self-expression, confidence, empowerment, or lifestyle choice, and how shame or transgression was minimized or absent.

Analysis proceeded through an iterative coding process, moving between data and theory. Initial open coding identified recurring themes and frames, which were then refined through axial coding to establish dominant representational patterns. The final interpretive stage linked these patterns to mediatization, normalization, and framing processes.

4.7 Trustworthiness and Analytical Rigor

To enhance rigor and credibility, the study employed several qualitative validation strategies:

1. Theoretical sensitivity, ensuring consistent alignment between data interpretation and the conceptual framework
2. Triangulation across visual, textual, and engagement-based data
3. Thick description, providing detailed contextual analysis of representational practices
4. Reflexivity, acknowledging the researcher's positionality and interpretive role in meaning-making.

The study emphasized transparency, coherence, and analytical plausibility, consistent with qualitative standards in media and communication research.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

All data analyzed were drawn from publicly accessible social media content. No private accounts or restricted materials were accessed. Given the sensitivity surrounding bodily representation and cultural values, the analysis avoided sensationalism and moral judgment. The study focuses on representational patterns rather than individual motivations or behaviors.

4.9 Methodological Limitations

As a qualitative study, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalizable. The analysis focuses on visible representational patterns and does not include direct audience interviews or surveys. Future research could extend this study through audience reception analysis, experimental designs, or cross-cultural comparisons. The final dataset consisted of approximately sixty (60) publicly accessible social media posts analyzed for visual composition, textual framing, and audience engagement patterns.

composition, textual framing, and audience engagement patterns.

5. FINDINGS

Guided by visual framing and discourse analysis, this section presents empirically grounded findings on how nudity is represented and normalized on social media platforms. The analysis draws on a corpus of sixty (60) publicly accessible posts across Instagram, TikTok, and X, selected for high visibility and engagement. Each finding is illustrated through specific media post types, captions, and audience interactions, consistent with qualitative media research standards (Entman, 1993; Gill, 2007; Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

5.1 Nudity Framed as Self-Expression and Authenticity

A dominant representational frame across the dataset constructs nudity as self-expression and authenticity. For instance, several Instagram posts analyzed feature partially nude bodies photographed in domestic or natural settings, accompanied by captions emphasizing “being real,” “self-love,” or “owning one's body.” Such framing aligns with what Hall (1997) describes as the encoding of preferred meanings through representational choices.

Visually, these posts employ casual body positioning, minimal styling, and direct eye contact, which normalize nudity by embedding it within everyday aesthetics rather than erotic spectacle (Gill, 2007; Livingstone, 2009). Linguistically, captions frequently draw on therapeutic and identity-oriented discourse, echoing broader cultural narratives of self-actualization and emotional authenticity (Illouz, 2007).

Audience responses to these posts overwhelmingly reinforce the frame, with comments praising “confidence,” “realness,” and “courage,” while critical or moralizing responses are rare and marginalized. This interactional pattern supports

cultivation and normalization arguments that repeated exposure to framed representations reshapes interpretive expectations (Gerbner et al., 2002; Morgan et al., 2015).

5.2 Nudity as Empowerment and Aesthetic Practice

A second prominent frame presents nudity as empowerment and aesthetic expression, particularly within influencer and lifestyle content. TikTok videos analyzed frequently depict bodies in slow-motion or stylized poses, paired with captions referencing empowerment, freedom, or resistance to “societal constraints.” These representations align with postfeminist and lifestyle media discourses that recast bodily exposure as agency rather than deviance (Gill, 2007; Negra, 2009).

From a framing perspective, nudity is legitimized through visual cues associated with art and wellness such as controlled lighting, symmetry, and non-sexualized posture, thereby distancing it from traditional moral condemnation (Entman, 1993; Silverstone, 2005). Such framing mirrors Illouz's (2007) argument that emotional and bodily practices are increasingly aestheticized within media culture.

Audience engagement further legitimizes this frame. High volumes of affirmative comments and symbolic endorsements (likes, shares) contribute to what Couldry and Hepp (2017) describe as the mediated construction of social reality, where visibility and repetition confer authority.

5.3 Platform Logics and Algorithmic Amplification

Beyond individual posts, the findings reveal that platform logics actively reinforce nudity-adjacent content. Posts featuring bodily exposure consistently recorded higher engagement metrics than comparable non-nude content, increasing their algorithmic circulation. This pattern reflects Hjarvard's (2013) argument that mediatized environments privilege content aligned with attention economies.

Algorithmic amplification intensifies normalization by increasing frequency of exposure, a process consistent with cultivation and desensitization research (Bandura, 2001; Gerbner et al., 2002). Over time, nudity becomes a routine visual element within users' feeds, reducing its capacity to trigger moral shock or stigma.

5.4 Audience Discourses and the Reconfiguration of Shame

Discourse analysis of comments reveals a marked erosion of shame-based regulation. Where nudity was historically policed through moral sanction (Foucault, 1977; Swidler, 1986), audience responses now predominantly frame bodily exposure as acceptable or admirable. This shift supports Bauman's (2003) thesis on the weakening of traditional moral anchors in liquid modernity.

Critical comments, when present, are frequently countered by other users defending the post as “art,” “expression,” or “personal choice,” indicating active

negotiation of norms within digital public space (Hall, 1997; Nyamnjoh, 2017). Such interactions illustrate normalization as a communicative process rather than passive acceptance.

5.5 From Margins to Mainstream: Cumulative Normalization

Across platforms, normalization emerges cumulatively through repetition, framing, and algorithmic reinforcement. Nudity shifts from marginal spectacle to ordinary content category, consistent with normalization theory (Entman, 1993; Hjarvard, 2013). The findings empirically demonstrate how mediated repetition restructures cultural boundaries of acceptability.

6. DISCUSSION

This section interprets the findings through mediatization, normalization, and framing theory, demonstrating that social media actively reshape cultural values rather than merely reflecting them.

6.1 Mediatization and Cultural Authority

The findings support mediatization theory's claim that media environments restructure cultural authority (Hjarvard, 2013; Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Traditional institutions that once regulated bodily display—religion, family, and formal media, are increasingly displaced by platform logics and influencer culture. Nudity gains legitimacy not through institutional endorsement but through visibility and engagement, confirming Couldry's (2012) argument that media now function as primary sites of social ordering.

6.2 Normalization Through Repetition and Desensitization

Normalization theory explains how repeated exposure transforms perception (Entman, 1993). As nudity becomes visually familiar across feeds, its moral salience diminishes, aligning with desensitization research (Bandura, 2001; Gerbner et al., 2002). The study thus provides empirical support for normalization as a cumulative media process rather than a deliberate ideological campaign.

6.3 Framing and Meaning Construction

Framing theory clarifies how nudity is made culturally intelligible (Entman, 1993). By framing nudity as empowerment, art, or authenticity, media posts pre-empt moral critique and reposition bodily exposure within culturally valued narratives (Gill, 2007; Illouz, 2007). Visual and textual framing work together to guide interpretation, demonstrating Hall's (1997) encoding/decoding model in a digital context.

6.4 Negotiating Tradition and Digital Modernity

The findings also reflect cultural negotiation rather than total value collapse. Audience debates reveal ongoing tension between inherited moral frameworks and mediatized norms, particularly in non-Western contexts (Adebanwi, 2017; Nyamnjoh, 2017). Social media thus function as arenas where cultural values are continuously contested and reconfigured.

6.5 Contribution to Media and Communication Scholarship

By grounding claims in empirical media analysis, this study extends mediatization and framing theories into the domain of bodily representation and moral boundary shifts. It responds directly to calls for communication-centered analyses of cultural change in the digital age (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

6.5 Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, this study advances media and communication scholarship in three keyways. First, it extends mediatization theory into the domain of bodily representation and moral boundary negotiation. Second, it conceptualizes normalization as a communicative outcome of repeated, framed visibility rather than a moral or psychological endpoint. Third, it demonstrates how framing theory operates in decentralized, algorithmically mediated environments where meaning is co-produced across multiple actors.

By integrating these perspectives, the study offers a coherent framework for analyzing how social media participate in the reconfiguration of cultural values, with relevance across cultural contexts.

7. CONCLUSION

This study has examined how social media representations of nudity contribute to the reconfiguration of cultural values through processes of mediatization, framing, and normalization. By situating nudity within everyday digital communication rather than treating it as an exceptional or deviant phenomenon, the paper demonstrates that social media platforms function as powerful cultural intermediaries that reshape norms of visibility, acceptability, and respectability in contemporary society.

The findings show that nudity on social media is rarely presented as transgressive. Instead, it is consistently framed as self-expression, empowerment, aesthetic practice. Through repeated exposure, algorithmic amplification, and affirmative audience engagement, these representations move nudity from the margins of public culture into mainstream digital visibility. In this process, traditional mechanisms of moral regulation are weakened, not through direct contestation, but through routinization and familiarity.

Theoretically, the study advances media and communication scholarship by

integrating mediatization, normalization, and framing theory to explain cultural value change as a communicative process. Mediatization accounts for the structural dominance of platform environments; framing explains how meaning is discursively constructed; and normalization elucidates how repeated, framed visibility stabilizes new norms. Together, these perspectives offer a robust framework for understanding how social media participate in the gradual transformation of cultural values rather than abrupt moral rupture.

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INTERCULTURALITY IN SELECTED NOVELS OF MACAIRE ETTY: A STUDY OF *LA LOI DES ANCÊTRES* AND *LES LARMES DE DIEU*

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ABSTRACT

*Interculturality, understood as a dynamic process of interaction, negotiation, and transformation between heterogeneous cultural systems, constitutes a crucial paradigm for the analysis of contemporary African fiction. In a context marked by colonial legacies, globalization, and cultural mobility, intercultural encounters profoundly shape literary production and meaning. This article examines the construction of intercultural discourse in *La Loi des Ancêtres* and *Les Larmes de Dieu* by Macaire Ety, highlighting the tensions, conflicts, and negotiations between ancestral traditions and external cultural influences. These novels foreground the complexities of cultural contact, revealing how inherited norms are challenged, reinterpreted, or reconfigured in response to historical and social change.*

Through a socio-critical and postcolonial approach, the study demonstrates that these narratives create a space of hybridity in which both individual and collective identities are continuously redefined. Macaire Ety's fiction portrays characters caught at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, whose experiences expose the fragility and adaptability of cultural values. The

narrative and symbolic strategies employed by the author—such as myth, memory, ritual, and fragmented narration—reveal a complex dialectic between otherness, cultural memory, and modernity, reflecting the profound sociocultural transformations generated by intercultural encounters.

The analysis shows that interculturality in these novels is not limited to the mere coexistence of differences but is embedded in a dynamic process of transformation, resistance, and redefinition of values. The African novel thus emerges as a privileged site of intercultural mediation and critique of power relations, offering both an aesthetic and ideological reflection on identity, belonging, and the African condition within an increasingly globalized world.

Keywords: *Interculturality, African Novel, Macaire Etty, Identity, Cultural Hybridity, Francophone Literature.*

INTRODUCTION

Culture refers to the set of practices, representations, values, and norms shared by a social group and constitutes a fundamental element of both collective and individual identity. In African societies, culture functions as a living system that governs social relations, moral conduct, spirituality, and communal belonging. However, African cultures are often misrepresented as homogeneous and static, a perception that overlooks their internal diversity, historical depth, and adaptive capacity. In a globalized context marked by sociopolitical transformation, African cultural identity appears dynamic, evolving, and resistant to simplistic generalization.

Tradition and modernity are frequently presented as opposing forces within cultural discourse. Tradition denotes inherited customs, belief systems, and social institutions transmitted across generations, while modernity reflects technological advancement, ideological shifts, and social transformation. Rather than existing in absolute opposition, these forces interact in complex ways, generating tensions that reveal processes of negotiation, accommodation, and resistance. Such tensions provide a critical framework for examining cultural transformation in contemporary African societies, particularly as they are represented in literary texts.

Within this context, this study examines the relationship between tradition and modernity in Macaire Etty's *La Loi des Ancêtres* and *Les Larmes de Dieu*. It seeks to analyze representations of African culture in the selected novels, identify conflicts arising from encounters between indigenous values and external influences, examine individual and collective responses to intercultural interaction, and

propose reflective perspectives for understanding intercultural tension. The study addresses the following questions: How is African culture represented in the selected novels? What conflicts emerge from intercultural encounters? How do individuals and communities respond to these encounters? What insights do the novels offer toward negotiating intercultural tensions?

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding cultural reconfiguration in African societies undergoing globalization. By foregrounding literary representation, the study highlights literature as a critical space for reflecting on identity, culture, power relations, and social transformation, while also extending scholarly engagement with the relatively underexplored works of Macaire Etyy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of culture occupies a central position in the humanities and social sciences, particularly in discussions of identity, social organization, and meaning-making. Early anthropological thought, notably Edward B. Tylor's classical definition of culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities acquired by humans as members of society” (Tylor, 1871: 45), laid the foundation for understanding culture as a learned and socially transmitted phenomenon. This definition has remained influential, though subsequent scholars have expanded and nuanced it to reflect the evolving nature of human societies.

Later interpretations emphasize culture as a lived and dynamic system. Bello conceives culture as the total way of life through which a people give meaning to social, political, and religious norms (Bello, 189), while Aziza defines it as the patterned behaviors characteristic of a particular group (Aziza, 31). Fafunwa further highlights the role of education and socialization in transmitting cultural values across generations (Fafunwa, 48). These perspectives collectively underscore the fact that culture is neither static nor monolithic but adaptive and continually reshaped through historical experience and intercultural contact (Etuk, 25; Antia, 2005: 17).

In the African context, culture is deeply intertwined with communal values such as solidarity, humanism, respect for elders, and collective responsibility (Idang, 2007: 4; Etuk, 2002: 22). However, these values have increasingly been subjected to tension and transformation as a result of colonial history, Western modernity, and globalization. Fanon's reflections on cultural alienation reveal how colonial domination disrupted indigenous value systems, producing identity crises and cultural ambivalence. Hall (1997) similarly argues that identity is not fixed but constantly reconstructed within specific historical and cultural conditions.

Scholarly discussions of interculturality further illuminate these transformations. Interculturality is commonly understood as a process of interaction and exchange

between cultures based on recognition and reciprocity (Cuq, 35). Abdallah-Preteille views it less as a stable reality than as an analytical and methodological approach that enables the understanding of the Other beyond ethnocentric assumptions. De Carlo distinguishes interculturality from multiculturalism by emphasizing interaction, negotiation, and action rather than mere coexistence. These perspectives resonate with Bhabha's concept of the "third space," where hybrid identities emerge through cultural contact (Bhabha, 1994), as well as Todorov's reflections on encounters with alterity (Todorov, 1982).

Literature has long been recognized as a privileged site for representing and interrogating intercultural encounters. From Montaigne's early reflections on cultural relativism to postcolonial critiques by Said (1978) and Bhabha (1994), literary texts have served as spaces where identity, difference, exile, and hybridity are imaginatively explored. African literature in particular has consistently engaged with the tensions between tradition and Western modernity. Works such as Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances*, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and *The Lion and the Jewel*, Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, and Ramonu Sanusi's *Le Bistouri des larmes* dramatize cultural confrontation, negotiation, and resistance (Adade-Yeboah et al., 2022; Reddy: 22). More recent studies, including analyses of Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu*, highlight linguistic and cultural hybridity as strategies of resistance to European domination (Adeniyi, 2021). Scholars such as Obiajulu emphasize the protest dimension of post-independence African literature, while Avruch and Chan & Goto underline the importance of cultural awareness in conflict resolution. Within this broader critical landscape, Macaire Ety's novels have been acknowledged for their thematic engagement with identity struggles and cultural tensions (Marsella: 11; Ulichny: 46). However, despite these observations, his works have not been sufficiently examined through a sustained sociocritical and intercultural lens, particularly about *La Loi des Ancêtres* and *Les Larmes de Dieu*. This relative scholarly silence creates a critical space that the present study seeks to address by foregrounding the intercultural dynamics and ideological implications of Ety's narrative discourse.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical frameworks: sociocriticism, intercultural theory, and postcolonial theory. Together, these approaches provide an analytical lens for examining cultural conflict, identity negotiation, and power relations in Macaire Ety's novels.

Sociocriticism focuses on the relationship between literary texts and their sociohistorical contexts, emphasizing how social structures, ideologies, and power relations are inscribed in narrative form. Through this framework, *La Loi des Ancêtres* and *Les Larmes de Dieu* are read as textual spaces where cultural norms, social tensions, and historical transformations are articulated and contested.

Sociocriticism thus enables an analysis of how Etty's fiction reflects and critiques the sociocultural realities of African societies.

Intercultural theory complements this approach by foregrounding interaction, exchange, and negotiation between cultures. Drawing on the works of Abdallah-Preteille, De Carlo, and Cuq, interculturality is treated not as a simple juxtaposition of cultural differences but as a dynamic process through which identities and values are transformed. Bhabha's notion of hybridity and the “third space” is particularly useful for analyzing moments in the novels where tradition and modernity intersect, producing new forms of cultural meaning.

Finally, postcolonial theory provides a critical framework for interrogating the historical legacy of colonial domination and its continued influence on African cultural expression. Fanon's reflections on cultural alienation, Hall's theory of identity as becoming, and Ricoeur's insights into memory and narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1990) inform the analysis of how Etty's characters navigate the tensions between ancestral heritage and Western modernity.

Combined, these frameworks allow the study to interpret Macaire Etty's novels as sites of cultural conflict, resistance, and transformation, where intercultural encounters generate both crisis and creative reconfiguration.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach based on sociocritical and intercultural analysis of literary discourse. Qualitative research aims to interpret cultural phenomena through textual and contextual data, emphasizing meaning-making rather than quantification (Merriam, 34; Creswell, 2013).

Within this framework, *La loi des ancêtres* and *Les larmes de Dieu* by Macaire Etty are examined as symbolic spaces in which tensions between African tradition and Western modernity are negotiated. The analysis is grounded in postcolonial and hermeneutic perspectives that highlight processes of cultural hybridity and identity construction (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1997; Ricoeur, 1990).

The primary sources of this study consist of the novels *La loi des ancêtres* and *Les larmes de Dieu*. Secondary sources include critical, theoretical, and historical studies on African literature, interculturality, and sociocultural dynamics (Abiteboul: 65; Merriam: 34).

The analysis primarily relies on thematic and discursive content analysis. Content analysis makes it possible to identify recurring themes, motifs, and symbolic structures within the texts (Bardin, 1989; d'Unrug, 1974). It operates at two levels: explicit meaning and implicit significations (Bardin, 1989).

This approach is complemented by:

- thematic analysis, which uncovers the ideological and cultural logics of the text (Braun & Clarke, 2006);
- narrative analysis, which explores the construction of identities and

- conflicts through narrative structures (Genette, 1972; Ricoeur, 1985);
- discourse analysis, which relates the text to its sociohistorical context (Fairclough, 1995).

Through this methodological framework, the study demonstrates how Macaire Ety's novels articulate intercultural conflicts, processes of cultural hybridization, and strategies of identity negotiation.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Cultural Evolution and Conflict in African Societies: Cultural evolution refers to the process through which societies' beliefs, values, norms, artistic practices, social institutions, technologies, and languages transform over time (Boyd & Richerson, 1985; Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981). These changes may occur subtly within a community or manifest as broad cultural revolutions affecting multiple societies. Cultural evolution is shaped by social interactions, migrations, technological innovation, intercultural contact, and environmental factors. Resistance to change and intergenerational tensions often accompany these transformations. Overall, cultural evolution reflects the adaptability and creativity of societies in a constantly changing world.

Cultural Conflicts in Society: Cultural conflicts in African societies emerge from historical, social, economic, and political dynamics. Colonialism imposed European languages, educational systems, and norms, generating tensions between traditional and modern practices. Africa's ethnic and linguistic diversity further contributes to cultural friction, particularly when groups attempt domination. Religious diversity—including traditional religions, Christianity, and Islam—also sparks ideological conflicts (Mbiti, 1991). Modernization, globalization, and technological change challenge traditional values, creating identity confusion and resistance to change. Cultural conflict is thus a dynamic process requiring context-sensitive understanding and inclusive dialogue for resolution.

Intercultural Conflicts in *Les Larmes de Dieu* and *La Loi des Ancêtres*: The novels examined address two main themes: religious/cultural beliefs and marital life. Belief systems—Islam, Christianity, and traditional religion—compete for authority in *Les Larmes de Dieu*. Traditional law emphasizes ancestral respect, while Christianity and Islam claim to liberate Africans from “dark” practices, often supported by scriptural references and miracles (Ety, 2005). Cultural norms, orally transmitted and safeguarded by elders, reinforce social cohesion, as illustrated by Aka's explanation in the novel (p.48).

The novel centers on a spiritual struggle in Kpando village, driven by Ndjesse, a devout autodidact who challenges harmful traditions while preserving the valuable aspects of culture. Ndjesse's critique of the *Danbry* festival, symbolizing moral and social corruption, illustrates tensions between faith, tradition, and modernity (p.42). Despite resistance from family, religious leaders, and local sorcerers,

Ndjesse's faith enables him to confront these forces and advocate for the proper use of tradition to advance society (p.160).

In a contemporary African city, Mangouté confronts marital betrayal within the context of ancestral law. His wife Hery's infidelity challenges both marital and cultural norms, compelling Mangouté to navigate tensions between traditional justice, religious teaching, and personal ethics (pp.21, 68, 92). The novel demonstrates how adherence to ancestral values and the support of community elders and spiritual guides mediate conflict while preserving social harmony.

Major Intercultural Themes in the Novels: Thematic analysis identifies societal concerns embedded in literature, providing insight into cultural and social dynamics (Ety, 2005; Elikwu, 2019). Key themes in these novels include:

Africa hosts multiple religious traditions. *Les Larmes de Dieu* and *La Loi des Ancêtres* explore characters' interactions with Islam, Christianity, and traditional religion, highlighting religious authority, moral guidance, and conflict resolution (Reuter, 2000).

Traditional rites, such as the *Danbry* festival and initiation rituals, transmit knowledge and reinforce communal identity. While these practices foster cohesion, they can be distorted to reinforce social control or superstition, as depicted in both novels (p.6, 82).

Marriage reflects alliances between families and the importance of mutual respect, community involvement, and guidance from elders and religious leaders. The novels show how infidelity challenges these values but can be navigated through ethical reflection and adherence to cultural or religious norms (p.48, 95).

Love, as an interpersonal and spiritual force, is central. Ndjesse's and Mangouté's relationships highlight the interplay between affection, religious devotion, and cultural expectations (pp.33, 68).

Infidelity is portrayed as socially and spiritually significant. Cultural sanctions—such as the *Magun* and *Tesho* charms among the Yoruba, or ancestral purification rituals among the Bamileke—illustrate the consequences of violating social and moral codes (Ajayi, 2010; Ojo, 2006).

Hospitality reinforces social cohesion, while death functions as both a narrative and cultural marker of sacrifice, justice, or moral lesson, as shown in the demise of Ndjesse's mother and Mangouté's confrontation with ancestral law (pp.13, 65, 168).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of Macaire Ety's novels, *Les Larmes de Dieu* and *La Loi des Ancêtres*, highlights the complex interplay between cultural, spiritual, and interpersonal dynamics in African societies. Drawing on cultural evolution theory (Boyd & Richerson, 1985) and intercultural conflict theory (Ting-Toomey, 1999), the findings show how cultural traditions and modern influences coexist, often

producing tension, negotiation, and selective adaptation.

This study shows the link between Macaire ETTY's texts and the Cultural evolution theory. The theory suggests that societies adapt by modifying practices that are no longer compatible with social and environmental changes. In *Les Larmes de Dieu*, the Danbry festival illustrates how traditional practices can be co-opted or distorted, requiring agents like Ndjesse to reinterpret tradition in light of moral and spiritual imperatives. Similarly, in *La Loi des Ancêtres*, the enforcement of ancestral laws in marital conflict demonstrates both the persistence of tradition and the selective integration of modern legal and religious values. Intercultural conflict theory is evident in the tensions between traditional African beliefs, Christianity, and Islam, highlighting how identity and power dynamics shape negotiations within communities.

The study's findings offer substantial responses to the research objectives and questions:

1. How do African novels depict intercultural and intergenerational conflict?

The novels depict conflict as a dynamic process involving negotiation, resistance, and adaptation between traditional values, religious beliefs, and modern ethical frameworks. Characters such as Ndjesse and Mangouté serve as mediators who reinterpret culture to balance spiritual, moral, and societal imperatives.

2. What role do rituals and traditions play in contemporary African societies?

Rituals like initiation and festivals maintain communal identity, transmit knowledge, and regulate social behavior. Yet, as the novels show, they can also perpetuate injustice or obstruct societal progress, revealing the necessity for critical engagement with tradition.

3. How is spirituality intertwined with moral and social order?

Spiritual beliefs in both novels influence ethics, law, and interpersonal relations. Religious leaders, supernatural agents, and ancestral laws act as moral guides, demonstrating the inseparability of religion and social order in African communities.

This study offers an original synthesis of cultural evolution, intercultural conflict, and African literary analysis. Unlike prior studies that treat African novels as either purely traditionalist or modernist, this work emphasizes the negotiation between spiritual, cultural, and ethical frameworks within narrative structures. Furthermore, it integrates lesser-studied literary works by Macaire ETTY, expanding the corpus of African literature examined for cultural negotiation.

The findings underscore the value of using literature as a lens to examine cultural continuity, adaptation, and conflict. They suggest that African literary studies

should consider novels not only as artistic texts but as critical sites for understanding societal negotiation, moral reasoning, and the evolution of African identity. This approach can inform interdisciplinary research, linking literary studies with anthropology, religious studies, and ethics, providing a nuanced understanding of African socio-cultural realities.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Macaire Etty's *La Loi des Ancêtres* and *Les Larmes de Dieu* serve as reflective spaces for negotiating tradition, spirituality, and modernity. The research revealed that rituals, ancestral laws, and spiritual beliefs continue to shape social behavior, ethical reasoning, and identity in African communities. Conflicts between traditional and modern values are mediated by characters who reinterpret cultural practices, suggesting that African societies are dynamic, adaptive, and capable of selective integration of modern influences.

By applying **cultural evolution theory** and **intercultural conflict theory**, this work bridges literary studies with social sciences, highlighting the analytical potential of African novels for understanding societal change. Literarily, the study contributes by foregrounding lesser-studied works of Macaire Etty, showing how narrative strategies convey cultural negotiation, and offering a framework for analyzing the interplay between tradition, morality, and modernity in African literature.

The study is limited to a select corpus of novels and primarily textual analysis, which may not fully capture oral, performative, or multimedia expressions of African culture. Additionally, socio-historical contexts of other African regions may present variations not covered in this study.

Future studies could expand the corpus to include oral literature, contemporary digital narratives, or cross-cultural comparisons across Africa. Investigations could also explore how literature informs policymaking, education, and cultural preservation, as well as how emerging forms of African digital literature reinterpret tradition and spirituality in the 21st century.

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GLOBALISATION AND THE EROSION OF AFRICAN RELIGIO-CULTURAL HERITAGE: A CALL FOR CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

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ABSTRACT

The legacy of colonialism, coupled with the increasing dominance of Westernisation and Christianity, has led to a decline in interest in African cultural practices as well as African Traditional Religion (ATR). This shift has created profound challenges for African societies. It has disrupted the African long-established way of life that is based on strict moral codes and spiritual beliefs. This article explores the significant impact of globalisation on African religio-cultural heritage, particularly the erosion of traditional values through forced acculturation. It stresses that globalisation has facilitated the spread of foreign ideas, values, and symbols, creating a cultural homogenisation that threatens local traditions. The paper argues that ATR, deeply rooted in African culture, offers distinct worldviews and practices that are increasingly marginalised in the face of imported religions. Using the method of analysis and hermeneutics, the paper presents both sides of the debate on cultural homogenisation versus diversification. It examines how globalisation influences various aspects of African life, including marriage, family structures, education and religious rituals. The article concludes by advocating for the revival of African cultural heritage through a cultural renaissance that balances tradition

with modern realities. This revival is necessary to preserve cultural identity, educate future generations, and counteract the negative effects of globalisation, while also incorporating the benefits of science and technology.

Keywords: *Globalisation, African Religio-Cultural Heritage, Acculturation, African Traditional Religion, Cultural Renaissance*

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are inherently social beings. They continually interact with others in the societies they inhabit. Interaction is fundamental to human life. This stems from the fact that individuals are compelled to engage with both the people around them and the environment in which they live. In the context of international relations, the exchange of cultural values and practices is essential for cultural diffusion. However, when this exchange is not mutually balanced, it gives rise to what can be described as cultural domination or imbalance. This phenomenon, as Ekwuru (1999) in Precious (2010), highlights, represents the "evil of forced acculturation," where one culture subjugates another. Often, such imbalances result in what Ukutsemuya (2023) refers to as "two unblending cultures," where the integration of cultures remains incomplete or discordant.

This issue is particularly relevant in the context of globalisation, which has sparked considerable debate regarding the emergence of a global culture, often centred on Western lifestyles that are increasingly viewed as the standard (Obioha, 2010). Scholars have widely debated the impact of globalisation on individuals and societies, with varying perspectives on its effects. While there is consensus on the fact that globalisation influences religious, economic, cultural, and political domains, there is significant disagreement regarding the nature of these impacts. Some scholars argue that globalisation has positive effects on individuals and societies, fostering growth and development. Conversely, others emphasize the negative consequences, highlighting the erosion of indigenous cultures and values. A third category of scholars takes a more nuanced view, acknowledging both the positive and negative dimensions of globalisation.

The focus of this paper is on the negative effects of globalisation, particularly its impact on African cultural heritage, a process that was significantly influenced by the colonial experience. In contemporary African society, there is a growing disinterest in traditional African religions and cultural practices, which are often considered obsolete or irrelevant. African history has lost much of its prominence, as attention shifts toward imported values associated with foreign religions and practices such as Westernisation, Christianity, and Islam. These external influences have come to dominate, overshadowing the indigenous belief systems that once

centred on moral strictness and a deep reliance on the spiritual realm for understanding and solving societal challenges.

The forced acculturation brought about by colonialism and perpetuated through globalisation is undoubtedly a major factor behind the social difficulties and challenges currently faced by African societies. These issues form the core focus of this paper, which seeks to explore the ramifications of this cultural imposition and its lasting effects on African identity and heritage.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Culture is a multifaceted concept that varies in definition depending on the perspective taken. It offers a framework through which individuals find meaning in their thoughts, actions, and emotions, significantly influencing their beliefs and way of life. Culture shapes identity and provides a sense of belonging. Culture is one of the essentials of human life and existence. Without it, there is no human society. According to Espin (2007) in Ikeke (2025), culture is "...the historically shared means and ways through which a people unveil themselves (to themselves, and only secondarily to others as human)". For Greez (1973), in Crozet (2017), culture is intrinsic to human nature. And that without it, individuals would become "unworkable monstrosities" and "mental basket cases," unable to make sense of themselves, others, or the world around them.

It is evident that culture is not static; rather, it is dynamic, evolving alongside human society. Hence, cultural transformation is gradual and not abrupt. As a product of human society, culture is learned, acquired, transmitted, and diffused through various forms of communication and intergenerational contact (Md Zahidul Islam, 2020). No individual is born with culture. It is gradually integrated as the individual engages with society. In many African contexts, for example, children are taught good manners and assigned gender-specific roles throughout their development, helping them integrate and contribute meaningfully to the society.

AFRICAN RELIGION AND CULTURE

African Traditional Religion (ATR) is an indigenous belief system that emerges from the cultural realities of African societies. It thrives on oral traditions. Unlike imported religions such as Christianity and Islam, ATR is rooted in the historical reflections of African ancestors on human origins, the purpose of life, and interactions within the community and the environment. This religion has been passed down through generations, embodying the cultural essence of the people.

One key feature of ATR is its henotheistic nature, which is reflected in the absence of a singular founder. This characteristic allows ATR to accommodate the diverse ethnic groups and belief systems across the African continent. Each community within Africa practices its form of ATR, which maintains core elements while integrating regional variations. This flexibility is part of ATR's unique ability to

unite various cultural practices under a shared spiritual framework. ATR is intrinsically linked to African culture. It is not merely a religion but a way of life, as culture and religion are so deeply intertwined that one cannot be fully understood without the other. As Grillo (2003) in Crozet (2017) notes that culture serves as a blueprint for communal living, and that for Africans, ATR is the spiritual backbone of their cultural identity.

In African societies, knowledge is primarily transmitted through oral traditions. It has no central sacred texts or written literature to record religious teachings. This reliance on oral transmission emphasises practice over theory, as the teachings of ATR are meant to be lived and experienced, rather than merely studied. ATR fosters community cohesion and social harmony by ingraining its principles into the daily lives of its followers. It has historically avoided major theological controversies and remains open to incorporating new ideas that address evolving societal challenges.

Awolalu (1979), while reflecting on the enduring nature of ATR, describes it as a living religion. That is, one that is not a relic of the past but a dynamic force actively shaping African life today. ATR may not have written scriptures, but its teachings are "written" in myths, folktales, songs, dances, proverbs, and cultural practices. The religion's historical origins are not tied to a single founder, which further underscores its collective and community-centred nature.

It is important to note that ATR is inseparable from African identity. For many Africans, abandoning their traditional religion signifies a profound disconnection from their cultural roots, ancestors, and sense of self. This deep cultural and spiritual attachment makes it difficult for individuals to completely abandon ATR in favour of religions like Christianity or Islam without retaining elements of their original beliefs. The past, for many Africans, is seen as an inseparable part of their present and future. This is evident in the attitude of some African Christian or Moslem when faced with certain challenges of life.

While ATR has been criticised by some as anti-progressive, often labelled with derogatory terms such as "paganism," "fetishism," and "idolatry," its role in African societies is far more complex. The religion enforces social cohesion by upholding moral standards, punishing unethical behaviour, and ensuring that familial responsibilities are met. Additionally, ATR has contributed to the development of rich artistic traditions, encouraging dance, drama, music, poetry, and craftsmanship as forms of religious expression and cultural preservation.

CULTURAL GLOBALISATION

Cultural globalisation refers to the exchange and circulation of ideas, meanings, and values across national borders. It fosters increased social interactions that, in turn, enhance human interconnectedness and cultural exchange. Nijman (1999), in Hongik, (2005,) defines cultural globalisation as the acceleration of cultural

exchanges among global populations, leading to shifts in local popular cultures and identities. However, the term "cultural globalisation" is inherently multifaceted, making it difficult to capture all its nuances in a single definition. Hongik, (2005), argues that the complexity of cultural globalisation can be better understood by breaking it into two steps: first, it involves the global diffusion, exchange, and sharing of cultures, and second, it requires distinguishing among its various components, such as the normative, cognitive, and expressive dimensions. The normative dimension deals with societal concepts of right and wrong, encompassing values, political and economic systems, and laws. The cognitive dimension addresses knowledge, human perception, education, science, and technology (Hongik,2005,).

As Paul (2006), in Crozet (2017), observes that cultural globalisation promotes social interactions that lead to a new global order. This new order, however, requires a slight shift from one's own culture to accommodate the values of other cultures, promoting common goods. This shift is made possible by factors such as the movement of populations (whether voluntary, as in international trade and tourism, or involuntary, such as forced migration) alongside advancements in mass media and communication technologies (Crozet, 2017,).

Globalisation has clear and far-reaching effects on culture. These can be either positive or negative, depending on the perspective taken. Thus, it is important to recognize that globalisation impacts cultures in different ways. No wonder Crozet (2017), explains that the impact of globalisation on culture is marked by contradictions experienced differently across various countries. While globalisation undeniably has a homogenising effect, it also provides an opportunity for the revitalisation of local cultures, especially when these cultures perceive global influences as a threat. This leads to the phenomenon of cultural hybridisation, where local cultures adapt and integrate global elements while maintaining their distinctiveness. Bhabha, argues that cultural hybridity is the only enduring result of cultural exchange, particularly from the perspective of minority groups. He cautions against interpreting cultural differences as fixed traits rooted in tradition, as this perspective ignores the fluid and evolving nature of culture (Bhabha, 2012).

It is worth noting that the onset of the European crusades and their subsequent discoveries of Africa marked the beginning of globalisation in its modern form (Marin 2010). Thus, one can infer that it is these historical events that laid the foundation for the globalisation of the economy. This in turn has led to the widespread adoption of the capitalist neoliberal model, which has since dominated the global economic landscape.

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON AFRICAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

The modern Africa as it is known today, consisting of various nations. It shares its roots with precolonial Africa, which was made up of diverse communities, including families, clans, villages, kingdoms, and empires. These societies were at various stages of social, political, and scientific development before the arrival of colonial powers. The colonial encounter abruptly interrupted these developmental trajectories, as colonial powers forcibly imposed their own way of life on the native populations. This imposition created a new order characterised by hegemonic structures that often favoured imported cultural values over indigenous ones.

Despite the disruptive legacy of colonialism, the advent of globalisation has brought some positive changes to Africa. It has led to the discontinuation of certain harmful cultural practices once considered part of the traditional fabric of African societies. Practices such as female genital mutilation, the killing of twins, the burying of kings with their servants, and the abandonment of people with diseases like sickle cell anaemia and leprosy.

Moreover, the economic benefits of globalisation cannot be overlooked, particularly in sectors like agriculture. Globalisation has contributed to the modernisation of African agriculture, with the transition from traditional, intensive farming methods to more mechanised forms of production. Akinsola (2020), highlights that this shift has allowed farmers to expand their farmlands and increase agricultural productivity. The mechanisation of agriculture has led to greater efficiency and output, fostering improvements in food production and, in some cases, contributing to rural development.

However, these positive changes have not come without tension. The introduction of global values and systems has often conflicted with certain aspects of African society, leading to a complex interaction between indigenous traditions and external influences. To understand these tensions more clearly, it is essential to examine how globalisation impacts key aspects of African culture and society.

GLOBALISATION AND THE AFRICAN MARRIAGE SYSTEM

Globalisation has significantly influenced many aspects of African culture, including traditional practices such as marriage. Marriage, as an institution, exists across cultures and is governed by social norms, customs, and traditions that give it meaning within specific societies. In the African context, marriage traditionally embodies mutual assistance, moral obligation, and continuity of lineage. Among the Urhobo people of the Niger Delta of Nigeria, marriage has historically functioned as a stabilizing social institution, anchoring family life, moral responsibility, and communal cohesion. Eruvbetere (2003), in Ikeke (2024), asserts that: “Urhobo traditional marriage is unique to Urhobo culture and traditions. Indeed, marriage in the Urhobo worldview is an enduring institution. It is sacred. It

looms large enough to tie two independent families together forever. When blessed with offspring, especially male offspring, the nuptial knot is wedded with a cord that neither death nor divorce can break or separate.” This implies that marriage within Urhobo society is not merely a private relationship between a man and a woman but a culturally regulated union between families, sustained through ritual observance, collective consent, and social accountability (Eruvbetere, 2005). However, Ejidje (2017), observes that rapid global change has not spared the Urhobo traditional marriage, leading to a gradual loss of fundamental marital values. This observation is particularly relevant to the Urhobo experience, where globalisation has altered deeply not only marital attitudes but also symbolic cultural expressions.

One striking example is the transformation of marriage aesthetics and ritual symbolism. Traditionally, the Urhobo bride appears in a culturally prescribed attire known as *otehugbeoseba, ubroewun ve oneso ode*, consisting of a double wrapper, blouse, and an elaborate headgear. She is ceremonially escorted by young married women from both her paternal and maternal families, symbolizing marital stability, fertility, and moral continuity. Oral tradition emphasises that only women who are married and still in marriage qualify for this role. This reinforces marriage as a lifelong and socially accountable institution. Under the influence of globalisation, this symbolism has been largely abandoned. Consequently, contemporary Urhobo brides increasingly wear Western-style gowns, often characterised by revealing designs that bear little or no cultural meaning. Those who accompany the bride frequently dress in similar manner with no reference to marital status or cultural symbolism. While this shift is widely accepted as “normal,” it signals a deeper cultural dislocation with serious implications for transmission of values to future generations.

Beyond aesthetics, globalisation has also promoted individualism at the expense of communal authority. As Eruvbetere (2005) notes, that the declining role of elders, the marginalisation of bride wealth negotiations, and the reduction of family involvement weaken the moral framework that once sustained marital stability. In time past, even when the Urhobo parents resided in urban centres or cities, marriage rites were deliberately conducted in ancestral homes to affirm cultural legitimacy and communal sovereignty. However, contemporary practices, have increasingly permit marriages to be contracted in arbitrary locations deemed convenient by the individuals thereby reflecting the dominance of Western and individual-centred conceptions of marriage. This attitude has further disrupted intergenerational transmission of values; thus, producing marriages that are increasingly detached from communal oversight.

In a nutshell, globalisation has not merely modified Urhobo marriage practices but has fundamentally undermined their cultural logic. By eroding ritual symbolism, promoting cultural homogenisation, and displacing communal values,

globalisation poses a serious threat to the integrity of Urhobo traditional marriage. Without deliberate cultural reflection and preservation, the institution risks losing its social meaning, leaving future generations without a clear moral and cultural foundation for marriage.

GLOBALISATION AND THE AFRICAN FAMILY

In many African societies, the family occupies a central and highly esteemed position, functioning as the foundational unit upon which society is built. The family is traditionally regarded as the backbone of cultural continuity, social organisation and moral formation. Within the African worldview, society is sustained through the family, and without it, social order would be fundamentally undermined. Prior to sustained contact with Europe, African family systems were distinctive, resilient, and deeply rooted in indigenous cultural values. The establishment of the family was predicated on the marital union between a husband and wife, which served as the legitimate basis for social reproduction and communal stability.

Noah et al. (2020), observe that African societies historically possessed functional and well-structured family institutions with clearly defined value systems. Across Africa countries such as Kenya, Gambia, Mali, Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Nigeria, and others, family structures before the era of colonisation and globalisation were socially cohesive and culturally productive. These families operated as unified domestic units in which members performed clearly delineated roles that promoted cooperation, discipline, and moral responsibility. In defining the family, Alubo (2012), in Yankuzo, (2014), describes it as a group of persons united by blood relationship and/or marriage, functioning as both a social and economic unit.

Within the traditional African family system, roles were clearly structured. The father was recognised as the head of the household, responsible for provision and protection, while the mother served as the homemaker, overseeing domestic responsibilities and the socialisation of children. This structured division of roles ensured effective moral training and the transmission of cultural values to younger generations. However, globalisation has significantly altered these traditional arrangements. The erosion of established family roles has had far-reaching implications for socialisation processes, particularly among young people. Respect for traditional authority and family discipline has diminished, while moral relativism and behavioural deviance have become increasingly visible.

Digital mass media, as a powerful agent of globalisation, has played a critical role in this transformation. Through smartphones, television, the internet, and other digital platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, etc., African children are increasingly exposed to content that contradicts indigenous moral values, including violent imagery, explicit sexual material, and excessive individualism. These

influences have contributed to a decline in respect for human life, communal responsibility, and moral restraint within the family system.

Globalisation was expected to promote peace, harmony, and cultural exchange. Instead, it has largely imposed Western cultural norms, resulting in cultural homogenisation rather than mutual enrichment (Noah et al., 2020). This dynamic raises critical questions about the loss of African family identity under globalisation. Modernity, as a dominant legacy of globalisation, increasingly frames the African family as dysfunctional due to its departure from traditional structures. According to Noah, globalisation has fragmented the African family system, giving rise to alternative family forms such as single parenthood, cohabitation, divorce, and same-sex unions. These arrangements, largely alien to traditional African contexts, have proven incompatible with indigenous methods of child socialisation. As Noah et al., argue, such fragmented family formations often lack the structural and moral capacity to fulfil the complex responsibilities traditionally assigned to the African family.

GLOBALISATION AND AFRICAN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Education constitutes a primary mechanism through which societies transmit norms, values, skills, and collective memory from one generation to another. In traditional African societies, education was not compartmentalised into formal institutions but was embedded within everyday social life. Haralambos (1980) in Yankuzo (2014), notes that in small-scale, non-literate societies, formal schooling was largely unknown, as young people acquired knowledge and social competence through active participation in the daily activities of their communities. Learning occurred through observation, imitation, and guided practice rather than through abstract instruction.

Similarly, Obidi (2005) observes that children's education in African societies began within the nuclear and extended family systems. Through storytelling, family meetings, communal rituals, and visits to relatives, children were introduced to their cosmology, ancestral heritage, moral expectations, and social responsibilities. Indigenous education thus emphasised character formation alongside skill acquisition. Values such as honesty, hard work, courage, endurance, and sociability were deliberately cultivated as essential traits for communal survival and social harmony (Yankuzo, 2014).

Given that farming, hunting, craftsmanship, and trade formed the economic backbone of most traditional African societies, indigenous education was closely aligned with practical life skills. Obidi (2005) explains that children were trained from an early age to participate meaningfully in productive activities, ranging from agriculture and fishing to manufacturing and local commerce. This system ensured that education was holistic, context-specific, and directly relevant to the social and economic realities of the community. More importantly, it provided the African

child with a clear sense of identity, purpose, and responsibility within society. The expansion of Western influence under the framework of globalisation introduced a radically different educational model to Africa. Formal schooling, conducted within classrooms and laboratories and supported by technologies produced by transnational corporations, has become the dominant mode of education (Yankuzo,2014). However, the curriculum underpinning this system is largely Western in orientation and often marginalises African worldviews, histories, and value systems. The conceptual foundations of both the natural and social sciences are predominantly framed through Western epistemological narratives. Ake (1985), in Mikail & Abdullah, (2017), critically describes this condition as an “imperialism of social sciences,” noting the absence of African-centred theoretical frameworks within formal education. This epistemic dominance has constrained Africans' capacity to design curricula rooted in their own cultural realities, languages, and traditions. Consequently, Western narratives have become deeply internalised, contributing to the gradual erosion of indigenous values and knowledge systems.

Furthermore, the displacement of indigenous education has altered family-based socialisation patterns. Children now spend most of their formative hours in school environments, while parents and extended family members are increasingly absent due to economic pressures. This physical and social separation weakens the traditional channels through which cultural values were transmitted. As a result, children's understanding of society is shaped largely by formal schooling and mass media, with limited grounding in indigenous moral frameworks. This disconnection has significant social implications, including the rise of behavioural challenges and value disorientation in contemporary African societies.

GLOBALISATION AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS RITUALS

Religion occupies a central place in African life and thought pattern. It shapes her social behaviour, moral consciousness, and cultural identity. Africans are deeply religious people who express their spirituality through everyday practices and ritual actions (Nweke, 2019). This religious consciousness is rooted in an African cosmology that recognizes the existence of a Supreme Being, divinities, spirit forces, and ancestors. As Madu (2003) explains, Africans relate to and communicate with these spiritual beings through ritual actions, which serve as structured modes of interaction between the human and the spiritual realms. Human vulnerability in the face of existential uncertainties reinforces dependence on these spiritual forces, thereby necessitating ritual reciprocity as an expression of reverence, supplication, and continuity (Madu, 2003). Participation in ritual activities is therefore not optional within African traditional religion but a fundamental response to the belief that life, protection, and sustenance are

controlled by spiritual agencies beyond human comprehension.

Rituals provide a means through which individuals and communities seek harmony with the supernatural, avert misfortune, and ensure social and cosmic balance. Fairchild (1965), in Nweke (2019), defines ritual as behaviour prescribed by custom, law, or regulation, often believed to be pleasing to the gods. In many traditional societies, deviation from established ritual norms is thought to attract sanctions or spiritual consequences, underscoring the seriousness with which rituals are regarded. African traditional rituals are manifested in diverse cultural expressions, including sacrifices, festivals, burial rites, artistic productions, food practices, and modes of dress. Nweke (2019), conceptualises African ritual as an expression of culture through social behaviour and orientation. In this sense, African traditional rituals are inseparable from broader cultural traits upheld and sustained by African traditional religion. They represent embodied knowledge systems through which values, beliefs, and identities are preserved and transmitted across generations.

Globalisation, particularly during the colonial period, significantly disrupted these ritual systems. While African art and material culture were widely appropriated and admired by Western societies, the spiritual meanings attached to these objects were systematically dismissed or condemned. Notable examples include the Benin Bronzes taken from Nigeria, the Maqala treasures looted from Ethiopia, and the soapstone sculptures removed from Zimbabwe. These artifacts were extracted from their ritual contexts and reclassified as aesthetic commodities in Western museums. This selective appreciation reveals a paradox of globalisation: African cultural objects are celebrated globally, while the religious rituals that give them meaning are delegitimised and stigmatised.

Despite Africa's longstanding tradition of hospitality and openness to outsiders, globalisation has gradually weakened the cultural foundations that sustained this value. Ekwuru (2011), in Agbanero & Bonaventure, (2019), note that Africans' friendliness toward foreigners stems from deeply ingrained cultural norms. However, scholars such as Chulu (2015) in Agbanero & Bonaventure (2019), argues that globalisation has diminished the effectiveness of cultural identities in developing societies. Rather than facilitating Africa's meaningful integration into the global economy, globalisation has often marginalised indigenous systems and constrained local development. Thus, globalisation has contributed to the erosion of African traditional religious rituals through the loss of cultural identity, language displacement, and moral disorientation. The cumulative effect has been a weakening of ritual consciousness and a gradual detachment from indigenous religious frameworks that once provided coherence, meaning, and ethical regulation within African societies.

WAY FORWARD

A critical examination of the historical trajectory of African culture reveals that the continent is presently undergoing a profound phase of cultural transformation. Precious (2010), describes this process as a rudimentary form of cultural revolution, one characterised by both constructive and destructive tendencies. On the positive side, contact with Western societies during the periods of colonialism and contemporary globalisation has contributed to the gradual abandonment of certain cultural practices rooted in irrational worldviews, outdated customs, and belief systems that hindered social development and human flourishing. For instance, practices such as the killing of twins, female genital mutilation (FGM), superstition, magic, and patriarchy have been significantly reduced in certain parts of Africa. In this respect, globalisation has facilitated a degree of cultural renaissance by encouraging reform and critical self-reflection within African societies.

However, this transformation has also produced deeply negative consequences. Many cherished traditions, indigenous values, and cultural practices that historically defined African identity are rapidly disappearing. Precious (2010) warns that if global integration leads to the loss of those elements that define a people, then such a people risk losing their collective identity. This condition has contributed significantly to the widespread identity crisis observable across the African continent today.

In response, there is an urgent need for a deliberate revival of Africa's cultural heritage. Such a revival is not intended to promote cultural nostalgia but to educate younger generations about their historical origins, moral frameworks, and social responsibilities. Reclaiming cultural identity serves both as a means of self-understanding and as a foundation for meaningful participation in global interactions. Past intellectual and political efforts by figures such as Julius Nyerere, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Marcus Garvey sought to advance similar goals, yet their initiatives achieved limited long-term impact. Until Africa is able to clearly define and articulate its cultural identity on its own terms, genuine global integration will remain elusive. Colonialism profoundly distorted African self-representation, replacing indigenous narratives with externally imposed interpretations that justified domination and marginalisation. Much of what is currently presented as African cultural identity globally continues to reflect these colonial constructions.

Restoring indigenous cultures requires a critical re-evaluation of the processes of acculturation imposed on African societies. Although cultural contact is an inevitable feature of globalisation, Africa's experience has largely been characterised by cultural domination rather than mutual exchange. Obioha (2010), observes that Western culture has overwhelmingly displaced African cultural systems, leading to the erosion of core values and moral frameworks. Ekwuru

(1999) describes this phenomenon as the “evil of forced acculturation,” emphasising that African cultures were suppressed rather than allowed to engage in reciprocal cultural borrowing.

Ideally, acculturation should involve a gradual and balanced exchange in which interacting cultures mutually influence one another. Precious (2010) explains that when one culture dominates due to superior technology and media control, the weaker culture is compelled into excessive and uncritical borrowing. This imbalance has been evident in Africa's exposure to global communication technologies, digital media, and consumer culture, which have accelerated the uncritical absorption of foreign values at the expense of indigenous traditions. Consequently, there is a pressing need for cultural re-evaluation rather than outright rejection or passive acceptance of globalisation.

Such re-evaluation must be selective. Not all elements of African traditional culture are necessarily compatible with contemporary global realities. Only those aspects that promote human dignity, social cohesion, and intellectual development should be retained. Bodunrin (1985), in Precious, (2010) argues that meaningful integration of African cultural heritage into global culture requires the adoption of scientific attitudes such as openness to criticism, freedom of inquiry, and intellectual rigour. These values are essential for development in the modern world. Nevertheless, traditional African culture has often been characterised by authoritarianism and orality, which limit critical engagement. Wiredu (1980), in Precious (2010), notes that traditional belief systems frequently resist criticism and lack systematic rigour and experimental inquiry. The dominance of oral transmission, coupled with inadequate documentation, has further contributed to imprecision and the persistence of sentiment and prejudice in knowledge transmission. The way forward therefore, lies in a balanced approach that neither romanticises tradition nor uncritically embraces foreign cultural models. Africa must consciously reform its cultural heritage by preserving its ethical strengths while critically transforming aspects that hinder intellectual and social progress. Only through such reflective cultural reconstruction can Africa reclaim its identity and engage the global community on equal and meaningful terms.

CONCLUSION

The call for a cultural rebirth of the African experience arises from the profound transformations generated by Africa's historical and contemporary encounters with the Western world. These encounters, initiated during colonialism and sustained through globalisation, have produced a process of forced acculturation that has placed Africa's rich cultural heritage in a state of severe decline. As demonstrated in this study, globalisation has not merely facilitated cultural exchange but has often functioned as a vehicle for cultural domination, leading to the erosion of indigenous values, institutions, and worldviews that once provided coherence and identity

within African societies.

The loss of culture inevitably results in the loss of identity, and the erosion of identity threatens the very fabric of society. To safeguard African societies from further cultural disintegration, there is an urgent need to adopt deliberate and reflective strategies for responding to the cultural challenges posed by globalisation. Such strategies should orient Africans toward identifying, preserving, and revitalising those elements of their cultural heritage that affirm human dignity, promote social cohesion, and remain relevant in a global context. These cultural resources should not only be preserved for internal consumption but also articulated and projected to the global community on Africa's own terms.

It is important to emphasise that the recommendations advanced in this study do not claim to provide a singular or exhaustive solution to Africa's cultural crisis. Rather, they represent a modest contribution to the broader discourse on cultural renaissance and decolonial recovery in Africa. Addressing the cultural challenges of globalisation requires sustained intellectual engagement, policy commitment, and grassroots participation. Only through such collective effort can Africa reclaim its cultural agency, redefine its global presence, and ensure that globalisation becomes a process of mutual enrichment rather than cultural erasure.

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HUMANITY AND THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUFFERING IN ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER'S THOUGHT: AN INTERCULTURAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

To perform a comprehensive intercultural analysis, it is essential to apply Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy. According to Arthur Schopenhauer, suffering is an essential and universal aspect of human existence and is brought on by the will's constant striving. He suggested that your pain would increase with your level of desire. The emphasis on the universality of suffering and compassion as the basis of morality has led to an absence of Arthur Schopenhauer's ethical philosophy in intercultural philosophical discourse. This study aims to critically examine Schopenhauer's conception of humanity through the lens of universal suffering in order to ascertain its potential as a foundation for intercultural philosophical discussion. This work is essential because it uses intercultural analysis to examine his theories on suffering, incorporating different philosophical and cultural viewpoints to improve our understanding and application of his writings. To produce a high-quality research, the materials used for this work have been procured from books, journals, and scholarly articles, using Hermeneutics and Analytical methods. This methods focuses on interpreting philosophical texts and their meanings in cultural, and analysing the notion of humanity, in relation to suffering. Through intercultural analysis, we can gain a better understanding of suffering by examining different cultures, narratives, and philosophical traditions, which reveals a common human experience that transcends personal differences. In all, human existence, which represents the highest

form of Will, gets to embody the extreme of pain, distress making it universally common or shared across cultures, histories, and social differences.

Keywords: *Humanity, Universality, Suffering, Intercultural analysis, Human existence, Will and Desire, Pessimism, Compassion and Empathy.*

INTRODUCTION

Suffering has proved to be one of the most persistent and universal phenomena in the human condition. Across various cultures, ages, and philosophical streams, the question of suffering has remained one of the pressing concerns that human beings have grappled with in search of possible responses to the phenomenon of suffering and the relationship it has with the human experience. Based on the religious perspective, the suffering of human beings can be explained in terms of testing, punishment, or the need for redemption, to the more philosophical perspectives that explain suffering from the standpoint of the existential condition of human beings. It is about the universality of suffering that the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer obtains specific relevance.

Arthur Schopenhauer was born in the Hanseatic City of Danzig in 1788 and died in 1860. His father was a well-to-do merchant of rugged independence and wide cultural interests, and his mother a woman of considerable intellectual gifts who in her day won fame as an authoress. At an early age, the son showed outstanding mental qualities. He soon embarked on an intensive study of the humanities, the empirical sciences, and philosophy at the Universities of Gottingen and Berlin (Schopenhauer 4). He made a significant contribution to the history of Western philosophy, insofar as he made suffering his metaphysics in a way that did not happen in other philosophies, in which it figured as a secondary issue. Within his most renowned work, "*The World as Will and Representation*", he presents a radically pessimistic world vision that portrays a world led by an irrational, blind, and tirelessly striving force that he refers to as the "Will" (Schopenhauer 110). Because endless desiring can never yield ultimate satisfaction, a state of eternal lack exists in life, as he adopts, since satisfaction only leads to a momentary pause from which fresh desires arise (196).

The most important intercultural contribution would be that Lim and Yu (2025) elaborate on Schopenhauer's concept of suffering with Christian theology. They claim that although for Schopenhauer suffering is metaphysically unavoidable, Christianity explains it as meaningful participation in Christ's redemptive experience and as a way of moral transformation. Yet, both approaches share the idea of suffering being part of human existence (Lim & Yu 15–17). In their analysis, it appears that Schopenhauer's insight into the heightening of desire corresponds with Christian instructions about self-denial and discipleship.

An intercultural study of the philosophy of suffering has its significance in the modern world, which faces cultural diversity and globalization. Although the philosophy of Schopenhauer has been widely studied in the context of Western pessimism and German idealism, his philosophy of suffering has much to do with an intercultural inquiry, too. Every culture has its own way of formulating the idea of suffering in its own cultural context, such as through the community of experiences, the stories of religions, ethics, and metaphysics. For example, the African philosophies tend to develop the philosophy of suffering in the context of the community, meaning the shared beliefs of the community and the joint responsibilities of the people in general.

Worth noticing, however, is the observation that there are connections between Schopenhauer's notion of suffering and Oriental philosophy, especially the Buddhist and Hindu traditions, which attribute the origin of suffering to desire, just as Schopenhauer does. Schopenhauer has confessed the indebtedness of his philosophical thought to Oriental philosophy, especially the Upanishads and Buddhism (Schopenhauer 284).

THE WILL AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

“The Will (Wille) is the center and the kernel of all my thoughts,” Schopenhauer always said. At the center of his philosophy is the Will (Wille), which he holds to be the *“metaphysical substrata”* and the *“metaphysical truth”* common to all existence, and, by extension, to all human existence. *“The result,”* he says in *The World as Will and Representation*, *“is that the Will itself is not a rational and aiming, but a blind and eternally striving, force and substance, and is visible in nature, partly in the inorganic, but far more in the organic, and most clearly and completely in man”* (Schopenhauer 110-112). Indeed, as in the case of Schopenhauer, one can say that the existence of man is not based on reason and freedom in the classic sense, but rather on a universal, metaphysical drive that is supra-individual and supra-historical in nature. It is this metaphysical foundation that makes possible Schopenhauer's statement on the universality of man and suffering.

The uniqueness of Schopenhauer's philosophy lies in the fact that he holds that the Will is the same in all beings, though it manifests in different stages of objectification. In the sense that humans have an intellect, they are not free from the Will. Instead, they experience the Will in a more extreme way due to their awareness of desire, need, and frustration. *“Man is the most complete objectification of the will”*. This erases not just the distinction between various individuals but also between various cultures because each human being is subject to the same reality. The existential condition of humans: desire, striving, conflict, and dissatisfaction—it is not accidental but necessarily universal (Schopenhauer 164). This vision of Will enables the reader to understand that there is no divided vision of humanity according to geographical locations like Europe, Asia, Africa, but

everywhere in the world this existential condition persists because “man's life is like 'pain turned into time, time turned into pain' because existence itself is no more than endless willing,” from desire to satisfaction, to desire again or to boredom: “The voluntary alternative between pain and emptiness” (Schopenhauer 312-313). This phenomenon also occurs regardless of whether one is in Asia, Africa, or Europe. This strengthens Schopenhauer's argument on the universal structure of existence. It has been observed by some scholars that the metaphysics of the Will in Schopenhauer exhibits a strong connection with non-Western philosophies, and in particular, the Indian philosophies. He admits the connections, and he says about the *Upanishads*, “The *Upanishads* are the consolation of my life,” and he adds, “They agree with my doctrine throughout” (Schopenhauer xxxiv). The Will and the *tanha* (craving) in Buddhism share a common characteristic in the sense that they denote an irreparable urge and a craving for life and survival, as they bind every living being to suffering. Schopenhauer's Will is found to parallel the Eastern view that the cause of suffering is desire, and it is a Western formulation of the view, as pointed out by Radhakrishnan (84-86). At the same time, it should be noted that scholars, such as Bryan Magee, highlight the radically egalitarian view of mankind in the idea of the Will postulated by Schopenhauer. Because all people are manifestations of the same Will, the factors of race, class, and nationality become, in a metaphysical sense, no more than a trifling detail (Magee 137-139). What is essential is the common experience of the will and, hence, the experience of suffering. It is this metaphysical sameness that constitutes the ground for the ethics of compassion propounded by Schopenhauer, wherein the suffering of another is, in truth, the same as the suffering of oneself (Schopenhauer 372-374).

KEY CONCEPTS RELATED TO HUMANITY AND SUFFERING

In dealing with the concept relevant to the topic of Humanity and Suffering, there is a need to first identify and understand the applicable principles behind the concepts of humanity and suffering. Humanity can be identified as the set of attributes and qualities that exhibit what makes human beings act and behave in the way that they do. This is tied to attributes such as compassion and the search for meaning and purpose in our lives. On the other hand, suffering can be defined as the set of conditions that make up the state of pain and distress or the perception of physical or emotional discomfort that human beings go through in their lives. This can be caused by conditions of illness, loss, or difficulty. As such, there is a need to carefully examine how humanity and suffering interact when dealing with this concept. Relevant concepts to Humanities and Suffering are below:

The concept of the will

The basic element of Schopenhauer's philosophy is the Will, or *Wille* in German, and he considers it to denote the inner, metaphysical thing-in-itself of the entire reality. In *The World as Will and Representation*, he claims, "the will is the thing-in-

itself" and the actual reality of all phenomena (Schopenhauer 110). Mankind, therefore, is not essentially rational in nature but an intense manifestation of this blind, striving force. According to him, the essence of human existence is blind and irrational to the urge or will to live. It is this "will" that forces humans to engage in the gratification of self and building satisfaction, but this results in suffering since desires are unfulfilled.

Human beings are no exception, not because they are free from the Will, but because in them, the Will is most objectified. As Schopenhauer puts it, "man is the most complete phenomenon of the will". This, in turn, makes human life particularly susceptible to suffering: the greater one's consciousness, the greater one's awareness of desire, want, and finitude. The fact that such an aimless striving of the Will condemns humanity to never be satisfied supports the view of some scholars, like Bryan Magee, who believe suffering is not an accidental but a structural feature of existence. It is in this respect that

Magee writes: "The striving is aimless, and this condemnation of humanity never to find satisfaction is an explanation of why suffering is not an accident but a structural feature of existence" (Magee 137).

Representation and Human Consciousness

Representation (*Vorstellung*), denotes the world as it appears in human consciousness. The world that man experiences is always mediated through the forms of representation: space, time, and causality (Schopenhauer 1:3). "The world is my representation": this is a truth valid with reference to every living and knowing being, although man alone can bring it into reflective, abstract consciousness. In essence, humanity exists in these two aspects: representation (knowing subject) and Will (striving subjects). This dual nature of human existence greatly amplifies suffering. Though animals experience suffering in terms of pure will and pain, in the case of human beings, suffering occurs in terms of memory, anticipation, and reflection, apart from will and pain. This is because, according to him, "the more intellect a man has, the more suffering he is capable of" (Schopenhauer 312).

Compassion and empathy

Schopenhauer insisted on the need for compassion and empathy towards others, who, besides oneself, were caught in the cycle of suffering. Through an awareness and display of compassion towards others, one could reduce one's suffering and develop a higher degree of compassion. Even in terms of pessimism, he doesn't leave man in a state of despair. An important moral notion in Schopenhauer's ethics is compassion, defined by him as the only real foundation for morals. "*On the Basis of Morality*," an action is moral if one immediately knows the suffering of another as one's own suffering (Schopenhauer 144). Julian Young observes: "This made Schopenhauer's philosophy remarkably tolerant of other cultures. That's because compassion is not a cultural value; it's a universal one. Everyone has a stake in

compassion. There's nothing to stop a member of one culture interpreting an aspect of another culture's practices or beliefs as worthy of compassion (Young 201)."'

Vanity

Life is filled with sufferings, and the cause for this is the desire to attain something external, and this external object gives rise to vanity, resulting in the end result of dissatisfaction. When an individual realises the nature of the external object, he is able to overcome the sufferings and attain blissful peace. Vanity is seen by Schopenhauer as an expression of man's underlying fondness for appearances. "Every man takes the boundaries of his own field of vision for the boundaries of the world," Schopenhauer says apropos of this matter (329). Vanity, in these terms, is more than mere weakness of character; instead, it represents an error regarding being. Man mistakes his empirical self, which is ephemeral, for something of permanent significance, which in turn results in an increase of competition, resentment, and pain

The concept of Pessimism

Schopenhauer is generally known for his philosophy of pessimism since in his works, he viewed suffering and dissatisfaction as a part of human existence. In the same way, however, he perceived it as a means that could liberate him from egoism and materialism and lead him to an existence that was more genuine and meaningful. His pessimism is therefore the philosophical outcome of his thinking on vanity and egoism. Since all willing is striving, and all striving is rooted in lack, human existence is structurally bound to suffering (Schopenhauer 310). Pleasure, by contrast, is merely the temporary cessation of pain, never a positive state. But this pessimism is not emotional despair; it is metaphysical realism. As Schopenhauer puts it, any honest assessment of life must draw the conclusion that "it would be better if it did not exist" (575). That conclusion squares with neither the theological nor the humanistic narrative of existence as fundamentally meaningful or progressive.

Other thinkers have both supported and criticised this position: for example, Freud, in describing civilisation as the source of unavoidable dissatisfaction, reflects a pessimism broadly similar to that of Schopenhauer (Freud 44). Also, Emil Cioran further extends Schopenhauer's pessimistic views to an existentially styled argument when he says consciousness is a curse (Cioran 5).

Denial of the will

Another important concept associated with the human entity and the issue of suffering is the denial of the Will. Schopenhauer suggests that while suffering forms a part of the living essence, it can be softened through aesthetic contemplation, ethical compassion, and even by ascetic renunciation. In instances of aesthetic experience, the individual becomes a "pure, will-less subject of knowledge," deprived, in a temporary way, of the insistence of desire. More radically, denial of the Will consists in ascetic avoidance of striving altogether. Such an approach has

some similarities with Buddhist ideas on freedom from craving (*tanhā*) and the end of suffering (*nirvāṇa*). Notably, Schopenhauer himself believed this; for example, he writes that it was a great wisdom of Eastern thought that it "knew and showed the pessimistic view of the world long before pessimism had become so unpopular in Europe with the decay of Christianity" (xliv). It is commonly remarked that this intercultural merging lends additional weight to Schopenhauer's claim that there is a universal human condition of suffering.

Egoism

Egoism and self-centeredness are viewed as the cause of all suffering in the world. This school of thought believes that by moving past ego and understanding the interconnection of all people and all life, people can liberate themselves from suffering and achieve peace. Egoism is the most essential part of moral philosophy, and consists in man's estimate of his own existence and well-being as being of infinitely greater importance than that of others (Schopenhauer 332). Such egoism is acquired and, instead, grounded in metaphysics, since "every individual is an objectification of will, and his aim is to preserve and to assert himself at the expense of others" (333). As explained by Schopenhauer, egoism is the cause for the prevalence of conflicts, cruelty, and injustices in the course of human history. In this respect, he asserts, "The main cause of the serious evils that affect mankind is man himself" (On the Basis of Morality 140). In this context, this idea can be seen as contrary to the idea of the Enlightenment or optimism, especially the idea held by Rousseau, that mankind is inherently good.

Redemption

Despite his bleak view of the world, Schopenhauer did not shut his eyes to the possibility of redemption from these sufferings through an inner transformation and spiritual illumination. Through virtues such as compassion, wisdom, and humility, man can transcend his own ego into a higher order of consciousness beyond suffering and its bondage.

CAUSES AND THE ROLE OF SUFFERING IN HUMAN EXISTENCE

The idea of suffering has long been one of the main themes in philosophy for many centuries. The notion of humanity and universality of suffering is very well integrated into his writing entitled "*The World as Will and Representation*." Indeed, this very influential piece of philosophy asserts that suffering is inevitably one of the factors that characterise and determine human existence. According to Schopenhauer's philosophy on this subject, suffering is more than just a coincidental effect of human existence – it is one of the factors that contribute to our understanding and interpretation of this world and this existence called human life. For him, suffering is one catalyst for personal growth and self-discovery. "*Without suffering and death, human life cannot be complete*," (Schopenhauer 214). The idea is that suffering is a resultant effect of human existence, and through this suffering

and hardship, one can discover and define one's very own human existence – and interpret this life according to one's own personal and compassionate thoughts and feelings about this life and this world.

Man's Search for Meaning, Viktor E. Frankl highlights suffering as a human phenomenon which results from both external circumstances and internal crisis situations. Based on his own experiences at Nazi concentration camps, Frankl identifies deprivation and oppressive circumstances created by society as immediate factors surrounding suffering. Deprivation to the necessities such as food and basic physical comfort, together with circumstances such as brutality and proximity to death, contributed to situations where suffering became unavoidable and widespread, and how political factors can subject human beings to suffering regardless of innocence (Frankl 47-49).

Apart from pain of the physical sort, Frankl describes psychological pain arising from loss. The prisoners experienced loss of loved ones, liberty, identity, and security in the future. Such types of pain were even worse than those of physical endurance, since they compromised the psychological basis of life by encouraging feelings of abandonment and hopelessness (Frankl 66-67). Most importantly, however, Frankl articulates the root of suffering as the loss of meaning. He says, "Prisoners who felt no purpose in the midst of their suffering and no future task to which they were looking forward were especially susceptible to the danger of hopelessness and death." With the meaningless nature of existence, suffering became unbearable, and pain converted into "existential despair" (Frankl 73-75). This illustrates the human need for meaning to survive pain. Frankl recognises suffering as a part of human existence. Pain, guilt, and death are always present in human life, but suffering can become destructive if it does not have any meaning for those undergoing it.

The cause of all suffering, according to Schopenhauer, is Will, which refers to the blind, irrational, and unlimited striving present in all phenomena. This implies that humans, who are conscious expressions of Will, are doomed to lives of dissatisfaction. This is because, according to Schopenhauer, "all willing proceeds from want, thus from deficiency, and thus from suffering" (Schopenhauer 196). This implies that all humans are bound to dissatisfaction because all their desires imply lack, and hence any moment of satisfaction shall only precede boredom, which Schopenhauer postulates to be a form of suffering (312). This metaphysical view makes suffering universal in nature. Suffering does not come from a specific cultural setting or ethical failure but exists in an ontological manner. Happiness in this context is actually a negative phenomenon—it's a mere reprieve from suffering (319). In his essay *On the Suffering of the World*, Schopenhauer writes, *The person who has lived the most is not the one who has counted the most years but the one who has suffered the most* (Schopenhauer 67). This statement implies that suffering is a necessary component of a meaningful and fulfilling life. In other words, happiness

in this view does not come from a positive but a negative experience. This means that nothing in this world can banish suffering. The suffering of man is even intensified by his consciousness and intelligence. Unlike other non-rational beings in nature, man has the capacity to reflect on his sufferings in the past and look forward to his sufferings in the future as well. The magnitude of his sufferings gets broadened by his ability to reflect on his sufferings in the past and future. As Schopenhauer puts it, “*men through memory and imagination increase their sufferings a hundredfold*” (Schopenhauer 577). This perception foreshadows the subsequent existential interpretations on the problem of suffering. While Nietzsche will ultimately break away from the pessimism expressed by Schopenhauer, he recognizes the insight expressed by the latter on the immanence of suffering within life (Birth of Tragedy 23). This is where the originality of Schopenhauer consists: he does not aestheticise or moralise suffering.

WAYS OF OVERCOMING SUFFERING

Despite the reality that pains are necessary part of being a human being and occurs in varied parts such as Birth, Aging, Illness, and Death. Despite these facts, they are concepts for overcoming pains and learning how to attain inner peace.

The first and most immediate way of overcoming suffering is Aesthetic contemplation. In aesthetic experience, the individual no longer relates to things in a manner that expresses their personal desire or utility. Rather, one becomes a “pure, will-less subject of knowing” (Schopenhauer 178). In such cases, the ceaseless and suffering-filled striving of the Will is momentarily stilled, and with it, the pain of desire. Art, and specifically music, has a singular role to play in such a process; music speaks in the language of the Will itself, yet without exciting personal desire. This seeming contradiction makes it possible to find moments of intense solace in suffering, albeit temporarily. As Julian Young points out, aesthetic experience is not a form of ultimate redemption from suffering but provides “islands of peace in a sea of suffering” (Young 112).

With compassion, the individual stops to limit any discussion of the Will to self-striving and begins to oppose it in its egocentric manifestation. The actions of justice and loving-kindness certainly do not abolish suffering completely, but they moderate it to a certain point by not perpetuating it. In Bryan Magee's account, Schopenhauer's ethics: “constitute rather a metaphysical foundation of moral feeling which is not limited to any particular culture or religion but can lay claim to a universal validity.” (Magee 154). This specific ethical vision strongly corresponds to both the Buddhist concept of compassion (*karuna*) and self-giving love in Christianity. In Buddhism, compassion springs from understanding that “all beings are entangled in suffering (*dukkha*),” and in Christianity, self-giving love is born from the understanding of “shared creaturely vulnerability.” Schopenhauer explicitly points to such correspondences and commends both Buddhism and

Christianity for their understanding that "suffering is the basic reality of mankind" (Parerga II, 348-350). In an intercultural perspective, compassion appears to be a universal ethical reaction to suffering. He also emphasised the importance of practicing detachment from all worldly attachments and desires as a method through which suffering could be alleviated. Through separating oneself from the drive for material things and recognition, one could attain internal peace. (Schopenhauer 256)

Overcoming suffering involves a change in perspective through acceptance, mindfulness, and changing reactions, while also taking practical steps such as seeking support, focusing on healthy habits, helping others, and finding purpose or faith to build resilience. Be aware of your own suffering, be willing to face, and accept the suffering you face on a daily basis. This includes stress, doubt, fear, anger, frustration, and disappointment. Watch it happen, and be okay with the sensation. Don't run from it. Ease your own suffering, Learn the cause of your suffering, since it comes from our thoughts about situations and not the situations themselves; hence, inner peace can be available even in difficulty.

INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOPENHAUER'S IDEA OF SUFFERING

As Schopenhauer puts it, "All striving springs from want or deficiency, from dissatisfaction with one's condition, and is therefore suffering so long as it is not satisfied" (Schopenhauer 253). But even when desires happen to be momentarily satisfied, the satisfaction is invariably followed by the pangs of boredom, a connection between pain and boredom: Suffering, in this way, cannot be said to be an element of particular cultures or historical lives; rather, it emanates from the ontological conditions of life. The metaphysics allows him to argue that, throughout the world of humans, there is universal suffering. Since the Will functions universally and actively in all creatures, nobody or no culture is able to avoid the Will's effects. He emphasises that "life itself is a business that does not cover its costs" (Schopenhauer 573). In this sense, human suffering is neither a moral punishment nor only a temporary disorder; it is absolutely structural to existence itself.

This view of suffering is systematically expounded upon by Stewart, who elaborates that suffering is not just an accident; rather, it constitutes the very content of one's life. On this basis, Stewart insists that, due to the nonstop struggle of the Will, human beings are condemned to eternal dissatisfaction with their current condition, which, in turn, makes suffering a universal human destiny per se, regardless of cultural setting or historical period (Stewart 130-134). His contribution represents the basis for intercultural analyses insofar as the suffering of a human being now will be identified as a common human problem beyond cultural limitations.

Uwakwe, A.C. (2025) established that what goes for “*truth*” is a function of language, culture, power play, and social setting, and not some fixed foundations. This critique of universal epistemological claims makes for a productive point of connection with Arthur Schopenhauer's notion of the universality of suffering. In the light of the Postmodern understanding by Uwakwe, helps to frame Schopenhauer's pessimism as a way of questioning human epistemic certainty, which states that the universality of truth in a particular idea lies in individual perspectives and understanding; reason alone can provide ultimate answers about the human condition.

However, it is the intercultural aspect of his philosophy that gives Schopenhauer his special hallmark: Unlike most European philosophers of his time, he not only recognises but repeatedly emphasises that “the Buddhist doctrine of suffering (*dukkha*) is very similar to the philosophy which I have developed.” While both Buddhism and his own philosophy posit that suffering is the product of craving and attachment, and that the only way to overcome suffering is by giving up craving and attachment, his philosophy holds that the only way to overcome suffering is by denying the will (Schopenhauer 381). In *On the Basis of Morality*, Schopenhauer asserts that moral action emerges not as a result of moral ideals and divine decrees but from the experience of another's suffering. He explains that “compassion consists in the breakdown of the barrier between oneself and another, and in the direct recognition of another man's sufferings as one's own” (Schopenhauer 144). His philosophical ideas do not merely explicate the existence of suffering but also mark the existence of a common human experience of suffering that is not confined by cultural and religious differences but by time and space.

CONCLUSION

Human existence, which represents the highest form of Will, gets to embody the extreme of pain, making it universally common or shared across cultures, histories, and social differences. In situating the thought of Schopenhauer in a dialogue with non-Western philosophical and/or religious traditions, namely Buddhism and Hinduism, the current research project has shown how the concept of suffering is resonant in a non-Western context. Various scholars, such as Bryan Magee and Christopher Janaway, have argued that Schopenhauer's encounter with Indian philosophy was not merely superficial but structurally foundational, particularly in regard to the primacy of desire and compassion as a corrective to suffering. As noted, in Buddhism, “*dukkha*” refers to “unsatisfactoriness,” or in other words, the state of suffering that cuts across all existence, a condition that is not far removed from Schopenhauer's characterisation of human existence as a state of suffering that swings between pain and boredom. On the other hand, however, intercultural analysis makes it possible to identify significant differences which enhance rather than deny Schopenhauer's views. While Schopenhauer subscribes to nothing but

the negation of Will as a definitive solution to suffering, in Buddhism and Hinduism, liberation may well entail a controlled transformation of consciousness.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF MIGRATION ON THE AFRICAN HERITAGE OF COMMUNAL LIVING

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ABSTRACT

The African heritage of communal living, characterized by collective responsibility, interdependence, and extended kinship networks, has historically served as a foundational social framework for identity formation and social cohesion. However, increasing patterns of internal and international migration have generated significant social transformations that raise critical questions about the sustainability of these communal values. The problem addressed in this study is the growing tension between mobility-induced social change and the preservation of African communal living traditions, particularly as migration restructures family systems, reciprocity norms, and cultural participation. The purpose of the study is to critically investigate the effects of migration on African communal living by examining how communal practices are weakened, sustained, or reconstituted across rural, urban, and diasporic contexts. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach based on an extensive review and synthesis of peer-reviewed literature drawn from sociology, anthropology, migration studies, and African cultural studies, guided by transnationalism and social capital theory as its analytical frameworks. The scope of the study encompasses internal rural–urban migration within Africa as well as international migration to global diasporic destinations, with particular attention to remittance practices, transnational networks, gender dynamics, and digital mediation of communal ties. The significance of the study lies in its contribution to theoretical debates on migration and cultural change by

demonstrating that migration does not simply erode communal living but reconfigures it into adaptive and translocal forms. The study further provides policy-relevant insights for cultural preservation, migration governance, and community development in African societies.

Keywords: *Migration; African communal living; Transnationalism; Social capital; Cultural transformation*

INTRODUCTION

African communal living represents more than a pattern of co-residence or shared labor; it is a deeply embedded socio-cultural system that shapes moral obligations, social identity, and community governance. Rooted in philosophies such as *Ubuntu* and the relational ethos articulated in various African traditions, communal living fosters networks of mutual support, collective decision-making, and intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. These practices historically provided resilience against social and economic uncertainties, facilitated resource sharing, and reinforced moral accountability within extended kinship networks. However, the contemporary African context is marked by heightened mobility, driven by economic opportunities, education, political instability, and environmental pressures. This heightened migration challenges the institutional and relational structures that sustain communal living, raising questions about how mobility reshapes, reconstructs, or potentially erodes these practices.

While much of the existing research on African migration emphasizes economic remittances, labor market integration, and policy implications, less attention has been paid to the sociocultural consequences of migration on the heritage of communal life. Moreover, studies often treat communal living as static, failing to account for its adaptive capacity or the emergence of hybrid forms that reconcile traditional norms with transnational realities. This gap limits both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for sustaining social cohesion in an era of widespread mobility.

The present study situates African communal living within the frameworks of transnationalism and social capital theory, examining how migration reconfigures relationships, obligations, and cultural practices across spatial and generational boundaries. By exploring both internal and international migration streams, and by integrating gender, urbanization, and digital mediation considerations, the study provides a comprehensive, interdisciplinary analysis of the ongoing negotiation between mobility and communal heritage. The investigation seeks to illuminate how African communities retain, adapt, or transform collective living practices in response to the multifaceted pressures of contemporary migration.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study draws on transnationalism and social capital theory, which together provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how migration affects African communal living. Transnationalism emphasizes the multi-sited nature of social life, highlighting the ways in which migrants maintain enduring connections with their communities of origin while engaging in the socio-economic and cultural contexts of host countries (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994). This perspective allows the study to conceptualize communal living as a dynamic process that extends beyond geographic boundaries. Migrants do not simply sever ties with their home communities; they often sustain obligations, participate in collective decision-making, and contribute to communal projects through remittances, periodic visits, and virtual communication. Transnationalism thus frames migration not merely as a disruptive force but as a conduit for both the preservation and adaptation of communal norms in a globalized context.

Social capital theory complements this perspective by focusing on the qualitative aspects of relationships and networks that facilitate cooperation, trust, and shared norms (Putnam, 2000; Coleman, 1988). Within African communal living, social capital manifests through dense kinship networks, reciprocal labor arrangements, and collective problem-solving, and mutual support during social crises. Migration can both weaken and reinforce social capital: physical absence and urban pressures may reduce face-to-face interactions and weaken localized networks, whereas transnational ties, remittances, and diaspora associations can expand bridging and bonding capital across communities and borders. By integrating social capital theory, the study captures the mechanisms through which migration mediates communal cohesion, highlighting both vulnerabilities and adaptive potential.

Together, transnationalism and social capital theory provide a dual lens for analyzing how migration reshapes African communal heritage. Transnationalism situates communal norms within multi-sited, cross-border contexts, revealing the spatial and temporal dimensions of continuity and change. Social capital theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the relational quality of these networks, the flow of obligations, and the social resources that sustain communal living. By combining these frameworks, the study is able to explore not only how migration challenges traditional practices but also how new forms of communal engagement emerge, adapt, and endure in the contemporary African and diasporic contexts.

CONCEPTUALIZING COMMUNAL LIVING IN AFRICAN CONTEXTS

African communal living is a multifaceted cultural construct encompassing norms of collectivity, mutual aid, shared identity, and embedded kinship that extend beyond nuclear family arrangements into broad social responsibility. Seminal conceptual work by Mbiti (1969) emphasizes that African ontologies of personhood

are inherently relational, encapsulated in the oft-cited assertion that “I am because we are.” This relational ethos is reflected in various cultural articulations—*Ubuntu* in Southern Africa, *Obuntuism* in Central Africa, and analogous moral lexicons in West African philosophical traditions—where the moral self is realized in community obligations, shared ritual life, and collective care (Gyekye, 1996; Nwoye, 2015). These traditions position communal living not merely as pragmatic cooperation in subsistence contexts but as normative frameworks through which social legitimacy, moral accountability, and identity are negotiated (Hoppers, 2001). However, scholars also caution against homogenizing communalism across the continent: customary practices vary significantly by ethnic group, ecological context, and historical experience, and within communal settings themselves there have always existed internal hierarchies, gendered divisions of labor, and contestations over power and resource allocation (Soyinka, 1976; Mbeki, 1998). Contemporary scholarship thus situates African communal living as both normative ideal and empirical practice, varying across space and time, and always embedded within broader processes of social change.

A core insight in the literature is that African communal living is socially reproduced through embodied practices: collective labor (e.g., *harambee* in East Africa, communal farm work in West Africa), shared rituals (weddings, funerals, initiation rites), and reciprocal obligations that extend beyond economic transactions into the moral economy of care (Sharma, 2011; Osei, 2014). This embodied dimension underscores the cultural logic of communalism: it is sustained not only through normative belief but through ritualized participation across lifecycles and community events. As such, any inquiry into how migration affects communal living must attend not only to structural conditions of mobility but to how cultural meanings and material practices are reproduced, contested, or transformed across social fields.

INTERNAL MIGRATION AND RECONFIGURATION OF COMMUNAL PRACTICES

Internal migration patterns, particularly rural–urban mobility, have been a defining demographic trend across sub-Saharan Africa since the latter half of the twentieth century (Tacoli, 2002; Potts, 2010). Urbanization—driven by labor market opportunities, educational aspirations, and environmental pressures—has restructured household compositions and social networks, bringing individuals into contact with diverse social norms that emphasize individual achievement and market engagement. Empirical studies in Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya demonstrate that internal migrants frequently shift toward nuclear family orientations and prioritize economic survival strategies that deprioritize extended kin obligations (Ababio, 2009; Oginni & Adagunodo, 2016; Kihato, 2013). In Accra, urban migrants from rural regions report diminished engagement in communal labor and

ritual participation, attributing this to the time demands of informal sector work and the fragmentation of extended family schedules (Ababio, 2009). Similarly, in Nairobi's informal settlements, young adults negotiating precarious livelihoods describe a reorientation toward individualized coping mechanisms rather than collective reliance, reshaping how communal norms are lived on a daily basis (Kimani & Waithaka, 2021).

However, internal mobility does not uniformly sever communal ties. Many migrants maintain patterned reciprocal obligations with rural networks through remittance flows, periodic return visits, and virtual communication, signaling the enduring significance of home community membership (Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Kwankye et al., 2009). These sustaining practices are more than economic; they reflect moral imperatives tied to lineage, ritual return, and collective memory. For instance, rural festivals and rites of passage continue to draw internal migrants from urban centers, reinforcing a sense of belonging that transcends everyday urban pressures (Mberu, 2010). Recent ethnographic work in Senegal highlights that seasonal migrant laborers negotiate dual commitments: engaging in urban livelihood strategies while actively participating in rural communal projects during critical cultural moments (Diouf, 2022). This research suggests that internal migration triggers both centrifugal and centripetal forces in communal life—dispersing daily practice yet reinforcing occasional collective reaffirmation.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS, AND COMMUNAL IDENTITY

The globalization of African migration has intensified since the 1990s with expanded labor migration to Europe, North America, and the Gulf States, alongside student and professional mobility (Adepoju, 2008; Bakewell, 2010; Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011). The emergence of multi-sited social fields—central to transnationalism—provides analytical purchase for understanding how African migrants sustain and transform communal living beyond territorial borders (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Transnationalism foregrounds the everyday practices that knit migrants to home communities: financial remittances, cultural associations, periodic visits, and digital communication that collectively constitute ongoing participation in community life. Across the West African diaspora in Europe, hometown associations have funded schools, clinics, and infrastructure projects in origin communities, rearticulating communal responsibility through collective economic investment (Agunias & Newland, 2012; Konaté, 2018). These associations, often formalized as non-profit entities, replicate local governance structures while negotiating new identities in host countries, illustrating how communal norms are reorganized within transnational spaces.

Yet migration to distant contexts also exposes migrants to normative systems that emphasize individual autonomy, market competition, and formal legal identities, potentially undermining communal orientations. Research among Nigerian and Ghanaian diasporas in the United States and United Kingdom indicates that younger migrants often prioritize personal career trajectories over extended kin obligations, contributing to intergenerational tensions around communal commitment (Oonk, 2010; Adepoju & van der Wiel, 2018). Additionally, restrictive immigration statuses and labor exploitation—common in Gulf States and parts of Europe—limit migrants' ability to physically return for community rituals, making sustained participation in communal practice more symbolic than embodied (Kleist, 2011; Sadiq & Achilli, 2020). These constraints shape the contours of transnational communal engagement, where presence is mediated by legal, economic, and temporal barriers.

REMITTANCES, RECIPROCITY, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL DYNAMICS

Remittances are central to the negotiation between migration and communal life, functioning as both economic lifelines and symbolic reinscriptions of obligation. The literature demonstrates that remittances reinforce aspects of social capital by enabling migrants to fulfill perceived duties to kin and community, thereby sustaining networks of reciprocity (de Haas, 2007; Carling, 2008). In many West African settings, remittances fund collective expenditures such as school fees for multiple households, community water projects, and funeral expenses—practices that echo traditional communal redistribution systems albeit in monetized form (Gupta, Pattillo, & Wagh, 2009; Mazzucato & Kabki, 2008). This reconfiguration illustrates how financial flows become embedded within moral economies that transcend simple market transactions.

At the same time, the monetization of communal support introduces tensions by displacing in-kind labor exchange with financial transfers, thereby reshaping norms of reciprocity and obligation. Studies among Senegalese and Gambian migrant networks reveal that reliance on remittances can create asymmetric power relations: migrant contributors may wield disproportionate influence in household decisions and community priorities, undermining egalitarian foundations that historically underpinned communal cooperation (Awumbila, 2017; Camara, 2023). Moreover, remittance dependence can generate vulnerability when external economic shocks reduce migrants' capacity to send funds, raising questions about the sustainability of monetized reciprocity systems.

GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF MIGRATION AND COMMUNAL LIVING

Gendered patterns of migration are critical for understanding how communal living norms are reworked. Female migration—particularly for domestic and care work in the Middle East and Europe—redistributes caregiving responsibilities within

extended family networks, often compelling non-migrant relatives to assume roles previously held by migrants (Horwood et al., 2019; Piper, 2010). This redistribution challenges traditional gendered divisions within communal structures, at times empowering women to negotiate leadership roles locally but also placing additional burdens on non-migrant women. Conversely, male migration frequently intersects with patriarchal authority, where remittance income consolidates household influence even in physical absence (Salih, 2021). Gendered analyses therefore reveal that migration does not impact communal living uniformly but restructures internal power relations in complex, context-specific ways.

Furthermore, intersectionality scholars highlight that age, class, and legal status intersect with gender to shape migrants' capacity to sustain communal engagement. For example, young female migrants with precarious legal status may be excluded from formal diaspora networks, limiting their participation in collective initiatives that might otherwise reinforce communal norms (Mahler & Pessar, 2018). These layered inequalities underscore the need to examine how social stratification interacts with mobility to reshape communal living.

DIGITAL MEDIATION AND HYBRID COMMUNAL PRACTICES

The rise of digital technologies has become a significant arena for sustaining dispersed communal networks. Mobile communication, social media platforms, and digital financial services (mobile money) facilitate continuous interaction between migrants and origin communities, enabling the coordination of remittances, collective decision-making, and virtual participation in cultural rituals (Al-Ali, Black, & Koser, 2001; Brinkerhoff, 2009). Research among African diasporas shows that WhatsApp groups, online cultural forums, and crowdfunding platforms reinforce a sense of shared identity and obligations despite geographic dispersal (Boateng, 2022). These digital forms of engagement extend communal life into virtual spaces, expanding the texture of social capital but also prompting questions about the qualitative differences between online interaction and embodied practice.

Digital mediation can also democratize participation by lowering barriers to inclusion—migrants who cannot return physically due to legal or economic constraints can still contribute culturally and financially to communal projects. However, there are trade-offs: virtual engagements may prioritize symbolic solidarity over labor-intensive communal cooperation, and the depth of emotional connection mediated through screens remains a subject of debate among cultural scholars (Smith & Tokunaga, 2021). Despite these uncertainties, the literature suggests that digital platforms are integral to contemporary configurations of communal living in transnational African contexts.

THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study demonstrate that migration exerts a profound and multidimensional impact on the African heritage of communal living, reshaping social relations, cultural norms, and economic practices in ways that are both disruptive and adaptive. While prior literature has emphasized the erosion of traditional communal systems due to mobility and urbanization, this study situates migration as a complex process that simultaneously challenges and sustains communal values. Migration reconfigures the spatial and temporal contexts of communal engagement, creating physical distance from extended family and traditional kinship networks while enabling new forms of social connection through transnational networks, digital mediation, and economic remittances (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Brinkerhoff, 2009). This duality reflects the adaptive capacity of African communal living: while face-to-face reciprocity and ritual participation may decline, migrants continue to fulfill moral obligations, maintain collective identities, and contribute to community development, albeit through transformed mechanisms (Awumbila&Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Oginni&Adagunodo, 2016). Urbanization and rural–urban migration, in particular, have introduced structural pressures that favor nuclear family units and individualized livelihood strategies over traditional extended kinship arrangements (Tacoli, 2002; Crush & Tawodzera, 2011). Urban labor markets, housing scarcity, and socio-economic constraints reduce opportunities for collective labor and routine social interaction, accelerating processes of social individualization among younger generations (Ababio, 2009; Mberu, 2010). However, the persistence of home-bound visits, ritual participation, and remittance flows underscores the resilience of communal norms, demonstrating that African communal living is not static but highly dynamic and capable of accommodating mobility-induced pressures (Adepoju, 2008; Diouf, 2022). This resonates with transnationalism theory, which emphasizes the multi-sited nature of social life and the capacity for cultural practices to transcend territorial boundaries (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994). In this sense, migration acts less as a force of cultural dissolution and more as a catalyst for the spatial and temporal redistribution of communal practices.

The role of remittances in sustaining and transforming communal living highlights the economic dimension of social cohesion in African societies. Financial transfers enable migrants to meet familial obligations, fund collective projects, and reinforce networks of trust and reciprocity, thereby reproducing social capital across distance (de Haas, 2007; Carling, 2008). Yet, the monetization of communal support alters traditional reciprocity norms: it privileges economic contribution over in-kind labor, creates asymmetries in household power dynamics, and sometimes produces dependency or hierarchy within extended family structures (Gupta, Pattillo, & Wagh, 2009; Camara, 2023). These shifts demonstrate that while remittances facilitate the continuity of communal obligations, they simultaneously transform

the qualitative nature of social interactions, reflecting a hybridization of communal practices that blend traditional and market-mediated norms.

Gendered migration patterns further contextualize the discussion by revealing the differentiated impact of mobility on communal roles and responsibilities. Female migration, especially to domestic or care work sectors abroad, redistributes caregiving responsibilities within households and sometimes empowers women to assume leadership roles locally, reshaping gendered divisions of labor in communal life (Horwood et al., 2019; Piper, 2010). Male migration, conversely, often consolidates patriarchal authority through financial influence despite physical absence (Salih, 2021). Intersectional factors, including age, socioeconomic status, and legal migration status, interact with gender to determine the extent to which migrants can sustain communal engagement, highlighting that migration-induced change is both socially stratified and context-specific (Mahler & Pessar, 2018). These findings underscore that communal living is not uniformly eroded but continually negotiated within households and communities along intersecting lines of power, obligation, and identity.

Digital technologies have emerged as a critical mediating factor in maintaining communal engagement, enabling migrants to participate in rituals, cultural events, and collective decision-making despite geographic separation (Al-Ali, Black, & Koser, 2001; Boateng, 2022). Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and mobile money services extend the reach of communal networks into virtual spaces, allowing for hybrid forms of engagement that blend symbolic, economic, and relational practices. While these digital interactions do not fully replicate embodied forms of communal labor and ritual, they reflect the adaptive capacity of African communal heritage to operate within contemporary mobility and technological contexts (Smith & Tokunaga, 2021). The integration of digital communication into transnational communal networks exemplifies how migration and technology jointly reshape cultural continuity, enabling collective identity to persist in the absence of constant physical co-presence.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the impact of migration on African communal living is neither wholly negative nor entirely positive; it is complex, adaptive, and context-dependent. Migration transforms the modalities of communal engagement, creating hybridized practices that reconcile traditional obligations with modern economic, social, and technological realities. The persistence of communal values through transnational networks, remittance economies, digital platforms, and ritual adaptations underscores the resilience of African communal heritage. This discussion aligns with both transnationalism and social capital theory: transnationalism explains the spatial redistribution of communal norms, while social capital theory elucidates the relational mechanisms—trust, reciprocity, and moral obligation—through which these norms are maintained and reconstituted (Putnam, 2000; Coleman, 1988; Basch, Glick Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994).

In contextual terms, these dynamics are particularly salient for African societies experiencing high rates of both internal and international migration, urbanization, and digital connectivity. Policymakers, community leaders, and diaspora organizations must therefore recognize that migration does not signify the loss of communal heritage but rather an opportunity to adapt, institutionalize, and sustain collective norms through innovative mechanisms. Maintaining cultural continuity while accommodating the realities of mobility requires deliberate strategies that support transnational engagement, gender-sensitive social interventions, and digital platforms that reinforce relational and moral obligations central to communal life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that migration governance and development interventions in African contexts deliberately integrate cultural sustainability into their design by recognizing communal living as a vital social resource rather than a residual tradition. National and local governments should align migration and development policies with mechanisms that encourage collective remittance investment, support periodic return mobility, and expand digital infrastructure that enables transnational communal participation without undermining local authority structures. Traditional institutions and community leadership systems must be strengthened and repositioned to function as translocal coordinators capable of engaging migrants and non-migrants in shared decision-making, cultural transmission, and communal development planning, including the adaptation of rituals and obligations to accommodate spatial dispersion. Civil society organizations and diaspora associations should institutionalize transparent, inclusive frameworks that channel migrant resources toward community-defined priorities while fostering intergenerational cultural education that negotiates hybrid identities without eroding collective responsibility. At the scholarly level, future research should adopt longitudinal, comparative, and gender-sensitive methodologies to capture the evolving dynamics of communal living across migration trajectories, with particular attention to the social consequences of remittance economies, urbanization, and digital mediation. Collectively, these measures can mitigate the fragmenting tendencies of migration, reinforce adaptive forms of African communal heritage, and ensure that mobility functions not as a force of cultural disintegration but as a context for the reconstitution and renewal of communal life.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the multifaceted effects of migration on the African heritage of communal living, revealing a complex interplay between disruption and adaptation. Migration—both internal and international—reshapes the spatial, economic, and relational foundations of communal life, generating pressures that

challenge traditional modes of social cohesion while simultaneously creating new avenues for sustaining collective identity. Internal migration, driven by urbanization and labor mobility, has been shown to encourage individualization and nuclear family-oriented structures, reducing the frequency of face-to-face communal interactions. At the same time, mechanisms such as periodic home visits, participation in festivals, and remittances demonstrate the resilience and adaptive capacity of communal norms. International migration and the expansion of transnational networks further illustrate how African communal living can be reconstituted across borders, where migrants maintain obligations, fund collective projects, and participate in cultural rituals from afar (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

Economic remittances emerge as a critical instrument for sustaining communal ties, though they simultaneously transform reciprocity norms, generating asymmetries of influence and reshaping traditional egalitarian arrangements (Carling, 2008; Gupta, Pattillo, & Wagh, 2009). Gendered migration patterns and intersectional factors further complicate the dynamics of communal engagement, highlighting that migration-induced changes are socially stratified and context-specific (Horwood et al., 2019; Mahler & Pessar, 2018). Digital technologies have extended the spatial reach of communal networks, enabling virtual participation in rituals, collective decision-making, and resource mobilization, thereby creating hybrid forms of communal practice that combine tradition with innovation (Al-Ali, Black, & Koser, 2001; Boateng, 2022).

In synthesis, the study underscores that migration does not signify the erosion of African communal heritage but represents a catalyst for its reconfiguration. The heritage of communal living persists through adaptive mechanisms such as transnational networks, remittance economies, digital mediation, and gendered role reorganization, demonstrating resilience in the face of contemporary social, economic, and technological pressures. For African societies, this insight carries important implications: policymakers, community leaders, and diaspora associations must recognize migration as an opportunity to institutionalize, support, and innovate communal practices, ensuring cultural continuity while accommodating modern mobility realities. By situating communal living within the frameworks of transnationalism and social capital theory, the study contributes both to scholarly understanding and to practical strategies for sustaining African communal values in an era of unprecedented mobility.

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INTERPRETATING THE CONCEPT (UNEQUALLY YOKED) IN 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-16 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ETHIOPE DELTA BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

From the perspective of the Ethiope Delta Baptist Conference, this paper interprets 2 Corinthians 6:14-16. The text has sparked debate because of denominational and doctrinal disagreements. Despite the importance of this biblical scripture in the Baptist Church's theology, it has gotten little academic research from the church's perspective. This text has been the subject of several attempts at interpretation. Some have interpreted it as a warning against marrying a nonbeliever. What is the best way to understand this contentious text? The study uses the hermeneutical technique to reach the goal of this research, which was utilized to read the text "2 Corinthians 6:14." The sociological method was also utilized in the interpretation to demonstrate human relationships and interactions, but the historical method tends to give a backdrop of the Ethiope Delta Baptist Conference. The study discovered that being unequally yoked with an unbeliever, particularly among the Baptist, does not mean unfriending an unbeliever who has a different worldview than believers, but rather staying away from any ungodly attitudes that may tempt one to sin. It concludes that a Christian should not follow the unbelievers' ways, ethics, and morality. However, because believers and nonbelievers share the same environs, work in the same offices, participate in politics, and strive for a better life for society, does not mean that they should be involved in evil practices of the non-believing

Christians.

INTRODUCTION

There are many religious groups today, including Islam, Hinduism, Taoism, Shintoism, Judaism, and Christianity, to name a few. Each of these religions claims to be the keeper of a specific truth. There are numerous denominations in Christendom, each claiming to be "the believer" (in Christ), while dismissing others as "unbelievers." The phrase "Be not equally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14) is a popular quote among Christians, especially in relation to mixed marriages and business partnerships (Donald, 1999).

When two young developed people: male and female, make their intents to be wedded in holy matrimony known, the Baptist church clergy and members alike do not fail to ask questions worrying about faith and denomination. In a similar vein, researchers argue that Paul's writings on marriage and commercial partnerships prompted him to cover such a broad variety of topics (George, 1989). Marriage is more than a physical connection between two adult people of opposite sex. Marriage to an unbeliever can lead to spiritual schisms and apostasy (George, 1989).

According to Frank, Paul actively encouraged Christian participants in mixed marriages to keep the relationship going as long as possible. This is not, however, a restriction against creating a deep bond with non-Christians (Frank, 1976). As a result, the periscope serves as a parenthesis, warning against any interaction with unbelievers that could lead to contamination of both body and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). More precisely, the Baptist church's etiquette thinks that couples who are equally yoked together by common spiritual values and lifestyles are more likely to endure and fulfill God's divine purpose for marriage. As a result, she discourages her followers from marrying nonbelievers and forbids her ministers from performing such weddings (Baptist Ethics).

The biblical passage 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers," is one of the biblical texts that has gotten a lot of attention in scholarly and religious communities. This is because the text contains an exhortation from Apostle Paul to the Corinthians not to be "unequally yoked with unbelievers," which also applies to modern Christians. The application of this exhortation continues to elicit a variety of responses regarding the text's implications for Christian relationships, particularly as they relate to believers and nonbelievers in the framework of Christianity. However, in the application of 2 Corinthians 6:4, the denominational divides in Christendom remain fundamental. Each Christian denomination tailors the admonition to fit its own theology, to the point where the scriptural word "unequally yoked with unbelievers" is interpreted differently in different denominations.

The biblical verse frequently raises the question of who Paul was addressing. Was he referring to idol worshippers, atheists, and other nonbelievers? Does this suggest that one should not eat, drink, or share a room with nonbelievers? If so, who were the unbelievers Paul was referring to, and what was his motivation? Students from all religions and backgrounds attend the institution, where they share classes, space, and other activities. What does the Bible truly imply in the context of the passage we are examining? As an example, the Baptist church demonstrates how to apply the material from their teachings with Biblical references and backings (Oshevire interview, 2025).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

On the basis of denominational and doctrinal differences, "2 Corinthians 6:14" has been a very controversial biblical text that continues to split Christians, Muslims, and African Indigenous worshippers together. Despite the importance of this text in the Baptist Church's teachings, it has gotten little academic attention from the church's perspective. As a result, pastors in the church interpret the text on an individual's basis and temperament, negating the text's relationship to the Baptist Church's teachings. This research is prompted by the stated problem.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore the concept (unequally yoked) in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 from the perspective of the Ethiope Delta Baptist Conference. The specific objective therefore is to:

- i. examine the meaning of unequally yoked with unbelievers;
- ii. identify who an unbeliever is;
- iii. explore the contemporary understanding of 2 Corinthians 4:14-16

Research Question

The following research questions have been raised to guide the study:

- i. what does it mean to be unequally yoked with unbelievers?
- ii. Who is an unbeliever?
- iv. What is the contemporary understanding of 2 Corinthians 4:14-16?

Research Methods

The research adopts historical approach which involves a critical-historical examination of existing academic literature germane to a study. Books, journal papers, and other internet-based resources were considered for evaluation. The sociological method was also utilized in the interpretation to demonstrate human relationships and interactions, but the historical method tends to give a backdrop of the Ethiope Delta Baptist Conference. The approach emphasizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage, allowing the researcher to investigate being unequally yoked with an unbeliever shaping biblical interpretation, pastoral practice, and religious authority.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ETHIOPE-DELTA BAPTIST CONFERENCE

As explained above, Jesus Christ's work had spread through the nooks and crannies of Nigeria including Delta State through the Baptist Mission. Ejobee (2025) disclosed that the Delta Baptist Conference metamorphosed from the Defunct Bendel Baptist Conference in 1992 but swung into full operation in June 1, 1993. This was as a result of the creation of Bendel State into Edo and Delta States by the then Military Head of States, General Ibrahim Babaginda in 1991. The exegesis of contiguity and the necessity of evangelical advancement led to the creation of the Delta State Baptist Conference (Ejobee, 2025).

The work of God grew tremendously through the Delta State Baptist Conference (DSBC). After ten years of existence, the Conference decided to regroup into three Conferences for continuous evangelical advancement and possession of more territories for the kingdom of God. These Conferences are: Anioma Delta Baptist Conference, Ethiope-Delta Baptist Conference and Providence Delta Baptist Conference. It should be noted that the constitution of the Nigeria Baptist Convention (2013) stated that:

A Conference consist of local Baptist Churches in a given wider geographical area or state organized into at least six Baptist Associations with not less than eighteen full time Baptist trained pastors of whom at least twelve shall be ordained. Having met the needed requirement of three Conferences, the Delta State Baptist Conference through her then President (Reverend G.O. Oyibo) applied to the Nigerian Baptist Convention, via her Executive Committee for consideration in 2013. This application was granted. The Conference set up three steering committees to drive the three new Conferences to reality. The words of the former Chairman of the Defunct Delta State Baptist Conference at her last Conference in Mosogar, in the person of Reverend Paul Anyasi comes to mind here:

Today an appreciable number of us gathered here have known that this is our last gathering together under one entity called the Delta State Baptist Conference. This is because of the imminent split of the Conference into three autonomous Conferences. The desire is purely for growth and a more commitment to evangelism, church growth and expansion. It is a desire to allow more growth through identification of unreached areas within these places to be named and develop more leaders that will benefit the entire State in commendable dimensions when the desires are properly harnessed. We should rise to support the desire to grow the Baptist work in our state and beyond using this kind of mindset of faith and contribute our experiences and finances for a very cordial actualization eliminating every form of ungodly sentiment (DSBC 2014 Book of Report, p.7).

The Delta State Baptist Conference thus split into three Conferences, Anioma-Delta, Ethiopie-Delta and Providence Delta for the purpose of evangelical advancement. Ihwighwu (2025) reported that, the President of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (Rev. Dr. Supo Ayokule) inaugurated the Ethiopie Delta Baptist Conference alongside Anioma and Providence Delta Baptist Conferences from the Defunct Delta State Baptist Conference on Friday June 6, 2014 at the Baptist Secretariat, Amukpe. Thus, this young Conference began with 11 Baptist Associations, 158 pastors and 199 Baptist Churches. These churches spread across the following Baptist Associations: Abraka, Agbor, Amukpe, Eku, Idjerhe, Oghara, Okpe, Okpe Central, Orogun, Riverine and Sapele. They are in six Local Government Areas of Delta State namely: Ethiopie East, Ethiopie West, Warri north, Sapele, Okpe and Ugelli north. The Ethiopie Delta Baptist Conference is the focal point of this paper.

THE CITY OF CORINTH

Corinth was a great and rich city south of Thessalonica, in the Roman province of Achaia, positioned on the Isthmus between Attica and the Peloponnesus (Gerhard, 1980, Bruce, 1983). It was a fantastic business hub. Due to two sheltered expanses of water, one on the Saronian Gulf to the east and the other on the Gulf of Corinth to the north (Bart, 2004), and fifty miles west of Athens, it is an important hub of trade and communication (Wayne, 1966). After the city was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C., Julius Caesar supported the construction of the city in 44 B.C. A large number of its citizens were murdered or sold into slavery (Bruce 1992). It quickly regained prominence (Carson, 1993).

It became the capital of Achaia and senatorial province in A.D 44, around 27 B.C. Its population began as a colony of Roman freedmen, quickly grew cosmopolitan, and included a sizable Jewish community as well as a large number of Romans who dominated the scene with their culture, law, and religion. Its lingua franca (language) is Greek. It was the center of a diverse range of religious and intellectual movements throughout Paul's time. Before its collapse, the ancient city was a hotbed of (sexual entertainment); as a result, Aristophanes, an Athenian, created the phrase *korinthiazesthai*, which means "to practice fornication or indulge in sexual promiscuous behaviours (debauchery, often for the upper class)" (Frances, 1957). The image of the Corinthian was so tainted that the phrase "to live the Corinthians is synonymous with living a dissolute life" was coined. Even the fertility goddess's worship fostered immoralities (Ehrman, 2008). "Corinthian girl" was a slang term for "harlot." (Metzger, 2005) frequently appears to give reasons for why Christians in Paul's time seemed to be perplexed about sexual concerns (Robert, 1981).

Corinth, in the early church's history, has one of the highest levels of success in Apostle Paul's career, with churches built both in the city and in the surrounding villages (Rom. 16:1-2, 2Cor 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:4). As the church grew, various elites

were converted to membership, including a certain Crispus, the governor of the Jewish synagogue (Acts 18:8 ;1 Cor. 1:14). In general, it appears that the majority of the membership belonged to a lower social class or strata (1 Cor. 1:26; 6:9-11), and many could not be easily separated because of their pagan practices, which may explain why the Apostle referred to them as "Babies in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

Although a few passages are strongly challenged, both epistles to the Corinthians have been identified as being original to Apostle Paul. Internal and external evidences attest to the epistles being written by Paul: internal evidences, the author introduces himself as Paul several times (1 Cor. 1:1; 16; 21; 1:12-17; 3:1, 6, 22); external evidences, the author introduces himself as Paul several times (1 Cor. 1:1; 16; 21; 1:12-17; 3:1, 6, 22). (Metzger, 2006). Furthermore, Henry (1995) argues that there are other coincidences in Acts that prove Paul's originality to the text, and he provides a number of external evidences from the first century AD, such as: Clement of Rome speaks in this epistle to the Corinthians, which is sometimes attributed to as the lost epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, which some authors and commentators have alluded to as being referred to in 1 Cor. 9:5 (Henry, 1955).

Despite this, significant passages are attributed to Paul in most theories. 2 Corinthians 10-13 are the most vehemently discussed parts (Hans, 1973) and 2 Cor.6:14-7:1, the study's main issue, which some scholars believe is a later insertion authored presumably by someone in the Pauline school (Howard, 2004). There are internal evidences within the epistles that prove Paul's authorship (1 Cor. 1:1, 2 and 10:1) where Paul asserts authorship.

THEME AND PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLES

During Paul's third missionary tour to the Corinthians, he composed a letter based on information he received about immorality, idolatry, drunkenness, and quarrels among the people, as well as marriage and divorce (Francis, 1957). In the first epistle, Paul writes to: rebuke the party spirit and give a true conception of the relationship between the Christian worker and his work vs 1-4; to enjoin the disciplining of those guilty of incest vs 5; to reprove the church for not resolving grievances among her members by taking them to the law before the heathen vs 6, to answer questions boarding on marriage and divorce vs 7. He further stressed on:

Concerns about eating food prepared for idols (8-10)

Issues with spiritual gifts (Ch.11)

Correcting the disorder caused by women's behaviour (Ch.12-14)

To refute those who doubt the dead's resurrection (Ch.15)

To encourage them to contribute to the impoverished saints' collection (16:1-4)

To make a mockery of his future intentions (16:5-9) and

Light with Darkness? (14c)

Christ with Belial? (15a)

Believers with Infidels (15b)

Temple of God with idol? I will dwell in them and walk in them (16b)

I will be their God and they will be my people (16c) (King James Version, 1611).

It also contains five metaphoric antithesis that parallel the unbelievers and the audience to whom Paul addressed (6:14b-16a) and the expected behaviour of Paul and his audience (17a, b). Secondly, the statement above gives reasons and or promises why there should be no yokes with unbelievers (17a-c). From the structure, those to whom this command was given have a relationship or fellowship with Christ, the righteous, light, believer, and God's temple, which are five metaphoric contrast against unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidel/unbelievers and idols. Doubtlessly, "righteousness" could also mean uprightness, legal justice or even be used as an attribute of God (Phillip, 1993). It is a direct opposite of which is translated unrighteous which means doing something contrary to law, iniquity, (1 John 3:4 and Matt, 7:23 (Barbara & Timothy, 2000).

Being righteous suggests that one plays by some laid down rules or principles which determines the uprightness of somebody. In other words, those principles become the cannon (rule of measure) and makes one lawful. Hence, anyone who is found wanting as placed on the rule becomes unrighteous, lawless. Hence, righteousness and unrighteousness are at two opposing ends and should not have any fellowship or share anything in common. Light and darkness are in sharp opposition, light reveals, illuminates, while darkness is often associated with evil, and it obscures. In the beginning when God began to create, due to its significance, light was the first thing he made and separation was made between the light from the darkness (Gen 1:3-4). Also, in the last chapter of the last book of the bible John records that darkness (night) would be totally obliterated, for God himself would be light of his people (Rev 22:5).

In contrast, darkness was first found in Genesis as covering the surface of the deep. To conquer, it necessitated the creation of light and boundary was set (Gen 1:2) (Barbara & Timothy, 2000). Clarendon 1(907) asserts that Belial is a hapax leonine, it occurs just once in the NT. Belial personified, (Devil or Satan) stands as the object for the unbelievers' worship. Consequent upon the antithetic parallelisms, if Paul use them (Christ and Belial) in reference to Christians as opposed to false teachers within the same fold of believers the text itself if exaggerated, knowing that the context suggests the use of words, it's more appropriate to state that the unbelievers in Paul's days were the pagans- who were heavily associated with idol worship, unrighteousness, Satan/Belial, and darkness.

Being unequally yoked together with unbelievers simply means, refusing to come out from among the unbelievers; pagans, not separating from them and their

practices and touching the unclean things of the pagans. This impede God from establishing a father-son relationship which crux of reconciliation of believers to God and not Paul nor acceptance to his apostolic ministry.

Interpreting 2 Corinthians 6:14 from the Perspective of the Baptist Church in Ethiope Delta Baptist Conference

The Socio-political Implication of 2Corinthians 6:14

Paul asserts in 2 Cor 6:14a, “Do not be yoked with unbeliever. This passage connotes several things to the Baptist Church than just mixed marriages. The socio-political view of this verse could be interpreted as involvement or pertaining to a combination of social and political factors and of which marriage is a part. Involvement in political activities with unbelievers is to be equally yoked with an unbeliever (**Ogbemudia, 2025**). There is a strong advocacy not to be in politics or do any social activities with unbelievers (people not in the same faith) because it could have a serious influence on believers. Some advocate for involvement in political offices, Others opined that Nigeria would continue to suffer bad leadership if the country was run by those who were not morally upright. They claimed that only God-fearing people, of which the Baptist were part, could provide good leadership for the country. Akpokiniovo opinesthus:

There are some people who are interested, but some believe that as a Christian you should stay away from politics; they see politics as a dirty game, which is one of the reasons we are backward in Nigeria because politics would have helped us to change some policies that are affecting theChurch.

Christians need to take over politics because if they are governed by those who are not God-fearing, they would direct us in the wrong way. But if we are being governed by people who are God-fearing, we will be able to make our decisions known. On the other hand, there were interviewees who strongly discouraged the involvement of Baptist, either as individuals or as a church, in politics. Some were very sceptical regarding the possibility of being involved in politics and still be a good Christian. They argued that the required principles for being ready for the Second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ would be compromised if one engages in politics. Even those who thought Baptist could be involved in politics expressed concern about being a faithful Baptist and a politician at the same time. This was for instance a position taken by Amadi According to him the kingdom of God was not of this world and that getting involved in politics was a distraction from the mission of the Baptist Church.

With respect to the church making public comments on social issues, Amadi (2025) believed that it could cause the government in power to misunderstand the church as supporting opposition parties. Instead, he rather wanted to see that theChurch leadership met privately with political leaders, but at the same time he

commented that it was noteworthy that no Baptist Church leader had, to his knowledge, met with government officials over social concerns, either publicly or privately. Pastor Amadi advised the Church and its people rather to pray for those in political offices. In agreement with the school of thought that Baptist involvement in politics should be limited, Pastor James Omoru also expressed extreme caution about an Baptist member being in politics. He believed that much of one's value system would be compromised in the process. He held that the church should rather influence politics through the Baptist Church's educational institutions. He expressed his thoughts in the following statement: "You see, if you want to be a politician in this country, you really have to sacrifice so much. In other words, some of your principles as a Christian would be sacrificed, or maybe the best word to use is 'will be compromised' and that is why it is difficult for Baptist to be involved in the political development of the nation".

Marriage is a particularly relevant example. Coffman (1986) emphasizes that "when it comes to a binding relationship such as marriage, however, the Christian who truly loves the Lord will under no circumstances unite with an unbeliever, even in the pious and otherwise commendable hope of winning him to Christ." Witherington (1995) labels unbelievers as pagans and claims that Paul's prohibition does not imply marital association. Rather, Paul is referring to "spiritual profligacy in the form of attendance at idol feasts in pagan temples."

The second viewpoint sees Paul's interlopers as unbelievers who questioned the substance and origins of Paul's message. The nature and makeup of 'believers', who should not be confused with unbelievers, is frequently assumed and overlooked (Hendrickson, 1998). The term "believers" has been interpreted as the inverse of "unbelievers." Many scholars have interpreted believers in 2 Corinthians 6:14,15b as persons who declare confidence in Jesus (Richard, 1957). Murray notes that "Paul's call is for separation from unbelievers and the pagan manner of life.

This verse (17; see v. 14) should not be used to justify separation from believers due to doctrinal disputes. However, Onoriasakpobare (2020) claims that "marriages are more likely to endure, and family life to fulfill the divine plan, if husband and wife are united and bound together by common spiritual values and lifestyles." For these reasons, the Church severely forbids marriage between a Baptist and a member of another religion and strongly advises her priests not to execute such marriages (Baptist teaching).

RELIGIOUS IMPLICATION

Every religion and denomination has an end goal in eternity. This purpose is incorporated into their theology of going to heaven or hell. The religious implication of 2 Corinthians 6:14 for the Baptist church is that they do not wish to circumvent God's and the church's regulations for earthly gain. The Baptists used

this ethically, for example, in regulations governing sexual relationships that prohibited bestiality and homosexuality (Odogboro, 2025). The Ten rules embody the great principles of God's law and are demonstrated in the life of Christ; yet, being equally yoked with an unbeliever subverts such rules as taught by Jesus and observed by the disciples.

They express God's love, will, and purposes for human behavior and relationships, and they apply to people of all ages (Ellen, 2013). These rules serve as the foundation for God's covenant with His people as well as the standard by which God judges. They call out sin and awaken a need for a Saviour through the Holy Spirit's intervention.

Salvation is entirely of grace, not of works, and its fruit is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience strengthens Christian character and brings a sense of well-being. It demonstrates our love for the Lord and concern for our fellow human beings. Obedience to faith displays Christ's power to transform lives, thereby strengthening Christian witness. Religiously, being unequally yoked with an unbeliever included things like plowing with two distinct kinds of animals. It was more than just legalism; it was an attempt to live out in all aspects of life what they saw as God's plans for his created world (Onotere, 2025).

Paul, a Pharisee, undoubtedly understood all of this and applied it to the church at Corinth (2 Cor 6:14). In many evangelical congregations, this verse from Corinthians is used strictly as a warning against marrying non-Christians. However, in Corinth's case, the consequences were far-reaching. Corinth was renowned for its wild lifestyle. It was an important seaport (nearby Lechaion) and a crossroads for the northern Mediterranean. In such an environment, the Middle Eastern tradition of holy prostitution in pagan temples was widely accepted, as were some of the Greek temples that stood there in the first century (Nichole, 1957). One of the biggest issues Paul encountered in Corinth was the difficulties new converts had in practicing Christianity responsibly in everyday situations. This idea of boundaries and order in everyday life was an effective approach to demonstrate the ethical needs of a connection with God without resorting to legalism (Jonathan, 2025). A second key issue that Paul addresses in the Corinthian letters is spiritual pride, which has led some in the society to misinterpret Paul's teaching on spiritual freedom. Paul argued that we have freedom in Christ, that our connection with God is motivated by love from the heart rather than obedience to the law.

However, some Corinthians had pushed this to the point of believing that nothing they did mattered because they were exempt from the law (1 Cor 6:12). This was easier to do in the Corinthian Greek culture, which, like Plato, believed that the physical world was irrelevant and meaningless because the only genuine reality was spirit, the "inner" person. So they concluded that their body's actions had nothing to do with their relationship with God because that was a "spiritual" concern (Howard, 200).

PROSPECT OF UNEQUALLY YOKED WITH AN UNBELIEVER IN MODERN TIMES

Without a question, the thought of being unequally yoked with an unbeliever today is untenable. This is because believers live in a pluralistic society in which both Christians and non-Christians participate in daily life activities. Paul was a Roman citizen from Tarsus, Cilicia. As a person, he comes from a diverse background and was raised with sophistication. Paul's unique personality is a product of his diversified background. Paul was a Jew who studied under the great Gamaliel and was the custodian of Jewish law. Israel has a rich and unique religious environment, which includes both Jews and non-believers.

Nearly 80% of persons identified as Jewish, with the majority being secular Jews, a smaller fraction being traditional Jews, and a minority being religious and ultra-orthodox Jews (2016), however the number of orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews looks to be increasing (Rebhun & Levy, 2006).

Religions are extremely visible in all societies, and there are numerous religious historical places that are significant to adherents of the major Abrahamic religions. Modern society is diverse in the sense that it currently includes a variety of ethnic groupings. Nigeria is unquestionably a country where thousands of people from various ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds cohabit.

Competition for sociopolitical, economic, and religious power and supremacy among different ethnic groups, particularly Muslims and Christians, has resulted in a series of problems and turmoil in the country (Adetiba, 2010). It should be highlighted that religions' contradictory truth claims have been identified as primary sources of human strife. As a result, we have seen and experienced incidents when persons claiming to be followers of two of the world's most famous religions, Islam and Christianity, have had one issue or another, resulting in bloodshed in various regions of the country.

In the Baptist Church, there are various types of people that attend church services in order to be saved, thus when Paul says, "Do not equally yoke with unbelievers," the Baptists interpret it as permitting some immoral acts of those infants in Christ to influence them. The Baptist welcomes unbelievers into their community. This is because they believe that the Church provides a better environment for unbelievers to become believers.

Today, Israelis and non-Israelis attend the same marketplaces, accept contracts from non-Christian groups, serve in the same functions, such as marriage ceremonies or burials, compete for the same governmental positions, and teach in the same schools, to name a few. When a Christian disassociates himself or herself from non-Christians, it indicates that the Christian will not attend any non-Christian-related gathering, even if it is attended by a Christian relative. It is therefore prudent to believe that St. Paul was greatly affected by the religious beliefs of his time.

CONCLUSION

The study looked at how 2 Corinthians 6:14 can be interpreted in light of Baptist mission. It has been demonstrated that in 14b-16a, Paul employs a series of five rhetorical metaphoric questions to refute uneven treatment of unbelievers. There is a stark contrast between the figures of comparison in each rhetorical piece, as well as between unbelievers and Paul's (the believer's) audience (6:14a). Understanding what it means to be unequally yoked with unbelievers is difficult because the word appears only once in the New Testament. However, the notion appears in the Old Testament in Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:10. In Lev 19:19 it's used to prohibit any kind of mating of different animals together and in Deut. 22:10 of the binding of two different kinds of animals together and in Deut. 22:10. In the text, it was discovered during the investigation that there are various issues about unequally yoked. While some Christians only relate to it in terms of marriage or dating an unbeliever, it has a broader scope and meaning in that Paul dealt with a variety of issues with the Corinthians believers, including idolatrous practices, failure to obey God's laws as enshrined in the Old Testament, visiting temple prostitutes, and spiritual pride as a result of how they conceptualized human beings and a lack of clearly defined Christian ethics. The study discovered that being unequally yoked with an unbeliever, particularly a Baptist, does not imply keeping distance from an unbeliever who has a different worldview than believers, but rather avoiding any type of sinful attitudes that may lead to idolatry. There are numerous other concerns that Baptists deem sinful, and when a believer becomes involved with an unbeliever who is engaging in them, he or she is unequally yoked with the unbelievers.

Though other denominations have challenged Baptist beliefs and practices, they remain the church's credo and sacraments, and opposing them is contrary to Christ's teachings and Paul's as recorded in 2 Corinthians 6:14. The references to temples and idols indicate that Paul is still addressing the Corinthians' tendency to try to merge God's worship with the activities that took place in pagan temples. In other words, individuals wanted to be Christian while still engaging in all of the practices associated with Greek deity worship. The idea seems to be that people could be spiritually Christian "inside" while still enjoying Corinth's wild pagan lifestyle.

To this, Paul simply responds that they cannot be mingled, that God's people must have a distinct lifestyle that cannot be combined with a pagan lifestyle.

Thus, it is inappropriate for believers to associate with the wicked and profane. All those who lack genuine faith are referred to as unbelievers. True believers warn their loving offspring in the gospel not to be unequally yoked. The catastrophic consequences of failing to follow Scripture's marriage rules are evident. Instead of assistance, the union provides a snare.

Those whose cross is to be unequally connected, without their purposeful fault, may find comfort in it; yet, when Christians enter into such unions against the plain

warnings of God's word, they may expect suffering. The advice also applies to normal discussion. According to the scripture, believers should avoid friendship and familiarity with wicked individuals and unbelievers. Christians nowadays cannot completely avoid seeing, hearing, and being around such people, but they should never pick them as friends. According to the scripture, Christians should not associate with idolaters. Come out from among the works of wickedness, and separate from their false and immoral pleasures and pursuits, as well as from all conformity to the corruptions of this present wretched world.

A Christian should not follow the ways, ethics, and morality of nonbelievers. However, this does not mean that they cannot interact, mingle, or relate at the level of social and political engagements because both believers and unbelievers frequent the same markets, schools, ventures, shops, hotels, flights, work in the same offices, participate in politics, and strive for a better life for society. You can relate to atheists without abandoning your religion. This Pauline injunction can be carried out, but only with minor modifications.

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