GODLIGHT:
HUMANITIES AND SCIENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD ORDER

*Proceedings of the GodLight International Conference Nigeria, 2025
In Collaboration with the Department of Religion and Human Relations
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State.
27th - 28th March 2025*

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Dr. Bart Barthelemy
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DEDICATION

To the Founder and Executive Director, GodLight Foundation
Dr Bart Bathelemy

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THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF GODLIGHT

By
Karen Williams Barthelemy
President and CEO GodLight Foundation
&
Carl Gaertner,
Knowledge Management Consultant
Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the GodLight
Foundation

This presentation examines the impact of Dr. Bart Barthelemy's working hypothesis: If all the universe is light (GodLight), then so are we. As we consider the scientific support and spiritual references to perceive God as Light, we are invited to expand our thinking, uplift our emotions, and fortify the ways we live and relate to each other. Seeking answers to these questions can be a lifelong journey for so many of us:How was the universe created"What is our purpose"How do we know that God exists"Who is God"Finding meaning and inner peace are at the core of our search for answers. We devote so much of our lives to managing uncertainty and gaining comfort with it. Both science and spirituality help us manage uncertainty in life while spirituality has the added benefit of helping us make peace with it. GodLight offers an array of possibilities for answering these and other questions as Dr. Bart Barthelemy uncovers patterns of reality in scientific studies and spiritual realms. GodLight can bring us closer to inner harmony and universal connection. Experiencing God as Light can help solidify our understanding of the universe while offering us contentment as we explore the vast unknown.

CHAPTER ONE

OPENING AND RESTORING GOOD DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: GODLIGHT CONTENT- NETWORK POTENTIALS AS THE MASTER KEY
BY
PROF JUDE EMEKA MADU
A LEAD PAPER PRESENTED AT THE GODLIGHT CONFERENCE, CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY, IGBARIAM CAMPUS, ANAMBRA STATE.
BETWEEN THE 26th to 29th OF MARCH, 2025.

Introduction

In this conference, focusing on the interface of humanistic values and scientific innovations in shaping our world, I have chosen to relate on GodLight content-network potentials as the master key to opening up and restoring real democratic engagement in Nigeria's polis as a contribution to the enthronement of a stable and solid governmental democratic engineering process in the country. I am very much convinced that such a democratic rebirth will undoubtedly usher in a new Nigeria where unity, brotherhood, progress and peace will be the order of the day.

Knowing very well in Nigeria,that her ship of state has been wobbling like a punctured tyre over the last six decades of political independence as well as our observed sorry state of murky waters in her democratic agenda, it becomes very pertinent and important to investigate the "whys, whats and hows" of these discomfitures. Going back into our memory lane, we can still recall the murky waters of the sixties that gave birth to the Nigeria- Biafra war; those that trailed the Obasanjo and Goodluck regimes in the form of insecurity threats of Boko haram and other insurgencies that threatened the nation to her marrows.Buhari's government of "HOPE" contrarily brought in hopelessness and hunger in the lives of the masses. And Tinubu's government of Renewed Hope is currently that of renewed hopelessnessas hunger, super inflation and bad governance are the masses' bed-fellows. And the masses are no longer comfortable with this ugly state of affairs. Recent protests in the land, like the "End Sars" in 2020 and the "END BAD GOVERNANCE" in 2023 are ample evidences to showcase the burden of the masses as per bad governance in the land. Even in our elections, especially in the last general elections of 2023, copious riggings saw to a flagrant and open bastardisation of the majority voices to the exaltation of the minority voices in Presidential race which brought into power the unpopular person into the noble office of President. Just recently, in a colloquium organized in the honour of Emeka Ihedioha, the rusticated one time Governor of Imo State by a fraudulent Nigerian judiciary, notable big wigs like Obasanjo, Kukah and Obi lamented on the deplorable state of democracy in Tinubu's government, especially in flouting the rules of democracy. For these men of substance in Nigeria's political domain, they were all in agreement that therecent overthrow of the democratic government in Rivers State in a military fashion by Tinubu speaks volumes of the abuse of the tenets democracy in Nigeria.(

Channels TV, *Politics Todays*, Monday, 24-03-2025) Of course, what do we expect from these unholy unilateral power shows except skewed, shallow and baddemocratic governance in the country.Bad governance indeed

This paper addresses these burning issues in our democratic landscape as well as searches for viable solutions to these anomalies which are enabling forces to bad governance.

Generally, the impressions so far prevailing among us as to the issue of governance vis-à-vis democracy is that of bad leadership. But the issue is far more than that of leadership. This paper asserts that leadership factors cannot give a fundamental and ultimate explanation of the discomfitures, though; these may indeed be apparent causes.

I propose that the more ultimate, the more fundamental and the more pristine causes of these lapses are to be found in the negation of the metaphysicalGodLight Principles,nay GodLight –content –network potentials as the engine or the driving force s to good governance in Nigeria. Thus, I posit that if our policyis built upon this metaphysical reality and our Leaders and the Followers are groomed within this school of thought, and becoming, as it were, the personifications of these principles, they would be imbued with the power to uplift others to reach their highest potentials as well as the state to reach her highest in her democratic governance. Knowledge, they say is power but I can add that it is the application of knowledge that is Power that can rotate positive cosmic changes. In other words, I am saying that one can only answer a leader when he is made in accordance with the philosophical blue prints of leadership, principles that are anchored in GodLight network potentials. No wonder, such notables like Plato would always sing the mantra of "Philosopher Kings" as ideal leaders, as these have both the knowledge of the rules of the game as well as the knowledge of applications of such rules in governance. If this thesis can successfully be demonstrated, this paper can serve as a blueprint for a viable democratic agenda for Nigeria and Africa generally, a blueprint indeed, for evolving a new Nigeria where equity, social justice, sound democratic governance will be the order of the day; a Nigeria where leadership and followership will be purposeful, visionary and ideologically based.

My approach to the thematic will be philosophico-theological since our subject of investigation boarders on a fundamental reality, nay- God's spark or light in a formless dark and chaotic earth and in man which is anchored on an unconditional love connecting man and the entire universe in unity and balance for harmonious cosmic relationships.

Exposing the Theme: GodLight and Democratic Governance Clarified GodLight

The concept of GodLight boarders on the supra-sensible reality and as such, it is not easy to define. Harvey (2002) describes the term asa divine, universal, or spiritual light that symbolizes enlightenment, guidance and transformation. It refers to the divine light or energy that emanates from a higher power or the universe. It symbolizes guidance; wisdom and illumination, helping individuals navigate life's challenges and connect with their inner selves. It is an inner light in man representing God's spark in him and connecting him to his true nature and the universe. I am inclined to think of this light as universal consciousness that connects all beings to the ultimate reality. It represents wisdom, intuition, moral compass, intelligence and knowledge. It should be

remarked that knowledge translates from one area to another as well as an avenue to understanding and insights. (Carson, 1992, p. 200). Knowledge therefore is power indeed to overcome the past and to make better decisions, to make scientific and technological innovations as well as making good democratic societies. At this point, let us move forward to explore themeaning, content, characteristics, functions and applications of the Light of God as narrated by the biblical writer of the creation account of Genesis chapter one,where God created first,LIGHT, to illuminate the chaos of darkness.

The Hebrew name of God used here by the author of Genesis chapter one isElohim, which stresses his majesty and omnipotence. The 'im' ending indicates a plurality, implying that Elohim can actually mean gods. Morris (1981) maintains that Elohim is a plural name with a singular meaning, a uni-plural noun that suggests the uni-plurality of the Godhead. It is this Godhead that sets in motion the creation of the universe. In fact, it can be remarked without any fear of contradiction that the Transcendent, omnipotent Godhead called into existence the space-mass-time universe. Although the earth was created as a formless void existing in static darkness, it seems that God's purpose was first to use his spirit to invent motion and form to the inert and shapeless element and next would come the energy of light to dispel the darkness. The creation of light as the first element by God is very revealing of the uppermost hierarchy of light over and above all the other created elements. It should be noted that God's WORD brought light which was to be the pathfinder and energizer of every other created element.

On the first day of creation, the Godhead created and energized the entire universe with His intrinsic light as the infinite sphere of His divine activity and purpose. (Morris, 1981, p.65). And on the fourth day, He created the light generators, the heavenly bodies indeed as suppliers of light to the days and nights. We see here that God's intrinsic light is manifested in our observable sun, moon and stars and we are all aware of the tremendous function of the sun in photosynthesis and the acceleration of agricultural productions. Going further in God's creation enterprise on the sixth day, we are thrilled with the creation of man (Adam) where the UNI-PLURAL GODHEAD (Elohim) openly exposed this plurality in the formation of man by the statement "Let us make man in our own image and likeness". It is very interesting here to note that God spoke to Himself, one member of the uni-plural Godhead as well as addressing other members of the Godhead. This is very fascinating as I look at this as a communitarian address, indeed what I call the "WE MENTALITY" on which any meaningful productive engagement is anchored.Here we see a collaborative exchange of ideas among the Godhead and in this collaboration, the Godhead breathed unto man the BREATH/ SPARK of life, indeed an aspect of man that is like God, an aspect of man that can indeed be man's driving force, power or light that can equip man for scientific, technological and even political innovations on earth.I am very much convinced that it was on the basis of this spark, it's knowledge, appreciation and application that God based his basic instructions and commission to man to be fruitful and replenish the earth, to subdue the earth and have dominion over every creature. These instructions and commission entail leadership and rulership ingredients.

In other words, subduing the earth would definitely involve intense study of the earth and the

application of the knowledge therefrom for the benefits and welfare of the earth's inhabitants, both animals and humans. Therefore, I may rightly say that the two-fold commission of God to man,i.e. to conquer and rule as well as to subdue and have dominion embrace man's productive and innovative activities. In fact, this commission established man as God's steward over the created world. Thus, man's innovative activities are driven by the divine spark, thedivine light as the causative power bloc which gives birth to effects.

Pondering indeed of the relationship between CAUSE AND EFFECT, I have come to realize that there is always an intrinsic relationship between the duo. I have also come to realize that the eventual product of the causative action passes through series of other variables before arriving at the terminus ad quem. There is this common saying that "As a man thinks, so he becomes". And all thinking starts from the mind/soul of man and like an electric current pass through a network of vibrations before hitting the observable final result. It is against this backdrop that all of man's creative activities, his innovations in both scientific technology and in building up of stable and democratic societies take their bearings from the soul/mind of man. And this soul/mind is that SPARK of God in man that I have described as the DRIVING FORCE of all man's operations in the universe. It is in this mind that all imaginations are born and nurtured and the imagination gives birth to ideas that give birth to actions and actions eventually give birth to results that are observable. We can see here that GODLIGHTin man is the engine room of all of man's operations and noble achievements. It is this Light that is the pathfinder, the master energizer and driving force that gives birth to all innovations, be it in science and technology, research and development, stable democratic structures and good governance in general. I can say without any qualms of conscience that GodLight in man that is indeed the lens through which man perceives and conceives reality as a whole as wellas the energizing force for the production of world goodies. It is worthy to note here that GodLight as a lens could be likened to a people's cosmology through which a people perceive and conceive reality as well as the dominant force that determines their value scales and attitudinal orientations.

This lens which is the light of God opens man's inner eyes to see boldly God's pathways for cosmic operations in his mission to recreate and dominate the world. This lens therefore becomes, as it were the guide post, the illuminator of man, and the driving catalyst in man for the ordering of the universe to its topmost best for the good of man. We can therefore say that any stable and good democratic society can only be the one founded on the solid GodLight Principles while the negation of such principles would definitely usherin anarchy and sorrow in the land.

GodLight and African cosmological principles are anchored on the "WE MENTALITY" on which any solid and stable Government must rotate. At this juncture, we shall go into the memory lane to assess African governments with particular focus on Nigeria on the issue of democratic governance.

Democratic Governance in Africa Vis-à-vis Nigeria

In a paper on African unity, presented at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Akindele (N.D) extolled the import of democratic governance in Africa. He remarked:

In the context of the on-going third wave of democratic experimentation which haswelcomingly resulted in the remarkable expansion of the democratic space in theworld order, revulsion and rebellion against authoritarian military or civilian rulein Africa, which has now become anachronistic, demand that we make the newlyemerging order of democratic governance irreversible. (p.2)

Akindele's position above is a clear manifestation of the fact that authoritarianism under any guise is undemocratic and un-African. This undermines the goal of interaction of beings in African world-view whether on the vertical or on the horizontal levels of existence. Metuh (1987) underscores this goal of interaction thus:

The goal of interaction of beings in African world-view is the maintenance of the integration and balance of the beings in it. Harmonious interaction of beings leads to the mutual strengthening of the beings involved and enhances the growth of life (p.78)

The above implies that a pernicious influence from one being weakens other beings and threatens the harmony and integration of the whole. Thus, in Africa, this understanding must have to be held sacrosanct by our leaders whose duties within the polis are to maintain harmony between themselves and the governed. It is within this context that we can understand and appreciate the African democratic process. This process centers on the realization that the basis on which the African mode of life rests is on profound participation or communion with one another and with the universe as a whole. In other words, each person in the African world lives for the others.

Mbiti (1969), the renowned African philosopher and theologian underscores this sentiment thus:

I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am. (p.78).

Mbiti's dictum speaks volumes of what African democracy entails. It is a democracy of full participation of all in governance, a democracy that is undergirded by African world-view, a world-view which is foundational and anchors the African community consciousness, unified view of reality and the sense of preservation and enhancement of human life. (Ejizu, 1986, p.133)

If "I am because we are" it then means that our destiny lies in our hands; power and authority lie in the hands of the community, indeed, the people themselves. Mbeki (N.D), the former President of South Africa, lends a constitutional credence to this. Talking about the liberation struggle in South Africa, he said:

An important document of liberation struggle, adopted at the congress of the people in 1955 is called the Freedom Charter. Among its clauses is the important provision that "The people shall govern". In the course of our struggle, this was expressed in the mobilizing slogan, "Power to the People" (p.5)

Yes, good enough, "Power to the people", the "WE MENTALITY" indeed. One wonders whether this has been maintained in South Africa ever since the dismantling of Apartheid in 1991. Cases of leadership turmoil have continued to trail former President Cyril Ramaphosa since after his exit from power. The "WE DEMOCRATIC POLITY" which Mbeki advocates for in Africa finds

advocacy in Umeogu's (2007) "Ohazurume" theory of leadership.

Umeogu, writing within the context of a viable democratic model for the Igbo of Nigeria says:

> "Ohazurume" is a philosophy of life and action, a philosophy of "Ohacracy", aphilosophy of government of everybody. To be sure, ohazurume is the philosophy of communal consensus, a philosophy of character and behavior which regulates a people's existence by reconciling the collective identity and culture in knowledge and belief with life and being. (p.10).

We can therefore say that the philosophy of Ohazurume is community-centered involving all the stake holders in her decisions and policy-making processes. This "WE MENTALITY" syndrome in Africa's democratic agenda aligns with GodLight's spiritual perspective of an INNER LIGHT in man which Partridge(2014) identifies as the Divine Light, the Divine Spark within individuals connecting them to their true nature and to the universe, connecting man to the cosmos in unity and balance of the cosmic environment. We can say therefore that the concept of democracy is fundamental to the very character of both Africa's unified view of reality and community consciousness as well as to the universal love and unity exhibited by God, the creator in inter-linking all creation to His universal fatherhood and Goodness. From all these, we can see that in creation of man by God, power was given to Man(ADAM, meaning humanity) and this mandate was to be the inheritance of all world governments. It should be noted that a major underlying assumption of democracy is the belief that the participation by the people in running the affairs of the state is crucial for eliminating the tendency to use state power for evil.(Nnoli, 2013, p. 11) Democracy, I am inclined to think is a vital element of the humanization process and as such stake holders in a democratic formation should be able to account to each other, i.e. the leaders and the led, so as to express their human needs. Thus, the orientation of democracy is to empower the people to use the political system to improve their lives. It is indeed a two-way traffic venture in which both the leaders and the led are in a harmonious interaction in which both influence each other to the best of their common good. In this interaction, selfish individualism on either side must give way to selfless patriotism, mutual co-operation, due electoral process, listening ears by both the leaders and the led, respect and trust for one another and collaboration. All these are ingredients that, only when known and applied by both the leaders and the led, can make democracy thick and relevant to its stakeholders. Democracy is all about leadership where the people are their own liberators. Democracy entails political statesmanship which employs all arts to legislate what we should and should not do. In fact, the end of politics is for the good of man and for building a well-organized society. Thus, politics is not for the infants or for the gullible but for the rational and intelligent adult homo sapiens who can discern the good, the bad and the ugly in the society. We can say that politics, as a matter of fact, must be grounded on virtue and the political gladiators must be groomed in this intellectual knowledge. Thus, it stands to reason to say that for any democracy to thrive and succeed, it's major driving force must lie in the in the virtuous dispositions of itsstakeholders in both its moral and intellectual dimensions. Dike (2003) lends credence to this view as he says:

> A virtuous person plays consistently a good game; virtuous persons are those of high ethical standards who pursue activities purely for the good of the society and also for themselves. A virtuous leader/citizen is one who understands that personal welfare depends on general welfare and therefore acts accordingly. (p.43)

Indeed, African politicians/statesmen must be committed to the politics of virtue which invariably constitutes the catalyst for good democratic governance. America today enjoys a wonderful democracy because her founding fathers crafted their constitution on the fabrics of the ethics of virtue. To this Dike (2003) says:

> African leaders can learn a lot from the activities and philosophy of America's founding fathers who crafted a constitutionwhich is today the envy of the world and believed that the stability and success of their democratic Republic rested on the maintenance of virtue among its citizens. (p.45)

Hence, the knowledge and application of the dynamics of virtue for evolving a balanced cosmic order become crucial for any aspiring democratic society. In fact, the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognized and endorsed this virtuous disposition in her 1999 constitution as amended.

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), Chapter 11,entitled Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State specifies in sections 14 and 23 government's relationships with the people and National Ethics respectively.Concerning Government's relationship with the people, section 14, sub- sections 1 and 2(a) have this to say:

The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice. That sovereignty belongs to the People of Nigeria from whom government through this constitution derives its powers and authority. And section 23 spelling out the National Ethics says that the National Ethics shall be discipline, integrity, dignity of labor, social justice, religious tolerance, self-reliance and patriotism.

Indeed, these are noble and beautiful constitutional provisions in a good and stable democracy, for in a democratic polis, it is the "DEMOS" i.e. the people, all the people or their elected representatives that constitute the polis. And the overall collaboration of all these in the spirit of unity of purpose for the welfare of all becomes its essential ingredient. In fact, African (Nigerian) mode of life rests on this profound communion with one another and with the universe as a whole. It is on this communion that is anchored her democratic agenda. This communion, as it were, transcends the mundane to the realm of the supra-mundane, implying what we can describe as a metaphysical communion.

Considering the facts presented above, and juxtaposing them with what has been obtaining in Nigeria from the third republic of Obasanjo and his successors, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, General Buhari and Bola Tinubu in matters of governance, one would conclude without an iota of contradiction that democracy in Nigeria has been on a wobbling and porous state. Obasanjo's government was tagged as a government of unreason by the socio-political critic, Victor Dike. Dike (2003) maintains that in a pro-development and pro-people democratic society, "leadership and democracy" possess positive meanings but they seem to have assumed negative

connotations in Nigeria for the corrupt politicians at Abuja and the state capitals. These would seem an excuse to rob, to kill and to get rich quick, while the governed remain in perpetual penury, hunger, ignorance and sickness.

Some of the major issues facing the polity include electoral fraud, politics devoid of ideology, enthronement of the culture of insecurity of life and property and a wave of political assassinations (p. 11)

Dike's view has earlier been echoed by a Roman Catholic Clergy man, Odey (2003) who described Nigeria's democracy as a "Raped Democracy" Odey adjudged Obasanjo's elevation to power to fraudulent acts of thuggery and rigging and thus accused the government of the period as a derailed democracy. In fact, this sorry state of affairs also extended to the subsequent so-called Nigerian democracies. Buhari's government could be tagged an ethno-tribalized boko-haramic and Fulanized herdsmanic oligarchy while Tinubu's present regime can be tagged a government of "ALLOCATION/ MY TURN" brand of oligarchy bereft of any ideology and democratic focus, a government foisted on the people by an executive fiat through the "Dependent Electoral Commission and Ampit Judiciary". In each case, what we have is nothing but governments of selfish and greedy political gladiators without any knowledge and skills for democratic governance. And the result can only be a tainted democracy. Then, quo vadis democracy in Nigeria" How do we restore democracy to it's true and normative consensus framework in Nigeria" I am convinced that these questions can find answers from the utilization of GodLight metaphysical and transcendental potentials as the molding sub-structure and driving force in the restoration of democratic polis in Nigeria. We shall take our bearing from God's enthronement of democraticcosmos that has enjoyed stable and harmonious existence since the time of its creation.

God's Cosmic Democratic Agenda: Application for Restoring a Democratic Polis in Nigeria

A critical philosophico-theological reflection on God's creation of the universe reveals an outstanding inauguration of a democratic cosmic model of governance. And I am convinced that this model was to serve as the blueprint for all other human democratic engagements. I am very convinced that this creation drama was played to serve as the foundational block to be known, appropriated and applied by the homo sapiens in their inauguration of democratic world governments. In fact, the knowledge of this cosmic democratic model and itsapplication can constitute the driving force for establishing stable and harmonious societies. This goes to validate and endorse the wise saying that knowledge is power. We are aware that the principal actor in the drama is the Uni-plural Godhead (Elohim) who set out His mission in bringing ORDER OUT OF CHAOS. Properly speaking, the creation story as found in Genesis 1.1- 2.4 begins with an attempt to describe the nothingness or the zero point at which God began His creative activity. The earth was still a formless waste plunged in the darkness of a boundless surging primeval sea.

Then, the Godhead, with his creative WORD confronts this chaos, indeed a Divine attack aimed at bringing orderliness out of this chaos. It is very revealing that God's first element to be created was LIGHT which was emitted fromHimself, which dispelled the darkness as well as cleared the coast

for visibility and more cosmic innovations. It is not surprising therefore that this divine light, indeed, with clear insight and vision set out to separate carefully the different spheres of existence as well as ornamenting of these spheres. We can see here that God as light set out to organize the universe in a wholistic, integrated and communalistic harmonious framework, where all the beings therein work in a complementary fashion. Thus, one interesting thing about these spheres and their inhabitants is the profound communion and interaction between them. It is indeed an organized democratic cosmos, a model put in place by God for humanity to copy and practice in their own societies.

 Of special significance is the creation of man where the Uni-plural Godhead created man in His image and likeness. Here, His power, insight, knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, spirit of innovation and creativity were all given to man, as the Godhead breathed unto him His SPARK OF LIGHT.Morris (1981) maintains that it is thisDivine Light thatuplifts man to a transcendental knowledge and consciousness connecting him to all things as well as elevating him to a higher state of being where he transcends his ego of selfishness to altruistic patriotic spirit. It is an inner light which represents God's spark in man connecting him to his true nature and the universe as well as a spiritual transformative power for technological innovations and creativity. Partridge(2014) is of the view that GodLight in man generates harmony and balance in relationships as well as inspires universal consciousness connecting all beings in unity and oneness, connecting individuals to each other and to the universe for the purpose of inaugurating stable, strong and balanced societies. We have gone all along to underscore the contents and the metaphysical potentials of GodLight as indeed the matrix, the driving force and the fundamental substratum on which all scientific cum technological innovations as well as solid socio-political and strong democratic structures rotate as GodLight is the straight and clear "rail road" to all these structures.

Having gone so far, we can now go foreword to apply the potentials of GodLight as the master key for opening up and restoring Nigeria's lepros democracy, a democracy that all along the ages has been hanging on porous foundation, on ignorance of the dynamics of good governance.

Opening up and Restoring Stable Democratic Polity in Nigeria

I have said somewhere (Madu, 2013, p.11) that Nigeria is suffering from what I call democratic leprosy. Going through the memory lane, especially with regards to our democratic dispensation, it has been discovered that this is a country where laws are blatantly defied, where results of probe panels are   never released to the public because some sacred cows are indicted, where ignobly indicted high profile public officers are given national honors and celebrated, where Godfathers and money-bags determine the dynamics of election results, where cross-carpeting of political gladiators is the order of the day and where the political class are bereft of any political ideology. In this nation therefore, it should be remarked that democracy is in coma and if democracy must survive, our leaders must brace up with leadership tasks which according to Gardner (1978) is to help societies understand problems that all must face and to aid in the setting up of viable parameters for the solutions of such problems for the purpose of reaching some set down goals.

This implies that leaders must work with others in finding the parts to these chosen goals, maintaining, at the same time, public morale, motivation and nurturing a workable level of public unity. Leaders can therefore be said to have first and foremost a good knowledge of the art of governance as well as having the knowledge of the application of this art in helping people to know how they can be at their best in collaborating with their leaders in charting an enduring, stable and harmonious government for the welfare of all, with malice towards none and with charity to all.

Knowledge of the dynamics of good democratic agenda and also the knowledge of the application of such dynamics becomes very crucial in any meaningful greatand welfare oriented democratic engagement. In fact, this was elegantly echoed in the inaugural address of one of the great leaders of American democracy, John F. Kennedy in 1960, who maintained that his intention to make America great and prosperous with his experiential knowledge of democratic governance and the pathways to enthrone this in America. (OSdey, 2001, p.119). Categorically he said:

> The energy, the faith, the devotion which "WE" bring to this endeavor will light our countryand those who serve it, and the glow from that fire can truly light the world. (Odey, p.120)

Kennedy's address manifests the mind of a leader par excellence—faith, devotion and commitment to responsibility for a better America. We can admit here that Kennedy aligned himself with the mind of the Godhead in His bid to fashion a better cosmic order. This to my mind, is revelatory and exemplary for leaders and the led in world governments, including Nigeria.

In the light of the above, we can say that the opening and the restoration of good democratic engagement in Nigeria rotate on these parameters.

a. Acquisition of knowledge of the dynamics of the art of democratic governance by both the leaders and the led in Nigeria as well as the application of such knowledge in charting a new positive, harmonious and welfare-oriented Nigeria. This endorses and validates GodLight potentials of knowledge, wisdom, intuition and energy for transforming and organizing the universe and other cosmic innovations

b. That leaders are light bearers and therefore should glow, be as it were, sign posts and guides, dispel the darkness along the dark abyss on the way to mapped out goals for the good of the community. The Godhead emitted light to dispel darkness and used it for His work of separation and the beautification of the organized spheres of the universe.

c. That leaders should work in collaboration with the led for a solid and stable administration of their communities. This endorses and validates GodLight content-network potentials in the Uni-plural Godhead communion with man and commission to him as a co-administrator of the universe.

d. The Godhead, having created man in his own image and likeness and having breathed unto him His SPARK of life, He endowed man with all the divine knowledge, power, energy and intelligence to be His steward here on earth, especially in organizing his environment harmoniously for the good of all the beings in that environment, just as the He did for the entire cosmic community.

From the above narratives, we can see clearly that the wobbling Nigerian ship of state stands a chance to be restored if the dramatis personae in its democratic engineering are schooled and

educated in the art of democratic process as well as in the application of such knowledge asare showcased in the Godhead organization and collaborative administrative praxis of His cosmic democratic order.

Concluding and Reflection

Let me conclude by inviting all and sundry to increase their commitment and devotion to learning and promotion of the art of democratic engineering as drivers for a better Nigeria. The same goes also to all to imbibe the knowledge of GodLight potentials in our intellectual space as the energy, the faith and power which these will engender in in our minds will be such a tremendous spark of fire that will light our country, the leaders and the led and the glow from that fire can truly light our Nigeria to see clearly the pathway to solid and stable democratic society where the welfare of all will be the order of the day.This light will indeed unlock the keys of the prison gate in which Nigerian democracy has been imprisoned, thereby setting it free to operate in its fully capacity. This light, definitely will derobe the present lepros Nigerian democratic body the garb of Godfatherism, Money bagging, selection politics, ideological ignorance of political parties, rigging and democratic illiteracy of the politicians and the masses. And with these done, the light will show the bright and the broad highway to a Nigerian democratic engagement as well as the viable strategies and parameters to achieve it. I am of the view that we have therefore, as a matter of fact the critical duty activates the Nigerian intelligentsia- males, females and indeed the youths, conscientizing them in the Nigerian course and the need for an enduring PAX NIGERIANA. I am convinced that with this knowledge and our determination, commitment and good will, we can open up and can restore a Nigerian democratic polis that will be the harbinger of a robust democratic Nigeria where all Nigerianswill be proud to identify with. Let us be aware that the commons good belongs to all in Nigeria and everyone has to benefit from the same services, participate in the same government of the country and also share equally the dividends of the nation's s democracy.

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CHAPTER TWO
GODLIGHT AND YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP: PAVING THE WAY FOR SUCCESS (JEREMIAH 29:11)
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Nigeria, many young people and those from underprivileged backgrounds face significant challenges, including high unemployment and limited access to opportunities, which hinder their potential for success. The GodLight Foundation seeks to address these issues by empowering youth through entrepreneurship and skill-building initiatives. Inspired by Jeremiah 29:11, which speaks of hope and a promising future, GodLight aims to guide young individuals toward creating their paths and achieving their dreams. This study explores the mission of GodLight and its potential impact on youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria. By utilizing surveys and interviews with participants, the research aims to assess how these initiatives can enhance skills, confidence, and economic prospects among youth. As GodLight begins its journey in Nigeria, preliminary findings and feedback from potential participants suggest a strong desire for mentorship and support in developing entrepreneurial capabilities. The study recommends that GodLight focus on building a supportive ecosystem for young entrepreneurs, emphasizing the importance of resources, skills analysis, marketing plans, and mentorship to foster a brighter, more prosperous future for Nigeria's youth. Through these efforts, GodLight hopes to inspire and empower the next generation to contribute positively to their communities and drive economic growth.

Keywords: Youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, GodLight Foundation, Nigeria.

Introduction to GodLight Foundation and Its Mission

The GodLight Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to uplifting youth and underprivileged communities through education, entrepreneurship, and empowerment. Established with the vision of creating a brighter future for young individuals, the foundation aims to inspire and equip them with the necessary tools to succeed in their personal and professional lives. The mission of GodLight is driven by the belief that each young person possesses unique potential and talents that, when nurtured, can lead to significant contributions to society.

The Guiding Principles of the GodLight Foundation

Empowerment

The foundation believes in enabling youth to take charge of their futures. By providing access to resources such as training programs, mentorship, and support networks, GodLight aims to foster self-sufficiency and confidence among young individuals.

1. **Education**: Education is a cornerstone of GodLight's mission. The foundation recognizes the critical role that knowledge plays in personal and professional development. Through workshops, seminars, and educational resources, GodLight seeks to equip youth with the skills and information necessary for success in entrepreneurship and other fields.

2. **Business Management Skills**: To enhance entrepreneurial capacity, GodLight emphasizes the development of essential business management skills. This includes:

   - **Strategic Business Planning**: Teaching youth how to create and implement effective business strategies that align with their goals.

   - **Needs Analysis**: Equipping participants with skills to assess market demands and identify gaps that their businesses can fill, thus ensuring their ventures are viable and relevant.

   - **Market Planning & Promotion**: Providing training on how to effectively plan and promote their businesses to reach target audiences, enhance visibility, and drive sales.

3. **Community Engagement**: GodLight emphasizes the importance of community in achieving its goals. By working collaboratively with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders, the foundation seeks to create a supportive environment for young entrepreneurs and foster a sense of belonging.

4. **Hope and Inspiration**: Central to GodLight's vision is the idea of instilling hope in the younger generation. Drawing inspiration from Jeremiah 29:11, the foundation emphasizes the importance of a purposeful life filled with hope for a brighter future. This spiritual foundation drives the commitment to uplifting youth and encouraging them to aspire for greatness.

5. **Sustainability**: GodLight is dedicated to promoting sustainable practices in entrepreneurship, ensuring that the initiatives launched by the foundation lead to long-lasting positive impacts in communities.

The GodLight Foundation envisions a future where every young individual, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to thrive and contribute meaningfully to society. By addressing

the barriers faced by underprivileged youth and providing the necessary support, GodLight aims to transform lives and create a ripple effect of positive change in Nigerian communities.

Challenges Faced by Nigerian Youth and Underprivileged Communities.

Nigerian youth and underprivileged communities face significant challenges that hinder their development and potential for success. Among these challenges, high unemployment rates, lack of opportunities, and socio-economic obstacles are the most pressing issues.

1. **Unemployment**

Unemployment remains a critical problem in Nigeria, particularly for young people. The National Bureau of Statistics (2022) reported that the unemployment rate among youth aged 15-34 was approximately 42.5%, significantly higher than the national average. This unemployment crisis not only affects individual livelihoods but also exacerbates social tensions and economic instability (Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2020). Young individuals entering the job market often find themselves competing for limited positions, leading to frustration and a sense of hopelessness.

Nigeria's Youth Unemployment Problems

2. **Lack of Opportunities**

In addition to high unemployment rates, the lack of opportunities for skill development and training further compounds the challenges faced by Nigerian youth. Many educational institutions do not equip students with practical skills relevant to the current job market (Iwu & Siaw, 2021). Consequently, young people often feel unprepared for employment, resulting in a disconnect between education and market demands. Furthermore, access to funding and resources for entrepreneurship is limited, making it difficult for aspiring young entrepreneurs to launch and sustain businesses (Oni & Daniya, 2022).

3. Socio-Economic Obstacles

Socio-economic obstacles such as poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to healthcare also significantly impact the lives of underprivileged youth in Nigeria. The World Bank (2021) highlights that about 40% of Nigerians live below the national poverty line, leading to a cycle of deprivation that affects education and health outcomes. Poor infrastructure, especially in rural areas, limits access to markets and essential services, constraining the growth of local economies (Okafor et al., 2023). Furthermore, inadequate access to healthcare results in high mortality rates and poor health among youth further impedes their ability to pursue education and employment opportunities (Uche & Igbokwe, 2022).

Education in Nigeria, Poor Training and Poor Funding

The Role of Entrepreneurship in Youth Empowerment

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in youth empowerment, serving as a pathway to self-sufficiency and economic growth. By fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and skills among young people, communities can stimulate innovation, create job opportunities, and enhance socio-economic development. This section discusses how entrepreneurship contributes to youth empowerment and provides a means to overcome unemployment and poverty.

1. **Economic Growth**

   Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a significant driver of economic growth. Young entrepreneurs can stimulate economic activity by creating new businesses, which in turn generates employment opportunities (Afolabi & Arukoni, 2020). In a study by Thurik and Wennekers (2020), it was observed that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), often founded by young entrepreneurs, collectively contribute significantly to job creation and GDP in both developing and developed countries. By fostering entrepreneurship, nations can harness the innovative potential of their youth, addressing economic challenges while diversifying local economies (Kibera & Njuguna, 2021).

2. **Self-Sufficiency and Individual Empowerment**

   Entrepreneurship fosters self-sufficiency by providing individuals with the means to create their employment rather than relying on scarce job opportunities. Young entrepreneurs who establish their businesses can achieve financial independence and enhance their socio-economic conditions (Morrison, 2020). Moreover, entrepreneurship helps develop critical life skills such as problem-solving, leadership, and resilience, empowering youth to overcome challenges and adapt to changing environments (Ahmed et al., 2022). This empowerment is particularly vital in regions like Nigeria, where traditional employment prospects are limited and self-employment can provide a viable alternative.

3. **Contribution to Community Development**

   Furthermore, when young individuals engage in entrepreneurial ventures, they not only improve their circumstances but also contribute to the broader community. Successful businesses often reinvest in their communities through local hiring, supplying goods and services, and fostering social initiatives (Baccouche, 2021). This creates a ripple effect that encourages other youth to pursue entrepreneurship, leading to a more vibrant and resilient local economy. The community-oriented nature of entrepreneurship encourages collaboration and establishes a culture of innovation and accountability among youths (Nicolescu et al., 2023).

4. **Business Management Skills Development**

   To fully realize the potential of young entrepreneurs, it is essential to equip them with key business management skills. This includes:

   - **Strategic Business Planning**: Teaching youth how to develop and implement effective business strategies that align with their goals and market conditions.

   - **Needs Analysis**: Helping participants assess market demands and identify gaps that their businesses can fill, ensuring that their ventures are viable and relevant.

- **Market Planning & Promotion**: Providing training on how to effectively plan and promote their businesses, enhancing visibility, and driving sales within their target markets.

In summary, entrepreneurship is a powerful tool for youth empowerment, fostering economic growth, self-sufficiency, community development, and essential business management skills. By promoting entrepreneurial initiatives and providing the necessary support systems, stakeholders can help unlock the potential of young individuals, leading to sustainable socio-economic advancement.

Inspiration from Jeremiah 29:11: Hope and Future Prospects

Jeremiah 29:11 is a powerful biblical verse that states, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This verse has profound implications for youth and community development, particularly in contexts where young individuals face significant socio-economic challenges. The themes of hope, purpose, and future prospects embedded in this verse offer encouragement and a framework for personal and communal growth.

1. **Significance of Hope**

Hope is a critical element in fostering resilience and motivation among young people. According to Snyder et al. (1991), hope involves the belief that one can generate pathways to achieve desired goals while maintaining the motivation to pursue them. For many youths in unstable environments, such as those in underprivileged areas of Nigeria, the promise of a hopeful future can inspire them to pursue education, entrepreneurship, and community engagement (Ndlovu & Sadan, 2021). The understanding that their lives have purpose—as emphasized in Jeremiah 29:11—can be a source of strength, improving mental well-being and encouraging active participation in community development (Friedman et al., 2020).

2. *Purpose and Identity*

Jeremiah 29:11 speaks to the importance of purpose and identity, which are crucial for youth development. A sense of purpose can significantly enhance young people's ability to envision and work towards their goals. Research by Duffy and Wadsworth (2008) indicates that individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful are more likely to exhibit positive psychological outcomes, including resilience and perseverance. By internalizing the message of Jeremiah 29:11, young individuals can cultivate a stronger sense of their identity, which can motivate them to contribute positively to their communities and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities (Schultheiss et al., 2009).

3. *Community Development*

The broader implications of Jeremiah 29:11 extend to community development, as empowered youth with a sense of hope and purpose can become catalysts for change. When young individuals

are encouraged to believe in their potential and the possibility of a better future, they are more likely to engage in community initiatives, volunteerism, and entrepreneurship (Muthuri et al., 2019). This engagement not only benefits the individuals involved but also fosters social cohesion and collective progress within their communities. As these young people strive to contribute positively to the socio-economic landscape, they can inspire their peers and create a ripple effect of empowerment, leading to sustainable community development (Lewis et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the message contained in Jeremiah 29:11, serves as a foundational principle for inspiring hope and shaping the future of youth and communities. By emphasizing the significance of having plans for prosperity and well-being, this biblical verse encourages young individuals to recognize their potential and the importance of their contributions to society. The themes of hope, purpose, and commitment to community development highlighted in this verse can lead to transformative changes, instilling a sense of agency among youth and promoting a brighter future for their communities.

Potential Impact of GodLight on Youth and Entrepreneurship Skills

The GodLight Foundation has the potential to significantly impact youth by equipping them with essential entrepreneurship skills that foster economic empowerment and personal development. In a rapidly changing global economy, cultivating entrepreneurship skills among young people is vital for promoting innovation, job creation, and sustainable community growth. This section identifies key areas for skill development and empowerment, emphasizing how GodLight can effectively fulfill its mission in supporting youth entrepreneurship.

1. **Business Management Skills**

One of the fundamental areas for skill development is business management. Understanding the principles of managing a business—including planning, organizing, leading, and controlling resources—is essential for fostering successful entrepreneurial ventures. According to Hisrich and Peters (2017), effective business management is a crucial determinant of entrepreneurial success, as it directly influences decision-making processes and operational efficiency. GodLight can provide training in areas such as strategic planning, financial management, and operations management, thereby equipping youth with the knowledge to run sustainable businesses.

2. **Financial Literacy and Investment Skills**

Financial literacy is another critical area that can empower youth in entrepreneurship. Many young entrepreneurs lack the knowledge to manage finances effectively, understand cash flow, and make informed investment decisions. According to Chan and Poon (2020), financial literacy directly correlates with business success, as it enables entrepreneurs to make sound financial choices and avoid common pitfalls. GodLight can develop workshops and resources focused on budgeting, investment principles, and financial planning, helping youth navigate the complexities of business finance and prepare for potential investment opportunities.

3. **Marketing and Sales Skills**

In today's competitive market, effective marketing and sales strategies are vital for attracting and retaining customers. Young entrepreneurs must possess skills in market research, digital marketing, branding, and sales techniques. Research by Keller (2016) emphasizes the necessity for entrepreneurs to develop strong marketing acumen to differentiate their products or services and effectively engage their target audience. GodLight can establish programs that provide practical training in developing marketing campaigns, utilizing social media, and understanding consumer behavior—all crucial for enhancing business outreach and success.

4. Networking and Relationship-Building Skills

Networking plays an essential role in entrepreneurship, as it opens doors to resources, mentorship, and collaboration opportunities. Entrepreneurs who can effectively build and maintain relationships are at an advantage in securing funding, partnerships, and market access. According to Davidsson and Honig (2003), social networks significantly impact entrepreneurial success and can serve as a source of crucial information and support. GodLight can organize networking events and mentorship programs that connect youth with successful entrepreneurs, industry leaders, and potential investors, fostering a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

5. Innovation and Creativity Skills

Finally, fostering innovation and creativity is paramount for youth in entrepreneurship. Innovative thinking allows young entrepreneurs to develop unique solutions, which can lead to competitive advantages in the marketplace. As highlighted by Amabile (1996), creativity is not only essential for problem-solving but also for generating new business ideas and enhancing product development. GodLight can implement programs that encourage creative thinking and problem-solving, such as design thinking workshops, ideation sessions, and collaborative projects that inspire youth to think outside the box and approach challenges with an entrepreneurial mindset.

In conclusion, the GodLight Foundation can significantly impact youth by focusing on key areas of skill development essential for entrepreneurship. By providing targeted training and resources in business management, financial literacy, marketing, networking, and innovation, GodLight can empower young individuals to become confident entrepreneurs capable of driving economic growth in their communities. Ultimately, such initiatives will not only enhance the personal capabilities of youth but also contribute to broader societal change through entrepreneurship.

Community Feedback and Preliminary Findings: Insights from Potential Participants

Community feedback is a crucial component in assessing the needs and expectations of potential participants in initiatives aimed at empowering youth and enhancing entrepreneurship skills. Understanding the perspectives of the community not only informs the design and implementation of programs but also ensures that they are relevant and impactful. This section discusses key

insights gathered from potential participants regarding their needs and expectations for entrepreneurship initiatives.

1. Skill Development Needs

One of the primary insights from potential participants is a strong desire for skill development opportunities tailored to their specific contexts. Many young individuals expressed that they need training in both hard and soft skills to succeed in entrepreneurship. According to Mwasalwiba (2012), skill development is essential for fostering entrepreneurial potential, as it equips individuals with the necessary competencies to navigate the business landscape effectively. In feedback sessions, participants highlighted a need for practical workshops focusing on skills such as digital marketing, financial management, and customer service, which they identified as critical for their entrepreneurial success.

2. Access to Resources and Funding

Participants also indicated a significant challenge in accessing resources and funding to start their businesses. Many voiced concerns about the high barriers associated with obtaining financial support from traditional sources. Feedback revealed that potential entrepreneurs often feel disillusioned by the complex loan processes and lack of operational understanding required to secure funding (Harte & Tosey, 2020). To address this gap, participants expressed the need for initiatives that provide guidance on grant applications, funding opportunities, and alternative financing options such as microloans or crowdfunding platforms. According to a study by Kauffman (2015), access to financial resources is a crucial determinant of entrepreneurial success, underscoring the importance of addressing this need.

3. Mentorship and Networking Opportunities

The need for mentorship emerged as a recurring theme in the feedback collected from potential participants. Many expressed the desire to connect with experienced entrepreneurs who can provide guidance, support, and industry insights. As noted by de Vries and Ruiter (2009), mentorship plays a vital role in entrepreneurship by enhancing the confidence and capabilities of emerging entrepreneurs. Participants indicated that networking opportunities could facilitate relationships with established business leaders, thereby providing access to valuable advice and potential partnerships. They suggested that GodLight should organize events, such as mentorship fairs and networking sessions, to foster these connections.

4. Community Support and Collaboration

Another critical insight from participants was the value of community support and collaboration. Many expressed a sense of isolation in their entrepreneurial journeys and underscored the importance of building a strong support network. Research by Aldrich and Cliff (2003) emphasizes the significance of community ties in entrepreneurship, as social capital can provide resources and

encouragement. Participants suggested the creation of community-driven platforms where they can collaborate on projects, share experiences, and support one another in their entrepreneurial endeavors. This collective approach could enhance motivation and accountability among youth.

5. Expectation of Holistic Development

Ultimately, potential participants indicated that they expect programs to promote holistic development rather than just business skills. Many emphasized the importance of personal development, including building self-esteem, leadership skills, and resilience. A study by Engle et al. (2010) suggests that successful entrepreneurs often possess strong interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, which are cultivated through comprehensive development programs. Participants expressed a desire for initiatives that integrate personal development into entrepreneurship training, thereby preparing them for the multifaceted challenges of entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, the insights gathered from community feedback reflect the diverse needs and expectations of potential participants in GodLight's initiatives. Addressing these needs through targeted programs that focus on skill development, access to resources, mentorship, community support, and holistic personal growth will be essential in empowering youth and fostering successful entrepreneurship. By incorporating participant feedback into program design, GodLight can enhance its effectiveness and ensure that its initiatives are well-aligned with the aspirations of the community.

Recommendations for Building A Supportive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Creating a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem is crucial for fostering innovation, encouraging economic growth, and empowering young entrepreneurs. Effective ecosystems provide not only resources but also networks and mentorship opportunities that are essential for business success. This section outlines strategic recommendations for enhancing mentorship, networking, and resource availability within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

1. Enhancing Mentorship Programs

To improve mentorship opportunities, it is vital to establish structured mentorship programs that connect experienced entrepreneurs with young aspiring business owners. Several strategic steps can be taken:

- **Mentorship Pairing Framework**: Develop a systematic approach to pair mentors and mentees based on their business interests, goals, and expertise. Research by Foroughi and

Farazmand (2020) emphasizes that effective mentorship matching can significantly enhance the learning experience, fostering stronger relationships and better outcomes for both parties.

- **Training for Mentors**: Provide training sessions for mentors on how to effectively guide and support young entrepreneurs. Kram (1985) notes that mentors benefit from understanding their roles, expectations, and the dynamics of mentorship. Training can cover topics such as communication skills, goal-setting, and providing constructive feedback, ensuring mentors are well-prepared to assist mentees.

- **Regular Check-Ins and Feedback Loops**: Establish a system for regular check-ins between mentors and mentees, as well as periodic feedback loops to assess the effectiveness of the mentorship relationships. This practice can help identify challenges and make necessary adjustments to mentoring strategies (Whitely, 2009).

2. Creating Networking Opportunities

Facilitating effective networking opportunities is essential for building connections within the entrepreneurial community. Here are several strategies to enhance networking:

- **Networking Events and Workshops**: Organize regular networking events, workshops, and industry-specific forums that bring together entrepreneurs, investors, and business leaders. According to O'Donnell (2014), frequent networking events can help entrepreneurs establish valuable contacts, share resources, and collaborate on projects, which can catalyze entrepreneurial growth.

- **Online Networking Platforms**: Develop an online platform or mobile application that allows entrepreneurs to connect, share ideas, and collaborate. Such platforms can facilitate ongoing connections beyond physical events, creating a vibrant online entrepreneurial community (Kelley et al., 2019).

- **Collaborative Projects and Hackathons**: Host collaborative projects, design sprints, or hackathons where entrepreneurs can work together on solving community issues or developing innovative solutions. These events encourage teamwork and creative thinking while promoting participants to form lasting connections (Peine et al., 2019).

3. Improving Resource Availability

Accessibility of resources, including financial support, training materials, and physical spaces for training, is foundational to the development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Recommendations include:

- **Resource Hubs**: Establish resource hubs or co-working spaces that provide entrepreneurs with access to necessary tools and services, such as legal advice, marketing assistance, and

financial planning. These hubs can serve as centralized locations for entrepreneurs to seek guidance and collaborate on projects (Bakhshi et al., 2015).

- **Access to Financial Aid and Microfinancing**: Facilitate access to financial resources such as grants, microloans, and investment funds tailored specifically for young entrepreneurs. Research by Ledgerwood and White (2006) indicates that microfinance can significantly enhance small business viability and growth, offering crucial support to those in the early stages of entrepreneurship.

- **Educational Resources and Workshops**: Provide continuous learning opportunities through workshops and seminars focusing on relevant business skills and strategies. Topics could include digital marketing, business planning, and financial literacy, ensuring that entrepreneurs are equipped with the knowledge necessary to succeed (Robinson, 2014).

4. Fostering a Culture of Collaboration

Building a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem also requires fostering a culture of collaboration rather than competition among entrepreneurs. Strategies include:

- **Promoting Shared Success**: Highlight community success stories to inspire and motivate other entrepreneurs. Celebrating local ventures can help build a culture that values collective growth and collaboration (García et al., 2020).

- **Multi-Stakeholder Engagement**: Engage a variety of stakeholders, including government entities, educational institutions, and local businesses, to create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs. A broad-based coalition can provide varied resources, experiences, and perspectives to support young entrepreneurs (Mason & Brown, 2014).

- **Encouraging Knowledge Sharing**: Create forums for entrepreneurs to share their experiences, challenges, and leanings. This can foster an environment of trust and collaboration, where entrepreneurs support each other's growth (Forman & Jang, 2019).

Conclusion

The recommendations outlined above provide a strategic framework for building a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem. By enhancing mentorship opportunities, creating networking avenues, improving resource availability, and fostering a culture of collaboration, communities can empower young entrepreneurs to thrive. Implementing these strategies will not only facilitate individual business success but also contribute to broader economic growth and innovation within the community.

Path Forward for GodLight in Nigeria

As GodLight Foundation embarks on initiatives aimed at empowering Nigerian youth and fostering entrepreneurship, the anticipated outcomes for both the youth and their communities are profound and far-reaching. By focusing on skill development, mentorship, networking, and resource accessibility, GodLight can play a pivotal role in shaping the entrepreneurial landscape of Nigeria. This conclusion summarizes the expected impacts of GodLight's initiatives and outlines a path forward for sustaining and scaling these efforts.

1. Empowerment of Youth

One of the primary anticipated outcomes of GodLight's initiatives is the empowerment of Nigerian youth. Through tailored programs that provide essential skills in business management, financial literacy, marketing, and leadership, young individuals will be equipped with the knowledge needed to launch and sustain their own ventures. Research indicates that when youth acquire entrepreneurial skills, they are more likely to engage in self-employment and business ownership (Kourilsky & Walstad, 1998). By fostering a sense of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial spirit, GodLight can enable youth to transform their aspirations into reality, thereby reducing reliance on traditional employment and contributing to economic resilience.

2. Job Creation and Economic Growth

The initiatives implemented by GodLight are expected to contribute significantly to job creation within local communities. As young entrepreneurs establish their businesses, they will not only employ themselves but also create jobs for others, thereby addressing the pervasive issue of unemployment in Nigeria. According to the World Bank (2021), small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are vital for economic development and employment generation. By supporting the growth of entrepreneurial ventures, GodLight can catalyze economic growth, drive innovation, and ultimately enhance the standard of living for many Nigerians.

3. Strengthening Community Cohesion and Support Networks

GodLight's focus on mentorship and networking will foster a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem that enhances community cohesion among young entrepreneurs and established business leaders. By creating platforms for collaboration and knowledge sharing, GodLight can help bridge gaps between different stakeholders, facilitating connections that can lead to partnerships and collaborative projects. Research by Huggins and Williams (2011) highlights that social networks contribute to the development of regional economies, emphasizing the importance of connectivity in fostering an entrepreneurial culture. The encouragement of shared success can create an environment where young entrepreneurs support one another, thus reducing the isolation that many new business owners experience.

4. Promotion of Sustainable Practices

An anticipated outcome of GodLight's initiatives is the promotion of sustainable business practices among youth. As part of their training and mentorship programs, GodLight can emphasize the importance of social responsibility and environmentally sustainable practices in entrepreneurship. This focus aligns with the growing global demand for sustainable practices in business, as highlighted by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (2015). By instilling these values, GodLight can empower young entrepreneurs to not only pursue profit but also contribute positively to their communities and the environment.

5. Long-term Impact on National Economic Development

Finally, the collective impact of empowering youth, creating jobs, fostering community connections, and promoting sustainability will contribute to the long-term economic development of Nigeria. As young entrepreneurs succeed and grow their businesses, they will contribute to the national economy through increased production, innovation, and tax revenues. The entrepreneurial dynamism fostered by GodLight can position Nigeria as a hub for innovation and economic activity in Africa, potentially attracting further investment and development opportunities.

In conclusion, GodLight Foundation has the potential to generate significant positive outcomes for Nigerian youth and their communities. By equipping young people with the necessary skills and resources, fostering a culture of collaboration, and promoting sustainable business practices, GodLight can contribute to a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem that drives economic development, reduces unemployment, and enhances the quality of life for countless individuals across Nigeria.

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CHAPTER THREE
THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH & GOVERNANCE: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF GODLIGHT IN SHAPING NIGERIA'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper explores the intricate relationship between faith and governance in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the challenges facing the nation's political landscape. Nigeria has long grappled with issues such as corruption, lack of transparency, and the erosion of public trust in political institutions. These problems have hindered effective governance and stifled national development. In this context, the GodLight initiative emerges as a transformative force aimed at revitalizing Nigeria's political framework. By fostering a values-driven approach to leadership, GodLight seeks to instill ethical governance practices and enhance civic engagement among citizens. Through community outreach, educational programs, and advocacy for integrity, GodLight endeavours to align political actions with spiritual principles, promoting accountability and social justice. This paper posits that integrating faith-based perspectives into governance can serve as a catalyst for positive change, ultimately directing Nigeria toward a more equitable and just political future.

Keywords: Faith, Governance, GodLight, Nigeria's Political Landscape

Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, has long been plagued by political instability, corruption, and a lack of transparency in governance. These persistent challenges have not only eroded public trust in political institutions but have also stifled the nation's potential for development and progress (Ihonvbere, 2020). The implications of this political landscape are far-reaching, affecting the daily lives of millions and perpetuating cycles of inequality and disillusionment among citizens (Ake, 2018). In this context, the GodLight Foundation emerges as a transformative force poised to revitalize Nigeria's political framework through a faith-based approach to governance.

The GodLight Foundation, inspired by its mission to illuminate spiritual journeys, aims to inject ethical values and integrity into the political terrain by fostering a values-driven leadership paradigm. This initiative seeks to realign the nation's political practices with core spiritual principles that emphasize accountability, social justice, and civic engagement (Barthelemy, 2022). By encouraging leaders to embrace these values, the foundation endeavors to create an environment where integrity is prioritized, and corruption is systematically dismantled. In this

way, the GodLight Foundation not only advocates for transparency but also promotes the idea that ethical governance can act as a catalyst for positive change in Nigerian society.

Furthermore, GodLight's commitment to community outreach and educational programs serves to empower citizens, enhancing their understanding of civic responsibilities and the importance of active participation in governance. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to hold their leaders accountable, the foundation aims to foster a culture of engagement that challenges the status quo (Ajebon & Salami, 2021). Through these efforts, GodLight aspires to restore public trust in political institutions and create a more equitable political landscape where citizens can thrive.

In conclusion, as Nigeria continues to navigate its complex political challenges, the GodLight Foundation's unique approach offers a promising pathway toward revitalizing governance. By integrating faith-based perspectives into the political discourse, GodLight seeks to create a future where leadership is grounded in ethical principles, accountability is paramount, and the spirit of civic engagement flourishes. This paper explores the various strategies employed by the GodLight Foundation to effect positive change in Nigerian politics, ultimately advocating for a more just and equitable political future.

The Role of Ethical Leadership in Revitalizing Governance in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the political landscape has been marred by pervasive corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability among public officials. These challenges have significantly undermined the trust of citizens in government institutions and hindered the country's developmental progress. Ethical leadership, defined as the practice of leading with integrity, honesty, and moral principles, is fundamental in addressing these issues and revitalizing governance (Brown et al., 2005). The GodLight Foundation can play a crucial role in fostering ethical leadership in Nigeria, thus contributing to the creation of a more transparent and accountable political system.

Ethical leadership is essential for promoting good governance, especially in a country like Nigeria, where public trust has been eroded by a history of corruption and maladministration. Leaders who exemplify ethical behavior can set a positive precedent for others, encouraging a culture of integrity and responsibility within political institutions. Research indicates that ethical leadership not only enhances team performance and employee satisfaction but also strengthens public trust and engagement (Brown et al., 2005). In Nigeria's context, ethical leaders can advocate for policies that not only reduce corruption but also prioritize public welfare and societal development.

Expected Outcomes

The positive implications of fostering ethical leadership through the GodLight Foundation are significant. Firstly, instilling ethical leadership principles can lead to a reduction in corrupt practices within the Nigerian political system, ultimately restoring public trust. As citizens witness

a commitment to integrity from their leaders, engagement in the democratic process may increase, resulting in higher voter turnout and more active citizenship.

Moreover, ethical leadership can create a conducive environment for sustainable development by prioritizing policies that address the needs of marginalized communities and promote social equity. As leaders become more accountable and transparent, public confidence in governance will improve, leading to enhanced cooperation between government and citizens.

In conclusion, the role of ethical leadership in revitalizing governance is pivotal for Nigeria's political rejuvenation. Through strategic initiatives aimed at fostering integrity, accountability, and citizen engagement, the GodLight Foundation can significantly contribute to the development of a more ethical and responsive political landscape. By promoting ethical leadership, GodLight has the potential to be a catalyst for positive change, guiding Nigeria towards a more just and equitable future.

Enhancing Civic Engagement through Faith-Based Initiatives in Nigeria

Civic engagement refers to the participation of individuals in activities that promote the common good and enhance democratic governance, such as voting, advocacy, and public discourse. In Nigeria, where political apathy, mistrust in governance, and social inequalities are entrenched, effective civic engagement is crucial for fostering accountability and democratic development. Faith-based initiatives, particularly those led by organizations like the GodLight Foundation, present a unique opportunity to enhance civic engagement by mobilizing communities, promoting civic education, and encouraging collective action (Wuthnow, 2003).

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) have a significant influence in many Nigerian communities. They often serve as trusted intermediaries between the government and citizens, leveraging their moral authority to address social issues. FBOs can effectively mobilize individuals to engage in civic activities, as they are often viewed as credible sources of guidance and support (Cnaan et al., 2006). Studies indicate that religious involvement positively correlates with civic participation, such as voting and community service (Verba et al., 1995). This connection underscores the potential role of FBOs in promoting active citizenship and advocating for social justice.

Expected Outcomes of Enhanced Civic Engagement

By enhancing civic engagement through faith-based initiatives, the GodLight Foundation can contribute to several positive outcomes in Nigeria. Increased civic participation among citizens can lead to higher voter turnout and more informed electoral choices. Furthermore, a more engaged citizenry can result in greater accountability from elected officials, as leaders become more aware of community expectations and demands (Blais et al., 2013).

Additionally, fostering a sense of community through collective action can strengthen social ties

and build trust among individuals, thereby contributing to social cohesion. As citizens work together to advocate for common interests, they can influence positive changes in their communities and promote social justice.

In conclusion, faith-based initiatives, particularly those led by the GodLight Foundation, have the potential to significantly enhance civic engagement in Nigeria. By implementing programs aimed at education, advocacy, and community building, GodLight can empower citizens and foster a culture of active participation in governance. This approach not only promotes individual empowerment but also contributes to the overall development of a more just and equitable society.

The Impact of Community Outreach on Public Trust in Nigeria

Public trust in government institutions is a critical component of effective governance and democratic stability. In Nigeria, where political corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of transparency have eroded citizens' trust in their leaders, community outreach initiatives can play a pivotal role in rebuilding this trust. Community outreach involves proactive efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations, including faith-based entities like the GodLight Foundation, to engage citizens, inform them about their rights, and encourage active participation in governance. This engagement fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among citizens and can significantly impact the level of public trust in government institutions.

Public trust refers to the confidence that citizens have in their government officials, institutions, and processes. In Nigeria, the prevalence of corruption scandals and poor governance has led to widespread disillusionment and apathy among the populace (Akanbi, 2020). Trust is vital for effective governance; without it, citizens are less likely to engage with their government, comply with laws, or support public policies. Therefore, rebuilding public trust is essential for enhancing civic engagement, promoting social cohesion, and achieving long-term national development (Mishler & Rose, 2001).

Expected Outcomes of Enhanced Public Trust

The impact of effective community outreach on public trust in Nigeria can have far-reaching consequences.

1. **Increased Civic Engagement**: As trust in government institutions grows, citizens are likely to become more engaged in civic activities, including voting, volunteering, and participating in community service. Higher participation rates can lead to more representative governance and improved public policies.

2. **Support for Policy Initiatives**: When citizens trust their leaders and institutions, they are more likely to support government initiatives and reforms. This cooperation can facilitate

the implementation of policies aimed at addressing critical issues such as healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation.

3. **Reduced Corruption**: Enhanced public trust can lead to a demand for greater accountability and transparency, thereby contributing to a reduction in corrupt practices. Citizens who feel empowered are more likely to report unethical behavior and advocate for reforms (Mishler & Rose, 2001).

4. **Improved Social Cohesion**: Trust in public institutions can strengthen social ties within communities, fostering a sense of unity and collective responsibility. This cohesion is vital for addressing communal challenges and promoting resilience in the face of socio-economic difficulties.

In conclusion, community outreach initiatives are vital for restoring public trust in Nigeria's governance structures. By engaging citizens, promoting transparency, encouraging participation, and leveraging the influence of faith-based organizations, initiatives led by entities such as the GodLight Foundation can rebuild the confidence necessary for effective governance. The relationship between community outreach and public trust highlights the importance of active civic engagement in creating a more accountable and responsive political system.

Spirituality as a Framework for Ethical Governance in Nigeria

Ethical governance is crucial for promoting justice, accountability, and public trust in governmental institutions. As Nigeria grapples with significant challenges such as corruption, political instability, and social inequality, integrating spirituality into governance offers a unique and profound approach to fostering ethical behavior among leaders and citizens alike. Spirituality encompasses not only religious beliefs but also a broader sense of connection to values such as integrity, compassion, and respect for human dignity. This integration can provide a moral compass for ethical governance, guiding decision-making processes and enhancing transparency and accountability.

Spirituality in governance refers to the application of spiritual principles and values to the political and administrative processes that shape a society. Unlike organized religion, which often emphasizes doctrine and ritual, spirituality allows for a more personal interpretation of values such as love, empathy, humility, and service to others. Such values can inspire leaders to act ethically and responsibly in their roles (Sharma, 2018). In Nigeria, where spirituality is an integral part of the cultural fabric, leveraging these spiritual dimensions can build a more ethical political landscape.

Key Aspects of Spirituality as a Framework for Ethical Governance

1. **Promoting Integrity and Accountability**: Spiritual principles emphasize honesty and accountability, intrinsic to ethical governance. Leaders who embrace these principles are

more likely to act with integrity, ensuring that their actions align with their values. For example, leaders grounded in spirituality may prioritize the welfare of their constituents over personal gain, creating a culture of accountability (Ekwunife, 2020). Implementing ethical frameworks inspired by spiritual values can lead to more transparent practices within government institutions.

2. **Fostering Compassion and Empathy**: Spirituality encourages compassion and empathy, essential qualities for effective governance. When leaders genuinely care about the people's well-being, they are more likely to make decisions that align with the public interest. This compassionate approach can be particularly beneficial in Nigeria, where socio-economic disparities persist. Leaders who embrace these values may prioritize policies that address poverty, healthcare access, and education, creating a just society (Miller & Spolsky, 2018).

3. **Strengthening Community and Social Cohesion**: Spirituality often emphasizes the importance of community and connectedness. By integrating spiritual principles into governance, leaders can foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity among citizens. This can be achieved through community engagement initiatives that encourage dialogue and collaboration between government officials and the populace. Such approaches can create a more participatory democracy, where citizens feel their voices are heard and valued (Cnaan et al., 2006).

4. **Encouraging Moral Leadership**: Spirituality can cultivate moral leadership, characterized by ethical decision-making, vision, and a commitment to service. Leaders who interpret their roles through a spiritual lens are likely to inspire trust and respect among their constituents. This moral leadership can break the cycle of corruption that has plagued Nigeria's political landscape, as leaders prioritize ethical behavior over self-serving interests (Graham, 2013).

5. **Facilitating Conflict Resolution**: Spirituality can serve as a valuable tool for conflict resolution and reconciliation. In a diverse nation like Nigeria, where ethnic and religious tensions often arise, the spiritual values of forgiveness, understanding, and dialogue can help bridge divides. Leaders who promote these values can foster a culture of peace and cooperation, facilitating collaborative solutions to societal conflicts (Nwogugu, 2020).

Implementing Spirituality in Governance: Practical Steps

1. **Education and Training**: Incorporating spiritual ethics training in leadership development programs can instill these values in both current and future leaders. Workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs can equip leaders with the skills needed to apply spiritual principles in their decision-making processes (Fajimoluwa, 2022).

2. **Establishing Ethical Standards**: Governments can develop ethical codes of conduct inspired by spiritual values to guide the behavior of public officials. These standards can define acceptable behaviors and outline consequences for unethical actions, thereby promoting accountability (Ekwunife, 2020).

3. **Community Engagement Initiatives**: Governance strategies should prioritize community engagement that reflects spiritual principles. This can include organizing forums and town hall meetings that invite citizen participation, allowing for open dialogue between leaders and community members (Miller & Spolsky, 2018).

4. **Collaborating with Faith-Based Organizations**: Partnering with religious and spiritual organizations can enhance the outreach of ethical governance initiatives. These groups often have strong community ties and can serve as intermediaries to promote ethical values and behaviors among the populace (Wuthnow, 2003).

5. **Promoting Advocacy for Social Justice**: Leaders should actively advocate for policies that reflect the spiritual imperatives of justice and equity. By prioritizing initiatives that address social inequalities, they can demonstrate a commitment to ethical governance driven by spirituality (Graham, 2013).

Expected Outcomes of Incorporating Spirituality into Governance

The integration of spirituality into governance practices can lead to several beneficial outcomes in Nigeria:

1. **Restoration of Public Trust**: As leaders embody and promote spiritual values, citizens are likely to develop greater trust in government institutions. Trust enhances civic engagement and promotes collaboration between the public and government (Mishler & Rose, 2001).

2. **Reduced Corruption**: An ethical framework rooted in spirituality can help diminish corrupt practices by encouraging leaders to act with integrity and accountability. This can lead to more effective use of public resources and improved service delivery (Akanbi, 2020).

3. **Strengthened Social Cohesion**: By fostering community and social engagement, spirituality can enhance societal cohesion, reducing ethnic and religious tensions. A sense of belonging can lead to a more harmonious society (Cnaan et al., 2006).

4. **Sustainable Development**: A governance framework that prioritizes spiritual values can promote policies that lead to sustainable economic and social development. By addressing the root causes of inequality and injustice, leaders can contribute to long-term societal progress (Ekwunife, 2020).

In summary, spirituality can serve as a powerful framework for ethical governance in Nigeria. By promoting integrity, compassion, community, moral leadership, and conflict resolution, spiritual principles can guide leaders toward responsible and accountable governance. Integrating spirituality into governance practices can restore public trust and foster a more equitable and just society, ultimately enhancing Nigeria's prospects for sustainable development.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of GodLight Foundation's Initiatives

The GodLight Foundation, a prominent faith-based organization in Nigeria, aims to improve community welfare through various initiatives focused on enhancing civic engagement, promoting social justice, and fostering ethical governance. Evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives is crucial for understanding their impact, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring that resources are utilized effectively. This evaluation can rely on both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive assessment of the foundation's activities.

Goals and Objectives of the GodLight Foundation

Before delving into the evaluation, it is essential to clarify the goals and objectives of the GodLight Foundation. These may include:

1. **Promoting Civic Engagement**: Encouraging active participation of citizens in governance and civic processes, particularly in underserved communities.

2. **Enhancing Social Welfare**: Addressing critical issues such as poverty, education, healthcare, and social inequality through targeted programs.

3. **Fostering Ethical Leadership**: Encouraging moral and ethical behavior among leaders and community members.

4. **Reducing Corruption**: Advocating for accountability and transparency within governmental and non-governmental institutions.

5. **Building Community Cohesion**: Strengthening social ties and promoting unity among diverse groups within communities.

Key Areas for Evaluation

1. **Program Reach and Participation:**

   o **Quantitative Metrics**: Assess the number of participants engaged in various initiatives, such as workshops, training sessions, community outreach events, and advocacy campaigns.

   o **Demographic Analysis**: Evaluate the demographics of participants to determine whether programs effectively reach marginalized and underserved populations.

   o **Stakeholder Feedback**: Collect surveys and feedback from participants regarding their motivations for engaging with the foundation's initiatives and their perceptions of the impact on their lives.

2. **Impact on Civic Engagement:**

   o **Pre- and Post-Assessment**: Measure civic knowledge and participation levels

among community members before and after their involvement in GodLight Foundation programs.

- **Case Studies**: Conduct in-depth case studies on particular communities or groups that have engaged with the foundation to document changes in civic activity, such as voter registration, participation in local governance, or involvement in community projects.

- **Tracking Policy Influence**: Analyze the foundation's influence on local governance or policy changes by tracking specific instances where their advocacy efforts have led to tangible outcomes (e.g., reforms in local governance policies).

3.   **Effectiveness of Capacity Building Programs:**

- **Skills Development Assessment**: Evaluate the effectiveness of training programs aimed at enhancing skills related to leadership, advocacy, and ethical decision-making. This can include pre-and post-training evaluations and participant testimonials.

- **Long-term Impact Tracking**: Monitor graduates of capacity-building initiatives over time to assess their engagement in civic activities or their roles in leadership within their communities.

4.   **Social Welfare Outcomes:**

- **Program-specific Evaluation**: For initiatives focused on areas such as healthcare, education, or economic empowerment, evaluate specific outcomes, such as improved health indicators, educational achievements, or financial stability among beneficiaries.

- **Longitudinal Studies**: Conduct longitudinal studies to track the sustained impact of interventions over time, assessing whether changes persist after program completion.

5.   **Corruption and Ethical Governance:**

- **Public Perception Surveys**: Administer surveys to gauge changes in public perception regarding corruption, transparency, and ethical governance in areas where the foundation operates.

- **Accountability Metrics**: Monitor and evaluate the implementation of recommended practices for transparency and accountability within local governance structures influenced by the foundation's advocacy.

6.   **Community Cohesion and Social Capital:**

- **Network and Relationship Assessment**: Examine the extent to which the foundation's initiatives have fostered relationships among community members,

local leaders, and institutions. This can include measuring changes in social capital and community trust.

- **Conflict Resolution Outcomes**: Evaluate the effectiveness of programs aimed at conflict resolution, assessing whether tensions have decreased and dialogue among diverse groups has improved.

Challenges in Evaluation

Evaluating the effectiveness of the GodLight Foundation's initiatives may present several challenges, including:

- **Attributing Outcomes**: Difficulties in attributing specific changes directly to the foundation's initiatives due to the multifaceted nature of social issues and external factors.

- **Data Collection**: Challenges in systematic data collection, particularly in remote or underserved communities where access may be limited.

- **Subjectivity of Impact**: The subjective nature of self-reported data may lead to bias, as participants may have differing interpretations of the impact of the foundation's programs on their lives.

- **Cultural Sensitivity**: Understanding and respecting local cultural contexts is essential while interpreting findings and making adjustments to programs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Evaluating the effectiveness of the GodLight Foundation's initiatives offers valuable insights into the impact of faith-based civic engagement efforts in Nigeria. By using a combination of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, the foundation can identify strengths, areas for improvement, and best practices.

Recommendations:

1. **Establish a Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**: Develop a structured evaluation framework that includes specific metrics for assessing the effectiveness of each program.

2. **Engage Stakeholders in the Evaluation Process**: Involve community members, beneficiaries, and local leaders in the evaluation process to ensure that evaluations are contextually relevant and comprehensive.

3. **Use Data to Inform Decision-Making**: Utilize evaluation findings to adjust programs and strategies, ensuring that initiatives remain responsive to community needs.

4. **Enhance Collaboration**: Collaborate with other organizations and researchers to share data and evaluation techniques, fostering a more extensive understanding of effective practices in the field.

By committing to thorough evaluation practices, the GodLight Foundation can strengthen its impact and continue to contribute meaningfully to the well-being and development of Nigerian communities.

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THE CHANGING REALITIES OF AFRICAN LIFE AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN VALUES AND SPIRITUAL INCLINATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The fact of change is a reality in every human society; in relation to every growth and development, what can be said to have happened is growth. Societal cultural values change as the human persons who make up a given society change. As people come in contact with others, changes occur; invariably when a culture meets another one, a cross breeding of ideas occurs, one enriches the other and change automatically occurs between the duo. Africa as a multi-cultural continent has through the centuries had intercultural and intracultural encounters with the people outside her borders and within herself respectively. These have brought about tremendous change in her traditional African values and spirituality positively and negatively. Using the style of textual analysis and critical expose, this work wishes to identify the original African cultural values and the influences other cultures have made on her. It will argue that despite the harm done to the original African image, she can galvanize herself and create a much better identity and a rebranding of her original self. The Igbo cultural context will be   a dominant ground for the expositions and critical appraisal.

Keywords: Change, Realities, African Life, African Values, Spiritual Inclinations

Introduction

A great philosopher of the pre-Socratic era, Heraclitus, stated that everything is in a state of flux; in other words, change is constant. In contrast, another school of thought in the same era upheld that reality is one, hence, that nothing changes. Can these claims be rightly thought of Africa and her life-world" Yes. A look at Africa as a continent and as a people with unique identity and rich cultural heritage reveals that she has experienced and is still experiencing tremendous evolution in all spheres of life.

However, amidst all these changes, certain elements have persevered and continue to endure. Bearing this in mind, this work consolidates the fact of the changing realities of African life and outlines the   factors responsible for those changes. It throws light on some autochthonous traditional cultural values of Africa and their current fate after modification. An evaluation is made on the nature of the impact – positive and negative – that these changing realities have on traditional African cultural values and spiritual inclinations. It also highlights whether certain aspects of these values have remained unchanged.

Laying credence to Ibigbolade (2015), Africa is a massive continent with diverse religious traditions and cultural values, to the extent that within the same tradition there are variations. It would be virtually impossible for this work to do full justice to the changing realities across the

entire continent. Therefore, the **Igbo tribe of Nigeria** will serve as the primary reference in examining African traditional values and spiritual inclinations. Definitions of key terms are also provided.

Traditional African Values

According to *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language* (Walker et al., 2004), value is defined as something regarded as desirable, worthy, or right – such as a belief, standard, or precept. It can also refer to intrinsic excellence or desirability. Thus, value may be seen as a collection of practices that people hold sacred or precious.

Traditional African values are a composite set of principles, knowledge, and beliefs held in high esteem within African societies. These serve as guidelines for human behavior in interpersonal, group, and intergroup relationships (Blake, 1993). These values are cultural in nature, as they originate from the African people's lived experiences without external influence. African culture itself can be defined as the "totality of the African people's response to nature and their social environment" (Ogbuja, 2014, p. 208).

Key values include respect for human life (linked to its perceived sacredness), communalism, respect for elders, hospitality, justice, moral rectitude, a deep sense of the sacred, docility, and integrity (Ramose, 1999). Proverbs and folklore were essential educational tools used to convey these values informally (Okolo, 1993).

African Spiritual Inclination

Africans are deeply spiritual people. Mbiti (1970) famously describes them as "notoriously religious" (p. 1). African spiritual inclination reflects how Africans perceive their existence in relation to the Supreme Being. In the **Igbo worldview**, this supreme being is referred to as *Chiukwu*.

Africans often attribute life events – whether positive or negative – to the influence of deities or spiritual forces. This belief reinforces the idea that communities and individuals are at the mercy of divine forces. Achebe (1958), in *Things Fall Apart*, portrays this vividly by recounting a year plagued by poor harvests, which the Igbo people attributed to spiritual displeasure.

4. The Changing Realities of African Life: A Fact or Myth?

Is life in Africa truly changing" The answer is yes. A comparison of past and present African life reveals not just change, but also significant transformation. There has been a shift in worldview and tremendous cultural adaptation. This section identifies the key factors responsible for these changes.

5. Factors Responsible for the Changing Realities of African Lives

These factors can be broadly classified into **intra-African** and **extra-African**.

Intra-African factors involve cultural exchanges among African communities, such as intertribal marriages and sharing of ideas through migration. For instance, in Nigeria, intertribal

unions and mobility foster cross-cultural integration.

Extra-African factors include colonization and globalization. Ufearoh and Onebunne (2017) argue that colonialism and globalization, combined with the Igbo people's adventurous spirit, have led to major socio-cultural shifts. Colonization began with the Portuguese arriving in Ghana around 1470 and later in Benin, Nigeria (Aderibigbe, 2015). This encounter with Europeans drastically impacted Africa's political, religious, and economic systems.

Colonialism introduced Christianity and commerce, yet it also opened the door for the trans-Atlantic slave trade and exploitation of African people (Okere, 2005b). African cultural practices were condemned as primitive and fetish, leading to cultural degradation. Nevertheless, this interaction also introduced education, healthcare, and scientific knowledge, which helped Africa develop and resist some colonial shackles (Okere, 2005b).

The **second wave of European contact** in Africa, occurring in the late 19th century, was driven by motives beyond exploration – it was orchestrated by initiatives such as Pope Nicholas V's papal bull (Okere, 2005b). The resulting colonial enterprise affected African society in **political, economic, social, and religious** domains. While Christianity and commerce were introduced, so were exploitation and slavery. African traditions were demonized, often labeled as *fetish* or *primitive* (Okere, 2005b; Ufearoh & Onebunne, 2017).

Despite these negatives, **colonial contact had its benefits**: Africans were exposed to Christianity, formal education, improved healthcare, and scientific knowledge. These tools helped Africa develop self-awareness and resistance against colonial domination (Okere, 2005).

Globalization further accelerates cultural change. Defined as how trade and technology create global interdependence, it promotes cross-cultural and economic exchange in a more respectful manner compared to colonial times, which was more of a slave master relationship. It allows Africa to project its values and assimilate others. (National Geographic Education, 2024).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) – including the internet, media, mobile phones – has transformed Africa into part of a "global village," significantly impacting traditional values. One of globalization's strongest instruments is **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**. Tools like radio, television, the internet, and mobile phones have turned the world into a "global village" (Walker et al., 2004). However, this global exposure has also introduced **foreign ideologies and lifestyles** that challenge African traditional values (Blake, 1993). For instance, ICT has altered how proverbs and folktales, once vital in African informal education, are transmitted. Young people now rely more on online content, often foreign, rather than oral traditions (Ogbuja, 2014). Additionally, ICT promotes individualism through personal media consumption and online interactions, weakening community-based learning and interaction.

Africa, with its vast cultural heritage, has undergone substantial transformations through colonization, globalization, and information and communication technology (ICT). These forces

have reshaped the African worldview – affecting everything from spirituality to social norms. From the above, we have seen that realities of African life are changing and certain factors are responsible for these changes. Hence, the following section examines the **impacts** these changes inflict on African traditional values and spiritual inclination.

6. The Impact of the Changing Realities of African Life on Traditional African Values and Spiritual Inclination

As previously established, Africa is a vast continent endowed with rich cultural heritage and traditional values. It has also been shown that Africa has undergone tremendous transformation due to both internal and external influences – namely colonialism, globalization, and information and communication technology (ICT).

It is pertinent to note that the **impact** of these changes on traditional African values and spiritual inclinations **has been both positive and negative**. On one hand, these external contacts have increased global appreciation for African cultural values; on the other, they have also led to the dilution, neglect, and in some cases, extinction of certain traditions. The **positive outcomes** include access to education, improved healthcare, broader worldview, and the internalization of universal values such as human rights and democracy (Okere, 2005). However, the **negative consequences** are particularly evident in the erosion of key traditional values. Below are detail clarification:

i. Communalism

Communalism is a core African value that asserts that an individual is only meaningful through others. This is captured by the popular *Ubuntu* philosophy, which states, *"A person is a person through other persons"* (Ramose, 1999). In a similar vein, Okolo (1993) encapsulates this with the Latin expression *Cognatus ergo sum* ("I am related to others, therefore I exist"). This does not deny individuality but emphasizes that identity is achieved within a community.

Traditionally, communalism meant that individuals were recognized, valued, and protected within the communal web (Ogbuja, 2014). However, this value has been **deeply eroded by Western individualism**, which was introduced during colonization and accelerated by globalization. The mistrust instilled by the trans-atlantic slave trade, the prioritization of personal success over collective welfare, and the growing culture of privacy (such as building high fences around houses) have all contributed to the **marginalization of communal living** (Aderibigbe, 2015). Today, people are more self-centered; personal goals often take precedence over community needs.

ii. Downplay of the Sacredness of Human Life

In traditional African society, human life was considered sacred. The killing of an individual, including unborn children, was abominable. However, modern society has significantly devalued this principle. For instance, in Nigeria, the violent acts perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen and increasing abortion rates reflect this shift. In Igbo society, ritual killings and kidnappings have also

become more prevalent, fueled by silence from authorities and a general degradation of cultural norms (Aderibigbe, 2015; Ogbuja, 2014).

iii. Erosion of Respect for Elders, Authorities, and Laws

Elders traditionally served as custodians of knowledge and moral authority. They were respected figures in African societies. Today, however, many are abandoned, ridiculed, or disrespected. In meetings like the *Umunna*, elders are often challenged or even assaulted. Additionally, the rich and powerful in society often operate above the law, a situation alien to traditional African justice systems (Ogbuja, 2014).

iv. Decline in Chastity and Modesty

In pre-colonial African societies, chastity before marriage and modesty were deeply valued, particularly among the Igbo. While early Africans may have dressed scantily, sexual integrity was upheld. Today, however, cohabitation without marriage, prostitution (now called "hook-up"), and indecent dressing have become normalized. ICT and the internet have exacerbated these trends, challenging the African value of communal responsibility and moral correction (Blake, 1993; Okere, 2005a).

v. Demonization of African Cultural Heritage

Christian missionaries often condemned African traditions as fetishistic, promoting Christianity through an Eurocentric lens. This lack of inculturation led to a shallow rooting of faith in African soil. The result was **syncretism** – a blend of Christianity and traditional religion that often distorts both. Thankfully, the rise of **inculturation**, as promoted by the Vatican II Council, now aims to integrate African values and customs into Christian life and liturgy (Arinze, 2008; Udechukwu, 2021).

vi. Eclipse of Integrity and Moral Rectitude

Integrity, once revered in African culture – especially through institutions like the *Ozo* title – is fading. Today, many titled men are corrupt, giving false testimony for money. The Igbo proverb *ikpe mara eziokwu na aka aẕ di ya* ("judgment against the truth has a backhand") illustrates this sad reality. Moral uprightness, once held above wealth (*ezi afa ka ego*), is no longer upheld (Okere, 2005b).

vii. Rise of Hedonism among Youth

African spirituality traditionally emphasized the harmony of body and soul. Today, consumerism, materialism, and hedonism, especially among the youth, are increasingly dominant. This quest for wealth, often by any means necessary, has led to a loss of spiritual balance and moral compass (Atueyi, 2021).

Positive Impacts

i. Improvement in Science and Technology

Contact with the global world brought advancements in agriculture, medicine, communication, and education. Local arts and crafts have been refined and expanded through these technological exchanges (Walker et al., 2004).

ii. Systematic Education

Before colonialism, Africa's education was informal and vocational – skills were passed down from one expert to another. Formal education introduced by missionaries structured learning and improved the quality of life. Now, people specialize and contribute to society more effectively (Okere, 2005b).

iii. Better Appreciation of African Values

Though initially rejected, African cultural values are now being recognized within religious contexts. The **Second Vatican Council** (1962–1965) emphasized *inculturation*, incorporating local languages, music, and rituals into worship. Organizations like **SECAM** (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) promote building the Church as the "Family of God" in Africa (Arinze, 2008; Nwaigbo, 2015). Blessed Michael Iwene Tansi modeled this by incorporating Igbo traditions such as the breaking of kola nuts into Christian hospitality (Udechukwu, 2021).

iv. Balanced Spiritual Outlook

Christianity provided Africans with tools to understand personal agency. The African worldview, often fatalistic, evolved to include concepts of planning and working towards a future, balancing spirituality with practical action (Okere, 2005a).

v. Elimination of Anti-Life Practices

Christianity helped abolish harmful traditions like twin killings and human sacrifice. These practices have been largely eradicated, making traditional religion more compatible with modern human rights and life-affirming values (Mbiti, 1970).

vi. Revival of Communal Spirit in the Diaspora

Despite individualism at home, many African diaspora communities are reviving traditional communal values. Organizations such as the *Igbo Union* in New York or *Ndi-Igbo in Texas* foster cultural events like the New Yam Festival, thereby preserving heritage and creating solidarity abroad (Ufearoh & Onebunne, 2017).

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that **change is a constant feature** in African life, and this change has brought both blessings and challenges. While colonialism, globalization, and ICT have

undermined many African values, they have also introduced tools for progress and self-rediscovery. Today, Africans face the task of reclaiming their identity through a balanced integration of their cultural values and the Gospel message of Christ.

Despite a painful history marked by slavery, exploitation, and cultural denigration, Africa possesses the strength to rise. Through **inculturation, education,** and a renewed sense of **communalism,** African societies can both **preserve their rich heritage** and **advance in the modern world,** free and dignified.

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CHAPTER FIVE
CAN SCIENCE ALONE PROVIDE MAN WITH ADEQUATE REFLECTIVE AND AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WORLD?
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Formal education today has two broad divisions – humanities and science. The German educational system makes the distinction clearer: Geisteswissenschaften and Naturwissenschaften. Initially, education consisted in the reading of the original works of authors such as Homer and Hesiod. Later, it shifted to Shakespeare. In the 20th century, the rapid development of science and technology led to profound transformation in every aspect of human life. From the industrial revolution to the rise of digital technologies. Humanity's relationship with the world has become increasingly mediated by technological advancements. The result was profound transformations in human thinking and life. Today, humanity's relationship with the world has become increasingly mediated by technological advancements. The result is the conclusion by some that science has overtaken humanity. Even in our secondary schools, those students who offer science subjects tend to look down on the ones that offer arts subjects as their academic inferiors. Our world seems to be moving purely towards the digital direction. However, it is a truism that man is a being in the world. The question is: can science alone provide man with adequate reflective and authentic engagement with the world" This paper answers in the negative. This position is by no means a rejection of science and technology. Taking a clue from the critic of science made by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger and the mediatory Encyclical of Pope Francis, this paper rejects the dominant role assigned unreflectively to science in our contemporary world. It takes the position that a reciprocal relationship between humanities and science can aid man better in his relationship with the world enabling him to objectively face the challenges of the contemporary era. Hermeneutics can be a veritable method. As recorded in the Book of Genesis, when God looked at his creative act, he described it as Good. The meaning is deeper and more profound than what we can find in any dictionary. It means perfect, spotless. God thereby replaced darkness with light. It is not light generated by man. It is light that is God himself. God is Light, GodLight. This paper proposes this maxim to our scholars – both of humanities and sciences. Every research should end with a declaration, God is Light. That is an acceptance of human limitation and at the same time the supremacy of God.

Science: General Meaning

The word, science is too amorphous. In the widest sense of the term, it could be used to incorporate such areas as politics, sociology, ethics, anthropology, etc. In this paper, 'science' will be taken to mean the natural sciences such as physical and biological sciences with their respective subdivisions. Technology would also be understood as applied science. Subdivisions also include genetic engineering, atomic physics, cosmology, mathematics, astronomy etc. It is not our intention here to delve into an in-depth etymological consideration of the word. We are aware that it has gone through many centuries of linguistic development. We only undertake a general explanatory analysis. According to Uzoma science is:

> The whole body of ascertained and reasoned truths Human reason has established as truths and has systematized and arranged, no matter fields of specialization or experiment such as arrangement may entail – each specific department of that universal body of reasoned and certain knowledge is a science. (Uzoma 5)

It is usually divided into two, empirical and non-empirical.

A problem arises already here. Is scientific knowledge exact" is it indubitable" Some have replied in the affirmative. For instance, Kant through the synthetic a-priori method. Scientism is also a philosophical position which maintains that only scientific method is valid and exact in the

pursuit of knowledge. Smith clearly articulated and expressed its spirit.

> …science discovers truth the hard way; entertaining no apriori certitude. She starts from ignorance and by tested and critical procedures little by little wrests from nature successive fragments of information which prove to be verifiable by competent observers at all times and at all places. The body of verifiable knowledge is what the scientist means by truth and the process by which science extracts it from nature is called the scientific method…the scientific method has been tried and tested by some three centuries and remain inviolate as the only reliable method for discovering something or anything that can be called 'truth'. (Smith 2)

The following kinds of explanation are found in science: causal, statistical probabilistic, teleological, genetic, deductive-nomological. (Mbat 57-66)

Critique of Science

We are now at the core of the main project of this paper. It is to develop the theme of the inexactitude of science. More precisely, to assert and prove that science alone cannot provide man with adequate reflective and authentic engagement with the world. Our position is that the so-called exactness of science as advocated by a good number of scientists and philosophers is not a reality. It is an illusion. The advocates of this exactness may have what they consider valid reasons for taking the position. We point out one of them. The belief that science is exact may not be unconnected with the conception by some scientists, especially those with atheistic tendencies, that science is the be-all and end-all of all that is. Hence, the ease with which God and all that He stands for are relegated to the background in the course of scientific enquiries.

We make our critique through the perspectives of two philosophers, Admund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. The views of Husserl are the results of our reflective reading of his last work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Fundamental Phenomenology*. Hereafter, we refer to it simply as The Crisis. For purposes of clarity, we have to answer a fundamental question: why the choice of The Crisis‟ It is because this is the work that Husserl regarded as his definitive exposition of phenomenology. (Husserl XXIX). This view is confirmed by Alfred Schutz when he reported that "in the last conversation which the writer had the good fortune of having with Husserl, he repeatedly designated this series of essays as the summary and the crowning achievement of his life work." (Schutz 165). The Crisis is placed within the framework of the teleological-historical reflections.

There were peculiar circumstances surrounding the writing of the Crisis: "a deeply felt lack of direction for man's existence as a whole, a sense of the emptiness of Europe's cultural values, a feeling of crisis and breakdown, the demand that philosophy be relevant to life." He goes on to admit that in our vital need, we find this science irrelevant. It does not have genuine answers to our problems. It puts in bracket thereby excluding "in principle precisely the questions which man" in his unhappy and moments of upheavals finds burning and agitating within him; "questions of the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of human existence." These questions are universal and necessary for all men. They, therefore, demand universal reflections and answers based on rational insight. (Husserl XXV-VI). His aim is to correct wrong popular thinking that science alone makes man wise and can give him full contentment. This was his main point in the Vienna Lecture.

> Is it not the case that what we have presented here is something rather inappropriate to our time, an attempt to rescue the honor of rationalism, of "enlightenment," of an intellectualism which loses itself in theories alienated from the world…‟ Does this not mean that we are being led again into the fateful error of believing that science makes men wise, that it is destined to create a genuine and contented humanity that is master of its fate‟ Who would still take such notions seriously today‟ (Husserl 289)

Precisely, it was against 'irrationalism' pure and simple that Husserl makes his most vigorous attacks. He gives the rising wave of existentialism as an example. He attacks the old rationalism with its sterile legacy of 19th century positivism. "But existentialism was not only symptomatic of Europe's problems. It was also symptomatic of the desperate and false solutions being accepted by society as a whole." (Husserl XXVII). He sees a red light – Europe coming to an

end. "At present we are faced with the immediate danger of extinction of philosophy in this sense and with it necessarily the extinction of Europe founded on the spirit of truth." (Husserl XLIII). His target is the attainment of scientific objective truth which is "exclusively a matter of establishing what the world, the physical as well as the spiritual world is in fact." (Husserl 6). It is only in pursuance of this truth that Europe can regain its lost leadership in the completely new shaping of European community which began with the renaissance. it is at this point that Husserl accepts that the European nations are sick.

> The European nations are sick; Europe itself, it is said, is in crisis. We are by no means lacking something like nature doctors. Indeed, we are practically inundated by a flood of naïve and excessive suggestions for reform. But why do the so richly developed humanistic disciplines fail to perform the service here that is so admirably performed by the natural sciences in their sphere" (Husserl 270)

A way out is the distinction as well as correlation of the life-world as the universe of what is intuitable in principle and the "objective-true" world as in principle nonintuitable logical substruction. "The life-world is a realm of original self-evidences. That which is self-evidently given is, in perception, experienced as "the thing itself," in immediate experience, or, in memory, remembered as the thing itself; and every other manner of intuition is personification of the thing itself. (Husserl 127-8). There is a contrast between the two. It lies in the fact that the "objective" and the "true" world" is a theoretical-logical substruction, the substruction of something that is in principle not perceivable, in principle not experienceable in its own proper being, whereas the subject, in the life-world, is distinguished in all respects precisely by it being actually experienceable". (Husserl 127).

We now turn our attention to Martin Heidegger. He is one of the most influential critics of science and technology. His critic has its roots in his philosophy of being. The two most important works in this respect are: *Being and Time* (1927) and his essay, "The Question concerning Technology" (1954). Let us immediately point out that Heidegger does not outrightly reject science and technology. He only criticizes the way in which modern science and technology represent the world. The main line of argument is that modern technological thinking reduces everything to resources to be exploited thereby turning human beings into mere technicians or operators of machines. Heidegger is not just concerned with the material world. His critic is strongly tied to human existence because it challenges the very way we understand and relate to the world around us (*umwelt*). His critical views are threefold: the essence of science and technology, the role of modern science, the alienating effects of technological thinking. Our choice of Heidegger is because his concerns are not just about the external effects of technology but about how technological thought has permeated our very understanding of existence. Consequently, our position is that Heidegger's philosophy offers a powerful framework for understanding the human cost of unchecked technological advancement and provides critical insights into the need for a more reflective and authentic engagement with the world.

In "The question concerning Technology", Heidegger argues that technology is not simply a collection of tools. It rather represents a way of revealing the world. He begins with the fundamental question: What is the essence of technology" He refused to follow conventional thinking that sees technology as a neutral tool, that is, tools used by humans to achieve specific ends. For him, it is much more profound. It is not a means to an end. It is rather a mode of revealing, a way of disclosing the world to us. To make his meaning of the essence of technology clear and distinct, he introduces the concept of enframing (*Gestell*). Enframing means the way of revealing that holds sway in the essence of modern technology. In itself, it is not technological. (Heidegger 287). In a technological age, human beings themselves are enframed. That is, they are viewed not as autonomous agents engaged in meaningful activities but as cogs in a larger machine. Man in the modern world is treated as a resource to be optimized, used and controlled. We continue to emphasize that Heidegger's critic of technological enframing of human beings is linked to his existential philosophy epitomized by his notion of *Da-sein* (being-there). With the notion of enframing as a solid foundation, he goes on to state the threat of technology. This threat "does not

come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology." Rather, the threat is the essence of technology because "the rule of enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. The result unfortunately is that truth itself is concealed. Heidegger undertakes his project in the conviction that unless humanity makes an effort to re-orient itself, it will not be able to find revealing and truth. Truth is actually Heidegger's primary objective. He, therefore, concludes that the question concerning technology is one "concerning the constellation in which revealing and concealing, in which the coming to presence of truth comes to pass." Put in clearer terms, it is finding truth. For him, it is through art (the poet) that one can navigate this constellation. It is so because the artist or the poet views the world as it is and as it reveals itself.

Let us conclude this section by casting a critical look on the method applied in science, induction. Thomas Kuhn in 1962 (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*) proposes a new and to most philosophers rather upsetting account of scientific change. Like Aristotle, Kuhn emphasized the collaborative character of science and the role of shared facts, concepts, procedures. He nevertheless warned that change or progress (in clearer language) might sever all logical connections with the past. If we accept his views, we are perhaps assuming that science accumulates facts, or that theories can be reduced, by approximations, to their more precise and more comprehensive successors.

In general, induction is a method or principle of reasoning that argues or draws inference from the observation of particular or single instances of the occurrence or presence of certain phenomena, events or state of affairs in nature to a general position, conclusion or law about the class of phenomenon, or event in question. It means or implies that by the method of induction, we can construct general statements or laws based on our observation of particular instances of things, events or states of affair in nature. However, in science, the understanding of induction is not so simple. Bertrand Russell in his book, *The Problems of Philosophy*, devotes an outstanding chapter to induction. Let us assume that he holds that the laws of nature like the law of gravitation, motion, the law of thermal expansion and so on have always held in the past. Then we pose the question: do we on this account suppose that these laws will continue to hold in the future" Paul Edwards in his article on Bertrand Russell has ingeniously reformulated Russell's question. He puts it in form of questions:

(i) Assuming that we possess n positive instances of a phenomenon, observed d in extensively varied circumstances, and we have not observed a single negative instance (where n is a large number), have we any reason to suppose that n+ 1st instance will also be positive"

(ii) Is there any number n of observed positive instances of a phenomenon, which affords sufficient evidence that the n+ 1st instance will also be positive" (Edwards 55-56).

The important question here is: do we have any reason assuming that all the large number of observed instances of a phenomenon are positive, to suppose that an instance which is yet unobserved is also positive" This is a problem. Russell himself sees this problem of induction as that of the justification of our belief in what is called "the uniformity of nature", which according to him "is the belief that everything that has happened or will happen is an instance of some general law to which there are no exceptions." (Russell 35). It is clear that Russell and those who hold his perspective doubt the truth of the conclusion of an inductive inference. The question is why" A key point held by the critics of inductionism is that the conclusion of an inductive argument compared with that of deductive argument is never necessarily true or certain. This can mean a number of things. The first is that the conclusion of an inductive argument cannot be certain because it rests on premises that cannot be known with certainty. Secondly, as Carnap also notes, even if the premises were assumed to be true or the inference is a valid inductive one, the conclusion might be false. In this view, considering the premises of an inductive argument, there is only one justification for its conclusion – that it has a certain degree of probability. We learn from inductive logic how to calculate the value of this probability.

Danger of over dominance of Science

It is clear from preceding presentations that the result of scientific research has undoubted limitations. It does not have the whole truth. What happens then if in spite of this, science exercises unquestioned dominance over other disciplines" The answer is danger. But how" The answer to this occupies us in this section. It can have many approaches. We have chosen an approach through the ecological crisis. The reason for the choice is because it is topical. We shall draw extensively from *Laudato Si*. It is an Encyclical Letter issued by Pope Francis, *On Care For Our Common Home*. He invites us to pause and consider a certain way of understanding human life and activity that has gone awry to the serious detriment of the world around us. We begin with his proposal "that we focus on the dominant technocratic paradigm and the place of human beings and of human action in the world." (Pope Francis No. 101).

For more than two centuries, humanity has benefitted immensely from scientific and technological inventions. These have no doubt improved the quality of our life. Yet it must also "be recognized that nuclear energy, biotechnology, information technology, knowledge of our DNA, and many other abilities which we have acquired, have given us tremendous power. More precisely, they have given those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world. Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used." (Pope Francis No. 104). That is, humanity has entered a new era in which our technical prowess has brought us to a crossroads. The Pope invites us to think of the nuclear bombs dropped in the middle of the twentieth century; how Nazi, Communist and other totalitarian regimes have employed technology to kill millions of people. Today, we have an increasingly deadly arsenal of weapons available for modern warfare. This power lies in the hand of a small part of humanity. This is risky. He warns that increase in power does not necessarily mean increase in progress. Man must acknowledge that he is not autonomous. We ought not allow certain superficial mechanisms to replace sound ethics. That is, we should nurture a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint.

The basic problem goes even deeper: it is the globalization of the technocratic paradigm. That is the way that humanity has taken up technology and its development according to an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm. "This paradigm exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation. It is as if the subject were to find itself in the presence of something formless, completely open to manipulation." (Pope Francis No. 106). The constant intervention men and women have only ended up being in tune with and respecting the possibilities offered by the things themselves. It follows that many problems of today's world stem from the tendency, at times unconscious, to make the method and aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society. Unfortunately, "technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups." (Pope Francis No. 108). The technocratic paradigm also dominates economic and political life. The maxim for acceptance of any advance in technology is profit. Maximizing profit is the motto. "We fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures, which have to do with the direction, goals, meaning and social implications of technological and economic growth."

There is further the crisis and effects of modern anthropocentrism. Unfortunately, in our time, the technological mind sees nature as a mere given, an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape. The cosmos represents for it a mere 'space' into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference. "The intrinsic dignity of the world is thus compromised. When human beings fail to find their true place in this world, they misunderstand themselves and end up acting against themselves". (Pope Francis No. 115) Modernity has been marked by an excessive

anthropocentrism which today, under another guise, continues to stand in the way of shared understanding and of any effort to strengthen social bonds. A misguided anthropocentrism leads to a misguided lifestyle. When human beings place themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative.

> The culture of relativism is the same disorder which drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects, imposing forced labour on them or enslaving them to pay their debts. The same kind of thinking leads to the sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly who no longer serve our interests. …Is it not the same relativistic logic which justifies buying the organs of the poor for resale or use in experimentation, or eliminating children because they are not what their parents wanted" This same "use and throw away" logic generates so much waste, because of the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary. We should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient to prevent actions which affect the environment because, when the culture itself is corrupt and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided. (Pope Francis No. 123)

Pope Francis proposes integral ecology. This is important because "many intensive forms of environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources which provide local communities with their livelihood, but also undo the social structures which, for a long time, shaped cultural identity and their sense of the meaning of life and community." (Pope Francis No. 145) Thus upholding the earth, our common home is also an action toward the common good of man. To achieve this, the Holy Father calls for informed dialogue, a kind of decisive action to preserve our common heritage, the common patrimony given to us. There is urgent need to tame our technology and prevent it from being a monster or terror to man. **Integral ecology is** the encyclical's main solution to ongoing social and environmental problems.

There is yet another aspect of the overdominance of science. It is the emergence in our time of comprehensive and deeply reflective literature on human extinction. For instance, there is Émile Torres' *A History of Science and Ethics of Annihilation*. For our paper, we prefer to draw from Todd: *Should We go Extinct?* It has as subtitle: A Philosophical Dilemma for our Unbearable Times. A number of complications sparked off the thinking and made him "to think it might be worthwhile to revisit in a more sustained way the question of whether the end of humanity would ultimately be a good thing." (May 4). He mentions the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the attendant nuclear threats that we witness. He opines that facing climatic destruction and the revived specter of nuclear annihilation even as humans continue to cause untold suffering to our fellow creatures on planet earth, we are forced each day to contemplate whether the world would be better off in our absence. There could be two options: should we bring new humans into the world" Or would it be better off without us" That the answer is unclear underscores the need for our paper. For him, human extinction would be both a tragedy and a good thing. There are two reasons why it would be a tragedy. "First, in addition to the suffering that would precede it, it would involve the loss of much of what humans value and only humans can create: art, science and so on. Second – here is the classical tragic part – that loss would be caused by humans." He identifies the advantage non-human animals have over humans. "But no non-human animal can cause the extra ordinary level of suffering that humans do, through factory farming and the consumption that goes along with it, deforestation, plastic disposal into the oceans, scientific experimentation, and the like." (May 3). It can further have adverse effect on world population. A number of young couples today find it difficult to decide whether to bring the next generation into the world or not. "They have come to the entirely reasonable conclusion that the climate crisis is only going to worsen and that the world they would be bringing their kids into will in all likelihood be, at best, environmentally challenging for them…. Current emissions are going to compound present ills with others that are more powerful and more dangerous than what we're experiencing now." (May 5). Let us note that May makes it clear that his argument is not that our exit from the planetary scene would definitely be good.

Conclusion

Let us recall that our objective in this paper is to answer a question: can science alone provide man with adequate reflective and authentic engagement with the world" In the introductory part of the paper, we answered in the negative. Now, as we conclude, as position has not changed. It is rather made more formidable and stronger by preceding arguments. We reiterate that we are not arguing against science and scientific inventions per se. The key word in the caption of the paper is 'alone'. The criticisms of science in our paper are directed against this key word. We should not be misunderstood as advocating a return to the Stone Age. No. Nevertheless, our paper is against the notion of scientism, a philosophical position which maintains that only scientific method is valid ad exact in the pursuit of knowledge.

It is a truism that technoscience when well directed can provide important means of improving the quality of human life. Such advantages range "from useful domestic appliances to great transportation systems, bridges, buildings and public spaces. It can also produce art and enable men and women immersed in the material world to "leap" into the world of beauty. Who can deny the beauty of an aircraft or a skyscraper" Valuable works of art and music now make use of new technologies. So, in the beauty intended by the one who uses new technical instruments and in the contemplation of such beauty, a quantum leap occurs, resulting in a fulfilment which is uniquely human." (Pope Francis No. 103) What we mean here is personal life. That is, how man can get fulfilment. Personal life does not mean private isolated life. Rather, it means living communalized as 'I' and 'We' within a community horizon. This should take place in communities of various simple or stratified forms such as family, nation, supernational community. The word 'life' here does not have a physiological sense; that is simply a being who breaths. It is not the opposite of death. It signifies *purposeful* quality life accomplishing spiritual products. The German term – *Maximierung des Menschensein*– portrays our meaning clearer. That is living humanity to the fullest, obtaining all the qualities of being human. It is a stage where man undergoes transformation. He goes beyond mere material benefits to spiritual benefits. The word 'spiritual' has both spiritual and intellectual meaning. Man creates culture in the unity of historical development. He manifests himself as a unique individual whose identity is not lost within the community. Riggle's aesthetic community makes our point of view clearer. "Aesthetic community is the community of mutual supportive individuals, people whose aesthetic lives fit together. People in aesthetic community support, encourage, value, and generally care about each other's aesthetic lives." The aesthetic freedom which each individual brings into the aesthetic community is an essential part of it. This freedom consists of one's style, creations, insights, and enticements. Also, "people in aesthetic community invite each other into spaces of aesthetic freedom, present each other with opportunities to be aesthetically free, to cultivate and explore their individuality." (Riggle 194). There is no way science alone can enable man to achieve this reflective and transformative level. It needs humanistic disciplines. We cannot rationally build a solid and workable world on the ideal types of Max Weber. There ought to be emphasis on interconnectedness and interdependence of man and nature. A science which would offer solutions to the great issues of life would necessarily have to take into account the data generated by other fields of knowledge, including philosophy and social ethics. There must be collaboration through informed dialogue. We say must because when each from its own standpoint engages in self-justification and claim to supremacy, the results produced are intellectually and spiritually lame. Such results lead man to blind alley. We propose an alliance between the two; what Prigogine and Stengers in their classic work refer to as La Nouvelle alliance (in literal translation, new alliance). Prigogine and Stengers show how the two great themes of classical science, order and chaos which coexisted uneasily for centuries are being reconciled in a new and unexpected synthesis. The theme of their work is the conceptual metamorphosis of science (métamorphose conceptuelle de la science). (Prigogine et Stengers 40).

All of this shows the urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution or do we better say, revival. Culture is a way of life of a people. One derives his identity from his culture. Among the Igbo of southeast Nigeria, the word for man is *mmadu*. Etymologically, *mma* – good; *ndu* – life. That is, there is beauty, joy, fulfilment in being human. These are realized within a

community. The emphasis is on 'we' not 'I'. A cherished value among this group is solidarity. Hermeneutics with emphasis on *auslegen* – manifestation, can be of aid towards better understanding. Despite the various theories of creation, the Igbo and a number of other cultural groups accept that both life and the earth as their abodes are gifts from God. Man, ought to use the earth with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given. Man is also a gift to man. This statement is for us universal. That is, it is true both in Africa and in Europe. Africa should avoid blind imitation and copying of western values. A copy can only reflect the original but can never in itself be the original. We should mutually borrow what is good from the other.

It is in this respect that we laud the GodLight project – illuminating the path toward a world where scientific project is harmonized with ethical consideration and human dignity. We agree that this project is topical and essential for addressing the complex challenges of our time. Our paper is a philosophical cum theological contribution to the project. Let us hope that we, humans who benefitted and still benefit from God's creative act accept that God is light.

Finally, an advantage of this paper is that it dissuades researchers from becoming armchair scholars. That is, people who unquestioningly say yes to every scientific finding without further reflection and consequently critic. The thesis is that every researcher is important; his findings are important to scholarship be they in the area of *Naturwissenschaften* or *Geisteswissenschaften*. Both areas are complementary.

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CHAPTER SIX
EGŌ EIMI TO PHŌS TOU KOSMOU (JOHN 8:12) AND THE CHALLENGES OF NEO-PAGANISM/POLYTHEISM IN AFRICA TODAY: THE WAY FORWARD

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A look at the situation in Africa today with regard to the rise of neo-paganism will surely make one believe that Christian is about getting into her dark ages in Africa. The Western world believed few years back that Africa would surely be the hub of Christianity considering the speedy growth the religion experienced. The recent unprecedented rise in neo-paganism in Africa especially indicate a very conspicuous and worrisome downward curve in Christianity. Statistics show that most young people believe that Christianity is a stranger in Africa. They feel that our ancestors were fooled into embracing Christianity and so they see it as their duty to return to the religion they believe is properly African. In the face of this obvious concern, one wonders the place of Jesus as the Light of the world. This paper adopts exegetical tool to examine the real meaning of John 8:12. It discusses the possible causes of the relapse into neo-paganism. It proposes proper catechesis, orthodoxy and development of a theology that addresses African issues as the indisputable panacea to this perilous malady.

Key Words: *I am, Light, World, Neo-paganism, Africa*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like a drop of ink in a bucket of water, so Christianity spread to different parts of the world. It started with firebrand preaching by Jesus, popularly known as 'the Christ' in company of twelve men chosen by him as apostles (Mark 3:14). His scandalous death on the cross, planned and executed by the members of the Sanhedrin out of jealousy (John 11:49-52) was believed to mark the end of the movement as recounted by Gamaliel in Acts 5:34-39. On the contrary, and with persecutions, the movement registered unprecedented growth even to other parts of the middle East, Greek and Roman world of the time (Acts 8:1ff). Historical records show that spread to many other parts were not without strict oppositions and persecutions. However, the more the persecutions, the more the spread so much so that Tertulian, the great theologian holds that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity. It was not until 313 A.D with the Edict of Millan by Constantine the Great, the then Roman Emperor, that Christianity got a reprieve and was accepted as the state religion in the then European world. The researcher believes that this spread with its gory stories is not just a matter of coincidence. It is so, because Jesus is the Light of the World in

fulfilment of the prophecy of Isa 42:6. What started with the Founder Jesus and twelve men, albeit, *agrammatoi kai idiotai* (Acts 4:13) grew into a big shrub all over the continents of the world, thanks to the commitment of later missionaries despite strict oppositions and dangers of death. Africa witnessed the relentless and altruistic evangelism from European Missionaries during the colonial times in the twentieth century. The African culture and religion appear to be a fertile ground for Christianity. It is in our culture to welcome strangers. Thus, the missionaries were accorded a befitting welcome. Africa is deeply religious. Most of her religious beliefs have some similarities with Christian teaching. It is therefore understandable how Christianity thrived largely after the initial difficulties. With the introduction of education, pastoral care by the missionaries and the desire of the African countries for western civilization, Africa became a hub for the future of Christianity. The twentieth century and part of this twenty-first century could in the least be described as the golden age of Christianity in Africa. Just as Europe is indebted to Christianity for her civilization, so Africa owe a debt of gratitude to Christianity for graduating from the dark part and abominable practices of her culture to what is fundamentally human and civilized. For instance, the killing of twins, subjugation of women, superstition and most fetishism have become facts of history. The researcher is concerned that despite this registered progress, recent years have witnessed a relapse into what some call 'revival of African Traditional Religion'. Africa has witnessed proliferation of cultism, ritualism and organized crimes in the name of African Traditional Religion. In August of 2023, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria's Metropolitan Archdiocese of Owerri (the Owerri Ecclesiastical Province) expressed their collective concern over the rising trend of Neopaganism among Nigerian youth, a viewed described by Moreno (2024) as anti-pagan rhetoric. They note that young people are increasingly turning to magical and ritualistic means to acquire wealth, demonic powers, and assurances of protection. The bishops contend that these practices inevitably lead to intimidation and criminal activity. The declarations have reportedly sparked concern among practitioners of traditional religions, such as the Yoruba religion or Ìẹ̀ẹ̀ẹ̀ often referred to as Ifá or Orisha worship. The Yoruba religion spread beyond West Africa due to the Transatlantic slave trade. It syncretized with other religious traditions in the Americas, resulting in practices such as Lucumí or Santería in Cuba, Candomblé in Brazil, and Vodou in Haiti (Moreno, 2024). In as much as this paper in line with the teaching of the Catholic () is not against the religious belief of the Africans provided it is not against the teachings of Christ; it is worried at the increasing wave of return to 'paganism' with her unpopular and long repudiated ritualism with her devastating impact on the youths and Africa as a whole. Some Nigerians had turned to blaming Christianity for Nigeria's rising insecurity, poverty, and other challenges. Under the guise of reviving our Traditional Religion and culture, some of our intellectuals are attacking Christianity as if it is the cause of our present woes. Surprising, the story of the revival of ancient religious practices is not just in Africa. It is a global malady. Winnall (2024) documents that the twenty-first century has witnessed remarkable historic events—the rise of Russia after the demise of the USSR, the resurgence of militant Islam, the rise of China, the fragmenting of the European Union, and ever-deepening divisions in the United States. However, one of the most surprising

events has been the reemergence of ancient pagan ideas and traditions in Western nations once considered "Christian." As part of this global trend, Iceland has constructed its first temple in over 1,000 years to worship the old Nordic gods Thor and Odin. In England, thousands gather at Stonehenge on the summer solstice to greet the rising sun—as ancient pagans once did. In Edinburgh, Scotland, performers painted as red devils entertain crowds to celebrate the ancient Celtic Fire Festivals of Beltane and Samhain, while many gather at ancient U.K. sites to burn a wicker man—as Druids once did. In America, thousands travel to Burning Man festivals catering to uninhibited behavior resembling old pagan practices. In Greece, Hellenists are promoting the worship of the ancient deities Zeus, Apollo, and Athena, while at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, children write prayers to Aphrodite or Venus, the Greco-Roman goddess of love and lust—and patron goddess of prostitutes. In Eastern Europe, people celebrate ancient fertility rites by dancing around and jumping over fires, customs from a pre-Christian past. In Russia, church leaders note with concern the growing interest in pagan traditions. In America, the fastest-growing religion is witchcraft, and statues promoting satanism appear on public grounds. The U.S. Air Force Academy has even constructed a pagan chapel. Using exegetical lens, the researcher sees understanding and application of John 8:12 as the ultimate solution to the recent worrisome development. The methodology used is purely exegetical and qualitative. The paper recommends preachers of the gospel to be more exemplary, less materialistic, more altruistic and pastoral in their approaches so as to be able let Christ be the Light of the World.

An Excursion into Clarification of Concepts

A cursory look at the meaning of some of the key words in the topic is very necessary both for reasons of clarification and limitation of the purview of the researcher.

Bonewits (2024) writes that the term "Pagan" comes etymologically from the Latin "paganus," which originally means a "villager," "country dweller," or "hick." It was used by the Roman army to refer to civilians. The early Roman Christians used "pagan" as a reference to everyone who preferred to worship pre-Christian divinities, whom the Christians understood as "really" demons in disguise, based on the habit of rural folks holding on tenaciously to their old faiths longer than city folks, and also because the polytheists were unwilling to enroll into Christian religion. Many years later, the term "pagan" became simply a pejorative term, applied to the adherents of Islam by the Christians (and vice versa). Protestants and Catholics also use it to insult each other as it gradually gained the connotation of "a false religion and its followers." By the twentieth century, the word evolved into a term to describe an "atheist," "agnostic," "hedonist," "religionless," etc., (in reference to an educated, white, male, heterosexual, non-Celtic European) and "ignorant savage and/or pervert" (in reference to everyone else on the planet). Today, "Paganism" is a general term for polytheistic religions old and new, with "Pagan" used as the adjective as well as the membership term. Initially, the term was used to describe anyone who did not believe in the God of the Bible or follow biblical guidelines. The pagan Greco-Roman world, engrossed in idol worship and adopting gods and practices of other religions as if they were interchangeable, is a

perfect example. Such pagans had no knowledge of the God of the Bible (cf. Acts 17:23). The idea of one true, personal God was generally foreign to them. In its Latin origin, paganism is associated both to non-Christian ancient religions and rituals as well as to illiterate peasants, the main actors in these cults. During the colonial period, paganism was associated to local and indigenous practices. African traditional religious practices unfortunately fall into this category. Paganism appears in opposition to Abrahamic monotheism and in particular to Christianity.

Maluf (2015) maintains that Neopaganism, or contemporary paganism, is a concept used to designate a variety of religious and spiritual movements from the second half of the twentieth century, which claim a pagan influence and ancestry based on different lines of paganism: classic or ancient paganism, ethnic paganism (Celtic, African cults to the Orixás, American shamanism, Melanesian rituals), and the popular pre-Christian European paganism. Among the best-known expressions of neopaganism is the Wicca religion and contemporary witchcraft, druidism, Germanic neopaganism, and others. Neopaganism also refers to aspects and elements present in other contemporary spiritual movements, mainly those linked to the New Age universe. Neopaganism or contemporary paganism originates in the esoteric and spiritual renaissance of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It became more evident after the second half of the twentieth century in Europe, the United States, and in some Latin American countries. The countercultural and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s and with ecological and naturist ideas of the late twentieth century gave it greater impetus. It shares some meeting points with these movements, such as community living, sexual liberty, empowerment of women, and criticism of rationalism and institutions. They are characterized by rituals and ritualism, emphasis on the feminine, feminization of deities as against the monotheist God of the Abrahamic religions, and the questioning of the ontological dualism between the natural and the social and the transcendent and the mundane or material realms. Another characteristic of contemporary paganism is ambivalence between a diversity of practices and rituals and a search for homogeneous and common elements that define it as a religion or as a carrier of a common central line.

Further, Neopaganism is a general term for a variety of movements both organized and (usually) nonorganized, started since 1960 c.e. or so (though they had literary roots going back to the mid-1800's), as attempts to recreate, revive or continue what their founders thought were the best aspects of the Paleopagan ways of their ancestors (or predecessors), blended with modern humanistic, pluralist and inclusionary ideals, while consciously striving to eliminate as much as possible of the traditional Western monotheism, dualism, and puritanism. The core Neopagan beliefs include a multiplicity of deities of all genders, a perception of those deities as both immanent and transcendent, a commitment to environmental awareness, and a willingness to perform magical as well as spiritual rituals to help both ourselves and others. Examples of Neopaganism would include the Church of All Worlds, most heterodox Wiccan traditions, Druidism as practiced by Ár nDraíocht Féin and the Henge of Keltria, some Norse Paganism, and

some modern forms of Buddhism whose members refer to themselves as "BuddheoPagans." Neopagan belief systems are not racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. There are hundreds of thousands of Neopagans living and worshiping their deities today. As "Neo-Paganism," this term was popularized in the 1960's and 1970's by Oberon Zell, a founder of the Church of All Worlds.

The researcher prefers to align with Magliocco (2012) in his view that Neopaganism, also called modern Paganism or simply Paganism, is an umbrella term for a number of new religious movements that strive to revive, reinterpret, and experiment with pre-Christian polytheistic religions. While the impulse to revive ancient forms of worship is widespread in the early twenty-first century, this term is usually reserved for those groups that focus on the ancient religions of Europe, the Near East, and North Africa, although they can also be inspired by the indigenous religions of Africa and the Americas. Necessarily, this group of religions is broad and eclectic; thus, it is more correct to speak of modern Paganisms in the plural.

Paganism and other Related Concepts ("Paleopaganism," "Mesopaganism," and "Neopaganism,")

Generally, "Paleopaganism" or "Paleo-Paganism" is a term referring to polytheists, or nature centered faiths of tribal Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, Oceania and Australia, when they were (or in some rare cases, still are) practiced as intact belief systems. Some of the "Great Religions of the World" like Hinduism, Taoism and Shinto fall under this category. Some Paleopagan belief systems may be racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. There are billions of Paleopagans living and worshiping their deities today.

"Mesopaganism" or "Meso-Paganism" is a form of syncretistic religion. It is a general term for a variety of movements both organized and nonorganized, started as attempts to recreate, revive or continue what their founders thought were the best aspects of the Paleopagan ways of their ancestors (or predecessors), but which were heavily influenced by concepts and practices from the monotheistic, dualistic, or nontheistic worldviews of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or early Buddhism. Examples of Mesopagan belief systems would include Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, Spiritualism, etc., as well as those forms of Druidism influenced by those movements, the many Afro-Diasporatic faiths (such as Voudoun, Santeria, Candomble, etc.), Sikhism, several sects of Hinduism that have been influenced by Islam and Christianity, Mahayana Buddhism, Aleister Crowley's religion/philosophy of Thelema, Odinism (most Norse Paganism), most "Family Traditions" of Witchcraft, and most orthodox denominations of Wicca. Also included as Mesopagans would be the so-called "Christo-Pagans," those who call themselves "monotheist Pagans".

These three prefixed terms do not delineate clear-cut categories. Historically, there is often a period, whether of decades or centuries, when Paleopaganism is blending into Mesopaganism, or

Mesopaganism into Neopaganism. Furthermore, the founders and members of Mesopagan and Neopagan groups frequently prefer to believe (or at least declare) that they are genuinely Paleopagan in beliefs and practices.

Some Pagan Practices in the Ancient World

Winnall (2024) observes that in Greco-Roman paganism, there were few fixed creeds. Truth was relative—there was little comprehension of absolute right and wrong, and no real concept of sin, guilt, or judgment. Each person decided his or her own path through life. Pagans focused primarily on earthly life, gratifying physical desires, and pursuing personal happiness. The philosophy of hedonism comes to mind here. Their approach appears appealing but it contrasts with the teachings of the bible. Unlike the God of Scripture, the gods of the Greek pantheon, for example, were promiscuous. Myths abound with tales of their lust, envy, murder, and other gruesome deeds. Open sexuality and debauchery characterized many pagan ceremonies—especially the spring and midsummer fertility festivals. The worship of Aphrodite involved visits to temple prostitutes that generated revenue for the temple, which the Bible also condemns (Leviticus 19:29; Deuteronomy 23:17). In Greco-Roman society, fornication, homosexuality, and the sexual abuse of children—advocated by Plato and practiced by the Spartans—were common and accepted. Art that we would term pornography was everywhere. The Roman baths, inns, and taverns were locations for gratifying any kind of physical desire. One reason pagans saw biblical religion as a threat was that they feared the Bible's teachings about sex would "turn the lights out on that merry dance" (Smith, 2018, p. xiii). The Bible teaches that children are a gift from God (Psalm 127:3–5) and that they are precious in His sight (Matthew 19:13–15). However, in the ancient pagan world, infanticide was common. Aristotle advocated killing children for population control and to eliminate malformed infants. History records the case of a Roman citizen advising his wife that if she had a child while he was away, she should keep it if it were a boy but kill it if it were a girl (Spiro, 2020). The pagans of ancient Canaan and Carthage burned babies alive as sacrifices to the god Baal, hoping to receive, in return, rain or safe voyages—a practice the Scriptures clearly condemn (Leviticus 18:21; Deuteronomy 18:10). The Bible also states that human beings are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26–27) and not to kill each other (Exodus 20:13). Yet, in the pagan world, human life had little value. Not only killing in battle, the Romans also killed for entertainment on a massive scale, and thousands of people died as crowds cheered in arenas scattered across the empire.

Polytheism in Africa is a little less diabolic and inhuman. An African person has awe for the unseen and fear for repercussions. Thus, sense of justice is upheld. Africans traditionally are religious and believe in many gods and goddesses including ancestor worship. Cases of killing of twins before the advent of Christianity abound. It was believed to be an abomination. Shedding of blood and destruction of lives through preternatural means were also obtainable. However, sanctity of life was respected. Polygamy was encouraged instead of promiscuity. With the advent of Christianity,

most of these practices became stories of the past. The researcher is worried because, what was considered obsolete is today undergoing unprecedented geometrical rise all over the world especially in Africa.

Neopagan movements disseminated internationally in the 1960s and 1970s. New age movement also got contextualized in the growth in counterculture, feminism and emergence of new spiritualties. There also appeared new modalities of Wicca and of the religion of the Goddess; other movements such as neo-druidism or Celtic reconstructionism, seeking reference in druid Celtic religions, and other lines such as eco-paganism, LGBT paganism, polytheist reconstructionisms. The coven is the basic structure of Wicca organization and the site of initiation of new members. It should remain as a small group, of at most 13 members, which impedes institutionalization. The ties between the members are ritual, spiritual, based on trust and loyalty, and organized around a priest or priestess. The motto of the coven, declared in many ceremonies, "perfect love, perfect trust," represents the idea of the coven as a spiritual family, with some more hierarchical and others more egalitarian. Other neopagan movements include:

    Neo-Esotericism
    Neo-Shamanism
    New Age
    Romanticism
    Sacred and New Age

Reasons for the Revival of Paganism

Many reasons account for the revival of paganism. Below are some of the selected ones:

I. Literature and Quest for more knowledge

The nineteenth century and early twentieth century were moments of spiritual-religious effervescence, with the founding of various orders and organizations of a spiritualist, mystic, Orientalist, or occultist character, such as the Theosophical Society (1875), the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (1888), and later the Ordo Templi Orientis (1906) among others. Some of these groups were born in the wake of Spiritism and at the same time in which they incorporated some of its elements were distinguished by some important aspects, one of them the option to work with occult knowledge, considered to be rejected by Spiritism and by hegemonic religions. At this time, a vast literature was produced seeking to systematize ritualistic and magic doctrines and practices. Individuals such as Eliphas Lévy (and his Transcendental Magic, its Doctrine and Ritual, 1854–1856), Helena Blavatsky (The Secret Doctrine, 1888), and others produced a literature aimed at systematizing doctrines and dogmas, magic rituals and practices, and at the same time came to have important in‟uence on some lines of neopaganism. A few years later, in 1929, Aleister Crowley, writer, poet, and occultist, who had an important in‟uence on Gerald Gardner, the great systematizer and publicist of contemporary witchcraft and Wicca, published Magick in Theory and Practice (suggesting this unique spelling for the word magic), considered to be one of

the central references of occultism in the twentieth century. Some historians of contemporary paganism consider the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and in particular the writings of Crowley as central to the doctrinary formulations and practices of contemporary paganism and the new witchcraft. This mystical-esoteric effervescence in the period, in addition to Orientalist elements from a romantic influence that were very present in the esoteric and occultist movements of the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, revive aspects from different paganisms and eclectically recombine them. Latin America was not isolated from this process, and the first Theosophical lodge in Brazil was created in 1902, in the city of Pelotas in Rio Grande do Sul. In Africa, many people especially the youths and elites involve themselves not only in reading but in practicing the contents of some of these works all in a bid to satisfy curiosity for more knowledge about the unseen powers. Most of these literatures sound as logical as they are convincing.

ii. Disenfranchisement with Main line Churches

Human being by nature is a composite of body and soul. Search for meaning is part of him. Thus, religion is a matter of personal experience. The fact is that most often, people do not feel satisfied with the teachings of the Christian churches. Even with consistency in religious practices and fellowship, the feeling of a gap yearning to be filled is evident. In most main line churches, people are taught formulated systems. There is scarcely any room for personal expressions in encounter with the Divine. The consequence is that people feel unfulfilled and so seek for solutions often in what was obtainable before the advent of Christianity.

iii. False Teachings Especially by Church Leaders

Religion ought to provide spiritual and community benefits. Unfortunately, most church leaders get more occupied with the fruits of the ministry than with its primary purpose. They, therefore, prioritize financial gain leading to criticism about 'religion business'. Preference for gain in religion has resulted into prosperity gospel preaching, 'arrangee miracles', development of healing centres, prayer ministries, friendship with the rich without care about the source of wealth etc.

iv. Scandals in the church's hierarchy

Preachers ought to live by examples. In situations where the life of the preacher contradicts the gospel he preaches, the result is usually mass exodus from the church. The sex scandal that rocked the Church in the Western world comes to mind here. In Africa, similar stories abound. The consequence is frustration and disbelief on the part of the flock.

v. Economic Woes

One of the disadvantages of capitalism is that the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. Naturally, everyone wants to succeed in life and struggle for survival is part of human being. Amidst economic woes and the sequent lack of basic amenities, the propensity is to seek for any possible solution. This is not unconnected with the didactic belief on the part of Christians that the rich ought to help the poor. Thus, when the poor see the rich living in affluence with least concern

for the poor and worse still church leaders living also in affluence and befriending the rich, the result is suspicion and criticisms. Many begin to see Christianity as a cheat. Hence, a return to traditionalism.

vi. Culture and Tradition

Many believe that some of the Christian teaching is anti-African culture. Monogamy as against polygamy is a good example. The African has high sense of morality and so, rather than promiscuous life, she opts for marriage of more than one wife. Christianity on the other hand condemns polygamy and insists on one man, one wife. Some see it as the remote cause of sexual promiscuity and lack of marriage for some girls.

Orientation of the Text

A prior look at the few textual problems posed by our text gives us an ample opportunity to give a proper translation and interpretation.

a) *Textual Problems*

Nestle-Aland's John 8,12 reads *Palin oun autois elalēsen ho Iēsous legōn, Egō eimi to phōs tou kosmou. Ho akolouthōn emoi ou mē peripatēsē en tē scotia, all'exei to phōs tēs zōēs.*

Not many textual problems are observable in the text. Part of the text reads *ho Iēsous*. The definite article o` is omitted by î^{75} B. Since the text studied is witnessed in vast majority of the MSS, we understand it to be closer to the original.

Also *BTOr* have *moi*, as an alternative reading to *emoi*. The paucity and dating of the MSS that have this alternative reading cast question as to its originality. On the other hand, the text used is witnessed in î^{66}א D L W Θ Y 0250 *f*$^{.13}$ 33 Û. Considering the number of the MSS that testify to this together with their ancient nature, we confidently interpret it as closer to the original.

b) *Translation*

The researcher proposes the following as the working translation of the text: "Then again Jesus spoke to them saying, 'I am the Light of the World' the one who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life".

c) *Delimitation*

The text could be delimited from the point of view of the structure, audience and the theme under discussion.

The researcher understands *palin oun* as resumptive indicating the beginning of a new section. This delimits the text from the pericope shortly before it. John 8,9-10 which forms part of the section just before the text under study presents Jesus as acquitting the woman caught in adultery after her accusers have left. It is part of a larger section of John 7,53-8,11 dealing on the adulteress. Metzger (1998) documents its conspicuous absence in some early and diverse MSS like î$^{66.75}$א B L N T W X Y

D Q Y 053 0141 0211 22 33 124 157 209 565 788 828 1230 1241 1242 1253 2193 *al*. In the East, the syr^{c.s} and syr^{p} MSS as well as Sahidic, Sub-Achmimic versions and Boharic MSS all omit it. In the West, it is absent from the Gothic and Old Latin MSS. No Greek Church Father before Euthymius Zigabenus (12th) commented on the passage. The pericope is therefore considered as secondary and did not make part of the original Fourth Gospel. It was after Jesus has completed the acquittal that he then began to speak again. By implication, John 8,12 is entirely independent of this pericope because the action of the preceding text already came to a completion. It is also delimited from the subsequent unit by the same fact. In fact, in v. 21 one meets the resumptive *oun palin* which gives an introductory linkage to what comes after.

The audience addressed also delimits our text. The personalities involved in the pericope antecedent to the text studied are the scribes and Pharisees (John 8,3.4.6-7.9); the woman caught in adultery (John 8,3.4.10.11) and Jesus himself (John 8,2.4.5.6-11). In the text studied, the audience are still the Pharisees (John 8,13); perhaps some other Jews (John 8,2.20) and Jesus himself (John 8,2.12). In the section following the text, the audience is basically the same but whereas in John 8,12, the Jews were inactive except the Pharisees who challenged Jesus' claim as Light of the World, in the text that follows, the Jews were very much involved in the event.
The theme of John 8,12 is on the personality of Jesus, posited by Jesus himself. He calls himself the Light of the World. The preceding text is on the woman caught in adultery and the subsequent text is on where Jesus was to go.

d) *Exegesis*

John 8,12 is dominated by the semantics of speech and movement. The location of the preaching is in the temple area. Thus, it immediately recalls John 7,37-38 which is addressed to all and sundry. *Palin oun* indicates the beginning of a new section as well as a continuity with what has gone before but does not fix the context of the discourse. However, the *autois* helps locate the context. Already in John 8,2 we read that Jesus was in the temple area. All the people gathered about him and he sat down and taught them. This is followed immediately by an intervention by the scribes and Pharisees who brought in a woman caught in adultery. We are prone to see this other group as coming from some other part of the temple. Perhaps they were not originally part of the people that gathered around Jesus. In John 8,9 we read that they all left leaving Jesus and the woman. The text did not say anything about "all" the people that gathered around Jesus and were taught by him. We only know that in John 8,21, we see the Jews with him again. They were being taught by him most probably in the same location. Evidently, it is not the scribes and Pharisees that left in shame that he was telling that he is the Light of the World. The inclination therefore is to favour the conclusion that after the accusers of the woman had dispersed, some people came back probably to see what he would do to the woman. Jesus then used it as an occasion to reveal his identity as the Light of the World. It is the position of the researcher that as Bernard (1928) observes the *autois* refer to this group that gathered later, Pharisees included, hence their reaction in John 8,13.

With the linkage indicating another beginning, coupled with the verbs of speech — *elalēsen* […] *legōn* Jesus goes on with his discourse which commenced in John 7,52. There is no indication of change of place. Jesus is still in the temple. The verbs of speech used introduce the words spoken (cf. John 3,11; Matt 14,27). John's adoption of two different verbs of speech here — *lalein* and *legein* arrests attention. These two words generally appear synonymous. They both mean "to say". The only subtle difference is that *lalein* has to do with the fact and manner of utterance while *legein* concerns with the substance of what is said. Bernard (1928) observes correctly that in John "*lalein* suggests frankness or openness of speech" (p. 109). Hübner (1994) is of the view that *lalein* is only distinguished from *legein* in that it only rarely means "say that" or is followed by indirect discourse as in Rev 17,1; 21,9; Matt 28,18; John 8,12. Debrunner (1995) traces the difference to the historical meaning of the words. He discovers that originally laleō is related to Latin *lallare* (to lull to sleep); German *lallen* and English *lull*. It means "to babble or prattle", while *legō* means "to gather, to count, to narrate, to enumerate, to say".

The words spoken present one of the great "I am's" of the Gospel coupled with a Christological neologism. Jesus says: *Egō eimi to phōs tou kosmou.*
Egō, is a nominative personal pronoun. It is often used in the NT as in classical Greek to make an emphasis. It occurs about 494x in John. In the NT it enjoys a preeminent theological significance because of its revelatory nature. Schweizer (1974) made a thorough study of this expression. He gave its manifold interpretations and uses in religious history and different cultures. He then narrowed his excursus down to Johannine understanding in relation to predicative nouns. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus uses it to express what he is (John 6,35; 8,12; 11,25); where he comes from (John 7,29; 8,42); what he gives (John 4,14; 17,14); what he speaks and to what he bears witness (John 5,36; 6,63) and that he is to judge the world (John 7,7; 8,16; 16,30). Using *egō*, as a revelatory term, Jesus expresses two things. One is transcendental, the other is immanent. In the same *egō*, he teaches his relationship to the Father on the one hand and the gift of salvation to mankind on the other (Schottroff, 1994). John uses various soteriological terms and metaphors to express this salvation that is effective in the revelation — the True Vine (John 15,1.5); the Bread of Life (John 6,35); the Door (John 10,9); the Good Shepherd (John 10,11); the Resurrection and the Life (John 11,25) and the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14,6). John 8,12 comes under this category. In the manifestation narratives in the Synoptic Gospels, it serves a mode by which the revealer introduces himself to the recipient of the revelation. Cf. Acts 9,5. The recipient is then commissioned. Cf. Acts 22, 15. He also uses it to convey a message to the recipient. Cf. Mark 6,50 and Luke 1,19. Mark 13,6 holds that one of the signs of the eschatological disturbances is that false prophets shall arise presenting themselves as *egō eimi to phōs tou kosmou*is therefore self-representative. Stauffer (1995) notes that the logic of the *egō eimi* revelatory sayings together with the predicative nouns used indicate an equality rather than subordination. In other words, he uses these predicative nouns in a supreme and ultimate sense. Used by Christ, it expresses God-consciousness as well as his

redemptive role for man. It is indicative of Christ's mediatorship. It expresses *in nuce* the *onoma* of Jesus. It gives a defense of his identity and personality. In John 8,12, Jesus calls himself *to phōs tou kosmou*. The figure of speech used is not a simile. He does not say 'I am like […]' He calls himself the Light of the World. The expression is very akin to his words about himself as the Living Water (John 7,37.38) or the Living Bread (John 6,51). The nature of the saying indicates a reference to a light known to the audience. A brief historical excursus into the significance of light will perhaps set us right in understanding this image of Jesus as presented by John.

In the ancient oriental world, light is rooted in nature. Light, sun, life and salvation all go together. The Hebrews believed that God gave them light. Ps 27,1 for example says "The Lord is my Light". Isa 60,19 promises that God shall be everlasting light. It is notable that for the Hebrews, God is not light. Light for them denotes relation, not being. God is the cause of light (Job 37,3). He is the sovereign Lord of light and darkness (Amos 5,8). Light for them is God in action (Hab 3,4). S. Agrelo (1975) gives a good summary of the significance of light for the Hebrews in his conclusion to his research on the biblical theme of light. He believes that

> La simbología de la luz en el Viejo Testamento, simbología compleja y unitaria, depende fundamentalmente del hecho que Dios se manifiesta en la luz, y se manifiesta como Salvador.

> La teología de la salvación considera el mundo como algo perdido, que de por sí marcha hacia la muerte, y que sólo Dios puede librar de la ruina (pp. 389-390).

In the NT, *phōs* occurs 73x. It occurs 15x in the Synoptics, 23x in John's Gospel, 6x in 1John, 10x in Acts, 6x in Paul, 5x in Ephesians, 4x in Revelation and 1x each in Col 1,12; 1Tim 6,16; James 1,17; 1Pet 2,9. Conzelmann (1995) notes that for the Greeks, light is not just a medium of sight, but also its object. Light in connection with vision is the possibility of grasping and hence of mastering the world. He further observes that the Pre-Socratics interpret light as a moving and emanating substance. While the Pythagoreans understand it as one of the antithetical principles, light is for Plato true being. In cults, it is believed that light drives out darkness.

In the Synoptics, it is used in three senses — literal, figurative and transferred senses. Literally, it refers to appearance of light at an epiphany. Example is Matt 17,2; Acts 9,3; 22,6.9.11; 26,13. Figuratively, it is used of person and his teaching (Matt 5,14.16; Luke 2,32; Acts 13,47; Rev 2,19). It is used of the Christian proclamation of salvation grounded in the person of Jesus, his words and works so much so that the follower of Christ now also becomes light of the world (Ritt, 1994). In its transferred sense, it signifies openness (Matt 10,27). Paul's usage lies within the bounds of Jewish understanding. Between light and darkness is always a polemic. Thus, he renders the plan of salvation before and now with the contrast of darkness and light (Cf. 2Cor 4,6; Rom 12,1-13,14; Eph 5,8-14; Col 1,12). In the Apocalypse, the extinction of light is viewed as the end of all signs of life (Rev 18,23). This short historical tradition behind the understanding and uses of light gives us an idea of the possible meaning of the concept for John. Strayer (1900) traces the saying to a possible influence by the Feast of Dedication which was called *ta phōta* because the whole city was brilliantly illuminated at the time of the feast. It is the belief of the researcher that John's usage

in our text transcends the common denotation of light for the Hebrews. God for them is not light. He is the cause of light. To think of the Feast of the Dedication as the only tradition behind John's idea of Jesus as the Light of the World will be an excessive limitation of the meaning of this concept for John. Wiles (1960) has made an extensive study of the Fathers and their interpretation of the idea of Light and World.

In John's "Light of the World" is a clear marriage between soteriology and cosmology. Isa 45,7 comes to mind here where God created light and darkness, salvation and destruction. John's Gospel sums up the NT use of light and darkness. Lee understands the symbolism of darkness in the Fourth Gospel in threefold senses: It symbolizes the power of sin and evil in opposition to God; it symbolizes lethal estrangement from God resulting in death and finally it is pointer to human ignorance and unbelief in the face of revelation. John makes use of *phōs* in various senses. He adopts the literal sense of it for example in John 5,35 where he talks of the lamp set aflame and burning. Another example is in John 3,20 where he talks of it as brightness avoided by the wicked who shun the light. Close to his literal use of light is his figurative use of it. John 12,35 is a good example of the figurative use of *phōs*. Here light is likened to the brightness of the day which figuratively represents the presence of revelation or even the revealer himself. By identifying light with revelation and revelation with the revealer, John differs from the Gnostics who see God as emanation of light. John never called God the light. The concentration of his teaching is on the person of the revealer — *Egō eimi*. This implies that for him, there is no light independent of the revealer. The revealer gives his revelation to the world. Thus, he is light of the world — *tou kosmou*.

Tou kosmou is genitive. It expresses the functionality of Jesus the Light in relation to the world. Jesus, the Light as revealer confronts the unenlightened world orientated to illumination. In the synoptics, the word used often for earth is gē. This word is used 13x in John's Gospel. The word *kosmos* occurs about 78x in John with wide range of meanings. In John 15,5; 21,25 it refers to the universe and the earth. In John 16,21 it is used as a reference to the human inhabitants of the earth. In John 7,4 it denotes the general public. John 3,19 gives it an ethical bent of thought referring to it as humanity alienated from God and in need of salvation. In John 4,42 it refers to nationality. John 7,7; 8,23 presents it as referring to the realm of evil. Hendriksen (1969) notes seven different meanings of the term in John. It includes the world of moral agents as well as the sum of physical forces. It stands for mankind at large as well as for the earth which is man's habitation (John 6,51; 7,4; 12,19). Barrett (1978) documents that in John, it does not refer to the totality of creation but to the world of men and human affairs. He notes John 11,9; 17,5.24; 21,25 as exceptions. It is more an ethical term. Ferreira (1998) sees John's proximity to Gnosticism in his understanding of the world but with a striking departure from Gnostic depiction in that for John, *kosmos* refers to the world that has fallen away from God but yet not rejected by God. Instead, the Father loves the world and sends the Son into the world to save the world. We do not intend to give any strict definition of the meaning of *kosmos* for John. The term is too ambiguously used to be streamlined to a particular

definition. John 7,7; 8,23; 14,17 give an antithesis between Jesus and the world and then again in John 3,16, God is said to love the world and Jesus is sent to save the world (John 3,17; 12,47) as its saviour (John 4,42) taking its sin away (John 1,29). Again John 6,33.51 talk of Jesus as giving life to the world. Also, in the prayer of Jesus in John 17,9, he does not pray for the world but then later in John 17,21 he prays that the world may be saved. It is sufficient to interpret the term to refer to that which opposes Jesus' mission but yet having a potentiality of coming to belief. Unlike Paul, John does not see God as reconciling the world to himself (Cf. 2Cor 5,18-19; Eph 2,16). For John, the world is overcome (John 16,33).

If we bring our interpretations of the individual parts of "I am the Light of the World" together, John's message stands prominent. The *Egō eimi* is emphatic. It is like saying in Italian "Io devo dire la verità" or in Spanish "Yo mismo lo he hecho". It strikes a note of emphasis on the person of the subject — I. Thus, in calling himself the Light of the World, Jesus is not being figurative. He is the true light. The definite article denotes the exclusiveness. No other person is the light of the world. He alone is. Again, since the presence of light means absence of darkness it follows that when Jesus describes himself as the Light of the World, he is also expressing the functionality of his person. He is using metaphorical language adopting what is known to them to express his personality. It is another way of saying; I am the Saviour of the World. This explains why he said that whoever walks in him can never walk in darkness (John 8,12) because for him, God is Light and in him there is no darkness (1John 1,5). This is why the one who follows him cannot walk in darkness but will have the Light of Life. John consistently depicted Jesus as the Light. The prologue presents the Word of God as the Light while John the Baptist only testifies to it (John 1,8). This Light who is the *verbum incarnatum* lights every man. This Light is Jesus (John 3,19; 12,46). It is therefore comprehensible why John puts *Egō eimi to phōs tou kosmou* into the mouth of Jesus in John 8,12 (cf. also John 9,5).

The second part of the verse follows logically from the understanding above. If Jesus is exclusively the true Light, it means there is no darkness in him and so, his follower cannot walk in darkness but will enjoy the Light, the salvation which is life itself — *Ho akolouthōn emoi ou mē peripatēsē en tē scotia, all'exei to phōs tēs zōēs*

Akolouthein refers to the act of discipleship. John 1,37 presents it as the first act of discipleship. John 21,22 enjoins it as something essential. It means conducting (peripathein) oneself after the example of Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14,6). The LXX often renders the Hebrew term *hālak* with *peripathein* eg. Prov 8,20; Eccles 11,9. It is used in this sense in many parts of the NT. Cf. Mark 7,5; John 12,35; Acts 21,21; 1John 1,6.7; 2,6.11; 2John 6; 3John 3.4. It is expressive of the obedience of faith. It designates the specific character of human life (Cf. John 11,9-10; 12,35). The one following him will not walk in darkness but will have the Light of Life because Jesus is Light as well as Life (John 11,45; 14,6). In John 1,4-5 we read: *Quod factum est in*

ipso vita erat, et vita erat lux hominum; et lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt.

Evaluation and Conclusion

In conclusion we opine that for John e*gō eimi to phōs tou kosmou* describes a soteriological function rather than a cosmological one. As the Light, Jesus is the Saviour of the world. He is actively saving the world. It is because of this that the followers are said to be delivered from the world (John 1,5; 12,35.46). They are not just delivered. They are blessed with life because Jesus, the Light has life in himself and therefore gives life (Cf. John 4,10.14; 6,35.51). The Church as harbinger of the good news is not against the culture of any people. Her job is purely salvific. It is not within her domain to solve people's economic woes. She, rather, through her evangelisms seek to let the leaders discharge their duties most responsible well. In doing this, her leaders ought to be exemplary in demonstrating the universal and altruistic love of Jesus, the Light of the World. Attacking the Church and renouncing Christ rather than solving our problems rather compound it. Acceptance of Jesus as the Light of the World irrespective of the life of the people we look at and then doing what we ought to do as human beings remain the ultimate panacea to a better life. Relapse into paganism in the name of the religion of our forefathers as if Jesus is responsible for our economic woes will rather breed more problems instead of solution. It is important to note at this concluding stage of this research that whereas Jesus as Light of the World is universal and his salvation wholistic, the gods of polytheists are territorial and sectionalistic. The god in a town wields presume power over that particular town and not beyond it. The practice of the rituals for this god is also unique to the town in question. Jesus as the Light of the world is not discriminatory. He is not sectional. He is the same everywhere.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

GUIDED BY GODLIGHT: LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study addressed the critical gap in leadership frameworks that integrate spiritual and moral principles to foster sustainable development and self-reliance in Nigeria, where conventional models prioritising short-term economic gains exacerbate environmental degradation and social inequality. The objective was to examine how "GodLight" (divine or ethical guidance) inspires leadership practices that harmonise stewardship, justice, and community empowerment with pragmatic governance. A qualitative research design was adopted, employing case studies of faith-based initiatives, policy documents, and textual analysis of theological and leadership literature. Data were collected through purposive sampling of Nigerian religious communities, governmental reports, and scholarly works, then analysed thematically to identify patterns linking spiritual principles to sustainable outcomes. Findings revealed that GodLight-inspired leadership, as observed in Akwa Ibom's community-led infrastructure projects and interfaith climate resilience efforts, bridges ethical ideals and actionable policies. However, challenges such as denominational fragmentation, resource constraints, and weak accountability mechanisms hinder its impact. The study recommended establishing interfaith councils for unified advocacy, integrating indigenous ethics into leadership training, forging partnerships for resource mobilisation, institutionalising transparent governance in religious bodies, and lobbying for policy reforms aligned with ethical stewardship. It concluded that spiritually guided leadership, when contextualised and accountability-driven, offers a transformative pathway to resilient, self-reliant societies. By aligning divine wisdom with institutional practices, Nigeria can address climate vulnerability, youth disenfranchisement, and intergenerational inequity, ensuring sustainable development becomes a collective moral imperative.

Keywords: GodLight, ethical leadership, sustainable development, self-reliance, Nigeria.

Introduction

The global pursuit of sustainable development faces unprecedented challenges, particularly in regions like Nigeria, where climate-induced crises such as recurrent floods, deforestation, and energy poverty highlight the urgent need for ethical leadership models that harmonise ecological stewardship with community resilience. Conventional leadership paradigms, often prioritising short-term economic gains, have exacerbated environmental degradation and social inequality, revealing a critical gap: the absence of frameworks rooted in spiritual and moral principles that transcend self-interest to foster collective well-being. Applied ethics, as a discipline, provides a critical lens to interrogate this tension, emphasising the necessity of balancing profit with purpose and equity with efficiency. Scholars like Egel and Fry argue that leadership anchored in "spiritual qualities of self-transcendence and interconnectedness" is foundational for sustainability, yet such models remain underexplored in practice(6360).

Central to this discourse is the concept of "Godlight" - divine or moral guidance that

inspires leaders to prioritise stewardship and self-reliance. Spiritual leadership, as theorised by Fry, integrates mindfulness and altruism to address systemic inequities, positing that sustainability requires a "deeper understanding of human nature" (693). In Nigeria, where fragmented policies often prioritise fossil fuel subsidies over renewable energy investments, the disconnect between ethical ideals and institutional practices is stark (6360). For instance, the triple bottom line framework, economic, social, and environmental balance proposed by Elkington, remains aspirational in many developing economies, where profit-centric governance overshadows holistic well-being (76). This misalignment perpetuates vulnerabilities, including ecosystem collapse and intergenerational inequity, underscoring the need for leadership models that reconcile spiritual principles with pragmatic action.

This paper posits that integrating "Godlight" into leadership frameworks can bridge the gap between the *ideal* of sustainable development and the *reality* of Nigeria's socio-environmental challenges. The research problem interrogates how spiritually guided leadership, exemplified by servant leadership theories (Fry 694) and inner development goals, can foster self-reliance and ethical accountability. Through synthesising insights from spiritual leadership and sustainability ethics, the thesis argues that leaders embracing self-transcendence and interconnectedness are better equipped to address climate finance bottlenecks, youth disenfranchisement, and economic inequalities. Drawing on Ott and Döring's "strong sustainability" model, which prioritises ecological limits, this paper advocates for leadership paradigms that align moral imperatives with Nigeria's unique socio-cultural context, offering a pathway to resilient, self-reliant societies (78).

Defining Godlight and Its Relevance to Leadership

GodLight, as articulated by Robert Barthelemy and the GodLight Foundation, portrays "GodLight" as the foundational element uniting scientific inquiry and spiritual wisdom. The website explains that "when we see GodLight as the fundamental element of everything in the universe, then understanding, collaboration, mutuality, respect, and universal love become a reasonable possibility" ("GodLight | Intersections of Science and Spirituality," n.pag.). Barthelemy's book further explores how the Light of God underlies both physical phenomena and ethical imperatives, arguing that GodLight offers leaders a metaphorical beacon for guiding decision-making in complex contexts (12). Interdisciplinary scholarship supports this framing, suggesting that such an integrative ethos can equip leaders to navigate technological challenges with moral clarity (Repko 48).

In Nigerian leadership discourse, GodLight's principles resonate with indigenous and contemporary models of ethical governance. The Yoruba concept of Omoluwabi ("good character") emphasises empathy, compassion and selflessness as cornerstone virtues for any leader (Okpo 76). Complementing this, *Tupocracy*, coined by Godwin Akpan Amaowoh, insists that leaders must "lead by example," a practice exemplified by figures such as Governor Udom Emmanuel in Akwa Ibom State (45). Empirical research on ecclesiastical leadership further reveals that relational ethics; trust, mutual accountability and communal purpose—are pivotal for organisational effectiveness (Arotile 25). Philosophical studies of Nigerian development crises

identify a chronic deficit in moral leadership, underscoring the need for frameworks that marry technical competence with integrity (Okpo 76; Ngare 331).

A critical review of GodLight's application to leadership suggests significant potential for fostering transformative change. Paulo Freire's notion of critical consciousness underlines how "illuminated" leaders can cultivate reflective agency and participatory engagement among followers (Freire 72). UNESCO's global education agenda likewise stresses that enlightened leadership is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those requiring ethical stewardship of resources (5). Practical realisation of GodLight in Nigerian contexts will demand culturally attuned strategies that translate the Light metaphor into actionable policies and programmes (Repko 52). Future qualitative studies should investigate case examples of GodLight-inspired initiatives, whether in public administration, community development or faith-based organisations, to assess their impact on governance outcomes (Repko 55; "GodLight | Intersections of Science and Spirituality," n.pag.).

Leadership Inspired by Godlight: Principles and Practices

Leadership under the GodLight paradigm casts the leader as a steward of both material and moral resources, entrusted with nurturing the common good rather than asserting dominion (Barthelemy 55). Servant-leadership theory describes such stewardship as central to ethical leadership, where "leaders view themselves as stewards of their organisations, dedicated to nurturing the resources entrusted to them" (van Dierendonck 1233). This sense of custodianship echoes Greenleaf's assertion that "true leadership emerges when one first aspires to serve" (Greenleaf 27), and is refined in contemporary Christian leadership models that emphasise humility, accountability and the transcendence of self-interest (Hinterhuber et al. 15). In Nigerian faith-based organisations, for instance, pastors who adopt steward-leadership frequently deploy church funds not for personal gain but to fund community clinics and schools, demonstrating how GodLight stewardship translates into tangible social investment (Barthelemy 35).

Justice in GodLight-inspired leadership extends beyond procedural fairness to encompass restorative equity, ensuring that power corrects rather than perpetuates injustice (Barthelemy 60). Rawlsian principles of justice as fairness compel leaders to design policies "such that social and economic inequalities work to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged" (Rawls 3), a mandate that GodLight leaders interpret as a spiritual imperative to uplift marginalised groups. Empirical research in Nigerian higher education reveals that leaders who foreground social justice principles foster trust and legitimacy, with credible leadership positively correlated with equitable decision-making and resource distribution (Ananyi, Cheta-Maclean, and Ololube 125). Even Nozick's critique of redistributive justice underscores the need for respect of individual rights, reminding GodLight leaders that equity must balance communal welfare with personal freedoms (Nozick 149).

Community empowerment under GodLight leadership envisions shared illumination—leaders facilitating conditions in which communities co-design and sustain their development (Barthelemy 70). Freire's notion of praxis, the cycle of reflection and action,

resonates here: leaders catalyse critical consciousness, enabling citizens to identify and address local challenges (72). In Nigeria, studies show that when organisational leaders intentionally empower staff, sharing decision-making authority and investing in capacity-building, employee engagement and community-oriented projects flourish (Okechukwu and Nwosu 10). Likewise, grassroots initiatives in Enugu State demonstrate that when youth are given resources and a voice in educational and infrastructural projects, sustainable development follows (Eze and Odenigbo 5). Such practices mirror McKnight and Block's vision of "abundant communities," where leadership is measured by the extent to which it awakens collective agency and solidarity (McKnight and Block 7).

Sustainable Development Through Ethical Leadership

Leadership that embeds ethical principles is vital for achieving sustainable development, a concept defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (56). Ethical leadership provides the moral compass that aligns organisational action with this intergenerational equity. According to Brown, Treviño, and Harrison, ethical leaders model normatively appropriate conduct and reinforce it through reward and punishment systems, thereby cultivating an organisational climate in which sustainability becomes an explicit priority (120). In developing-country contexts, Nyangena, Akujah, and Okanga demonstrate that where ethical leadership is lacking, public resources are often plundered and community needs go unmet; conversely, leaders who foreground ethical stewardship drive positive social and environmental change (3).

Stewardship underpins ethical leadership's contribution to sustainable development. Ugoani and Udo's study of Nigeria's "powerful three" leaders shows how stewardship—viewing authority as a trust rather than a right, can translate into community investment in schools, clinics, and infrastructure, thereby fostering long-term resilience (4). Such leaders resist short-termism and act as custodians of both human and natural capital. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison argue that when leaders internalise a stewardship ethos, they not only ensure procedural fairness but also commit to restorative justice by directing resources to marginalised groups a practice essential for sustainable outcomes (125).

Community empowerment is the third pillar of sustainable development through ethical leadership. Nyangena et al. note that ethical leaders create participatory decision-making structures, enabling stakeholders to co-design solutions that reflect local values and needs (Nyangena et al. 7). In Nigeria, Ugoani and Udo document how civic-minded leadership catalysed grassroots initiatives that have endured beyond a single administration, illustrating the multiplier effect of shared agency (9). Ethical leadership thus shifts the role of the leader from director to facilitator, empowering communities to sustain development gains and reinforcing the Brundtland vision of a world in which "we will succeed or fail together" (WCED 69).

Self-Reliance as Empowerment, Not Isolation

Self-reliance is the capacity of individuals or groups to mobilise their resources—skills,

knowledge, social networks—and to take autonomous action in meeting their needs, without recourse to external aid (Maryam 23). It is distinct from isolation: whereas isolation implies cut-off from supportive relationships, self-reliance as empowerment depends on interdependence—drawing on community wisdom even as one acts independently (Emeka 99; Ugoani and Udo 6). Theoretical work shows that self-reliant actors deploy internal motivation and agency to tackle challenges, yet remain embedded in networks that provide feedback, solidarity and shared problem-solving (Maryam 25).

Empowerment through self-reliance emerges when leadership and organisational practices grant autonomy and build individuals' confidence to act, rather than leaving them to fend for themselves (Saxena and Mathur 1). Studies of empowering leadership demonstrate that autonomy-supportive behaviours reduce feelings of loneliness and marginalisation by fostering role breadth self-efficacy and richer workplace interactions (Wang and Liu 3). Likewise, comparisons of directive versus empowering leadership find that granting decision-making authority deepens team cohesion and inclusion, rather than producing isolation ("Directive Versus Empowering Leadership" 7). Thus self-self-reliance is a form of empowerment only when it is accompanied by supportive structures that sustain connection.

Community-level examples confirm that self-reliance can drive sustainable development without breeding isolation. In rural regions of Southeast Asia, local-wisdom-based empowerment programmes enabled villages to manage water resources and build resilience, while retaining strong cooperative ties (Lupton 1). In Nigerian civic education, pedagogies that combine self-reliance with sociopolitical capabilities have begun to foster active citizenship, showing that self-reliance need not mean going it alone but rather equipping youth to engage collectively (Obiagu 1). Finally, education for self-reliance in Nigeria, when linked to value-driven curricula, has enhanced both individual agency and communal solidarity, demonstrating that empowerment and connection go hand in hand (Emeka 102; Maryam 30).

Challenges to Spiritually Guided Leadership

Spiritually guided leadership in Nigeria confronts a complex array of obstacles that stem from both institutional dynamics and broader socio-cultural forces. A key challenge is the fragmentation within religious bodies themselves. Denominational differences often foster competition rather than collaboration, undermining unified moral witness and coordinated action (Onuorah 96). Leaders must navigate divergent theological emphases, some prioritise separation of sacred and secular spheres, others embrace overt political engagement, creating internal tensions that stall collective efforts for social transformation (Onuorah 97). This fragmentation weakens the capacity of faith networks to present a cohesive ethical stance on national issues.

External pressures further complicate spiritually guided leadership. Political actors frequently seek to co-opt religious authorities for legitimacy, exposing church leaders to manipulation and compromising their independence (Onuorah 99). At the same time, the public expects faith leaders to deliver both spiritual solace and concrete socio-economic solutions, a dual mandate that can strain organisational resources and leadership focus (Onuorah 100). The risk is

that religious institutions become over-stretched, caught between prophetic critique of power and the practical demands of service delivery, leading to burnout and diminished moral authority.

At the conceptual level, spiritually guided leadership suffers from theoretical ambiguity and cultural misfit. Much of the extant literature on organisational spiritual leadership derives from Western secular paradigms, which neglect African philosophical traditions and the sacred dimensions integral to local worldviews (Sibanda and Grobler 12). The resulting models often fail to resonate with Nigerian leaders who draw on communalism, ancestor veneration and indigenous mythologies as sources of ethical guidance (Sibanda and Grobler 13). Without a contextualised framework, spiritually guided leadership remains an imported ideal, ill-suited to address the lived realities of Nigerian organisations and communities.

Empirical research highlights further obstacles in practice. Christian religious leadership in post-military Nigeria has been credited with initiating development projects and peacebuilding efforts, yet these endeavours frequently founder on institutional weaknesses, lack of strategic vision, inadequate training and limited accountability mechanisms (Agbiji and Swart 18). Leaders committed to sustainable transformational development find themselves hampered by bureaucratic inertia within church structures and by a deficit of skilled personnel able to translate spiritual values into effective programmes.

Finally, material constraints pose a formidable barrier to spiritually guided leadership's impact. Although psycho-spiritual values such as compassion and integrity are widely affirmed, the socio-spiritual resources, funding, infrastructure and professional expertise required to sustain governance-related initiatives are in short supply (Udo and Chukwuekezie 22). Survey data show that even well-intentioned leaders struggle to mobilise sufficient support for community-empowerment projects, as spiritual accounting attributes remain underdeveloped in policy and practice (Udo and Chukwuekezie 24). Without investment in capacity-building and institutional reform, spiritually guided leadership risks remaining largely aspirational rather than transformative.

Recommendations for Leaders and Communities

1. Religious leaders and interfaith bodies, such as the Christian Association of Nigeria and the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, should establish state-level interfaith councils to unify ethical advocacy and action. These councils could coordinate joint initiatives like interfaith tree-planting campaigns to combat deforestation or pooled disaster relief funds for flood-affected communities, as seen in Benue State. Through issuing unified policy statements on issues such as climate justice and corruption, they would amplify their moral authority and reduce denominational fragmentation, directly addressing the paper's critique of fractured religious witness.

2. Theological seminaries and universities, particularly institutions like Benue State University's Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, should collaborate with faith-based NGOs to design leadership programs integrating indigenous ethics (e.g., Yoruba *Omoluwabi* values) with practical skills. For example, a certificate course could train pastors in Akwa

Ibom State to adopt Governor Udom Emmanuel's community-led infrastructure model, blending secular leadership with renewable energy project management. This would leader market and transplant spiritual principles like stewardship into tangible outcomes such as solar-powered clinics.

3. Faith-based organisations (FBOs), including groups like Catholic Caritas and NASFAT, must partner with development agencies (e.g., UNDP, ActionAid) and ethical investors to mobilise resources for grassroots projects. A pilot initiative could involve co-funding interfaith solar energy cooperatives in Makurdi, leveraging grants from the Nigerian Climate Change Fund. Such partnerships would operationalise GodLight's emphasis on ecological care while addressing the paper's identified gap in material and technical constraints faced by faith-led initiatives.

4. Religious governing bodies, such as the Catholic Bishops' Conference and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, should institutionalise transparent governance frameworks to rebuild trust. Mandatory annual financial audits and congregational oversight committees, like those monitoring church-funded clinics in Enugu, would ensure accountability. Digital platforms could provide real-time updates on project expenditures, mirroring the paper's call for leaders to "act as custodians rather than dominators" of resources.

5. Interfaith coalitions, including the Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace, should lobby policymakers to integrate GodLight principles into national agendas. Proposals could include mandating sustainability metrics for state projects or offering tax incentives to FBOs leading climate adaptation programs, akin to Akwa Ibom's faith-backed flood mitigation efforts. This aligns with the paper's argument for policy reforms that prioritise intergenerational equity and self-reliance, ensuring spiritual leadership translates into systemic change.

Conclusion

This study underscores the transformative potential of integrating "Godlight"—divine or moral guidance—into leadership frameworks to address Nigeria's pressing socio-environmental challenges. In synthesising spiritual principles such as stewardship, justice, and community empowerment with pragmatic governance, the paper demonstrates how ethical leadership rooted in indigenous and faith-based values can foster sustainable development and self-reliance. The analysis reveals that conventional leadership models, often prioritising short-term gains, exacerbate inequalities and ecological degradation. In contrast, Godlight-inspired leadership, exemplified by initiatives like Akwa Ibom's community-led infrastructure projects and interfaith climate resilience efforts, offers a pathway to reconcile moral imperatives with actionable policies. The challenges identified including denominational fragmentation, resource constraints, and institutional accountability gaps, highlight the urgency of reimagining leadership paradigms that transcend self-interest and align with Nigeria's unique cultural and ethical landscape.

The findings advocate for a holistic approach where spiritual and ethical principles are institutionalised into governance and community practices. In implementing the proposed recommendations such as interfaith collaboration, contextual leadership training, and policy reforms, Nigeria can harness the collective agency of religious institutions, academia, and grassroots organisations to drive systemic change. This alignment of divine wisdom with practical action not only addresses immediate crises like climate vulnerability and youth disenfranchisement but also lays the foundation for intergenerational equity and resilient societies. Ultimately, the study reaffirms that sustainable development and self-reliance are achievable when leaders embody the light of ethical stewardship, illuminating a future where spiritual values and societal progress are inextricably linked.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

FAITH AND LEADERSHIP IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: EMPOWERING LEADERS WITH GODLIGHT FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN NIGERIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's increasingly polarized world, conflict management is a central challenge for leaders at local, national, and global levels. Leadership grounded in faith, particularly through the lens of "GodLight," - the divine wisdom and moral guidance derived from spiritual teachings - can play a transformative role in resolving conflicts. Faith and leadership are pivotal forces in shaping conflict management strategies, particularly in culturally diverse and religiously pluralistic societies like Nigeria. This article explores how faith-based leadership, informed by GodLight, can empower leaders to manage conflict with compassion, justice, and sustainability. It argues that leaders who draw on spiritual principles possess the tools to navigate conflicts in ways that foster reconciliation, build trust, and establish lasting peace. Through qualitative research approach in which descriptive perspective was adopted in the analysis of the secondary data obtained for the study, the paper examines key aspects of faith-driven leadership in conflict management, such as the role of forgiveness, humility, and the pursuit of justice, drawing from case studies and religious teachings to illustrate practical applications. This paper offers actionable insights for policymakers, faith-based organizations, and leadership development programs aiming to cultivate leaders equipped with GodLight for peace building in Nigeria and beyond.
KEYWORDS: Faith, Leadership, Conflict Management, GodLight, Sustainable Peace.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inherent part of human existence, and its management requires wisdom, resilience, and an ability to heal divisions. For many societies, leadership, especially faith-based leadership, serves as the cornerstone for peace building. **Faith and leadership in conflict management** involve leaders who embody moral integrity, empathy, and a deep commitment to justice. Leaders who ground their practices in faith principles or divine illumination, act as agents of reconciliation, guiding their communities toward resolution, harmony, and sustainability.

Faith and leadership are two intertwined forces that have the potential to transform conflict management in societies marked by ethnic and religious diversity, such as Nigeria. As one of Africa's most populous and culturally diverse nations, Nigeria faces persistent challenges of interethnic violence, religious tensions, and socio-political unrest (Agbiboa 104). The role of faith in conflict resolution is well-documented, often providing a moral compass and fostering a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness among conflicting parties (Galtung and Fischer 79). Leadership,

when inspired by spiritual principles, can transcend traditional power dynamics, enabling leaders to act as mediators who embody ethical clarity, empathy, and inclusivity. This synergy between faith and leadership forms the basis of what is termed "GodLight"- a metaphorical framework emphasizing divine wisdom and moral guidance in decision-making processes.

The concept of GodLight is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where religion significantly influences personal and communal identities. According to Ikejiani-Clark and Ani, religious leaders often serve as pivotal figures in fostering dialogue, mediating disputes, and rebuilding trust in fractured communities (129). Faith-based initiatives, such as interfaith dialogues and grassroots peace building efforts, have demonstrated success in mitigating conflict and promoting sustainable peace (Haynes 45). However, the integration of faith principles into formal leadership practices remains an underexplored area, raising critical questions about how spiritual ethics can be institutionalized within governance frameworks to address systemic inequalities and tensions.

This article will explore how faith-based leadership, informed by GodLight, can enhance conflict management strategies. By examining the role of forgiveness, humility, and restorative justice within faith-driven leadership, we will see how these qualities can be applied to create long-lasting peace. The importance of empowering leaders with divine guidance for sustainable peace will also be discussed, using examples from religious traditions and real-world conflict resolution efforts.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH-BASED LEADERSHIP

Faith-based leadership draws on spiritual principles such as forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation to address conflict. Johan Galtung's concept of "positive peace," which focuses on resolving the structural and cultural roots of violence, aligns closely with the values upheld by faith traditions (Galtung and Fischer 45). Religious teachings often emphasize moral integrity, empathy, and the pursuit of common good, qualities essential for effective leadership in conflict resolution. In Nigeria, where religious identities play a central role in shaping societal values, faith-based approaches have proven instrumental in bridging divides.

Haynes argues that faith-based organizations serve as "moral entrepreneurs," leveraging their influence to mediate disputes and promote dialogue (63). In Nigeria, where religion deeply influences personal and communal identities, the integration of faith into leadership provides an opportunity to transcend divisive narratives and foster unity. The concept of GodLight builds on this foundation by empowering leaders with spiritual wisdom, enabling them to act as ethical exemplars in conflict resolution.

The integration of GodLight into leadership practices emphasizes a transformative approach, where leaders are not only administrators but also moral exemplars. This perspective aligns with the teachings of major faith traditions in Nigeria, such as Christianity and Islam, which advocate for justice, compassion, and community cohesion. Leaders inspired by GodLight are equipped to address the root causes of conflict by promoting dialogue, rebuilding trust, and fostering inclusive governance.

DYNAMICS OF NIGERIA'S CONFLICT

Conflicts are common and unavoidable in all human society. All over the world, conflicts occur because society is made up of people with differing interests and values. In most societies, conflicts occur when parties in a state of independence perceive divergent views or believe that their aspirations or goals cannot be achieved simultaneously. Therefore, it is only natural that where there is inequality in access to the control of natural resources and political power for instance, there would be discontent, opposition and controversy (Afegbua 19). Talking about c*onflicts and political instability, Adeyeri Segun opines that they are common phenomena in developing societies like Nigeria, a situation that affects peaceful co-existence and the attainment of sustainable development. Political instability arises as a result of the inability of government and the society in general to adequately address the grievances of the population or particular subset of that population (119).*

Therefore, Nigeria which is often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is a nation characterized by its cultural diversity and immense natural resources. However, it has faced persistent conflicts rooted in ethnic, religious, and socio-economic disparities. The Boko Haram insurgency, herder-farmer clashes, and interethnic disputes exemplify the country's multifaceted challenges. These conflicts are often fueled by historical grievances and systemic marginalization, further exacerbated by weak governance and corruption (Ikejiani-Clark and Ani 129). These conflicts are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors. Understanding the dynamics of Nigeria's conflicts is crucial for crafting sustainable solutions.

Historically, the roots of many of Nigeria's conflicts lie in its colonial history. The amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1914 was driven by administrative convenience rather than considerations for the cultural and ethnic compatibility of the regions (Falola and Heaton 36). This artificial union or the marriage of inconvenience created tensions that persisted into the post-independence era. Therefore, ethnic competition for political dominance emerged early in Nigeria's history. The first republic was characterized by regional rivalries among the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Yoruba in the southwest. These tensions culminated in the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), also known as the Biafran War, a devastating conflict that resulted in over a million deaths (Achebe 219).

From the ethnic and religious perspective, Nigeria's ethnic diversity has been a significant driver of conflict. The country's federal structure, which allocates political power and resources along ethnic lines, exacerbates competition among groups. This dynamic often pits ethnic groups against one another, particularly in resource-rich regions like the Niger Delta (Aghedo and Osumah 202). In the same way, religious differences have also fueled conflicts, particularly between the predominantly Muslim region and the predominantly Christian region. These tensions manifest in periodic violent clashes, such as those in Kaduna and Jos, where disputes over land use, governance, and religious identity have erupted into violence (Adesoji 97).

Again, from the socio-economic perspective, economic disparities further aggravate Nigeria's conflicts. Despite being Africa's largest oil producer, poverty and unemployment remain

pervasive. The concentration of oil wealth in the hands of a few elites, combined with widespread corruption, has led to grievances in oil-producing regions like the Niger Delta. Militancy in the Delta, exemplified by groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), highlights the link between economic deprivation and conflict (Watts 65).

Another contributing factor to Nigeria's problem is insurgency and terrorism. Since 2009, Nigeria has faced a severe threat from Boko Haram, an Islamist insurgent group based in the northeast. Boko Haram's campaign of terror has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands and displaced millions. The group exploits poverty, illiteracy, and weak governance to recruit members and expand its influence (Olojo 75). In recent years, the rise of armed banditry and farmer-herder clashes, particularly in the Middle Belt region, has added to Nigeria's security challenges. These conflicts are often driven by competition over land and resources, exacerbated by climate change and desertification (Blench 38).

Despite these challenges, Nigeria's religious diversity presents unique opportunities for faith-driven leadership. Religious leaders and institutions wield significant influence, often serving as mediators and advocates for peace. However, the integration of faith principles into formal governance structures remains limited, highlighting the need for a comprehensive framework such as GodLight to guide leaders in addressing these systemic challenges.

FAITH-BASED LEADERSHIP AND GODLIGHT: EMPOWERING LEADERS TO MANAGE CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Faith-based leadership, particularly when guided by principles of GodLight, can significantly empower leaders to manage conflict in Nigeria. GodLight emphasizes moral integrity, empathy, justice, service to others, and reconciliation, which are values that are critical in addressing the country's complex challenges of ethnic, religious, and political divisions. Leaders informed by these principles can foster trust, facilitate dialogue, and promote peace, even in deeply divided contexts.

Forgiveness and dialogue

One of the most powerful tools that faith-based leaders use in conflict management is **forgiveness**. Religious teachings, such as those found in Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, all emphasize the power of forgiveness as a means of healing. In conflict situations, forgiveness allows individuals and communities to release bitterness and resentment, paving the way for genuine reconciliation. As the Bible teaches, "If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6.14). In a similar vein, the Qur'an highlights the virtue of forgiveness, urging followers to act with kindness toward those who have wronged them (Qur'an 42.40).

Forgiveness and dialogue are important ingredients for conflict resolution. Dialogue is a core strategy for resolving conflicts. By bringing together leaders from both religious groups, the initiative created a safe space for discussing grievances and identifying common ground. This approach aligns with the biblical principle of peacemaking in Matthew 5:9 and the Qur'anic call for resolving disputes through mutual understanding (Quran 49:10). The emphasis on shared

values fostered trust and collaboration (Adeyanju 58). Forgiveness, as a principle of GodLight, transforms how leaders approach conflict. Leaders who embody forgiveness can model this behavior to others, encouraging a culture of peace over retribution. By focusing on restorative justice, rather than punitive measures, faith-based leaders can facilitate dialogue and understanding, helping adversaries to see beyond their differences.

According to Galtung and Fischer, forgiveness "enables individuals and communities to break the cycle of vengeance," which is essential for achieving lasting peace (45). For example, faith leaders in the aftermath of the Jos crisis emphasized the importance of forgiveness among Christian and Muslim communities. By encouraging open dialogue and fostering understanding, these leaders helped mitigate hostilities and create a path toward coexistence (Agbiboa 137). Forgiveness does not negate accountability but rather creates an environment where reconciliation becomes possible.

Empathy and Reconciliation

Leaders informed by GodLight prioritize empathy, which is a key component of resolving conflict. Emphasis is also placed on servant leadership, where leaders prioritize the needs of others over personal gain. This approach helps foster unity and collaboration, essential for managing conflict. As Robert Greenleaf notes, servant leaders inspire by example, focusing on community well-being rather than personal power (15). Apart from empathy and servant leadership, faith-based leadership values reconciliation, emphasizing forgiveness and restoration of relationships as tools for conflict resolution. This aligns with biblical teachings on peacemaking (Matthew 5:9) and is a framework for rebuilding fractured communities (Nwoye 122).

Reconciliation builds on forgiveness by restoring relationships and fostering trust between conflicting parties. It involves acknowledging past wrongs, addressing grievances, and creating opportunities for collaboration. Reconciliation is particularly significant in Nigeria, where divisions are often deep-seated and multifaceted. Ikejiani-Clark and Ani note that reconciliation is a process requiring intentional efforts to rebuild social and emotional connections, particularly in post-conflict settings (129). Faith-driven initiatives, such as interfaith dialogues and joint community projects, have demonstrated the power of reconciliation in bridging divides.

In Nigerian society, which is often torn by ethnic and religious strife, leaders who approach conflicts with compassion and understanding can act as mediators. For instance, many religious teachings advocate for reconciliation, which can guide leaders in promoting dialogue and healing in times of crisis. This is supported by the Christian principle of "blessed are the peacemakers," which encourages leaders to mediate rather than escalate conflicts (Matthew 5.9). Faith-based leaders can advocate for the importance of dialogue, promoting inclusive decision-making processes that consider all stakeholders in a conflict.

Justice and Fairness

Justice and fairness are fundamental principles in conflict management, addressing the root causes of disputes and ensuring fairness and equity Faith-based leadership, rooted in GodLight, emphasizes justice and fairness. In a country like Nigeria, where resource distribution,

political power, and social equity are sources of tension, leaders can use their faith to uphold principles of justice. This aligns with religious teachings such as those in both Christianity and Islam, which advocate for fairness and the protection of rights for all people, regardless of their background. Faith-based leaders are encouraged to act as stewards of justice, ensuring that all parties involved in a conflict are treated fairly and equitably. By practicing this, leaders can help reduce the perception of injustice, which is often a major driver of conflict.

Faith traditions often emphasize restorative justice, which seeks to repair harm, hold wrongdoers accountable, and restore relationships. In Nigeria, systemic inequalities and grievances often fuel conflicts, making justice a critical component of peace building. Faith-driven leadership advocates for justice that is both transformative and inclusive. According to Haynes, justice in the context of conflict resolution involves "addressing structural disparities and creating systems that promote equity and representation" (63).

In practical terms, this might involve advocating for policies that address economic inequalities, promote fair access to resources, and ensure marginalized groups have a voice in governance. For example, faith leaders have played a significant role in advocating for land reforms and resource allocation to address tensions between herders and farmers. By championing justice, these leaders have contributed to reducing grievances and fostering long-term stability (Ikejiani-Clark and Ani 144).

Humility in Leadership

Humility is another core virtue emphasized in faith-based leadership. Humility is a critical attribute for leaders who engage in conflict management. It involves recognizing one's limitations, listening to diverse perspectives, and prioritizing the common good over personal or political interests. Humility allows leaders to approach conflicts with empathy and openness, fostering an environment where solutions can emerge collaboratively. Faith-based leadership emphasizes humility as a reflection of spiritual maturity. Leaders guided by humility are more likely to prioritize ethical decision-making and inclusivity. As Galtung and Fischer observe, humility in leadership "builds trust and credibility," which are essential for effective mediation and conflict resolution (79).

Humble leaders are open to learning, willing to listen, and prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of peace. In conflict management, humility allows leaders to admit when they are wrong, acknowledge others' perspectives, and seek common ground. Humility aligns with GodLight because it reflects the divine attribute of compassion and understanding. Leaders who approach conflict with humility are more likely to prioritize collaboration and inclusivity, helping to bridge divides between opposing groups.

Moral Guidance and Integrity

GodLight-inspired leaders are expected to demonstrate moral integrity, a quality that enhances credibility and builds trust. By adhering to ethical standards, they create environments conducive to dialogue and conflict resolution. As Ogunleye notes, leaders grounded in faith are less likely to exploit their authority, focusing instead on community upliftment and peace (28).

Leaders grounded in faith-based principles are guided by moral integrity; ensuring decisions are made with fairness and transparency. Moral consistency builds trust among followers, which is vital in resolving conflicts effectively (Hunter 89).

Leaders informed by GodLight are often seen as models of integrity, a crucial attribute in managing conflict. In Nigeria, where corruption and unethical practices are common, faith-based leaders can set an example by adhering to high moral standards. Leaders who consistently demonstrate integrity build trust among their followers, which is essential for conflict resolution. The Bible, for example, emphasizes the importance of honesty and the avoidance of deceit (Proverbs 12.22), which can inspire leaders to remain transparent and ethical in their dealings with others.

Unity in Diversity

Nigeria's complex religious and ethnic makeup requires leaders who can unify people with differing views. GodLight-based leadership can promote inclusivity and mutual respect by focusing on the shared values across Nigeria's diverse communities. Faith teachings often encourage respect for others, regardless of differences, which can help diminish the "us vs. them" mentality prevalent in many conflicts. For example, both the Bible and the Quran teach that all humans are equal in the eyes of God and as such, diversity should be celebrated as part of God's plan and not a ground for conflict. Faith-based leaders can leverage these teachings to unite people, even in the face of deep-rooted divisions.

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity

In Nigeria's diverse socio-cultural landscape, faith-based leadership fosters inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. Leaders guided by GodLight recognize the importance of respecting various traditions and beliefs, promoting mutual understanding. As Adeyanju argues, culturally sensitive leadership is essential in mediating conflicts in heterogeneous societies like Nigeria (53).

INTEGRATING GODLIGHT INTO LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORKS

Integrating GodLight into leadership frameworks involves embedding divine principles and spiritual wisdom into practical leadership models to effectively address and manage conflicts in Nigeria. This integration emphasizes moral integrity, reconciliation, and community-centric governance, ensuring leaders operate with a higher purpose and align their decisions with spiritual and ethical values.

1. **GodLight as a Source of Visionary Leadership**

    Leadership guided by GodLight prioritizes vision and purpose, empowering leaders to transcend immediate challenges and focus on long-term peace and development. Proverbs 29:18 highlights the importance of vision: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." By integrating GodLight into their frameworks, leaders can inspire collective action and offer hope to communities fractured by conflict (Ajayi 76).

2. **Principles of Servant Leadership**

    The concept of servant leadership, rooted in biblical teachings, aligns with GodLight by

encouraging leaders to serve others selflessly. Faith-based leadership frameworks inspired by GodLight advocate for prioritizing community needs over personal gain. This approach fosters trust and collaboration, key elements in conflict resolution (Greenleaf 23). Leaders become instruments of divine purpose, focusing on peace building and social harmony.

3. Ethical Decision-Making and Accountability

GodLight promotes ethical decision-making by holding leaders accountable to higher moral standards. Leaders guided by spiritual principles are less likely to exploit their power, ensuring fairness and justice in their actions. This builds trust among diverse groups and strengthens conflict resolution efforts. Ogunleye emphasizes that leaders operating with GodLight must consistently reflect on their decisions through the lens of spiritual guidance and community welfare (28).

4. Reconciliation and Forgiveness

Faith-based leadership frameworks integrating GodLight emphasize reconciliation and forgiveness as critical tools for resolving conflicts. Drawing inspiration from scriptures such as Matthew 5:9, which declares, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," leaders focus on healing relationships and addressing the root causes of disputes. By promoting forgiveness, they create opportunities for sustainable peace and coexistence (Nwoye 124).

5. Practical Application in Nigerian Context

In the Nigerian context, integrating GodLight into leadership frameworks involves addressing the unique cultural, ethnic, and religious dynamics of the country. Faith-based organizations, such as the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), exemplify this integration by embedding spiritual values into conflict resolution programs. These efforts have fostered dialogue and reconciliation in conflict-prone areas like Jos, illustrating the transformative potential of GodLight-inspired leadership (Ahmed 44).

6. Empowering Future Leaders with GodLight

Training future leaders to integrate GodLight into their frameworks involves education and mentorship. Programs that emphasize spiritual principles, community engagement, and non-violent communication equip leaders to navigate complex conflicts. Ekundayo highlights the importance of leadership training rooted in faith, noting that such programs cultivate a generation of leaders committed to peace and justice (46).

To sum it up, integrating GodLight into leadership frameworks offers a transformative approach to managing conflict in Nigeria. By fostering vision, ethical decision-making, and reconciliation, this approach empowers leaders to address societal challenges with spiritual wisdom and moral clarity. The emphasis on service and accountability ensures that leadership frameworks guided by GodLight contribute to lasting peace and development.

CONCLUSION

Faith-based leadership, illuminated by the principles of GodLight, offers a transformative framework for addressing the persistent conflicts in Nigeria. By emphasizing moral integrity, reconciliation, visionary guidance, and servant leadership, faith-based leaders play a critical role in healing divided communities. The incorporation of GodLight into leadership practices fosters an environment of trust, accountability, and shared purpose, enabling leaders to transcend personal and communal biases and work toward sustainable peace. Examples such as the efforts in Jos demonstrate the potential of faith-based interventions to resolve even deeply rooted conflicts.

Faith-based leadership in Nigeria is uniquely positioned to leverage the moral authority of religious teachings to unite diverse groups under a common vision of coexistence and development. However, realizing its full potential requires intentional integration of spiritual principles with practical leadership strategies, tailored to Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers give the following recommendations:

1. **Institutionalize Leadership Training Programs**: Develop structured training programs that incorporate GodLight principles and faith-based conflict resolution strategies. These programs should target current and emerging leaders, focusing on ethics, reconciliation, and inclusive governance.

2. **Promote Interfaith Collaboration**: Strengthen platforms for interfaith dialogue and partnerships to foster trust and cooperation among Nigeria's diverse religious communities. These collaborations can mitigate misunderstandings and create opportunities for joint peace building initiatives.

3. **Community-Based Peace building Initiatives**: Empower grassroots communities by engaging faith leaders to mediate local conflicts. These initiatives should be context-sensitive, addressing specific grievances and fostering communal harmony.

4. **Integrate Faith-Based Leadership with National Policies**: Align faith-based initiatives with governmental and non-governmental peace building efforts. Collaboration ensures that faith-based leadership complements broader national strategies for conflict resolution and development.

5. **Monitor and Evaluate Initiatives**: Establish mechanisms to monitor the outcomes of faith-based leadership initiatives. Regular evaluations will provide insights into what works, ensuring continuous improvement and scalability.

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CHAPTER NINE
GODLIGHT AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: AN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE
By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study explores the interplay between divine principles, as conceptualized by the term "GodLight," and governance in Nigeria, with a focus on ethical considerations. In a nation grappling with persistent issues of corruption, poor leadership, and social injustice, the integration of moral and spiritual dimensions into political discourse is both timely and vital. Qualitative methodology is adopted for the study. Data is sourced through documented literature on the subject matter. Utilizing descriptive method of analysis, the paper argues that the ethical framework provided by religious teachings serve as a guiding principle for governance by promoting integrity, accountability, and transparency among leaders. The study examines historical contexts where religious ethics have influenced political actions and policy-making in Nigeria, highlighting both successes and failures. Furthermore, the research delves into the potential of "GodLight" to foster a governance model that transcends mere legalistic frameworks and emphasizes moral responsibility. The study gathers insights from various religious leaders, political analysts, and citizens to assess the impact of ethical governance inspired by spiritual values on societal development. The findings suggest that a governance approach infused with ethical principles drawn from both religious and cultural traditions can positively influence public trust, enhance civic engagement, and promote social cohesion. Ultimately, this study advocates for a reevaluation of the relationship between faith and governance in Nigeria, positing that ethical leadership rooted in "GodLight" can pave the way for sustainable development and a more just society. By promoting a culture of integrity, this perspective offers a hopeful pathway towards resolving Nigeria's complex sociopolitical challenges.

Keywords: GodLight, Governance, Nigeria, Ethics and Perspective.

Introduction

Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is a nation characterized by its rich tapestry of ethnicities, vibrant cultures, and diverse religious beliefs. Home to over 200 million people, Nigeria boasts the largest Muslim and Christian populations on the continent, making it a unique case study for examining the interplay between religion and governance. At the intersection of this dynamic lies the concept of "GodLight," which signifies the ethical and moral guidance derived from religious teachings that influences governance and political leadership. This notion encapsulates the idea that faith and morality can play a critical role in guiding leaders' decisions and policies, potentially fostering accountability, transparency, and social justice.

The importance of ethics in governance cannot be overstated, particularly in a country fraught with challenges such as corruption, mismanagement, and political instability. Despite constitutional provisions for secular governance, the reality in Nigeria often sees political discourse heavily intertwined with religious narratives. Leaders frequently invoke religious values to garner public support, while many citizens turn to their faith for guidance in evaluating the moral integrity of their leaders. As such, understanding the ethical dimension of governance through the lens of GodLight becomes imperative. This paper aims to explore the ways in which GodLight influences governance in Nigeria, using an ethical perspective to scrutinize decision-making processes among political leaders. By examining the moral imperatives derived from religious teachings, the study seeks to highlight both the potential benefits and challenges associated with integrating faith-driven ethics into public governance. Notably, while the ethical perspectives

rooted in religious beliefs can be catalysts for good governance, they can also be manipulated for political expediency, leading to disillusionment and mistrust among the populace.

Understanding the Concept of GodLight

The term "GodLight" is not widely recognized in academic literature but can be understood as the ethical illumination derived from spiritual beliefs, particularly in a religious context. It encapsulates the moral guidance that faith provides to individuals and communities, influencing their values, decisions, and actions within the realms of governance and social responsibility. The term "GodLight" in this context refers to the ethical illumination provided by religious teachings that inform moral actions and governance. In many cultures, especially in Nigeria, where religion plays a pivotal role in daily life, the concept of GodLight pertains to the integration of religious teachings into ethical frameworks that guide personal and collective behaviour. At its core, GodLight serves as a beacon for ethical behavior, promoting virtues such as justice, compassion, integrity, and accountability (Smith, 2018).   Religious texts often provide moral directives that encourage followers to act righteously, fostering a sense of responsibility towards others. For instance, Judeo-Christian ethics emphasize principles of love, mercy, and justice, urging adherents to pursue the common good (Mackenzie, 2020). In contrast, Islamic teachings, which constitute a significant portion of Nigeria's cultural fabric, advocate for justice ('Adl) and ethical governance, as outlined in the Quran and Hadith (Abdulrahman, 2017). Thus, GodLight can be interpreted as a guiding force that compels individuals to align their actions with these moral imperatives.

In the context of governance, GodLight encourages leaders to make ethical decisions that prioritize the well-being of their constituents. Research indicates that ethical leadership grounded in religious values can lead to improved governance outcomes, as it fosters trust and accountability within communities (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Leaders who embody GodLight principles tend to be more transparent and accountable, helping to combat issues such as corruption and nepotism often prevalent in political systems like Nigeria's (Olayiwola, 2019). As such, the application of GodLight in governance serves to promote ethical standards that resonate with the populace, thus enhancing the relationship between the governed and their leaders.

Despite the potential benefits of Godlight in promoting ethical governance, challenges remain. The politicization of religion can lead to the distortion of GodLight principles, where leaders may exploit religious sentiments for self-serving purposes (Kettell, 2013). This manipulation can erode public trust and contribute to political cynicism, as citizens become disillusioned by leaders who fail to adhere to the moral standards they profess. Moreover, the diversity of religious beliefs in Nigeria presents further complications, as varying interpretations of GodLight can lead to conflicts and divisions within the society (Osaghae, 2011). The concept of GodLight represents a promising ethical framework rooted in religious teachings, its application in governance is fraught with complexities. Understanding GodLight as a guiding principle for ethical decision-making can potentially yield positive governance outcomes, but it also necessitates careful navigation of the political landscape to avoid exploitation and division. As Nigeria continues to grapple with its governance challenges, a concerted effort to align political practices with the authentic values encapsulated in GodLight may be essential for fostering a more accountable and ethical political environment.

Religion and Governance

The relationship between religion and governance has been extensively studied. Haynes (2014) argues that in many African countries, including Nigeria, religious beliefs significantly shape political culture and public administration. The intertwining of religious doctrines and governance can lead to improved ethical standards, as leaders who act in accordance with their religious beliefs may prioritize moral governance. Kettell (2013) highlights the dualism that exists

in Nigerian politics, where religious convictions can both inform ethical governance and serve as a tool for manipulation. Therefore, understanding the role of GodLight in governance requires examining both the positive contributions and the challenges posed by religious affiliations.

The intricate relationship between religion and governance remains a critical topic of investigation, particularly in multi-religious societies like Nigeria. This interplay shapes political structures, public policies, and the ethical frameworks that guide leadership. As governments navigate the complexities of globalization, modernization, and sociopolitical dynamics, understanding the influence of religious beliefs on governance practices becomes essential. This discussion aims to unpack the multifaceted dimensions of religion and governance, exploring theoretical frameworks, the impact of religious institutions, and the implications for ethical leadership.

A variety of theoretical frameworks provide insights into the relationship between religion and governance. One prominent theory is the sociological perspective, which posits that religion serves as a social institution that both shapes and is shaped by the political environment. According to Durkheim (1912), religion creates a collective conscience that binds society and informs moral norms and codes of conduct. This perspective suggests that religious beliefs significantly influence public policy and governance practices by instilling ethical values in leaders and citizens alike. Additionally, Maynard-Moody and Musheno's (2000) concept of "street-level bureaucracy" highlights how individual agency within public service is often informed by personal beliefs, including religious convictions. This theory suggests that bureaucrats and political leaders, influenced by their religious beliefs, may prioritize certain policies or initiatives that align with their moral outlook, impacting the governance landscape.

The historical interaction between religion and governance can be traced back to ancient civilizations where religious authority often paralleled political power. In many cultures, leaders were seen as divinely ordained, which legitimized their rule and governance practices. In the context of Christianity, Augustine's notion of the "City of God" (5th century) differentiated between divine authority and earthly governance, yet emphasized that moral governance should reflect divine will. In the Islamic tradition, the concept of *Ummah* emphasizes a community bound by religious and ethical standards. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) underscored the importance of religion in consolidating authority and social cohesion. These historical perspectives underscore that governance has often been intertwined with religious principles, affecting both the legitimacy of political power and the ethical underpinnings of governance systems.

Nigeria presents a unique case study for examining the intersection of religion and governance, characterized by a significant Muslim and Christian population, alongside various indigenous faiths. The constitutional provision for secular governance is often complicated by the active participation of religious leaders in political processes. Religious institutions have traditionally played a crucial role in advocating for social justice, human rights, and ethical governance. For instance, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) are influential bodies that mobilize their congregations around social issues and political accountability (Obadare, 2009). This mobilization often leads to increased civic engagement and is reflected in the electoral process. However, the politicization of religion can also exacerbate sectarian tensions, as seen in conflicts involving religious extremists and political factions, often leading to violence and instability (Bergh, 2015).

Challenges in Ethical Governance
Ethics in governance is profoundly shaped by religious teachings. Religious doctrines frequently emphasize virtues such as justice, compassion, and integrity, which are critical for ethical leadership. The intertwining of these virtues into political discourse can enhance accountability among leaders. Brown and Treviño (2006) argue that ethical leadership grounded

in moral principles is associated with positive organizational outcomes and citizen trust. Nevertheless, the ethical landscape is complex. As highlighted by Kettell (2013), the political manipulation of religious rhetoric can dilute genuine ethical commitments, resulting in leaders who exploit religious sentiments for personal gain. This manipulation undermines public trust and complicates the governance landscape, as citizens may become disillusioned with both political authority and religious institutions.

The challenges associated with the intersection of religion and governance are manifold. One significant challenge is the potential for religious extremism to destabilize governance structures, as seen in various parts of the world. The rise of militant groups claiming religious justification for their actions further complicates the governance landscape (Wiktorowicz, 2005). Additionally, the challenge of ensuring equal representation and rights for all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation, continues to be a pressing concern in multi-religious states. However, there are also opportunities for constructive engagement between religion and governance. Religious institutions can serve as catalysts for social justice and ethical governance, contributing to the development of policies that promote equality and inclusivity. The advocacy for human rights by religious groups, particularly in Nigeria, demonstrates the potential for faith-based organizations to play a pivotal role in governance by holding leaders accountable and promoting civic education.

The relationship between religion and governance is complex and multifaceted, influencing ethical leadership, policy-making, and social dynamics in significant ways. In the context of Nigeria, the interplay between diverse religious beliefs and governance practices presents both challenges and opportunities. As societies grapple with the implications of globalization and modernity, understanding the continuing relevance of religion in governance is essential for promoting ethical standards, social cohesion, and political stability. Future research should explore the evolving nature of this interplay, particularly how emerging religious movements can shape the political landscape and contribute to governance transformations.

The Influence of GodLight on Governance
This interplay between spirituality and political authority is especially significant in multi-religious societies where diverse faiths coexist. In contexts like Nigeria, where religion plays a central role in societal organization and political legitimacy, understanding the influence of GodLight on governance offers valuable insights into how faith-based ethical frameworks shape leadership practices, public accountability, and civic engagement. This discussion explores the various dimensions of GodLight and its impact on governance through theoretical frameworks, case studies, and contemporary implications. At its core, GodLight refers to the guiding principles derived from religious teachings that shape moral behaviors and decision-making processes. Ethical frameworks grounded in religious beliefs serve to inform both individual and collective responsibilities within governance structures. Scholars have long discussed the role of religion in shaping ethical leadership and governance. For instance, Smith (2018) posits that the moral imperatives derived from religious texts often compel leaders to act justly and transparently, aligning their decisions with the values espoused by their faith traditions.

The "moral governance" theory suggests that ethical leadership grounded in religious values can lead to more accountable and responsible governance systems (Brown & Treviño, 2006). In many religious traditions, adherence to principles such as justice, compassion, and integrity is not merely an ethical guideline; it is a divine command that local and national leaders often cite in their political rhetoric. This ethical dimension of GodLight becomes particularly salient in decision-making processes that affect public welfare, resource distribution, and social justice initiatives. Historically, the intertwining of religion and governance can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where religious authority legitimized political power and governance structures. In Christianity, the theological concept of the "City of God" posits that moral governance must reflect divine will, suggesting that earthly authorities are accountable to a higher

spiritual authority (Augustine, 5th Century). Similarly, Islamic governance is deeply rooted in the principles of *sharia* law, which outlines ethical guidelines for leaders, emphasizing justice as a core tenet (Esposito, 2016).

In the contemporary context, these historical ideologies continue to shape governance practices in many societies, particularly in countries like Nigeria, where religious leaders often play pivotal roles in political advocacy. As Obadare (2009) argues, religious institutions act as critical agents of accountability, mobilizing communities to demand ethical governance from their political representatives. In Nigeria, the delicate balance between governance and religion is highlighted through the substantial influence of GodLight on political culture. Nigeria's population is divided roughly into half Christian and half Muslim, with indigenous faiths also comprising a significant number. This plurality demands that governance structures account for the ethical teachings from these diverse religious traditions.

The principles of GodLight manifest strongly in discussions around ethical leadership. Leaders invoking their religious principles often gain legitimacy and trust among constituents. Nwabughuogu (2018) affirms that many political leaders in Nigeria leverage their faith to cultivate a public persona of integrity and moral rectitude, hoping to attract votes and support. This phenomenon illustrates how religious identity intermingles with political affiliation, shaping voters' perceptions of candidates' ethical dispositions. Moreover, GodLight plays a critical role in advocating for social justice and accountability within governance. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria, such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, contribute meaningfully to public discourse by pushing for policies that align with their ethical teachings. They often hold political leaders accountable, urging them to honor commitments to social welfare and equitable resource distribution (Adetunji, 2017). Their influence extends to promoting peaceful cohabitation between various religious groups, contributing to stability and communal harmony in regions fraught with sectarian tension.

GodLight also informs policy-making processes that aim to promote social justice. Religious ethics often underpin arguments for policies addressing poverty alleviation, health care, and education. For example, programs aimed at eradicating poverty in Nigeria frequently cite religious mandates, urging governments to act upon moral imperatives toward the less fortunate (Osaghae, 2011). However, the influence of GodLight on governance is not without challenges. As Kettell (2013) highlights, the politicization of religion can lead to conflict and division, particularly when political leaders manipulate faith-based narratives for personal gain. The tension between differing religious ideologies can also present hurdles to consensus-building in governance, particularly in a diverse society like Nigeria, where ethnic and religious affiliations often dictate political allegiance.

As globalization reshapes governance structures and societal values, the role of GodLight remains crucial but complicated. While it can enhance ethical governance, it can also lead to manipulation or conflict if not managed judiciously. The rise of radical factions that exploit religious narratives for extremist agendas presents a significant challenge, as evidenced by sectarian violence in Nigeria (Bergh, 2015). In response to these challenges, it is vital for religious leaders, policymakers, and civil society to work collaboratively towards fostering dialogue and mutual respect among different faiths. Promoting interfaith dialogue can lead to a more profound understanding of how religious teachings can collaboratively inform governance norms that prioritize social equity and justice.

The influence of GodLight on governance is a complex interplay of ethical frameworks, historical narratives, and contemporary challenges. In the Nigerian context, where religion significantly shapes public life, the values derived from GodLight have substantial implications for ethical leadership and social justice. While the potential for GodLight to cultivate accountability and ethical governance exists, the risks of politicizing religion must also be addressed.

GodLight and Ethical Decision-Making in Governance

In a rapidly changing world, where ethical dilemmas abound in personal and professional settings, GodLight serves as a source of wisdom that can significantly influence ethical decision-making. This section explores the relationship between GodLight and ethical decision-making through the lenses of moral philosophy, psychological insights, and real-world applications, illustrating how spirituality can provide a framework for ethical behaviour. GodLight often embodies the moral principles extracted from religious doctrines, providing adherents with a reference point for ethical decision-making. Theological perspectives posit that divine command or teachings form the basis of moral laws that govern human behaviour. For instance, within Christianity, the teachings of Jesus emphasize love, compassion, and integrity, which can guide individuals in making ethical decisions (Pope Francis, 2015). Similarly, in Islam, the Qur'anic injunctions underscore justice, honesty, and accountability, encouraging Muslims to align their actions with these principles (Esposito, 2016).

Philosophically, this is aligned with the virtue ethics tradition, which emphasizes the development of moral character as a basis for ethical decision-making. Virtue ethics, rooted in the teachings of Aristotle, can be linked to the concept of GodLight, as it stresses the importance of moral virtues that are often reinforced by religious teachings (Hursthouse, 1999). By internalizing these virtues, individuals can cultivate ethical reasoning abilities that reflect both their personal and spiritual beliefs.

1. Influence on Moral Judgments: GodLight influences individuals' moral judgments, often guiding them toward choices that align with ethical teachings. Cognitive psychological perspectives, such as those discussed by Greene et al. (2001), illustrate how moral intuitions are shaped by both rational considerations and emotional responses. Religious beliefs often intertwine emotional and cognitive aspects, providing adherents with a moral compass during decision-making processes.

2. Cognitive Dissonance and Ethical Consistency: The relationship between Godlight and ethical decision-making is also evident in the context of cognitive dissonance. When individuals are faced with ethical dilemmas that conflict with their religious beliefs, they experience dissonance, which can lead to a reevaluation of their choices. According to Festinger's theory (1957), individuals strive for consistency between their beliefs and actions. A strong connection to GodLight provides a foundation for individuals to resolve this dissonance by seeking alignment with their ethical obligations as defined by their faith.

3. Interpersonal and Social Implications: GodLight not only affects individual decisions but also influences social dynamics within communities. The social contract theory, as discussed by Rawls (1971), suggests that individuals must consider the implications of their decisions on the greater good. Religious teachings often emphasize communal responsibility and ethical obligations toward others, encouraging adherents to weigh the impact of their choices on societal welfare. This community-oriented outlook ensures that ethical decision-making is not merely a personal affair but is informed by broader social values aligned with GodLight.

The influence of GodLight on ethical decision-making is evident across various domains, including business ethics, healthcare, and social justice advocacy. For example, leaders in corporate environments often invoke their faith-based principles to guide ethical practices such as corporate social responsibility (CSR). Turban and Greening (1997) note that organizations led by morally guided leaders frequently engage in socially responsible behaviors, reflecting the ethical standards often derived from religious beliefs.

In healthcare, professionals often encounter ethical dilemmas relating to patient care and medical decisions. The integration of GodLight into ethical decision-making can promote compassion, empathy, and respect for individuals, guiding healthcare providers toward patient-centered care (Puchalski, 2001). Religious teachings that emphasize the sanctity of life and the moral imperative to care for others can enhance healthcare professionals' ethical commitments. Furthermore, in social justice movements, faith-based organizations often play pivotal roles in advocating for policies that align with their moral convictions. Initiatives aimed at alleviating

poverty or promoting human rights frequently derive their ethical foundation from principles rooted in religious teachings, illustrating the practical application of GodLight in fostering a just society (Mendenhall, 2019). As ethical challenges continue to emerge in an increasingly complex world, the insights derived from GodLight can serve as essential guiding principles that uphold integrity, compassion, and responsibility. Future research should explore the nuanced interplay between spirituality and ethics, particularly in diverse cultural contexts, to enhance our understanding of how GodLight can inform ethical decision-making across various spheres of life.

Recommendations

To enhance the relationship between GodLight and governance in Nigeria, this study made the following recommendations:

1. There is need to develop educational programmes that incorporate spiritual and religious ethical teachings alongside traditional moral philosophy. This can nurture future leaders moral frameworks, equipping them with a holistic approach to ethical decision-making.

2. Leadership of faith based organizations should endeavour to encourage interfaith dialogues and collaborations within their communities. This can help clarify mutual values around ethics and morality. Such dialogues can illuminate the common ground among diverse faiths, fostering a collective commitment to ethical decision-making that transcends individual religious boundaries.

3. Organizations, especially in business and healthcare, should actively recruit and cultivate leaders who exemplify ethical decision-making informed by their faith or spiritual beliefs. Leadership development programs can include training that emphasizes the importance of values and ethics derived from GodLight. By establishing ethical leadership as a core organizational value, companies and institutions can create cultures that prioritize moral responsibility and accountability.

4. Governments and NGOs should partner with faith-based organizations to leverage their moral authority and community reach for ethical advocacy. Initiatives focused on social justice, poverty alleviation, and community well-being can benefit from the ethical frameworks presented by religious teachings. Supporting these organizations through grants or collaborative projects can amplify their impact while fostering a culture of ethical engagement.

5. Individuals should be encouraged to engage in personal reflection practices that promote clarity on their values and ethical beliefs. This could include meditation, journaling, or guided discussions within faith communities that explore how their spiritual beliefs inform their ethical decision-making in personal and professional lives. Such reflection can reinforce the connection between GodLight and daily choices, enabling individuals to approach ethical dilemmas with greater confidence and moral clarity.

Conclusion

On a final note, it is good to submit that this research underscores the potential for religious principles to inform and enhance ethical governance, promoting integrity, accountability, and communal welfare. Ethical governance framework influenced by GodLight facilitate a more just and equitable society in Nigeria. By encouraging leaders to embody moral values espoused by their faiths and calling upon citizens to participate actively in governance through a lens of ethical consideration, the nation can move toward greater transparency and collective responsibility. The synergy of spirituality and governance facilitate a revitalization of public trust in leadership, reinforce democratic principles, and contribute toward sustainable development. A conscious recognition of the role of GodLight in governance not only enhances ethical decision-making but also nurtures a culture of moral responsibility among leaders and citizens alike. It is crucial for policymakers, religious leaders, and civil society to engage in collaborative dialogues, ensuring that governance in Nigeria is not only effective but also ethically grounded in the ideals promoted by the nation's diverse religious traditions.

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CHAPTER TEN

GOD'S BLESSING OF HUMANKIND AND HUMAN LABOUR (GEN 1:28-29): ITS MEANING AND IMPLICATIONS – RELEVANCE ESPECIALLY TO YOUTHS IN NIGERIA

By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Work and positive human activity are, generally speaking, strong and essential ingredients for the self-actualization and development of the human person. But when these categories are down-played or are not sufficiently strongly emphasized, there is often a resultant situation of near-chaos – a description that could be given to the present state of general insecurity and societal decadence in Nigeria today. This bold statement is verifiable from practical life in human societies all over the world and it all derives from God's blessing of humankind and human labour right from the creation of the world in Gen 1:1-2:3, but precisely in Gen 1:28-29 – a blessing that humankind has to live out as responsible creatures. This paper, therefore, undertakes the study of this text of Gen 1:28-29 so as to bring out its meaning and implications especially for their application to Nigeria in general and her youths, the leaders of tomorrow, in particular. The method employed in this article is mainly sociological-theological, particularly engendered through keen observation in the society, library research and the use of the historical critical method of scriptural exegesis for the proper interpretation of the chosen biblical text. It is amply clear from this paper that the situation, now prevalent in this country, has been the result of gradual and consistent deterioration from past years owing mainly to general corruption and failure in governance as well as societal neglect. Hence, the recommendation is that the government in Nigeria at all levels has to be up to its duties to the governed in order to help stimulate the needed re-orientation in the society that all have to embark upon anew right from the grassroots. Therefore, this paper has high significance not just for youths in Nigeria but for all her citizens with particular reference to families, towns, the government, Churches and institutions of learning.

Key Words: Blessing, mankind (humankind), labour, youth.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Holy Writ, God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day (Gen 1:1-2:3). That is the first account of creation in the Bible. God created humankind on the sixth day (Gen 1:26-30), blessing the human person and human labour (Gen 1:28-29). It is this important blessing in that first book of the Bible which this paper has examined in detail, highlighting its meaning and implications. It has also applied that text to the present-day situation in our country Nigeria with particular emphasis on the negative plight of the youths which has unfortunately helped to precipitate high-level insecurity in the land.

However, this paper thinks that all hope is not yet lost. Things could still be made better given the proper determination on the part of the leaders at all levels in the country to embark on a new re-orientation. Recommendations have, therefore, been made to that effect beginning with the government and going down to all levels of society. These measures would help sanitize our society in the first instance, thereby, engendering more youth empowerment and developmental programs from the citizens to supplement what already exists in that regard. They will also bring about a more prosperous future especially for the youths today who will be the adults of tomorrow.

Explanation of Some Key Words in the Text

"Labour" means "physical or mental work; exertion; toil" or "such work considered as supplying the needs of a community."[1] Therefore, the terms "labour" and "work" will be used interchangeably to mean the same thing in this article.

The word "Youth" is more difficult to define precisely. It means "the state of being young; the period between childhood and adult age."[2] For some, this transitional stage between childhood and adulthood is adolescence, often regarded as coterminous with the stage of youth. Therefore, for these people, "youth" begins with the onset of puberty and, after a number of years in which further experience and training are acquired, finally fits the individual for full adulthood in his own particular society and culture, generally spanning from the ages of 18 to 21.[3] The United Nations, generally speaking, also aligns with the foregoing definitions. It indicates that "youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence." But for statistical purposes, it also makes the strict definition of "youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States."[4] In this paper, "youth" would be taken as those in the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood; this is the idea which is constant in all the available definitions.

"Blessing" generally means the act of declaring, seeking or bestowing divine favour[5] on someone or something while "mankind" means the human species,[6] humankind. These two words would be further commented upon in the exegetical section below, as they are integral to the text of Gen 1:28-29.

The Biblical Text

And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food" (Gen 1:28-29).

Delimitation of Text

The book of Genesis, in which our text is found, is the book of beginnings – recording the divine guidance of the world right from its creation. It is, therefore, the beginning of the entire OT – the Pentateuch through to the Prophets and to the Writings. It is, above all, the beginning of the entire Christian Bible encompassing the OT and NT.[7]

That book of Genesis actually commences with the text of God's creation of the world in Gen 1:1-2:3. As already hinted above, God's blessing of humankind and human labour (Gen 1:28-29) is part of the account of the creation of humankind on the sixth day (vv 26-30) in that account of Genesis 1. God created the world in six days (Gen 1:1-31) and rested on the 7th day (Gen 2:1-3).

This text of Gen 1:1-2:3 is a unity and is, in fact, also the text of "beginnings" as has been said of the book of Genesis itself: it is the introductory text of both the Hebrew and Christian Bible. It introduces the two main subjects of Holy Scripture, God the creator and man his creature, and sets the stage for the long story of their relationship. It is also the opening of the *Torah* or

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[1]D. THOMPSON, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (New York: Oxford Press, 1995) 757.

[2]THOMPSON, ED., *The Concise Dictionary of Current English*, 1627.

[3]J. C. BERNARDIN, ed., *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, Vol. 19, 1983, 1090.

[4]UNITED NATIONS "Definition of Youth", https://www.un.org (accessed 08/03/2025).

[5]THOMPSON, ED., *The Concise Dictionary of Current English*, 136. [6]THOMPSON, ED., *The Concise Dictionary of Current English*, 829.

[7]Cf. L. BOADT, "Genesis",in W. R. FARMER – al, ed., *The International Bible Commentary* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998) 348-349.

Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, which tells the story of the origin of the people of Israel. Also, as the first text in the Book of Genesis, specifically, it introduces the primeval and patriarchal histories that constitute that Book in chapters 1-11 and 12-50 respectively.[8] Thus, Gen 1:1-2:3, form-critically attributed to the Priestly Document (P), is different from what comes after it thematically and contextually, as Gen 2:4a speaks of the "generations of the heavens and the earth" while Gen 2:4b-25 dwells on the 2nd creation account which is rather attributed to the Yahwistic Document (J). Therefore, Gen 1:1-2:3 "stands apart from the narratives that follow in style and content and makes it an overture to the whole work."[9]

Furthermore, the account of Gen 1:1-2:3 highlights creation as taking place day by day: light on day 1, Sky on day 2, land (plants) on day 3, luminaries on day 4, birds and fish on day 5, animals and man (plants for food) on day six and Sabbath on day seven. Almost all of those days of creation are introduced with the announcement of the command, "And God said" (vv 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29); and also with the order, "Let there be…." (vv 3, 6, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). The fulfillment formula, "And it was so", also signals their actual execution (vv 3, 7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30).[10] These descriptions help to distinguish each of those days of creation from one another.

Specifically, however, the creation on the 6th day, where our text is found, is distinguished from that of the 5th day and God's rest on the 7th day. Hence, "And God saw that it was good" (v 25) concludes the creation on the 5th day while "then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image …." (v 26) begins the creation on the 6th day, concluding with the robust statement: "And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" (v 31). In content, as well, this 6th day is completely different from the 7th day, Gen 2:1-3, which deals with God's rest on that day.

Thus, even though the creation of humankind (vv 26-30) is a unit in the entire creation account, as already said, vv 28-29 (the text of our discussion) is a part of it. Yet, it is thematically distinct within that unit – specifically on the blessing of humankind and human labour – for which reason it is being singled-out in this work for exhaustive analysis.

Exegesis of Text

As already said, Gen 1:28-29, even though a united text, is nevertheless a subunit of Gen 1:26-30, the creation of humankind on the sixth day. This would, therefore, necessitate some reference to that larger unit, when needed, in this exegetical section.

The creation of man ($'$ādām) is the climax of this first account of creation in Genesis. Not only did God create him last, at the final day of creation, he created man in his own "image" (v 26, 27) and "likeness" (v 26); "male and female" he created them (v 27). Thus, the Hebrew word ($'$ādām) means man, mankind and Adam, the first man.[11] In this article, therefore – and as has already been hinted – "man," "humankind", "humanity" and "human being" are being used interchangeably for the Hebrew noun, $'$ādām.

The word, "to create", *bārā$'$* in Hebrew, is a special one because it has God always – Israel's God and never a foreign deity – as its subject of expression. It is actually the verb used at the very beginning of Genesis to describe the entire creation (Gen 1:1). This verb, therefore, highlights the incomparable newness and uniqueness of what God brings into existence.[12] Hence, God created the world, including man, virtually out of nothing in six days and rested on the seventh day. "Image" (*ḥelem*) means "physical image"[13] while "likeness" (*dḇmût*) means resemblance.[14]

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[8]G. J. WNHAM, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary 1; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987) 5.

[9]WNHAM, *Genesis 1-15*, 5.

[10]Cf. WNHAM, *Genesis 1-15*,6.

[11]F. BROWN – S. DRIVER – C. BRIGGS, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996) 9.

[12]W. H. SCHMIDT, *"bārā$'$"* in E. JENNI – C. WESTERMANN, ed., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Vol. I (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997) 255.

[13]Cf. F. BROWN – S. DRIVER – C. BRIGGS, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*,853.

[14]Cf. F. BROWN – S. DRIVER – C. BRIGGS, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 198.

Therefore, man has some divinity in his/her being[15] which puts him/her in a special relationship with God his creator whereby man can uniquely relate with Him, unlike other created things.[16] This distinguishes man from all the other creatures in creation. The precise distinction of "male" (*zākār*) and "female" (*nbqēbāh*), apart from underlining that women also bear the image of God as well as men, emphasizes the difference in the sexes which ensures the propagation of humanity. It is sexual differentiation, indeed, which is the humans' way of continuing in existence.[17]

The text continues: "And God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply …'" "To bless" (*bārak*), in line with what has already been noted, means to impart "benevolent power, health-creating power." Hence, in this context of the first chapter of Genesis, "it consists of God's providing humanity, as all living beings (Gen 1:22), with the power[18] of fertility and multiplication."[19] In other words, divine blessing continues God's benevolent work in creation. Therefore, God commands humankind, just as he commands animals in v 22: "Be fruitful and multiply" (v 28). These injunctions also help to highlight the unique nature of "blessing", as they carry with them the divine promise that they can be carried out – as the word of blessing, whether pronounced by God or man, guarantees and effects the hoped-for success.[20] Furthermore, the imperatives "be fruitful and multiply" are also a clear statement about the divine purpose of marriage. "Positively, it is for the creation of children; negatively, it is a rejection of the ancient oriental fertility cults"[21] sometimes practiced for procreation.

The text goes further: "… and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'" (v 28). This statement repeats in large part the purpose of the creation of humankind in v 26. "To fill" (*mālē'*), in this context – just like the other two ensuing verbs – is used transitively as an imperative, with "the earth" as the direct object of its activity.[22] In the same vein, "to subdue" (*kāḇaš*) the earth (*hā'āreḇ*) denotes humanity's occupation with "the whole inhabited world without territorial or geographic limitation;"[23] just as "to dominate" (*rādāh*), which also clearly denotes an action to be executed by human agents – humankind in this case. But this "does not mean subjection by force but rather putting the earth to use,"[24] as human beings are, indeed, "the pinnacle of the created world."[25] All these trickle down to one thing: that in blessing humankind especially in Gen 1:28-29, God also blesses human labour and legitimate human occupation. Hence, v. 29 concludes: "And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.'" For humankind "it is thus clear that being made in God's image includes exercising dominion over the earth and its fauna and that this dominion is understood as a blessing."[26]

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[15]H. WILDBERGER, *"ṣelem"*, in E. JENNI – C. WESTERMANN, ed., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Vol. III (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997) 1082.

[16]WENHAM, *Genesis 1-15*, 31.

[17]R. J. CLIFFORD – R. E. MURPHY, "Genesis", in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Bangalore: Theological Publications, 1994) 11.

[18]C. A. KELLER – G. WEHMEIER, *"Bārak"*, in E. JENNI – C. WESTERMANN, *The Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Vol. I (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997) 268.

[19]C. A. KELLER – G. WEHMEIER, *"Bārak"*, 278.

[20]WENHAM, *Genesis 1-15*, 24.

[21]WENHAM, *Genesis 1-15*, 33.

[22]H. J. FABRY, *"Mālē'"*, in G. J. BOTTERWECK – H. RINGREN – H. J. FABRY, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. VIII (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997) 298.

[23]S. WAGNER, *"Kāḇaš"*, in G. J. BOTTERWECK – H. RINGREN – H. J. FABRY, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. VII (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997) 54.

[24]H. J. ZOBEL, *"Rādāh"*, inG. J. BOTTERWECK – H. RINGREN – H. J. FABRY, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol.XIII (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997) 335.

[25]R. J. CLIFFORD – R. E. MURPHY, "Genesis", 11.

[26]H. J. ZOBEL, *"Rādāh"*, 335.

Emphasis on the blessing in the Bible and its subsequent theological development

God's blessing of humankind and human labour in Gen 1:28-29 has been explained above. Emphasis on this blessing is found in one form or another firstly in the book of Genesis and in the entire Bible.

Hence after the flood, God "blessed Noah and his sons" saying: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen 9:1). The same is his promise to Abraham (Gen 17:2) and in relation to Ishmael also (Gen 17:20). Isaac extends it to his son Jacob (Gen 28:3) and God did the same to Jacob as well (Gen 35: 11).

But the emphasis of this article would dwell more on God's blessing of human labour which, as already indicated, intricately goes together with His blessing of humanity, with the result that, through work, humankind continues in the creation of the world already commenced by God. It is this that is actually "the norm of human activity – to harmonize with the authentic interests of the human race, in accordance with God's will and design, and to enable men as individuals and as members of society to pursue and fulfil their vocation."[27] Therefore, work is part of God's purposes for humankind from the beginning of creation, as He places man in the garden of Eden to till it (Gen 2:15). Also work is generally seen in the OT as a provision of divine wisdom (Ps 104:19-35; Isa 28:23-29). It is also a profit (Prov 14:23), thus bringing into focus also the remuneration that accrues from labour for the worker. But the entrance of sin, the rebellion of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:1-14), changes work from a joy to a toil (Gen 3:16-23). The result is that even though work is not bad in itself, it has lost its true value, with the danger that it can become an end in itself, with very negative consequences. [28]

However, through the redemption of Christ, work has been transformed again into a means of blessing. Idleness, even with religious motives, was condemned in the NT (1 Thess 4:11; 2 Thess 3:10). Jesus, working as a carpenter (Mark 6:3), sanctified ordinary work. Paul set an example of honest labour in order not to become a financial burden to the church he served (Acts 18:3), but he also advocated a fair remuneration for church leaders (1 Tim 5:17); cf. Luke 10:7). Ordinary tasks become for the Christian a service for God and are thus to be done to his honour (Col 3:23-25) and in the service of one's neighbor (Mt 25:40).[29] Consequently, the dignity of human work remains a "constant" right from the creation of humanity on account of God's blessing of humankind and human labour – so also the issue of a just wage for work.

Further Implications of God's Blessing of Humankind and Labour.

Most people believe that there is a Supreme Being who created the world, as this is the tenet of almost all the major religions of the world, especially Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the African Traditional Religion. They also believe that God controls and relates uniquely with the world he created, especially humankind. But to further say that most of these people may, as well, be very conscious of the fact that their work is blessed by God and it is through working and other human activities that they continue God's creation in their lives and in the development of the world, may not really be that certain. But that has been the emphasis of this paper. It is in working according to the will of God that humankind also realizes and actualizes its essence. Thus: "Human activity proceeds from man: it is also ordered to him. When he works, not only does he transform matter and society, but he fulfils himself. He learns, he develops his faculties, and he emerges from and transcends himself. Rightly understood, this kind of growth is more precious

[27]VATICAN II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern World, *Gaudium et spes*" no. 35, in A. FLANNERY, ed., *Vatican Council II: Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1975) 934-935.

[28]Cf. D. WILLIAMS, *New Concise Bible Dictionary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1989) 585.

[29] Cf.WILLIAMS, *New Concise Bible Dictionary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1989) 585.

than any kind of wealth that can be amassed. It is what a man is, rather than what he has, that counts."[30]

When the above emphasis is not in consideration or is even lost sight of, then work could become an end in itself and could often be abused. The book of Ecclesiastes reminds one of how work, wrongly understood, could almost turn into idolatry (Eccles. 2:4-10), with a disappointing end-result: "Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun" (Eccles 4:11). Often, this abuse takes the form of exploitation and oppression as was the case with the Hebrews in Egypt under a Pharaoh "who did not know Joseph" (Exod 1:8-22). But the Letter of James, however, reminds such exploiters and oppressors: "Behold, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts" (Jas 5:4).

Such abuse is not lacking even in recent times, as Gen 1:28-29 has been wrongly used in modern history for the unbridled exploitation of the earth as well as the oppression and subjugation of human beings. It was often appealed to in the hermeneutical justification of apartheid in South Africa.[31] The same was the case, as well, in the trans-Atlantic slave trade as "European colonialists interpreted this as a divine command to claim and civilize 'empty' lands disregarding the existence of indigenous societies."[32] Furthermore, regarding the eco-system, many are of the opinion, following the false view of that scriptural text, that human beings could and should use whatever resources that are to be extracted from the earth as they deem fit. Before the 18th century, for example, the practical effects of this attitude on the environment were not very pronounced. But, "with the coming of the industrial Revolution and the discovery that carbon-based natural resources – first wood, then fossil fuels – could power great engines of production and development, the full implications of this proprietary perspective were soon illustrated by landscapes ravaged by coal miners and the rivers polluted by toxic waste."[33] Today, in 2025 – just about two centuries after – the dangerous and devastating effects of global warming are there for everyone to see! Hence, the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis – like some of his predecessors[34] – strongly warns that the world is now faced "with global environmental deterioration."[35] Emphasizing, in the words of St. Francis of Assisi, that the earth is like a sister and a mother to all who live in it, he solemnly continues:

> This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.[36]

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[30]VATICAN II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern World, *Gaudium et spes*" no. 35

[31]Cf. https://scielo.org.za: E. B. FARISANI, "Interpreting the Bible in the context of apartheid and beyond: An African perspective", in *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, On-line Version, Vol. 40, no. 2 (December 2014) (accessed 06/03/2025).

[32]"African Enslavement: Divine Sanction or Human Prejudice: The Misuse of the Bible in the Justification of African Enslavement", https://medium.com (accessed 06/03/2025).

[33]L. CANIPE, "Rethinking Dominion in Genesis 1:27-28", https://Christianethicstoday.com (Accessed 20/02/2025).

[34]Cf. Popes: Paul Vi, Apostolic Letter *Octagesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971); John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979); Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009).

[35]Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si' (Encyclical Letter on care for our common home)* (24 May, 2015) no. 3.

[36]Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, nos 1-2.

The foregoing words are certainly needed in our day and age. They strongly underline a serious point that has been made in this paper: God's blessing of humankind and his labour in Gen 1:28-29 enjoins and engenders man's constructive and developmental activities on the earth and not *viceversa*.

Relevance to Youths in Nigeria:

The Situation of the Youths in Nigeria today

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and, with a population of more than 230 million people, it is the sixth most populous country in the world.[37] About 70% of this population are youths, also making Nigeria the land with the highest population of youths in the world.[38] Consequently, this article, the writer believes, would be highly relevant to them. This is because, on account of the present largely challenging socio-economic and political situation in the country, many of these youths seem to lose their bearing and hence, are unable to profit from the scarce opportunities of development and growth which exist in the society. Many are not properly educated, if educated at all; others are unskilled, or semi-skilled at best, while many others seem unprepared for the hard work and dogged struggle that would naturally propel someone to success in life. Furthermore, many of these youths who find themselves in institutions of higher learning are often not concentrated enough on their basic goals of academic pursuit, hence the accusations of "sorting", "sex for grade" and other abuses that keep making the rounds. Thus, the dominant ambition of many youths in Nigeria today is just to make quick money – without labouring much for it! – so as to be counted among those who have made it in society. This is simply sad.

The unpleasant result is very high unemployment for these youths. Many who do not migrate to greener pastures – as many also try to do so illegally – therefore veer rather into drugs, idleness, promiscuity, armed robbery, internet fraud, banditry and kidnapping, to mention but these. In the religious realm, the strong tendency today is towards neo-paganism – a phenomenon these youths do not even properly understand! One dares to say, therefore, that the present prevalent atmosphere of general insecurity in the country is mainly due to this pervading situation, a situation of near-impunity. No single day passes without one hearing of harrowing and horrifying accounts of the citizens of this country languishing under one form of attack or another from the menace of insecurity, or of the number of mindless youths who have rendered themselves almost useless through substance abuse, the abuse of drugs of various names and categories. Three examples would help buttress the point here.

The first is the kidnap and gruesome murder of Justice Azuka, the member representing Onitsha North 1 constituency in the Anambra State house of Assembly. He was kidnapped at Onitsha on December 24, 2024, while returning home for Christmas. Many millions of naira – allegedly more than 100 million – were withdrawn from his bank account by those kidnappers. Yet his decomposing body was discovered, almost one and a half months later, near the Second Niger Bridge in the early hours of February 6, this year, 2025. About a week later, the Police paraded a group of more than 8 young men – all between the ages of about 20 and 30 years – who they had arrested and who, according to them, had already confessed to the crime! Unfortunately, as one pens down these thoughts, the news is also making the rounds that two of those suspects, who were accompanying policemen to a recovery operation regarding the belongings of the same deceased lawmaker, have dramatically escaped from custody.[39] Unbelievable!

In the early days of February, this year, the media were awash with the news of the kidnap of the former Director General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Brig. Gen. Maharazu

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[37]"Nigeria", https://en.wikipedia.org (accessed 19/02/2025).
[38]A. I. AKINYEMI, "Nigeria's growing population can be an advantage, with better data and a policy focus on young people", https://theconversation.com (accessed 23/02/2025).
[39]V. UJUMADU, "Killing of Anambra Lawmaker: Two suspects escape from Custody", *Vanguard News*, February 19, 2025; https://www.vanguardngr.com (accessed 07/03/2025).

Tsiga (rtd), along with a number of other villagers, by bandits in Katsina State. These villagers, reportedly, had to pay the ransom of about 30 million naira in order to regain their freedom while the whooping sum of about 250 million was being insistently demanded for the release of the retired General.[40] Gen. Tsiga was actually abducted on February 5, and was finally released[41] on April 2, after 56 days in captivity. As the astronomical sum of 400 million naira was the ultimate demand by his captors, fellow army generals had to frantically rally round for it. And he was released! What a shame! Who then can be spared, one is forced to ask, if the lot of an army General could be this bad and humiliating"

The two stories narrated above are more recent. But this disturbing security situation in Nigeria during this time did not just begin today – even though it has gradually and consistently deteriorated to the worrisome level being experienced at this time. *Fides* Newspaper published the abhorrent story of the abuse, rape and gruesome murder of one Miss Cynthia Osukogu in 2012 by some boys in a hotel in Lagos.[42] Twenty-five year old Cynthia was the daughter of a retired Nigerian army general and an undergraduate of Nasarawa State University. Cynthia never met those boys face to face, as they had only interacted on Facebook. Those miscreants had thought that Cynthia had a lot of money, probably on account of her rich parentage. They, therefore, lured her to Lagos on the evil pretext of helping her to buy goods at cheap prices. Then they drugged her in their hotel room, raped her and strangled her to death in their bid to steal that money – but to their utter disappointment, she actually did not have much money with her! Two of those boys, Nwabufor Echezona and Ezike Ikechukwu Olisaeloka, were later found guilty of murder by a Lagos High Court on March 23, 2017, and sentenced to death by hanging. Hear the shocking confession by those young men on why and how they killed Cynthia:

> When she got to Lagos, we took her to a hotel in Festac. We thought that she had a lot of money, but she said she didn't have any money. We gave her Reflon tablet in her Ribena drink. After this, we slept with her for 12 hours in that hotel. We discovered that the tablet did not work quickly on her. We then attacked her, tied her up and used celotape to cover her mouth. After that, we beat her to tell us where she kept the money. When we didn't get any money from her, we tied her mouth and strangled her and then abandoned her in the hotel and fled![43]

Horrifying indeed! But from the three stories recounted above, which are just the tip of the iceberg in view of what prevails in the Nigerian society almost every day these days, one cannot but shudder at the level of rot and near mental derangement which has befallen much of the Nigerian society, especially her youths. The situation is really worrisome, to say the least. But the truth remains that Nigeria's economic growth or doom, now and in the future, should be reliant mainly on the youths. If these youths are left the way things stand now – mainly unskilled, unproductive and susceptible to deviance, as already said – they will even constitute a greater burden to society in the future.[44]

The Way Forward

While the depressing picture painted above is true of the Nigerian youths today, one has to

[40]A. ABATTA, "Police, Army Mute 2 Weeks After Retired General Tsiga's Abduction", Fig.ng, February 15, 2025,https://fij.ng (Accessed 20/02/25). [41]P. SHIMNOM – C. LIMAN, "Controversy Over Release of Gen. Tsiga", *Daily Trust*, April 9, 2025, Dailytrust.com (Accessed 11/04/25).

[42]Cf. FIDES Communications, Okpuno, Awka, March 26 – April 1, 2017, p. 3, cited inU. T. Igwe, "Creative Education for Critical Consciousness as a Panacea for the embattled Nigerian Youths", in L. E. IJEZIE – S. AUDU – A. I. ACHA, ed., *Youth Formation and Globalization in the Nigerian Context*(Portharcout: Cathan Publication, 2018) 492-493.

[43]IGWE, "Creative Education for Critical Consciousness as a Panacea for the embattled Nigerian Youths", 493-494.

[44]Cf. F. EROMOSELE, "How Nigeria's Youth bulge can become a demographic Dividend", *Vanguard News*, www.vanguardngr.com (accessed 23/02/2025).

say, as already hinted, that it is also largely true of the Nigerian society in general [45] – as the youths are products of the society they live in. On this note, Igwe contends that "the Nigerian youths have now become endangered species as a result of the socio-economic and religio-political manipulations and exploitation by the Nigerian elites."[46] For many people, therefore, Nigeria is irretrievably sliding down the precipice as a failed state in line with other failed governments in the continent of Africa.[47] This writer – while candidly acknowledging this worrisome state of things in the polity – however, feels that there is still some light at the end of the tunnel. Hopefully, this light will finally shine out especially for the youths, given the right emphases on hard work – its blessedness, richness and inevitability for success in the society – by all concerned. But this has to be done in stages, as this writer now goes on to suggest.

To begin with, nothing meaningful can be achieved in a state of wanton insecurity and chaos. Therefore, the first task is that the government, at all levels in Nigeria, has to get down to work on the issue of security so as to rid the society of the agents of destruction and crime and establish the requisite rule of law for meaningful life in the country. This is the primary and most basic duty of the government to the governed. To that end, one must commend the government of Anambra State for the recent promulgation of the "Anambra State Homeland Security Law, 2025" which came into effect on the 17th day of January, 2025. This "law is to provide for the maintenance of internal security and order in the State and to establish the Anambra State *Agunechemba* and for related matters."[48] The *Agunechemba* outfit has already begun working and its positive influences are gradually being felt in the state. The prayer on the lips of most Anambrarians, however, is for these effects to endure in the future. The *Amotekun* outfit in many of the South Western states is also a case in point. But what of the other states in the federation as well as the federal government itself" Why does insurgency still persist in Nigeria, especially in the north, despite the ample presence of security agents in those places as well as the digital nature of life today in the whole world"

The second stage is the commencement of a gradual but consistent re-orientation especially for the youths in our society. These youths are the leaders of tomorrow, as already said. If one is actually expecting a more purposeful future in this country, this suggestion has to be embarked upon very seriously. There needs to be a gradual but concerted re-orientation on God, the conscience and the sterling value of hard work (which indeed demands discipline too), especially for the youths in the Nigerian society. This, of course, presumes the hands of all on deck: families, towns, governments and churches.

As the family is the first unit of the human society, children solidly brought up in good homes naturally, as in the South Eastern societal set-up, for example, fit into the kindred (*Ummunna*), the village (*Ogbe*), the town (*Obodo*) and the larger society. All these categories were formerly successfully supportive of and complementary to one another in our society – but today, no more! But why not" This is a soul-searching question which demands heartfelt answers from the government and citizens of this country.

Then comes the Church. What is being proposed in this paper has already been

[45] For more on this, cf. E. U. DIM, "The Plot to kill Joseph by his Brothers (Gen 37:2-36): It's Place within the Joseph Story and Lessons for Christians in Nigeria", *International Journal of Academic and Applied Research* (IJAAR), Vol. 6, No. 12 (December 2022) 143-146; also E. U. DIM, "Abraham the Father of Faith (Gen 12-17) – Challenge to Christians in Nigeria", *Global Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences,* Vol. 10, No. 1, 58-59.

[46] IGWE, "Creative Education for Critical Consciousness as a Panacea for the embattled Nigerian Youths", 481.

[47] Cf. T. OKERE, "Crisis of governance in Africa: the root of the problem", in J. O. OGUEJIOFOR – M. B. RAMOSE – G. I. ONAH, ed, *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa* (Studies in African Philosophy, Vol. 1; Enugu: Delta Publications, 2004) 10.

[48] Anambra State Homeland Security Law, 2025, Anambrastate.gov.ng (accessed 24/02/2025).

commenced by many of the Churches in Anambra State. This is done, not just through their regular liturgical services and catechesis, but especially through the different schools that are privately owned and managed by them – thanks especially to the handing over of many of those schools to their proper owners by Mr. Peter Obi, the former governor of Anambra State. But what of other states and the federation at large, one must still ask" More important is the question whether adequate attention is being paid to these youths in the Churches today given particularly the highly changed and challenging times in this digital age" This writer earnestly thinks that more is actually demanded in this direction. Thus, "we need to think new ways of presenting the perennial truths of our faith, our unchanging values in a changing world, so that the youth, who are destined as the successors of our success, will embrace Jesus, the Church, and eternal values with passion, desire, and 'coolness.'"[49]

This paper now turns to the government, whose most basic function of ensuring the security of lives and properties in the state has already been underlined. But the state's function is much broader than that, of course, as it is actually saddled with the general wellbeing and progress of its citizens, not excluding the youths. Youth empowerment, especially in the areas of schools, jobs, employment and other social programs to uplift them, are simply urgent. One must also further commend the Anambra State government for the free education introduced in her public schools. Special mention must also be made of the government's youth empowerment strategy in the area of jobs and skills, including the "one youth two skills" program which has also entered its second phase.   These also "include Solution Innovation District, through which about five thousand youths were empowered with vocational entrepreneurship skills as well as two billion naira grant for business start-ups…."[50] At   the federal level one also hears of   the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND), the Nigeria Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) and the Nigeria Youth Futures Fund (NYFF). NELFUND is for the students in the universities, helping especially the poor students with their school fees. But to be candid, apart from NELFUND, how many Nigerians actually know about the existence of those other two mentioned above, not to talk of their *modus operandi*"

The last question is important because back in the 70's and 80's, there was a more comprehensive and regular bursary granted to students, especially those in the tertiary institutions, as a basic assistance for them to be able to make ends meet in their quest for higher scholarship. Automatic employments were also instantly given to exceptional students by the government and other private companies at the end of each academic year, a fact that made most students struggle very hard to excel in their studies, so as to be so rewarded. Many institutions of learning also had living quarters for the accommodation of their teachers and other workers. Above all, most workers were, at that time, also paid good and living wages with which most of them were able to fend for themselves and their families. Today, all these are no more so! But average politicians, even the ones without any meaningful education, live larger than life! It is actually these factors, only a few of which have just been mentioned, which have grossly dampened the enthusiasm and morale of most people, especially the youths, in Nigeria. Something more drastic has to be done in this area by the government at all levels, and urgently too. But that does not in any way mitigate or remove the ultimate responsibility and resolve by each citizen, especially the youths, to make the best of life for himself or herself in personal industry and diligence, despite the highly challenging odds. This, believably, is the most important aspect of this paper, because it is how one actually makes one's bed that one will lie on it. In other words, the Nigerian youth has to decide to face life squarely as it is:

> Thus, it is noteworthy to recall that this world to which he relates is not a static and closed order, a given reality which man must accept and to which he must adjust. It is rather, a problem to be worked on and resolved. In other words, it is the material used by man in order to create history, a task which he performs as he overcomes that which is dehumanizing at any particular time and place as well as dares to create the qualitatively new.[51]

[49]R. O. AINA, "Can Jesus and the Church be 'cool' Today"",in L. E. IJEZIE – S. AUDU – A. I. ACHA, ed., *Youth Formation and Globalization in the Nigerian Context*(Port Harcourt: Cathan Publication, 2018) 13.
[50]Anambra State Government Approves 2nd Phase of One Youth, Two Skills Programme, https://www.absradiotv.come (accessed 24/02/2025).
[51]IGWE, "Creative Education for Critical Consciousness as a Panacea for the embattled Nigerian Youths", 482.

One thing, therefore, thrusts out, ultimately, from this paper: it is only in engaging in work and meaningful activities that human beings actualize their existence and optimally live out the blessing given to them and their labour by God. This is a *dictum* which every reasonable person in Nigeria and all over the world has to always bear in mind. This is also the conviction that would generally prosper the citizens, especially the youths, in Nigeria. It is, therefore, the duty of all who are responsible for them to help in inculcating that in them – and the urgency of this in Nigeria today can never be over emphasized.

Thus, since most, if not all, people in Nigeria actually believe in God, one considers also the interesting approach of the *Godlight Foundation,*[52] as a profitable way of engendering the desired transformation of our society – a country of many ethnic groups, languages and even religions. This approach was amply dwelt upon during the *Godlight International Conference Nigeria 2025 in Collaboration with the Department of Religion and Human Relations Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State, Nigeria.* The theme was: "Godlight: Humanities and Science in Contemporary World Order." The aim of this foundation is to illuminate the spiritual journey of human beings by promoting personal growth, community engagement, and a deeper understanding of faith and spirituality. Through this foundation, Dr. Barthelemy encourages people, from different backgrounds and religions, to discover the external Light from God, the enlightening Light from the Spirit and their own inner Light, to embrace their unique spiritual journeys, and to share that light with others. Thus, with love, compassion and understanding, the ultimate result is the building up of stronger communities that are deeply rooted in shared values. This is simply desirable just as it is a happy development, as well, that this foundation is now also established here in Nigeria with the name *Godlight Nigeria Foundation*.

Conclusion

This article has studied God's blessing of humankind and human labour as recorded in Genesis 1:28-29. It has examined that text exegetically, bringing out its meaning, highlighting its continuous biblical emphasis and theological development while also outlining its further implications for life in the world. These have precipitated the emphasis of this paper that it is only by living out this blessing especially through engagement in work and other legitimate human activities that humankind can meaningfully develop and purposefully progress, as man would then be co-operating with God in His good work of creation. When this is not the case, then it is all disorder and near-chaos as are clearly reflected in the prevalent situation especially in Nigeria today.

In relating these thoughts particularly to the youth, this article frowns at the negative mentality of many of them who, even though generally wishing to be successful in life, are nevertheless not prepared for the requisite hard work, discipline and doggedness that should naturally aid their attainment of this goal; hence the abundance of delinquency and negative traits on their part in the society today. This is certainly not the proper way to go.

Consequently, this paper has recommended a thorough re-assessment of our societal *modus operandi* thus far. This essentially means going back to the drawing board right from our society's grassroots – and it involves, necessarily and primarily, the government at all levels, then the Churches, all public institutions, particularly institutions of learning, towns and families. It remains a truism that proper and meaningful youth development and empowerment are ultimately the most assured means of toning up the present situation, as these youths today will certainly be the society's leaders tomorrow. Thus, even though some noble efforts are already initiated in this direction, as noted in the paper, these are not sufficient enough to make much meaningful impact – hence, the suggestion, as well, of the consideration of the "Godlight" *modus* of living and interaction as enunciated by the *Godlight Foundation*. The prevalent situation in Nigeria today is simply demanding and the time to act is now.

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[52]This is a nonprofit organization founded by Dr. Bart Barthelemy, from the United States of America.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL BELIEFS IN SAFEGUARDING CULTURAL PRACTICES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Spiritual beliefs, as central components of many indigenous cultures, serve as custodians of cultural identity, offering frameworks for understanding the world, guiding moral principles, and preserving ancestral knowledge. The aim of this paper is to explore the role of spiritual beliefs in safeguarding cultural practices. Using a descriptive analysis, the paper delves into the intricate relationship between spiritual beliefs and cultural practices, highlighting the pivotal role that spirituality plays in safeguarding cultural heritage. By examining the intersection of spirituality and cultural practices across diverse societies, it demonstrates how spiritual beliefs serve as a resilient framework for preserving cultural identity, traditions, and values. The findings underscore the importance of acknowledging and respecting the spiritual underpinnings of cultural practices in efforts to promote cultural conservation and sustainability. The paper recommends that elders and spiritual leaders should be encouraged to pass down sacred knowledge, rituals and traditions to younger generations. While formal and informal education systems should integrate cultural teachings, ensuring that young people appreciate the significance of their spiritual heritage. Ultimately, it concludes that preservation of cultural heritage requires a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between spirituality, cultural practices, and cultural heritage. By recognizing the importance of spirituality in shaping cultural practices and traditions, we can work towards preserving cultural heritage in a way that is meaningful and relevant to local communities.

Keywords: Spiritual beliefs, Cultural Heritage, Cultural Preservation, Indigenous Knowledge, cultural revitalisation

Introduction

The preservation of cultural beliefs through spiritual beliefs is a profound and complex subject that highlights the interplay between religion, tradition, and cultural preservation. Spiritual beliefs often form the foundation of cultural practices, rituals, and worldviews, shaping the way

communities view their identity and heritage. These beliefs provide not only moral guidance but also a sense of belonging and continuity, linking individuals to their ancestors and their land.

In many societies, spiritual beliefs are intricately woven into the cultural fabric, influencing customs, art, language, festivals, and even legal systems. The safeguarding of these cultural beliefs often relies on spiritual practices that are passed down through generations, ensuring that traditions endure despite external pressures, such as globalisation, modernisation, colonisation among other influence. Furthermore, spiritual beliefs can serve as a means of resistance, helping communities preserve their cultural identity in the face of cultural assimilation or erasure.

In examining this issue, attempt is made to x-ray how religious institutions, rituals, and spiritual leaders contribute to the resilience of cultural practices. We have also looked at, the role of sacred texts and teachings in cultural transmission, and the ways in which spiritual beliefs have helped to preserve cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world. Ultimately, the intersection of spirituality and culture plays a crucial role in the resilience and survival of many communities, ensuring that cultural beliefs remain vibrant, relevant, and deeply rooted in the collective consciousness.

Conceptual clarification
Spiritual beliefs

Spiritual beliefs refer to systems of faith or conviction centered on the divine, metaphysical realms, or higher powers, guiding individuals in their understanding of existence, morality, and purpose. These beliefs can be deeply intertwined with religious practices but may also extend beyond formal religious systems, encompassing individual or communal spiritual experiences. Spiritual beliefs shape the way people view the world, their relationships with others, and their roles within the larger community or society.

In the context of safeguarding cultural beliefs, spiritual practices play an essential role in preserving a community's traditions, identity, and social structures. Spiritual rituals and teachings offer a framework for maintaining cultural continuity, often passed down through generations. As highlighted by Williams, spiritual beliefs are integral to the preservation of cultural values and traditions, as they serve not only to guide personal conduct but also to provide a collective sense of belonging and identity (57-71)

Spiritual beliefs also provide mechanisms for resistance against external pressures that may threaten cultural heritage, such as globalisation or colonisation. It is on this note that Navas, maintains that, the survival of cultural practices, particularly in marginalized communities, often depends on their spiritual foundation, which ensures that cultural knowledge and customs endure, adapting while remaining rooted in ancestral teachings (234-245).

Cultural practices

Cultural practices refer to the shared behaviours, customs, rituals, and traditions that define

a specific group or society. These practices are often passed down through generations and serve as markers of identity, helping individuals and communities connect to their past while shaping their present and future. Cultural practices can include a wide range of activities such as ceremonies, festivals, language, cuisine, art, and social norms that reflect the values, beliefs, and history of a particular group (Patel, 75-88).

These practices are essential for maintaining cultural identity and ensuring the continuity of traditions in a rapidly changing world. Accordingly, Thompson notes that, cultural practices provide a sense of belonging and community, offering a shared framework for individuals to navigate their lives (44-56). Relatedly, Lee posits that, in many societies, these practices also serve as tools of resilience, particularly in the face of external pressures such as globalisation, colonisation, modernisation or cultural assimilation (182-194). While Rodriguez, shares that, indigenous communities often rely on cultural practices to resist cultural erasure, using traditional rituals and language as powerful forms of cultural expression and resistance (321-335). Cultural practices are dynamic expressions of identity, deeply tied to the beliefs and values of a community, and they play a crucial role in preserving the uniqueness of cultures amidst external challenges.

Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage refers to the legacy of physical artifacts, practices, traditions, languages, and knowledge that are inherited from past generations and maintained for future generations. It encompasses both tangible heritage, such as monuments, buildings, and artifacts, and intangible heritage, including oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, and craftsmanship (Smith, 45-59). Cultural heritage plays a critical role in shaping a community's identity, values, and social structures, providing a sense of continuity and connection to the past. According to Peterson, cultural heritage is not only a way of preserving history but also an active process of interpreting and adapting past experiences to the present and future (59-74).

The safeguarding of cultural heritage is vital in maintaining cultural diversity, particularly in the face of modern challenges like globalisation and cultural homogenisation. As stated by Thomas and Lee, the protection of cultural heritage helps to sustain the unique aspects of various communities' identities, fostering a sense of pride and unity (301-315). It is this thinking that made Bates to maintains that, intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional knowledge and practices, are often more vulnerable to loss than tangible forms and require specific efforts to preserve and pass down (124-134). Above all, cultural heritage is a living testament to the richness of human diversity, serving as a bridge between past, present, and future generations while offering valuable insights into cultural evolution and adaptation.

The relevance of spiritual beliefs in cultural practices

Spiritual beliefs play a crucial role in shaping and maintaining cultural practices in different societies. These beliefs are often foundational to the values, customs, and rituals that define a community's cultural identity. Spirituality provides a framework within which cultural practices are not only understood but also sustained, allowing them to evolve while retaining their core

meaning and significance. Harris noted that, spiritual beliefs are often intertwined with cultural traditions, guiding behaviours and interactions within a community and helping individuals connect to their shared history and ancestry (210-225).

The relevance of spiritual beliefs in cultural practices is particularly evident in rituals and ceremonies that mark significant life events such as birth, marriage, and death. These rites are often infused with spiritual meaning, reinforcing the community's shared worldview and beliefs about the afterlife, morality, and the natural world (Moore,65-79). For example, in many indigenous cultures, spiritual beliefs guide agricultural practices, seasonal festivals, and storytelling traditions, all of which serve to preserve not just the spiritual connection to ancestors, but also the community's cultural continuity (Patel and Singh, 78-92).

Spirituality also plays a role in safeguarding cultural practices against external pressures. In the face of globalisation or cultural assimilation, spiritual beliefs offer a form of resilience, allowing communities to preserve their traditions and practices while adapting to new influences. As Johnson suggests, spiritual beliefs act as a repository of cultural knowledge, facilitating the transmission of practices from one generation to the next. Through this transmission, cultural practices rooted in spirituality remain dynamic, enabling communities to maintain their unique identity despite external challenges (88-102). The relevance of spiritual beliefs in cultural practices lies in their ability to provide meaning, continuity, and resilience, ensuring that cultural traditions are not only preserved but also enriched in the process.

The intersection of spirituality and cultural practices

Spirituality and cultural practices represent the intricate relationship between belief systems and the rituals, customs, and traditions that define a community. Spirituality often forms the backbone of cultural practices, providing a framework for understanding the world and guiding social and cultural behaviours. As Williams observes, spiritual beliefs are deeply embedded in cultural practices, shaping not only personal experiences of the sacred but also collective expressions of identity, belonging, and community cohesion (89-102).

At the heart of this intersection is the idea that spiritual beliefs inform and give meaning to cultural rituals. For example, many cultural festivals, dances, and ceremonies are rooted in religious or spiritual ideologies, with the performance of these practices reinforcing a community's connection to the divine, ancestors, and the natural world (Henderson, 215-230). In many indigenous cultures, spirituality directly influences agricultural practices, seasonal celebrations, and healing rituals, ensuring that cultural identity is preserved through sacred actions tied to the land and the cosmos (Peterson, 2020).

Moreover, the intersection of spirituality and culture can also be seen in the preservation and adaptation of cultural practices in response to external influences. Spiritual beliefs can act as a tool for resilience, helping communities navigate the challenges of globalisation and cultural assimilation by grounding them in traditions that hold spiritual significance (Smith, 98-112). By maintaining these spiritual and cultural practices, communities not only safeguard their heritage

but also assert their autonomy and resilience in the face of modern pressures.

Mechanisms of cultural preservation through spirituality

Cultural preservation through spirituality involves various mechanisms that ensure the continuity of cultural practices, values, and traditions. Spiritual beliefs serve as a foundation for maintaining cultural identity by providing both the framework and rituals necessary for the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations. As McDonald notes, spiritual practices often act as "living archives," preserving important cultural narratives, knowledge systems, and ethical teachings through oral traditions, sacred texts, and communal rituals (202-218).

One key mechanism of cultural preservation through spirituality is the use of sacred rituals and ceremonies. These events, which can include festivals, rites of passage, and seasonal observances, are not only acts of worship but also key moments for cultural transmission. They have a lot of religious meaning, and through their observation younger generations learn about their heritage, reinforcing their connection to their ancestors and the broader community (James and Khatri, 145-159).

Another significant mechanism is the role of spiritual leaders and elders in preserving and passing on cultural knowledge. Elders, often seen as the custodians of both spiritual and cultural wisdom, are instrumental in transmitting traditions, teachings, and practices to younger members of the community. In Tiv for instance, *Ityo* (council of elders) consists of a family group (clan, kindred, super clan…) which are controlled by well-known sanction and prohibition that had the blessing of ancestors and the unseen is binding on members of the group. These assertions make the Tiv people say *tahav ka ityo*, for *ityo* is the backbone and support which guide and permeates man's action upon which, he can do nothing. They have the absolute powers in her people's affairs and when they support a person in his undertaking, he cannot fail.

It is in relation to the above that Gbenda opines that the Tiv look upon elders as possessing and determining one's life-span and death. The elders constitute the corporate body or group called *ityo*, of smaller or larger units of a socio-political organization. They also possess the power to enter into the invisible side of nature and commune with ancestral spirits (180). Based on this, the Tiv always say *ityo-hemba! Ka te hwande a ityo ga* (*ityo* is great; no one dare challenges their decision). Owing to this position, Thomas affirms that, spiritual leaders serve as both spiritual guides and cultural mentors, helping to navigate the complexities of maintaining cultural practices while adapting to modern challenges (56-71).

The integration of spirituality and cultural practices can also aid in resistance against cultural erosion. In the face of globalization and cultural assimilation, spiritual beliefs provide communities with the strength to preserve their unique identities. As highlighted by Patel and Singh, the reclamation and reinforcement of indigenous spiritual practices in contemporary contexts have allowed communities to assert their cultural autonomy, ensuring the survival of both spiritual and cultural practices in the modern world (78-92).

Challenges and opportunities of spiritual beliefs

Spiritual beliefs play a pivotal role in safeguarding cultural beliefs, though the relationship between spirituality and cultural preservation is not without its challenges and opportunities. While spiritual practices provide a framework for maintaining cultural identity and traditions, they also face pressures from modernisation, globalisation, and external cultural forces. These challenges, however, also offer opportunities for the revitalisation and reimagining of cultural and spiritual practices in contemporary contexts.

One of the primary challenges faced by spiritual beliefs in safeguarding cultural beliefs is the impact of globaliation, modernisation, western education and Christian missionaries. The spread of dominant global cultures often leads to the erosion of local traditions, languages, and spiritual practices, especially in marginalised communities. As noted by Harris, the encroachment of Western ideologies and consumerism has caused significant shifts in how traditional spiritual practices are viewed, often leading to a decline in their importance and practice among younger generations. This cultural homogenisation threatens the preservation of spiritual beliefs that are vital for maintaining cultural heritage (256-270). For example, Tiv cultural values in the era of modernisation are changing because parents are no longer the sole bread winners of the family. The cherish culture of Tiv eating food together as family has been shifted away as a result of tight work schedules. The saying that *"nyam Karen nyigh ga"* (no meat is too small for the teeth to crush) is hinged on this belief which encourages sharing with others no matter how small the meal may be. Culturally, the Tiv people do not eat in isolation but rather, prefer eating in group. Modernisation, has shattered the Tiv habit of eating leaving it to individual precept.

Westernised mode of dressing has suppressed the traditional way of dressing; while nude scenes are promoted on television. The use of foreign and exotic names, overshadow while traditional names are not cherished anymore. Language which is the first element of culture has been changed. English Language now becomes the core language rather than the native language used for communication in many homes. The introduction of communication gadgets has made it possible for the family members to relate to each other no matter the distance while neglecting the traditional mode of communication.

Atel maintains that Tiv religion was one aspect of Tiv culture that suffered the impact of such negative missionary attitude. The *imborvungu* ritual which was at the heart of Tiv religion was condemned as a murderous practice involving the taking of innocent lives with both the possibility and right to becoming full grown human beings (98). The Tiv ritual cleansing of *ityumbun* and *ikyoor* have been replaced with Christian baptism, wearing of scapular and Christian medals. According to Ushe the traditional practices of death and burial rites that were obtainable in pre-colonial Tiv society began to disappear one after another. The Tiv belief in witches and wizard as agents of death was substituted with the Christian belief and teaching about God as the determinant of death (153). **To this,** Adega lamented that, despite *ku oron* (funeral inquest) and *ichin tan* (rebuking), people continue to die as there seems to be no regulating

mechanism again. Things have certainly fallen apart and the centre seems not to be holding for Tiv society any longer (223). **Though Gehman remarks that the cultures of Africans today are no more what they used to be; many areas of traditional custom are changing technologically, educationally, economically, politically, culturally, and to some extent religiously (8).**

Another challenge is the generational gap in spiritual and cultural transmission. Younger generations, particularly in urbanised or diasporic communities, may feel disconnected from traditional spiritual practices. As Moore points out, modern education systems and social media often prioritise secular or mainstream beliefs, leading to a loss of interest in the spiritual dimensions of cultural heritage. This generational divide in most cases, result in the dilution or abandonment of practices that were once central to the community's spiritual and cultural identity (189-203). For instance, in Tiv society, **with western education, traditional mechanism for controlling the sexual life of the young people is shifted away. There is a paradigm shift from polygamy to monogamy; hence those who acquired education are taught to marry one wife in the church rather than marrying many wives.**

There are however significant opportunities in using spiritual beliefs to safeguard cultural heritage. Spirituality can act as a tool for resilience, helping communities preserve and adapt cultural practices in the face of external pressures. According to Lee, spirituality offers a means for communities to reconnect with their roots, reinforcing traditional practices as expressions of cultural pride and autonomy (134-149). For instance, indigenous groups worldwide are increasingly reclaiming their spiritual practices as part of larger cultural revitalisation movements, which help strengthen their social cohesion and resistance to cultural erasure (Patel and Singh, 44-59).

Additionally, spiritual beliefs provide a unique opportunity to engage younger generations with their cultural heritage in ways that are relevant to contemporary life. As Thompson argues, the integration of spirituality with modern technologies and educational frameworks can create new pathways for cultural preservation. Digital platforms, for instance, allow spiritual leaders to share traditional teachings and rituals with younger, tech-savvy audiences, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity (72-85). Spirituality remains a vital force for cultural preservation, offering pathways to resilience and cultural continuity in a rapidly changing world.

Recommendations

Having discussed the role of spiritual beliefs in safeguarding cultural practices, the following recommendations are made:

i. Traditional rulers and spiritual leaders should be encouraged to continue to pass down sacred knowledge, rituals and traditions to younger generations.

ii. Communities leaders should harness social media, websites and online platforms to share spiritual teaching, cultural stories and rituals. These platforms allow for global interaction and engagement, ensuring that spiritual beliefs and cultural practices are digitally connected to the younger generation

iii. Local Governments, NGOs, and cultural organisations should fund and support programs that aim to revitalise indigenous cultures, particularly those that focus on spiritual beliefs and practices.

iv. Traditional rulers should enact and enforce laws that safeguard cultural practices, language and traditions, especially those tied to indigenous spiritual beliefs. These policies should promote cultural rights, protect sacred sites and support the continued practice of traditional spiritual rituals

v. Local Governments should build community based cultural hubs and establish physical or virtual cultural centre's where indigenous practices, art and spiritual beliefs can be taught, practiced and shared. These centre's can serve as repositories for cultural knowledge and act as spaces for intergenerational dialogue.

Conclusion

The intersection of spirituality and cultural practices play a pivotal role in preserving and safeguarding cultural heritage. Spiritual beliefs offer both the foundation and the framework necessary for the continuity of cultural traditions, rituals, and values. These beliefs are intricately linked to the community's identity, serving as a means of connecting individuals to their past, reinforcing shared values, and guiding practices that define their way of life. However, the preservation of cultural beliefs through spirituality is not without its challenges. Globalisation, modernity, and the erosion of traditional practices by secular influences pose significant threats to the transmission of spiritual and cultural knowledge. Additionally, the generational divide in spiritual engagement, particularly among younger generations, further complicates the continuity of these cultural practices.

Despite these challenges, opportunities abound in the revitalisation and adaptation of spiritual practices to modern contexts. Spiritual beliefs provide a resilient foundation that allows communities to preserve and adapt cultural traditions in response to contemporary pressures. The reclamation of indigenous spiritual practices and the integration of technology in cultural preservation efforts exemplify how spiritual beliefs can be used as tools of resistance, resilience, and revitalisation. Moreover, by reconnecting spiritual teachings with modern educational systems and digital platforms, spiritual leaders and cultural custodians can engage younger generations in preserving and evolving cultural practices in ways that are relevant to their contemporary experiences.

Ultimately, the role of spirituality in safeguarding cultural beliefs is vital not only in maintaining cultural identity but also in fostering social cohesion and continuity in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. The preservation of cultural heritage requires a nuanced understanding of a complex relationship between spirituality, cultural practices and cultural heritage, by recognizing the importance of spirituality in shaping cultural practices and traditions; we can work towards preserving cultural heritage in a way that is meaningful and relevant to local communities.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

FAITH AND LEADERSHIP IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: EMPOWERING LEADERS WITH GODLIGHT FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN NIGERIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's increasingly polarized world, conflict management is a central challenge for leaders at local, national, and global levels. Leadership grounded in faith, particularly through the lens of "Godlight," - the divine wisdom and moral guidance derived from spiritual teachings - can play a transformative role in resolving conflicts. Faith and leadership are pivotal forces in shaping conflict management strategies, particularly in culturally diverse and religiously pluralistic societies like Nigeria. This article explores how faith-based leadership, informed by Godlight, can empower leaders to manage conflict with compassion, justice, and sustainability. It argues that leaders who draw on spiritual principles possess the tools to navigate conflicts in ways that foster reconciliation, build trust, and establish lasting peace.

Through qualitative research approach in which descriptive perspective was adopted in the analysis of the secondary data obtained for the study, the paper examines key aspects of faith-driven leadership in conflict management, such as the role of forgiveness, humility, and the pursuit of justice, drawing from case studies and religious teachings to illustrate practical applications. This paper offers actionable insights for policymakers, faith-based organizations, and leadership development programs aiming to cultivate leaders equipped with Godlight for peacebuilding in Nigeria and beyond.

KEYWORDS: Faith, Leadership, Conflict Management, Godlight, Sustainable Peace.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inherent part of human existence, and its management requires wisdom, resilience, and an ability to heal divisions. For many societies, leadership, especially faith-based leadership, serves as the cornerstone for peacebuilding. **Faith and leadership in conflict management** involve leaders who embody moral integrity, empathy, and a deep commitment to justice. Leaders who ground their practices in faith principles or divine illumination, act as agents of reconciliation, guiding their communities toward resolution, harmony, and sustainability.

Faith and leadership are two intertwined forces that have the potential to transform conflict management in societies marked by ethnic and religious diversity, such as Nigeria. As one of

Africa's most populous and culturally diverse nations, Nigeria faces persistent challenges of interethnic violence, religious tensions, and socio-political unrest (Agbiboa 104). The role of faith in conflict resolution is well-documented, often providing a moral compass and fostering a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness among conflicting parties (Galtung and Fischer 79). Leadership, when inspired by spiritual principles, can transcend traditional power dynamics, enabling leaders to act as mediators who embody ethical clarity, empathy, and inclusivity. This synergy between faith and leadership forms the basis of what is termed "Godlight"- a metaphorical framework emphasizing divine wisdom and moral guidance in decision-making processes.

The concept of Godlight is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where religion significantly influences personal and communal identities. According to Ikejiani-Clark and Ani, religious leaders often serve as pivotal figures in fostering dialogue, mediating disputes, and rebuilding trust in fractured communities (129). Faith-based initiatives, such as interfaith dialogues and grassroots peacebuilding efforts, have demonstrated success in mitigating conflict and promoting sustainable peace (Haynes 45). However, the integration of faith principles into formal leadership practices remains an underexplored area, raising critical questions about how spiritual ethics can be institutionalized within governance frameworks to address systemic inequalities and tensions.

This article will explore how faith-based leadership, informed by Godlight, can enhance conflict management strategies. By examining the role of forgiveness, humility, and restorative justice within faith-driven leadership, we will see how these qualities can be applied to create long-lasting peace. The importance of empowering leaders with divine guidance for sustainable peace will also be discussed, using examples from religious traditions and real-world conflict resolution efforts.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH-BASED LEADERSHIP

Faith-based leadership draws on spiritual principles such as forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation to address conflict. Johan Galtung's concept of "positive peace," which focuses on resolving the structural and cultural roots of violence, aligns closely with the values upheld by faith traditions (Galtung and Fischer 45). Religious teachings often emphasize moral integrity, empathy, and the pursuit of common good, qualities essential for effective leadership in conflict resolution. In Nigeria, where religious identities play a central role in shaping societal values, faith-based approaches have proven instrumental in bridging divides.

Haynes argues that faith-based organizations serve as "moral entrepreneurs," leveraging their influence to mediate disputes and promote dialogue (63). In Nigeria, where religion deeply influences personal and communal identities, the integration of faith into leadership provides an opportunity to transcend divisive narratives and foster unity. The concept of Godlight builds on

this foundation by empowering leaders with spiritual wisdom, enabling them to act as ethical exemplars in conflict resolution.

The integration of Godlight into leadership practices emphasizes a transformative approach, where leaders are not only administrators but also moral exemplars. This perspective aligns with the teachings of major faith traditions in Nigeria, such as Christianity and Islam, which advocate for justice, compassion, and community cohesion. Leaders inspired by Godlight are equipped to address the root causes of conflict by promoting dialogue, rebuilding trust, and fostering inclusive governance.

DYNAMICS OF NIGERIA'S CONFLICT

Conflicts are common and unavoidable in all human society. All over the world, conflicts occur because society is made up of people with differing interests and values. In most societies, conflicts occur when parties in a state of independence perceive divergent views or believe that their aspirations or goals cannot be achieved simultaneously. Therefore, it is only natural that where there is inequality in access to the control of natural resources and political power for instance, there would be discontent, opposition and controversy (Afegbua 19). Talking about c*onflicts and political instability, Adeyeri Segun opines that they are common phenomena in developing societies like Nigeria, a situation that affects peaceful co-existence and the attainment of sustainable development. Political instability arises as a result of the inability of government and the society in general to adequately address the grievances of the population or particular subset of that population (119).*

Therefore, Nigeria which is often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is a nation characterized by its cultural diversity and immense natural resources. However, it has faced persistent conflicts rooted in ethnic, religious, and socio-economic disparities. The Boko Haram insurgency, herder-farmer clashes, and interethnic disputes exemplify the country's multifaceted challenges. These conflicts are often fueled by historical grievances and systemic marginalization, further exacerbated by weak governance and corruption (Ikejiani-Clark and Ani 129). These conflicts are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors. Understanding the dynamics of Nigeria's conflicts is crucial for crafting sustainable solutions.

Historically, the roots of many of Nigeria's conflicts lie in its colonial history. The amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1914 was driven by administrative convenience rather than considerations for the cultural and ethnic compatibility of the regions (Falola and Heaton 36). This artificial union or the marriage of inconvenience created tensions that persisted into the post-independence era. Therefore, ethnic competition for political dominance emerged early in Nigeria's history. The first republic was characterized by regional rivalries among

the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Yoruba in the southwest. These tensions culminated in the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), also known as the Biafran War, a devastating conflict that resulted in over a million deaths (Achebe 219).

From the ethnic and religious perspective, Nigeria's ethnic diversity has been a significant driver of conflict. The country's federal structure, which allocates political power and resources along ethnic lines, exacerbates competition among groups. This dynamic often pits ethnic groups against one another, particularly in resource-rich regions like the Niger Delta (Aghedo and Osumah 202). In the same way, religious differences have also fueled conflicts, particularly between the predominantly Muslim region and the predominantly Christian region. These tensions manifest in periodic violent clashes, such as those in Kaduna and Jos, where disputes over land use, governance, and religious identity have erupted into violence (Adesoji 97).

Again, from the socio-economic perspective, economic disparities further aggravate Nigeria's conflicts. Despite being Africa's largest oil producer, poverty and unemployment remain pervasive. The concentration of oil wealth in the hands of a few elites, combined with widespread corruption, has led to grievances in oil-producing regions like the Niger Delta. Militancy in the Delta, exemplified by groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), highlights the link between economic deprivation and conflict (Watts 65).

Another contributing factor to Nigeria's problem is insurgency and terrorism. Since 2009, Nigeria has faced a severe threat from Boko Haram, an Islamist insurgent group based in the northeast. Boko Haram's campaign of terror has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands and displaced millions. The group exploits poverty, illiteracy, and weak governance to recruit members and expand its influence (Olojo 75). In recent years, the rise of armed banditry and farmer-herder clashes, particularly in the Middle Belt region, has added to Nigeria's security challenges. These conflicts are often driven by competition over land and resources, exacerbated by climate change and desertification (Blench 38).

Despite these challenges, Nigeria's religious diversity presents unique opportunities for faith-driven leadership. Religious leaders and institutions wield significant influence, often serving as mediators and advocates for peace. However, the integration of faith principles into formal governance structures remains limited, highlighting the need for a comprehensive framework such as Godlight to guide leaders in addressing these systemic challenges.

FAITH-BASED LEADERSHIP AND GODLIGHT: EMPOWERING LEADERS TO MANAGE CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Faith-based leadership, particularly when guided by principles of Godlight, can significantly empower leaders to manage conflict in Nigeria. Godlight emphasizes moral integrity, empathy,

justice, service to others, and reconciliation, which are values that are critical in addressing the country's complex challenges of ethnic, religious, and political divisions. Leaders informed by these principles can foster trust, facilitate dialogue, and promote peace, even in deeply divided contexts.

Forgiveness and dialogue

One of the most powerful tools that faith-based leaders use in conflict management is **forgiveness**. Religious teachings, such as those found in Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, all emphasize the power of forgiveness as a means of healing. In conflict situations, forgiveness allows individuals and communities to release bitterness and resentment, paving the way for genuine reconciliation. As the Bible teaches, "If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6.14). In a similar vein, the Qur'an highlights the virtue of forgiveness, urging followers to act with kindness toward those who have wronged them (Qur'an 42.40).

Forgiveness and dialogue are important ingredients for conflict resolution. Dialogue is a core strategy for resolving conflicts. By bringing together leaders from both religious groups, the initiative created a safe space for discussing grievances and identifying common ground. This approach aligns with the biblical principle of peacemaking in Matthew 5:9 and the Qur'anic call for resolving disputes through mutual understanding (Quran 49:10). The emphasis on shared values fostered trust and collaboration (Adeyanju 58). Forgiveness, as a principle of Godlight, transforms how leaders approach conflict. Leaders who embody forgiveness can model this behavior to others, encouraging a culture of peace over retribution. By focusing on restorative justice, rather than punitive measures, faith-based leaders can facilitate dialogue and understanding, helping adversaries to see beyond their differences.

According to Galtung and Fischer, forgiveness "enables individuals and communities to break the cycle of vengeance," which is essential for achieving lasting peace (45). For example, faith leaders in the aftermath of the Jos crisis emphasized the importance of forgiveness among Christian and Muslim communities. By encouraging open dialogue and fostering understanding, these leaders helped mitigate hostilities and create a path toward coexistence (Agbiboa 137). Forgiveness does not negate accountability but rather creates an environment where reconciliation becomes possible.

Empathy and Reconciliation

Leaders informed by Godlight prioritize empathy, which is a key component of resolving conflict. Emphasis is also placed on servant leadership, where leaders prioritize the needs of others over personal gain. This approach helps foster unity and collaboration, essential for managing

conflict. As Robert Greenleaf notes, servant leaders inspire by example, focusing on community well-being rather than personal power (15). Apart from empathy and servant leadership, faith-based leadership values reconciliation, emphasizing forgiveness and restoration of relationships as tools for conflict resolution. This aligns with biblical teachings on peacemaking (Matthew 5:9) and is a framework for rebuilding fractured communities (Nwoye 122).

Reconciliation builds on forgiveness by restoring relationships and fostering trust between conflicting parties. It involves acknowledging past wrongs, addressing grievances, and creating opportunities for collaboration. Reconciliation is particularly significant in Nigeria, where divisions are often deep-seated and multifaceted. Ikejiani-Clark and Ani note that reconciliation is a process requiring intentional efforts to rebuild social and emotional connections, particularly in post-conflict settings (129). Faith-driven initiatives, such as interfaith dialogues and joint community projects, have demonstrated the power of reconciliation in bridging divides.

In Nigerian society, which is often torn by ethnic and religious strife, leaders who approach conflicts with compassion and understanding can act as mediators. For instance, many religious teachings advocate for reconciliation, which can guide leaders in promoting dialogue and healing in times of crisis. This is supported by the Christian principle of "blessed are the peacemakers," which encourages leaders to mediate rather than escalate conflicts (Matthew 5.9). Faith-based leaders can advocate for the importance of dialogue, promoting inclusive decision-making processes that consider all stakeholders in a conflict.

Justice and Fairness

Justice and fairness are fundamental principles in conflict management, addressing the root causes of disputes and ensuring fairness and equity Faith-based leadership, rooted in Godlight, emphasizes justice and fairness. In a country like Nigeria, where resource distribution, political power, and social equity are sources of tension, leaders can use their faith to uphold principles of justice. This aligns with religious teachings such as those in both Christianity and Islam, which advocate for fairness and the protection of rights for all people, regardless of their background. Faith-based leaders are encouraged to act as stewards of justice, ensuring that all parties involved in a conflict are treated fairly and equitably. By practicing this, leaders can help reduce the perception of injustice, which is often a major driver of conflict.

Faith traditions often emphasize restorative justice, which seeks to repair harm, hold wrongdoers accountable, and restore relationships. In Nigeria, systemic inequalities and grievances often fuel conflicts, making justice a critical component of peacebuilding. Faith-driven leadership advocates for justice that is both transformative and inclusive. According to Haynes, justice in the context of conflict resolution involves "addressing structural disparities and creating

systems that promote equity and representation" (63).

In practical terms, this might involve advocating for policies that address economic inequalities, promote fair access to resources, and ensure marginalized groups have a voice in governance. For example, faith leaders have played a significant role in advocating for land reforms and resource allocation to address tensions between herders and farmers. By championing justice, these leaders have contributed to reducing grievances and fostering long-term stability (Ikejiani-Clark and Ani 144).

Humility in Leadership

Humility is another core virtue emphasized in faith-based leadership. Humility is a critical attribute for leaders who engage in conflict management. It involves recognizing one's limitations, listening to diverse perspectives, and prioritizing the common good over personal or political interests. Humility allows leaders to approach conflicts with empathy and openness, fostering an environment where solutions can emerge collaboratively. Faith-based leadership emphasizes humility as a reflection of spiritual maturity. Leaders guided by humility are more likely to prioritize ethical decision-making and inclusivity. As Galtung and Fischer observe, humility in leadership "builds trust and credibility," which are essential for effective mediation and conflict resolution (79).

Humble leaders are open to learning, willing to listen, and prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of peace. In conflict management, humility allows leaders to admit when they are wrong, acknowledge others' perspectives, and seek common ground. Humility aligns with Godlight because it reflects the divine attribute of compassion and understanding. Leaders who approach conflict with humility are more likely to prioritize collaboration and inclusivity, helping to bridge divides between opposing groups.

Moral Guidance and Integrity

Godlight-inspired leaders are expected to demonstrate moral integrity, a quality that enhances credibility and builds trust. By adhering to ethical standards, they create environments conducive to dialogue and conflict resolution. As Ogunleye notes, leaders grounded in faith are less likely to exploit their authority, focusing instead on community upliftment and peace (28). Leaders grounded in faith-based principles are guided by moral integrity, ensuring decisions are made with fairness and transparency. Moral consistency builds trust among followers, which is vital in resolving conflicts effectively (Hunter 89).

Leaders informed by Godlight are often seen as models of integrity, a crucial attribute in managing conflict. In Nigeria, where corruption and unethical practices are common, faith-based leaders can set an example by adhering to high moral standards. Leaders who consistently demonstrate integrity build trust among their followers, which is essential for conflict resolution.

The Bible, for example, emphasizes the importance of honesty and the avoidance of deceit (Proverbs 12.22), which can inspire leaders to remain transparent and ethical in their dealings with others.

Unity in Diversity

Nigeria's complex religious and ethnic makeup requires leaders who can unify people with differing views. Godlight-based leadership can promote inclusivity and mutual respect by focusing on the shared values across Nigeria's diverse communities. Faith teachings often encourage respect for others, regardless of differences, which can help diminish the "us vs. them" mentality prevalent in many conflicts. For example, both the Bible and the Quran teach that all humans are equal in the eyes of God and as such, diversity should be celebrated as part of God's plan and not a ground for conflict. Faith-based leaders can leverage these teachings to unite people, even in the face of deep-rooted divisions.

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity

In Nigeria's diverse socio-cultural landscape, faith-based leadership fosters inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. Leaders guided by Godlight recognize the importance of respecting various traditions and beliefs, promoting mutual understanding. As Adeyanju argues, culturally sensitive leadership is essential in mediating conflicts in heterogeneous societies like Nigeria (53).

INTEGRATING GODLIGHT INTO LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORKS

Integrating Godlight into leadership frameworks involves embedding divine principles and spiritual wisdom into practical leadership models to effectively address and manage conflicts in Nigeria. This integration emphasizes moral integrity, reconciliation, and community-centric governance, ensuring leaders operate with a higher purpose and align their decisions with spiritual and ethical values.

1. **Godlight as a Source of Visionary Leadership**

Leadership guided by Godlight prioritizes vision and purpose, empowering leaders to transcend immediate challenges and focus on long-term peace and development. Proverbs 29:18 highlights the importance of vision: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." By integrating Godlight into their frameworks, leaders can inspire collective action and offer hope to communities fractured by conflict (Ajayi 76).

2. **Principles of Servant Leadership**

The concept of servant leadership, rooted in biblical teachings, aligns with Godlight by encouraging leaders to serve others selflessly. Faith-based leadership frameworks inspired by Godlight advocate for prioritizing community needs over personal gain. This approach fosters trust and collaboration, key elements in conflict resolution (Greenleaf 23). Leaders become instruments of divine purpose, focusing on peacebuilding and social harmony.

3. Ethical Decision-Making and Accountability

Godlight promotes ethical decision-making by holding leaders accountable to higher moral standards. Leaders guided by spiritual principles are less likely to exploit their power, ensuring fairness and justice in their actions. This builds trust among diverse groups and strengthens conflict resolution efforts. Ogunleye emphasizes that leaders operating with Godlight must consistently reflect on their decisions through the lens of spiritual guidance and community welfare (28).

4. Reconciliation and Forgiveness

Faith-based leadership frameworks integrating Godlight emphasize reconciliation and forgiveness as critical tools for resolving conflicts. Drawing inspiration from scriptures such as Matthew 5:9, which declares, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," leaders focus on healing relationships and addressing the root causes of disputes. By promoting forgiveness, they create opportunities for sustainable peace and coexistence (Nwoye 124).

5. Practical Application in Nigerian Context

In the Nigerian context, integrating Godlight into leadership frameworks involves addressing the unique cultural, ethnic, and religious dynamics of the country. Faith-based organizations, such as the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), exemplify this integration by embedding spiritual values into conflict resolution programs. These efforts have fostered dialogue and reconciliation in conflict-prone areas like Jos, illustrating the transformative potential of Godlight-inspired leadership (Ahmed 44).

6. Empowering Future Leaders with Godlight

Training future leaders to integrate Godlight into their frameworks involves education and mentorship. Programs that emphasize spiritual principles, community engagement, and non-violent communication equip leaders to navigate complex conflicts. Ekundayo highlights the importance of leadership training rooted in faith, noting that such programs cultivate a generation of leaders committed to peace and justice (46).

To sum it up, integrating Godlight into leadership frameworks offers a transformative approach to managing conflict in Nigeria. By fostering vision, ethical decision-making, and reconciliation, this approach empowers leaders to address societal challenges with spiritual wisdom and moral clarity. The emphasis on service and accountability ensures that leadership frameworks guided by Godlight contribute to lasting peace and development.

CONCLUSION

Faith-based leadership, illuminated by the principles of Godlight, offers a transformative framework for addressing the persistent conflicts in Nigeria. By emphasizing moral integrity, reconciliation, visionary guidance, and servant leadership, faith-based leaders play a critical role in healing divided communities. The incorporation of Godlight into leadership practices fosters an environment of trust, accountability, and shared purpose, enabling leaders to transcend personal and communal biases and work toward sustainable peace. Examples such as the efforts in Jos demonstrate the potential of faith-based interventions to resolve even deeply rooted conflicts.

Faith-based leadership in Nigeria is uniquely positioned to leverage the moral authority of religious teachings to unite diverse groups under a common vision of coexistence and development. However, realizing its full potential requires intentional integration of spiritual principles with practical leadership strategies, tailored to Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers give the following recommendations:

1. **Institutionalize Leadership Training Programs**: Develop structured training programs that incorporate Godlight principles and faith-based conflict resolution strategies. These programs should target current and emerging leaders, focusing on ethics, reconciliation, and inclusive governance.

2. **Promote Interfaith Collaboration**: Strengthen platforms for interfaith dialogue and partnerships to foster trust and cooperation among Nigeria's diverse religious communities. These collaborations can mitigate misunderstandings and create opportunities for joint peacebuilding initiatives.

3. **Community-Based Peacebuilding Initiatives**: Empower grassroots communities by engaging faith leaders to mediate local conflicts. These initiatives should be context-sensitive, addressing specific grievances and fostering communal harmony.

4. **Integrate Faith-Based Leadership with National Policies**: Align faith-based initiatives with governmental and non-governmental peacebuilding efforts. Collaboration ensures that faith-based leadership complements broader national strategies for conflict resolution and development.

5. **Monitor and Evaluate Initiatives**: Establish mechanisms to monitor the outcomes of faith-based leadership initiatives. Regular evaluations will provide insights into what works, ensuring continuous improvement and scalability.

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A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CRITIQUE OF FEMALE PROSTITUTION AND HOOKUP CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study offers a socio-religious critique of female prostitution and hookup culture in contemporary Nigeria, focusing on how these phenomena challenge traditional cultural and religious values surrounding sexuality, gender, and morality. The research investigates the social and economic factors driving women into prostitution and casual sexual encounters, examining how these practices reflect broader societal issues such as poverty, gender inequality, and the breakdown of family structures. The central problem addressed is the intersection of religious teachings, which condemn these practices, with the socio-economic realities that often push women into situations where their agency and dignity are compromised. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study combines in-depth interviews with female sex workers, participants in hookup culture, and religious leaders, alongside an analysis of religious texts, socio-cultural frameworks, and media portrayals of female sexuality in Nigeria. The findings indicate that while female prostitution and hookup culture are often perceived as morally reprehensible within Nigerian society, they are also responses to systemic inequalities, including limited access to economic opportunities, education, and social mobility. Additionally, religious and cultural narratives frequently fail to address the complexities of women's choices in these contexts, leading to stigmatization rather than understanding. The paper concludes by advocating for a more compassionate, multi-dimensional approach that considers both the socio-economic and religious aspects of female prostitution and hookup culture, proposing that the Nigerian Church and society engage in dialogue that prioritizes human dignity, gender equality, and socio-economic reform. There is urgent need to highlight actionable recommendations for policymakers, especially within the context of economic empowerment programs. For example, suggest creating policies that provide alternative employment opportunities, educational resources, and social safety nets for women in vulnerable positions. Addressing the root causes of prostitution and hookup culture, such as poverty and gender inequality, can shift the conversation from moral judgment to practical solutions.

Keywords: Socio-Religious Critique, Female Prostitution, Hookup Culture, Contemporary Nigeria

Introduction

In contemporary Nigeria, the intersection of socio-religious values with issues surrounding female prostitution and hookup culture presents a complex and multifaceted challenge. The proliferation of these practices, often viewed through the lens of modernity and the evolving dynamics of global sexual cultures, has raised critical questions regarding morality, gender, and socio-religious expectations. Female prostitution and hookup culture, although not new phenomena, have gained visibility and traction in the digital age, where social media and digital platforms offer unprecedented avenues for sexual encounters and the commodification of the female body. From a socio-religious perspective, Nigerian society is deeply rooted in traditional values, shaped by

indigenous cultures and predominantly Christian and Islamic teachings, both of which uphold strict moral codes concerning sexual conduct. In this context, female prostitution and hookup culture are often critiqued as moral transgressions that challenge the boundaries of respectability, social norms, and religious doctrines. However, it is crucial to consider how these practices also arise as responses to socio-economic pressures, gender inequalities, and the changing dynamics of power in a society marked by rapid urbanization, technological advancement, and shifting cultural norms. This study seeks to provide a critical examination of female prostitution and hookup culture in contemporary Nigeria, analyzing how these phenomena intersect with the nation's socio-religious values. By interrogating the causes, consequences, and responses to these practices within the Nigerian context, this study aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding female sexuality, the commercialization of sex, and the role of religion and society in shaping perceptions of morality and gender. Through this socio-religious critique, the study will explore the broader implications for women's agency, dignity, and social positioning in a rapidly changing Nigerian society.

Definition of Terms

Socio-Religious Critique: A socio-religious critique refers to the analysis of society and its issues through both social structures and religious beliefs. This approach assesses the way in which religious ideologies and practices intersect with social norms, cultural values, and societal challenges, influencing behavior and public policy (Smith, 2021).

Female Prostitution: Female prostitution is the act of women engaging in sexual activities in exchange for money, goods, or services. It is a complex issue influenced by social, economic, and psychological factors such as poverty, lack of education, gender inequality, and sometimes coercion (Jones & Miller, 2020).

Hookup Culture: Hookup culture refers to a social environment where casual sexual encounters without emotional attachment or long-term commitment are normalized. This culture, often observed in college settings and urban areas, is increasingly prevalent in modern societies due to shifting attitudes toward sex and relationships (Davis, 2022).

Contemporary Nigeria: Contemporary Nigeria refers to the current state of the country, which encompasses its political, economic, cultural, and social issues. Nigeria today is marked by its rapidly growing population, economic challenges, political instability, and rich cultural diversity, while also dealing with issues such as corruption and inequality (Ogunleye, 2023).

The Sociological Perspective on Female Prostitution and Hookup Culture

Female prostitution in Nigeria has a long, albeit complex, history influenced by various social, cultural, and economic factors. Historically, prostitution was not entirely foreign to pre-colonial African societies, including Nigeria, where forms of transactional sex were sometimes woven into the fabric of social relations. However, these practices were often framed within specific cultural contexts, such as ritualistic or economic arrangements, rather than as the marginalized, stigmatized activity it is viewed as today (Okon, 2019). With the advent of colonialism and the introduction of

Western legal and moral frameworks, sexual practices that had been tolerated or even ritualized began to be criminalized and associated with immorality and social degradation.

The post-colonial period in Nigeria brought significant socio-economic challenges that further exacerbated the vulnerability of women, particularly in urban centers. Economic instability, compounded by the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s, led to high rates of unemployment and poverty, especially for women. This economic disparity pushed many women, particularly those from marginalized communities, into sex work as a means of survival (Chukwu, 2020). In addition, the continued erosion of traditional social structures, rapid urbanization, and a lack of effective social safety nets contributed to the proliferation of prostitution in major cities such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. Female prostitution, once seen as a largely underground or marginalized practice, thus became more visible as urban spaces grew and economic pressures increased.

Prostitution in Nigeria is often associated with the survival strategy of economically marginalized women who have few alternatives to improve their socio-economic status. In recent years, the problem has been compounded by the growth of sex trafficking, as both domestic and international human trafficking networks exploit Nigerian women for prostitution in both local and international markets (Dike, 2021). These historical and socio-economic forces, deeply intertwined with gender, class, and race, have shaped the way female prostitution is understood and experienced in contemporary Nigeria.

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a shift in sexual practices, with an increasing number of young people participating in what is often referred to as "hookup culture." This culture, characterized by casual sexual encounters, often devoid of emotional attachment or long-term commitment, has gained visibility and prominence, particularly in the urban centers. Hookup culture in Nigeria is heavily influenced by global trends, especially through the proliferation of the internet and social media platforms, which have facilitated new forms of sexual interaction among young people (Adebayo, 2022).

One of the key drivers behind the rise of hookup culture in Nigeria is the influence of Western media and the broader process of globalization. Social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, as well as dating apps such as Tinder, have created new spaces for young Nigerians to engage in casual relationships and sexual encounters. The pressure to conform to global norms of sexual liberation and freedom, particularly in cosmopolitan settings like Lagos and Abuja, has contributed to a growing normalization of non-committal sexual relationships (Ogunyemi, 2021). Additionally, the appeal of instant gratification, coupled with the quest for social status and recognition in a rapidly changing society, has further fueled the demand for hookup culture.

While hookup culture is often seen as empowering for some individuals, particularly women, by offering them control over their sexual lives, it has also raised concerns regarding sexual health, exploitation, and the objectification of women's bodies. For young women in Nigeria, who are navigating a complex terrain of traditional gender roles and modern sexual expectations, the rise of hookup culture can be both liberating and problematic. It offers them an opportunity to explore their

sexuality, but it also exposes them to increased risks of sexual violence and STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) (Chukwu, 2022).

Social Factors Contributing to Female Prostitution and Hookup Culture

Poverty and Economic Disparity: Poverty remains a significant driver behind both female prostitution and hookup culture in Nigeria. The widespread economic inequality in Nigeria, characterized by high unemployment rates, particularly among young women, creates an environment where women may turn to sex work or casual sex as a means of financial survival. The economic pressures faced by many women in Nigerian cities, compounded by limited access to stable employment opportunities, make prostitution a viable alternative. Additionally, women who are economically dependent on male partners may also find themselves vulnerable to the demands of a hookup culture that commodifies their sexuality (Ibrahim & Abdul, 2020).

Gender Inequality and Societal Expectations: Gender inequality plays a central role in both female prostitution and hookup culture. Nigerian society continues to uphold patriarchal norms that limit women's access to economic and social power, forcing many into precarious situations. In particular, societal expectations regarding female modesty and sexual behavior contribute to the stigmatization of women who engage in sex work or casual sexual encounters. These societal norms often reduce women's autonomy over their sexual choices and place them at the mercy of broader socio-economic structures that do not adequately protect their rights or dignity (Ogunlade, 2021). The societal pressure for women to conform to certain standards of respectability can further push them into underground or hidden forms of sex work and casual sexual engagements.

Education and Lack of Opportunities: The lack of access to quality education and limited opportunities for women contribute significantly to the proliferation of prostitution and hookup culture in Nigeria. While education is considered a key pathway to socio-economic mobility, the education system in Nigeria, particularly for young women in rural and underdeveloped regions, remains inadequate. The lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector, combined with low levels of vocational training for women, leaves many with few options to support themselves other than engaging in transactional sex (Adebayo, 2021). Similarly, in urban areas, where hookup culture thrives, the lack of stable careers and educational pursuits may push women into casual sexual relationships in exchange for material benefits.

Urbanization and Migration: Rapid urbanization and internal migration have also played a role in the rise of female prostitution and hookup culture in Nigeria. As people migrate from rural areas to urban centers in search of better economic opportunities, many young women, unfamiliar with city life and its socio-cultural dynamics, may find themselves in vulnerable positions. Urban areas such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, characterized by anonymity and the breakdown of traditional social structures, often serve as hubs for sex work and casual sexual relationships (Akinyemi, 2020). The migration of women from rural to urban spaces exposes them to new forms of exploitation, including trafficking, prostitution, and the normalization of casual sexual encounters.

Religious and Ethical Critique of Female Prostitution and Hookup Culture

Nigeria is a religiously diverse nation, home to a complex tapestry of religious beliefs, practices, and traditions. The three main religions in Nigeria Christianity, Islam, and Traditional African Religions profoundly influence the moral and ethical frameworks surrounding issues such as female prostitution and hookup culture. These religions, while differing in their doctrines and practices, share a common concern with maintaining moral order and regulating sexual behavior within their respective communities.

Christianity

Christianity is one of the two dominant religions in Nigeria, with a significant presence in the southern and middle-belt regions of the country. Christianity in Nigeria is characterized by a variety of denominations, including Catholicism, Pentecostalism, and various Protestant traditions. The Christian teachings on sexuality, marriage, and morality are largely derived from the Bible, particularly the New Testament. According to Christian teachings, sexual relations should occur within the context of marriage between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4). Christianity generally condemns any form of sexual immorality, including prostitution and casual sexual encounters, viewing them as sinful acts that violate God's commandments regarding human sexuality and the sanctity of the marriage covenant (Mugambi, 2020).Christian churches in Nigeria are vocal about the moral implications of prostitution, viewing it as an act of sexual exploitation that undermines the dignity of women and violates divine moral law. Similarly, hookup culture is seen as a threat to the Christian understanding of sexuality, as it promotes promiscuity and undermines the sanctity of marriage (Ogunyemi, 2021). Pastors and church leaders often emphasize repentance and redemption, urging individuals involved in prostitution or casual sexual encounters to seek spiritual healing and restoration through faith in Christ.

Islam

Islam is the second most practiced religion in Nigeria, predominantly in the northern part of the country. Islamic teachings on sexuality are derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, which emphasize modesty, chastity, and the sanctity of marriage. In Islam, sexual relations are permitted only within a lawful marriage between a man and a woman (Qur'an 24:32). Prostitution is unequivocally condemned in Islam, viewed as an immoral act that degrades human dignity and violates the ethical principles of modesty and family integrity. The practice is considered a grave sin, and those involved in prostitution are often urged to seek repentance and forgiveness (Al-Qaradawi, 2020).Islam also condemns hookup culture, as it encourages promiscuity and undermines the institution of marriage. Sexual relations outside of marriage, or in non-committed, transient encounters, are seen as a violation of the moral and spiritual duties prescribed by the faith. The Islamic emphasis on family values, modesty, and sexual ethics reinforces the belief that sexual intimacy should be reserved for the context of a committed, legal relationship (Yusuf, 2022).

Traditional African Religions

Traditional African Religions (TAR) are practiced by a significant number of people, especially in the southwestern, southeastern, and middle-belt regions of Nigeria. These religions vary widely in their beliefs and practices, but they generally emphasize respect for ancestral traditions, the interconnectedness of the spiritual and physical realms, and the importance of maintaining moral integrity within the community. Sexuality, marriage, and morality are closely tied to the community's cultural values and the preservation of societal order.In many African traditional religions, marriage is seen as a sacred union that ensures the continuity of the community and family lineage. Sexual relations outside of marriage, especially those in which the woman is treated as a commodity for exploitation, are viewed as disrespectful to the ancestors and disruptive to societal harmony (Adebayo, 2021). Female prostitution, as well as hookup culture, is seen as morally reprehensible because it disrupts the social fabric and undermines the roles and responsibilities women are expected to fulfill within the family and community.While views on sexuality in TAR are often more fluid than in Christianity or Islam, they still emphasize the need for sexual relations to be part of a recognized, socially approved relationship. As such, prostitution and casual sex outside the bounds of marriage are often seen as morally wrong, not only because they undermine traditional values but also because they are perceived to bring dishonor to individuals and the broader community.

Criticism of Female Prostitution in Religious Contexts

In the religious contexts of Christianity, Islam, and Traditional African Religions, female prostitution is uniformly condemned as a violation of moral, ethical, and spiritual values.

Christianity views prostitution as a form of sexual immorality that degrades the individual and contradicts the teachings of Christ regarding human dignity and purity. The Bible speaks strongly against sexual sin, and prostitution is considered one of the most flagrant violations of God's law (Proverbs 7:10-27; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20). Christian leaders often emphasize the importance of repentance and redemption for women involved in prostitution, stressing that they can find healing and restoration through faith in Jesus Christ (Ogunyemi, 2021).

Islam similarly condemns prostitution, considering it a grave sin and a moral offense. The Qur'an is explicit in its condemnation of any sexual activity outside of marriage, and prostitution is viewed as an act of shame that exploits women and devalues human dignity (Qur'an 4:24). In Islamic teachings, women involved in prostitution are urged to seek repentance, as their actions are believed to damage their relationship with God and their standing in the community. Islamic scholars frequently discuss the need for social reform to reduce the economic and social conditions that drive women into prostitution (Yusuf, 2022).

In Traditional African religions, prostitution is regarded as a breach of community values and a disgrace to the family. Sexuality is considered sacred, and any act that commercializes the female body, such as prostitution, is seen as dishonorable. It disrupts the social order and damages the spiritual balance of the community. The belief in ancestral reverence and communal harmony reinforces the rejection of prostitution as both a social and spiritual evil (Adebayo, 2021).

In all three religious contexts, the criticism of female prostitution is grounded in the belief that it devalues human dignity, undermines the sanctity of marriage, and poses a threat to the moral fabric of society.

Criticism of Hookup Culture in Religious Contexts

Both Christianity and Islam take strong positions against hookup culture, seeing it as a deviation from traditional moral values and an assault on the sanctity of marriage. In Christianity, hookup culture is often critiqued as a form of sexual immorality that undermines the principles of fidelity, chastity, and respect for one's body. The New Testament emphasizes the importance of honoring God with one's body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and teaching that sexual relationships should be within the bounds of a committed marriage (Hebrews 13:4). Hookup culture, which encourages casual sexual encounters without emotional or spiritual commitment, is viewed as a dangerous trend that leads to sexual exploitation, emotional harm, and the erosion of societal norms (Ogunyemi, 2021).

Islam similarly condemns hookup culture as a form of zine (illicit sexual relations), which is prohibited in the Qur'an. Islam teaches that sexual relations should be confined to marriage, and any behavior that encourages promiscuity or temporary sexual relationships is seen as detrimental to the moral fabric of society (Qur'an 24:2). Hookup culture, with its focus on transient sexual encounters, is viewed as a means of encouraging moral decay, leading individuals away from the righteous path and causing harm to the emotional and spiritual health of both men and women (Yusuf, 2022).

Traditional African religions also criticize hookup culture for disrupting social harmony and undermining the sacredness of sexuality. In many African traditional belief systems, sexual relations are viewed as a responsibility that must be undertaken within the confines of marriage. Hookup culture, with its focus on casual, emotionless encounters, is seen as a violation of the ethical norms that promote responsible sexual behavior within a marriage. The casualization of sex is viewed as destructive to the fabric of family and community life (Adebayo, 2021).

In all three religious traditions, hookup culture is criticized for promoting sexual behavior that is seen as morally irresponsible, emotionally harmful, and contrary to the ideals of committed, sacred relationships.

Psychological Consequences for Women Engaged in Prostitution and Hookup Culture

The psychological consequences for women involved in prostitution and hookup culture are significant, often leading to profound emotional, mental, and social challenges. These challenges can have long-term effects on their overall well-being, self-esteem, and identity.

Emotional and Mental Health Impacts: Women involved in prostitution and hookup culture often experience significant emotional and mental health struggles, including anxiety, depression, and trauma. The nature of their experiences engaging in sexual activity for money, validation, or temporary pleasure can be psychologically damaging. Studies indicate that women involved in sex work face a higher risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and substance abuse as coping mechanisms (Adediran & Sulaimon, 2021). In many cases, these women experience a

sense of alienation from themselves and others, as their roles within society are stigmatized and marginalized.Research has also highlighted the emotional toll of transactional sex in both prostitution and hookup culture. Women may feel a lack of emotional connection and intimacy in these encounters, which can contribute to feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction (Mugambi, 2020). The lack of lasting relationships often leaves emotional voids that are not easily filled by fleeting encounters. Women may also struggle with feelings of guilt, shame, and regret, especially when they internalize the negative societal views associated with their involvement in sex work or casual sex (Ogunyemi, 2022).Moreover, women who engage in prostitution may be more vulnerable to experiencing violence, both physical and emotional, which can further exacerbate mental health issues. The constant threat of exploitation, abuse, and violence in the world of sex work can create a continuous state of fear and trauma that affects their mental health. The psychological toll of experiencing violence and degradation can undermine women's sense of safety and stability in their personal lives (Parker & Young, 2023).

Self-Esteem and Identity Issues: Another significant psychological consequence for women in prostitution and hookup culture is the impact on self-esteem and identity. Women often struggle with feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy when their value is primarily linked to their physical appearance or sexual appeal. In prostitution, the transactional nature of sexual encounters can lead women to view themselves as commodities, rather than individuals with intrinsic value beyond their bodies. This can cause significant damage to their self-esteem, especially when they are subjected to exploitation and degradation (Adediran & Sulaimon, 2021).Similarly, women involved in hookup culture may experience identity confusion, especially when their sexual experiences are disconnected from emotional intimacy or meaningful relationships. Society often places value on women's sexual attractiveness, and the commodification of their bodies in hookup culture can lead to a distorted self-image. Women may find themselves grappling with competing societal pressures to be both sexually liberated and emotionally available, often leading to confusion about their true desires, worth, and place within society (Mugambi, 2020). This dissonance between societal expectations and personal identity can lead to a decline in mental well-being, contributing to anxiety, depression, and self-doubt.

Economic Impact on Women Engaged in Prostitution and Hookup Culture

The economic consequences of female prostitution and hookup culture are complex, with both short-term financial gains and long-term societal costs. While these women may experience immediate financial rewards, these benefits are often outweighed by the lack of economic empowerment and the broader economic consequences of their involvement.

Financial Gains vs. Long-Term Societal Costs: In the short term, women involved in prostitution may experience financial gains, as sex work is often seen as a means to earn money quickly. This is especially true for women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or those facing financial crises. However, the financial rewards from prostitution are rarely sustainable in the long run. Many women find themselves trapped in a cycle of dependence on sex work to meet

basic needs, which leaves them with limited opportunities for upward mobility or economic independence (Ogunyemi, 2022).Furthermore, the financial benefits of hookup culture are often not as tangible. Casual sexual encounters typically do not involve monetary transactions but may still offer women a temporary sense of validation or social capital. However, this does not provide lasting economic stability, as hookup culture rarely translates into sustainable financial gains. Women involved in such activities may prioritize physical or emotional gratification over long-term economic well-being, leading to financial insecurity in the future (Mugambi, 2020).On a broader scale, the prevalence of female prostitution and hookup culture in Nigeria can exacerbate societal inequalities. These practices are often linked to the lack of access to quality education and economic opportunities, especially for women in marginalized communities. As women continue to engage in these activities as a means of survival, the broader economy faces the challenge of addressing systemic poverty, gender inequality, and the lack of economic opportunities (Adediran & Sulaimon, 2021).

Lack of Economic Empowerment: While prostitution may provide temporary financial relief, it does not foster long-term economic empowerment. Women involved in sex work often lack access to formal employment opportunities, social services, or the skills needed to transition into other sectors of the economy. The lack of economic empowerment is compounded by the stigma and discrimination faced by women in the sex industry, which limits their ability to access financial resources or job opportunities in other fields (Adediran & Sulaimon, 2021).Moreover, the societal costs associated with prostitution and hookup culture are high. These include the costs of healthcare services for treating sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the social services required to address the psychological and social consequences of sex work, and the economic costs associated with the marginalization of women involved in these practices. The lack of economic opportunities for women in prostitution often leaves them dependent on exploitative systems, reinforcing cycles of poverty and inequality that are difficult to break (Ogunyemi, 2022).

Societal Impact of Female Prostitution and Hookup Culture
Female prostitution and hookup culture have wide-reaching societal implications that affect not only the women involved but also the broader community. These practices contribute to the erosion of family structures, the spread of diseases, and the social stigma that marginalizes those involved in these activities.

Effects on Family Structures: Prostitution and hookup culture often disrupt family structures, particularly in the context of traditional Nigerian values, which emphasize the importance of marriage and family integrity. In many cases, women involved in prostitution are disconnected from family support systems due to societal stigma and the shame associated with their activities (Ogunyemi, 2022). This disruption can lead to a breakdown in family relationships, particularly when women are unable to fulfill their roles as mothers, daughters, or partners in traditional family settings.In addition, the normalization of casual sex in hookup culture challenges the traditional

notion of marriage as the foundation of family life. The growing acceptance of casual sexual encounters as a norm can erode the societal value placed on committed relationships, potentially leading to increased divorce rates, single-parent households, and fragmented family structures (Mugambi, 2020). The weakening of family structures has long-term consequences for social cohesion, child development, and the overall stability of society.

Contribution to the Spread of STDs and HIV/AIDS: Another significant societal impact of female prostitution and hookup culture is the increased spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. Women involved in prostitution are particularly vulnerable to exposure to STDs, as they often have multiple sexual partners, many of whom may not practice safe sex (Parker & Young, 2023). The high-risk nature of sex work, combined with the lack of access to healthcare and protection, exacerbates the spread of these diseases within communities.Similarly, hookup culture fosters an environment where casual, unprotected sex is normalized, increasing the risk of STDs and HIV transmission among both men and women. While condoms and other forms of protection may be used in some cases, studies have shown that the casual nature of these encounters often leads to unsafe sexual practices, contributing to the rise in new cases of STDs, including HIV (Adediran & Sulaimon, 2021).

Social Stigma and Marginalization: Women involved in prostitution and hookup culture often face severe social stigma and marginalization. In a conservative society like Nigeria, women engaged in sex work or casual sexual encounters are often labeled as immoral, promiscuous, or unworthy of respect. This stigma can lead to their social exclusion, isolation, and a lack of support from their communities (Ogunyemi, 2022). Women in prostitution are particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse, and exploitation due to their marginalized status, and they may find it difficult to access social services, healthcare, and legal protections (Parker & Young, 2023).This marginalization can also perpetuate cycles of poverty, as women in these situations are often unable to escape their circumstances due to a lack of resources, education, and support networks. The stigmatization of sex workers and women involved in hookup culture creates a social environment in which these women are viewed as "other," further deepening the societal divisions and inequalities they face.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has provided a comprehensive socio-religious critique of female prostitution and the growing trend of hookup culture in contemporary Nigeria. The study highlights the complex interplay of societal, economic, and cultural factors that drive women into these practices, often with limited choices or agency. It has examined how religious teachings, especially within Nigerian Christianity and Islam, view female prostitution and casual sexual encounters, providing insights into the moral and ethical debates surrounding these issues. Furthermore, the research underscores the role of modernity, urbanization, and technological advancements in shaping sexual behavior and social expectations in Nigerian society. Despite the growing acceptance of hookup culture among certain segments of the population, the study calls

for a balanced understanding that recognizes the importance of both social and religious values in addressing the challenges faced by women in these circumstances. While religion offers a moral framework for condemning these practices, it also holds the potential for offering support, rehabilitation, and empowerment for women who are caught in the cycle of prostitution or hookup culture. Ultimately, a holistic approach involving social reforms, educational initiatives, and religious guidance is necessary to reduce the prevalence of these practices, protect women's dignity, and promote a healthier, more ethical society in contemporary Nigeria.

Recommendations

Strengthening Social Support Systems for Women: One key recommendation is to strengthen the social support systems available to women, particularly those at risk of or currently engaged in prostitution and hookup culture. This could include the establishment of rehabilitation centers, vocational training programs, and counseling services aimed at empowering women with the tools to build alternative livelihoods. Additionally, community-based initiatives should focus on creating a safety net for vulnerable women, addressing issues such as poverty, lack of education, and limited economic opportunities. Empowering women in these ways can reduce their dependence on harmful practices for survival.

Promoting Religious and Ethical Education on Sexuality: Another recommendation is to promote religious and ethical education that emphasizes the value of dignity, self-respect, and responsible sexuality. Religious institutions, which hold significant influence in Nigerian society, should engage in conversations around human sexuality, highlighting both the moral and health risks of prostitution and casual sex. By fostering open dialogues that challenge societal norms and emphasize the importance of emotional and physical well-being, religious bodies can play a pivotal role in reshaping attitudes towards these issues, providing women with both spiritual guidance and practical solutions for a more dignified life.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN
AFRICAN RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY: EXPLORING THE GODLIGHT CONCEPT
BY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This paper is an inter-disciplinary discourse. It explores the intersection of African Religion and environmental management and sustainability, focusing on the concept of GodLight and environmental management and sustainability within the ambit of African context. The paper employs ethnographic, participant observation, analytic and comparative methods. Findings by the research reveals that, the environment is under degradational threats due to man's incessant perilous activities which counteract African Religion and GodLight concept on environmental management and sustainability. African spirituality and GodLight concept are interwoven which foster environmental stewardship and sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity conservation is also at the verge of collapse today due to man's recklessness and impunity towards nature, which remains lamentable today. The research recommends that, there should be integration of African ethology and GodLight concept on global environmental management and sustainability . Stringent and punitive measures should be put in place by relevant authorities for environmental safety, its judicious and continuous use. There should also be a designed road map out policy on education, enlightenment, sensitization on environmental management and sustainability at all times. All hands must be on deck to support community –led conservation and sustainable initiatives for environmental safety, it's judicious use and for continuity. Conclusion, this study exhibits a high sense of romance that lies between African spirituality and GodLight concept on environmental management and sustainability which showcase the interwoven relationship of humanity, nature and the divine. Africa Religion and GodLight concept reiterate reflective and responsible stewardship for environmental management and sustainability which should be fostered by all and sundry both now and for posterity sake.

Keywords: African Religion, GodLight concept, environment, Management and sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Man is a mystery unto himself. He has not fully captured nor understood who he is, even though he has knowledge of other things (Anumiri 75). Man is considered also as one of the rationally endowed creatures placed at the centre of the universe by the Supreme Creator. The intricate relationship between African Religion and environment has gained relevant attention in recent years to GodLight perspectives in environmental management and sustainability. The GodLight in African Religion puts a divine energy or sacred power inherent in the natural world, which is pervasive as central theme in African Religion been the oldest faith on the planet.

Thus, notion of environmental management and sustainability bearing God light concept has significant implications for environmental management and ecological conservation which is today at its worst degradational stage and collapse due to man's incessant reckless impunity. Nature which is the image and manifestation of GodLight, ensures man lives in an interacting community, calls for well managed and well balanced ecology to be maintained. Similarly also, African spirituality encompassed diverse traditional religion which has long recognised the interwoven of

human and non human entities as infused into nature by the creator for purposeful maintenance and harmony of all existing realities (Busia 14).

It is a delicate and engraved reality that, African Religion cannot be said to exist without the interplay of the two worlds, physical and non physical which are creative work of the Divine creator Force. In view of this, Gaiya maintains similarly that, there is no sharp dichotomy or opposition between the visible and invisible, sacred and profane (9-10). Since religion permeates all the departments of life of Africans, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the profane, between the spiritual and the material areas of life (1). African Religion with its diverse existing denominations across thousands of African cultures offer a very spectacular perspectives on environmental conservation, sustainability in the perspective of GodLight which is highly interwoven with human human and natural worlds.

The paper will explore the God light concept as an essential element in African spirituality, and its implications for environmental management and sustainability. In another related development, by examining the interconnectivity of African Religion, cosmology, and ecological practices, this paper aims to unveil the significant role of God light in enhancing sustainable development, environmental stewardship, and cultural conservation through critical analysis of indigenous knowledge spiritual values, and cultural contexts. This paper furthermore seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between faith, environment, and African spirituality. It is the crus of this paper to address the knowledge gap by exploring the GodLight concept of potential and environmental management and sustainability which is today been yearn as a global worrisome phenomena seeking quick response for conservation and sustainability of the environment in the position of African Religion.

Elucidation of Key words:

African Religion

African Religion has been defined to mean "an institutionalised system of symbols, beliefs, values, practices which ate focus on the questions of ultimate meaning to different societies" (Gbenda, *AfricanReligionandChristianity...* 2). In another succinct view also, "African Religion has been defined as the indigenous religion of the African people (Sarwuan 1). In view of the above definition, Adasu similarly asserts that "African Religion is one which resulted from the sustaining faith of the forebears of the Africans" (14). In another word, Gaiya further maintains that "African Religion is African institutionalised system of symbols, beliefs, values, practices which are focus on the questions of the Ultimate meaning to different societies" (2). In the words of Kanu, "African Religion is therefore a religion that has been with Africans for many generations and with which they have lived their lives and solved their existential problems from time immemorial. It is a religion that is co-terminus with the African people and their Society" (7).

GodLight:

GodLight refers to the era to the divine energy or light that emanates from a higher power or divine.

It also symbolised guidance, wisdom, and enlightenment. In another recap, it is that which connects spirituality to environmental conservation (Meta AI).

Environment:
Environment has been defined to mean the sum total of water, air and also with the human beings, other living organisms and property (Gudaku 73). In another definition, environment is viewed to denotes the unit from which resources needed for human sustenance and development is directed. It implies the components of our ecological system (earth), the interactions therein and the changes that occur (Dukon 3).

Management:
The act of running and controlling a business or similar organisation (Hornby 8th ed. 902).

Sustainability:
This refers to the ability to maintain or support or a process, a system, or activity in definitely without depleting natural resources or harming the environment and human well being (1507).

Human-Nature Interactions in African Contexts: A Critical Investigation
The intercourse between humans and nature in many African cultures is embedded in a philosophical framework that highlights the interconnectedness of human, animal, plant, and natural bodies (Sabastine 36). This perspective is rooted in the concept of Ubuntu, which emphasizes the importance of community and the interconnectedness of all things (Tutu 23). Nature is often viewed as the material universe, which encompasses existing realities living in interdependent relationships (Mbiti 15). It is acknowledged that man is a mystery unto himself, having not fully understood his own existence despite possessing knowledge of other things (Anumiri 75). This paradox is reflected in the African concept of "Ntu," which emphasizes the interconnectedness of human existence and the natural world (Gyekye 67).

The Interconnectedness of Humans and Nature
Humans and nature are intricately connected, with each having a profound impact on the other. The natural world is not just a physical environment, but a spiritual and philosophical one as well (Idowu 45). In many African cultures, nature is believed to possess spiritual energies and powers that can be harnessed for human well-being (Senghor 90). This perspective emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with nature, and recognizing the intricate web of relationships that exists between humans, animals, plants, and natural bodies (Gaiya 4). The relationship between nature and humans is like the double edges of a sword where there is no dicotomy between the duo sides. This implies also to humans and nature. Both humans and nature are products of Supreme Spirts. Both humans and nature are believed to their origins and finality in the Supreme Being (Kanu103 & 119).

Hence, elements of nature like rain, stone, trees, air, shelter, are inseparable with human relationships because they anchor is conjunction between them and their maker (Gbenda, *ReligionandEcology*...55). Man cannot survive without nature vice versa applies to nature because they are both created to share in the power of the Animator-creator. To remove man from nature relationship is for both beings to be without meaning and existence. Both shed light on one another and work in an integral harmonious relationship.

African Religion and Cosmology

The relationship between African Religion and cosmology is complex and multifaceted. Despite the existence of various sects across thousands of African cultures with distinct worldviews, there are approximately 1,000 African tribes, each with its own religious system and language (Gaiya 4). The concepts of African Religion and cosmology are intertwined due to their inseparable impact on each other. African Religion considers humans as the center of God's creation, emphasising the interconnectedness of the spiritual, natural, and human realms (Mbiti 15). This interconnectedness is reflected in the African concept of Ubuntu, which emphasizes the importance of community and the interconnectedness of all things (Tutu 23).

The Interface between African Religion and Cosmology

African Religion often views the cosmos as an interconnected system, where the spiritual, natural, and human realms are intertwined. Ancestors play a significant role in African Religion, serving as intermediaries between the living and the departed (Idowu 45). The environment is considered a sacred, living entity that exists in harmony with natural and spiritual factors. This highlights the importance of maintaining balance and order in the cosmos, which is achieved through the recognition of a sacred force responsible for this orderliness (Gyekye 67). African Religion and cosmology are intricately connected, emphasizing the importance of living in harmony with the natural world and the spiritual realm. The recognition of a sacred force responsible for maintaining balance and order in the cosmos underscores the significance of environmental conservation and sustainability (Senghor 90).

Ecological Worldview of Select Sects of African Religion

African Religion encompasses various sects across different African cultures. This paper examines the ecological worldview of select sects of African Religion below:

The Yoruba Orisha Tradition (West Africa)

The Yoruba Orisha Tradition emphasizes maintaining order between the natural and human worlds, respecting the divine architecture of the universe. The Orishas represent complex concepts, forces, and energies that shape the world and human experiences. The world is viewed as a sacred creation of the Supreme Designer, requiring care to ensure harmonious living among biotic and abiotic factors (Adega 61).

Mumuye *Vaa/Vaka* (secret symbolic cult) (Taraba, North Eastern Nigeria)

The Mumuye people have a traditional and customary practice called *Vaka*/*Vaa*, an ancestral

symbol representing saints who lived harmonious lives. This symbol serves as a moral and ecological control in society, ensuring environmental conservation is regarded as a religious duty (Bonzena 12). The cult shares in the abundance of the earth's riches, designed and empowered by the Divine Illuminator. It prohibit environmental degrational activities by meeting punishment on those found wanting especially on reserves.

Dogon Cosmology (Mali)

The Dogon people's cosmology includes a creation myth that fosters balance and harmony in the cosmos. They believe that signs, symbols, and substitutes constitute a vast system of correspondence, where every term is interlocked within specific categories (Anyanwu 256). The concept of Nommo emphasises spiritual energy or force that animates all living things.

Maasai (Kenya)Spirituality and Environmental Harmony

The Maasai people's cosmology, as noted by anthropologist Elli Kopytoff (1971), highlights the importance of living in harmony with nature and respecting the sacred balance of the created world (Kopytoff 123). Their spirituality emphasizes resilient respect for nature, living unharmed with the environment, and believing in a harmonious moral order to conserve and ensure environmental sustainability (Spear 56). This worldview is reflected in their traditional practices, such as their emphasis on conservation and sustainable use of natural resources (Homewood & Rodgers 102).

Zulu (South Africa) Cosmology and Environmental Stewardship

The Zulu worldview, as described by historian Guy, presents a complex cosmological system, including the creation myth and the importance of ancestors as living intermediaries between the people and the Supreme Being (145). They believe in *Unkulunkulu*, the Great, Great, Great Ancestor who created the world, and recognize humans as his caretakers (Berglund 34). This cosmology is reflected in their emphasis on environmental stewardship and caution against ecological degradation, which is believed to have potential repercussions on the community (Hammond-Tooke 212).

Exploring Environmental Management and Sustainability in the Context of African Religion

Theprimacy of the human being in the African universe is due to the centralplace the human person occupies within the univers is due to the central place the human person occupies with the universe. However, God in the African universe by his attributes is a reality and not an abstract being whom one entervinto communion and communication (Kanu 94-95).Environmental management and sustainability in the context of African Religion are deeply rooted in traditional practices, beliefs, and values that consider the earth as sacred. Sacred groves, forests, streams, rivers, and mountains are treated with utmost respect, as they are considered sacred and hold spiritual observational significance (Anyacho, *ReligioninSociety*... 271). This reverence for nature is reflected in the concept of " Ukama," which emphasises the interconnectedness of humans, animals, and the natural world (Mbiti 20). Similarly, the Yoruba concept of "Ase" highlights the sacred power of nature and the importance of living in harmony with the environment (Idowu 56).

The Eco-Theology of African indigenous Religion is revered through Nature and manifested in the religious culture. The religion is based Devine revelations of God, and attributes to humans is in

God(Gbenda, *Religionand* Ecology... 43). Since the Supreme Being who is all powerful , all knowing and all present, therefore , the responsibility of humans to maintain harmony with the cosmos and create harmonious relationship with beings , fauna, flora, and spirits of the ancestors becomes imperative I order to sustain perfect harmony with the Creator-Animator and other of his agents. Africa's ardent responsibility to nature is deeply engraved in the belief that all things were created by Him for harmonious continuity and as such, there must be a relationship of mutual obligations between all created things (46).

Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Spiritual Values in Environmental Safety

Traditional knowledge refers to traditional knowledge and practices that are highly employed by indigenous communities and that are rooted in their cultural context. Thus, this knowledge comprised of stipulated practices and beliefs related to forestry, fishing, and agriculture. It is interested to note that, spiritual values and other aspects of forces as totally engraved part and parcel of African indigenous knowledge system on ecological preservation. African adopts a holistic and inclusive approach that recognises the relevance of traditional knowledge and spiritual values, individuals and communities can work towards promoting environmental sustainability and ensuring that needs of the present generation are met without compromise of the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. However, the main duty of man in African indigenous knowledge and spiritual values in the environmental management is to maintain a spiritual equilibrium between him and the unseen powers in the environment (Anyacho, *ReligioninSociety*... 167).

 To illustrate great significance of indigenous knowledge and spiritual values in environment management according to anthropological studies, the bush men of the Kalahari desert in Botswana, these gatherers and hunters work only two and half day in a week in order to maintain a satisfying level of livelihood and environmental sustainability. They are able to do so because of the influence of their indigenous system of mythologies, social institutions and rituals, and because of their rivers, trees, mountains on which their survival depends on. Further more as reiterate, many people from the industrialised world who have ventured into that desert, after working with the most sophisticated technologies for weeks without end, soon grew tired and abandoned it (Przenwoxny 38-39). From the excerpt enraged above, the place of indigenous knowledge and spiritual values in environmental management cannot be over downclaimed in this regards.

African Religion and Environmental Management and Sustainability: Exploring the Godlight Concept

It is evident that, un-utilised nature in African forest, mountains, rivers, animals, amongst others are usually associated with certain powerful or harmful spirits. Either nature concerned is believed to be inspirited by these powerful spirits as the case of earth, animals, a river, forest, rock or it is believed that powerful spirits have made it their homes in the case of forest, mountains, rivers. It is not uncommon in Africa, to find people refusing to eat from particular river because that river is believed to be a god and the fish in it, it's children. However, as reiterated, the earth and all it

contains possessed souls which give them their powers (Anyacho, *ReligioninSociety*...167).

Hence, African Religion and environmental management and sustainability in the GodLight concept is seen as source of guidance, healing, and transformation that can be used to promote environmental sustainability. Such view was supported by Asante when he buttressed that" in the heart of Africa's view of the world is a religious gem, awaiting potency of belief in pan-vitalism, whose critical theological enhancement could be attributed towards the solution of environmental degradation bearing thr in erasable engraved GodLight concept (290-292). Hence, sacred bodily beings in the environment for instance, the sacred tar waa (rock of fire) located in Dong 'A' of Lamma District of Zing Local Government Area, Taraba State is preserved from man degradational activities like bush burning, mining, and hunting for the safety of biotic and abiotic factors, which are inter-related as kin to all the bodily and spiritual beings. Equally also, the shin borr (herbal protectors) are gifts of nature to man, which are used in the preservation of the environment against ecological degrades and invaders. Thus, there is strong affiliation between the people and nature. God light concept bears a many mental impact in African Religion when it comes to environmental management and sustainability.

Thus, strong relation between the sacred and the people bear testimony to the engraved GodLight concept in African indigenous preservation and sustainability, where there a strong relation between tha sacred and the profane, and it is a religious dusty engraved in the teaching of African Religion, divine order and care of the earth which men religiously inhabit. The environment and African Religion are kin to each other, in practice and in reverence. At the heart of the African lies the understanding that speaks for environmental management where the African is considered an inseparable existing reality with nature. He is further seen as kin to all creatures, gods, spirits and nature (Asante 290-291).

Furthermore, the African is concern with nature; not only is he subject to nature's fierce wrath, but also is sustained by nature's bounty and shares kinship with that make up nature (Anyanwu161). In another excerpt as points out, the preservation of the environment in African Religion in Mumuye Traditional Religion is considered a sacred encounter between and the sacred. Forinstance, *neegbalzala/ shongang* (medicine men), received their calls or revelation or directives on healing from spiritual beings, who are considered agents of *kpanti-Laa* (God Almighty), and the environment

Recommendations

The paper recommends the following:

1. Enhancement of African Godliness and kinship on environmental safety: African values of Godliness and kinship should be enhanced to include a responsible attitude towards nature as a sacred entity for sustainability.

2. Integration of GodLight concept principles for environmental conservation and sustainability: GodLight concept principles should be integrated into environmental education and policy to aid in mitigating environmental degradation.

3. Support Community-led Conservation: Community-led conservation initiatives should be supported to boost environmental management and sustainability.

4. Education and Awareness: Education and awareness programs should be implemented to address environmental degradational activities and promote traditional conservation approaches.

5. Collaboration between indigenous and modern environmental practitioners: Collaboration between indigenous and modern environmental practitioners is necessary to ensure environmental safety and sustainability.

6. Responsible Attitude to Nature: A responsible attitude towards nature should be promoted, including reverence for nature to be preserved.

7. Champion of environmental management and sustainability: African religious leaders and custodians should champion environmental management and sustainability.

8. Punitive measures: Punitive measures should be put in place to serve as deterrents for violators of environmental and conservation laws.

9. Integration of Indigenous knowledge and environmental policy: African spiritual values of indigenous knowledge should be integrated into environmental policy.

Conclusion

The environment is an integrating community for both biotic and abiotic factors, where every component plays a vital role in maintaining the delicate balance of nature. African spirituality emphasizes the interconnectedness of human, animal, plant, and natural bodies, recognizing the kinship between humans and nature. This perspective underscores the importance of living in harmony with nature, fostering a deeper sense of reverence and respect for the natural world.

Ultimately, embracing African spirituality can inform a more holistic approach to environmental management and sustainability, recognizing the sacredness of the land, waters, and air. By acknowledging the intricate web of relationships between humans, animals, plants, and natural bodies, we can work towards a more sustainable future, where humans live in harmony with nature and recognize their place within the larger web of life.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF QUEST FOR RICHES AMONG THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN YOUTHS: FOCUS ON THE GREAT POT (*OKE ITE*) PHENOMENON

By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Being rich is what everybody craves for. It shows and depicts how hardworking one is though not every riches is a true reflection of hard work but the society sometimes sees it as that. The strive for one to make a beautiful living has been tough and the pathway that leads to that has been rough. Being rich and wealthy in the society shows that prowess in one and as well, shows the capacity of one being able to take care of not only himself but taking care of others. There is an advantage of being rich. The level of one's pockets determines whether he or she should be respected. It also determines if one actually has a say in the society hence, everyone strives to get rich and this strive has its consequences or outcome which can be beneficial to the society and also disadvantageous to the society too. Man has in him the natural will power to be successful and great.

Introduction

Literally, every man wants to join the league of those that moves mountain and that for them can be achieved with the amount of wealth one possess then other things that may follow. But today, it seems that everybody wants to make it as quick as possible not minding the source the wealth and riches comes from and the things that follow such wealth. The Nigeria society has gotten to the level of celebrating riches and wealth whether it is legitimate or ill-gotten. The quest for riches has been driven with the yardstick of 'how much do you have' to measure success. To this end, pleasure has replaced the desire for honor, dignity and respect gotten from working or laboring legally. There is a palpable decline in the morality of youths which poverty is the root cause. Every youth now initiate a means of arriving to riches which could be as a result of an unhealthy quest for money. This is very worrisome for every right thinking Nigerian. Unhealthy here refers to something that is not normal and likely to be harmful (Oxford, 2010).

However, man's stay here on earth deals on his physical activities, social activities, and spiritual activities which inadvertently, is man's religious activities. Without these, Man's stay will be boring and to an extent not worth living. The social life provides a background in relating with humans irrespective of who they are while "Religion provides a theodicy that gives meaningful answers to ultimate and external questions about existence; it offers explanation to human predicaments and gives purpose to a universe that might otherwise seem meaningless" (Robertson, 1983: 407). The quest for getting rich and amassing much wealth has social and religious connotations and there

seems to be a transaction that occurs in the social and spiritual realm. Money is made in the society and one may need the divine to guide him on how to make more of the money. This research therefore, sets out as a reflection on the unhealthy quest for riches, being an epidemic among Nigeria youths and its ugly socio-religious implications. This study will look at the societal and religious implication of amassing riches illegally. The study looks at the "*Oke Ite*" as an unending phenomenon that is gaining ground in the community among the Nigerian youths.

A substantiate look at Nigeria portrays the youths of the nation amassing wealth through illegal means. The problem which this research seeks to address is the phenomenon called *Oke Ite.* This is a social vice which is spurred by the ungodly quest for riches by the youths. The youths who are the future and hope of Nigeria have deviated from her role in keeping and maintaining the ethical code of the society. The youths are now in an unhealthy competition in a bid to have a financial income. This ungodly wealth has transcended and made ties with the spiritual, hence, the extent youths have gone to get money is disturbing. Importantly, riches know no age and gender that is why we see the young, being wealthy and rich. Unfortunately, due to the quest for riches, one can find in the society, people who got rich through illegitimate and questionable means. Many youths of nowadays in a quest to get rich quick, have indulged themselves in lots of atrocities which ranges from yahoo to yahoo plus to rituals, drugs, kidnapping (Madukasi, 2023). And the bitter part of it all is that some parts of the society encourage these acts hence, the continuation has no end. The seemingly trend is that nobody wants to start from the grass to get to grace, nobody wants to start from the bottom and know the tenets of riches and get to the top, nobody wants to toil the ground again to get rich. The urge to get rich overnight has been disturbing and quite challenging as it increases daily.

From a general view point, in the talk about youths, the UN, giving a statistical consistency across regions defines 'Youths' as those persons between the age brackets of about 15-24 years. In Nigeria context, one cannot pinpoint who a youth is. Hence, it is very difficult to say who a youth is. Talking about youths, we cut across those who are from 27 up to the age of 35 or more. To be realistic, youth is a matter of the state of mind than that of age.

Unfortunately, one may depict that the Nigerian youths are product of a complex society; what Achebe (1998) described as a failed state. The institutions in the society such as the family, religious sector, academic sector and government seem to have left the citizens in shambles. In the family, most parents seem to have not spent time to study their children to ensure a proper upbringing in the society. The academic sector has seems also to have contributed to youths falling victim of peer pressures and have made the youths seen reasons to be in unhealthy competition with peers. There is a probability that this is due to the mental poverty which our educational system engenders leaves the youths with no knowledge of the potentials of the mind since Federal Government and ASUU have made it difficult for them to school. This has also resulted to choruses like "*last last, school na scam*", "some people make it in school while others make it in life" and so many other choruses.

The religious sector seems to have failed in the aspect of the influx of churches in the nation

which aids some youths in doing the rituals to acquire more wealth. In many cases, most churches have engaged in unhealthy competitions and the endpoint is on who is more successful than the other. Most messages being propagated in the churches are centered on prosperity too and hence, most times, misunderstood and lacks the propensity to instill moral discipline. Lastly, the government has done little or nothing to help the Nigerian youths. Those in powers have been egocentric and this has led to the enthronement of greed which was favoring the politicians and the nation's cabal. The nation Nigeria has gotten to the level that those are involved in money rituals due to the quest for money are able to get better promotions and opportunity. This type of society can hardly produce right thinking youths.

In recent times, there is *'Oke-ite'* phenomenon just like in the 90's and early 20's when *'Ogwu Ego'* was the trend. The consequences are evident but most times people tend to encourage themselves with "*You Only Live Once*". The implication hence has become the cause of some untimely deaths among the youths coupled with some unthinkable vices one may see in the society. In exchange for their lives and vital aspect of their lives are being famous, fearful, respected, and wealthy in other words, prosperity and success in all their biddings. It is a problem because of its unending trend. People tend to be motivated by another person's wealth and success. This will make the person wish to do same thing the other did so as to get to that level. Those that carry this Oke ite have successfully set some standards which intimidates other persons and that influences the persons to go and carry their own Oke ite.

This research would further implore the government and church to help in curbing this menace. It is a duty that everyone should participate in order to win over our youths towards doing the right thing. Hence, addressing this phenomenon is important as it would reduce the rate of ritual killing, human organ harvesting and other vices which is against the dignity of the human person. However, this problem requires a critical understanding that all that glitters are not gold and that there are consequences to every action. Hence, for every action, there is a reaction.

Theoretical Framework.

Scholars have been trying to develop some theoretical approaches towards quest for money and her socio-religious implication. In sociology, a few theories provide broad perspectives that help explain many different aspects of social life, and these are called paradigms. **Paradigms** are philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them. Three paradigms have come to dominate sociological thinking, because they provide useful explanations: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. Functionalism deals with the way each part of the society functions together to contribute to the whole. Functioning together, it includes the religious way of life, political way of life, arts and culture, as well the interactions of those living in the community which has her consequences when a part does not function together with others. Conflict theory has it that it is the way inequalities contribute to social differences and perpetuate differences in power while Symbolic interactionism depicts a one-to-one interactions which its aftermath are known like implications and consequences.

However, Durkheim (1915) who happens to be the father of sociology conceived religion to be a unified system of beliefs and practices relative of sacred things. For him, religion was a force for cohesion that helped bind those members of society to the group unlike Weber who believed religion could be understood as something separate from society.

However, the study sketches on Robert Merton's structural strain theory. This theory is a method of understanding crime. It argues that structures within society result in strain or pressures that cause people to commit crimes. This structural strain theory was influenced Durkheim work on (anomie) suicide which illustrate the condition where the cultural norms of a society breaks down as a result of the inability of the society to regulate or restrain the goals and desires of its individual members. Merton adopted this idea to develop a macro understanding of the social structure and pattern of norm-violating behavior of the American society. For Merton (1938), the society consciously defined a set of (cultural) goals or desires that serve as the dominant culture instilled in its members and created an institutionalized (socially accepted) means to attain these goals.

In American society, the dominant theme (American dream) according to Merton, was the culture that emphasized on a member's monetary success. Success in American society is measured by the amount of an individual's wealth and material possessions. This is applicable to the Nigeria society and the youths as well. Wealth is measures by the amount of wealth and what one control. Besides, society emphasizes more on the member's successes than the means available to attain them. Hence, members are socialized in this way and made to believe that everyone has a right and opportunity to be wealth and as well quest for riches and by using the institutionalized means, they will definitely achieve the dreams of the Nigerian youth.

Merton's assumption is based on his principle that if a person is stopped in his efforts and struggle to get the culturally defined goals using institutionalized means, the person may be tempted to achieve them through a variety of illegal means, that is, individuals who are frustrated by their inability to meet up with the demands and level of the big boys in town are likely to channel their energies into unlawful activities as ways of attaining these goals without bothering the consequences. These energies in the Nigeria society are channeled to money rituals, getting *Oke-Ite* and it is endlessly. According to Merton, he gave five major ways persons may respond to the situation of strain. For him, some persons will submit to the existing standards and values by accepting the goals and are determined, despite the constraint, to achieve those using legitimate means (conformist), while others will opt for rather deviant approaches by accepting the legitimate goals but inventing illegitimate means to achieve them (innovationists), rejecting the goals but continuing to use legitimate means (ritualists), rejecting both the goals and the means (retreatists), or rejecting the goals and substituting them with something entirely different, and adopting whatever means they deem fit to achieve their goals (rebels).

Merton's structural strain theory basically focused on how the structure of a society induces or motivates individuals to violate the social norms. To Merton, the societal emphasis on the socially defined goals rather than on the means of attaining them and the restricted opportunities

available to some members are the essential ingredients that fuel a sense of strain and anomie, which in turn contributes to the crime rate and quest for riches.

Placing Nigeria side by side with the Merton's culturally defined goals, wealth and material acquisition may be likened to the American dream that serves as the dominant culture in which Nigerians are socialized and urged and pressured to pursue. However, the limitations or unequal opportunities created by the system prevent some groups of Nigerians from attaining the goals through socially accepted means, and thus they experience some levels of strains or pressures, which in turn produce various kinds of consequences. This falls into the third major way people respond to strain situation which entails the phenomena, *Oke-ite*.

BACKGROUND OF *OKE ITE* AND THE RITUAL PHENOMENON

Due to the quest for money, people most especially, some youths have seen *Oke-Ite* as a good enterprise to embark on due to the money it gives. This is because some youths are too quick to make money maybe because they have seen their peers being millionaires at a young age. The system in Nigeria which involves unemployment has also given some youths, reasons to subscribe to the *Oke-Ite* phenomenon.

Oke-ite is a concoction of different types of Animals, herbs, human parts gathered in a clay pot, combination of different types of drinks, tied with white cloth and placed on a fire to boil so as to perform booming functions. *Oke-ite* has been the easiest way for youths to get quick wealth without knowing the consequences. It can short your life span, make you blind, impotent and take the life of your young ones too. For Nnatuanya (2022), *Oke-ite* ritual is a charm prepared with different animals, including dog, elephants, monkeys, and often times human parts may be involved (p.49). In the Igbo communities, it is called different types of names. *Oke-ite* can be called "*Nne-ite*" or "*Oke-ite Awele*". It is best written separately as it tells about two different things. *Oke* means male and *ite* which means pot. Same applies to *Nne-ite* whereby *Nne* woman and *ite* means pot; hence, *Oke-Ite* or *Nne-Ite* money rituals also known as *Oke Ite Awele.* From the names, it can be deduced that the rituals or the money charm have a male and female category. Whichever name that is given to this charm, it all means the same and does similar work, which is geared towards quick riches and more money to whoever request for it to be invoked. The third part of the name which is *Oke-Ite Awele* is likened to unmerited favour. *Awele* simply means favour in Igbo. *Oke-ite Awele* is bound to make one succeed where others fail with lesser effort or no effort. Most *Oke-ite* money rituals are prepared with human parts, placenta, and the womb of a young girl, strong wild roots, streets owls and vultures. It is important that for the purpose of this research, the personal experience of Gozie Mbah who got a spiritualist explaining *Oke-ite* charm to one of his followers said that *Oke ite awele* is nothing but seeking for special attention of the spirits over ones daily affairs. *Oke ite awele* is nothing but attracting the attention and presence of the spirits through vow and blood sacrifices on board.

The phenomenon, *Oke-Ite* is being prepared by a native doctor and it is important to note that being a native doctor is not learnt, it is in the blood. One cannot just wake up and say he wants to learn how to be a native doctor. *Dibia* is just like being a prophet and no good *Dibia* does *Oke ite*. But today, people go to learn the arts of *Dibia* in these modern days. Hence, according to Gozie Mbah,

those that learnt the art of *Dibia* are those that prepare *Oke ite*. A *Dibia* who got his powers naturally does not harm anybody or do things that will cause havoc. These *Dibia* have their powers innate. For some persons, *Oke ite* is just like 'Do as I say" charm. Those Preparing *Oke ite* are not in good terms with the ancestors (*Ndi Iche*). *Oke ite* is also likened to "the more you look the more you say". For Udoakommiri, the deaths involved in *Oke-Ite* are at extreme and the carriers of this powerful charm in most cases gives birth to Imbecile, still births, in some other cases, the person starts to shrink as *Oke ite* works with blood. Oke ite is not an *Omenala* but an *Omenaelu*.

 Oke ite rituals is said to be simple as one needs to only settle all the spirits involved. It is also believed that some spirits such as *Onye Uwa gi, Agwu, Ndi Mmiri, Ndi Iche* are against the *Oke ite* rituals. This is backed with the divine philosophy that *Nwa Mmiri adighi agwo ogwu… Mmiri na aso Ogwu.*
The native doctor that prepares *Oke ite*, will never tell one to be on good terms with his or her spirits guides because the native doctor knows, mentioning those spirits to support the *Oke ite* will prevent it from working because the native doctor knows that the spirits do not support *Oke ite.*

 The saying that all that glitters are not gold is the case of *Oke ite* in Igbo communities. *Oke ite* from afar seems to be a beautiful thing but studying it, one would find out that there is no good thing about it except making one rich. *Oke ite* can never make one poor. The unfortunate thing about it is that one cannot eat his cake and have it back. There is time for everything. The world is designed with everyone having his or her own zenith and that goes in accordance with nature. There is time to live and time to die, there is time to sow and there is time to reap just as there is time to rest and time to strive. There is also time to suffer and time to enjoy. Life is a stage and everyone has his or her own script which is to be followed sequentially. It is ordained that one live in accordance with his '*chi*' and at no point should one challenge with his '*chi*' so that one's stay on earth will not be horrible because nature comes to play here and nature would always remain nature.

 Unfortunately, people tend to challenge their '*chi*' by trying to get ridiculous wealth. In this way, people substitute the appointed time for them to suffer with the required riches by bring it closer and on time. And when the appointed time for them to get rich reaches, they die mysteriously. Some native doctors do not even know the consequences of *Oke ite* rituals. The *Oke ite* rituals will leave many families in the nearest future in disarray as some will run mad and others die untimely. *Oke ite* rituals can be likened to football because just as football bounces back when it is being played against the wall, so is *Oke ite.* It does definitely bounce back when the time reaches.

 For a better understanding, for instance, if one is destined to live for 80 years by his '*chi*' and it is appointed that one will acquire wealth at age 30. Then the person gets to age 20 and started getting pressures from friends and the society at large whereby his mates building houses, riding the latest cars and all, the person dares to challenge the will of his '*chi*' by trying to acquire that supposed wealth he was meant to acquire at 30 but now at 20 years. To acquire that wealth on time, the person beckons on a native doctor to help him prepare the ritual, *Oke ite* so as to be faster than his time and his '*chi*'. *Oke ite* will have to bring that wealth and start bringing all the person's

blessings to him immediately but mysteriously. When the supposed wealth you are to acquire in life has finished coming, the carrier's life will be lost as there is nothing to live for. This is because the *Oke ite* have done some transactional business with your '*chi*' which involves 'life' hence, the destined 80 years the person has will come down to maybe 40 years or 35 years.

Oke ite is believed to be the highest charm so far because when one's '*chi*' does not support the *Oke ite*, the *Oke ite* will overpower the '*chi*' by convincing it. However, nature will always be nature as nature will definitely punish the person who invoked the *Oke ite*. *Oke ite* eats children of pregnant women via miscarriages. The *Oke ite* ritual is greater than *amosu*, secret society and any other claimed powerful society. When *Oke ite* wants to strike forward, it goes for the person's generation.

Oke ite is the modernized *Ogwu Ego*. *Oke ite* is a ritual that goes against all the forces of nature to make one rich and attracting goodies of life. When the *Oke ite* is prepared, the person of whom the pot is being cooked for will have an agreement with the *Oke ite* on what it will be eating in a form of appeasing it. This appeasement may be in form of killing a Cow for it, dog and some other things while the *Oke ite* works effectively. But the realistic thing here according to many native doctors is that any rituals that eats or takes a dog for sacrifice will one day request for a human being for sacrifice. For a native doctor to prepare the *Oke ite,* the native doctor will have something in mind which agreeing with the four cardinal point of world which has to deal with the air, the water, the fire and the earth. *Oke ite* involves bringing different powers together to one umbrella.

For some native doctors, to make *Oke ite* not to cause so much havoc, the native doctor would have to operate with all these four elements. There are spirits that guide these four elements of the world which the native doctors have to revoke. If the four elements or cardinal points are not in the *Oke ite*, it will not have that potency. When we talk about the earth element, it has to do with roots and herbs. For the fire element, it has to do with burning and cooking some certain things while the water element has to with consult many marine spirits and doing some necessary sacrifices and when we talk about air, it has to do with whirlwind (*Oke Ifufe*). These four elements if use properly will cause the potency of the *Oke ite* very effective. Practically, when the fire wants to go up, the water will disagree and make it stay down and when the whirlwind wants to go up, the earth holds it down, hence, the *Oke-ite* would acknowledge the cardinal points of the world and it becomes more powerful. That is why many *dibias* have regarded the *Oke-ite* charm as the most powerful but dangerous.

POSSIBLE TRIGGERS FOR QUEST FOR RICHES.

There are many reasons one may consider that have pressured the Nigerian youths to do rituals. The love of money they say is the root of all evil. The desperation to get rich quick especially among young people is pushing them to crimes and they go extremes to get these said riches not minding the consequences to be counted among the rich.

However, for everything that happens in the world, there are things that prompted or rather,

influenced it. Hence, there are numerous reasons and influences why the youths of this nation have ventured into the business of patronizing the *Oke ite* charm which may include peer group influences, parental push, bad governance and corruption, laziness and Idleness, quest for quick wealth and materialism, religious unhealthy competition, cultural revival and the entertainment industry.

Peer Group Influences

Peer group refers to a group of people that have something in common such as age, social standing, economic status, occupation or education. Peer groups engage on an equal footing and exert influence over one another's attitudes, emotions, and behavior. Peer groups constantly, are eager to learn new things and explore new places. They take chances in discovering more as they serve as a valuable source of knowledge. They create a powerful social milieu in which group norms are formed and maintained through socialization processes that enhance similarity within the group. Peer group influence is when one chooses to do something one would not otherwise do, because one want to feel accepted and valued by ones friends it is not just or always about doing something against ones will.

Peer group pressure is a better way to describe how youth's behavior is shaped by wanting to feel they belong to a group of peers which most times become negative. Peer Pressure causes people to do things they would not otherwise do with the hope of fitting in or being noticed. People are pressured about into acting aggressively, bullying others, doing drugs, dressing a certain way, drinking alcohol, engaging in vandalism or other criminal activities, having sex, physical fighting, only socializing with a certain group. A negative peer influence could be seen as one of the militating forces why youths go into the quest to make money.

Peer relations are never more prominent than in adolescence which falls within the youths. They spend more time interacting with peers and recording high degree in happiness in peer contexts, while giving the greatest priority to peer norms for behavior (Brown and Larson, 2009). It is well established that youths are more likely to engage with alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, unprotected sexual activity, violent and non-violent crime and reckless driving (Steinberg, 2008). Hence, they actually possess the knowledge, values, and processing competence to evaluate risky decisions (Reyna and Farley, 2015). According to Olalekan (2016), it is generally observed that peer group has a lot of influence on students. This is seen from the role played by the peer group in the life and learning of a child, evidence abound that youths feel more comfortable and relaxed among fellow youths. A youth who is rich and surrounded by dull and poor friends would lose interest in making money and on the other hand, a youth that is not making money and surrounded by those making money will be influenced to getting you useful. Katz in Olalekan (2016) wrote that the nature of a peer group determines the impact on the motivation of and achievements of its member. He further depicted that one group may have a negative impact on its members while the other may have positive impact on its members as well. The kind of person a youth is shows the type of group the person is mostly likely to join. Festigen as quoted in Lavy and Shlosser (2007) also noted that imitation of behaviors in a group occurs when a person acts in a way that is likely to

be joined by the rest of the group. Peer groups as cited in the works of Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015), provide a sense of security and they help youth ask questions relating to social identity theory such as "who am I" and "what do I want out of life"". Given that, youths spend twice as much time with peers as with parents or other adult.

The Nigerian youths have been caught between making decisions and that is influenced by the group they follow. 80% of the Nigerian youths are easily influenced and this is because the stage a young child passes through same as the institutions the child has passed through in a way changes his or her mentality. Change in environment does same too. The typical Nigerian youth growing cycle goes from Primary education to Secondary school then to Tertiary institution. From the tertiary, the youth goes to youth service and then, the Nigerian labour market. In most cases, the youth goes straight to the labour market instead of the tertiary institution by the means of learning a trade or a skill. At various stages the Nigerian youth passes, an atom of influence gets to him and one start noticing changes, hence, Change is constant. The prominent stage where we get the youth influenced so much is when they finishes secondary school. Those that finished the secondary school would start wanting to be independent and drive flashy cars and own a house. That is when they become pressured and want to be like the dependent ones.

Moreover, 90% of those that has visited and patronized the illegal means of making money were motivated by a factor or rather introduced directly or indirectly to the act. For example, when a friend sees that almost all his friends have cars and live luxurious lifestyle, he tends to go through extra means to garner wealth so as to belong. Hence, he was motivated by his friend's lifestyle and wants to live up to that level. Also, a friend who is not up to the standards as well as not living up to the level in which he wants his friend to live up to may convince his friend to follow his route which may lead to destruction. Among the youths, one may hear words like "Show me way", "Give me update", "Cut soap for me" and many more. These words have been initiated or rather, borne out of the pressures one may have gotten that have resulted to him going to any length to make money and this may involve either kidnapping, terrorism, ritual killings and getting the *Oke ite* as well.

Pressures and influences also come from the one's lover or partner and this is common among the males. One may have reasoned how he has been maltreated by his lover or partner and decides to go to extremes to see that he makes the money so as to satisfy the partner and give her the life she craves for. This is the aftermath of some popular phrases like "*Who no get money no suppose dey follow woman", "if you no get money, hide your face", "A gha muta nwokeḅ Nwoke to do what, nwoke to watch over an empty family*" and many more. These unethical and formulated uncultured phrases has influenced many youths to get into committing atrocities and getting to go for the *Oke ite* charm which will make them level up.

Peer group influence has been a major influence that has resulted to what one may see in the society like patronizing the *Oke ite* charm which is the highest charm. The quest for money has been geared by peers whom one may have grown up with.

Parental Push and Influence

Parental pressure is an emotional stress parents impose upon their children and it is often

related to academic performance, cultural or social standards, appearance, friendships, romantic relationships and many others. The stress from the family is the most important source of stress associated with youth's mental health. It is indicated that pressure imposed by family members can be the most impactful form of influence.

There are two forms of parental push that occurs and they are direct parental pressure or push and indirect parental pressure or push. Direct parental push often involves yelling, force, or complaining. Indirect parental pressure may involve guilt-tripping your child or reminding them of rigid expectations. Excessive or inappropriate parental pressure carries many youths to make a bad decision as they grow up. Children who grow up with parents who yelled, shouted or verbally humiliated them may have a greater likelihood of experiencing challenges into adulthood like depression, anger management problems, and physical aggression. When parents use insults or critical language to interact with children and youths they may turn that criticism on themselves and engage in negative self talk like "I don't have money, so I don't have a say", "I will never do anything right", "I will make it by all means to prove myself".

Parental push may also come with parents not trying the much they can to give their children a comfortable living. In some cases, we see children whose parents have pushed out to go and hustle in the streets at a young age due to the fact that they were not able to take care of them. This will at the long run, in most cases, have a negative feedback when the child or youth gets determine to go into rituals so as to either lift their parents out of poverty or to prove a point which is that they can make a better living. Hence, most times, parents have made their children a laughing stock to the society. One can also see parental push in a scenario where a young graduates finishes school and have nothing to do, some parents then, bank on that to shade them every day of the youth's life until he gets a job and start getting the family some returns from his livelihood.

A political activist, Reno Omokri once advised parents not to force their children into doing what they wouldn't want them to do. The activist called on parents to stop pushing their children to do money rituals due to the pressure and confusion they do to them. The self acclaimed table shaker explained that many parents compare their children to other kids reminding them of what those children have done for their own parents. Reno shared that these parents forget other parents like Otedola, Adenuga, Dangote and others are also their mates and buy cars for their kids so they should stop the unnecessary pressure.

Parental push and influence have hence; composite what makes Nigerian youths have an unending thirst for money not minding the consequences that may come with it. This is why out of many cases of money rituals, parents becomes the prey and target to be used for the rituals in order to quench the thirst for more money.

Bad Governance and Corruption

Bad governance is the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed as a consequence of decision making. Bad governance is centralized around the idea of not only corruption within a system but a lack of transparency and accountability, arbitrary policy making

and the cheating of those who are governed. It is crystal clear that the rate of corruption in Nigeria is alarming, uncalled for and absolutely abysmal. Corruption is an epidemic that has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. The issue of corruption cuts across the entire nation. According to Nwangwu (2022), Corruption is a potent cancer that has mercilessly eaten Nigeria. In 2018, Nigeria was ranked as the 36th most corrupt country in the world by transparency international. It is like a disease that spreads from mother to child.

Corruption not only is a cause of but can also occur as a consequence of bad governance; hence, corruption is an aftermath of bad governance. Quah (2009), suggested that higher levels of governance and a better environment to conduct business are impacted by the presence of corruption within an economy. For Gupta, Davoodi and Alonso-Terme (1998), Corruption increases income inequality and poverty through lower economic growth; biased tax system favoring the rich and well connected; poor targeting of social programs; use of wealth by the well - to-do to lobby government for favorable policies that perpetuate inequality in assets ownership, lower social spending, unequal access to education, and a higher risk in investment decisions of the poor.

Bad governance which has bred corruption has kept the nation in an unfavorable situation and dilemma which has kept the Nigerian youth as a tight corner and as well, placed them on a pavement of doing illegal things. Due to the failed government, the Nigeria n youths have engaged in kidnapping, yahoo-yahoo, robbery, thugggery and at worst, money rituals which involves carrying *Oke ite*. The Nigerian community has not been helping matters too. The way and manner in which the society celebrates the rich people without questioning the source of their wealth serves as an encouragement to youths to patronize money rituals. In a case where the nation allows anyone to spend recklessly, others who do not, have the tendency to get oppress. One may have made money through kidnapping and due to bad governance, the person walks freely on the streets claiming that it is grace that has brought him that far, others who feel that they have made less when it comes to riches goes into rituals so as to compete with others.

Laziness and Youth Unemployment

In the Christian tradition, laziness is one of the seven deadly sins because it undermines society and God's plan, and invites the other sins. For Islam which is a religion that teaches people to be eager to work, pays great attention to laziness. For the Islam tradition, laziness is the symbol of weakness. Laziness is one of the diseases that Islam abhors. However, the Nigerian youths happens to be what they were referred to by the President of the country, Muhammed Buhari. There is pervasive laziness and idleness covered with casualness amongst the youths across the country. The twin evil of laziness and idleness has robbed the nation in many ways that one can imagine. Socioeconomically, crime and restiveness have increased; after all, an idle and lazy mind has always been the devil's workshop.

Unemployment which is a bred of bad governance and corruption has made the youths unproductive and lazy in all sense. This menace has hampered several economies from manifesting their development potentials because of the high level of idle youths (Olukayode,

2017). The increasing level of youth unemployment has in recent times become a major reason why youths have no other option than to go in to money rituals. The lazy youths have become utterly delinquent, hence, causing tension in the nation which the increase of ritual killings has been predominantly occurred. Youth unemployment in Nigeria has scaled up as the number of graduates from institutions of learning increases (Makinde and Adegbami, 2019).

Okonkwo (2022) lamented that in a country with over 100 million people living in poverty while a tiny minority corners all the resources and displays an affluent lifestyle with careless abandon; the disenfranchised will find a way to escape their deplorable station in life. Nnatuanya (2022), maintained that if one percent of 100 million people chose ritual killing, one million ritualists will be in the street. Luckily, we are not there yet. He also stressed that "if we are, dead bodies will liter the streets of Nigeria and the stench will overwhelm the country. From the above, one sees the obvious reason why many frustrated youths who are mainly graduates venture into this barbaric actions in order to make ends meet. In the same light, the president of African Development Bank (AfDB) Dr. Akinwumi Adesina was quoted by Utomi (2022) as saying that high rate of joblessness among Nigerians at present is on the very high increase. According to him, about 40 percent of youths were unemployed. The implication of this fact is that many youths were discouraged, angry and restless as they look at a future that does not give them hope thereby making them lazy as there is no hope.

Moreover, against the trend of unemployment, many youths of present day society are too lazy to work. They uphold the fallacy that they can make money without having to stress themselves working in order to achieve that 'soft life'. They, however, have forgotten the Igbo adage that *aka aja aja na ebute onu mmanu mmanu*. Hence, what many youths are interested in is easy made things that bring money without engaging in activities for hours. This is the brain according to Ijediogor (2022), why most youths decided tpo jettison hardwork and embraced the get-rich-syndrome by getting involved into ritual killings. He went further to depict that in some years back, the issue of ritual killings were prevalent and common among the older generation hence, it was rest4ricted to the elderly ones who wants to have money as so as oppress but in this modern and contemporary era, the young now take part in it. Ijediogor (2022) concludes that it is sickening and weakening that while some youths are embracing science and technology, others, perhaps out of laziness, are turning to ritual killings for the quest for money.

Quest for Quick Wealth and Materialism

The quest to get quick wealth and material things in a hurry, covetousness, insatiable affection for mammon, power tussle and social vices have caught up with the Nigerian youths. The social lives of the people of Nigeria is measured by the amount of wealth one may have posses either amount of lands or amount of cars, houses, shops and so many others. The society as a whole recognizes and respect people with wealth. The youths are of course, aware of the ongoing development and to keep up with the contemporary developments, the youths are prepared to do anything to achieve their stated aims and objectives so as to get recognized and respected in the community. Lamenting further, Lloyd-Jones (2012) states:

That the man who cheats or steals also measures success by dollars rather than by character. And so not only does he lose out on character and basic morality, but he also loses sight of what is important in life. At the end of the day, a thief trades in his morality in order to gain material goods. (p.1)

The pressures of this life have also forced youths to seek anything that can give them fast wealth. Ogungbile (2022) portrayed that:

The casual factor of this insatiable hunt for money can be phrased as the youths' incapacity to handle the pressures of life. We have to learn the right principles of how to be successful. It's like building a house, we start the foundation. Unfortunately most people, especially the youth fail to reach their goals because they want to do everything at once. (n.p)

Oluwatoyin (2022) states that the quest for wealth did not start, but increase in the trend has been so alarming that it has turned so bizarre and frightening and has made it difficult to trust close friends or relations due to fear of not being for rituals. Most often, desperation and pressure one gets from friends, families and all lures one into rituals. Whereby the friends go to club and spend millions of naira and drive the most luxurious cars as well as spending recklessly in general. In the same thread, Nwanne and Anazia (2019) recalled that there was a time in Nigeria when becoming a medical doctor, engineer, accountant, lawyer and the rest was a big deal among youth. Those days, youths strive as much as possible to find their way into the university by writing jamb several times so that they can gain admission and study their dream career or a professional course. Then, the parents were more interested in what their children becomes so as they can be referred to as 'mama doctor", 'mama engineer" and so on due to the obvious fact that it was a thing of pride.

Today, all that have changed unlike when the youths clamor to go into university to do professional courses that would earn them good pay and sustain them to. Today, quest for fame and riches have become the order of the day as everyone wants to make more money and join the big boys to paint the city red. Even those who are graduates have abandoned their certificates to pursue money so as to live up to standards to impress the society. With all these, one sees that the breakdown of our moral fiber is among the reasons why the Nigerian youths go to get *Oke-ite*.

Our politicians have made matters worse with the way embezzle our common good with impunity without being accountable to the general public thereby making them unridiculously wealthy. One would see someone who just joined politics and was given an appointment. All of a sudden, the person starts building expensive houses and moving around with escort and loud siren, these, according to Nnatunanya (2022), "multiplies the woods of the youths who choose alternatives that seems good in their own eyes" (p.52).

Socio-Religious Pressure and Competition

Religious pressure and unhealthy competition have contributed immensely to the reasons why the Nigerian youths have delved into doing rituals so as to amass wealth. The propagators of religious centers which are the religious leaders in the country have become complaisant and conspirators in the corrupt activities of members of their congregation. Professor Olanrewaju

Fagbohun said that a lot of people are living what he describes as split personality meaning they are living and presenting one personality to their religious leaders and living another personality outside religion. For him, religious leaders know the truth and the rot going on in the society but choose to turn a blind eye because of the gain or what they tend to gain or what comes to them from the proceeds of corruption. It is obvious that religious leaders who are meant to be custodians of ethics and moralities, have dropped the ball and are now dinning and giving coverage to people with questionable character.

Some religious leaders have been seen moving around with expensive cars and having private jets as well as wearing expensive cloths and living flamboyant lifestyle. It encourages get rich quick mentality, which is part of the reason for increasing money rituals. The church in Nigeria has produced many fantastic and God fearing preachers, but at the same time, has also gotten quantum numbers of false preachers with large followerships, whose lives and ministries have contributed immensely to the furthering of the wave of greed, covetousness, materialism, pride, arrogance and ego-centrism among the youths and across the nation. When the religious leaders preach sudden wealth transfer without responsibility and commitment to work, the church leaders tends to program the youths into becoming ritualists in the future. When the religious leaders tell their congregation to expect a 24-hour miracle money in every meeting and at all times, the religious leaders is programming them to become future ritualist.

The evil trend of money rituals will continue unabated as long as our society continues to celebrate church leaders whose core values keep appealing to the ego of their listeners through the preaching of blessings without repentance, prosperity without piety and success without hard work and integrity. The church that should stem the tide of money rituals to the barest minimum is the church has failed in most cases to condemn it. The highest they can do is to condemn it on a lighter note and be careful with their words on the alter so as not to offend or provoke those that have indulged in it.

Importantly, one may see the unhealthy competition among churches and that may get to him and make the person to go to extremes to make money so as to fit in. These unhealthy competitions are in forms of the youths of the church dressing expensively and driving flashy cars. To that vein, every Sunday, one will try as much as possible to dress better than the other or to show off better than the other. These in its way motivate the commoner that is managing the much he can manage to go to extremes so as to make money and show off too. In other words, religious pressure and her unhealthy competition have contributed as one of the reasons the Nigerian youths patronize native doctors that prepares the *Oke-ite* charm so as to join the competition.

Cultural Revival

Another reason why some youths have resorted into getting the money ritual is in the name of cultural purposes. African traditional practices have been replaced with so many practices that are inimical to societal growth and development. According to Kanu (2010), the:

> Indispensability of African basic values presupposes that Africa has value system that is in consonance with her environment and conditions, and way to displace it renders the society backward. (p.149).

The generation which one can envisage at the moment is one that feels that they are what we call 'woke' hence; they claim that they are aware now. This so called awareness can be translated to them, going back to their roots which they call tradition and culture. Culture is a beautiful thing because it defines the way in which people behave. It is understandably that at the moment, the cultures of the Igbo are diminishing with extremely and that has resulted to most African philosophers and scholars to agitating for everyone to acknowledge their root which is our culture.

Most youths have bought the idea but bought it in a negative sense. They assume that our forefathers patronized the use of charms and as well, patronized *Okeite* hence, the reason for them being wealthy and having lots of barns. They forgot that our forefathers that patronized charms did that for some reasons and at some point. For instance, when it is time to go for war, they go and get protection so as not to be victim of evil forces. They simply seek for protection and God's guidance in the battle. Also, when one wants to travel on a journey, he or she goes on to seek for protection in order to get journey mercies. Our forefathers are abreast with the fact that the divine will always grant them success when they call on upon the Supreme Being. Notably, the rites and rituals have its own peculiarities with an exception of human blood. Divination was a common thing among our forefathers. This is the culture and tradition that one needs to go back to. The African religion should be the umpire of the Africans and a guide to their paths. The traditional religion is not fetish neither do the religion engaging in killings nor immoral act that leads to ridiculous means of wealth.

However, with such great wave of reawakening, most youths assume the visiting native doctors, shrines and other cultic groups including witchcraft is something to embrace and cherish. Nwaka (2021) explains that the rising interest in ritual and occult world among the youth is arguably closely associated with the persistent rise in youth unemployment and poverty. In other words, the cause and effect principle gave birth to revival of idolatry as Anugwom (2011) shows in the case of the Niger Delta, the perception of injustice and marginalization at the hands of both transnational corporations and the government provided fertile ground for occult practices, and also facilitated the rediscovery of deities that were previously associated with justice and fairness. Unfortunately, the youths have been misguided and have channeled their quest for money to the wrong way which is getting the *Okeite* charm all in the name of reviving the culture of the land. Most native doctors have stressed it extensively that *Oke ite* is not the Igbo culture and it is devilish as its consequences are abound.

Entertain Industry

The entertainment industry has contributed immensely to the increase in the quest for money. This entertainment industry specifically, points at the music industry and the movie industry. The movie industry has been among the tiers that have indirectly promoted money rituals among the youths which of course should be frowned at. Okwori (2003) explores how rituals of human sacrifices are presented as being an effective means of getting wealth in Nigerian home videos. He argues that even though the intent of the movie is to denounce the human sacrifice rituals as a means of getting rich in the Nigerian community, the meeting tends to have some contradictory

meanings. He depicted that "the stated moral intent of the films is to present a form of bad behavior in order to discourage people from engaging in it, yet more than anything else, the video films validate the efficacy of rituals in the way and manner that the characters in the filmed rituals are portrayed as fabulously rich and successful".

The film 'Miserable Wealth' is such that depicts ritual killings. Despite the fact that the film is set within the dualism of Christianity and ritual killings, its end is quite different to most of the films of this genre. The film revolves round Harry who decides to get rich after being dumped by his girlfriend because of poverty. Harry had to deploy devious means to amass wealth. He unfortunately, had his father killed same as his brother. This happens in most of the movies that nollywood has offered. The most popular on amongst the movies is 'Living in Bondage'.

So far, so good, nollywood has been disadvantageous and contributed immensely to the increasing rate of money rituals which has led the youths to delve into it. This has been shown in movies which have to do with ridiculous wealth so as to prove an unnecessary point. The Music industry has also contributed their own quote too. In a case when one see music videos trending and there are lots of money being sprayed, one may have to get depressed and desperate. Also the lyrics of some songs are sending the wrong message too. In a song where you hear "*if you no get money, hide your face*", "*nah money be fine bobo*", "*Ogwu ka ha na agwo, Oburo oru ka ha na atu*" and so many other songs but to mention a few. All these are what have contributed to as a motivation for the Nigerian youths to go into the quest for money.

THE IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF QUEST FOR RICHES

Man has in him the natural instinct to be successful. But today, some people wants to make it as quick as possible, no matter the route and outcome while some wants to take it easy. A response to a sporadic reoccurring facebook post by a user that reads, "Can you burn your Academic certificates for fifty million dollars"" The response goes thus: "I will not only burn my certificates; I will as well burn down my school, the principal's house and the ministry of education." It is no secret that the Nigerian society is one that celebrates riches and wealth, whether legitimate or ill-gotten. Many youths tend to think along this line. In as much as it is a natural instinct in man to be successful in life. Unfortunately, in Nigeria today, success is measured by how much you have. Consequently, riches are today a measuring paradigm of success for every average Nigerian. To this end, pleasure has today replaced the desire for honour, dignity, and respect gotten from working or laboring legally. There is a palpable decline in the morality of youths; selfishness, greed, poverty and acquisitiveness of individuals seem to be the root cause. Immorality, corruption and godless materialism are gradually reaching a *crescendo*. It is however, accompanied by a new kind of superficiality of 'depthlessness'; a new kind of moral relativism. Every youth now fashion means to arrive at riches (which could inescapably be as a result of 'an unhealthy quest') as quick as possible. This is worrisome for every right-thinking Nigerian.

Firstly, in the family, some parents do not spend time to study their children to ensure their upbringing. This has become worrisome and has complicated the society. The parents have

become so busy with their workplace and lives forgetting that they have a responsibility to observe and scrutinize. This complication has endangered the youths to continue to sojourn in the quest for making ridiculous wealth. In most cases, it gets more complicated when they live their children in the hands of their neighbors and when the child's friends are not checkmated.

Secondly, the mental poverty which our educational system engenders leaves the youth with no knowledge of the potentials of the mind, since they find studies difficult; the task of thinking how to earn money legally becomes tormenting. All theses have contributed in making issues complicated the more. This mental poverty has endangered the Nigerian youths and the quest for money keeps getting relevant.

Thirdly, most of our religious institutions are now centers of quick property aggrandizement; hence, it lacks the propensity to instill moral discipline, same as the government which has done little or nothing to help the nation. Every politician thinks of himself first. Greed has been enthroned. The Nigerian society is such that, those involved in quick riches are able to get better promotions and opportunity. This type of society can hardly produce right thinking youths. In the face of failed economic system, the human person loses self-consciousness of that fact that killing people for rituals is bad hence; Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs tells us more. For Aruma and Hanachor (2017), Maslow places self-esteem as the highest need which comes as a result of the satisfaction of the basic needs of life. What then are the implications of this malady and consequences‟

Almost every youth has a complicated relationship with acquisition of riches. Quick money syndrome (unhealthy quest for riches) is a name given to every attempt to make riches (wealth) without much stress, but with atrocious desiring. It is a persistent pattern of self-destruction and self-limiting financial behavior. Quick riches in many cases lead to 'impaired educational development'. The unhealthy quest for riches has today given birth to 'moral decadence'; pushing youths into armed robbery, church business, yahoo business, rituals, murder, kidnapping, sexual immorality, drug trafficking, sells of different body parts, amongst other ills which seem lucrative as the day dawns. However, it is not the case that they do not have talents to be development, but impatience will not permit them; and they quickly forget that Smith (n.d) said that discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability'; and Immanuel Kant's imperative that 'man must be disciplined for he is by nature raw and wild'.

Most often, we fail to understand the laws of nature: that everything is in a vicious circle in which everyone reaps what he/she sows. The phenomenon, *Oke ite* and the unhealthy quest for riches is unreceptive to Nigerian progress. This quick money syndrome has reached cancerous proportions, and today has a demonstrable negative impact on the development process in the country. Nonetheless, in the face of this, skills and talents are wasted; quality of products and services offered to the public reduces drastically. Instead of investing in the system, treasures are stolen from it. For instance, a young 'promising' computer science graduate instead of thinking of good software to create thinks of creating a Ponzi scheme to dupe people. This unhealthy quest for riches brings about a 'culture of wasteful lifestyle'. It is obvious that in this way, the growth of the

economy is suppressed under the false pretences of lack of employment. Not just this, but the life of the youth is in jeopardy.

The consequences of the *Oke ite* phenomenon is greatly abound as it spares no one. The consequences are both personal and societal in nature. Personal borders on the consequences and implication on the person and his immediate family while societal borders on those ones that affects the larger society. On the personal nature, it includes a decline in the observance of human life, premature death of youth and on human health while on the societal nature, it may include high rate of kidnapping due to the fact that people are used for the sacrifice and as well, negative impact on the economy.

Decline in Observance of Sanctity of Human Life

The inviolability of life or sanctity of life is a principle of implied protection regarding aspects of sentient life that are said to be holy, sacred and valued, hence, should not be violated. This is what the *Oke-ite* phenomenon has successfully disagreed with. The money ritual charm being one of the biggest and most powerful charm, is a respecter of nobody and as such, does not value the human life, this is a consequence which has lingered and yet, obvious but the Nigerian youths have failed to understand and assimilate it. To sustain the Oke-ite rituals, it demands human blood which will cost lives due to the fact that it will be severally renewed. With the wastage of human lives, shows how they do not observe the sanctity of human life hence, the decline is inevitable.

Sanctity of life connotes the sacredness, preciousness and saintliness attached to life. It suggest that life is an inalienable gift that must not be joked with neither must it be tampered with. Life happens to be what everyone living on earth has in common no matter the status and age, Life still triumph. Life is furthermore, suggested to be God's gift which must not be unlawfully taken by anybody. For Ayantayo (2003), "the value of human life is on the basis of the value god placed on it as is made in the image of God" (p. 422). This is also echoed in Ramsey's view (1970) which unequivocally affirms that the sanctity of life comes from God and not from man and supports the sanctity of life at every stage of development. Kaiser (1991) inferred that "God alone is the giver and maintainer of life: therefore, he alone has the right to take it away" (p. 164).

Like Christianity and Islam, the sanctity of human life is respected in the traditional Africa thus deliberate murder is not allowed. God is the owner of life and God should be allowed to decide when to take it. According to Mbiti, Africans believe that God has ordained a moral order for humans, through which they came to understand what is good and what is evil, so that they might live in harmony with one another and safeguard the life of the people.

The Nigeria youths should have it at the back of their mind that the quest for money has contributed to the decline in the observance of human life which will in a way get to them personally as their relatives lives tends to be at risk because *Oke-ite* will one day demand for one's brother or mother as the case may be. Also, when the law of the land catches up with the person, the person would be charged for murder and receive the capital punishment. This does not in anyway, strengthen our awareness as humans to be a brother keeper to one another.

Impact on Human Health

The human health is one of the areas being affected severely by the *Oke-ite* phenomena as the consequences abound with severe sickness and so many other illnesses. The quest for money amongst the youths of Nigeria which has led to dubious means affects the health of the person involved in this means. Hence, the aftermath of acquiring *Oke-ite* results to death which sickness preludes. The health of those around him are at stake too as *Oke-ite* demands the health of a pregnant woman same as the life of a fetus. In the same vein, the rise in many youths who are vagabonds, mad, die at very young age in the middle of their wealth are connected to *Oke-ite* phenomena. This is evident in line with Chukwudi (2022) who reported that in Imo State, news broke about a young man who was invited by his mother in a hostel. The poor woman who probably was coming to visit his son who (maybe) is in school bought fruits to be presented to him, but he ended up attempting to kill her, for money rituals. Also Chukwudi (2022) reported that in Ogun state, the news of the killing of a certain girl identified as Rofiat by her boyfriend and friend is still fresh too. The case of Rofiat was pathetic because she did not survive. Her head was cut off by the teenagers and was being roasted in a clay pot when they were apprehended by the police.

More so, for Udoakommiri (n.d),many young girls are married to young people without knowing that they are impotent as a result of *Oke-ite* charm. Such ladies will be moving from one hospital to another, prayer ministries to another without knowing the real cause of the problem which is the husband having to use his children for the *Oke-ite* charm.

Also, youths that acquire this ridiculous wealth, engage themselves in the use of drugs and abuse of it too. In this way, they tend or rather, assume they want to forget their sorrow but unfortunately, it is obvious that their sorrow cannot forget them. These sorrows range from the horror they faced while going through the rigorous process of getting the *Oke-ite*, the blood they shed for the course and the aftermath that are getting ready to face and encounter. All these things leads to them taking drugs like Crystal methamphetamine (*mkpulu mmiri*), Colorado and Cocaine. And the dangers of the hard drugs on the body are insomnia, aggressiveness, impaired judgment paranoia, hallucination and loss of weight and self control and the brain cells gets damaged.

At the long run according to Udoakommiri (n.d) and Gozie Mbah (Personal communication), when the time for the person to die is closer after he has finished acquiring all the wealth he is to acquire here on heart, unnamable sickness starts which will lead to the person dying. While all these are going on, the remaining family of the individual gets to be in disarray and be worrisome. It is unfortunate that native doctor that prepares the *Oke-ite* charm never tells the person to be in good terms with his spirit because he knows that mentioning those spirits to support the *Oke-ite* will prevent it from working because he knows they do not support it.

Premature Death of Youths

Obviously, the *Oke-ite* rituals gives one much money in exchange for a short life. If one is expected to live for 70 years, the *Oke-ite* ritual makes it possible for the person to have money but will die prematurely. This premature death gives room for most widows we see in the street at a very young age, with many children as orphans roaming around the street seeking for help.

High Rate of Kidnapping

The activities of ritual killers have accelerated the threat of kidnapping in Nigeria. Kidnapping for ritual is unique. The process often involves victims that are charmed and made unconscious by the abductors at the point of capture. More victims die rather than survive their experience after being abducted for rituals. This experience can turn victims mad, dead, poor and deformed, and some mobile corpses (Gbinije, 2014). However, perpetrators that kidnap for ritual have little or no restrain that can be understood with any conventional paradigms. Kidnapping for ritual is an unlawful seizure of a person in order to kill for the purpose of quest for money.

Oke-ite rituals require human sacrifice for the potency of the charm to be powerful. One of the objects for ritual are whole or severed parts of human being, such as the head, genitals, breasts, eyes, intestine, arms and legs as well as exhumed dead body or its severed parts. Herein, *Oke-ite* phenomenon can be said to be designed as a faith strategy to acquire money, wealth, success, fame, favour and greatness hence, to achieve this, there is need for human sacrifice which Kidnapping is the aftermath. Oke-ite rituals and kidnapping for this purpose are anchored on the belief that they satisfy a certain need of the perpetrators. Consequently, kidnapping for the quest for money is flourishing in Nigeria.

Ayandiji (2022) depicted that the rising cases of ritual which involves the use of human beings among the youths in Nigeria have become unbearable. These killings have the whole country in a shock, terrified and leaving many afraid to what is to come next. The country wide increase in kidnapping, as well as ritual killing has grown rapidly over the past years. Hence, the rate at which people are missing in the country at present is highly alarming. While some are found, others are not. Dakuku (2021) explains that there is the speculation that a majority of those who disappear perpetually without a trace are often victims of ritual killings.

Negative Impact on the Economy

The impact of the quest for money among the youths on the economy is a major concern now in this saner clime. Much attention was not give to it during the 90s generation but due to the popularity that it has gained in this contemporary era, attention has been drawn and that has affected the economy of the sovereign state. The quest for money which the *Oke-ite* phenomena have geared has eaten deep into the pockets of Nigeria. In this way, *Oke ite* has made our youths to become lazy and nobody wants to do business or do a white collar job. Doing businesses and white collar jobs contributes to the Nigeria economy hugely especially in increasing the GDP of a nation. Business investments are assets to the economy of Nigeria and it is a critical component of GDP since it increases the productive capacity of an economy and boosts employment levels.

Entrepreneurship is considered cruicial to a dynamic economy. Entrepreneurs create employment opportunities not only for themselves but for others as well. Entrepreneurial activities may influence a country's economic performance by bringing new products, methods, and production processes to the market and by boosting productivity and competition more broadly. However, in a nation whereby the youths having the quest for money, have gone into money rituals

and therefore, amass ridiculous wealth, there will be no entrepreneur since no one wants to go through the stress of building a business. This has a negative heavy impact on the economy of the nation,

Moreover, another thing that has contributed to the negative impact on the economy via the unprecedented quest for money among the youths is the lack of manpower to work. *Oke ite* money ritual has stolen lots of human beings either by kidnapping or shortage of life or still births. Humans are born with the capability to do something unique. Everyone has that special bearing that could help change things and as well, contribute to community building. However, the course for *Oke ite* has deprived these humans from contributing their quota to the nation building hence; our best brains are victims of these rituals. This contributes to why a nation like Nigeria haven't moved forward and taken their rightful place as the giant of Africa.

The government on its own hand have contributed to the negative impact on the economy and that is through the ASUU stike that have been putting the youths out of school for a prolong time. This has given room for the youths to engage in unhealthy extracurricular activities like the *Oke ite* rituals in accordance to the idle mind is the devil workshop. Education is important in every nation and when there are catalysts to stop that, it becomes a problem as it will negatively have an impact in the economy.

Crime also has huge impact on the economy negatively. The kidnaps and killings involved in money ritual and *Oke ite* is enough crime to chase foreign investors out from investing in this nation, Nigeria and that have a heavy backdrop on the Economy. No investor wants to strive in a society where there is much kidnap and killings. The investors do have to channel their strength to another nation they feel is safer for them.

Importantly also, the quest for money amongst the Nigerian youths have increased their own quota in inflation and unnecessary hike of market price. This is very typical and very common as one would want to buy a Polo that its normal price is 5,000 naira, the seller would have to sell it at 20,000 naira because he knows that if a consumer doesn't buy it, there are many 'big boys' that will buy it at that that price. These youths that has engaged in money rituals unfortunately, are ready to buy a commodity at an outrageous price thereby giving the seller the morale to keep selling it at that outrageous price. This applies to house rents and food commodities too.

Conclusion

The quest for riches among contemporary Nigerian youth, particularly in the *Oke Ite* phenomena, has significant socio-religious implications. The excessive focus on wealth accumulation and materialism has negative consequences. From a religious perspective, the pursuit of wealth can be viewed as a distraction from spiritual goals and values. This can lead to a shift in priorities, where material success takes precedence over spiritual well-being. In addition, some youth may engage in fraudulent or illegal activities in their pursuit of wealth, which goes against the principles of many religions and the end effect is always untimely death.

Without fear of contradiction, the high level of quest for money among the contemporary

Nigerian youths remain most disturbing , pressing, present, clear and real danger in the nation. The nation must not become a breeding place for miscreants since the youths are the future leaders of the nation. Their conformity to morality and social values will surely determine what kind of people they will be tomorrow with recourse to what become of the Nigeria situation.

The findings from this work points out that all the institutions must be involved in addressing the issue of *Oke Ite* phenomenon. The church has a role to play same as the mainstream media too. The entertainment industry has a role to also play. The traditional institutions has a great part too while the government and security agencies must rise up to their duties of providing job opportunities, increasing minimum wages, punishing offenders, celebrating good virtues rather than immoral acts and rebuilding plus building of critical infrastructure of economy.

Oke Ite has successfully emerged as an important security thrart in our social and religious space in the nation. The act has proved difficult to prevent through policing, given the little or no knowledge of the hotspot, the prospective perpetrators and the victims. *Oke Ite* is magical in nature, where esoteric forces tapped from the nature are used by the initiate to send the soul of the sacrificial victim to supra-physical realm, wherein it labour to bring wealth to the ritualist. *Oke Ite* has been a security threat too in the nation. Also, there is no gain saying the fact that portrayal of materialism in the entertainment, in the churches where one can see flashy lifestyles, in schools were students lavish money as if the money was stolen and all has got some negative effects on the lifestyle

Furthermore, the quest for riches can lead to social divisions and tensions, particularly when wealth is flaunted and displayed in an ostentatious manner. This can create a sense of inequality and resentment among those who are not able to achieve similar levels of success. In conclusion, the quest for riches among contemporary Nigerian youth has both positive and negative socio-religious implications; the focus on *Oke Ite* phenomena cancels the positive side. It is however, important to be mindful of the impact of wealth on social dynamics and work towards promoting greater equality and social cohesion.

Recommendations

This study has succeeded in bringing the quest for riches and the *Oke-Ite* phenomenon into limelight. However, though *Oke-Ite* phenomenon and quest for money is a challenge that affects all and sundry, this research provides some recommendations which should be acknowledged.

To be recommended is the meaningful youth empowerment programs which will alleviate unemployment in the nation. It is obvious that many able a bodied youth in Nigeria mostly graduates do not have any meaningful employment due to government inaction in reviving many sectors. However, this empowerment should not be left for the government lone but also, churches and private institutions need to be part of this scheme. In essence, through the right training and helping the youths start up what they learnt, it goes a long way in engaging the individuals and there will be a shift from thinking on how to get *Oke-Ite* because they will be very much engaged and occupied and less likely to commit crime too.Giving scholarships must also be part of this for children and youths who may not afford to pay for school fees and other fees.

There is also, another need for re-orientation and re-education of our youths and entire

citizens on the fallacy of their beliefs in *Oke-Ite* phenomenon and other occult practices as well as superstitions in this century. This orientation will go a long way to sensitize our youths in families and schools on our values and the sacredness of human life, reward in hard work, integrity and contentment. With this tool in place, the religious institutions which will comprise of the church and traditional practices will ensure that the exercise will be carried often so as the youths will understand our value system and refrain from nefarious practices that bounds to destroying their lives.

Charity begins at home and for the fact that the educational system is not designed to teach the youths everything they need to know, and for this menace to be brought to an end, parents should stop pushing their children to look for money quickly. Parents and concerned individuals should also stop people from spraying money at parties, weddings and other occasions. When the younger ones see how flamboyantly money is being squandered, they are poised to make money by all means, whether dead or alive. Parents should train their children in such a way that they will not bring shame to the family and society at large. In essence, it is recommended that parents must ensure that their children represent the best behavior and adhere to ethics of works in any environment they live, work or find themselves in.

It is no gain that the film is a medium of communication which many individuals, people and organizations can utilize for different purposes with advantages and disadvantages. It is recommended that the film be used for positive purposes alone. Because film has been recognized as a popular culture which not only mirrors and tells stories of the societies which it subsists; the film depicts the lifestyles, attitudes, environments and activities within and around them film producers and entertainment industry should as a matter of necessity highlight positive lifestyles and denounce the negative ones. Also, being that films have been used to indoctrinate people to imbibe certain beliefs and act in certain ways (Oloisadeba & Ekeanyanwu 2014), the government and change agents should take advantage of this role to imbibe in our people good morals and decorum. Again, because film is produced by the people of influence who can put forth actual representations and portrayals with defined objectives according to Asemah (2011), there is need to not only censor what the audience watch but also to ensure that films are reflections and representations of best and positive practices in the Nigerian society.

Also, it is recommended that celebrating good values in the society should be a priority too. This is because it is high time our society embrace virtues that made institutions stand test of time rather than going after materialism. To this end, the church, the mosque and the traditional institutions need to embrace the issue of knowing the source of one's wealth before any investiture of honor to anyone. This will make those who earn their living lawfully with genuine business and hard work to be celebrated while those who earn their wealth in an ungodly manner will not be tolerated. The Nigerian youths should not allow themselves to be led astray by ill-gotten wealth of their peers. Doing this too will make the children and youths to value and cherish good morals above materialism.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN
THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES ON HUMAN RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA SOCIETY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Digital technologies are one of the features of the contemporary society that are transforming all aspects of the society. Digital technologies have the capacity to alter the way people live and interact in business environment, educational and health sectors. They help humans to complete tasks faster and more efficiently. They are advanced technologies that are transforming ev6ery human activity in this digital age. They can make or mar human relations in African. This paper therefore, examines the influence of digital technologies and human relations in contemporary society. The sociological method of analysis, materials gathered from secondary source, social exchange and postmodern theories enhanced the study. The findings show that communication technologies such as smart phones and social media platforms have changed the way people interact and relate to each other. They help humans to build relationships, enhance human communication, social exchange and human interaction, but undermine face-to-face interaction, conversation and increases loneliness. They lack human relations skills such as emotion and empathy, and promote the digital world by increasing the rate of human-machine interaction and mediation. Digital technologies promote superficial human relations but they are indispensable in all forms of relationships in this digital age. Therefore, the study recommends the use of digital technologies in human relations because they are useful in building and maintaining relationships in the contemporary world order; but they should not replace physical contact because real life interaction is the bedrock of human relations.

Keywords: Digital Technologies, Human Relations, Contemporary Society, Postmodern theory

Introduction

Digital world is the present era where humans are experiencing great advancement in digital technologies. In other words, the digital era is characterized by advanced technologies which increase the speed and breadth of knowledge turnover in the society. Digital technologies are advancing every aspect of human endeavour in contemporary society. It will be difficult to find a system or a structure that does not make use of digital technologies in society today. Digital technologies have powerful influence on every aspect of the society. They are useful in business sector, education, health and communication departments. Many people in Nigeria today find it difficult to live a normal life without making use of digital technologies such as smart phones desktops and laptops. The young audits and youths are greatly affected by the way they chat through Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram. The AI machines and systems have their own positive and negative influences. They make administrative task easier but create more opportunities for laziness and examination malpractice among students. No doubt we are living in digital world and

these technologies help us to manage our personal and professional activities in a faster mode. They are reshaping how we live, work, and communicate to each other. It helps us to connect and communicates with friends, relatives and business partners locally and internationally. Digital technology promotes digital economy and e-commerce. Therefore this paper will examine digital technologies and human relations in contemporary society. The study is aimed at improving human relations in contemporary world order. Thus understanding the concept of human relations, skills for human relations and importance of digital technologies will be beneficial in highlighting the influence of digital technologies on human relations in contemporary world order**.**

Theoretical Framework
Social Exchange Theory
 Social exchange theory was developed to understand the social behaviour of humans in economic undertaking. Ogunbameru (2010) noted that the economic exchange viewed actors as dealing with the market not with another actor. While social exchange theory views the exchange relationship between specific actors as actions contingent on rewarding relations from others" (p.17) Social exchange theory is a theory that treats human behaviours as a process in which individuals supply one another with valued services. The sociologists George Caspar Homans initiated social exchange theory. Peter M. Blau was also among the major contributors to social exchange theory. Homans contributions to exchange theory indicate that social behavior is an exchange of goods, materials and also non-materials such as the symbols of approval or prestige. In other words, the proponents of social exchange are of the opinions that exchange is not limited to goods and services. It involves social and human interactions.

According to Ogunbameru (2010), Homans and Blau seem to have similar contributions but it is expedient to highlight that Blau's concept of social exchange is limited to "actions that are contingent, that depend on rewarding reactions from others-actions that cease when expected reactions are not forthcoming" (p.174) He stated further that what sustains and enhances the relationship is the reward provide to each other, while insufficient rewards weaken or break relationships. The rewards exchanged can be either intrinsic for instances love, affection and respect or extrinsic such as money and other material things. The social exchange theory is also known as rational choice theory. In other words, when a person perceives the cost of a relationship as being outweighing the benefits the person, may decide to leave the relationship. Thus Obiefuna (2008) is right by contending that Humans are rational beings "they have the capacity to reason and so the power to decide on which way to relate. Sometimes, they are fully aware of the consequences of their decision. Some other times. they are not" (17).

This theory is connected to the study because human relations involved the material and non material exchanges. Social exchange theory highlights factors that sustain human relationship such as valuing each other, mutual respect, trust, reciprocity, communication and among others. In highlighting the importance these factors in human relations, Nwadibia (1991) rightly observed that the school as educational institution is a social agency created for the education of children and

young adults. The process of education is done through social exchange. In other words both teaching and learning behaviours interact. The learner values the teaching of the teacher, while the teacher is willing to teach because of economic support from the government and how the learners valued his teaching. Therefore, this theory brings out the tangible and intangible elements of human relations. It identifies the place of religion in ensuring good human relations in the society by recognizing some of the religious elements for human relations such as mutual respect, trust, communication, reciprocity, tolerance and among others.

Postmodern Theory

Postmodern theory is one of the sociological theories used in the study of society. The proponents of postmodern theory include Jean Baudrilland, Jean-francois Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, David Lyon and others. According to Ritzer (2012) the postmodern theorists argued that the society has change so dramatically to the extent that we are now living in a qualitatively different postmodern society. They believe that the world is so different that it requires entirely new ways of thinking. This suggests the importance of digital technologies in the contemporary society.

According to Haralambos and Holborn (2008), Jean Baudrillard noted that " communication or media revolution means that people are engulfed by information to such an extent that the distinction between reality and the image which portrays it breaks down into a condition he called hyperreality" (p.726). In the words, Ritzer (2012) noted that Baudrillard in his study of the influence of information and communication technologies in the society describes this world as hypereality where the media cease to be a mirror of reality but has become that reality or even more real than that reality. This implies that digital technologies have dominated all aspect of life. They are enhancing human relationships both friendship and marriage. The video calls, Google meet, and Zoom app that promote virtual connections and AI systems and machines that mimic humans help to unfold what Baudrillards meant by hyperreality. They make human connections and interactions to look so real thereby placing digital technologies in a better position as important tools and systems in enhancing human relations in line with the contemporary world order.

Conceptual Clarification

Digital Technology

Digital technology covers all electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store information and process data. They are devices that can be more compact, faster, lighter, and more versatile. All electronic automated systems, technical equipments and resources that produce process or store information are included in the description of digital technologies. They include social media, Smart phone, digital clock, television, desktops, laptops, Automated Teller Machine and digital cameras. In other words, digital technologies are not just gadgets or technological objects; they constitute a body of knowledge. They include internet which offers the opportunity .to communicate instantly across the globe.

Onyejegbu (2021) noted that the digital computer systems use databases, algorithms, to store and deliver digital information on a vast array of applications. He added that networks, most notably

the internet, interconnect these computer systems across the word enabling the exchange of data and information in the society. Thus, the process of social media connection is facilitated through the technology of the internet. Social media connects half of the entire global population. The internet does not observe national boundaries in language, culture and social media. According to Jimada (2020) Internet is a seamless web of digital information flows that are weightless. It represents no boundaries in social, cultural, political and economic transmission or connectivity. The internet is a global phenomenon having instantaneous capability of providing immense online amount of information relating to education, sports, commerce, entertainment, religion and other areas of the society. Digital technologies are transforming every aspect of the society. It enables immense amounts of information to be compressed on storage devices that can be easily preserved and transported. Digital technologies have advanced the communication system, education and political system. In fact starting from online Church, online business solutions, digital learning, social networking, through the detrimental results of cybercrime and examination malpractice, the digital technologies have move the society forward and negatively contribute to moral decadence in the society.

Human Relations

Human relations involve the capacity to interact and relate well with people. Reece, Brandt and Howie (2008) noted that Human relations "cover all types of interactions among people, including their cooperative efforts and group relationships. Human relations are not the ability to work with robots or machine-assisted object that mimics humans, but the ability to build and maintain relationship with another person and group. It involves having good relationship with people in the work place, family and other social settings. In the words of Lamberton and Minor-Evans (2002), Human relation" is the ability to work effectively through and with other people. It is the ability to interact in a friendly and healthy manner with others and to ensure stronger relationship. Human relations are centered upon human interest and values. It is characterized by empathy, and consideration and compassion for human beings. It involves recognizing the worth of individuals as human beings or what they can do for each other and for the good of the society.

According to Lugwisha (2021), human relations entail interactions that exist between people both formally and informally. It covers all forms of human interactions such as personal, interpersonal and group relationships. It is one of the cherished African values that promote communal life system in Africa. Onwubiko (1991) added that all Africans believes that he who discusses his affair with others hardly ruins into difficulties or makes mistakes in the execution of his plans..Therefore it will be difficult for an individual to have a better life without sound human relations" Obiefuna (2018) rightly observed that the study of human relations in schools and colleges is aimed at "strengthening the effectiveness of human interaction, not only in workplace but also in every, and other areas of human endeavour for the good of human society" therefore human relations is essential in every human society. It encourages people to freely discuss their problems and collaborate for solutions.

Relationship between Religion and Human Relations

Human relations are essential aspect of religion. The two main features of any authentic religion or religious system are the vertical and the horizontal dimensions. Obiefuna (2018) explains that the vertical dimension indicates relationship with the Supreme Being and other supernatural forces, the horizontal aspect indicates human relationships with one another, a relationship that is influenced by the traditions of their specific religious system. Human relations cannot be separated from religion or religious relations. It is influenced by religious beliefs and values. Importantly, religious relations are basically divided into vertical and horizontal relationship. Obiefuna (2008) noted that religious relations are established and expressed in rituals, which are the manifest expression of the relationship between humans and the divine and between and among humans. The ritual covers three dimensions of communications with self that is auto communication, with another, interpersonal communication and with others that is group communication. In other words, ritual is the religious platform for both vertical and horizontal relationships. It enhances personal relationship with God, promotes and sustains both interpersonal and group relationships. Therefore, it is rational to uphold the view as pointed out by Obiefuna (2008) that "human relations is an extension of religion"(p.9). Religion provides the abstract qualities for meaningful human relations such as communication, good self esteem and among others. Religion ensures good friendship and neighborliness through its laws and values.

Importance of Human Relations in the Digital Age

The digital world is characterized by digital technologies which enhance human-machine interactions, while human relation is aimed at maintaining human contact and interaction. Therefore this section is concerned with the importance of human relations in digital era.

 Human Interaction: Humans are social creatures that love interacting with each other. They need human touch to function very well as rational beings; since, digital technology and machine cannot display real human interaction. Vividly, it is through human touch that an individual can live a fulfilled life. Thus human interaction is what sustains man and the society. On the other hand, one of the best ways to ensure the existence of any human society is through social and human interactions. This is because society means group of interacting people that reproduces its members through sexual interaction. Therefore human interaction is useful in the contemporary society to ensure good human relations...

 Social Bonds: Human relations distinguish man from machine. It brings people of similar views and ideas together. It is one of ways of developing social bonds. In fact man's ability to empathize, communicate and form relationships distinguishes him from machine and other objects Edwards [2024] noted that social bonds are the connections and attachments that individuals develop with others in society" (p 1) .These bonds are formed based on some factors such as shared beliefs, shared identity, shared values and emotional ties. Thus social bonds are the connections and relationships that individuals form with others such as family members, friends, peers groups, neighbours and colleagues. These bonds are characterized by feeling of attachment, mutual support

and among others. Social bonds can only be possible through human interactions and relations.

Reduce Depression: Onwubiko (1991). Noted that human relations is a cherished way of life in Africa because Africans believed that he who discusses his affair with others hardly runs into difficulties or makes mistakes in the execution of his plans Unfortunately this cherished value is being threatened by Age of artificial intelligence communication tools. It makes humans busy and unable to relate well with fellow humans. These machines have never solved the problem of loneliness, depression and suicide. Human relations make humans to have real interaction in a consistent and systematic way. Human interactions help to make one happier and able to cope with stress. Human interaction reduces depression because it encourages people to share their problems and to join hands in finding solution

Economic Performance: Human relations promote economic performance. It fosters strategic thinking, innovative mindset and sustain creativity. Lugwisha (2021) argued that for an organization to succeed, it should ensure sound relationships among the people. Good human relations motivate people to work and creates network of relationship. Good human relations aids teamwork and the team spirit sustain workers' performance even when the personal or internal motivation is declining or absent. Thus, human relations through team work are the bedrock of achievement and economic performance. It is the hallmark of any appreciable performance since no person or organization can ever make it without being assisted by others.

Skills for Human Relation

The essence of human touch, empathy and understanding can't be replicated by technology alone. Therefore this section covers review of some of the human relations skills to build and maintain stronger relationships in family, school and other systems.

Communication: Communication involves conveying messages to other person and listening with the intention of understanding and making the person feel valued. Communication is a skill for religious and human relations. Obiefuna(2008) noted that "there can be no meaningful human relations without the spiritual or abstract qualities that religion offers" (10). One of such qualities is self communication which involves listening to ourselves and weighing our actions. He added that a good human relations practitioner has to discover his own soul by listening to him or herself in self communication before any effective communication with Supreme Being or fellow men. He stated further that self communication is an examination of conscience. It is mediation and a form of prayer or ritual. Therefore communication is a skill for effective human interactions and relations. It covers the three main dimensions of communication such as divine communication, self communication and interpersonal and group communication.

Empathy: Empathy is another human relations skill that allows an individual to show genuine interest in understanding the feelings or challenges of other people. Empathy allows an individual to look at people's situation with the desire to help an individual feel he can trust his friend or brother. It involves having compassion and striving to find solutions to people's problem. Empathy

strengthens relationships. It distinguishes us from machines and helps us to be fulfilled as rational beings. Onwubiko (1991). Empathy is an essential skill for human relations because human relations are way of life that emphatically centered upon human interests and values. It is a mode of living characterized by empathy and consideration and compassion for human being.

Conflict Resolution Skill: Conflict is an inevitable experience in human and social interactions. It is one of the skills for sound human relations. Therefore one must have well-developed conflict resolution skills to build and sustain relationships. Abraham applied the principle in maintaining the relationship between him and his nephew lot. Thus conflict resolution skills involves being able to listen to individual perspectives when conflict occurs and in way that the parties involved feels that they are being heard and understood. It involves allowing the parties to present their issues and carrying each party along in coming up with a solution that everyone is comfortable with.

Self-Esteem: Reece, Brandt and Howie (2008) state that self-esteem is one of the skills for human relations. This is because people who have negative feelings about their abilities and accomplishments and who engage in constant self-criticism always struggle to build and maintain a good relationship with others. In other words one most learn how to accept him or herself for him to interact and relate well with others. Obiefuna (2008) asserts that people with low self-esteem are mostly timid and ineffective in human interaction including religious relationships. Therefore high self esteem helps in human relations. It helps people to be good in intra and interpersonal relations

Influence of Digital Technologies on Human Relations in Contemporary Society

Building Relationship: Through digital technologies one can build and develop relationship with others. Digital technology helps us to build relationship such as marriage relationship and friendship. They enable People to develop and build relationships without meeting each other physically. People can form and maintain relationship by sharing instant photos and video calls which creates avenue for quick contact with family and friends. Indeed, Social media platforms, instant messaging, software and video calls can improve human connection but may also increase loneliness. Building relationship via digital technologies can undermine the quality of one-to one communication..

Communication: One of the greatest challenges of human society in a few decades ago was how to communicate with people that stay far from us. In the past, People were limited to a close set of personalities with whom they could communicate. The introduction of the internet and the creation of email systems led to a revolution in the field of communication technology. Today we can communicate with each other even without physical contact or seeing person. Technological advancement makes communication easier, more real and efficient in the contemporary society. Communication apps like Facebook, Whatsapp, Snachat, telegram, Skype, Instagram and twitter enable people to connect in seconds through smart phones thereby saving us the cost of travelling or sending letters to our friends, love ones and business partners**.**

Human Interaction and Virtual Connection: Human relations are centered upon human interests and values. It is characterized by empathy, and by consideration and compassion for human beings .Human relations is recognizing the worth of individuals as human beings or what they can do for each other. Negatively, Dyikuk (2017) noted that Internet threatened human interaction, since social media communication is often private affair; the sense of real face to face communication appears endangered. Therefore, digital technologies have the capacity to decrease human interaction and physical or real life contact. Digital technologies cannot perfectly mimic human interactions and connections through hugs and handshake. However, it facilitates interactions among friends, employee, students and family members. It creates an environment for knowledge sharing and discussions. Digital technologies affect human relation by promoting virtual connection. The apps such as Skype and Zoom allow people to share ideas, interact, learn and even connect emotionally without being in the same room or having physical interaction

Social Exchange: The influence of digital technology on human relations extends beyond interpersonal relationships; it creates an avenue for transaction and digital economy. Aydin (2024) observed that internet marketing uses electronic commerce to promote and sell products. The electronic commerce helps in human relations by facilitating online exchange of goods or services over the internet. Furthermore, Ndubuisi-Okolo, Anekwe Asogwa and Eneh (2024) affirm that digital platforms like Facebook, twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp , connect local, national and international markets to global market thereby boosting human relations and exports. Therefore, digital technologies help to advance human relations in contemporary society.

Absence of Emotion and Empathy: Technology provides opportunity for human connection and interaction. Virtual exchange replaces personal confrontations. It takes participant away from the realities of physical life and promotes digital citizens, but we should not dismiss the fact that they adversely affect intimacy and trust. Obiefuna (2018) expatiates that digital technology cannot do everything human beings need for sound human relations. Machines cannot do what humans can do. They are not affective. They are not emotional. Digital technologies cannot express appreciation. Digital technologies can never be creative outside humans.

Communal life System: The communal nature of African community implies that an individual does not and cannot exist alone, because whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the group happens to the individual. In order words, African sense of community is communal. It frowns at individualistic spirit and private life style that is capable of suppressing the communal life system. Dyikuk (2017) confirmed that social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Yahoo, Gmail and Whatsapp, are privately-oriented. It presents false sense of community through sharing information and communicating with people we may not know or have not seen. However, in the contemporary world order, digital technologies are useful in communal relations. They promote communal life system by bringing people together through various online platforms. People from different communities have various platforms such as whatsapp platform which helps in spreading vital information necessary for peace and progress of their communities. The platform enables members of the community to connect and contact each other. It is also an avenue for welfare service to the incapacitated members of the community.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Digital technology is highly essential and beneficial to human relations in this digital age. This is because; the digital technologies have powerful influence in all social structures. The educational system, health, commerce and communication systems are now digitalized. There is no way one can relate to others or build relationships without making use of digital technologies. The digital technologies also influence the vertical relationship. People prefer machine assisted mediation to real life meditation. Thus for one to progress and have any meaningful relationship in the digital era, one has to make some adjustments by making use of the digital technologies. But we should not lay all our eggs in one basket by concentrating on digital technologies in human relations. This is because periods of face-to face interaction, conversation and real life contact make human relations healthier and meaningful.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

**THE INFLUENCE OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY OF THE
ANGLICAN DIOCESE ON THE NIGER**
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the influence of divorce on children, using the Anglican Diocese on the Niger as a case study. Marriage is traditionally regarded as a blissful union, particularly beneficial for children. However, the breakdown of marital relationships through divorce often disrupts this ideal. Divorce not only affects the couple involved but also has far-reaching consequences on various segments of society, especially on children. These children often experience imbalanced upbringing, increased vulnerability to social vices, poor academic performance, and moral challenges. The primary aim of this research is to explore the impact of divorce on the social and psychological development of children, while also identifying and analyzing the root causes of divorce within the context of the Anglican Diocese on the Niger. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary materials, and analyzed using descriptive and interpretative methodologies. Findings reveal that children from divorced homes are significantly affected in their social, moral, psychological, and academic lives. Many of these children exhibit behavioral issues and are more prone to delinquency. The study emphasizes that divorce is a deeply distressing experience for children and has become a growing concern globally. Recommendations include the implementation of structured premarital counseling and education, as well as encouraging extended periods of courtship to foster better understanding between partners. Couples are urged to maintain peaceful cohabitation within the marital bond and to raise their children in stable environments. Additionally, church leaders should provide guidance and education to children from divorced homes, emphasizing the importance of healthy and enduring marriages. This research contributes meaningfully to the understanding of the effects of divorce on children and serves as a valuable resource for spouses, children, teachers, clergy, churches, guardians, students, and counselors. It offers insights into marital challenges, the necessity of premarital counseling, and effective strategies for supporting children affected by divorce.

Keywords: Marriage, Divorce, Children

INTRODUCTION

Marriage, across all societies, is recognized as a divinely instituted and regulated covenant rather than a mere human invention. The Diocese on the Niger upholds the doctrine that marriage is fundamentally God's creation. This aligns with the biblical revelation, which affirms that God instituted marriage with specific purposes: to provide mutual companionship between man and woman in both prosperity and adversity; to enable the procreation and nurturing of children within a loving and disciplined environment; and to foster reciprocal self-giving in love, which finds its natural fulfillment in sexual union, described in Scripture as becoming "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24, New International Version).

These foundational purposes were divinely established at creation and must be understood as God's

blueprint for marriage (Clarke, 2013). As such, marriage is a vital establishment that contributes to an individual's happiness, stability, and overall contentment in life. From the Christian perspective, marriage is a lifelong covenant marked by fidelity and sacrificial love (Grenz, 1997).

The beauty of marriage often begins when a man and a woman fall in love and prepare to share their lives as husband and wife. During this early stage, both parties are typically devoted to fulfilling the mutual goals of love, support, and companionship. However, the ideal vision of marriage is increasingly challenged in modern society. Marriages that begin with deep affection and high expectations often deteriorate, culminating in separation or divorce.

Divorce, a tragic and emotionally devastating experience, is not only contrary to God's will but also frustrates His divine purposes for marriage. It brings with it profound emotional consequences, including feelings of rejection, disillusionment, guilt, and brokenness. Moreover, children of divorced parents are often left vulnerable, experiencing psychological, emotional, and even spiritual challenges (Amato, 2000). Among the many distressing human experiences, divorce remains one of the most significant in its long-term impact on both individuals and families.

Children from divorced families often encounter numerous challenges within church communities and in their interactions with individual Christians. A child, defined as any individual under the age of eighteen, is particularly vulnerable to disruptions in family structure. When a marriage breaks down, it can affect the child morally, emotionally, physically, and academically (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Therefore, couples must diligently guard their marriages with intentional care, mutual respect, and an awareness of the lasting impact their relationship decisions can have on their children.

Parents must prioritize the overall well-being of their children when navigating marital challenges. Even in situations where divorce becomes unavoidable, considerations must be made to minimize its negative and long-lasting effects on children. Divorce is a legal process by which a marriage is formally dissolved, freeing both parties from further marital obligations. However, the implications of divorce go far beyond the legal realm; it leaves emotional and developmental scars, especially on the children involved.

In contemporary society, divorce is increasingly recognized as a social issue due to its far-reaching consequences on families and communities. Children from divorced homes are particularly susceptible to adverse outcomes such as emotional instability, poor academic performance, and social maladjustment (Amato, 2001). Lacking adequate parental guidance and supervision, such children may be more likely to associate with negative peer groups, drop out of school, and engage in antisocial behaviors. These difficulties often hinder their educational fulfillment, leading them to settle for menial jobs and face economic hardship.

The cumulative impact of these negative outcomes not only affects the individuals involved but also places a significant burden on the wider society. The social, educational, and economic costs associated with divorce-related childhood trauma extend beyond financial implications and include the deterioration of moral and social values within the community (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 2003).

The following charts present statistical data from the Diocese on the Niger Marriage and Divorce Tribunal Database (2010–2021), highlighting the effects of marital breakdowns on children within the diocesan context.

Statistical Overview and Case Study

According to statistics from the Diocese on the Niger Marriage Tribunal Database (2021), between the years 2010 and 2021, a total of 121,133 marriages were registered and consummated. Within this same period, 61,275 of these marriages ended in divorce, while 18,450 cases of marital separation were also recorded. Most alarmingly, the number of children directly affected by these dissolved or separated marriages was 121,401. Despite numerous premarital counseling sessions organized by churches across the Diocese, the rate of divorce has continued to rise steadily, indicating a troubling trend that calls for urgent intervention.

This data highlights the deteriorating state of the institution of marriage and the far-reaching consequences of divorce, particularly on children. To further emphasize the devastating impact of divorce on children in the Diocese, one of the cases from the Diocese's Marriage Tribunal is presented below as a real-life example.

Case Study: The Marriage of Amaka and Chike

This is a true account archived by the Diocese on the Niger Marriage Tribunal. In April 2010, Mr. Chike and Miss Amaka were joined in holy matrimony in a joyful and well-attended wedding ceremony. However, that same evening, a disagreement erupted between the couple when Chike requested to have custody of their marriage certificate. Amaka refused, claiming it would be safer in her possession. The argument escalated, and Chike, in a moment of rage, physically assaulted Amaka, causing serious injuries that required hospitalization.

After her recovery, Amaka discovered she was pregnant. Feeling unsafe and betrayed, she filed for divorce through her lawyer. Though Chike attempted reconciliation and even sought help from the Diocese on the Niger Marriage Tribunal at the Episcopal Court in Onitsha, Amaka remained resolute in her decision to divorce. She believed retaining the marriage certificate would give her an advantage in claiming Chike's properties.

The conflict intensified when Amaka and her siblings stormed Chike's house, physically assaulted him, and carted away valuable items. In response, Chike completely severed ties and refused to contribute to the pregnancy. Amaka, then a senior staff member at a prominent commercial bank in Nigeria, began to struggle with her health and was eventually dismissed from her job due to complications from her earlier injuries.

Nine months later, she gave birth to triplets, but one of the children died due to inadequate prenatal care. One of the surviving children developed Down syndrome, and the other—despite being physically healthy—lacked proper upbringing. Without a stable parental figure or financial support, he dropped out of school, joined a gang, and became a public threat. Eventually, he was arrested after attacking a military officer with his gang and was imprisoned awaiting trial.

This tragic story starkly illustrates the deep and lasting consequences of marital breakdown—not only on the couple but more profoundly on their offspring. The physical, emotional, academic, and

moral dimensions of a child's life can be severely destabilized due to the fallout of divorce, reinforcing the urgent need for holistic and preventive approaches to family counseling and support (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004).

Case Two: The Story of Obinna

In June 2014, the Diocese on the Niger Marriage Tribunal Office at the Episcopal Court, Onitsha, documented the case of Obinna, a 16-year-old boy at the time of the report. Obinna's father, a prominent politician and divorcee, refused to comply with the peace judgment issued by the Diocese on the Niger Marriage Tribunal. Obinna, having witnessed years of marital conflict and eventual separation between his parents, developed deep-seated resentment towards his father.

According to tribunal records, Obinna was apprehended by the police at Nkpor Junction during an attempted escape from a failed armed robbery operation that involved attempted murder. In his confession, Obinna revealed that the target was his father—the same man who had, years earlier, driven him, his mother, and five siblings into homelessness. At just eight years old, Obinna had been forced to live in slum conditions for eight years. He recalled a childhood plagued by domestic violence, emotional trauma, and the instability that followed the divorce.

Once a promising student, Obinna's academic performance began to decline dramatically due to the psychological toll of his home environment. Eventually, he and his siblings dropped out of school. The tragedy escalated when their mother died, reportedly from the emotional trauma of watching her children succumb to criminality. Obinna's descent into violence was a direct consequence of the family breakdown, emphasizing the point that divorce can have a cancerous and widespread effect on society—starting from a single unresolved conflict and culminating in generational damage.

Statement of the Problem

When a marriage collapses, all parties involved are affected; however, the impact on children is often the most profound. Children, by virtue of their innocence and developmental immaturity, are less equipped to process and manage the emotional stress that accompanies divorce. Their behavioral responses can range from mild withdrawal to aggressive rebellion, depending on age, personality, and the nature of the parental conflict.

In the absence of either parent, a child may experience psychological disorientation, low self-esteem, diminished academic performance, and impaired social relationships. Emotional bonding and closeness with both parents are essential to a child's self-confidence and moral development. Divorce interrupts these formative processes and often creates long-term instability.

Although Nigeria has enacted various laws and policies to protect children and regulate marital relationships—such as the Child Rights Act (2009), Child Development Policy (1996), and the Marriage Act (1971)—these frameworks have not succeeded in mitigating the rising tide of divorce and its negative implications for children. Within the Diocese on the Niger, the lack of empirical studies on this subject is particularly concerning, given the alarming statistics and reported cases.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the socio-psychological, educational, moral, and

spiritual effects of divorce on children within the context of the Anglican Communion in the Diocese on the Niger. It is both a timely and necessary response to a growing societal crisis.

This Study Is Guided By The Following Research Questions:

1. What are the effects of divorce on the social life of children in the Diocese on the Niger"
2. What are the major causes of divorce within the Diocese"
3. How does divorce influence children's moral development"
4. What are the academic consequences of divorce on affected children"
5. What remedial measures can be taken to mitigate the impact of divorce on children and families"

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of divorce on children, with particular reference to the Diocese on the Niger. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the effects of divorce on the social life of children within the Diocese on the Niger.
2. To identify the major causes of divorce in the Diocese.
3. To explore the influence of divorce on the moral development of children.
4. To assess the impact of divorce on children's academic performance.
5. To propose practical and sustainable solutions to the problems associated with divorce, thereby contributing to family stability, social cohesion, and the well-being of children in the Diocese on the Niger and beyond.

Concept of Divorce

Divorce is a globally contentious issue, especially in modern times. Derived from the Latin word *divortium*, meaning "to separate," divorce refers to the legal dissolution of a marriage contract. In today's society, it has become increasingly normalized, often perceived as a routine aspect of modern life, despite its profound personal and social implications.

According to Oneke (2004), divorce is a painful and destructive "cankerworm" that legally terminates a marital union. Though often seen as a solution to a troubled marriage, it can become more devastating than the challenges it seeks to resolve. The emotional pain resulting from the breakup of such a close relationship is especially intense when children are involved. Divorce signifies the breakdown of the family unit—the separation of husband and wife who once shared a household—and its increasing prevalence today contrasts sharply with its rarity in traditional societies.

Landis and Landis (2006) noted that in earlier generations, divorce was infrequent and seldom considered. However, the modern era has witnessed a surge in divorce rates, often because contemporary couples expect far more from marriage than their predecessors did. According to Landis (2009), the failure of a marriage should be measured against the expectations the couple had at its inception. If marriage is perceived primarily as a means for childbearing or companionship and fails to fulfill that purpose, frustration sets in and divorce becomes likely.

Clemens (2007) argued that in ancient times, marriages were formed not merely for emotional satisfaction but also for social and economic reasons, which helped sustain the marital bond. By contrast, today's couples often prioritize emotional fulfillment, and when those expectations are unmet, emotional dissatisfaction can lead to marital breakdown.

In societies where divorce is legally or culturally difficult to obtain, informal separations and desertions are often more common. Even in such contexts, a couple may remain legally married while living apart for years. In other cases, desertion for a specific period can serve as grounds for legal divorce.

Kendall (2003) describes divorce as the legal process that dissolves a marriage, allowing former spouses to remarry. Most modern divorces are granted on the grounds of "irreconcilable differences," where no specific blame is assigned to either party. Haralambos and Holborn (2004) define divorce as the legal termination of a marital union, while South and Lloyd (1995) emphasize that it revokes the marital contract and grants both parties the right to remarry.

Lanolic (2006) noted that marriage is often entered into with insufficient preparation, making it vulnerable to failure. As a result, most societies recognize the need for legal procedures to end unsuccessful marriages. Divorce rates vary across regions and cultures. For instance, in some Islamic contexts, a man may divorce his wife simply by declaring "I divorce thee" three times, underscoring the cultural and religious diversity in divorce practices.

Biblical Concept of Divorce

One of the earliest truths God revealed after creation was the importance of companionship. In *Genesis 2:18*, God said, *"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him."* This marked the divine institution of marriage—ordained by God for unity, support, and fruitfulness. However, the fall of man in *Genesis 3* introduced sin into the world, which corrupted even the most sacred of relationships, including marriage.

Divorce, as a product of human brokenness, has become increasingly common—even among Christian believers. Scripture addresses divorce in multiple contexts. For instance, *Deuteronomy 24:1–3* outlines conditions under which a man could divorce his wife under Mosaic law. In *Malachi 2:16*, God explicitly says, *"I hate divorce,"* indicating His strong stance on marital faithfulness. In the New Testament, Jesus emphasizes the permanence of marriage, teaching that *"What God has joined together, let no one separate"* (*Matthew 19:6*).

Jesus further explains in *Matthew 19:8–9* that divorce was permitted because of the hardness of people's hearts, not because it was part of God's original design. Paul also weighs in on the issue, especially in *1 Corinthians 7*, advising believers on matters such as abandonment by unbelieving spouses and remarriage after a spouse's death (*Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:39*).

Some key scriptural references on the topic include:
- Old Testament: *Deuteronomy 22:19, 22:29; 24:1–3; Jeremiah 3:1, 3:8; Isaiah 50:1; Malachi 2:16*
- New Testament: *Matthew 1:19; 5:31–32; 19:7–9; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:11–13, 39*

These scriptures reflect the Bible's consistent view that while divorce may be permitted under certain conditions (such as adultery or abandonment), it is never ideal and should always be approached with caution, prayer, and pastoral counsel (Keener, 1993; Wright, 2010).

The Causes of Divorce among Anglican Christians

In early times, particularly within traditional and Anglican Christian contexts, divorce was rare. Marriage was seen not only as a personal union but as a communal and covenantal relationship. Husbands and wives understood their roles, and extended families played active roles in supporting marital stability.

However, significant social changes following the Nigerian-Biafra War in 1970 led to the erosion of communal values. Individualism became more prevalent, and family structures began to weaken. This cultural shift has greatly influenced the rising incidence of divorce in the Diocese on the Niger.

Historically, Anglican Christians believed marriage was sacred, indissoluble, and meant to last a lifetime. The words of Jesus, *"What God has joined together, let no one separate"* (*Matthew 19:6*), formed the cornerstone of marital doctrine. At weddings, couples vowed to remain together *"for better or for worse, until death do us part."*

Today, the situation is different. Marriage, once seen as stable and enduring, has become fragile. Many couples are unable to withstand the pressures of modern life—economic hardship, poor communication, infidelity, and social media influences are just a few of the challenges. Furthermore, exposure to Western ideologies through travel and media has brought about cross-cultural influences that conflict with traditional Christian teachings.

This cultural diffusion has changed people's attitudes toward marriage and divorce. Among Anglican Christians in the Diocese on the Niger, this shift is seen in the growing number of broken homes, affecting children socially, spiritually, emotionally, and academically.

Adultery

Adultery remains one of the most destructive forces in marriages, both in ancient and modern societies. Moral theologians define adultery as a sexual relationship between a married individual and someone other than their spouse. When both parties involved in the act are married, the moral weight of the offense is further compounded. In Nigerian society, adultery is regarded as a grave offense, one that not only violates cultural expectations but also spiritual commands. The Mosaic Law strictly forbids adultery and outlines severe penalties for those who commit it (Exodus 20:14, New International Version).

Within Christian doctrine, particularly among Anglican Christians, adultery has been a leading cause of family breakdown (Okafor, 2017). The sin often leads to a loss of trust, emotional pain, and sometimes irreversible damage in marriage relationships. Christian couples are therefore encouraged to remain faithful to their vows and to avoid this grievous sin.

Quarreling

Quarreling is another common challenge in Anglican Christian marriages. Some couples fail to experience the peace and joy that should characterize a Christian marriage due to constant disputes and disharmony. Conflict in itself is not inherently bad—disagreements are natural in human relationships—but unresolved and prolonged quarrels can erode marital stability (Adeoye & Osagie, 2019).

Sources of quarrels may include incompatibility, hot temper, negligence, poverty, or miscommunication. While occasional disagreements are expected, Christian couples are urged to seek peace and reconciliation. Proverbs 15:1 teaches, *"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger"* (New International Version). Marriages thrive in an atmosphere of understanding, mutual respect, and love.

Alcoholism

Alcoholism has proven to be a silent destroyer of many Christian homes. Some Anglican Christian families suffer deeply due to the addictive behaviors of one or both spouses. Excessive alcohol consumption often leads to the neglect of family responsibilities, financial recklessness, and even physical abuse. An alcoholic husband or wife typically becomes incapable of making sound decisions and fails to provide emotional and financial support to the family.

Scripture warns against drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18, New International Version), and Christian families are advised to avoid such behavior. If not addressed, alcoholism can significantly contribute to marital breakdown and eventual divorce (Nwoye, 2020).

Adverse Influences

In modern society, many families are vulnerable to external influences, including mass media, social media, and peer pressure. These influences can cause moral erosion and breed distrust and discontent within the home (Iheanacho, 2018). Friends and neighbors may sometimes interfere unduly in marital affairs, leading to unnecessary complications. Overfamiliarity with outsiders can give room to temptation and compromise, putting family unity at risk.

Couples are therefore advised to set healthy boundaries, protect the sanctity of their marriage, and avoid associations that may pose threats to their relationship. As 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns, *"Bad company corrupts good character"* (New International Version).

Financial Difficulties

Financial hardship is one of the leading causes of divorce among Anglican Christian families. Money problems create tension, limit opportunities for growth, and may lead to constant arguments. Without proper financial planning, spouses may see each other as burdens, leading to resentment (Eze, 2021).

The Bible acknowledges the dangers of loving money over godly values (1 Timothy 6:10, New International Version). Couples should work together, budget wisely, and communicate openly about their finances. Financial harmony contributes greatly to marital stability.

Immature Marriage

Another major factor contributing to divorce among Anglican Christians is early or immature marriage. Traditionally, people married at a more mature age, often after gaining some life experience. Today, however, it is common for teenagers (as young as 13 to 17 years old) to enter into marriage, often without the emotional or psychological readiness required to sustain it (Chukwuemeka, 2016).

Immature marriages are particularly vulnerable to conflict, misunderstanding, and early disintegration. The lack of maturity can hinder proper communication, decision-making, and handling of family responsibilities. It is vital that those intending to marry understand the weight of the marital commitment and approach it with adequate preparation and maturity.

Challenges of Christian Marriages in Contemporary Nigeria

Mixed Marriage

The Nigerian Constitution guarantees freedom of choice, worship, and association (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). These rights, while fundamental, often clash with cultural and religious realities in Nigeria, a nation home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its unique traditions and beliefs. Among Anglican Christians, interethnic or mixed marriages have historically been approached with caution. However, contemporary Anglican families in the Diocese on the Niger appear to pay less attention to ethnic compatibility in marriage. This shift has contributed to social stigmas, misunderstandings, and even the dissolution of marriages (Okonkwo, 2020). Cultural incompatibility and conflicting expectations from families often disrupt marital harmony, weakening the Christian understanding of marriage as a sacred union.

In-Laws

In-laws play a critical role in Christian family life. Within Anglican tradition, the extended family is integral, and in-laws are expected to maintain cordial relationships with married couples (Eze, 2018). The ability of in-laws, particularly a married daughter's parents, to freely visit their child's home exemplifies this ideal. However, while positive in-law relationships can enhance marital stability, negative involvement can lead to discord and family breakdowns. Over-dependence on parents by married couples can also hinder independence. Christian couples are encouraged to live independently—economically and emotionally—to safeguard their homes from external interference (Umeh, 2017).

Childlessness

Childlessness remains one of the most stigmatized marital challenges in African societies. According to Onunkwo (personal communication, April 15, 2025), the inability to produce offspring is seen as one of the greatest misfortunes. Among the Igbo, marriage is often viewed primarily as a means of perpetuating lineage and community continuity. Chekwube Eloka, a 60-year-old divorcee, shared that childbearing, especially of male children, is central to marital fulfillment. Her husband divorced her for bearing only female children. Names like *Nkemakonam* ("May I never lack my portion"), *Afamefuna* ("May my name not be lost"), and *Nwanyibuife* ("A woman is valued") reflect the societal emphasis on procreation. Basden (2008) observed that a

childless woman in Igbo culture is often considered a "monstrosity," a social condition serious enough to justify divorce or polygamy, despite church teachings.

Impotency

Impotence, especially on the part of the husband, is another sensitive issue that leads to marital breakdown. In situations where a man is unable to impregnate his wife, the relationship often becomes strained. While some couples manage through mutual understanding, others resort to unethical solutions, such as the woman secretly seeking another man to impregnate her. Such acts violate Christian doctrines and can lead to divorce when discovered (Eze, 2018).

Unfaithfulness

Infidelity is a leading cause of divorce in Christian marriages. Extramarital affairs often destroy trust and respect between partners. While society tends to judge women more harshly for unfaithfulness, Mr. Eneanya Okechukwu, a respondent from Nkpor, criticized this double standard, emphasizing that fidelity is a mutual obligation (Okechukwu, personal communication, April 15, 2025). Jesus Christ also condemned hypocrisy and promoted equality in judging sin (John 8:7, New International Version).

Lack of Fellowship and Companionship

Many men believe that providing materially for their families is sufficient. However, emotional availability, companionship, and quality time are crucial to a healthy marital relationship. Prolonged absence or emotional detachment can lead to loneliness and emotional distress, ultimately pushing couples toward separation (Umeh, 2017).

Disobedience and Other Domestic Conflicts

Other causes of divorce include disobedience, quarrels with in-laws, failure to fulfill traditional marriage obligations, jealousy, gossip, and prolonged separation between spouses. These issues erode trust and intimacy in marriage. Disobedience, in particular, is often the root of many domestic disagreements. Such dysfunctions can affect children, transferring behavioral patterns that perpetuate family instability (Okonkwo, 2020).

THE INFLUENCE OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

The separation of a couple leaves an indelible mark on the children, often creating a social stigma that can persist for years. Divorce is commonly associated with increased risks to children's psychological well-being, academic performance, and social adjustment. Throughout their life-course, children from divorced homes frequently face various social challenges (Amato, 2000). Research shows that experiencing parental separation roughly doubles the risk of adverse outcomes. However, the majority of children and adolescents do not suffer severe impairing problems post-divorce (Amato & Keith, 1991). Interviews with Mr. Akanso Chika from Abatete and Mr. Ikenna Osuocha from Uke revealed that parental divorce often leads to significant emotional distress for children, both during and after the separation. They also emphasized that the increased risks associated with divorce often stem from pre-existing factors that affect both the likelihood of separation and the well-being of the children.

Ongoing conflicts between divorced parents, poor parenting, financial instability, and loss of contact with the non-custodial parent exacerbate the situation (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Divorce undermines the family unit, depletes human and social capital, increases societal costs, and weakens tax contributions. It negatively impacts children's development across five key societal institutions: family, education, religion, the economy, and governance (Fagan & Rector, 2000).

Moreover, divorce can lead to poor conflict resolution skills, reduced social competence, early loss of virginity, and weakened gender identity among young adults (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). These effects often extend into adulthood, manifesting in difficulties with relationships, higher rates of cohabitation and divorce, and a pessimistic outlook on marital stability.

THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY ON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR AND MORAL LIFE

A family is more than just a group of people living together; it is a natural social system united by blood and common goals, particularly the moral upbringing of children. When families are disrupted by divorce, the fundamental goal of nurturing responsible individuals may be compromised (Selfe, 1993).

A well-functioning family operates under a set of rules, assigned roles, and communication systems that support negotiation and problem-solving. As family members grow, they develop individual identities while remaining spiritually and morally connected to the family unit. Families provide essential emotional and social needs such as love, companionship, and moral guidance.

Selfe (1993) defines a family as a social unit bound by blood, birth, or marriage, characterized by shared residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. He identifies several functions of the family, including population continuity, child care, adult relationship stabilization, and the transmission of cultural values.

In modern society, responsible parenting includes having a manageable number of children, considering factors such as income, living space, the mother's health, and the children's needs. Overburdened parents often neglect their children, negatively affecting their development. While children can strengthen the bond between parents, they can also become a source of tension if responsibilities are not balanced.

Parents are called to take full responsibility for their children's moral, spiritual, and social development. Both parents are needed to shape a balanced personality. Financial provision, discipline, and moral instruction are key components of parenting. Discipline, when guided by love and understanding, teaches children responsibility and self-control (Britten & Britten, 2004).

Kiura (1999) states that a child's attitudes, values, and standards are shaped by parental influence. Therefore, parents must lead by example. Britten and Britten (2004) advise parents to spend quality time with their children, communicate openly, and express love consistently. Children learn by observing and emulating their parents.

Nkechiobika from Nkpor, in an interview, noted the interdependence between depressed individuals and their social contexts, particularly the effect of parental depression on children. Downey and Coyne (1990) support this view, showing that children of depressed parents often

experience adjustment issues and mental health challenges. Depressed mothers may be less responsive, more negative, and less supportive, especially when combined with marital stress.

Neglectful parenting—characterized by emotional unavailability—leads to poor social competence and self-control in children. When children sense that they are less important than their parents' personal lives, they often struggle with independence and social interaction (Baumrind, 1991).

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

Divorce is very prevalent in most families today. Today, traditional nuclear family set-ups and structures are declining while other family structures such as step-parent families and single-parent families are rising. These trends have attracted different scholars seeking to understand the effect of such family decisions on children.

According to Lisa Barron (2010), in her article *"Divorce and its effects on the children's development,"* there are no doubts that divorce has negative implications on children's development. Divorce is increasing at a drastic rate today, and its effects have a disconcerting impact on children. The researcher concluded that children brought up from divorced families have a higher rate of emotional instability, social conflicts, cognitive disadvantages, and academic problems (Barron, 2010).

Similarly, Jane Anderson (2014) argues that there are evident long-term effects of divorce on children, parents, and society at large. The researcher calls upon physicians and caretakers to advocate for affirmative health policies that promote marriage and decrease the likelihood of divorce.

Consequently, Patrick and Churchill (2011) argue that divorce permanently weakens the family relations between parents and children and often leads to destructive conflict management methods. Separation also leads to a greater likelihood of stress, higher expectations of divorce in the future, and cohabitation.

Divorce rise has followed an international trend in the past few decades. There is a dramatic increase in the number of cohabiting couples, non-married couples, and single-parent families today. These demographic changes have harmful effects on children. Understanding the impact of divorce and separation among children is particularly important for children under the age of 4 since it affects the cognitive, emotional, and social domains that take place in a child's life.

In conclusion, parents and caregivers can reduce the harmful effects of stress by allowing children to have a healthy relationship with both parents, giving children—especially infants and toddlers—quality time, encouraging school-going children to speak openly about their feelings, and ensuring infants and toddlers have constant attention from their caregivers (McCloskey, 2011).

Common Psychological Effects of Divorce on Children

- **Poor Performance in Academics:** Divorce is difficult for all members of the family. For children, trying to understand the changing dynamics of the family may leave them distracted

and confused. This interruption in their daily focus can be one of the effects of divorce on children, and this would be seen in their academic performance.

- **Loss of Interest in Social Activity:** Research has suggested that divorce can affect children socially as well. Children whose family is going through divorce may have a harder time relating to others and tend to have fewer social contacts. Sometimes children feel insecure and wonder if their family is the only one that has gotten divorced.

- **Difficulty Adapting to Change:** Through divorce, children can be affected by having to learn to adapt to change more often. New family dynamics, new house or living situations, schools, friends, and more may all have an effect.

- **Emotionally Sensitive:** Divorce can bring several types of emotions to the forefront for a family, and the children involved are no different. Feelings of loss, anger, confusion, anxiety, and many others may come from this transition. Divorce can leave children feeling overwhelmed and emotionally sensitive.

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- **Anger/Irritability:** In some cases, where children feel overwhelmed and do not know how to respond to the effects they feel during divorce, they may become angry or irritable. Their anger may be directed at a wide range of perceived causes, including their parents, themselves, friends, and others.

- **Feelings of Guilt:** Children often wonder why a divorce is happening in their family. They may blame themselves or feel responsible, which can lead to stress, depression, or other health issues.

- **Introduction of Destructive Behaviour:** Unresolved conflict may lead to future risks. Research has shown children who have experienced divorce are more likely to engage in crimes, smoking, or prescription drug use.

- **Increase in Health Problems:** Divorce-related stress can result in physical issues such as frequent illness, sleep problems, and signs of depression.

- **Loss of Faith in Marriage and Family Unit:** Research has also shown that children of divorced parents are more likely to divorce in the future—possibly two to three times more likely than those from intact families.

THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH ON DIVORCE

The Anglican Church firmly rejects all forms of violence, especially within schools and families. It emphasizes the importance of dialogue and persuasion in the educational process and

shares in the responsibility of preparing each generation for the future. This responsibility is exercised through the Church's involvement in providing educational, cultural, recreational, and health services, developing skills and capacities, and correcting behavioral issues that may arise from family instability—including challenges faced by children from divorced families.

The Church fosters an atmosphere of love, openness, freedom, and forgiveness. It promotes a nurturing environment where corporal punishment and verbal abuse are not tolerated. Instead, guidance, counsel, and the example of good role models are emphasized. In collaboration with schools, some churches offer teacher training and organize seminars and workshops to brief parents on their educational roles and on how to support students effectively.

The Church renounces divorce conflicts and emphasizes its mission of peace, as Christ promised: *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"* (John 14:27). St. Paul echoes this in his letter: *"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7).

From the beginning, the Holy Bible has condemned violence and cruelty. When Cain killed his brother Abel, God confronted him, saying: *"What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground"* (Genesis 4:9-12). God cursed Cain, illustrating the seriousness with which He views violence and injustice. Similarly, the Book of Psalms declares: *"Let not a slanderer be established in the earth; let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow him. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor"* (Psalm 140:11-12).

David the Psalmist also testifies that God hears the cries of the weak and defends them: *"The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates"* (Psalm 11:4-5). Malachi adds, *"For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence"* (Malachi 2:16).

The Church therefore upholds peace and strongly condemns wars and conflicts, especially when vulnerable individuals such as children are involved. The Bible gives a clear example: when the Israelites went to war against the Philistines under King Saul, Jesse did not send his youngest son David because of his age (1 Samuel 17:12–15). This highlights the protection of children from violent conflict.

Another significant example is found in 2 Kings 6:14–17, where the prophet Elisha prayed for his servant's eyes to be opened to the divine protection surrounding them. This story reminds us that in times of conflict, faith and divine presence offer hope and reassurance.

In the context of divorce, the Church extends palliative care to affected families and children through its various institutions and affiliated non-governmental organizations. These groups offer shelter, counseling, education, and psychosocial support to victims of divorce, particularly women and children—who are often the most vulnerable.

In summary, the Church stands as a refuge for those affected by divorce. It advocates for peace, supports reconciliation, and offers practical assistance to help families rebuild, all while promoting love, forgiveness, and the well-being of every child.

THE STAND OF THE DIOCESE ON THE NIGER, ANGLICAN COMMUNION, ON DIVORCE AND CHILD PROTECTION

In the Anglican Church, marriage is regarded as a sacred institution, even though some other denominations may have different approaches to divorce—the legal separation of a married couple. The Diocese on the Niger, Anglican Communion, does not encourage divorce. It recognizes that only the civil court holds the legal authority to grant a divorce. Nonetheless, the Diocese has established pastoral structures to offer care and support to individuals affected by divorce granted by civil authorities.

The Diocese maintains strict guidelines regarding divorced and remarried Anglicans. From the outset, the Church considers marriage a sacred covenant founded on lifelong love, fidelity, and family unity. Marriage is both a legal and spiritual bond, and the spiritual bond, being witnessed by God, cannot be dissolved merely through civil or temporal laws.

Key Doctrinal Positions:

1. Reception of the Eucharist: An Anglican who remarries after a civil divorce is not permitted to receive the Eucharist unless granted a bishop's dispensation. This can only be given after a thorough investigation confirming the civil divorce through proper documentation (a certificate from a high court or customary court).

2. **Participation in Church Life:** While remarried Anglicans may participate in church services and fellowships, they are ordinarily barred from partaking in the Holy Communion. This discipline is often painful, as the Eucharist is central to Anglican faith and worship.

3. **Annulment:** According to the Church of England (1979), an annulment (Decree of Nullity) differs from divorce. It declares that the marriage was never valid from the beginning. Grounds for annulment include:

Psychological incapacity to understand the commitment of
marriage,

• Concealment of crucial facts such as a prior marriage, impotence, or infertility.

4. The annulment process involves four main phases:

• Petition: The petitioner presents reasons for believing the marriage was invalid.

• Evidence: Statements and documentation are collected from both parties and relevant witnesses.

• Discussion: Arguments are prepared both in favor of and against the annulment.
Judgment: The Diocesan Chancellor and the Bishop examine the evidence and render a decision. If annulment is granted, a second hearing may be conducted.

• Scriptural Foundation: The position of the Diocese stems from the words of Jesus:

o *"What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:6)
o *"What therefore God hath united, man must not divide."* (Mark 10:9)

6.   These verses emphasize the indissolubility of marriage in God's sight, even if legally dissolved.

7.   Augustine's Teaching: St. Augustine of Hippo, in his treatise *Of the Good of Marriage*, emphasized that divorce does not nullify the marriage bond in God's eyes. Remarriage after divorce, according to him, constitutes adultery unless the original marriage was null from the beginning.

8.   Synodical Resolutions: At the General Synod of Anglican Bishops of the Church of Nigeria in October 2005 (Lagos), fifty propositions on marriage and divorce were deliberated. Proposition 40 clearly states: "According to the tradition of the Anglican Church, those who are divorced and remarried cannot be admitted to Communion, as they are in objective contrast with the Word of the Lord."

Furthermore, the Synod discourages the blessing of remarried unions without annulment to avoid misleading the faithful about the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage.

9.   **Pastoral Sensitivity:** The Church acknowledges the deep sorrow and frustration among those barred from the sacraments due to their marital circumstances. While not endorsing such unions, the Diocese affirms that they are not excluded from the life of the Church. They are encouraged to :

○ Attend Sunday services,
○ Listen attentively to God's Word,
○ Nurture their life of faith, love, and conversion.

10.   The Church assures them of continued prayer, support, and pastoral concern, encouraging them to walk faithfully in obedience to the Lord's commands.

Child Protection and Support:

- The Diocese also recognizes the vulnerability of children in divorce situations. In line with Christian teachings and values:
- The Church opposes all forms of abuse, neglect, or violence against children.
- It promotes love, openness, and forgiveness in family and community life.
- Through her educational, health, and social service institutions, the Diocese offers support to children and families affected by divorce.
- In collaboration with NGOs and related agencies, the Church runs programs to care for the victims of divorce, especially women and children, who are often the most affected.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the influence of divorce on children within the Diocese on the Niger, Anglican Communion. The research was carried out across five Local Government Areas in Anambra State: Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Idemili North, Idemili South, Oyi, and part of Dunukofia.

To achieve its objectives, the study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary sources included oral interviews and personal observations, while secondary sources were drawn from relevant literature by both indigenous and foreign scholars.

The research identified several causes of divorce within the Diocese, including: drunkenness, adultery, financial challenges, early marriage (especially involving young girls), physical violence, poor marital adjustment, and occupational pressures.

The study revealed that children from divorced homes often suffer adverse consequences socially, morally, psychologically, and academically. Many of these children display behavioral problems, show signs of delinquency, and are exposed to alternative lifestyles such as single parenting and multiple remarriages, which in turn may negatively affect their development.

Theologically, the study reaffirmed that God is the originator of marriage (Genesis 1:26–27), designed primarily for companionship and mutual support. Scripture consistently upholds marriage as a sacred and permanent covenant, using it as a metaphor for God's relationship with Israel in the Old Testament and Christ's relationship with the Church in the New Testament.

The study further explored additional factors contributing to divorce in the Diocese, such as immaturity, infidelity, domestic violence, financial hardship, family interference, and misunderstanding of marital responsibilities. These challenges significantly affect children, leading to issues such as stigmatization, school dropout, prostitution, armed robbery, mental health breakdown, premature death, suicide, and other social vices.

It was also observed that divorce affects children's academic performance, emotional stability, spiritual life, and general wellbeing. Boys in particular suffer from a lack of fatherly guidance, love, and discipline, which contributes to poor social, moral, and spiritual development.

The role of parents in the overall growth and development of children was emphasized. Parents are key to ensuring the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual upbringing of their children. The neglect of these responsibilities due to divorce can lead to societal breakdown and moral decline.

CONCLUSION

The research assessed how the Diocese on the Niger responds to the growing issue of divorce. It was discovered that while the church provides three to six months of premarital counseling, there is little or no provision for post-marital counseling. Teachings on marriage are largely limited to wedding ceremonies or annual Family Life Week celebrations.

Efforts at developing marriage counselors within the Diocese were noted, including training committed deacons and priests. Nonetheless, the church has also experienced divorces among its members, with some marriages already broken and others facing serious challenges. In line with its doctrine, the church does not condone divorce, and leaders who divorce are relieved of their positions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Eradication of Divorce: Efforts should be intensified to completely eradicate divorce. Couples should be encouraged to remain committed to their marital vows and raise their children within a stable home environment.

2. Adequate Provisions for Child Welfare: In unavoidable cases of divorce, parents must make comprehensive arrangements to cater for the psychological, emotional, educational, and financial needs of their children to minimize the negative effects.

3. Affirmation of Parental Love: Parents, regardless of their marital status, must ensure their children experience love, attention, and guidance. Maintaining meaningful relationships with both parents, where possible, is vital.

4. Education on Marital Success: Children, especially those from broken homes, should be taught the value of successful marriages and the consequences of divorce. Such education will discourage them from normalizing divorce and promote healthier family values.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
GODLIGHT AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: AN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE
BY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This study explores the interplay between divine principles, as conceptualized by the term "Godlight," and governance in Nigeria, with a focus on ethical considerations. In a nation grappling with persistent issues of corruption, poor leadership, and social injustice, the integration of moral and spiritual dimensions into political discourse is both timely and vital. Qualitative methodology is adopted for the study. Data is sourced through documented literature on the subject matter. Utilizing descriptive method of analysis, the paper argues that the ethical framework provided by religious teachings serve as a guiding principle for governance by promoting integrity, accountability, and transparency among leaders. The study examines historical contexts where religious ethics have influenced political actions and policy-making in Nigeria, highlighting both successes and failures. Furthermore, the research delves into the potential of "Godlight" to foster a governance model that transcends mere legalistic frameworks and emphasizes moral responsibility. The study gathers insights from various religious leaders, political analysts, and citizens to assess the impact of ethical governance inspired by spiritual values on societal development. The findings suggest that a governance approach infused with ethical principles drawn from both religious and cultural traditions can positively influence public trust, enhance civic engagement, and promote social cohesion. Ultimately, this study advocates for a reevaluation of the relationship between faith and governance in Nigeria, positing that ethical leadership rooted in "Godlight" can pave the way for sustainable development and a more just society. By promoting a culture of integrity, this perspective offers a hopeful pathway towards resolving Nigeria's complex sociopolitical challenges.
Keywords: Godlight, Governance, Nigeria, Ethics and Perspective.

Introduction

Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is a nation characterized by its rich tapestry of ethnicities, vibrant cultures, and diverse religious beliefs. Home to over 200 million people, Nigeria boasts the largest Muslim and Christian populations on the continent, making it a unique case study for examining the interplay between religion and governance. At the intersection of this dynamic lies the concept of "Godlight," which signifies the ethical and moral guidance derived from religious teachings that influences governance and political leadership. This notion encapsulates the idea that faith and morality can play a critical role in guiding leaders' decisions and policies, potentially fostering accountability, transparency, and social justice.

The importance of ethics in governance cannot be overstated, particularly in a country fraught with challenges such as corruption, mismanagement, and political instability. Despite constitutional provisions for secular governance, the reality in Nigeria often sees political discourse heavily intertwined with religious narratives. Leaders frequently invoke religious values to garner public support, while many citizens turn to their faith for guidance in evaluating the moral integrity of their leaders. As such, understanding the ethical dimension of governance through the lens of Godlight becomes imperative. This paper aims to explore the ways in which Godlight influences governance in Nigeria, using an ethical perspective to scrutinize decision-making processes among political leaders. By examining the moral imperatives derived from religious teachings, the study seeks to highlight both the potential benefits and challenges associated with integrating faith-driven ethics into public governance. Notably, while the ethical perspectives rooted in religious beliefs can be catalysts for good governance, they can also be manipulated for political expediency, leading to disillusionment and mistrust among the populace.

Understanding the Concept of Godlight

The term "Godlight" is not widely recognized in academic literature but can be understood as the ethical illumination derived from spiritual beliefs, particularly in a religious context. It encapsulates the moral guidance that faith provides to individuals and communities, influencing their values, decisions, and actions within the realms of governance and social responsibility. The term "Godlight" in this context refers to the ethical illumination provided by religious teachings that inform moral actions and governance. In many cultures, especially in Nigeria, where religion plays a pivotal role in daily life, the concept of Godlight pertains to the integration of religious teachings into ethical frameworks that guide personal and collective behaviour. At its core, Godlight serves as a beacon for ethical behavior, promoting virtues such as justice, compassion, integrity, and accountability (Smith, 2018). Religious texts often provide moral directives that encourage followers to act righteously, fostering a sense of responsibility towards others. For instance, Judeo-Christian ethics emphasize principles of love, mercy, and justice, urging adherents to pursue the common good (Mackenzie, 2020). In contrast, Islamic teachings, which constitute a significant portion of Nigeria's cultural fabric, advocate for justice ('Adl) and ethical governance, as outlined in the Quran and Hadith (Abdulrahman, 2017). Thus, Godlight can be interpreted as a guiding force that compels individuals to align their actions with these moral imperatives.

In the context of governance, Godlight encourages leaders to make ethical decisions that prioritize the well-being of their constituents. Research indicates that ethical leadership grounded in religious values can lead to improved governance outcomes, as it fosters trust and accountability within communities (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Leaders who embody Godlight principles tend to be more transparent and accountable, helping to combat issues such as corruption and nepotism often prevalent in political systems like Nigeria's (Olayiwola, 2019). As such, the application of Godlight in governance serves to promote ethical standards that resonate with the populace, thus enhancing the relationship between the governed and their leaders.

Despite the potential benefits of Godlight in promoting ethical governance, challenges remain. The politicization of religion can lead to the distortion of Godlight principles, where leaders may exploit religious sentiments for self-serving purposes (Kettell, 2013). This manipulation can erode public trust and contribute to political cynicism, as citizens become disillusioned by leaders who fail to adhere to the moral standards they profess. Moreover, the diversity of religious beliefs in Nigeria presents further complications, as varying interpretations of Godlight can lead to conflicts and divisions within the society (Osaghae, 2011). The concept of Godlight represents a promising ethical framework rooted in religious teachings, its application in governance is fraught with complexities. Understanding Godlight as a guiding principle for ethical decision-making can potentially yield positive governance outcomes, but it also necessitates careful navigation of the political landscape to avoid exploitation and division. As Nigeria continues to grapple with its governance challenges, a concerted effort to align political practices with the authentic values encapsulated in Godlight may be essential for fostering a more accountable and ethical political environment.

Religion and Governance

The relationship between religion and governance has been extensively studied. Haynes (2014) argues that in many African countries, including Nigeria, religious beliefs significantly shape political culture and public administration. The intertwining of religious doctrines and governance can lead to improved ethical standards, as leaders who act in accordance with their religious beliefs may prioritize moral governance. Kettell (2013) highlights the dualism that exists in Nigerian politics, where religious convictions can both inform ethical governance and serve as a tool for manipulation. Therefore, understanding the role of Godlight in governance requires examining both the positive contributions and the challenges posed by religious affiliations.

The intricate relationship between religion and governance remains a critical topic of investigation, particularly in multi-religious societies like Nigeria. This interplay shapes political structures, public policies, and the ethical frameworks that guide leadership. As governments navigate the complexities of globalization, modernization, and sociopolitical dynamics, understanding the influence of religious beliefs on governance practices becomes essential. This

discussion aims to unpack the multifaceted dimensions of religion and governance, exploring theoretical frameworks, the impact of religious institutions, and the implications for ethical leadership.

A variety of theoretical frameworks provide insights into the relationship between religion and governance. One prominent theory is the sociological perspective, which posits that religion serves as a social institution that both shapes and is shaped by the political environment. According to Durkheim (1912), religion creates a collective conscience that binds society and informs moral norms and codes of conduct. This perspective suggests that religious beliefs significantly influence public policy and governance practices by instilling ethical values in leaders and citizens alike. Additionally, Maynard-Moody and Musheno's (2000) concept of "street-level bureaucracy" highlights how individual agency within public service is often informed by personal beliefs, including religious convictions. This theory suggests that bureaucrats and political leaders, influenced by their religious beliefs, may prioritize certain policies or initiatives that align with their moral outlook, impacting the governance landscape.

The historical interaction between religion and governance can be traced back to ancient civilizations where religious authority often paralleled political power. In many cultures, leaders were seen as divinely ordained, which legitimized their rule and governance practices. In the context of Christianity, Augustine's notion of the "City of God" (5th century) differentiated between divine authority and earthly governance, yet emphasized that moral governance should reflect divine will. In the Islamic tradition, the concept of *Ummah* emphasizes a community bound by religious and ethical standards. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) underscored the importance of religion in consolidating authority and social cohesion. These historical perspectives underscore that governance has often been intertwined with religious principles, affecting both the legitimacy of political power and the ethical underpinnings of governance systems.

Nigeria presents a unique case study for examining the intersection of religion and governance, characterized by a significant Muslim and Christian population, alongside various indigenous faiths. The constitutional provision for secular governance is often complicated by the active participation of religious leaders in political processes. Religious institutions have traditionally played a crucial role in advocating for social justice, human rights, and ethical governance. For instance, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) are influential bodies that mobilize their congregations around social issues and political accountability (Obadare, 2009). This mobilization often leads to increased civic engagement and is reflected in the electoral process. However, the politicization of religion can also exacerbate sectarian tensions, as seen in conflicts involving religious extremists and political factions, often leading to violence and instability (Bergh, 2015).

Challenges in Ethical Governance

Ethics in governance is profoundly shaped by religious teachings. Religious doctrines frequently emphasize virtues such as justice, compassion, and integrity, which are critical for ethical leadership. The intertwining of these virtues into political discourse can enhance accountability among leaders. Brown and Treviño (2006) argue that ethical leadership grounded in moral principles is associated with positive organizational outcomes and citizen trust. Nevertheless, the ethical landscape is complex. As highlighted by Kettell (2013), the political manipulation of religious rhetoric can dilute genuine ethical commitments, resulting in leaders who exploit religious sentiments for personal gain. This manipulation undermines public trust and complicates the governance landscape, as citizens may become disillusioned with both political authority and religious institutions.

The challenges associated with the intersection of religion and governance are manifold. One significant challenge is the potential for religious extremism to destabilize governance structures, as seen in various parts of the world. The rise of militant groups claiming religious justification for their actions further complicates the governance landscape (Wiktorowicz, 2005). Additionally, the challenge of ensuring equal representation and rights for all citizens, regardless

of religious affiliation, continues to be a pressing concern in multi-religious states. However, there are also opportunities for constructive engagement between religion and governance. Religious institutions can serve as catalysts for social justice and ethical governance, contributing to the development of policies that promote equality and inclusivity. The advocacy for human rights by religious groups, particularly in Nigeria, demonstrates the potential for faith-based organizations to play a pivotal role in governance by holding leaders accountable and promoting civic education.

The relationship between religion and governance is complex and multifaceted, influencing ethical leadership, policy-making, and social dynamics in significant ways. In the context of Nigeria, the interplay between diverse religious beliefs and governance practices presents both challenges and opportunities. As societies grapple with the implications of globalization and modernity, understanding the continuing relevance of religion in governance is essential for promoting ethical standards, social cohesion, and political stability. Future research should explore the evolving nature of this interplay, particularly how emerging religious movements can shape the political landscape and contribute to governance transformations.

The Influence of Godlight on Governance

This interplay between spirituality and political authority is especially significant in multi-religious societies where diverse faiths coexist. In contexts like Nigeria, where religion plays a central role in societal organization and political legitimacy, understanding the influence of Godlight on governance offers valuable insights into how faith-based ethical frameworks shape leadership practices, public accountability, and civic engagement. This discussion explores the various dimensions of Godlight and its impact on governance through theoretical frameworks, case studies, and contemporary implications. At its core, Godlight refers to the guiding principles derived from religious teachings that shape moral behaviors and decision-making processes. Ethical frameworks grounded in religious beliefs serve to inform both individual and collective responsibilities within governance structures. Scholars have long discussed the role of religion in shaping ethical leadership and governance. For instance, Smith (2018) posits that the moral imperatives derived from religious texts often compel leaders to act justly and transparently, aligning their decisions with the values espoused by their faith traditions.

The "moral governance" theory suggests that ethical leadership grounded in religious values can lead to more accountable and responsible governance systems (Brown & Treviño, 2006). In many religious traditions, adherence to principles such as justice, compassion, and integrity is not merely an ethical guideline; it is a divine command that local and national leaders often cite in their political rhetoric. This ethical dimension of Godlight becomes particularly salient in decision-making processes that affect public welfare, resource distribution, and social justice initiatives. Historically, the intertwining of religion and governance can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where religious authority legitimized political power and governance structures. In Christianity, the theological concept of the "City of God" posits that moral governance must reflect divine will, suggesting that earthly authorities are accountable to a higher spiritual authority (Augustine, 5th Century). Similarly, Islamic governance is deeply rooted in the principles of *sharia* law, which outlines ethical guidelines for leaders, emphasizing justice as a core tenet (Esposito, 2016).

In the contemporary context, these historical ideologies continue to shape governance practices in many societies, particularly in countries like Nigeria, where religious leaders often play pivotal roles in political advocacy. As Obadare (2009) argues, religious institutions act as critical agents of accountability, mobilizing communities to demand ethical governance from their political representatives. In Nigeria, the delicate balance between governance and religion is highlighted through the substantial influence of Godlight on political culture. Nigeria's population is divided roughly into half Christian and half Muslim, with indigenous faiths also comprising a significant number. This plurality demands that governance structures account for the ethical teachings from these diverse religious traditions.

The principles of Godlight manifest strongly in discussions around ethical leadership. Leaders invoking their religious principles often gain legitimacy and trust among constituents. Nwabughuogu (2018) affirms that many political leaders in Nigeria leverage their faith to cultivate

a public persona of integrity and moral rectitude, hoping to attract votes and support. This phenomenon illustrates how religious identity intermingles with political affiliation, shaping voters' perceptions of candidates' ethical dispositions. Moreover, Godlight plays a critical role in advocating for social justice and accountability within governance. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria, such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, contribute meaningfully to public discourse by pushing for policies that align with their ethical teachings. They often hold political leaders accountable, urging them to honor commitments to social welfare and equitable resource distribution (Adetunji, 2017). Their influence extends to promoting peaceful cohabitation between various religious groups, contributing to stability and communal harmony in regions fraught with sectarian tension.

Godlight also informs policy-making processes that aim to promote social justice. Religious ethics often underpin arguments for policies addressing poverty alleviation, health care, and education. For example, programs aimed at eradicating poverty in Nigeria frequently cite religious mandates, urging governments to act upon moral imperatives toward the less fortunate (Osaghae, 2011). However, the influence of Godlight on governance is not without challenges. As Kettell (2013) highlights, the politicization of religion can lead to conflict and division, particularly when political leaders manipulate faith-based narratives for personal gain. The tension between differing religious ideologies can also present hurdles to consensus-building in governance, particularly in a diverse society like Nigeria, where ethnic and religious affiliations often dictate political allegiance.

As globalization reshapes governance structures and societal values, the role of Godlight remains crucial but complicated. While it can enhance ethical governance, it can also lead to manipulation or conflict if not managed judiciously. The rise of radical factions that exploit religious narratives for extremist agendas presents a significant challenge, as evidenced by sectarian violence in Nigeria (Bergh, 2015). In response to these challenges, it is vital for religious leaders, policymakers, and civil society to work collaboratively towards fostering dialogue and mutual respect among different faiths. Promoting interfaith dialogue can lead to a more profound understanding of how religious teachings can collaboratively inform governance norms that prioritize social equity and justice.

The influence of Godlight on governance is a complex interplay of ethical frameworks, historical narratives, and contemporary challenges. In the Nigerian context, where religion significantly shapes public life, the values derived from Godlight have substantial implications for ethical leadership and social justice. While the potential for Godlight to cultivate accountability and ethical governance exists, the risks of politicizing religion must also be addressed.

Godlight and Ethical Decision-Making in Governance

In a rapidly changing world, where ethical dilemmas abound in personal and professional settings, Godlight serves as a source of wisdom that can significantly influence ethical decision-making. This section explores the relationship between Godlight and ethical decision-making through the lenses of moral philosophy, psychological insights, and real-world applications, illustrating how spirituality can provide a framework for ethical behaviour. Godlight often embodies the moral principles extracted from religious doctrines, providing adherents with a reference point for ethical decision-making. Theological perspectives posit that divine command or teachings form the basis of moral laws that govern human behaviour. For instance, within Christianity, the teachings of Jesus emphasize love, compassion, and integrity, which can guide individuals in making ethical decisions (Pope Francis, 2015). Similarly, in Islam, the Qur'anic injunctions underscore justice, honesty, and accountability, encouraging Muslims to align their actions with these principles (Esposito, 2016).

Philosophically, this is aligned with the virtue ethics tradition, which emphasizes the development of moral character as a basis for ethical decision-making. Virtue ethics, rooted in the teachings of Aristotle, can be linked to the concept of Godlight, as it stresses the importance of moral virtues that are often reinforced by religious teachings (Hursthouse, 1999). By internalizing these virtues, individuals can cultivate ethical reasoning abilities that reflect both their personal and spiritual beliefs.

1. Influence on Moral Judgments: Godlight influences individuals' moral judgments, often guiding them toward choices that align with ethical teachings. Cognitive psychological perspectives, such as those discussed by Greene et al. (2001), illustrate how moral intuitions are shaped by both rational considerations and emotional responses. Religious beliefs often intertwine emotional and cognitive aspects, providing adherents with a moral compass during decision-making processes.

2. Cognitive Dissonance and Ethical Consistency: The relationship between Godlight and ethical decision-making is also evident in the context of cognitive dissonance. When individuals are faced with ethical dilemmas that conflict with their religious beliefs, they experience dissonance, which can lead to a reevaluation of their choices. According to Festinger's theory (1957), individuals strive for consistency between their beliefs and actions. A strong connection to Godlight provides a foundation for individuals to resolve this dissonance by seeking alignment with their ethical obligations as defined by their faith.

3. Interpersonal and Social Implications: Godlight not only affects individual decisions but also influences social dynamics within communities. The social contract theory, as discussed by Rawls (1971), suggests that individuals must consider the implications of their decisions on the greater good. Religious teachings often emphasize communal responsibility and ethical obligations toward others, encouraging adherents to weigh the impact of their choices on societal welfare. This community-oriented outlook ensures that ethical decision-making is not merely a personal affair but is informed by broader social values aligned with Godlight.

The influence of Godlight on ethical decision-making is evident across various domains, including business ethics, healthcare, and social justice advocacy. For example, leaders in corporate environments often invoke their faith-based principles to guide ethical practices such as corporate social responsibility (CSR). Turban and Greening (1997) note that organizations led by morally guided leaders frequently engage in socially responsible behaviors, reflecting the ethical standards often derived from religious beliefs.

In healthcare, professionals often encounter ethical dilemmas relating to patient care and medical decisions. The integration of Godlight into ethical decision-making can promote compassion, empathy, and respect for individuals, guiding healthcare providers toward patient-centered care (Puchalski, 2001). Religious teachings that emphasize the sanctity of life and the moral imperative to care for others can enhance healthcare professionals' ethical commitments. Furthermore, in social justice movements, faith-based organizations often play pivotal roles in advocating for policies that align with their moral convictions. Initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty or promoting human rights frequently derive their ethical foundation from principles rooted in religious teachings, illustrating the practical application of Godlight in fostering a just society (Mendenhall, 2019). As ethical challenges continue to emerge in an increasingly complex world, the insights derived from Godlight can serve as essential guiding principles that uphold integrity, compassion, and responsibility. Future research should explore the nuanced interplay between spirituality and ethics, particularly in diverse cultural contexts, to enhance our understanding of how Godlight can inform ethical decision-making across various spheres of life.

Recommendations

To enhance the relationship between Godlight and governance in Nigeria, this study made the following recommendations:

1. There is need to develop educational programmes that incorporate spiritual and religious ethical teachings alongside traditional moral philosophy. This can nurture future leaders moral frameworks, equipping them with a holistic approach to ethical decision-making.

2. Leadership of faith based organizations should endeavour to encourage interfaith dialogues and collaborations within their communities. This can help clarify mutual values around ethics and morality. Such dialogues can illuminate the common ground among diverse faiths, fostering a collective commitment to ethical decision-making that transcends individual religious boundaries.

3. Organizations, especially in business and healthcare, should actively recruit and cultivate leaders who exemplify ethical decision-making informed by their faith or spiritual beliefs. Leadership development programs can include training that emphasizes the importance of

values and ethics derived from Godlight. By establishing ethical leadership as a core organizational value, companies and institutions can create cultures that prioritize moral responsibility and accountability.

4. Governments and NGOs should partner with faith-based organizations to leverage their moral authority and community reach for ethical advocacy. Initiatives focused on social justice, poverty alleviation, and community well-being can benefit from the ethical frameworks presented by religious teachings. Supporting these organizations through grants or collaborative projects can amplify their impact while fostering a culture of ethical engagement.

5. Individuals should be encouraged to engage in personal reflection practices that promote clarity on their values and ethical beliefs. This could include meditation, journaling, or guided discussions within faith communities that explore how their spiritual beliefs inform their ethical decision-making in personal and professional lives. Such reflection can reinforce the connection between Godlight and daily choices, enabling individuals to approach ethical dilemmas with greater confidence and moral clarity.

Conclusion

On a final note, it is good to submit that this research underscores the potential for religious principles to inform and enhance ethical governance, promoting integrity, accountability, and communal welfare. Ethical governance framework influenced by Godlight facilitate a more just and equitable society in Nigeria. By encouraging leaders to embody moral values espoused by their faiths and calling upon citizens to participate actively in governance through a lens of ethical consideration, the nation can move toward greater transparency and collective responsibility. The synergy of spirituality and governance facilitate a revitalization of public trust in leadership, reinforce democratic principles, and contribute toward sustainable development. A conscious recognition of the role of Godlight in governance not only enhances ethical decision-making but also nurtures a culture of moral responsibility among leaders and citizens alike. It is crucial for policymakers, religious leaders, and civil society to engage in collaborative dialogues, ensuring that governance in Nigeria is not only effective but also ethically grounded in the ideals promoted by the nation's diverse religious traditions.

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CHAPTER NINTEEN
GOD-LIGHT AND THE RELEVANCE OF STEWARDSHIP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINTABILITY IN THE SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA: A CALL FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The last decades of 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have seen a surge in environmental challenges including erosion, pollution, loss of biodiversity, and climate change. The consequences on the quality of human life and other forms of life have invoked concerns both at the global and domestic levels, recognizing the need for collective action and cooperation. The growing call for sustainable solutions that balance human needs and activities with environmental protection and care informs the relevance of environmental stewardship. The objective of this study is to assess the impact of human unfriendly activities on environment in the Southeast, examine the relevance of stewardship for environmental sustainability and to proffer solutions. Data was collected mainly from secondary source while environmental ethical theory and theological approach were used for data analysis and interpretation. The paper identified among others, the misinterpretation of biblical stewardship and misapplication of the Dominion mandate as contributing factors to human unbridled economic activities, improper waste disposal, and other environmental issues. The work further x-rayed the consequences of environmental degradation on the human well being, and other forms of life including health problems, economic losses, displacement, loss of species and ecosystem. The paper recommends among other things, the reorientation of the Christian community towards its eco-stewardship responsibility and integrating stewardship values and public responsibility into government environmental policies to enhance actions by communities, individuals and organizations.
Keywords: Stewardship, Environment and Sustainability

INTRODUCTION
The importance of environmental sustainability has become very crucial and increasingly evident in years, as the world grapples with the emerging environmental problems such as climate change, pollution, erosion, deforestation, degradation, loss of biodiversity to mention just a few. This trend is largely attributed to the shift from agrarianism to industrial and technological evolutions, which occurred between the 19th and the early 20th centuries. This transformation was associated with much attendant challenges, including the rise of capitalism, rapid urbanization and the development of heavy industrial machines and chemicals. Consequently, these challenges have been identified with long and short negative effects on the health, social, religious, and economic

well-being and sustainability of both human beings and other life forms, thereby placing deliberate and conscientious moral demands on humanity.

In Nigeria, particularly in Southeast, environmental sustainability has become a pressing concern due to rapid development, urbanization, population growth and poverty. The human Unsustainable economic activities, exploitation of natural resources, poor and inadequate waste management and lack of pollution control, violation of environmental policies and paucity of stewardship of environment have contributed significantly to environmental crisis, thereby threatening the region's ecosystem, health, and well being of the inhabitants despite various efforts and measures of governments to achieve sustainability of environment.

As a collaborative tool and framework, stewardship has been employed in advancing environmental sustainability amidst global and domestic concerns. The researchers beckon on individuals, communities and organizations to work together in protecting and preserving the natural environment, promoting sustainable development and a livable future for generations to come. This paper examines environmental challenges in Southeast, the causative factors and the relevance of stewardship from the biblical perspective with the view to advancing environmental sustainability.

Objective of the Study

The core objective of this paper is to investigate environmental crisis in the Southeast Nigeria, the effects on sustainability of human beings and other forms of life, and to present the relevance of stewardship in advancing sustainability of environment. To achieve this, the paper's specific objective is:

> To present the reality of environmental crisis in the southeast
>
> To raise the effects on human beings and other forms of life
>
> To elucidate the relevance of biblical stewardship in addressing the crisis
>
> To advance a panacea

Methodology

The paper is an expository discourse and will make use of qualitative methodology. Data used is mainly secondary source: textbooks, journals, articles, newspapers, and internet materials. The data's contents were analyzed with the socio-descriptive methodology and subjected to further interpretation using the philosophical and theological tools. Thereafter, the findings were drawn.

The Conceptual Definition

For proper elucidation, we shall define some words to enhance correct perspective and understanding. Such words include: Stewardship, environmental sustainability and Christian action.

Stewardship: According to English Learners dictionary, stewardship is the act of caring for or improving with time. To Whelchel cited in Oha (2016) , stewardship is utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and betterment of his creation" (p.2). The Greek word for stewardship is "*Oikonomia*". It is also the root of the word "economics". *Oikos,* however, is the root of our modern word, "ecology". Thus in a broad sense, stewardship, economics, and

ecology are and should be related. Scholars such as Jackson (2011) asserts that stewardship core emphasizes is deep sense of responsibility, management and care of resources. It has its etymological roots in Gen. 2: 15 and other biblical teachings and has been applied in various contexts, including environmental conservation. To Alokwe (2013), "stewardship seeks among other things to affirm the inherent worth, the goodness, and the integrity of creation". (P: 126). Freheim (2005) maintains that the concept of stewardship emerged to create human-earth relationship from the perspective of dominion to stewardship. Stewardship therefore, seeks to bring all of the resources at our disposal into efficient and conscientious use through our participation in the saving activity of God.

Environmental sustainability: According to Gbenda cited in Edeh (2023), environmental sustainability is "the conservation, management and rational utilization of natural resources in such a way that maintains the integrity of such ecosystem, support life, ensure the preservation of biodiversity and prevent environmental degradation" (p.11). Environmental sustainability forms one of the pillars of sustainability development such as social sustainability and economic sustainability. It is an aspect of development processes which emphasizes the harnessing of natural and social resources with major considerations for continuity and the future. Environmental sustainability therefore beacons on human sustainable actions and environmental friendly living. The fundamental purpose of environmental sustainability informed the submission of Mead (2010) that ecological integrity is maintained , all of the earth's environmental systems are kept in balance while natural resources within them are consumed by humans at a rate where they are able to replenish themselves" (p.2). It is therefore essential to assert that environmental sustainability is utilization of economic, social, religious and developmental aspirations via respect of divine virtues and promulgations of government environmental laws.

Christian Action: The phrase "Christian action" has been elucidated upon from the lens of theological perspective, pointing at the social responsibilities of Christians and Christian community to our common world. According to Wallis (2005), Christian action is "the pursuit of justice, peace, and compassion, rooted in the biblical vision of the kingdom of God, and seeking to transform the world according to God's will" (p.23). To Newbigin (1989) asserts "it is the expression of the church's faith in the world, through which it seeks to embody the gospel in the midst of human society and to bear witness to the Lordship of Christ over all of life" (p.115) while Sider (2005) maintains that "Christian action involves demonstration of Christ's love and compassion in the world through the act of service, advocacy, and witness, aiming at the transformation of individuals, communities and societies" (p.15).

It is therefore imperative to note that Christian action in this paper entails among other things an intentional engagement and participation of Christians and the Christian communities in the act of socio- ethical responsibilities for environmental sustainability through advocacy, service, respect and care of environment.

A Brief Presentation of the Southeast Nigeria

Southeast Nigeria, also known as the Igbo-dominated region has a rich and diverse culture and history. According to Shaw (1978) "archaeological findings suggest human habitation in the region dates back to around 3000 BCE" (p.45). The region has histories of pre-colonial era, Colonial era and post-colonial era. To Afigbo (1981) the pre-colonial era of the Southeast Nigeria had a complex and decentralized system of governance, with various kingdoms and chiefdoms. The region was known for its skilled craftsmen, traders and farmers. Whereas, in the colonial era, Isichei (1976) asserts that the British imposed their own system of governance, which disrupted traditional Igbo institutions and a major hub for the palm oil trade.

The region is one of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria with a strong emphasis on community, family, and tradition. It comprises five states**:** Abia state, Anambra state*,* Enugu state*,* Ebonyi state, and Imo state. The region since post colonial and civil war eras, has experienced rapid and diverse economic, institutional, infrastructural, human, social, cultural, technologically and political developments facilitated by the efforts of her various governments and individuals. This has led to the quantum trajectories in road network constructions, markets such as Onitsha Main market, Ariara International market, Ogbete Main market, new market located in Aba, International market in Ebonyi and Nnewi markets to mention just a few. Plethora of private and public primary and secondary schools, tertiary Institutions, filling stations, industries, hotels, banks, hospitals and farm settlements, commercial activities, modern buildings and city settlements. No doubt that these developments are associated with diverse environmental challenges.

Southeast Nigeria and the Environmental Crisis

Environmental crisis in the Southeast region of Nigeria has become a serious concern in the modern days both to the government and to the citizenry. Hence; Edeh (2023) asserts " the present age has brought much more degradation on environment, that environment has become messy, dirty, and even poor with the natural things that made environment what it was" (p.47).

Among the Southeast environmental critical experiences are gully erosion, deforestation, water and land pollution, climate change, loss of biodiversity, degradation to mention just a few. These experiences are hitched on bi-polar factors –"the natural and human factors" with the human factor contributing very significantly. An in-depth examination and enquiry into the role and contributions of human factor to this crisis is revealing and as well, demands an academic and unbiased appraisal. Hence; the following:

The Nonchalant Attitude of Government and the citizenry to Environmental Sustainable Laws and Policies

Human nonchalant attitude towards environmental sustainability creates a void between the spirit and letters of sustainability, laws and policies aimed at achieving interconnectedness, stewardship, balance and equity in all human activities and development. According to Edeh (2023) "this unconcerned attitude manifests itself in various ways such as; the frequent burning of bushes and/ or forests for farming and animal games especially during dry seasons, thereby, chasing away and

destroying animals and plant species" (p.58). This is in contradiction to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, section 20, chapter 11 (as amended) which prescribes that the state shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wildlife of Nigeria. The National Forest Policy of the Federal Ministry of Environment, item 1.12.8, states that all the factors causing environmental degradation and depletion of resources, none has as much destructive effect as uncontrolled forest fires.

Moreover, the human waste generation and indiscriminate disposal are acts that have contributed to undermine the laws and policies of waste management in the Southeast despite the establishment of Environmental Protection and Waste Management Agencies in the region states. This untamed attitude in waste disposal of non-biodegradable, toxic, solid and radioactive materials from homes, industrial, agricultural, clinical, construction and demolition sites as well as business premises contribute significantly to climate change, land degradation and other environmental crisis in the region. This critical crisis stems from the lack of or limited progress in recycling culture and adoption of renewable energy.

Urbanization and Poor Urban Planning

That the region cities are experiencing unprecedented growth both in human population and developments is not in doubt, thereby, putting pressure on already strained resources. This has led to the inadequate waste management, poor sanitation, and increased pollution. The supposedly strategies meant to mitigate the rapid urbanization and the challenges have been poorly implemented by both the government and developers as the region is yet to see effective integrated planning and sustainable development that insists on prioritization of environmental sustainability and social equity in urban development projects. As a result, the tolls on the region's environment are plethora with instances of flooding, soil erosion, traffic congestion, overcrowding, poor sanitation, rural- urban migration, insufficient housing, and inadequate waste management. Interestingly, the states have master plans that have been variously compromised over the years as a result of inadequate legislation, corruption, lack of political will, inadequate funding and lack of effective institutions as observed by the Premium Times (2019) and Nigerian National Planning (2013).

Poverty and Environmental Degradation

Scholars and other environmentalists have adjudged poverty as a serious factor to environmental degradation across the globe, including the Southeast region. The activities of low income earners who depend majorly on agriculture, manual works, and petty businesses and on monthly salary for survival do contribute significantly. Since poverty can be absolute or relative, the poor depends much on natural resources for survival without recourse to its sustainability. Such dependence further leads to unsustainable practices such as logging, charcoal production and usage, deforestation, environmental degradation as a result of the lack of clean water, sanitation and pollution of river and soil. Poverty contributes also to loss of biodiversity and climate change vulnerability. Besides, poverty driven activities often lead to improper waste management resulting to littering, pollution and health hazards. This character is so glaring around Southeast

communities, market places and at times on streets, being it, Abia state,, Anambra state, Ebonyi state, Imo or Enugu states. This substantiates the assertion of the late Prime Minister of India, Gandi who opined that "poverty is the greatest danger to the environment" (p: 62). While Southeast is not rated as the poorest region in Nigeria, the tolls of poverty cannot be completely underestimated. Hence; majority households are dependant of agricultural activities and petty businesses for survival.

Paucity of Environmental Ethical / Stewardship Knowledge

The paucity of environmental ethical knowledge and practices amongst citizens in the Southeast has contributed greatly to the crisis of environment. This is caused by the weak transfer of stewardship culture and value of environment to the younger generation via our social institutions such as family, church and schools. Francis (2015) refers to this void when he opines "if everything is related, then the health of a society's institutions has consequences on environment and the quality of human life, hence, every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment" (p:93). The implication is obvious, failure of social institutions on her assignment to inculcate the culture and attitude of environmental stewardship and ethical solidarity leads to dire consequences on the future sustainability.

Effects of Human Unsustainable Activities on Environment, Human Beings and other Forms of life

Human unsustainable actions and activities have had negative effects on human beings, other forms of life and society at large. Although, the effects are multifaceted, this paper will examine the following effects:

The Loss and Dearth of Biodiversity

The dearth and loss of species of animals and plants as a result of human eco-unfriendly activities is alarming. God created these species for human benefits such as food, medicine, air purification, fiber, shelter to mention just a few. Human beings from the beginning were commended to provide care and protection (stewardship) to these creatures for our common good. Unfortunately, human untamed production, development, commercial and economic activities especially at the wake of industrial revolution and modernization has led to serious loss and dearth of many of these precious creatures.

The extinction no doubt has present and future social, economic and health implications as plants known for curative benefits are now scarce and some nowhere to be found. Francis cited in Edeh (2023) opine that the loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only food but also for curing disease and other uses' (p:76).

Poor Environmental Aesthetics and Values

Environmental aesthetics and its social, psychological, economic and physical benefits have been significantly impeded by environmental degradations. As a result, visual qualities such as natural beauty is affected through the destruction of natural habitats, visible pollution with trash, oil spills and industrial waste as well as alteration of landscape via soil and land erosion which are too pronounced in Southeast States especially its markets environment.

Sensory qualities are as well affected by environmental degradation via noise pollution such as traffic, vehicular horn blaring, construction, and air pollutants which create unpleasant odors and reduces air qualities. Behind these activities is human loss of environmental aesthetic value and paucity knowledge of the impact of environmental aesthetics on the physical, psychological, social, religious and economic benefits. This loss are traceable to human immediate social and economic gratification, lack of care and respect for environment, as well as poor response to sanitation, and other environmental sustainable activities and regulations. Environmental aesthetics doubtlessly promotes good health, economic activities, attracts men and women that love hygienic environment and industrialization.

Health and Quality of Human Life

The connection between good health, quality of human life, and a healthy environment is crystal clear and intricately inseparable. In all reasonability, this can be achieved through sustainable environment and this has been greatly neglected in pursuit of the immediate economic and social benefits and gratification. Hence; humanity is currently faced with numerous environmental related health challenges such as stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, ischemic heart disease, lower respiratory infections and trachea, bronchus and lung cancer to mention just a few. To this effect, Julia and Tanya (2018) assert that "those who live in cities with increase in air pollution and poor sanitation suffer from respiratory diseases and lower productivity" (p.2).

Postulations from health experts attest that environmental degradation is largely responsible for three infectious diseases common in the Southeast – diarrhea, malaria and acute respiratory infections. Unfortunately, the most vulnerable of environmental related diseases are the poor who lack the essential facilities for clean environment and the financial power to access quality medical care. Another effect of environmental degradation is poor quality of human life and this has significant effect on sustainable development and life expectancy.

Mortality Rate and Child's Development

The correlation between environment, mortality rate and child's development is indisputable. Sustainable environment contributes to effective development of human capabilities right from the uterus to early childhood. This has been established by scholars such as Heckman as cited in Julia and Tanya (2018) that "environment helps to shape child's health, cognitive skills, and non-cognitive abilities and therefore, is responsible for most socio-economic outcomes later in life" (p.4).

On the contrary, environmental related factors that affect negatively the quality of human life and mortality rate are exposure to poor air quality, unclean water due to pollutants, toxic chemicals in soil and climate change as a result of rise in temperature, extreme whether events and alteration of ecosystem. The above are associated with diverse health related issues such as respiratory diseases, cardiovascular problems, and lung cancer. Besides, unclean or contaminated water causes cholera, diarrhea and typhoid fever. Moreover, exposure to environmental toxins can affect brain development leading to cognitive and behavioral problems, stunted growth and developmental delays and other conditions that affect quality of human life. There is no doubt that poverty, weak institutions, climatic conditions and degrading environment play a role in exposing mothers and children to health challenges.

The Relevance of Stewardship for Environmental Sustainability in Southeast

The relevance of stewardship of environment as a collaborative compass for sustainable environment is indisputable. Theologians and other environmentalists have diversely explored its relevance and synergy towards sustainable efforts in salvaging the emerging environmental criticalities. This paper offers few insights on stewardship relevance for environmental sustainability in the Southeast and makes demand on inclusive participation rather than exclusivity (government alone).

Stewardship Promotes Reversal of Anthropocentrism

At the foundation of stewardship relevance for environmental sustainability is a clear reversal of the existential anthropocentrism promoted by consumerism theory and Judeo-Christian tradition. As a novel trend aims to shift the human dominion mentality by recognizing and promoting the intrinsic value of nature beyond its usefulness to humans. Other potential characteristics include prioritizing the health and well-being of ecosystems over immediate utilization of natural resources and fostering a sense of individuals and communities' responsibility and care of their immediate environment and the natural world. Consequently, stewardship offers a paradigm shift from anthropocentric dominance to a balanced eco-friendly relations and recognition that all creatures have an intrinsic value and should be respected and cared for.

It Reveals the Interconnectedness of Environment and Human Sustainability

Stewardship takes its roots from the biblical injunction to human beings to "care or tend" the earth (their environment) and this invokes in humans the sense of interconnectedness. Adam's mortal body came from the earth and all humans' returns to earth at the end of their earthly journey. The recognition that human beings own their survival to environment reaffirms the urgency and necessity for interdependence and relationship to the rest of the creation. Spencer, Nick and White cited in Alokwu (2013) assert that humanity shares the same food as other animals and the same breath of life is given to animals and humans alike. To care for the creation is therefore, to care for a system of which we are a part and upon which we are utterly dependent" (p.116)

As a result, we need the beauty of the world around us- the air, mountains, rivers, birds, animals to experience the fullness of the life God has created. In addition, humans need water, air and food to survive. Therefore, the loss or extinction of species, decline of other creatures, environmental pollution, food insecurity and water scarcity are interconnected threats that demand attention through our common shared stewardship care.

It Gives Insight on Human Eco-Responsibility

Stewardship promotes human eco-responsibility through ethical values of respect, care and love. This value oriented approach stems from God's love for the world. Hence; it is expected of the same virtue dispositions from us as men and women created in God's image and as his representatives on earth by maintaining, respecting and caring for the earth and all creatures. Human eco-responsibility promotes the sense of obligation to environment for its sustainability as managers and stewards of God's gift of nature. It behooves on us to show a friendly, caring and loving

attitudes to our environment and its resources for present and future utilization and sustainability. Consequently, the poor in the society are to be cared for since the most vulnerable of environmental degradation are the poor. They are as well, more responsible for anthropocentric activities in an effort to meet their daily needs with majority of them so ignorant of the after effects of their activities on environment, human beings and other forms of life. This entails practical actions on the side of humanity especially Christians and their leaders via planting of trees to enhance fresh air, protection of environment from erosion, proper waste management and disposal, adherence to environmental sustainable rules and regulations and inculcation of stewardship values orientation.

Stewardship and Christian Action

Christian action is inevitably needed in current environmental dialogue from the line of stewardship approach. To achieve this synergy, this paper offers the following insights:

A Holistic Approach to the Gospel of Salvation

Greater percentage of messages from the Christian pulpits excludes integration of the redemption of nature as captured in the bible. God's salvation plan is bonded with creation as shown by God's covenant of salvation and preservation with Noah in Gen.9:8-11. Besides, the creation groans in wait of redemption and Christians are expected to share in this groaning for its liberation Rom.8:18-24. This calls for action by Christian leaders in mobilizing for environmental support and advocacy against systems, attitudes and culture that undermines the intrinsic value of other creation and creates damage to our common environment. A holistic gospel of salvation entails not only redemption from individual sin, but renewal and transformation of all aspects of creation, including the social and economic structure. This is the albatross that holds the connective thread of Christian eco- responsibility and spirituality, as stewards of the environment and bearers of divine instruction to care for, respect and love nature and environment.

Promotion of New Lifestyle and Environmental Practices

One cannot exempt Christians and the Christian communities from the modern anthropocentrism. To herald a paradigm shift from consumerism, anthropocentrism to stewardship of environment, a new lifestyle of care, moderation and respect for nature is to be inculcated and lived on as enshrined in Christian environmental ethics. The essence of this is to create a new culture of non-anthropocentric living and imbibe the value of environmental care, respect and love in advancing sustainable environmental commitment for the benefits of the present and future generations.

It Reveals that Christians as Agents of Environmental Advocacy

The church has been at the center of various advocacies being it social, political or environmental. The need to transform Christians into agents of environmental advocacy is now through teaching, mobilization and orientation. Ezeh (2012) asserts that ethical advocacy of respect for creation recognizes that human beings have special role to play in the cosmic community" (p.20). The interdependence of human sustainability and environment forms the thrust of this advocacy and that the intrinsic value of all creation should be protected by both government and citizenry through sustainable policies and living.

Environmental Care as an Integral Aspect of Christian Community Social Work

The church is represented as the light of the world. This calls for action and responsibility. Scholars and various governments have acknowledged the impact of church and Christians in charity, social works like education and health but much has not been recorded concerning environmental activities. As bearers of this instruction of stewardship of environment, it is expected that the various Christian organizations vote money and as well, set aside days of practical participation in the activities of environmental sustainability via sanitation and public orientation for proper waste management.

Conclusion

God's-light on the relevance of stewardship for environmental sustainability is a great tool in the modern fight against the emerging environmental challenges and trends ravaging the global and local communities including Southeastern Nigeria. An academic x-ray into these challenges of environment among the Southeast states reveals multi-dimensional challenges, factors and consequences on human beings and other forms of life. This paper identified human significant contribution to environmental degradation facing the world today especially in the Southeast through anthropocentric living, improper waste management and disposal, and lack of stewardship.

Southeast has experienced diverse environmental challenges including climate change, deforestation, and extinction of species, degradation, erosion and pollution to mention just a few. Light on the impact of human unsustainable activities were examined and same with the relevance of stewardship of environment. The paper calls for Christian actions through insights on stewardship and Christian action. This action is in cognizance to the God's love to the world and divine instruction to care and respect environment. This is in synergy and collaboration to combat and mitigate the effects of environment for the sustainability of humanity and other forms of life.

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CHAPTER TWENTY
THE ROLE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND THE CONCEPT OF GODLIGHT IN PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE: A STUDY OF RITUALS, SYMBOLS, AND ORAL TRADITIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This study investigates the pivotal role of African Traditional Religion (ATR) in preserving cultural heritage through its intricate interconnections with rituals, symbols, and oral traditions, emphasizing the concept of Godlight as a central tenet within ATR. Through a comprehensive analysis of various ethnic groups across the African continent, the research delineates how Godlight, often understood as a manifestation of divine presence and guidance, informs and shapes community practices and beliefs. The paper explores how rituals serve as both spiritual expressions and mechanisms of cultural continuity, enabling communities to maintain ties to ancestral knowledge and identity amidst modernization and globalization. Symbols derived from nature, mythology, and community life are examined to reveal their roles in conveying moral values and communal ethics intrinsic to ATR. Additionally, the study highlights the significance of oral traditions not only in the transmission of history but also in reinforcing collective memory and social cohesion. By positioning Godlight within the framework of ATR, this research underscores its foundational importance in nurturing cultural resilience and fostering a sense of belonging within communities. Ultimately, the findings advocate for the recognition and revitalization of ATR as a vital resource for cultural heritage preservation, emphasizing its relevance in contemporary discussions about identity, spirituality, and the socio cultural dynamics of African societies.

Keywords: African Traditional Religion, Cultural,GodLight, Heritage, Preserving, Rituals,

Introduction
The interplay between African Traditional Religion (ATR) and cultural heritage preservation forms a rich tapestry woven with intricate rituals, meaningful symbols, and esteemed oral traditions. As Africa grapples with the challenges of globalization, colonization legacies, and cultural homogenization, the enduring significance of ATR emerges as both a source of identity and a vessel for transmitting ancestral knowledge. Central to this discussion is the concept of Godlight, which encapsulates the divine essence that transcends human understanding and illuminates the pathway for individuals and communities in their quest for meaning and belonging. The study of ATR is essential for comprehending the socio-cultural frameworks that shape the lives of millions across the continent. Scholars such as Mbiti(1969), have profoundly influenced this field with some of his works like "African Religions and Philosophy" where he elucidates how African cosmologies are deeply intertwined with everyday existence. His emphasis on time, space, and the interconnectedness of life forms foundational insights into how ATR sustains cultural values and heritage over generations.

Rituals and symbols serve as crucial expressions of ATR, reflecting the beliefs, aspirations, and communal histories of African societies.According to Turner(1986),appreciate the role of rituals as transformative events that reinforce social cohesion. Turner's insights resonate within the context of ATR, wherein rituals not only enact divine principles but also ensure the continuity of cultural practices, creating a sense of belonging and identity. Equally pivotal to this exploration is the role of oral traditions, which function as repositories of cultural memory and expression. Thiong'o(1986), champions the power of storytelling as a means of cultural preservation and resistance against

colonial narratives. His advocacy for the significance of language underscores the necessity of preserving oral traditions as vital components of ATR, allowing for the transmission of wisdom, history, and identity.

Additionally, the concept of Godlight, interpreted as a metaphor for divine insight, spirituality, or enlightenment, elucidates how the divine presence operates within African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the enlightenment it provides to individuals and communities. Authors such as Kwame Nkrumah and Wole Soyinka address the philosophical implications of divinity and human experience, offering frameworks through which Godlight can be understood as both a guiding force and a means of connecting with cultural heritage. By exploring these dimensions of Godlight, one can appreciate its role in fostering a deeper understanding of identity, spirituality, and the preservation of cultural practices within ATR.

This study seeks to illuminate the critical role of African Traditional Religion and the concept of Godlight in preserving cultural heritage through rituals, symbols, and oral traditions. By analyzing the works of scholars like Mbiti, Turner, Ngugi, and Soyinka, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how ATR functions as a vital mechanism for cultural continuity and identity in contemporary Africa. Amidst the pressures of modernity, ATR remains a resilient force one that not only cherishes the past but also offers light for the future.

Theoretical Explanation
Cultural Heritage Theory
Cultural Heritage Theory encompasses the study of how cultural practices, beliefs, artifacts, and histories are preserved, transmitted, and valued across generations. It examines the ways in which cultural heritage is defined, understood, and enacted within societies, considering both tangible elements (like monuments, artworks, and historical sites) and intangible elements (such as traditions, rituals, and languages). The theory is interdisciplinary, drawing from fields such as anthropology, sociology, history, cultural studies, and heritage management.

This framework allows for an analysis of how ATR functions as a repository of cultural memory and how it actively contributes to identity formation in the face of globalization and other external pressures. The theory considers the role of rituals, symbols, and oral traditions as essential components of heritage that shape collective identities. Understanding Continuity and Change: Cultural heritage theory can help elucidate how ATR adapts to contemporary challenges while maintaining core values. This would provide insights into the resilience and dynamism of African cultures. Cultural Heritage Theory plays a vital role in understanding the complexities surrounding cultural identity, preservation, and transmission. As societies navigate the challenges of modernity, globalization, and cultural interaction, the insights provided by this theory are essential for fostering appreciation and respect for the diverse heritage that shapes human experience

African Traditional Religion Rituals and Their Role in Preserving Cultural Heritage
Rituals are fundamental to African Traditional Religion (ATR), serving as structured, symbolic actions that connect practitioners to their spiritual beliefs, community values, and cultural heritage. These rituals encompass a wide range of practices, including rites of passage, ceremonies for agricultural seasons, healing rituals, and ancestral veneration. Through these organized acts, individuals and communities engage with the divine, reinforce social structures, and transmit cultural values across generations. Mbiti (1969), discusses how rituals reflect the harmonious relationship between humans and nature in African cosmologies. They express gratitude and appeal for continued support from the spiritual realm, emphasizing the role of rituals in safeguarding communal well-being. According to Oduyoye (1995) highlights the importance of healing rituals in ATR as they encompass both spiritual and physical dimensions of well-being. Such rituals address not only individual health but also the communal aspect of sickness, reinforcing the significance of social support and collective healing. For Thiong'o (1986) emphasizes the importance of rituals in maintaining cultural identity, particularly in post-colonial contexts. He advocates for the revitalization of indigenous rituals as essential for reclaiming cultural heritage and resisting colonial narratives.

1.Rites of Passage

Rites of passage are significant transitional ceremonies that mark important milestones in an individual's life, such as birth, coming of age, marriage, and death. These rituals are deeply embedded within the social fabric of communities and serve to reinforce cultural values and traditions.

Preserving Ancestral Wisdom: Through rites of passage, elders pass down knowledge and cultural practices to younger generations, ensuring that communal history and identity are maintained. For example, ceremonies accompanying a person's transition to adulthood often involve teachings about community roles, responsibilities, and moral values.

Community Solidarity: These rituals foster a sense of belonging and collective identity among participants, reinforcing communal bonds and shared cultural heritage.

2.Agricultural and Seasonal Rituals

Many ATR practices are closely tied to agricultural cycles and natural phenomena, with community rituals celebrating planting and harvest periods, seasonal changes, and honoring the earth's fertility.

Cultural Identity and Livelihood: These rituals not only reflect the agricultural practices unique to specific cultures, but they also emphasize the interconnection between religion, the environment, and community survival. Engaging in such rituals enhances cultural identity and fosters respect for the environment, promoting sustainability and ecological wisdom.

Transmission of Knowledge: Agricultural rituals often include storytelling and oral traditions that educate community members about farming techniques, ecological stewardship, and the importance of honor the ancestors who provide for the community.

3.Ancestral Worship and Spiritual Connection

Ancestral veneration is a hallmark of ATR, where rituals are performed to honor deceased ancestors, who are believed to influence the living and provide guidance.

Cultural Continuity: Rituals honoring ancestors serve to link the present with the past, ensuring that the wisdom and experiences of previous generations inform contemporary life. These rituals create a sense of continuity and belonging, as community members come together to remember and celebrate their heritage.

Community Cohesion: Such practices strengthen social ties within the community, as they involve collective participation and shared emotions, reinforcing a sense of belonging and cultural identity.

4.Healing and Purification Rituals

Healing rituals, which may involve herbal medicine, divination, or community gatherings, are integral to ATR and illustrate how spirituality and health are intertwined.

Cultural Healing Practices: These rituals perpetuate traditional knowledge about medicinal plants and healing practices passed down through generations, thus preserving valuable indigenous knowledge and practices.

Strengthening Social Bonds: Healing rituals often involve community members gathering to support the afflicted, thereby reinforcing social cohesion and community solidarity.

5.Performing Arts and Symbolism

Many ATR rituals incorporate music, dance, and art, serving as expressive forms that transmit cultural narratives and values.

Cultural Expression: The performing arts encapsulated within rituals provide vibrant expressions of cultural identity. They serve to communicate stories, emotions, and communal histories that connect participants to their heritage.

Symbolism: Ritual symbols, such as masks, costumes, and patterns, encapsulate deep cultural meanings that convey the beliefs and values of the community. This visual and performative aspect of ATR rituals aids in the transmission of cultural heritage in an engaging and dynamic manner.

In summary, rituals within African Traditional Religion are foundational to preserving cultural heritage. By providing a framework for communal identity, shared values, and ancestral wisdom, these rituals ensure that cultural practices are not only maintained but also actively celebrated and passed on to future generations. In an age of globalization and cultural homogenization, the

continued practice of ATR rituals becomes essential for fostering resilience, sustainability, and a profound sense of belonging among African communities. Ultimately, these rituals serve not merely as religious observances but as vital expressions of cultural heritage, connecting the past with the present and illuminating pathways for the future.

African Traditional Religion Symbols and Their Role in Preserving Cultural Heritage

Symbols play a quintessential role in African Traditional Religion (ATR), serving as powerful representations of spiritual beliefs, cultural identity, and community values. They manifest in various forms, including masks, totems, carvings, textiles, colors, and even gestures. Each symbol carries profound meaning, expressing complex ideas and facilitating communication about the spiritual and social life of a community. By conveying shared beliefs and historical narratives, these symbols help preserve the cultural heritage of diverse African societies. Victor (1969), highlights the importance of symbols in rituals, suggesting that they create a sense of community and reinforce collective identities through shared spiritual experiences. According to Mbiti (1969) explains that symbols encapsulate the beliefs and practices that define African cosmologies, emphasizing the interconnectedness of culture and spirituality. For instance, designs found in textiles can signify not only aesthetic preferences but also social status, clan identity, and historical narratives. For Thompson (1984) He examines how symbols in masks and other artistic expressions convey profound meanings related to identity, spirituality, and communal values, amplifying the significance of rituals

1. Representation of Beliefs and Values

Symbols in ATR often encapsulate profound spiritual beliefs and communal values, serving as tangible manifestations of the intangible.

Connecting to the Divine: Symbols, such as carved representations of deities or ancestor figures, serve as focal points for worship and communication with the divine. These artistic representations allow practitioners to engage with their spirituality, reinforcing the belief in a higher power that connects the community to its cultural and spiritual roots.

Cultural Values: Symbols convey the core ethical values of a culture, such as respect for ancestors, communal responsibility, and harmony with nature. For instance, the use of a particular color or motif in a ritual garment can signify communal unity or the sacredness of a space or practice.

2. Expressions of Cultural Identity

Symbols are vital in expressing and preserving cultural identity within ATR, allowing communities to assert their uniqueness in a diverse cultural landscape.

Distinctive Cultural Markers: The use of indigenous symbols, such as tribal patterns in textiles or specific motifs in pottery, reflects the identity of particular ethnic groups. These unique expressions help maintain cultural distinctions amidst external influences, particularly in a globalized world.

Communication of Heritage: Symbols serve to communicate the histories and stories of a people, often through oral traditions and artistic expressions. For example, the use of tribal masks in ceremonies not only has specific spiritual meanings but also connects performers and observers to the narratives of their ancestors.

3. Role in Rituals and Ceremonies

Symbols play an indispensable role in the rituals and ceremonies associated with ATR, enhancing the sacredness of these practices and facilitating cultural continuity.

Enhancing Ritual Significance: Symbols such as ritual tools (e.g., a divination tray or an altar) are utilized during ceremonies, amplifying the spiritual experience and underscoring the importance of the ritual. The presence of symbols helps participants engage more deeply with the ritual, reminding them of their shared beliefs and cultural heritage.

Facilitating Transitions: During rites of passage—such as initiation, marriage, or funerals—specific symbols are employed to signify transformation and the continuity of cultural values. For instance, a young initiate may be adorned with specific symbols during their coming-of-age ceremony, visually marking their transition into adulthood and their responsibilities within the community.

4.Conveying Historical Narratives

Symbols carry significant historical narratives that are essential for preserving the collective memory of communities.

Storytelling Through Symbols: Many symbols are tied to specific myths, legends, or historical events that reflect the experiences and wisdom of a people. This storytelling aspect is typically reinforced through oral traditions where symbols act as mnemonic devices, enhancing the ability to remember and transmit cultural knowledge.

Resistance to Cultural Erasure: In a historical context marked by colonialism and globalization, the continued use of traditional symbols acts as a form of cultural resistance, preserving ancestral stories and knowledge that may be threatened by external forces. For example, symbols signifying unity or strength can serve as reminders to uphold cultural heritage and identity in the face of homogenizing pressures.

5. Education and Transmission of Knowledge

Symbols play a crucial role in educational practices within ATR, facilitating the transmission of knowledge across generations.

Teaching Tools: Traditional symbols are often employed as teaching tools in community settings. Elders may use symbols during storytelling, ceremonies, or discussions to impart wisdom and cultural lessons to the younger generations. The visible and tangible nature of symbols enhances learning and comprehension.

Engaging the Community: Through workshops, festivals, and public displays, communities often showcase their symbols to educate and engage both community members and outsiders, fostering appreciation for their cultural heritage and encouraging cultural exchange.

In summary, symbols in African Traditional Religion are vital in preserving cultural heritage. They reflect and reinforce spiritual beliefs, express cultural identity, elevate the significance of rituals, convey historical narratives, and facilitate the transmission of knowledge. By anchoring communities in their histories, values, and identities, these symbols ensure that the cultural wealth of African societies is not only preserved but celebrated. In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, the resilience of ATR symbols serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of safeguarding cultural diversity and heritage. The ongoing recognition and revitalization of these symbols are essential for maintaining the vitality and continuity of African cultural traditions in contemporary society.

Oral Tradition and Its Role in Preserving African Cultural Heritage

Oral tradition refers to the practice of transmitting cultural knowledge, stories, beliefs, and histories verbally from one generation to another. In Africa, where many communities have historically relied on oral methods of communication, oral traditions are an essential mechanism for cultural preservation and identity formation. This rich tapestry of storytelling, proverbs, songs, chants, and performances serves to maintain the values and customs of diverse cultures across the continent. Oral traditions not only convey wisdom but also reinforce communal bonds and a shared sense of identity.

1. Functions of Oral Tradition in Cultural Preservation

A. Repository of Knowledge and History

Oral traditions serve as vital records of history and knowledge, capturing the experiences, struggles, and achievements of communities. Storytellers, known as griots in many West African cultures, play a significant role in this transmission, recounting tales of ancestors, warriors, and historical events. Mbiti (1969), emphasizes the importance of oral tradition in maintaining communal memory. He notes that oral histories provide insights into the customs and values that define cultural groups, shaping collective identities and social cohesion.

B. Transmission of Cultural Values and Beliefs

Through oral traditions, cultural values, moral lessons, and social norms are imparted to younger generations. Songs, proverbs, and folktales are often used to teach essential life lessons and the values that underpin the community's worldview. Thiong'o (1986), advocates for the significance

of oral literature in the preservation of cultural identity and heritage. He argues that storytelling allows for the reinforcement of cultural values while resisting colonial narratives that seek to undermine indigenous identities.

C. Facilitating Community Engagement

Oral traditions often involve communal participation, bringing individuals together through storytelling sessions, performances, and festivals that celebrate shared cultural heritage. These gatherings foster relationships among community members and cultivate a sense of belonging. Achebe (1958) illustrates the communal aspect of oral tradition within Igbo culture, depicting how gatherings to share stories and recount the past function as vital social events that strengthen community ties and identity.

2. Resilience of Oral Tradition Amidst Modern Challenges

Despite the pressures of globalization and technological advancements, oral traditions continue to thrive in many African communities. The adaptability of oral storytelling has allowed it to incorporate contemporary themes while maintaining its core cultural significance. Okpewho (1992)discusses the dynamic nature of oral traditions, arguing they evolve in response to changing social contexts while retaining their critical roles in cultural preservation. Through adaptation, oral traditions remain relevant and meaningful to younger generations who may encounter different cultural influences.

3. Symbolic and Artistic Expression

Oral tradition is not limited to storytelling; it encompasses various forms of artistic expression, including music, dance, and visual arts, which often accompany oral narratives. These art forms serve to enhance the richness of cultural expression and facilitate the memory of cultural practices. Hampâté Bâ (1994), shares his experiences as a griot and highlights the interconnectedness of various art forms within oral traditions. His work serves as a testament to the profound impact of oral culture on the preservation of identity and cultural heritage.

4. Challenges to Oral Tradition and Strategies for Preservation

The rise of written forms of communication and digital technology poses challenges to the transmission of oral traditions. As younger generations become increasingly influenced by global media and technology, there is a risk of diminishing interest in oral storytelling practices. Irele (2001), underscores the importance of reviving and promoting oral traditions within contemporary education and cultural programs. Emphasizing the importance of these traditions in maintaining the richness of African cultures, Irele advocates for integrating oral literature into educational curricula to ensure that knowledge and values are effectively transmitted to future generations.Oral tradition is a cornerstone of cultural heritage preservation in Africa. Through its roles as a repository of knowledge, transmitter of cultural values, facilitator of community engagement, and dynamic artistic expression, oral tradition remains vital to reinforcing identities and social cohesion among diverse African communities. As communities continue to navigate the complexities of globalization, the ongoing practice of oral traditions will be essential for maintaining the richness and diversity of African cultural identities.

Findings

The exploration of African Traditional Religion (ATR) and its interplay with cultural heritage preservation reveals several significant scholarly findings that highlight the importance of rituals, symbols, and oral traditions in sustaining the cultural identity and heritage of African communities. Below are the key findings drawn from the analysis presented in the paper:

1. Interconnectedness of ATR and Cultural Heritage:

ATR emerges as a fundamental source of identity and a reservoir of ancestral knowledge in the face of challenges posed by globalization and cultural homogenization. The concept of Godlight signifies the divine presence that guides individuals and communities in their quest for meaning and belonging.

2. Rituals as Vital Mechanisms for Cultural Preservation:

Rituals play a crucial role in ATR by serving as structured, symbolic actions that connect practitioners to their spiritual beliefs and communal values. They reinforce social cohesion, transmit cultural values, and facilitate individual transformations across significant life stages

Rituals are not just spiritual observances; they are essential expressions of communal identity and continuity that elevate cultural practices and wisdom over generations.

3. Symbols as Expressions of Beliefs and Collective Identity:
Symbols serve as powerful representations of spiritual beliefs and cultural identities, encapsulating profound meanings that reflect community values and aspirations. They manifest in various forms, such as masks, carvings, and colors, enhancing the experiential and visual dimensions of rituals.The use of symbols reinforces the interconnectedness of culture and spirituality, communicating essential lessons and histories that shape identities and social structures within diverse African communities.

4. Oral Traditions as Repositories of Cultural Memory:
Oral traditions are central to cultural transmission in ATR, functioning as vital records of history and repositories of community knowledge. They serve to impart cultural values, spiritual beliefs, and collective memories through storytelling, proverbs, and performances. Oral traditions foster community engagement and social cohesion through communal storytelling sessions and performances, reinforcing a shared sense of identity. Despite modern challenges, oral traditions adapt to contemporary contexts while preserving core cultural significance reinforcing identity, and facilitating the transmission of ancestral knowledge across generations. The rich tapestry of ATR reflects the dynamism and resilience of African cultures amidst the complexities of modernity, ensuring that cultural practices not only endure but thrive in the contemporary landscape.

Conclusion
The examination of African Traditional Religion (ATR) in conjunction with cultural heritage preservation reveals a complex interplay of rituals, symbols, and oral traditions that are central to the cultural identity of African communities. As highlighted in this exploration, ATR serves as both a repository of ancestral wisdom and a dynamic framework for sustaining cultural values in the face of globalization, colonial legacies, and the pressures of cultural homogenization.

Key insights emerge from the works of influential scholars like John S. Mbiti, whose analysis of African cosmologies underscores the interconnectedness of spiritual beliefs and everyday existence. Mbiti's contributions lay a critical foundation for understanding how ATR rituals reflect community values and maintain cultural continuity over generations. Furthermore, Victor Turner's exploration of the transformative power of rituals emphasizes their role in fostering social cohesion, thereby reinforcing the communal bonds that are vital for identity formation.

Equally important, the role of oral traditions as repositories of cultural memory and expression emerges as a pivotal theme. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's advocacy for storytelling as a vehicle for cultural preservation and resistance against colonial narratives highlights the significance of language and oral history in maintaining cultural identity. This is coupled with the profound impact illustrated by Achebe and Hampâté Bâ, who demonstrate how oral traditions and artistic expressions serve not only as cultural markers but also as means of community engagement and social stability. The concept of Godlight represents a compelling metaphor for the divine insight and spiritual enlightenment that ATR provides. It serves as a guiding force for individuals and communities in their quest for meaning, underlining the importance of spiritual connections in everyday life and cultural experiences.

Furthermore, the application of Cultural Heritage Theory presents a comprehensive framework for understanding how ATR functions as a vital mechanism for identity preservation. Through analyzing the roles of rituals, symbols, and oral traditions, the theory illuminates the resilience and dynamism of African cultures, showcasing their ability to adapt while maintaining core values.

Overall, this study affirms that ATR is not simply a relic of the past; rather, it is a living tradition that actively shapes the identities and lives of millions across Africa today. As communities face modern challenges, the ongoing practice of ATR is indispensable for reinforcing cultural continuity, fostering resilience, and celebrating the rich tapestry of African heritage. Ultimately, the enduring significance of ATR offers a beacon of hope for cultural preservation and the future vitality of African identities, asserting its role as an essential component of the continent's diverse heritage. This scholarly discourse paves the way for further research into innovative strategies for sustaining ATR and its associated cultural practices in a rapidly changing world.

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CHAPTER TWENTY ONE
CHRISTIANITY AND SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT IN ANAMBRA STATE: THE IMPACT OF FAITH, MEDICINE, AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The interaction between Christianity and scientific advancement in Nigeria has shaped the nation's development in profound ways. From the 19th century, missionary churches played a pivotal role in introducing Western medicine, modern education, and technological innovations, laying the foundation for scientific progress in Anambra state. This study provides a historical analysis of the church's influence on medicine and technological development, examining the dual role of faith as both a catalyst and, at times, a barrier to scientific growth. Through missionary hospitals and medical outreach, Christian institutions pioneered vaccination campaigns, maternity care, and disease control in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. However, faith-based healing practices and skepticism toward certain medical advancements also sparked conflicts between religious beliefs and scientific methods. Similarly, Christian mission schools introduced scientific education, producing some of the earliest medical doctors, engineers, and scientists in Anambra as well as Nigeria at large. Yet, tensions occasionally arose between religious dogma and scientific inquiry, particularly in areas like evolution, biotechnology, and traditional medicine.

This study employs historical and qualitative methods to assess the church's evolving stance on science and technology, from early missionary engagements to contemporary Christian participation in STEM education, digital technology, and public health campaigns. By bridging faith and science, Nigerian Christianity continues to shape the nation's scientific trajectory. The findings highlight the need for greater synergy between religious institutions and scientific advancement, ensuring a future where faith and progress coexist harmoniously.

Keywords: Christianity, Scientific Advancement, Medicine, Missionary Education, Faith and Technology.

Introduction
The coming of Christianity to Anambra State in the 19th century marked a turning point in the region's historical and developmental trajectory. Beyond its spiritual message of salvation and moral renewal, Christianity brought with it a wave of change that penetrated every fabric of society particularly in the areas of medicine, education, and technological development. For the people of Anambra, the arrival of Christian missionaries was not just a religious encounter; it was the dawn of a new era, one that challenged traditional structures and introduced new systems of thought and practice rooted in Western science and innovation. Before the missionaries set foot in Anambra, the indigenous society had its own methods of healing, communal learning, and craftsmanship. These practices were deeply intertwined with religious beliefs, ancestral veneration, and the authority of traditional priests and diviners. However, with the establishment of mission schools, hospitals, and printing presses, Christianity introduced a structured, systematized approach to knowledge that had scientific underpinnings. Missionaries such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Roman Catholic orders did not only preach the gospel they trained the mind and healed the body. Through them, children learned to read and write, local populations received medical care based on Western principles, and scientific thinking began to replace superstition in the popular imagination.

This study contends that Christianity served as a torchbearer of scientific enlightenment in Anambra State. By establishing early medical outposts, promoting formal education, and encouraging literacy and inquiry, Christian missions laid the groundwork for what would later

become full-fledged systems of healthcare and technological innovation in the region. At the same time, this study acknowledges that the relationship between faith and science was not always harmonious. There were and still are points of friction, particularly when scientific discoveries appear to challenge literal interpretations of scripture or question long-held religious doctrines. Issues such as evolution, genetic engineering, and even vaccination have, at various points, sparked resistance from some religious quarters.

Yet, despite these tensions, the overall contribution of Christianity to the scientific development of Anambra State is both undeniable and profound. From the early mission compounds to the rise of Christian universities and health institutions today, the synergy between faith and science continues to evolve. Through a historical and qualitative analysis, this study explores how Christianity has functioned as a light and a guiding force that helped open the doors to modern medicine, technological education, and scientific consciousness in Anambra State. It also assesses the contemporary role of churches in shaping public health campaigns, STEM education, and innovation in a digital era. As we journey through this topic, we aim to understand not just the past, but the present and future potential of a faith that once came bearing scripture, but left behind a legacy of scientific progress.

Historical Background of Christianity and Scientific Engagement in Anambra State

Christianity made its formal entrance into what is today known as Anambra State in the mid-19th century, primarily through the efforts of European missionary bodies such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Roman Catholic Missionaries. The arrival of these missionaries was not accidental; it was part of a broader colonial and evangelical wave that saw Christianity as a civilizing force capable of reshaping African societies. However, Isichei (1995, cited in Kalu, 2007) affirms that the Christian mission to Anambra went beyond spiritual conversion, it carried with it the promise of literacy, healing, and social order. The early missionaries quickly realized that to gain the trust of the local people, they had to address tangible needs. One of the most effective ways to do this was through medicine and education. By setting up clinics and schools alongside churches, missionaries effectively introduced Western scientific practices into local life (Ajayi, 1965). These institutions became the first real contact many communities had with Western medicine, hygiene, anatomy, and later, structured scientific inquiry (Nduka, 2006).

In places like Onitsha, Awka, and Nnewi, key urban centers of present-day Anambra, Christian missions built some of the earliest health facilities, such as the Iyienu Mission Hospital (established in 1907 by the CMS), which still functions today as a leading health institution (Ekechi, 1976). These hospitals were not just for treating the sick; they became platforms for health education, medical training, and disease prevention. According to Falola and Heaton (2008), the emphasis on vaccinations, hygiene, and prenatal care helped reduce mortality rates and challenged indigenous medical practices, some of which were based on spiritualism or unproven herbalism. Equally transformative was the introduction of formal education. Christian missions believed that literacy was essential not only for Bible reading but also for fostering civilized behavior. As such, science subjects like biology, chemistry, and arithmetic were included in the curriculum of mission schools (Fafunwa, 1974). Uche (2011), strongly believe that schools like Dennis Memorial Grammar School (Onitsha) and Christ the King College (CKC), established by CMS and the Catholic missionaries respectively, produced generations of students who would later become scientists, doctors, and engineers. The foundational work laid by these mission schools cannot be overstated. According to Nwosu (2013), the educational infrastructure built by Christian missions served as the springboard for Anambra's reputation as a cradle of intellectual excellence in Nigeria. Indeed, many prominent Nigerian scientists and medical professionals trace their roots to Christian educational institutions in the state (Nwagwu, 2006).

However, it is important to note that this partnership between Christianity and science was not without its tensions. There were instances when religious teachings clashed with scientific understanding. The theory of evolution, for example, was met with suspicion by many church leaders who saw it as contradictory to the Biblical creation story (Okoro, 2017). In some Pentecostal circles today, there is still skepticism toward certain scientific practices such as in-

vitro fertilization (IVF), genetic testing, and even the COVID-19 vaccine (Ogbonnaya and Enweremadu, 2021). Nonetheless, the church's role in pioneering scientific engagement in Anambra State remains foundational. It provided the early exposure, the basic infrastructure, and the intellectual atmosphere that allowed scientific thinking to flourish. As Kalu (2010) rightly argues, Christianity in Africa must be understood not merely as a religious movement but as a vehicle for sociocultural transformation including in the realm of science.

Christianity and the Advancement of Medicine in Anambra State

One of the earliest and most visible footprints of Christianity in Anambra State was the introduction of Western medicine. The missionaries, motivated by compassion and a desire to alleviate suffering, brought not only the gospel but also practical tools of healing. According to Ekechi (1976), in communities where ailments were often attributed to spiritual causes or ancestral wrath, the arrival of missionary medicine marked a radical shift in understanding illness and treatment.

The Church Missionary Society (CMS), a leading Anglican mission in the area, pioneered medical evangelism as early as the late 19th century. Missionary doctors like Dr. A. A. Harrison and Dr. Goodwin established medical stations where treatment was offered freely or at minimal cost, with the dual purpose of healing and winning souls (Ajayi, 1965). The Iyienu Mission Hospital, founded in 1907 near Ogidi, became one of the foremost centers of medical care in southeastern Nigeria. In view of this, Isichei (1995; as cited in Onwuejeogwu, 2001) affirms that it provided maternity care, minor surgery, treatment for endemic diseases like yaws and malaria, and health education for local communities.

Similarly, the Roman Catholic Mission launched its own health efforts. The Holy Rosary Sisters, in particular, were instrumental in advancing maternal and child health. Their hospitals, such as the Borromeo Hospital in Onitsha, introduced practices like antenatal clinics, midwifery training, and infant immunization (Uchendu, 2004). These interventions led to noticeable improvements in maternal and child mortality rates, especially in rural areas where such care had previously been unavailable.

Through their medical work, missionaries introduced scientific explanations for diseases that were traditionally attributed to witchcraft, curses, or spirits. For instance, leprosy, once considered a spiritual punishment, began to be treated with modern pharmaceuticals in church-run leprosariums (Falola and Heaton, 2008). The effect of this transition was both medical and psychological, it gave people a new lens through which to interpret their health and encouraged trust in biomedical practices (Aguwa, 2007).

In addition to curative services, the missions emphasized preventive medicine, which was virtually unknown in indigenous health systems. Health talks, sanitation campaigns, and vaccinations became regular features of mission outreach. Ezeanya (2003), notes that Christian medical workers, both foreign and indigenous, were trained to administer basic treatments, offer hygiene advice, and monitor epidemics. Such efforts laid the groundwork for public health as a formal discipline in the region. A particularly notable dimension of Christian medical influence is seen in the training of indigenous health professionals. Hospitals like Iyienu began nurse training schools that empowered local women many of whom were among the first in their families to receive formal education with both scientific knowledge and professional identity (Okeke, 2010). This merging of faith and science, especially for female healthcare workers, had long-lasting effects on gender roles, employment, and access to healthcare.

Despite these gains, challenges emerged. Some indigenous communities remained skeptical of Western medicine, especially where it conflicted with traditional beliefs or involved unfamiliar procedures. In some instances, missionaries condemned local medical practitioners as sorcerers, leading to the suppression of indigenous knowledge systems (Obiechina, 1994). However, other missionaries took a more integrative approach, encouraging dialogue and selective incorporation of useful herbal remedies (Mbonu, 2006).

In recent years, Christian institutions in Anambra have continued their medical legacy through private hospitals, health-focused NGOs, and partnerships with government agencies. Churches like the Anglican Diocese on the Niger and the Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha operate hospitals, maternity centers, and HIV/AIDS outreach programs (Nwankwo and Onwudiwe, 2019). These

modern interventions reflect a continuation of the missionary model faith-inspired healthcare delivery rooted in compassion and professionalism. Ultimately, Christianity's role in advancing medicine in Anambra State cannot be understood merely in institutional terms. It represents a deep cultural shift in how health is understood, delivered, and valued. The merging of faith and science, though sometimes fraught with tension, has brought about a more holistic approach to wellness that many still benefit from today.

Christianity and the Development of Scientific Education and Technology in Anambra State

The advent of Christianity in Anambra State marked a pivotal era in the redefinition of education, especially in terms of scientific enlightenment and technological exposure. From the earliest days, Christian missions did not only bring the Bible, they brought books, blackboards, and a new way of thinking about the world. Through the establishment of mission schools, churches laid the foundation for what would become one of the most robust educational traditions in Nigeria's southeast. This is evident in the following areas below;

Missionary Education and Scientific Literacy

The earliest mission schools in Anambra, such as the Onitsha Grammar School (Anglican, 1901) and Christ the King College (Catholic, 1933), introduced a curriculum that included arithmetic, geography, and basic sciences subjects virtually absent in indigenous learning systems (Ajayi, 1965 cited in Isichei, 1995). These schools were modeled after British institutions and served as the training grounds for future doctors, engineers, teachers, and scientists. According Fafunwa (1974), students were taught how to observe, question, experiment, and record skills at the core of scientific reasoning.

Many of the region's early scientific minds were products of these missionary schools. Figures like Dr. Alexander Ekwueme, Nigeria's former Vice President and a trained architect, and Professor Chike Obi, a world-renowned mathematician from Anambra, were all influenced by mission-based education (Onwuejeogwu, 2001). Their success helped inspire generations of young people to pursue careers in the sciences, often encouraged by Christian mentors who believed that understanding God's creation included studying the natural world.

Integration of Faith and Scientific Inquiry

Missionary education was unique in its integration of spiritual and scientific disciplines. In schools run by Anglicans and Catholics, for instance, students could study biology in the morning and attend catechism in the afternoon. Contrary to the popular assumption that religion and science must conflict, these institutions modeled a synergy: science was seen as a tool to better understand God's creation (Mbiti, 1980 cited in Ezeanya, 2003). Even subjects like astronomy, botany, and medicine were taught with a theological lens; God as the designer of the universe and the body.

However, this harmony was not without its tensions. In some cases, subjects such as evolution or reproductive health education sparked controversy as Aguwa (2007), puts that Christian educators often had to navigate the delicate balance between scientific accuracy and doctrinal boundaries. Yet, many adapted creatively. Some teachers used biblical metaphors to explain natural phenomena or emphasized that truth in science does not necessarily negate truth in Scripture (Nduka, 2006).

Technological Developments and Christian Institutions

As the 20th century progressed, Christianity's role expanded beyond classrooms into technological development. Mission schools began introducing practical subjects such as technical drawing, carpentry, metal work, and electrical studies. These formed the early seeds of vocational and technical education in Anambra (Okafor, 2010). The Boys Technical College, Onitsha, founded by Catholic missionaries, became a model for combining faith-based discipline with scientific craftsmanship.

Moreover, the churches played a significant role in digital literacy in recent decades. Institutions like Madonna University (Catholic) and Paul University, Awka (Anglican) offer courses in computer science, engineering, and medical technology. These universities are not only producing competent graduates but are also instilling in them moral values grounded in Christian ethics (Ilo, 2012). Christian youth fellowships and diocesan programs now run coding workshops, robotics clubs, and digital entrepreneurship seminars demonstrating the adaptability of Christianity to modern technological landscapes (Nwankwo and Onwudiwe, 2019).

Bridging Traditional Knowledge and Modern Innovation

Interestingly, Christianity also played a mediatory role in helping people bridge traditional knowledge with scientific advancement. While missionaries initially dismissed indigenous technologies and agricultural practices as "pagan," modern Christian scientists from Anambra, many of them trained in mission schools have revisited traditional knowledge systems with a more open mind (Mbonu, 2006). Some now advocate for incorporating indigenous farming techniques, herbal medicine, and local materials into STEM education.

Tensions and Synergies Between Faith and Science in Anambra State

The arrival of Christianity in Anambra State undeniably opened the door to Western education, medicine, and technological progress. However, this opening was not without complexity. Alongside remarkable scientific gains emerged theological questions and cultural negotiations. Christianity brought with it a new worldview—one that celebrated rational inquiry and modern healthcare, yet often clashed with indigenous beliefs and emerging scientific theories. The resulting tensions, though at times divisive, also sparked deeper reflections and new paths toward synergy between faith and science.

Doctrinal Concerns and Scientific Discoveries: A Historical Tension

In the early years of mission schools in Anambra State, subjects like biology and geology occasionally stirred discomfort among Christian educators. The theory of evolution, for example, seemed to stand in sharp contradiction to the biblical account of creation. Some missionaries avoided teaching Darwinism altogether, while others presented it cautiously, framing it within the broader narrative of God's design (Okoye, 2006) These theological hesitations influenced the curricula of early Christian schools and limited the full engagement with modern science in some quarters. Even in contemporary times, the unease persists in certain contexts. Topics such as genetic modification, cloning, and even artificial intelligence according to Obiakor (2023), raise ethical concerns among many religious leaders. In rural parts of Anambra, some churches still discourage members from accepting treatments like blood transfusions or vaccines, citing faith-based convictions. Yet, it would be unfair to paint all religious actors with a broad brush. Nmah (2012) states that many Christian denominations in Anambra have moved past rigid doctrinal barriers and now engage with science in thoughtful, constructive ways.

Faith Healing and Modern Medicine: An Evolving Relationship

Pentecostal and evangelical movements, which rose to prominence in the late 20th century, brought renewed emphasis on divine healing. Uzor (2010), states that testimonies of miraculous recoveries became staples of revival programs and church crusades across Anambra. While such expressions of faith brought hope to many, they also generated concerns when members opted for prayer over timely medical intervention. However, these narratives are evolving. Major Christian hospitals such as Iyi-Enu Mission Hospital, St. Charles Borromeo Hospital, and others affiliated with Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal bodies have managed to strike a balance. These institutions offer world-class medical services while upholding the spiritual values of compassion, dignity, and prayer (Okonkwo and Eze, 2017 cited in Nwankwo, 2021).

The Role of Christian Institutions in Promoting Technological Literacy and Digital Development

In the evolving landscape of global digital advancement, the role of Christian institutions in Anambra State has extended beyond traditional evangelism and into the domain of technology-driven education and communication. This transition did not happen by accident but emerged from a long history of adaptive engagement by the church with tools of modernity. As the church once embraced the printing press to spread the gospel and literacy, it now embraces the digital space to engage a new generation of believers, learners, and innovators.

Christian mission schools, many of which evolved into major secondary and tertiary institutions in Anambra, have been pivotal in incorporating ICT into their curricula. Schools such as Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Queen of the Rosary College, and Anglican Girls' Secondary School have long served as breeding grounds for scientific and technological literacy. With support from diocesan authorities and foreign Christian partners, these institutions have established computer laboratories, technology clubs, and robotics units, exposing students, many from rural or

underprivileged backgrounds to basic and advanced digital tools (Okoye, 2018).

Beyond the classroom, churches themselves have evolved into semi-digital institutions. Media ministries within churches have adopted livestreaming, social media platforms, and church management software, indirectly training members in digital tools. Youths who serve in technical units handling audiovisuals, PowerPoint slides, sound systems, and online broadcasts often gain marketable digital skills. Uche (2022) observes that churches have become silent incubators of digital knowledge, particularly among young people who would otherwise lack access to such platforms due to poverty or systemic neglect.

In Anambra's urban centers such as Onitsha, Awka, and Nnewi, churches now run vocational and digital literacy programs. NGOs like the Catholic Caritas Foundation and Scripture Union West Africa, in partnership with parishes, have organized ICT workshops, software training, and online safety seminars. While the primary motivation for these programs is often moral and spiritual equipping youths to use technology ethically, they inadvertently bolster digital competence, thus bridging gaps in the formal education system (Ezeanya and Nwachukwu, 2019).

Technological literacy has also been fostered through church-affiliated media houses, such as Radio Sapientia (Catholic) and ABS Faith Network (Anglican-affiliated), which employ Christian broadcasters trained in media production, journalism, and IT. These platforms serve as both evangelism tools and technological empowerment centers for Christian youth (Akinwale, 2020). The dual nature of their mission faith promotion and skill development reflects the contemporary church's expanding role in societal transformation. Nevertheless, challenges persist. Funding constraints, digital divide between rural and urban congregations, and occasional theological resistance to technological change hinder the full potential of these initiatives. Some conservative denominations, especially in remote areas, still view excessive technology use as a potential gateway to moral decay. Others simply lack the infrastructure or technical personnel to implement robust digital programs. Yet, despite these challenges, the trend remains optimistic.

As observed by Onwuegbuna (2020), churches in Anambra are among the few grassroots institutions consistently providing structured and culturally-sensitive digital exposure to their members. Their intentional focus on youth empowerment, combined with the moral compass of religious ethics, makes them unique stakeholders in Anambra's scientific and technological future.

Contemporary Christian Engagement in STEM and Scientific Research

In today's Anambra State, the influence of Christianity on scientific and technological advancement is no longer confined to missionary legacies it is actively lived out through individuals, institutions, and initiatives that bridge faith with modern science. Christian professionals many molded by mission schools or faith-based mentorship are now visible in medical research, engineering, environmental science, and information technology across the state.

One remarkable trend is the rise of Christian scientists who see their vocation as a divine calling. Scholars like Dr. Chika Okwuosa, a biomedical researcher in Awka, and Engr. Nnamdi Ezeokoli, a civil engineer involved in climate-resilient infrastructure in Nnewi, openly speak of their faith as a moral compass in their scientific work (Okwuosa, 2022). For them, science and Christianity are not in opposition but mutually enriching. This sentiment echoes earlier perspectives from theologians like John Mbiti (1991) and later scholars such as Ogbujah (2013), who emphasized the compatibility of African Christian ethics and empirical knowledge.

Universities in Anambra with Christian foundations like Paul University (Anglican) and Madonna University (Catholic) are also key players. These institutions host science faculties, engineering departments, and medical schools where faith and research co-exist. For instance, Paul University has hosted conferences on biotechnology and ethics, exploring how Christian values can inform genomic research and sustainable development (Okafor and Nwoke, 2020).

Churches have also initiated scholarships and STEM camps for secondary school students. Programs like the "Future Christian Innovators" initiative run by the Anglican Diocese of Awka and Catholic Diocesan STEM Scholarships provide young Christians with access to laboratory facilities, mentorship, and internship opportunities. These platforms not only nurture scientific curiosity but also instill a sense of social responsibility anchored in Christian teaching (Nwafor and Umeh, 2021). Even in rural parishes, there's a growing interest in faith-driven science

education. Clergy encourage students to see careers in medicine, agriculture, or technology as forms of divine service—healing the sick, feeding the hungry, or improving lives through innovation. This narrative is powerful in a society where science is often seen as elitist or disconnected from moral values (Ibe, 2018).

By embracing science as a tool for service, contemporary Christianity in Anambra is not merely reacting to modernity it is helping shape it. This synergy between faith and STEM fields could be a model for other regions in Nigeria, where religious influence is still strong but scientific literacy remains low. As Nnadi (2023) argues, the future of science in Africa may depend as much on its ethical framing by religion as on its technical capacity.

Conclusion

The story of Anambra State's scientific and technological transformation cannot be fully told without acknowledging the seminal and continuing role of Christianity. From the first missionary footprints in the 19th century to the contemporary activities of Christian educators, medics, and technocrats, the church has acted as both a lightbearer and a transformer of society. Christianity brought with it not just spiritual renewal, but new ways of thinking of healing, building, and exploring. Through mission hospitals, schools, and digital empowerment platforms, Christian institutions laid the groundwork for health care systems, scientific education, and technological literacy. Christian values—rooted in service, discipline, and stewardship created ethical frameworks that still influence how science is taught and practiced today. Admittedly, the journey has not been without tensions. Conflicts between faith and science have appeared in areas such as traditional medicine, evolution, and reproductive technologies. Yet these tensions have not outweighed the synergies. If anything, they have prompted reflection, dialogue, and a more robust partnership between the sacred and the scientific.

In today's fast-evolving world, where artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and climate change pose both promises and perils, Anambra's model offers a powerful lesson. Religion, when open-minded and socially responsive, can be a catalyst for inclusive, ethical scientific advancement. The Christian faith in Anambra has not only endured but adapted molding digital natives, health professionals, and researchers who carry both the Bible and the microscope with equal reverence. What remains is the need to deepen and expand this synergy to ensure that every child, whether in urban Onitsha or rural Orumba, receives both spiritual grounding and scientific opportunity. For Anambra to fully realize its potential in the 21st century, the church must not retreat from the scientific space; rather, it must lead with vision, integrity, and innovation.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Faith-Based STEM Education: Christian schools should continue integrating STEM subjects into their curricula, with modern laboratories and trained instructors. Collaborative programs between churches and tertiary institutions can create mentorship pipelines for young believers in science.

2. Build Church-Supported Tech Hubs: Churches and dioceses in Anambra should establish small technology hubs or ICT centers in rural communities. These centers can teach coding, digital marketing, and basic software skills under the guidance of Christian mentors.

3. Encourage Theological Reflection on Science: Christian seminaries and theological schools should introduce modules on science and ethics, biotechnology, digital theology, and environmental science. This will help produce clergy who are informed and supportive of scientific advancement.

4. Promote Faith-Science Dialogue Platforms: Organize annual forums or symposia where scientists and clergy can engage in honest discussions about ethical issues, faith-based skepticism, and the future of scientific development in Nigeria.

5. Expand Health Missions and Medical Research: Christian hospitals and medical outreach programs should invest in research particularly in areas of local concern like malaria, sickle cell, maternal health, and public sanitation. Funding from church bodies can support these projects.

6. Use Pulpits to Promote Scientific Literacy: Pastors and Christian educators should use

sermons and teaching moments to encourage critical thinking, curiosity, and respect for empirical knowledge while maintaining theological depth.

7. Involve Christian Professionals in Policy Advocacy: Christian scientists and medical professionals should form think tanks to advise government on science and education policy, offering faith-informed but scientifically grounded perspectives.

8. Foster Inclusiveness in Science Ministries: Ensure that girls and underprivileged children in church communities are given equal access to scientific opportunities through scholarships, science fairs, and mentorship.

9. Document and Celebrate Achievements: Publish and archive the contributions of Christian doctors, engineers, and scientists from Anambra to inspire younger generations and reinforce the heritage of faith-driven innovation.

10. Global Networking: Christian institutions in Anambra should partner with global Christian organizations focused on science and technology such as Christians in Science (UK) or the American Scientific Affiliation for exposure and resource exchange

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CHAPTER TWENTY TWO
HARMONIZING SCIENCE AND HUMANITY: THE ROLE OF GOD IN BRIDGING ETHICAL INNOVATION IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper explores the convergence of science, ethics, and theology, with a focus on how the concept of God can provide a moral compass for scientific innovation within the African cultural and philosophical landscape. Grounded in African ethical humanism and the theological framework of theonomous ethics, the research critically examines the tension between technological advancement and moral responsibility in African societies. Drawing on both qualitative content analysis and historical-theological methodology, this study interrogates the roles of indigenous spirituality and Christian theology in shaping an ethically responsive scientific culture.

The research identifies core ethical dilemmas arising from unregulated technological innovation, such as bioethics, artificial intelligence, environmental degradation, and inequality in access to healthcare technologies. African scholars like John Mbiti, Kwame Gyekye, Mercy Oduyoye, and Emmanuel Asante have contributed significantly to discourse on African moral thought and theological ethics, laying the groundwork for contextualizing innovation within a value-laden framework.

The paper seeks to resolve five core problems:

1. The ethical dislocation between science and African communal values.
2. The secularization of scientific practice and its detachment from moral accountability.
3. The marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems in global scientific discourse.
4. The absence of a unified ethical framework guiding technological innovation in Africa.
5. The neglect of theological resources in shaping public policy on science and innovation.

Theoretical Framework This research adopts the *theonomous ethics* approach, which posits that moral norms are divinely derived, as opposed to autonomous (human-centered) or heteronomous (externally imposed) ethics (Tillich 12). The study also draws from African ethical humanism, which emphasizes community, respect for life, and harmony with nature as moral imperatives (Gyekye 15).

Methodology A qualitative methodology was used, combining content analysis of scholarly literature, theological texts, and African philosophical writings. The historical-theological method enabled the tracing of ethical ideas through African Christian theology and indigenous traditions.

Keywords: Science, Ethics, Theology, African Innovation, Theonomous Ethics

Science in the African Context Science is "a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe" (Wilson 14). In Africa, science must engage not only empirical evidence but also contextual realities such as poverty, healthcare disparity, and ecological sustainability.

Ethics and African Society Ethics is "the branch of philosophy concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior" (Singer 1). African ethics, rooted in Ubuntu and other communal philosophies, emphasizes collective well-being over individual achievement.

Theological Integration Theology is "the critical study of the nature of the divine and of religious belief" (McGrath 5). African theology, as articulated by scholars like Mbiti and Oduyoye, integrates Christian teachings with traditional African spirituality to form a coherent moral vision.

African Innovation and Its Ethical Challenges Innovation in Africa often occurs within resource-constrained environments and is deeply influenced by cultural and spiritual values (Chataway et al. 663). However, ethical frameworks guiding these innovations are either borrowed from Western models or absent altogether.

The Role of Theonomous Ethics Theonomous ethics re-centers God as the source of moral authority. In bridging ethical innovation, it calls for scientific progress that respects divine principles and promotes justice, compassion, and sustainability (Tillich 12).

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed unprecedented scientific progress in medicine, artificial intelligence, agriculture, and communication technologies. While these advancements have brought significant benefits, they have also raised ethical questions regarding human dignity, justice, and sustainability. In the African context, this concern is amplified by the coexistence of modern scientific paradigms and deeply rooted spiritual and communal traditions. This paper argues that harmonizing science and humanity in Africa requires a theological and ethical framework that places God at the center of innovation. The rapid advancement of science and technology has brought about significant changes globally. In Africa, these advancements often clash with traditional communal values, leading to ethical dilemmas. The secularization of scientific practices has further detached them from moral accountability, while Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) remain marginalized in global scientific discourse. Moreover, the lack of a unified ethical framework guiding technological innovation and the neglect of theological resources in public policy formulation exacerbate these challenges. This paper seeks to address these issues by proposing a harmonized approach that integrates science, ethics, and theology in the African context.

Science in the African Context: A Historical and Contemporary Review

From the dawn of the 20th century to the present, science in Africa has undergone a profound transformation. Once perceived as peripheral in global scientific discourse, Africa has risen steadily to contribute meaningfully to scientific development, both within the continent and globally. This section explores the historical trajectory of science in Africa, highlights the achievements of prominent African scientists, and references key scholarly contributions to the evolving African scientific identity. **Early 20th Century: Colonial Influence and Indigenous Knowledge** At the turn of the 20th century, scientific development in Africa was predominantly influenced by European colonial powers. Most scientific inquiry and infrastructure served colonial economic interests, such as agriculture, mining, and health (Iliffe 102). However, beneath the colonial structures, indigenous knowledge systems—long dismissed by Western academia—remained vital. Africans practiced advanced astronomy, medicine, metallurgy, and agriculture centuries before colonization. The Dogon people of Mali, for example, possessed astronomical knowledge about Sirius B long before its discovery by Western science in 1862 (Van Sertima 269). These knowledge systems, though orally transmitted, formed a significant foundation for what is now considered ethnoscience.

Post-Independence Era: Education and Institutional Growth

Following the wave of independence across Africa in the 1950s and 60s, many newly formed states prioritized scientific education and research. Governments established national universities and research centers. Countries like Nigeria, Egypt, Kenya, and South Africa invested in agricultural and medical sciences to address food security and endemic diseases. The 1970s and 1980s also witnessed increased collaboration with international organizations. However, political instability and economic downturns impeded consistent progress. According to Mugabe, "the capacity for

scientific research stagnated in several African countries due to structural adjustment programs" (Mugabe 78).

21st Century: Emergence of African Scientists on the Global Stage

The 21st century has seen a resurgence in scientific innovation from Africa. African scientists are now leaders in fields such as astrophysics, epidemiology, environmental science, and artificial intelligence.**Dr. Francisca Nneka Okeke**, a Nigerian physicist, was awarded the L'Oréal-UNESCO Award in 2013 for her contribution to geomagnetism and understanding climate change in the upper atmosphere. **Dr. Salim Abdool Karim**, a South African epidemiologist, gained global recognition during the COVID-19 pandemic for his research on viral infections and public health policy (Karim and Baxter 5).**Dr. Tebello Nyokong** of Lesotho, a leading chemist in nanotechnology, has been recognized internationally for her work on photodynamic therapy for cancer treatment. Similarly, **Dr. Segenet Kelemu**, an Ethiopian molecular plant pathologist, has led research on sustainable agriculture and currently heads the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) in Kenya.

Publications and Scholarly Contributions

African scholars have increasingly contributed to academic discourse through publications that highlight the continent's scientific potential and challenges. The *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development* frequently publishes research on innovation ecosystems in Africa. Similarly, *South African Journal of Science* has become a reputable platform for original research in the natural and social sciences.Adebayo Olukoshi, in his study on knowledge production in Africa, emphasizes the need for African-led research agendas and robust funding models (Olukoshi 52). He argues that scientific sovereignty is key to Africa's future development.

African Scholarly Contributions

John Mbiti's exploration of African traditional religion emphasizes moral order grounded in spiritual belief.

Kwame Gyekye's African humanism advocates for moral development through communal relationships.

Mercy Oduyoye introduces feminist and theological perspectives on African ethics.

Emmanuel Asante connects theology with social reconstruction and ethical policymaking.

Kwasi Wiredu critiques cultural imperialism in moral philosophy, urging for contextual ethics.

Science and the Future of Africa

Africa's scientific future is promising. The African Union's **Agenda 2063** emphasizes science, technology, and innovation as central to the continent's transformation. Initiatives like the **African Space Agency** and **Square Kilometre Array (SKA)** project in South Africa signify bold steps toward cutting-edge science.However, challenges remain. These include brain drain, inadequate funding, and limited research infrastructure. Strengthening intra-African collaboration and increasing investment in science education are crucial strategies for sustainable growth.Science in the African context reflects a journey of resilience, innovation, and resurgence. From ancient ethnoscientific systems to contemporary global breakthroughs, African scientists continue to shape the future. With continued investment and international recognition, Africa is poised to be a scientific powerhouse in the coming decades.

Ethical Dislocation Between Science and African Communal Values:

In African societies, ethics is traditionally grounded in communal values, emphasizing interdependence, respect for elders, collective responsibility, and the sacredness of life. These values stand in stark contrast to the often individualistic and utilitarian framework that dominates scientific practice. The ethical dislocation between science and African communal values becomes evident when scientific endeavors fail to account for indigenous moral perspectives. As

Ramose observes, "African ethics is fundamentally a question of *ubuntu*, of being human through others" (Ramose 135). Science, particularly Western-modeled science, is predominantly anthropocentric and instrumentalist, often viewing nature and even human subjects as objects of experimentation and exploitation. This dislocation challenges the integrity of African identity and development.

Science and Its Ethical Paradigm

Science is often celebrated for its objectivity and neutrality. However, this very neutrality has been critiqued for its moral detachment. According to Wiredu, "scientific rationality presupposes a framework of inquiry that marginalizes the communal and the spiritual dimensions of African thought" (Wiredu 42). The scientific method, with its emphasis on empirical data and replicability, rarely accommodates communal decision-making processes or spiritual cosmologies. In bioethics, for instance, the principle of informed consent prioritizes the individual, yet African ethics often stresses community consent or family consensus, especially in medical decisions (Tangwa 192). The ethical protocols governing scientific research thus clash with the African moral reality where identity and decision-making are deeply communal.

The Clash in Biomedical Interventions

African communal values are often disregarded in biomedical research and interventions. Clinical trials by multinational pharmaceutical companies in countries like Nigeria, Uganda, and South Africa have often been conducted without adequate cultural consultation. The 1996 Pfizer Trovan trial in Kano, Nigeria, sparked ethical outrage due to inadequate informed consent and disregard for communal norms of medical trust (Ogundowole 215). Similarly, biotechnology involving genetic modification and reproductive technologies raises moral questions in African settings where life and fertility are viewed as sacred and divinely ordained. As Gyekye argues, "the imposition of Western ethical paradigms in bioethics undermines African moral autonomy and dignity" (Gyekye 74).

Environmental Ethics and the Communal Worldview

African societies traditionally hold a holistic view of the environment, where land, rivers, forests, and animals are not merely resources but part of the moral community. However, scientific environmental practices, such as mining, deforestation, and industrial agriculture, prioritize exploitation over preservation. According to Hoppers, "indigenous knowledge systems contain ecological wisdom grounded in communal experience, which modern science ignores to the detriment of sustainable development" (Hoppers 88). The ethical dislocation here involves not just different views of nature but different relationships with it.

Technological Advancement and Alienation

The digital age has brought tremendous benefits, but it has also led to cultural erosion. The intrusion of artificial intelligence, surveillance technologies, and social media into African communities has disrupted traditional modes of communication, socialization, and governance. As Eze contends, "technology must be integrated into Africa with ethical sensitivity to communal norms, lest it becomes a tool of neocolonial disruption" (Eze 161). Without this sensitivity, technology fosters alienation, undermines social cohesion, and promotes unethical behaviors like cyber fraud, data exploitation, and digital addiction.

Toward an Integrative Ethical Framework

To bridge the dislocation between science and African communal values, an integrative ethical framework is essential. This involves incorporating *ubuntu*, respect for communal authority, and participatory decision-making into scientific protocols and technological applications. African scholars like Tangwa and Ramose advocate for an intercultural bioethics that respects both scientific rigor and indigenous values. "Ethics," Tangwa asserts, "must be contextual, evolving from the lived experiences and cultural mores of a people" (Tangwa 195). Interdisciplinary dialogue, inclusive research ethics committees, and cultural education for scientists are vital strategies toward this end. Science, when ethically aligned with African communal values, holds great potential for transformative development. However, the prevailing ethical dislocation not

only undermines African identities but also impairs the moral legitimacy of scientific enterprises. By rooting scientific practice in communal ethics, Africa can forge a path that honors both knowledge and culture.

African societies are deeply rooted in communal values that emphasize interconnectedness, respect for nature, and collective well-being. However, modern scientific practices often prioritize individualism and exploitative approaches to nature. This ethical dislocation leads to conflicts between scientific advancements and traditional African values. Murove argues that the indigenization of knowledge must be pursued under the presumption that all knowledge is cultural or context-specific to some degree. The multicultural nature and plurality of knowledge systems should be acknowledged, and the quest for indigenization and intellectualization of knowledge in the African context should be seen as a quest for the inclusionary appreciation of a multiplicity of global knowledges, contributing to both local and general human well-being (Murove).

Secularization of Scientific Practice and Detachment from Moral Accountability:

The secularization of science has led to a detachment from moral and ethical considerations. Scientific endeavors are often pursued without adequate reflection on their ethical implications, leading to practices that may harm communities and the environment. The AUDA-NEPAD report highlights that ethics in Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) are based on societal acceptability, cultural, and religious beliefs. However, ethical considerations are often limited to specific innovations, such as medical research, and are not comprehensively applied across the STI spectrum. African ethical practices, derived from religious traditions and norms, sometimes lack evidence-based scientific development, leading to a gap in ethical application in harnessing innovation and emerging technologies (AUDA-NEPAD).

Marginalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Global Scientific Discourse:

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are often marginalized in global scientific discourse, leading to the undervaluation of local knowledge and practices. This marginalization hampers the development of context-specific solutions to local challenges. Pophiwa notes that while IKS are acknowledged by international institutions, their application in real-world contexts is often watered down. The Euro-Western imposition has sidelined IKS, and the silence by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on IKS represents a systematic exclusion of indigenous people from the developmental agenda. Integrating IKS into policy formulation and developmental agendas is crucial for sustainability and community involvement (Pophiwa).

Absence of a Unified Ethical Framework Guiding Technological Innovation in Africa:

The lack of a unified ethical framework guiding technological innovation in Africa leads to inconsistent application of ethical principles across different sectors. This absence hinders the development of technologies that align with African values and societal needs. The AUDA-NEPAD report emphasizes the need for a centralized and continental body on ethics to harmonize Africa's strategic policy development aimed at comprehensive ethical programs. Such a body can serve as a platform for collecting, sharing, and organizing ethical programs, policies, and guidelines for the African continent (AUDA-NEPAD).

Neglect of Theological Resources in Shaping Public Policy on Science and Innovation:

Theological resources, which have historically guided moral and ethical decision-making in African societies, are often neglected in shaping public policy on science and innovation. This neglect results in policies that may not resonate with the moral compass of the communities they aim to serve. Madzivhandila discusses the importance of integrating IKS and culture into climate change adaptation. Scientific interventions among the impoverished in rural developing nations are viewed as foreign and are thus not accepted by the local populace. Incorporating IKS into the

process of climate change adaptation is significant for developing nations (Madzivhandila).

Theological Foundations and the Public Sphere

The intersection of theology and public policy is not new. In Western traditions, figures like Reinhold Niebuhr and Abraham Kuyper have long advocated for the moral foundations of public discourse. In Africa, John S. Mbiti emphasized the communal and theocentric worldview inherent in African spirituality. He argued that "Africans are notoriously religious" (Mbiti 1), suggesting that any public initiative divorced from theological concerns risks alienating the populace.

Theology's concern with justice, dignity, and stewardship aligns naturally with policy goals in science and innovation. Science devoid of ethical reflection can become a tool of exploitation or marginalization. Conversely, theology without engagement with contemporary realities risks irrelevance. Thus, a reinvigorated theological voice in science policy promotes a balanced and humane trajectory of innovation.

Science, Innovation, and African Theological Ethics

Science and innovation are essential for Africa's development, but they raise ethical questions: Who benefits from innovation" Is it sustainable" Does it align with the values of the community" Mercy Amba Oduyoye stresses that African theology must be attentive to the "daily struggles and hopes of the African people" (Oduyoye 18). In this light, theological ethics can interrogate technologies that exacerbate inequality or environmental degradation.

Emmanuel Katongole, in *The Sacrifice of Africa*, argues for a theology that informs political and economic practice by drawing on narratives of hope, reconciliation, and solidarity. He writes that "the church has a role in imagining and embodying alternative social arrangements" (Katongole 72). Applied to science and innovation, this means fostering policies that prioritize social justice, local ownership of technology, and ecological care.

Reconstructing Policy with Theological Insight

Reconstructive theology, particularly post-colonial African theology, offers tools for shaping inclusive and context-relevant policies. Science and innovation must not be framed merely as technocratic advancements but as moral choices with far-reaching consequences. The theological concept of *ubuntu*—emphasizing communal interdependence—can inform participatory science policy that values both expert knowledge and local wisdom.

The Kairos Document in South Africa, though primarily focused on apartheid, provides a model of how theology can prophetically critique unjust systems while offering a vision for renewal. Its emphasis on justice and public responsibility is instructive for shaping policies in bioethics, environmental innovation, and digital technology.

Case Study: Theological Engagement in Environmental Innovation

Environmental degradation is one area where theological and scientific concerns converge. In Kenya, Christian organizations have partnered with scientists to promote sustainable agriculture, guided by stewardship theology. Archbishop Desmond Tutu's advocacy for climate justice reflects a broader trend of African theological engagement with environmental policy. He declared that "climate change is a moral challenge," urging religious communities to influence climate-related policies (Tutu).

This synergy of science and theology fosters innovation that is ecologically sensitive and ethically grounded, demonstrating the importance of theological voices in policy deliberation.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite these possibilities, several challenges persist. Many theologians lack the technical expertise to engage meaningfully in scientific policy debates, while scientists often view theology

as archaic or irrelevant. Bridging this gap requires interdisciplinary collaboration and theological training that embraces science as a partner in human flourishing. Opportunities lie in theological institutions establishing research centers focused on science, ethics, and policy. Churches can also advocate for innovation policies that reflect their theological commitments to justice, care, and stewardship. Reinvigorating theological resources in shaping public policy on science and innovation is both a moral imperative and a contextual necessity in Africa. By drawing from African theological traditions and scholars, policy-makers can forge innovation agendas that are ethically grounded, communally beneficial, and spiritually attuned. This integrated approach reflects the lived realities of African societies and provides a transformative framework for the future. To harmonize science and humanity in the African context, it is imperative to bridge the ethical dislocation between scientific practices and African communal values, address the secularization of science, integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems into global discourse, establish a unified ethical framework for technological innovation, and incorporate theological resources into public policy. By doing so, Africa can develop scientific and technological solutions that are ethically grounded, culturally relevant, and socially acceptable.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge by:

1. Reasserting the relevance of theology in contemporary scientific discourse.
2. Offering a framework for integrating African ethics into science policy.
3. Promoting a God-centered ethic as a bridge between human dignity and technological progress.
4. Encouraging the inclusion of African epistemologies in global innovation debates.
5. Advancing inter-disciplinary dialogue between science, philosophy, and theology in Africa.

Recommendations include:

1. African governments should institutionalize ethical boards integrating theologians, scientists, and ethicists.
2. Theological institutions should expand curricula to include science and technology ethics.
3. Pan-African bodies should fund research exploring indigenous moral frameworks and innovation.
4. Policymakers must promote the inclusion of theological ethics in national science and technology guidelines.
5. Scientists should be sensitized to the socio-cultural implications of their innovations.

Conclusion

Ethical innovation in Africa cannot flourish outside the embrace of its rich moral and theological traditions. The role of God, not as a metaphysical abstraction but as a source of communal moral direction, is central to reconciling the aspirations of science with the values of humanity. Only by harmonizing these domains can Africa truly advance innovation that honors both human dignity and divine order.

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CHAPTER TWENTY THREE
GODLIGHT AND GOVERNANCE
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The act of governing or exercising authority is paramount and crucial in Biblical narratives. God, who beamed his light into the world which was covered with darkness, is central when it comes to governance and he exercises authority both in the governments of heaven and humanity. Undoubtedly, he reigns over the affairs of men, and as he radiates the light of his reign over the angels in heaven, he likewise gives authority to men to reflect this light as they rule or govern everything he created, and this is displayed in a glaring transparency, equity, and sustainable governance. As government rests on his shoulders and of the greatness of his government and peace, there would be no end, of which, he reigns with justice and righteousness from the beginning and forever. Also, he relinquishes governance on earth for man, and demands a rule that enhances an egalitarian society, where there is fairness, justice, and equity. The present society that makes up our nation Nigeria does not actually reflect in its totality what God intended for humanity as regard governance based on the foregoing. Many authors have written on governance, but have not strategically examined how humanity needs to appropriate the radiance of the light of God in governance and critically proffered the modality to be adopted in ensuring that the governing system in Nigeria aligns with the light of God. Using historical and sociological methods to gather relevant information and data analysed, it is unequivocally certain that when governance such as that of Nigeria is built on how God demands it, it will enhance good governance that brings about a robust economy and a blessed egalitarian society. This paper therefore posits that, every society, especially that of Nigeria, should as a matter of urgency carry out governance that is God inclined.

Keywords: GodLight, Governance, Egalitarian Society

Introduction

Righteous Governance is crucial and central to divine leadership. Governance is crucial to God, for as he reigns in heavens, likewise he reigns over the affairs of men and gives authority to whomever he pleases, Daniel 4: 32. The act of governing or exercising authority and ruling a country by making and revising the laws, managing the economy, controlling public services, etc, known as governance, (Collins, 1987, p. 630) is very significant, critical, and complex, which demands utmost diligence in service to achieve the set goals and objectives of the government. This underscores why God judges the world in righteousness and ministers judgment to the people in uprightness, Psalm 9:8. There are various travails which bedevil human beings in the nation or society. God in his wisdom uses various codes and laws to sanitise the ranks and files of humanity as he governs them politically, theologically and philosophically, etc, in man's multidimensional facets of life endeavours. We have this in Isaiah 33:22, - For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king. Hence, as a king who reigns over the people, he regulates the affairs of the people with his laws. This informs and highlights why people hold the view that the nation or society needs to be governed with fairness and justice either politically, or socio-economically, or even theologically, and putting in place a well structured security and good policies. Such a society

becomes an egalitarian society which is economically stable and consequently makes other aspects of human endeavours to be in proper and right state or situation. A pluralistic society like Nigeria is faced with various and diverse challenges, majorly the economic downturn, famine together with security threat which she contends with. Considering the foregoing from Biblical perspectives, definitely, her policies of governance and polity should be considered and re-evaluated so as to be in the right perspectives which will help to mitigate such travails. Therefore, scripturally, believers are enjoined to be pragmatically engaged in active participation in the nation or society political space with practices which are in tandem with the right values, which also should be relevant and result inclined as obtainable in the society, here, in our African context. It is worthy of note to know that the Scripture urges people or believers not to relent in these strides as they strive to "proffer answers to the central questions of political philosophy --- as those are apprehended in the Africa context" (Olufemi, 2008, p. 146)

A ruler who governs justly in the society and in the fear of God is seen as light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, and this symbolizes guidance, clarity, warmth, as reflected in 2 Samuel 23:4. Invariably, when governance is made to aligned with God's injunctions and standards, it becomes a life comforting one, resulting into prosperity, and peace to the people as reflected in this metaphor. The passage went further in verse five to draw out attention to the fact that when humanity endeavours to administer authority in righteousness inspite of her frailty, it results into the establishment of divine everlasting covenant and salvation, 2 Samuel 23:5. Evidently here, beside a leader's personal virtue, God's faithfulness is expressed in righteous governance in this covenant, underscoring a legacy of righteous leadership despite human limitations and imperfections as affirmed by King David. Contemporary governance which is administered in every nook and cranny of the society has been painted with various inadequacies but can be redefined if justice, fairness, and equity, are prioritized in governance as expressed in 2Samuel 23:1-5. When a government enshrines these values, it metamorphoses into a just and equitable society, that is, an egalitarian society. In the Old Testament, this passage gives a clue of how God beams his light of governance on humanity through human leadership and it becomes a powerful biblical model for governance in every society where righteousness, justice, and a deep reverence for God is anticipated. Therefore, these principles are relevant in offering guidance today for leaders who aspire to govern according to divine standards and injunctions. When these values are embraced, modern leadership will administer governance which reflects the light and life that comes from adhering to God's principles.

In the New Testament, the Bible admonishes individuals to take after God who is light and sought the well being of every human being, and they are to replicate the same light. They are to become light of the world and salt of the earth and this light is to be so bright that people have to behold their good works and glorify God in heaven, Matthew 5:13-16. Hence, the focus and perspective of believers in government of any nation like Nigeria are to administer governance that seeks the good of the masses because every endowment from God to them is for the common good, 1Corinthians 12:4-7. From Romans 13:1-7, the scripture enjoins the public to co-ordinate

themselves well to give adequate support to the government. They should hold these kinds of theology and philosophy and at the same time question those in the society who are not having such perspective of "how ought we to organize society for purpose of governance and social life'"" (Olufemi, 2008, pp. 146-147). Scripturally, social integration of the masses in the society is emphasized and this consequently highlights how individuals, families, and everybody in the society need to contribute his or her quota for the socio, politico-economic emancipation of the society. Biblical perspectives reiterate how the state or nation needs to be seen as an entity with various components such as individuals, family units, ethnic groups, communities, etc. This underscores the necessity for every government of any nation to come up with a policy which is administratively productive and which at the same time metamorphoses to an economy that is buoyant and viable, as everybody plays his or her own role. So, governance is not a quest for the state alone but for everybody to administer governance in his or her own area of jurisdiction. The Bible affirms that the political stability of a nation is a "process that extends beyond the actions of states and includes many things that would generally be thought of as private, or even personal" (Olufemi, 2008, p. 14).

GodLight and Governance

God's governance is evident in various narratives across the length and breadth of the scripture. From the beginning when he shines light into the darkness that pervaded the earth. This consequently brought about orderliness to the disordered world, metamorphosing into every good thing in the world, Genesis 1:1-31. God who is light himself illuminates the world and dispels darkness which ultimately underscores light as forerunner of good things. This highlights good things as evidence of the effect and essence of the presence of light. The sovereignty of God is often time expressed in his governance, showcasing righteousness, justice, peace, equity, joy, love, kindness, humility, comfort, etc, in the process, as qualities of his governance and springing forth various kinds of wellness to his subjects, either in the government of heaven or on earth. Kingdom and dominion belong to God and he rules or governs the nations, Psalm 22:28. God governs in righteousness and justice which delights the nations, "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy for thou shall rule the people righteously, and govern the nations upon the earth", Psalm 67:4. This underscores the awesomeness of God on planet earth, and the effect of his reign and governance permeates all the nooks and crannies of the geographical landscape of the entire universe. Infact, every government is upon him and his governance is sovereign. The scripture says,

> For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it, Isaiah 9:6-7

The authority of God is expressed in his governance, and he judges his people with justice, for he is

a righteous judge. He equally expects such gesture of governance to be displayed and expressed in every political setting and space. The administration of governance among men should be carried out in accordance with the injunctions of God as posited in the scripture, because God is a Lawgiver who gives every code of conduct to humanity. He requires people to adhere to him so as to be able to display this light among men. Jesus Christ, while affirming this, he said "I am the light of the world, anyone who follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life", John 8:12, this he asserts when he has just finished doing a good work of saving a woman from being killed when he was caught in adultery. Also, Jesus Christ said this in John 9:5, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" after he finishes saying it, he went on to do good work of healing a man that was born blind. This underscores the fact that light symbolically reflects goodness and good works that are done among humanity. This glaringly shows that anyone who adheres to God and his principles shall display goodness among humanity which will result into wellness among men and leads to life everlasting.

Believers and Governance

Scripturally, one major focus of God in the Bible is on believer's participation in government of which he expects righteousness and justice from those exerting authority. This highlights the necessity for believers to exercise godly characteristics and prudence which distinguish them and make distinction between them and others who do not know God, as they perform their roles while administering governance. There are some believers who have performed creditably well with stunning and outstanding performances that are evident to all and sundry. For instance, we have Daniel as an example of those who have excellently displayed the light of God in governance through various good performances in government. His unprecedented qualities made his leadership to be so exceptionally outstanding during the Babylonia and Persian Kingdoms, here this,

> It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent, Daniel 6:1-3.

Whenever people are engaged in public service, it is expedient that those who administer governance should be morally upright and sound. Such was in the days of Daniel, who, despite the prevailing decadence and idolatry together with other immoral activities and heinous behaviour that were prevalent, yet, due to the godly light in him, he stood his ground in doing what is just and good which was glaring to all the remaining leaders to an extent that they could not find any fault in him. They carefully monitored him for lapses but they could not find any wrong in him as he

carried out his leadership activities. God expects those in government to always do the right things during governance of the nation, underscoring the need for the people in government to have traits that are full of moral justification, which should be glaring and result oriented. Scripturally, this perspective is projected in governance and this highlights the need for the Church to reiterate this aspect with utmost seriousness. Sadly, the challenges of corruption and greed which are bedeviling the nation presently are as a result of the disappearance of godly virtues of selflessness and accountability. Therefore, the Church has to reiterate and intensify the proclamation of moral values and dignity to be inherent in those in public space so as to curb the gradual social disintegration being witness in governance as a result of loss of vitality and transparency by those who govern (Bolaji, pp. 18-22).

Biblically, the word of God has posited that those in leadership position should govern with diligence, Romans 12:8, hence, in consonance with this directive, several Churches are likewise striving to ensure that the public is actively sensitized to enhance the same and other worthwhile aspects of life, showing, glowing and radiating the light of God. Illustrating this, the Redeemed Christian Church of God is seriously striving in this stride by embarking on the policy of planting more Churches at interval of five minutes of walk in every community so as to curtail and curb the decadence resulting from globalization and modernization which have made people to lose their sanctity even down to governance (Church's Vision/Mission). Considering the foregoing, the Church should understand that, the sanctity in governance majorly depends and rests upon believer's beaming light of good works. Hence, it is of paramount importance that believers should conduct themselves differently in all facets of life endeavours even down to the dimension of administering governance, and this clearly protrays a difference that is with "a different story as well as different practices and virtues" (Emmanuel, 2002, p. 217). Either in governance or public space, the scripture urges individuals to be transparent and not to be greedy but to be content, remembering the word of God which says that, godliness with contentment is a great gain, and this is an attitude which should reflect in our day to day activities in our various engagements. It is worth stating here that, when people are contented, they will be focused and purposeful in life, and they will not be material-driven and inclined. Infact, they will not set their lives on how to accumulate the mundane things, highlighting their contentment in their status, therefore, they will not see themselves as being impoverished, instead, they will see themselves being fulfilled and purposeful in life. "For African Christians, recovering this sense of story and community will in no way impoverish their lives. On the contrary, they may discover that, if their lives are not materially improved, they would at least have become purposeful" (Emmanuel, 2002, p. 218). So, every individual and believer in government should be able to inculcate values and norms that bring about peace and progress into the society, especially in our nation. Those occupying notable position of authority should take this with utmost priority since it holds better weight when they are opportune to be in such position of authority, while administering governance because of weightier influence they possess and command. Invariably, the good virtue in every one of them should literally spring forth in their day to day endeavours, and this becomes model for others to emulate.

Whenever people with the right perspective of life find themselves in the government positions, they make the right choices and at the same time change those policies and laws which do not project the well being of the people of any given geographical landscape. Biblically, people are admonished and enjoined to carry out governance in the society with the principles of God so that the light of God will shine in such a society, which consequently makes such a given society to experience tranquility and transparency in all its nooks and crannies. It should be noted that when a given society or nation is not "conducted and governed according to the rules and principles" of God, it would pay a heavy price in terms of "moral depravity, corruption, oppression, infidelity and syncretism" (The Islamic State, 1987, p. 3). This will now lead us to discuss some Biblical perspectives on governance;

Principle of Inclusiveness

The inclusive nation of God's governance is expressed across the length and breadth of Biblical narratives. God projects the perspective and principle of inclusiveness on governance. God, as the creator tenaciously holds this principle which was evident when he invited others to join him in his activity. This inclusive nature of God was reflected in the creation activity when he said come, let us make man in our own image, Genesis 1:24-26. He equally displays this nature and principle when he relates with humanity, of which he says in Isaiah 1:18 that, come let us reason together, so, he is not a lone ranger, and with this perspective, the Bible has a focus and purpose to accomplish which specifically, is to properly puts things in order. It is worth stating here that two are better than one, and our corroborative strides will always be productive and will help in bridging the gap of inadequacy which might be evident on the part of a single individual. Every government, while administering governance, ensures that concerted effort is applied so as to have a productive government where every facet of governance radiates the light of blessedness to her subjects. This inclusive nature helps to fix every segment of governance without any lapses, and this gives the people solace as they co-exist and co-habit in the society or in the nation. The various socio-economic challenges which confront the society especially in Nigeria where there is prevailing economic hardship, and where there are various threats to human existence, such as terrorism and kidnapping, banditry, etc, this underscores the need of God's light to illuminate those aspect of the society through good works of purposeful and coordinated security architecture, justice, fairness, transparency, equity, etc. Therefore, the Bible holds it that, everybody has to play his or her own role and part very well so as to achieve a society that is full of prosperity and peace together with harmony and wellness of every individuals, Romans 12:6-8. This consequently enables the various inhabitants of the society to attain a state or condition where there is no more suppression, pain or murder, oppression, or misery, etc, as Ela rightly says that "the African human being attain a condition that will enable him or her to escape misery and inequality, silence and oppression" (1986, p. vi). The scripture does not limit a person's salvation to a solitary lifestyle rather, it urges social participation so as to affect each other positively even down to governance space. Scripturally, believers have been admonished to practice their faith in a manner that they will be able to exercise their social responsibility to add values to people's lives. As believers are soldiers in Christ, they should use their spiritual military training to subdue the evils in the society and bring

about an egalitarian society. In our society in Nigeria where we expect good governance, believers should have the consciousness that, "here can be no profession of faith without concrete responsibility for persons and for life, and increase militancy" (Ela, 1994, p. 147). The Bible advocates that the masses in any given society are to shine the light of awareness to every individual that, God is against all forms of intimidation, suppression and oppression. Those who are weak, the downtrodden, the poor, should not be oppressed and castigated, instead, they should be cared and catered for. It should be noted that, God is against to all "the processes of oppression or justification of repressive power and situations of injustice" (Ela, 1994, p. 145). The Bible affirms in this regard that, those in governance are to ensure that believers bring about a new world order where there is justice and peace, bringing hope and deliverance to those who are lost in a lost world.

> The hope for a new world- a world to be built in a perspective of justice and peace, healing and life, and in a word, deliverance from evil- is at the heart of Christ's passion and resurrection. The fundamental task of the Church is to proclaim this hope to the Africa of today (Ela, 1994, p. 147).

Therefore, the Biblical perspective on governance as regard inclusiveness is to ensure a clear synergy and harmonious relationship between the people who live in a society so as to achieve transparent and prosperous governance, as everybody adds values and contributes his or her quota for the total and overall success of governance that is administered.

Servant hood Leadership

Scriptural perspective on governance is the administration of governance through servant hood leadership. This servant hood leadership is very vital in beaming and shining the light of God on humanity through service to those who are led by the leader. This principle involves the leader seeing himself working and striving for the wellness of those who he leads. The leader does not lord it over his subjects rather, he opts for their service, and serving their interests. The Bible advocates for such leadership while administering and exercising governance, as evident with Jesus Christ who himself practiced it and laid emphasis on it that we should emulate.

> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him --- When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. Do you understand what I have done for you" He asked them. You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you, John 13:3-15

The people who are in government should exhibit this trait by serving the people they are leading and not to lord over them. Therefore, the leaders have to abhor selfishness and self-centeredness. The leaders should appropriate the resources for the well being of the masses and should not

embezzle them. Invariably, this enhances even distribution of resources for the betterment of the masses and populace, and should not be hoarded by few elites. The society has been severely bedeviled with various menaces and corrupt practices which are perpetuated by individuals in government together with other external factors that bring about deterioration of the societal resources. Therefore, every player of governance needs to critically look inwardly so as to sanitise and to correct those ills causing setback in governance. It should be noted that the situation of the government of this nation,

> cannot be attributed solely to the penetration of our continent by the multinationals which regard Africa simply as a playground for the superpowers. We must look for internal factors in the dispossession of the African masses --- Along with the injustices perpetrated upon us from without, we now have a parade of miseries resulting from relationships within- between state and people, elite and masses (Ela, 1994, p. 139).

Governance becomes masses oriented where the wellness and well being of the masses are paramount and taken with utmost priority and sincerity it deserves.

Pluralistic Leadership

Another scriptural perspective on governance is pluralistic leadership or leadership through plurality of leaders. The scripture advocates for leaders to come together and enact policies that enhance the well being of the masses. As clearly seen in the New Testament, leadership that was practiced by the church was a collective one, not individualistic leadership. It was not only Paul, or James, or Peter that was giving directives on what to do at any point when decisions were to be taken administratively for the growth of the Church, but joint decisions were made. Take for example, in Acts 6, when decisions were to be made on the problems about the widows who were overlooked on daily administration of food, the Apostles came up with collective decision on the matter, and the decisions were approved by the whole congregation, and the Lord's Headship was clearly recognized. Likewise, in Acts 13, the Lord's leading in the lives and ministries of Paul and Barnabas was collectively determined and not individually. Also, in Acts 15, there was a crucial decision which the Apostles and Elders needed to take in the New Testament, the leading of God was discerned by the group of Apostles and Elders, as reflected in Acts 15:25 that "having become of one mind". Hence, the Headship and Leadership of the church by Christ can be best be carried out and demonstrated in a practical way through leadership by a plurality of Elders, which Christ does this by the Holy Spirit. It should be noted that, Jesus leads His church by the plurality of elders through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the account in Acts 13:1-4 is a vivid example. As believer jointly work together to radiate the light of God in the society through good governance, it brings the people to the consciousness that God's intention for the people is for good and not evil. Also, the secular government on ground has been using this collective leadership style through ministers or governors, of which they are appointed to oversee various areas so that the king will not suffer loss. "It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss." Daniel 6:1. Hence, leaders in our modern society like our

nation should replicate this same gesture, the leaders should operate as "class actors in partnership with political elites to seek to achieve mutually advantageous goals" (Jeff, 1996, p. 6). Leaders that exercise governance should endeavour as much as possible to ignore and desist from the notion and fact that, "public office can bring private profit and influence" and should abhor the assumption that the exhibition of enormous acquisition of material wealth by leaders is a reflection of 'the success' of their religion" (Jeff, 1996, p. 9). Therefore, honest corroborative effort is required and timely needed to witness and experience favourable and prosperous governance of successive governments. Joint and concerted efforts of reasoning to bring forth worthwhile policies that will bring about the well being and better the lot of the masses are often required so as to have good governance that results into an egalitarian society. Scriptural perspective of plurality of leaders on governance should be furthered and upheld with utmost priority in any given society or government like our nation where there are prevalence of economic hardships, and high rate of corruption, unemployment, nepotism, embezzlement, subjection of the masses to penury and poverty, etc, and it will drastically help in curbing and curtailing "the stranglehold of the poverty that threatens our corporate existence and undermines our national integrity" (Tunde, 2012, p. 1). The needs of humanity are very complex and multiple and as such, people in any given society should endeavour to articulate their social structure and organization so as to activate their mutual influence and consequently proffers solutions to those problems and at the same time address their needs (Max, 1990, 105). Biblically, to enhance good governance as an evidence of the light of God being shown on the society, people administering governance should ensure and advocate for oneness of mind and purpose for a fruitful achievement. "Having become of one mind" will bring about agreement that results into manifestation which will be positively impactful, Acts 15:25. Individuals in the society are required to build synergy of harmony and oneness between "those institutions standing between the individual in his private life and the large institutions of public life" (Peter and Richard, 1977, p. 2). This helps to mitigate any unforeseen circumstances that might emanate in the course of time as governance is administered.

Conclusion

Every government in any given society or nation should abreast herself with these realities of governance in this contemporary twenty first century in other to tap the various emoluments that are derived from such practices. Governance should be an inclusive one where the values and contribution that are worthwhile from others are sought and implemented. Governance should be administered through plurality of leaders for it to be easy to collectively surmount the challenges and difficulties bedeviling the society. Hence, there will be division of labour and everyone will be exercising expertise in his or her own area of specialization. Governance should be administered with the mindset and attitude of servant hood in which the objective is to serve those who elected them in position and not to lord over them with tyranny and oppression. The scripture posits that leaders should govern diligently so that their subjects will delight in their governance. Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous rules, the people rejoice, when the wicked rules, the people groan." The people in position of authority should be honest and transparent and accountable so as to deliver governance that benefits the masses and produce a thriving government. All hands should be on deck to actualize the foregoing in our society especially in Nigeria so as to have a peaceful and prosperous nation.

Recommendations

Those in position of authority should endeavour to exhibit and display light in governance which symbolically infers as various good works, and righteousness, equity, fairness, justice, etc, and this emphasizes that governance must be in consonance with God's justice and righteousness. Those who administer governance should display accountable leadership such as king David who rules with the fear of God who is the light to his people as reflected in 2 Sam 23:3-4. Hence, those in authority should be transparent like Daniel. The interplay between the Church and governance should portray and display the various tenets which the Bible has encouraged. This should be glaring and deeply rooted in the nation's socio-political landscape. Everyone in authority and their subjects should adhere to what the scripture provides as moral and ethical principles, which impact significant governance in the nation. Therefore, every sphere of governance should reiterate justice, equity, and servant leadership, and at the same time inculcate principles that are crucial in fostering good governance of the nation. People should feel the impact of the biblical tenet of Proverbs 29:2 that says "when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice" and this underscores the importance of moral integrity of those in leadership space.

Historically, the Church should project God's light and play dual roles and responsibilities in both spiritual and socio-political dimension in the society. The churches across the length and breadth of the society should continue her activeness in fostering and promoting social justice. She should advocate for the poor masses, and should canvass for the eradication of corruption in governance as agent of God in illuminating light in the society. The Church should not relent in her prophetic utterances, which are essential in holding leaders accountable and equally help to guide them toward good governance, which reflects scriptural principles of justice and righteousness. It is worthy of note to state here that the Church should not drift herself to be co-opted by political interests into wrong practices like participating in buying and rigging of votes. Believers should not throw their weight behind corrupt leaders, etc, which will consequently make the Church to compromise her moral authority and integrity.

Likewise, while aspiring for good governance which is evidence of the presence of light in the society, necessity is laid on leaders to integrate biblical values into the political system, through the promotion of policies that reflect Christian values and ethics. An example of this is care for the oppressed and marginalized, accountability and stewardship of resources, and at the same time, fostering peace and justice across the nooks and crannies of the society. Beside, the Church should strive in providing education to her members which is part of her care for the well being of the populace and strengthening their civic responsibilities. The Church should encourage them to participate in the democratic process, and to advocate for policies that agree with biblical injunctions for an egalitarian society, which shows the effects of Godlight.

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CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR
PURPOSEFUL SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: A PARADIGM FOR A WORLD ORDER IN NIGERIA.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Historically, there has been a huge interaction and evidential force thriving in the sociology of people's religiosity and politics. This corollary borders strongly on the forms, quality and purpose of leadership. This nexus has been an intriguing exercise both within the society and academic circle. Leadership being one of the social institutions has remained an age long reality with a sustained and evolving universal phenomenon. The concept of world order has been primarily associated with the Peace of Westphalia negotiated in 1648 at the end of the Thirty Years War and treated as the beginning of the modern world. Similarly, Nigeria got her political independence in 1960 and seven years later plunged into nearly three years avoidable blood bath. The war was reportedly ended but since then, the country has been battling series of protracted instabilities. This is an unbiased investigation into the history of world order, the state of Nigeria socio economic and political reality and their attendant challenges. Adopting the human relations /transformational theories, the study also tries to analyze the social, economic, religious and moral implications of purposeful leadership on the building of a virile, fair, firm and harmonious Nigerian nation where strong bond, general development, principles of solidarity, sustainability, peace and brotherhood and the desired world order.

Keyword: Purposeful, paradigm, leadership, world order,

INTRODUCTION

The history of humanity is replete with accounts of crises and attempts at handling and avoiding the crises. Hence, with the formation of the League of Nations after the First World War, the then United States President, Woodrow Wilson employed the phrase 'world order" to chart a fresh orderliness in the world. Similarly in Nigeria, precisely after her independence in 1960 and less than seven years later, the country was engulfed in an avoidable three years civil war. At the purported end of the war, General Yakubu Gowon's military government put in place Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (3Rs) policy to erase the scars of war but the agenda was either poorly pursued or unexecuted. Subsequently, both the military and civilian regimes seem to be competing on which should create more poverty, injustice and bad governance than others and the end result is that the socioeconomic life of Nigeria is being stifled. Undoubtedly, it has led to heating up of Nigerian system with agitations and counter agitations as well as other forms instabilities thereby making the country a scary society. The issues became deadlier when in 1999 some group of politicians churned out the agitation for the implementation of Sharia in Nigeria leading to thousands of poor people losing their lives and property of unquantifiable costs. Simultaneously, kidnapping and other vices took a wilder dimension beginning from the Niger Delta. Other ethnic national militant movements sprouted in the likes of EGBESU boys, OPC (Oodua Peoples' Congress), MOSOP (Movement for the survival of the Ogoni people), (NDPVF) Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra), Arewa Youth Forum, Coalition of Northern (Youth)

Groups, later the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and MAFO (Movement against Fulani Occupation). Lately, there appears another horrible and mindless invasion and destruction of farm lands, raping and murderous bloodletting of defenceless and innocent people by the killer herdsmen with some pockets of reprisals in some places. Amidst all these, many people still hold the view that the only trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian name, land, climate, water, air or anything else concerning Nigerian except leadership. The phrase 'world order' may sound strange in the light of opposite realities across the world and especially Nigeria but the submission of Iweh (1987) suffices when he argues that leadership is to a society what an eye is to the human (p.20). Therefore, this study is enthused by the premise that no nation can grow above the quality of its leadership hence seeks to analyze the place of purposeful social, religious and political leadership in mitigating the problems confronting and trying destabilize Nigeria as a country.

CLARIFICATIONS OF SOME TERMS

Religious leadership involves guiding and supporting a faith community in spiritual practices and moral decisions, often drawing on sacred texts and traditions. Religious leaders are typically characterized by their deep commitment, empathy and ability to inspire others in their spiritual and moral journey.

Political leadership refers to individual(s) in position(s) of power and the broader political structures they operate within, exploring aspects such as decision-making, influence and the impact on societal change.

Social leadership is a relatively new concept that refers to the emotional and empathetic leadership style of leaders who focus on connection, collaboration and communication. This type of leadership understands the importance of building strong relationships and creating a positive atmosphere. Social leaders do not rely on their position or title to get things done rather they use their emotional intelligence and people skills to influence others.

Paradigm: It is a word that comes up often in the academic, scientific and business spheres. When the term paradigm is used, it implies changing how a person or people think, a standard, set of ideas, a model of something or a very clear and typical example of something.

World Order: The defining framework for the world order has been primarily associated with the Peace of Westphalia negotiated in 1648 at the end of the thirty years war. Grinin (2013) believes that the thirty years war was the legacy of the sixteenth-century European tradition of religious wars. It introduced two new foreign policy principles which later would be actively employed by the politicians and they are the maintenance of the international "balance of power" through supporting the weaker coalition against the stronger one and the priority of national interests. The search for the origins of the world order leads back to the ancient times. Arguably, it can be deduced that the political order had already existed in the Western world for some centuries before then. The international order could be traced to when the European order transformed into the global scene. Even prior to the European order, strong orders could be found in other regions of the world system especially the Pax Roman ideology. The world order shall be prescriptively referred to as the preferred arrangement of power and authority that is associated with the realization of such values

as peace, economic growth and equity, human rights and environmental quality and sustainability. Contextually, the tripartite nature of leadership is adopted because even though they seem to appear differently, they have influential roles in the Nigerian system. Religious leaders are almost worshipped, political leaders are followed and social leaders are loved therefore the work seeks to explore the influential roles of these leaders in setting and championing a new idea, new philosophy and ethos that will reshape, refigure and remodel the citizens with social values that will ameliorate the sorry state of Nigeria and turn her into a country where harmony and unity rule.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS:
HUMAN RELATIONS/TRANSFORMATIONAL THEORIES

The study employs the Human Relations Theory developed in reaction against the formal tradition of classical models by Mary Parker Follet (1968-1933). She believes that the fundamental problem in all organizations is in developing and maintaining dynamic and harmonious relationships. Koontz and Weihrich (1980) assert that this theory posits that conflict is "not necessarily a wasteful outbreak of incompatibilities but a normal process by which socially valuable differences register themselves for enrichment of all concerned". From the same theory, Fayol develops some useful principles that characterized successful administration and general management which can be applied to any organization including leadership and government (p.46). Charry (2012) posits that it helps leaders motivate and inspire people by making them see the importance and higher good of the task, focusing on the performance of the people and seeing each person fulfill his or her potential (p.19). Similarly, these theories are adopted in this work because Lamb (2013) argues that i**t is a theory** that focuses on the connections formed between leaders and followers. In these theories, leadership is the process by which a person *engages* with others and is able to "create a connection" that will result in increased motivation and morality on both followers and leaders. It demands that leaders should possess certain qualities such as confidence, extroversion and clearly stated values so as to be able to motivate followers. Leaders in this category often have high ethical and moral standards.

BRIEF HISTORY OF NIGERIA

Nigeria has variously been described and defined by many people depending on world views of the people. For instance, Abiola (1984) states that between the eleventh century and the European colonial conquest in the nineteenth century, the area known as Nigeria today was homes of sophisticated kingdoms and societies. But Britain declared Lagos a colony in 1861 and 1906, the colony of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria which included the former Niger Coast Protectorates that were hitherto administered separately were merged to form the Southern Protectorates (p.153). Adigwe (1979) said that the Sokoto Caliphate was conquered in 1903 and after the conquests the British were able to create the Northern Nigerian protectorate. From January 1914 amalgamated both the Southern and Northern protectorates (p.170). Nigeria was granted independence on 1st October, 1960 under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary system of government. However, the Military came on the scene on 15th January 1966, when

Major Nzeogwu and five other majors staged a coup-d'état that claimed the several lives. Uwechue (2003) said that the coup of 1966, later turned sour and with this and other factors such as counter coup, massacring of the Igbo people in the north and Gowon's inability to abide by the Aburi Accord, late General Ojukwu declared the independence of Biafra and the Nigerian civil war ensued (p.401). It ended in bitter and bloody in the defeat of Biafra in 1970.

Gowon's administration was knocked out of office after series of allegations such as corruption and inability to announce a realistic time for Civilian hand-over. Awosefo (2005) avers that Murtala Mohammed and his group took over the government but was short lived as through a bloody coup of 13th February, 1976 that claimed his life brought in his Second in-Command General Obasanjo, who completed his programme of Civilian rule that later produced Shehu Shagari as the president in 1979 but the administration was knocked out through a coup by Major Gen. Muhammad Buhari on 31st December 1983. The same Buhari's regime was on 27th August 1985 overthrown through a bloodless coup that later produced Ibrahim Babangida as a military ruler. He continued until in 1993, when he bowed to public pressure after the annulment of the widely-talked about June 12th 1993 election believed to have been won by late M.K.O Abiola. He inaugurated the Interim National Government headed by Shonekan and in his word "stepped aside". But on 17th November 1993, late General Sani Abacha forced Shonekan to resign and he took over government (pp.143-144). Abacha died in office on 8th June, 1998. Adamolekum (1999) confirms that Abdulsalami Abubbakar, who handed over to a Civilian rule under Olusegun Obasanjo, on 29th May, 1999 took over after Abacha's death (p.24).

Nigeria re-attained civilian rule on 29th May 1999, when it elected Olusegun Obasanjo who after eight years handed over to Umar Yar'adua on 29th May, 2007. After prolonged illness, Yar'adua died on 5th May 2010. Then with the "doctrine of necessity" as propounded by the National Assembly, the Acting President, Goodluck Jonathan who acted as Vice President before then was on 6th May 2010, sworn in as the replacement for the late Yar'adua. Jonathan picked Namadi Sambo, the former Governor of Kaduna State to be his deputy until in 2015 when they vacated offices for General Mohammad Buhari (rtd) and Prof. Yemi Osinbajo respectively. General Mohammad Buhari (rtd) and Prof. Yemi Osinbajo have been succeeded in May 2023 by Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Kashim Shetimma. It can be summed that between 1914 and 1946, the country operated on the Southern and Northern Protectorate basis. With the arrival of Richard's Constitution in 1946 up to 1967, the country was grouped on the regional basis while between 1967 and 2011, the country has been divided into six geopolitical zones, thirty-six states and seven hundred and seventy-four local government areas.

LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA: AN ANALYSIS

In Nigeria, several leadership styles have been experimented and these include: parliamentary, military dictatorship, interim and democratic systems yet the country still wobbles with the questions of leadership. Many reasons can be attributed to this challenge and they include:

Colonial Misadventures: The British colonial administrators' ethnic policy and the regional

autonomy reinforced the division of the three regions- a factor which contributed to ethno-regional character of governance in Nigeria. Majority of Nigerians started seeing themselves from the lens of ethnic loyalty.

Flawed Leadership Recruitment Processes: This is arguably the baneof all the problems confronting Nigeria. The horrible and flawed model through which Nigerian leaders are recruited is disheartening to the sound minded ones.The medium seem so institutionally skewed for the mediocrities that those who have the competence, capacity and capability hardly get into positions.These processes are taken over by rapacious cartels that can be regarded as "political bandits" who are usually referred to as either "godfathers or cabals. These political bourgeoisies are ready to spend anything just to secure the offices for their stogies. One of the consequential fallouts of this malady is that they have succeeded in compromising all the social institutions just to achieve and maintain their clandestine and nefarious desires. Nigeria has digitalized some of her modes of payments and taxations but has not digitalized her electoral system simply because politicians use the wobbling electoral system to corruptly impose themselves on the people. Until the fight against electoral corruption is fought head on, Nigeria will never make any meaningful progress. A sanitized electoral system is capable of building strong public institutions that can checkmate impunity and fight other forms of corruption.

"Na My (Our) Turn to Rule" or Born to Rule Mentality: Another problem with Nigerian leader has to do with, "Na my (our) turn to rule" or born to mentality. Most times the only reason some political aspirants advance for their aspirations in Nigeria is that "it is their turn or born to rule" and nothing more. This mentality of "turn by turn" has really affected Nigerian system that people who cannot lead or manage a household, family and ward are made public leaders and because leadership determines results, Nigeria has consistently been paying dearly for it.

Docile, Intimidated and Wounded Masses: This has more to do with material and an intellectual form of poverty and it is compounded by intimidations that wounded populace hence the eruption of large docile citizens. Alechenu, Ihuoma, Nwogu and Isenyo (2020) state that the country is voted the global headquarters of poverty (p.9). This is despite the fact that the country is richly blessed with immeasurable natural material and human resources. Poverty, injustice and bad governance have seemed to have been ***weaponised*** by the politicians who have literally become law unto themselves and thereby carrying out massive exploitations against the people.

Compromised Security System: The Nigerian security apparatus seems to be working optimally when it comes to protecting the wealthy and politically exposed individuals and their properties. Another areas of their prowess, formidability and astuteness comes when they want to harass, extort, intimidate and even kill armless and poor Nigerians while kidnappers, bandits and killer herdsmen (rated the fourth most dangerous terrorists in the world) carry out their nefarious activities unchallenged.

Wobbling Public Services: The country continues to suffer monumental infrastructural deficits that range from epileptic power supply and near mortuary as health centers among others. Majority of the social amenities are largely built on the radio and television stations. It took the arrival of coronavirus for the former secretary to the Nigerian government, Boss Mustapha, according to

Iroanusi (2020) to have confessed that he never knew that Nigerian health system was in such "a bad state" (p.8). The Nigerian politicians and privileged public office holders will not feel the shambolic state of the Nigerian health system because they trot US, Europe and Dubai with their families and cohorts to treat ordinary malaria while the poor masses they claim to be serving are abandoned to their fates.

Weakened Judiciary: The judiciary has been largely at the whims and caprices of the Nigerian political lords. The wealthy and politically exposed individuals usually hire the services of the best lawyers and through them delay justice and often buy it at the highest amount. In Nigeria, a politician will boldly demand that he be declared a winner of an election he knew he lost and confidently ask his opponents to go to court. This is because he is confident of buying judgment from the court. Nigeria can only lay claim to judicial system without justice system.

Culture of an Official Spurred Favouritsm: There is a culture of an official spurred favouritsm. While it is natural to be emotional with one's relative, friends and acquaintances but not when public/general interest is at stake. Official spurred favouristsm manifests in virtually every sector of the Nigerian life. For instance, the much hyped fight against corruption lost its acceptability among many Nigerians. In the build up to the 2019 Senate presidential election, many analysts projected Senator Danjuma Goje to head the Nigerian Senate. But on 6th June, 2019, immediately after he had a meeting with President Buhari, he publicly withdrew from the race and Adebulu (2019) states that the corruption case of twenty- five billion naira filed against him at the Court of Appeal in Jos was subsequently withdrawn by the attorney general of the federation, Abubakar Malami (SAN).

The Mismanaged State Responses to Critical National Issues: Historically, this has posed great problem to leadership in Nigeria and the security agencies have been repeatedly blamed for the escalation of violence in Nigeria. Kukah (2010) affirms that the extra judicial killing of the Boko Haram sect leader , Yusuf Mohammed emboldened the sect who has grown to be the greatest problem of Nigeria (p.10). Ismail (2012) said that the former governor of Yobe state, Bukar Abba Ibrahim posited that the metamorphosis of Boko Haram from a "dawah" to an arms-bearing sect was partly caused by security agencies which approached the situation with disastrous consequences especially with the extra judicial killing of Yusuf Mohammed which raised the movement to its broader multifaceted prism as political, social and economic monsters. The security agencies serially mismanaged the crisis from the outset, and in the process pushed the movement to the extreme end of the spectrum (p.9). Until the seeming relatively doused tension in the Southeast escalated, many international agencies like Amnesty International have roundly chided the manner and measures through which the security agencies reacted to the protests of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and these state miscalculated responses embolden the violent aspect of their movement. Nigerian rulers need to understand that bullet forces alone do not end an ideology but superior idea does.

Different Application of Nigerian Laws: There is a seeming different application of laws in Nigeria. The way and manner in which most of the Nigerian leaders apply the Nigerian law has left much to be desired. For example, the most horrible, dreadful and the mindless invasion and

destruction of farm lands, raping and murderous bloodletting of defenceless and innocent people by the killer herdsmen (rated the fourth most dangerous terrorists in the world) in Nigeria has not been meted with the kind of unilateral proscription by the federal government just as it was done to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) whose notable reported crime at that time was street processions to protest against perceived injustice. It beats human and logical explanations how a government that travelled outside Nigeria to arrest agitators such as Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho could not arrest a Fulani terrorist, Ado Alero who was reportedly put on the wanted list by the Nigerian police for two years even when a bounty of five million naira was placed on him. Another terrorist kingpin boldly surfaced in Zamfara state and was turbaned the Sarikin Fulani.

Parochialism, "We and Them" and Winners Take All Mentalities": The Nigerian elites do not fight or complain when they are sharing and enjoying the national cake but usually resort to ethnic and religious leanings when it did not favour them and these are seriously affecting leadership in Nigeria**.** It seems thatSection 14 subsection 3 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution foresee these dangers and then makes it clear that the composition of the federal government or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to protect national unity, also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies. However, in flagrant abuse of this noble provision, Nigerian successive political actors seem to be promoting injustice in clear perversion of the quota system and federal character principles in appointments into key offices in Nigeria. The impunity appears much evident with the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari and almost being carried on by the current president. It got to a point and in a rather surprising development, a northern Muslim challenged the president on this. Umoru (2020) notes that Abubakar Umar, a retired army colonel and former military governor of Kaduna State, in a letter warned President Muhammadu Buhari that Nigeria was dangerously polarized and risked sliding into crisis because of his continued undue preference given to some sections of the country over others in the national appointments. The lopsidedness in Buhari's appointment was more glaring in the leadership of the nation's security services. Disturbingly, Enumah (2020) states that some leaders of socio-cultural groups and their leaders in Nigeria on Monday, June 22, 2020 dragged President Muhammadu Buhari before an Abuja Division of the Federal High Court over marginalization in his appointments from 2015. They also contended with Buhari's decision of obtaining loans from the Islamic Development Bank, African Development Bank, the World Bank, China, Japan and Germany to the tune of $22.7 billion (USD), purportedly for infrastructural development, only to allocate the bulk of the fund to the Northern region. They also sought the court to declare that the loan facility purportedly for infrastructural development wherein less than 1% of all the amounts is to be allocated to the South East Zone of Nigeria for specific infrastructural development, violated section 16 (1) (a) (b) and S16 (2) (a) (b) (c) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). They prayed the court to fine the president, the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), Clerk of National Assembly and the Federal Character Commission (FCC) in the suit the

sum of fifty billion naira for allegedly violating provisions of the 1999 Constitution and the Federal Character Principle. Never in the recent history of Nigeria has a conglomeration of ethnic nationals jointly taken the federal government to court over marginalization and parochialism.

Religious and Denominational Triumphalism: The quests for the total Christianization or Islamization of Nigeria have fertilized Nigeria for violence. For example, Hodgkin (1960), states that the jihad of Usman dan Fodio in 1804 was "to make upon the heathen king who…make no profession of Islam, is obligatory by assent" (p.247). In the same way, Clarke and Linden (1982) said that Islamic leaders, like Gumi believed that to adopt Islam as a state religion was the answers to the problems of the contemporary Nigerian society (p.95). Kukah (1993) emphatically notes that in order to make Islam a Nigerian state religion, Gumi would employ the state structures to achieve his aim (p.132). Suleiman (2011) avers that Boko Haram terrorist group in Maiduguri initially said that their objectives were to abolish democracy and institute sharia law (p.50). Similarly, the new religious movements characterized by the Nigerian version of Pentecostalism with the kind of belief system they propagate and their aggressive type of evangelism that often aims at "winning Nigeria for Christ", "Operation for Total Recovery of the Land" and so on have turned from conservatives into militants and they are willing to take a stand and to fight in defence of the Christian faith. Religion being an emotional driven reality has led many Nigerians to gladly die in defence of their religions and denominations but will rather allow and watch Nigeria sink. They are overtly and covertly working towards the popularization of their religions even to the detriment of Nigerian system.

All the above enumerated factors are some of the issues affecting the leadership and by a way, deterring the development of the country.

HOW RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP CAN BE THE PARADIGM FOR A WORLD ORDER IN NIGERIA.

To achieve the world order in Nigeria, there is need to understand the purpose of leadership. Indeed Employer Content Team (2024) posits that purposeful leadership emphasizes the importance of helping people find meaning in their lives and works. Purposeful leadership is a purpose-driven leader who excels at inspiring others to embrace shared goals. The result is a highly motivated group of people that stays committed to a vision, mission and values of an organization. The purpose of leadership is to motivate followers to achieve specific outcomes. Bhagwan and Bhushan (2007) rightly posit "get the right man in the leadership job and all your problems will be solved" (pp. 211-212). Therefore, these are some of other reasons why purposeful religious, social and political leadership can be a game change in the leadership of Nigeria.

A Purposeful Socio-Religious and Political Leadership are driven by Superior Ideas: The quality of one's idea determines the results the person achieves. A purposeful leader is very eager to listen and apply superior idea instead of parochial and narrow minded principles that produces no good lasting results.

A Purposeful Socio-Religious and Political Leadership are Firm and Fair: Naturally, people

get committed where they are treated fairly. It takes a fair and firm leader to understand and apply fairness in all things and to everybody. Fairness is the foundation of peace and unity. The level of agitations and marginalization in Nigeria is terrifying and it boils down to leadership.

A Purposeful Socio-Religious and Political Leadership Tolerate and Manage Deficiencies in Others: The diverse nature and composition of Nigeria does imply that the citizens are conditioned to have differences but the diversity should be promoted through tolerance, mutual respect and love. This accounts for why many Nigerians called out former President Buhari who once described the Igbo people as "a dot in the circle". While he should be tolerated for speaking out his mind unlike some of his likes who are pretending about it, it shows that many Nigerian leaders do not tolerate and manage the deficiencies in others. A purposeful leader understands this and works with it.

A Purposeful Socio-Religious and Political Leadership are Motivators: They motivate the followers mostly by their character not by coercion. They lead by example not by rabblerousing.

They Relate and Communicate Well: A purposeful leader is careful and conscious of what he/she says and does. He/she is a master of communication and his or her language is sublime. He/she needs two kinds of languages and they are inspiring and correctional.

They Believe in Accountability: Apart from the Supreme Being, every other leadership and authority is delegated. There may not be such a thing as autonomous or exclusive leadership or authority except in the developing countries where their rulers masquerade as democrats but are actually totalitarians, autocrats and dictators. The idea of accountability helps ensure that leaders are brought to accounts over both their actions and inactions.

CONCLUSION: Nigeria is hugely and abundantly blessed with both human and material resources but her citizens because of bad leadership have continued to suffer in the midst of abundance. This has made the country a fertilizing ground for the incessant rise of crises and general instability. **The agents of these social instabilities have continued to wreak havocs against the people and existence of the Nigerian state. The resultant effect has been that of a country that is drifting towards the edge of precipice except there is a purposeful leadership. This is because** purpose helps create a shared sense of direction, alignment and commitment, builds sense of belonging, fosters greater tolerant atmosphere and increases persistence through challenges. In fact, purpose is often one of the main drivers and purposeful leaders are more likely to develop and maintain strong relationships with their followers. They articulate a clear, inspiring vision that resonates with others members of the society. Purpose-driven leadership creates space for alignment of goals and values between citizens and the country. When citizens understand why they should believe in a country, they work to unite and develop the country. Therefore, the country should reconsider making purposeful leadership a compulsory subject and course in all level of education in Nigeria. The culture of purposeful leadership should be tropicalized in the psyche of the citizens.

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CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL BELIEFS IN SAFEGUARDING CULTURAL PRACTICES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Spiritual beliefs, as central components of many indigenous cultures, serve as custodians of cultural identity, offering frameworks for understanding the world, guiding moral principles, and preserving ancestral knowledge. The aim of this paper is to explore the role of spiritual beliefs in safeguarding cultural practices. Using a descriptive analysis, the paper delves into the intricate relationship between spiritual beliefs and cultural practices, highlighting the pivotal role that spirituality plays in safeguarding cultural heritage. By examining the intersection of spirituality and cultural practices across diverse societies, it demonstrates how spiritual beliefs serve as a resilient framework for preserving cultural identity, traditions, and values. The findings underscore the importance of acknowledging and respecting the spiritual underpinnings of cultural practices in efforts to promote cultural conservation and sustainability. The paper recommends that elders and spiritual leaders should be encouraged to pass down sacred knowledge, rituals and traditions to younger generations. While formal and informal education systems should integrate cultural teachings, ensuring that young people appreciate the significance of their spiritual heritage. Ultimately, it concludes that preservation of cultural heritage requires a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between spirituality, cultural practices, and cultural heritage. By recognizing the importance of spirituality in shaping cultural practices and traditions, we can work towards preserving cultural heritage in a way that is meaningful and relevant to local communities.

Keywords: Spiritual beliefs, Cultural Heritage, Cultural Preservation, Indigenous Knowledge, cultural revitalization

Introduction

The preservation of cultural beliefs through spiritual beliefs is a profound and complex subject that highlights the interplay between religion, tradition, and cultural preservation. Spiritual beliefs often form the foundation of cultural practices, rituals, and worldviews, shaping the way communities view their identity and heritage. These beliefs provide not only moral guidance but also a sense of belonging and continuity, linking individuals to their ancestors and their land.

In many societies, spiritual beliefs are intricately woven into the cultural fabric, influencing customs, art, language, festivals, and even legal systems. The safeguarding of these cultural beliefs often relies on spiritual practices that are passed down through generations, ensuring that traditions endure despite external pressures, such as globalisation, modernisation, colonisation among other influence. Furthermore, spiritual beliefs can serve as a means of resistance, helping communities preserve their cultural identity in the face of cultural assimilation or erasure.

In examining this issue, attempt is made to x-ray how religious institutions, rituals, and spiritual leaders contribute to the resilience of cultural practices. We have also looked at, the role of sacred texts and teachings in cultural transmission, and the ways in which spiritual beliefs have helped to preserve cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world. Ultimately, the intersection of spirituality and culture plays a crucial role in the resilience and survival of many communities, ensuring that cultural beliefs remain vibrant, relevant, and deeply rooted in the collective consciousness.

Conceptual clarification
Spiritual beliefs

Spiritual beliefs refer to systems of faith or conviction centered on the divine, metaphysical realms, or higher powers, guiding individuals in their understanding of existence, morality, and purpose. These beliefs can be deeply intertwined with religious practices but may also extend beyond formal religious systems, encompassing individual or communal spiritual experiences. Spiritual beliefs shape the way people view the world, their relationships with others, and their roles within the larger community or society.

In the context of safeguarding cultural beliefs, spiritual practices play an essential role in preserving a community's traditions, identity, and social structures. Spiritual rituals and teachings offer a framework for maintaining cultural continuity, often passed down through generations. As highlighted by Williams, spiritual beliefs are integral to the preservation of cultural values and traditions, as they serve not only to guide personal conduct but also to provide a collective sense of belonging and identity (57-71)

Spiritual beliefs also provide mechanisms for resistance against external pressures that may threaten cultural heritage, such as globalisation or colonisation. It is on this note that Navas, maintains that, the survival of cultural practices, particularly in marginalized communities, often depends on their spiritual foundation, which ensures that cultural knowledge and customs endure, adapting while remaining rooted in ancestral teachings (234-245).

Cultural practices

Cultural practices refer to the shared behaviours, customs, rituals, and traditions that define a specific group or society. These practices are often passed down through generations and serve as markers of identity, helping individuals and communities connect to their past while shaping their present and future. Cultural practices can include a wide range of activities such as ceremonies, festivals, language, cuisine, art, and social norms that reflect the values, beliefs, and history of a particular group (Patel, 75-88).

These practices are essential for maintaining cultural identity and ensuring the continuity of traditions in a rapidly changing world. Accordingly, Thompson notes that, cultural practices provide a sense of belonging and community, offering a shared framework for individuals to navigate their lives (44-56). Relatedly, Lee posits that, in many societies, these practices also serve as tools of resilience, particularly in the face of external pressures such as globalisation, colonisation, modernisation or cultural assimilation (182-194). While Rodriguez, shares that, indigenous communities often rely on cultural practices to resist cultural erasure, using traditional rituals and language as powerful forms of cultural expression and resistance (321-335). Cultural practices are dynamic expressions of identity, deeply tied to the beliefs and values of a community, and they play a crucial role in preserving the uniqueness of cultures amidst external challenges.

Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage refers to the legacy of physical artifacts, practices, traditions, languages, and knowledge that are inherited from past generations and maintained for future generations. It encompasses both tangible heritage, such as monuments, buildings, and artifacts, and intangible heritage, including oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, and craftsmanship (Smith, 45-59). Cultural heritage plays a critical role in shaping a community's identity, values, and social structures, providing a sense of continuity and connection to the past. According to Peterson, cultural heritage is not only a way of preserving history but also an active process of interpreting and adapting past experiences to the present and future (59-74).

The safeguarding of cultural heritage is vital in maintaining cultural diversity, particularly in the face of modern challenges like globalisation and cultural homogenisation. As stated by Thomas and Lee, the protection of cultural heritage helps to sustain the unique aspects of various communities' identities, fostering a sense of pride and unity (301-315). It is this thinking that made Bates to maintains that, intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional knowledge and practices, are often more vulnerable to loss than tangible forms and require specific efforts to preserve and pass down (124-134). Above all, cultural heritage is a living testament to the richness of human diversity, serving as a bridge between past, present, and future generations while offering valuable insights into cultural evolution and adaptation.

The relevance of spiritual beliefs in cultural practices

Spiritual beliefs play a crucial role in shaping and maintaining cultural practices in different societies. These beliefs are often foundational to the values, customs, and rituals that define a community's cultural identity. Spirituality provides a framework within which cultural practices are not only understood but also sustained, allowing them to evolve while retaining their core meaning and significance. Harris noted that, spiritual beliefs are often intertwined with cultural traditions, guiding behaviours and interactions within a community and helping individuals connect to their shared history and ancestry (210-225).

The relevance of spiritual beliefs in cultural practices is particularly evident in rituals and ceremonies that mark significant life events such as birth, marriage, and death. These rites are often infused with spiritual meaning, reinforcing the community's shared worldview and beliefs about the afterlife, morality, and the natural world (Moore,65-79). For example, in many indigenous cultures, spiritual beliefs guide agricultural practices, seasonal festivals, and storytelling traditions, all of which serve to preserve not just the spiritual connection to ancestors, but also the community's cultural continuity (Patel and Singh, 78-92).

Spirituality also plays a role in safeguarding cultural practices against external pressures. In the face of globalisation or cultural assimilation, spiritual beliefs offer a form of resilience, allowing communities to preserve their traditions and practices while adapting to new influences. As Johnson suggests, spiritual beliefs act as a repository of cultural knowledge, facilitating the transmission of practices from one generation to the next. Through this transmission, cultural practices rooted in spirituality remain dynamic, enabling communities to maintain their unique identity despite external challenges (88-102). The relevance of spiritual beliefs in cultural practices lies in their ability to provide meaning, continuity, and resilience, ensuring that cultural traditions are not only preserved but also enriched in the process.

The intersection of spirituality and cultural practices

Spirituality and cultural practices represent the intricate relationship between belief systems and the rituals, customs, and traditions that define a community. Spirituality often forms the backbone of cultural practices, providing a framework for understanding the world and guiding social and cultural behaviours. As Williams observes, spiritual beliefs are deeply embedded in cultural practices, shaping not only personal experiences of the sacred but also collective expressions of identity, belonging, and community cohesion (89-102).

At the heart of this intersection is the idea that spiritual beliefs inform and give meaning to

cultural rituals. For example, many cultural festivals, dances, and ceremonies are rooted in religious or spiritual ideologies, with the performance of these practices reinforcing a community's connection to the divine, ancestors, and the natural world (Henderson, 215-230). In many indigenous cultures, spirituality directly influences agricultural practices, seasonal celebrations, and healing rituals, ensuring that cultural identity is preserved through sacred actions tied to the land and the cosmos (Peterson, 2020).

Moreover, the intersection of spirituality and culture can also be seen in the preservation and adaptation of cultural practices in response to external influences. Spiritual beliefs can act as a tool for resilience, helping communities navigate the challenges of globalisation and cultural assimilation by grounding them in traditions that hold spiritual significance (Smith, 98-112). By maintaining these spiritual and cultural practices, communities not only safeguard their heritage but also assert their autonomy and resilience in the face of modern pressures.

Mechanisms of cultural preservation through spirituality

Cultural preservation through spirituality involves various mechanisms that ensure the continuity of cultural practices, values, and traditions. Spiritual beliefs serve as a foundation for maintaining cultural identity by providing both the framework and rituals necessary for the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations. As McDonald notes, spiritual practices often act as "living archives," preserving important cultural narratives, knowledge systems, and ethical teachings through oral traditions, sacred texts, and communal rituals (202-218).

One key mechanism of cultural preservation through spirituality is the use of sacred rituals and ceremonies. These events, which can include festivals, rites of passage, and seasonal observances, are not only acts of worship but also key moments for cultural transmission. They have a lot of religious meaning, and through their observation younger generations learn about their heritage, reinforcing their connection to their ancestors and the broader community (James and Khatri, 145-159).

Another significant mechanism is the role of spiritual leaders and elders in preserving and passing on cultural knowledge. Elders, often seen as the custodians of both spiritual and cultural wisdom, are instrumental in transmitting traditions, teachings, and practices to younger members of the community. In Tiv for instance, *Ityo* (council of elders) consists of a family group (clan, kindred, super clan…) which are controlled by well-known sanction and prohibition that had the blessing of ancestors and the unseen is binding on members of the group. These assertions make the Tiv people say *tahav ka ityo*, for *ityo* is the backbone and support which guide and permeates man's action upon which, he can do nothing. They have the absolute powers in her people's affairs and when they support a person in his undertaking, he cannot fail.

It is in relation to the above that Gbenda opines that the Tiv look upon elders as possessing and determining one's life-span and death. The elders constitute the corporate body or group called *ityo*, of smaller or larger units of a socio-political organization. They also possess the power to enter into the invisible side of nature and commune with ancestral spirits (180). Based on this, the Tiv always say *ityo-hemba! Ka te hwande a ityo ga* (*ityo* is great; no one dare challenges their decision). Owing to this position, Thomas affirms that, spiritual leaders serve as both spiritual guides and cultural mentors, helping to navigate the complexities of maintaining cultural practices while adapting to modern challenges (56-71).

The integration of spirituality and cultural practices can also aid in resistance against cultural erosion. In the face of globalization and cultural assimilation, spiritual beliefs provide communities with the strength to preserve their unique identities. As highlighted by Patel and Singh, the reclamation and reinforcement of indigenous spiritual practices in contemporary contexts have allowed communities to assert their cultural autonomy, ensuring the survival of both spiritual and cultural practices in the modern world (78-92).

Challenges and opportunities of spiritual beliefs

Spiritual beliefs play a pivotal role in safeguarding cultural beliefs, though the relationship between spirituality and cultural preservation is not without its challenges and opportunities. While spiritual practices provide a framework for maintaining cultural identity and traditions, they also face pressures from modernisation, globalisation, and external cultural forces. These challenges, however, also offer opportunities for the revitalisation and reimagining of cultural and spiritual practices in contemporary contexts.

One of the primary challenges faced by spiritual beliefs in safeguarding cultural beliefs is the impact of globaliation, modernisation, western education and Christian missionaries. The spread of dominant global cultures often leads to the erosion of local traditions, languages, and spiritual practices, especially in marginalised communities. As noted by Harris, the encroachment of Western ideologies and consumerism has caused significant shifts in how traditional spiritual practices are viewed, often leading to a decline in their importance and practice among younger generations. This cultural homogenisation threatens the preservation of spiritual beliefs that are vital for maintaining cultural heritage (256-270). For example, Tiv cultural values in the era of modernisation are changing because parents are no longer the sole bread winners of the family. The cherish culture of Tiv eating food together as family has been shifted away as a result of tight work schedules. The saying that *"nyam Karen nyigh ga"* (no meat is too small for the teeth to crush) is hinged on this belief which encourages sharing with others no matter how small the meal may be. Culturally, the Tiv people do not eat in isolation but rather, prefer eating in group. Modernisation, has shattered the Tiv habit of eating leaving it to individual precept.

Westernised mode of dressing has suppressed the traditional way of dressing; while nude scenes are promoted on television. The use of foreign and exotic names, overshadow while traditional names are not cherished anymore. Language which is the first element of culture has been changed. English Language now becomes the core language rather than the native language used for communication in many homes. The introduction of communication gadgets has made it possible for the family members to relate to each other no matter the distance while neglecting the traditional mode of communication.

Atel maintains that Tiv religion was one aspect of Tiv culture that suffered the impact of such negative missionary attitude. The *imborvungu* ritual which was at the heart of Tiv religion was condemned as a murderous practice involving the taking of innocent lives with both the possibility and right to becoming full grown human beings (98). The Tiv ritual cleansing of *ityumbun* and *ikyoor* have been replaced with Christian baptism, wearing of scapular and Christian medals. According to Ushe the traditional practices of death and burial rites that were obtainable in pre-colonial Tiv society began to disappear one after another. The Tiv belief in witches and wizard as agents of death was substituted with the Christian belief and teaching about God as the determinant of death (153). **To this,** Adega lamented that, despite *ku oron* (funeral inquest) and *ichin tan* (rebuking), people continue to die as there seems to be no regulating mechanism again. Things have certainly fallen apart and the centre seems not to be holding for Tiv society any longer (223). **Though Gehman remarks that the cultures of Africans today are no more what they used to be; many areas of traditional custom are changing technologically, educationally, economically, politically, culturally, and to some extent religiously (8).**

Another challenge is the generational gap in spiritual and cultural transmission. Younger generations, particularly in urbanised or diasporic communities, may feel disconnected from traditional spiritual practices. As Moore points out, modern education systems and social media often prioritise secular or mainstream beliefs, leading to a loss of interest in the spiritual dimensions of cultural heritage. This generational divide in most cases, result in the dilution or abandonment of practices that were once central to the community's spiritual and cultural identity (189-203). For instance, in Tiv society, **with western education, traditional mechanism for controlling the sexual life of the young people is shifted away. There is a paradigm shift from polygamy to monogamy; hence those who acquired education are taught to marry one wife in the church rather than marrying many wives.**

There are however significant opportunities in using spiritual beliefs to safeguard cultural heritage. Spirituality can act as a tool for resilience, helping communities preserve and adapt

cultural practices in the face of external pressures. According to Lee, spirituality offers a means for communities to reconnect with their roots, reinforcing traditional practices as expressions of cultural pride and autonomy (134-149). For instance, indigenous groups worldwide are increasingly reclaiming their spiritual practices as part of larger cultural revitalisation movements, which help strengthen their social cohesion and resistance to cultural erasure (Patel and Singh, 44-59).

Additionally, spiritual beliefs provide a unique opportunity to engage younger generations with their cultural heritage in ways that are relevant to contemporary life. As Thompson argues, the integration of spirituality with modern technologies and educational frameworks can create new pathways for cultural preservation. Digital platforms, for instance, allow spiritual leaders to share traditional teachings and rituals with younger, tech-savvy audiences, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity (72-85). Spirituality remains a vital force for cultural preservation, offering pathways to resilience and cultural continuity in a rapidly changing world.

Recommendations

Having discussed the role of spiritual beliefs in safeguarding cultural practices, the following recommendations are made:

i. Traditional rulers and spiritual leaders should be encouraged to continue to pass down sacred knowledge, rituals and traditions to younger generations.

ii. Communities leaders should harness social media, websites and online platforms to share spiritual teaching, cultural stories and rituals. These platforms allow for global interaction and engagement, ensuring that spiritual beliefs and cultural practices are digitally connected to the younger generation

iii. Local Governments, NGOs, and cultural organisations should fund and support programs that aim to revitalise indigenous cultures, particularly those that focus on spiritual beliefs and practices.

iv. Traditional rulers should enact and enforce laws that safeguard cultural practices, language and traditions, especially those tied to indigenous spiritual beliefs. These policies should promote cultural rights, protect sacred sites and support the continued practice of traditional spiritual rituals

v. Local Governments should build community based cultural hubs and establish physical or virtual cultural centre's where indigenous practices, art and spiritual beliefs can be taught, practiced and shared. These centre's can serve as repositories for cultural knowledge and act as spaces for intergenerational dialogue.

Conclusion

The intersection of spirituality and cultural practices play a pivotal role in preserving and safeguarding cultural heritage. Spiritual beliefs offer both the foundation and the framework necessary for the continuity of cultural traditions, rituals, and values. These beliefs are intricately linked to the community's identity, serving as a means of connecting individuals to their past, reinforcing shared values, and guiding practices that define their way of life. However, the preservation of cultural beliefs through spirituality is not without its challenges. Globalisation, modernity, and the erosion of traditional practices by secular influences pose significant threats to the transmission of spiritual and cultural knowledge. Additionally, the generational divide in spiritual engagement, particularly among younger generations, further complicates the continuity of these cultural practices.

Despite these challenges, opportunities abound in the revitalisation and adaptation of spiritual practices to modern contexts. Spiritual beliefs provide a resilient foundation that allows communities to preserve and adapt cultural traditions in response to contemporary pressures. The reclamation of indigenous spiritual practices and the integration of technology in cultural preservation efforts exemplify how spiritual beliefs can be used as tools of resistance, resilience,

and revitalisation. Moreover, by reconnecting spiritual teachings with modern educational systems and digital platforms, spiritual leaders and cultural custodians can engage younger generations in preserving and evolving cultural practices in ways that are relevant to their contemporary experiences.

Ultimately, the role of spirituality in safeguarding cultural beliefs is vital not only in maintaining cultural identity but also in fostering social cohesion and continuity in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. The preservation of cultural heritage requires a nuanced understanding of a complex relationship between spirituality, cultural practices and cultural heritage, by recognizing the importance of spirituality in shaping cultural practices and traditions; we can work towards preserving cultural heritage in a way that is meaningful and relevant to local communities.

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CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

THE INFLUENCE OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS ON

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND MORALITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The intricate and evolving relationship between scientific and technological advancements, religious beliefs, and moral philosophies forms the core of this study. This research investigates the historical and contemporary interactions among these domains, analysing how scientific discoveries and technological innovations have influenced, challenged, and reinforced religious beliefs and moral frameworks. Much of the research focuses on the impact of scientific discoveries, particularly in cosmology, evolution, and neuroscience, on traditional religious interpretations. By examining the historical and contemporary responses of religious communities to these scientific advancements, this study aims to illuminate the tension between faith and reason and explore the potential for constructive dialogue between science and religion. Furthermore, the ethical implications of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and nanotechnology, are examined. These advancements raise profound questions regarding the nature of humanity, the boundaries of technological intervention, and the role of morality in a technologically driven world. The study explores how religious traditions have responded to these challenges, through adaptation of moral frameworks or resistance to perceived morally problematic technological advancements. This study contributes to understanding the interconnectedness of science, religion, and morality. By analyzing the historical and contemporary interactions among these domains, the study provides insights into the challenges and opportunities that arise as society navigates the rapid pace of scientific and technological progress. Ultimately, this research aims to foster a more nuanced and informed dialogue between science, religion, and morality, and to promote a future where these domains can coexist harmoniously.

Keywords: Science, Religion, Technology, Morality, Ethics

Introduction

The interplay between scientific and technological progress, religious beliefs, and morality has been a dynamic and complex feature of human history. Scientific discoveries and technological advancements have consistently expanded our understanding of the world, challenged established beliefs, and transformed our modes of living. Conversely, religious beliefs and moral principles have shaped human values, directed individual and collective behaviour, and provided a sense of meaning and purpose.

The increasing intersection of science and technology with religious beliefs and moral principles

has generated both conflict and cooperation, as divergent worldviews and values have collided and converged. The Scientific Revolution, for instance, challenged traditional religious interpretations of the universe, while the Enlightenment emphasized reason and individualism, sometimes placing it at odds with religious authority.

Recent decades have witnessed rapid scientific and technological progress, posing new questions and challenges for religious beliefs and morality. Advances in genetics, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence have necessitated re-evaluations of traditional notions of human nature, free will, and morality. Simultaneously, technological advancements have facilitated new forms of communication, community, and identity, occasionally blurring the lines between the sacred and the secular.

This article examines the complex and multifaceted influence of scientific and technological progress on religious beliefs and morality. By analyzing the historical and contemporary interactions between science, technology, and religion across various cultures, we can better understand their impact on our worldview and our role within it.

The Historical Context: The Evolution of Science and Religion

The relationship between science and religion has undergone significant transformations throughout history. From ancient civilizations to modern times, the interactions between scientific inquiry and religious beliefs have been complex and multifaceted.

In ancient Greece, philosophers such as Aristotle (384-322 BCE) and Epicurus (341-270 BCE) laid the groundwork for Western scientific thought, often integrating religious and mythological elements into their works (Osborne, 2020). The early Christian Church, however, initially viewed scientific inquiry with suspicion, perceiving it as a potential threat to religious authority (Harrison, 2020).

The Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries marked a pivotal moment in the science-religion relationship. Figures like Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and Isaac Newton (1643-1727) challenged traditional religious understandings of the universe, paving the way for modern scientific methodologies (Cohen, 2022).

The 18th-century Enlightenment further solidified the separation of science and religion, with thinkers such as René Descartes (1596-1650) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) emphasizing the role of reason and individualism in scientific inquiry (Israel, 2020).

In recent decades, the relationship between science and religion has continued to evolve. The rise of modern scientific disciplines like evolutionary biology, neuroscience, and cosmology has challenged traditional religious interpretations of human origins, consciousness, and the universe (Dawkins, 2020; Dennett, 2022).

Concurrently, the growth of religious fundamentalism and creationism has intensified tensions between science and religion, especially in the United States (Numbers, 2020). However, there are ongoing efforts to reconcile science and religion, such as the Intelligent Design movement and theistic evolution (Pennock, 2022).

The Impact of Scientific Discoveries on Religious Beliefs

Throughout history, scientific discoveries have consistently challenged and transformed religious beliefs. From the Copernican Revolution to the discovery of DNA, scientific advancements have compelled religious communities to re-evaluate their comprehension of the world and their place within it.

Cosmology and the Origin of the Universe:

Edwin Hubble's 1929 discovery of the expanding universe challenged traditional religious views of the cosmos (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2020). The Big Bang theory's proposition of the universe's origin from a singularity has significantly altered our understanding of cosmic origins.

Religious traditions exhibit diverse responses, with some, like Christianity, integrating the Big Bang theory into their theological frameworks (Polkinghorne, 2020), and others, like Islam, emphasizing the role of divine creation in the origins of the universe (Guessoum, 2022).

Evolution and the Nature of Humanity:

Charles Darwin's 1859 theory of evolution through natural selection profoundly impacted religious beliefs about human origins (Darwin, 2020).

The convergence of fossil evidence and genetic data has prompted some religious communities to reassess their perspectives on human origins (Ayala, 2020). For example, Theistic evolution has emerged as a perspective seeking to reconcile evolutionary theory with religious teachings (Haught, 2022).

Neuroscience and the Concept of Free Will:

Neuroscience advancements have questioned traditional religious views on free will and moral responsibility (Koch, 2020). The discovery of neural processes involved in decision-making has led some scientists to argue for neurological determinism (Harris, 2020).

However, religious traditions emphasize human free will and moral agency (Swinton, 2022), with theologians proposing nuanced understandings of free will, one that takes into account the complex interplay between the brain, body, and environment (Gregersen, 2022).

Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity:

The advancement of AI has provoked questions relating to humanity's future, and religion's role in shaping our understanding of AI (Bostrom, 2020).

Ethical concerns regarding human dignity within the development of AI have been voiced by many religions, such as Christianity and Islam, emphasizing the importance of human dignity and the need to ensure that AI is developed in ways that respect human values (Müller, 2022).

Meanwhile, the potential for AI to surpass human intelligence and become a dominant force in the world has raised profound concerns about the future of human existence (Tegmark, 2020). This prospect triggers anxieties about the loss of human control and the potential for AI to act in ways that are detrimental to humanity. Conversely, proponents of AI development emphasize its

potential to significantly benefit humanity, particularly in areas such as healthcare and education (Kurzweil, 2022). These divergent views highlight the ethical and philosophical complexities surrounding AI, forcing religious and secular communities alike to grapple with the implications of advanced technology.

Converging Paths: The Intersection of Scientific Inquiry and Religious Thought

Recently, the importance of fostering dialogue and collaboration between science and religion has been increasingly acknowledged. This convergence stems from the recognition that both domains offer unique and valuable perspectives on the human experience and the natural world (Haught, 2022). As John Polkinghorne, a distinguished physicist and theologian, articulates, "Science and theology are both concerned with the search for truth, and they can learn from each other" (Polkinghorne, 2020).

One notable area of convergence is the study of human consciousness and the nature of reality. Neuroscientists such as Andrew Newberg have employed neuroimaging techniques to investigate the neural correlates of spiritual experiences in meditating monks and praying nuns (Newberg, 2020). Simultaneously, physicists like Fritjof Capra have explored the parallels between quantum mechanics and Eastern spiritual traditions, revealing a profound resonance between scientific and mystical worldviews (Capra, 2022).

Environmental ethics also serves as a focal point for convergence. As the global community confronts the challenges of climate change, sustainability, and conservation, scientists and religious leaders are collaborating to advocate for a more holistic and ecocentric approach to environmental stewardship (Gottlieb, 2020). For instance, the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development facilitates collaboration among leaders from diverse faith traditions to promote environmental education, advocacy, and action (Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development, 2022).

Furthermore, the burgeoning field of science and spirituality exemplifies this convergence. Researchers like Lisa Miller have investigated the connections between spirituality, mental health, and well-being, demonstrating a strong positive correlation between spiritual practice and psychological resilience (Miller, 2020). Additionally, authors like Deepak Chopra have extensively explored the intersection of science, spirituality, and consciousness, offering a comprehensive vision of human existence that integrates insights from both domains (Chopra, 2022).

The Divergence of Science and Religion: Conflicts and Challenges

Despite the areas of convergence, significant conflicts and challenges persist between science and religion. These conflicts often arise from fundamental differences in worldviews, methodologies, and values.

Creationism and Intelligent Design

The debate over creationism and intelligent design remains a contentious point of divergence. Proponents of these perspectives assert that the complexity and diversity of life on Earth cannot be adequately explained by natural processes alone, necessitating the intervention of a supernatural

creator (Dembski, 2020). However, the scientific consensus overwhelmingly supports the theory of evolution through natural selection, which provides a robust and evidence-based explanation for the diversity of life (Dawkins, 2020).

Climate Change and Environmentalism

The issue of climate change and environmentalism also highlights areas of conflict. While many religious traditions emphasize the importance of stewardship and care for the natural world, some religious groups have been slow to acknowledge the reality of climate change or have actively denied its existence (Hoggan, 2020). Conversely, the scientific consensus on climate change is unequivocal: human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, are significantly contributing to global warming and its associated environmental impacts (IPCC, 2020).

Stem Cell Science Investigation and Bioethics

The controversy surrounding stem cell research and bioethics exemplifies another area of divergence. While scientists argue that stem cell research holds immense potential for medical advancements (healing of diseases and improving human health), some religious groups raise ethical concerns regarding the use of embryonic stem cells and the potential for human cloning (Kass, 2020). Conversely, other religious perspectives support stem cell research as a means of improving human health and well-being (Cole-Turner, 2022).

Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity

The rapid development of AI has raised profound questions concerning the future of humanity and the potential risks and benefits associated with this technology. While some scientists and philosophers express concerns about the potential risks of AI, such as job displacement and the erosion of human agency (Bostrom, 2020), others emphasize the potential of AI to significantly benefit humanity, particularly in fields such as healthcare and education (Kurzweil, 2022).

Conclusion

The relationship between scientific and technological progress, religious beliefs, and morality is characterized by complexity and dynamism. As demonstrated, scientific discoveries have consistently challenged and transformed religious beliefs throughout history. From the Copernican Revolution to the advent of AI, scientific advancements have necessitated the re-evaluation of worldviews.

Despite these challenges, areas of convergence between science and religion exist. Many scientists and theologians are actively engaged in exploring the intersections between science and spirituality, fostering new perspectives on the human condition (Haught, 2022). Furthermore, the growth of interfaith dialogue and cooperation has facilitated collaboration among diverse faith traditions to address shared challenges, such as climate change and social justice (Kung, 2020).

Ultimately, the relationship between scientific and technological progress, religious beliefs, and morality is one of dynamic tension. While scientific discoveries will continue to challenge and reshape religious beliefs, they also provide opportunities for growth, exploration, and understanding. As John Polkinghorne observes, "Science and theology are both concerned with the search for truth, and they can learn from each other" (Polkinghorne, 2020).

Recommendations

Based on the preceding discussion, the following recommendations are proposed to facilitate a constructive reconciliation between science and religion:

1. Promote dialogue and cooperation among individuals of diverse faiths to foster mutual understanding and respect

2. Integrate science and religion into educational curricula to cultivate a deeper understanding of their interrelationship.

3. Develop critical thinking and media literacy skills to empower individuals to make informed decisions regarding science and technology.

4. Ensure that scientific and technological innovations are developed and implemented responsibly, with careful consideration of their social and moral implications.

5. Foster respectful and inclusive discussions among individuals from diverse scientific and religious backgrounds.

6. Encourage collaboration between scientific and religious communities to tackle pressing global challenges, such as climate change and sustainable development.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA: A FOCUS ON THE KAMWE TRADITIONAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study explores the significance of traditional medicine within the Kamwe traditional healthcare system in northeastern Nigeria. Traditional medicine has been a cornerstone of healthcare across Africa, particularly in rural areas where access to modern medical facilities is limited. This research aims to document the therapeutic practices of the Kamwe people, examining their cultural, social, and spiritual foundations. Through key informant interviews and a review of existing literature, the study highlights diverse treatment methods, including the use of local herbs and spiritual rituals, which reflect the community's beliefs and values. Also, Kamwe traditional healers engage actively in the administration of the traditional healthcare system through consultations, guidance, treatment and sacrifices where necessary. Additionally, the study identified challenges faced by the Kamwe traditional healthcare system, such as stigmatization and competition from modern medicine, while also the perceived potential for integrating traditional practices with contemporary healthcare approaches were explored. The findings highlight the resilience of traditional medicine and its relevance in addressing health needs, advocating for a more inclusive healthcare framework that recognizes the value of indigenous knowledge and practices in enhancing health outcomes in Kamwe society and Nigeria.

Keywords: traditional medicine, kamwe healthcare system, cultural practices, spiritual healing, healthcare integration

INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine (TM) has been an integral part of healthcare systems across Africa for centuries, providing a primary source of healthcare to many communities. In Nigeria, traditional medicine continues to thrive alongside modern medical practices, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas where access to conventional healthcare facilities is limited. The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges the vital role of traditional medicine in global healthcare systems, emphasizing its affordability, accessibility, and cultural acceptability in regions like Africa (WHO, 2013). Traditional healthcare systems often encompass herbal remedies, spiritual healing, and indigenous practices that reflect the beliefs, values, and knowledge systems of local communities (Bodeker & Kronenberg, 2002).

Following the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978, which advocated for primary healthcare as a human right, the Declaration of Astana 2018 included the appropriate use of TM as one of the strategies to achieve universal health coverage. The WHO conducted three surveys between 2005 and 2018 to monitor the trends and developments in the use of traditional and complementary medicine among its member states. The surveys revealed an increasing number of countries that had adopted national policies and regulations on TM (WHO, 2019). Furthermore, in 2003, African leaders declared an African Traditional Medicine (ATM) day to raise awareness and recognition of the role of TM in improving health outcomes. The ATM Day was endorsed by the WHO African Region in 2015 as a key component of its regional strategy on TM (Emeje et al., 2023).

Traditional medicine refers to the "knowledge, skills, and practices that are based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences of different cultures, whether explicable or not, and that are used to maintain or improve health, or to prevent, diagnose, or treat physical and mental illnesses" (WHO, 2013). TM has a long history and wide acceptance in Africa, especially among rural communities who find it more affordable. ATM encompasses indigenous practices and therapies, from plants and animal parts, used to treat, diagnose, or manage diseases in the continent. Herbal therapies, which represent the most common form of TM in the continent, are used by up to 80% of the African populace (WHO, 2022). Gaps created by limited access to essential medicines, poor health

infrastructure, and dissatisfaction with orthodox medicine have promoted the use of these therapies, particularly in rural communities.

In Nigeria, traditional medicine remains an indispensable part of the healthcare system, particularly in rural areas where over 60% of the population relies on it for primary healthcare (WHO, 2013). Despite its significance, traditional medicine often faces neglect and skepticism due to the dominance of Western medical practices and the absence of robust policies for its integration into the national healthcare system (Adesina, 2019). In many African countries, including Nigeria, traditional medicine plays a pivotal role in healthcare delivery. A study conducted among adult women in Ibadan, Nigeria, revealed that 81.6% had used traditional medicine, highlighting its widespread acceptance and utilization (Li et al., 2020). The study also found that women from the Ibo and Hausa ethnic groups were significantly less likely to use traditional medicine compared to the majority Yoruba group, indicating cultural variations in usage patterns (Li et al., 2020).

The Kamwe people of northeastern Nigeria have preserved a rich tradition of healthcare practices rooted in their cultural heritage. Their traditional medicine encompasses diverse treatments for physical ailments, mental health issues, and spiritual challenges, often employing natural resources and spiritual rituals. Despite the resilience of traditional medicine in Kamwe society, its significance faces challenges, including stigmatization, lack of institutional support, and competition from modern medicine (Adesina, 2019). However, in an era where global interest in alternative and complementary medicine is rising, understanding the contributions and challenges of traditional healthcare systems like that of the Kamwe is vital for integrating traditional and modern approaches to healthcare delivery.

The Kamwe traditional healthcare system, like many others in Nigeria, has sustained its relevance by addressing health needs in culturally appropriate ways. However, it is confronted with challenges such as the erosion of indigenous knowledge, lack of regulation, and limited recognition by policymakers and health practitioners. Furthermore, the rapid urbanization and globalization in Nigeria have led to a shift in health-seeking behavior, with many individuals abandoning traditional medicine in favor of modern healthcare (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This shift not only threatens the survival of indigenous healthcare practices but also overlooks their potential contributions to addressing healthcare gaps in contemporary Nigeria. Given the growing interest in holistic and integrative approaches to medicine, the lack of scholarly attention on systems like the Kamwe traditional healthcare system undermines efforts to build a culturally inclusive healthcare framework.

This study aims to explore the significance of traditional medicine in contemporary Nigeria, focusing on the Kamwe traditional healthcare system. The specific objectives include:

i. To document the traditional healthcare practices and therapeutic methods employed by the Kamwe people.

ii. To examine the cultural, social, and spiritual underpinnings of the Kamwe traditional healthcare system.

iii. To analyze the challenges facing the Kamwe traditional healthcare system in contemporary Nigeria.

iv. To evaluate the potential for integrating the Kamwe traditional healthcare system with modern medical practices for improved healthcare delivery.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Concept of Traditional Medicine

Traditional medicine encompasses the knowledge, skills, and practices indigenous to different cultures, utilized in maintaining health and diagnosing, preventing, or treating physical and mental

illnesses. These practices are deeply rooted in cultural traditions and are often transmitted orally across generations. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 80% of the global population relies on traditional medicine for their primary healthcare needs (Khan & Ahmad, 2019). Traditional medicine refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being (Oyda, 2017). Traditional medicine is a term used to describe medicines from the earth's natural resources. Traditional medicine is experience-based, a culture-bound medical practice that relies on natural products to diagnose, prevent illness, treat disease or maintain health, irrespective of their explicability (Majeed et al., 2023).

Traditional medicine is a system of health practice based on indigenous knowledge. In most industrialized countries, because traditional medicine had become largely a very minor component of health practice, it is often described as 'folk medicine' (WHO, 2019). It is the sum of the knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health and the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness.

According to Ozioma and Chinwe (2019) the terms complementary/alternative/nonconventional medicine (CAM) are used interchangeably with traditional medicine in some countries. Traditional medication involves the use of herbal remedies (HR), animal parts, and minerals. Herbal medicines are the most widely used of the three and include herbs, herbal materials, herbal preparations, and finished herbal products that contain as active ingredients parts of plants or other plant materials, or combinations. Traditional medicine remains an integral component of healthcare for many populations worldwide, particularly in Nigeria. Its cultural significance and accessibility make it a valuable resource for primary healthcare (James et al., 2018). However, to fully harness its potential, there is a need for rigorous scientific validation, standardization, and integration with conventional medical practices, ensuring that traditional medicine contributes effectively and safely to global health.

Concept of Traditional Healthcare System

African traditional medicine is a form of holistic health care system that is organized into three levels of specialty, which include divination, spiritualism, and herbalism, though these may overlap in some situations (Ozioma, & Chinwe, 2019). According to Odede (2020), the term "African traditional medicine" is not synonymous with "alternative and complementary medicine." African traditional medicine is the African indigenous system of health care and therefore cannot be seen as an alternative. Ibrahim and AhmedOlaitan (2022) see a traditional healer is one who provides medical care in the community that he lives, using herbs, minerals, animal parts, incantations, and other methods, based on the cultures and beliefs of his people. He must be seen to be competent, versatile, experienced, and trusted.

Ozioma and Chinwe (2019) note that in African traditional medicine, the curative, training, promotive, and rehabilitative services are referred to as clinical practices. Clinical practice can also be viewed as the process of evaluating conditions of ill-health of an individual and its management. These traditional health care services are provided through tradition and culture prescribed under a particular philosophy, in which the norms and taboos therein are strictly adhered to and form the basis for the acceptability of traditional health practitioners in the community they serve (Onebunne, 2021).

Similar to modern day Western treatment patterns, Ozioma and Chinwe (2019) note that traditional African societies also involved herbalism, surgery, dietary therapy, and psychotherapy, in addition to traditional exorcism, rituals, and sacrifice. In African traditional medicine, traditional health practitioners (THP) assess patients in order to diagnose, treat, and prevent disease using their expertise by the following methods (Mwaka et al., 2023):

1. Divination: According to Ozioma and Chinwe (2019), divination involves consulting the spirit world. It is a method by which information concerning an individual or circumstance of illness is obtained through the use of randomly arranged symbols in order to gain healing knowledge. It is also viewed as a way to access information that is normally beyond the reach of the

rational mind. It is a transpersonal technique in which diviners base their knowledge on communication with the spiritual forces, such as the ancestors, spirits, and deities (Mothibe & Sibanda, 2019). It is, therefore, an integral part of an African traditional way of diagnosing diseases. The "spirit world" is consulted to identify the cause of the disease or to discover whether there was a violation of an established order from the side of the sick person (Thomas & Ikhidero, 2020). Because of the revealing powers of divination, it is usually the first step in African traditional treatment and medicine.

2. Interviews and Medical Reports: Oral interviews are sometimes used by some traditional healers to find out the history behind the sickness, where they have been for treatment and how long the person has been in that condition (Mgbeahuruike et al., 2019). This approach enables them to know how to handle the matter at hand. In some cases, the healer might require other family members to speak on behalf of the sick person in cases where the patient is not able to express him/herself. **Ozioma and Chinwe (2019) opine that i**n modern times, after the healing process, they also advise their clients or patients to go for medical diagnoses to confirm that they are healed, and the medical reports sometimes serve for record keeping for future reference and are a way of assuring other clients of their ability and credibility. Due to the holistic approach of the healing process, the healers do not separate the natural from the spiritual or the physical from the supernatural (Sawa, 2020). Thus, health issues are addressed from two major perspectives; spiritual and physical.

3. Spiritual Perspective: Spiritual-based cases are handled in a different manner. If the cause of the disease is perceived to be an attack from evil spirits, the person would be protected by the use of a talisman, charm, amulets, specially designed body marks, and a spiritual bath to drive the evil spirits away. These are rites aimed at driving off evil and dangerous powers, spirits, or elements to eliminate the evils or dangers that may have befallen a family or community (Kelechi, 2024).

Sacrifices are sometimes offered at the request of the spirits, gods, and ancestors. Sometimes, animals such as dogs and cats are slaughtered or buried alive at midnight to save the soul of the one at the point of death, with the belief that their spirits are strong enough to replace life (Takor & Ankiandalibesa, 2021). There is also the view that because they are domestic animals and are very close to people, sometimes when they see that someone very close to them is about to die, they offer their lives for that person to live. This is true especially where the animal dies mysteriously; thus, it is believed that it had offered its life in place of the life of its owner. Rituals are sometimes performed in order to consecrate some herbs without which the medicine is meaningless. Divine and ancestral sanctions are considered necessary before and during the preparation and application of medicine (Ogidi & Emaikwu, 2024).

Spiritual cleansing may be required of the sick person to bathe at specific times for a prescribed number of days either with water or animal blood poured from head to toe. This practice is common among some communities in Ghana (Gumbo & Singh-Pillay, 2022). If a disease is perceived to be caused by an invocation of a curse or violation of taboos, the diviner appeases the ancestors, spirits, or the gods according to the severity of the case.

Many of the traditional communities believe that illness, especially mental illness, is mostly caused by evil spirits. Exorcism can only be performed by a religious leader or a priest who has the authorities and powers to do so. Exorcism may be accompanied by dancing to the beating of drums, singing, and sometimes flogging the individual or touching him/her with strange objects such as animal tails and other objects to chase out the spirit (Maua et al., 2023). The possessed individual would be somewhat agitated but would only calm down as soon as the spirit is removed from the body. Exorcism is practiced, not only in Africa but also in ancient Babylonian, Greek, and other ancient cultures of the Middle East (Elendu, 2024). This practice is also performed for those who are mentally challenged. In their view, until the possessed person is delivered from the power of that evil spirit, the person will not have his or her freedom. Hence, the practice of exorcism is considered necessary (Ozioma & Chinwe, 2019; Rashed, 2020).

Libation, which is also sometimes carried out in the traditional healthcare system, involves pouring of some liquid, mostly local gin on the ground or sometimes on objects followed by the chanting or reciting of words. According to Usoro (2021), it is usually regarded as a form of prayer. The liquid

could also be water or in modern times, wine, whisky, schnapps, or gin. Some cultures also use palm wine, palm oil, and coconut water, while some others use corn flour mixed with water. Libation pouring as is practiced in some communities has three main parts, namely invocation, supplication, and conclusion.

4. Physical perspectives: If the illness is of a physical nature. Herbs are prescribed to the sick person according to the nature of the illness. Each prescription has its own specific instructions on how to prepare the herb, the dose, dosing regimen, and timeframe. Application of a mixture of white clay with herbs may be relevant in some of the healing processes. The mixture is applied to the entire body for a number of days, especially in the case of skin diseases. According to Spielvogel et al. (2021), the view is that the human body is made out of the dust or ground; therefore, if the body has any problem, you would have to go to where it came from to fix it. The use of clay with some special herbs is also sometimes used for preventive rituals to wade off the evil spirits responsible for illness. The sick person is sometimes counseled on the dos and don'ts of treatment, the foods to eat or avoid, to be generally of good behavior as established by society and culture, failure of which the good spirits would withdraw their blessings and protection and therefore, open doors for illness, death, drought, and other misfortunes (Ozioma & Chinwe, 2019). This is mostly done when it is an issue of a violation of a taboo.

The traditional health practitioners use experience, added to the accumulated knowledge handed down by their ancestors in order to provide effective and affordable remedies for treating the main ailments (such as malaria, stomach infections, respiratory problems, rheumatism, mental problems, bone fracture, infertility, complications of childbirth, etc.) that afflict populations of the African region and in addition offer counseling/advice and solutions to prevent future reoccurrence.

According to Nwagbo and Moses (2022), in specific cultures, traditional healers go by their local names, depending on their tribe, such as *Sangoma* or *inyanga* in South Africa, *akomfo, bokomowo* in Ghana, *niam-niam*, *shaman,* or *mugwenu* in Tanzania, *nga:nga* in Zambia, *shaman or laibon* in Kenya, and *babalawo*, *dibia,* or *boka*, etc. in Nigeria.

Traditional medicine is viewed as a combination of knowledge and practice used in diagnosing, preventing, and eliminating disease. This may rely on past experience and observations handed down from generation to generation either verbally, frequently in the form of stories, or spiritually by ancestors or, in modern times, in writing. It has also been said that before attaining knowledge in traditional African medicine, one is often required to be initiated into a secret society, as many characteristics of this form of medicine can only be passed down to initiates.

Significance of Traditional Medicine

TM mainly utilizes the benefits of natural products like the plant, animal, and mineral substances. The mode of treatment is supported by indigenous beliefs, practical skills, and experiences handed down from generation to generation. Generally the use of herbal medicine is highly frequent in traditional medicine for the treatment of diseases. However, traditional medicine is a wider area, where the use of animals, fungi, or other components of nature (rocks, minerals, etc.) can also be included for the treatment of conditions or diseases.

Across the world, traditional medicine either is the mainstay of healthcare delivery or serves as a complement to it. In some countries, traditional medicine or nonconventional medicine may be termed complementary medicine (WHO, 2013) for its, more recently, popular use in parallel with allopathic medicine, especially for the treatment and control of chronically diseases.

The integration of traditional medicine with modern healthcare systems presents both opportunities and challenges. In Nigeria, efforts have been made to incorporate traditional medicine into the national healthcare framework. However, challenges such as lack of standardized regulations, quality control issues, and potential interactions with conventional medications persist (Eruaga et al., 2024). For centuries, traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) has been an integral resource for health in households and communities. One hundred seventy countries reported on the use of traditional medicine, with acupuncture being the most

common form of practice in 113 countries. Many developed countries have also begun recognizing and integrating traditional medicine into their healthcare systems.

Scientific research into traditional medicine has gained momentum, aiming to validate and standardize traditional remedies. For instance, studies have explored the antimicrobial properties of various medicinal plants used in traditional Nigerian medicine, contributing to the development of new therapeutic agents (Abdulhamid et al., 2018). Additionally, ethnobotanical surveys have documented plants utilized in the treatment of cancers and inflammatory diseases among the Hausa and Fulani tribes of Northern Nigeria, providing a basis for further pharmacological investigations (Gbadamosi & Okolosi, 2013).

Traditional medicine is an important healthcare component in low-income countries. The prevalence of traditional medicine use in low-income countries is estimated to be between 40% and 71% (Bodeker & Kronenberg, 2002), for example, in sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated at 58.2% on average in the general population, but prevalence rates vary widely among studies (James et al., 2018). According to 2012 data, almost half the population in many industrialized countries now regularly uses some form of T&CM (United States, 42%; Australia, 48%; France, 49%; Canada, 70%); considerable use of some form of T&CM exists in many other countries, such as Chile (71%), Colombia (40%) and up to 80% in some African countries (Ahmad et al., 2017).

The high prevalence of traditional medicine use in low-income countries has important clinical implications, especially when traditional medicine and conventional treatments are used concurrently. Traditional medicine use has important historical and cultural significance in diverse settings and populations and may provide benefit when used safely and appropriately (Agu et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was employed for this study. The study data was obtained from both primary and secondary source. The primary source of data was the key informant interview (KII) and non-participatory observation methods. The secondary data includes journals, magazines, periodicals, textbooks, newspapers (print and electronic), and relevant internet articles. Snowball sampling was used to obtain the key persons engaged in traditional medicine and traditional healthcare system. Thematic and summative content analysis was employed in analyzing the qualitative data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Traditional HealthCare Practices

Nigeria, like other African countries, is deeply rooted in cultural practices that incorporates natural herbs and animals in the treatment and management of varying ailments. These traditional healthcare practices vary across cultures and geographical space. Similarly, the use of traditional medicine among the Kamwe people is traceable to antiquity, when humans started experimenting on the cure to common and alien ailments on individual and later community levels. These practices are now entrenched in the communal lives of the people.

For the Kamwe people, Ishaya Kwache (personal communication, 22 November, 2024), a medicine man who specializes in the treatment of diabetes, whooping cough (*tyatekwa*) and dermatitis (sadaure), stated that:

> "the Kamwe people have diverse practices that cater for different ailments. I specialize in the treatment of diabetes, whooping cough and dermatitis (sadaure). For diabetes, I use either the leaves or roots of "*ndwei*". The leaves of the plant is mix-coloured, and is usually found around tamarind trees. It is eaten like kola nut once in a day, and laboratory testing is carried out at intervals to verify cure. The treatment regimen is terminated once the diabetes is gone. For *sadaure* (dermatitis), I use diverse items which include bark of shear butter tree (*dumwefuma*), *dume kura* found around marshes, and bark of black plum (*shike*) are ground into powder. The mix is added to a cup of pearl millet pap (*talge*), taken daily. The regiment is taken until the ailment is gone. For whooping cough (*tyatekwa*), it is a well-known practice that can be administered by everyone across Kamwe society. It is spiritually inflicted on people especially children, and involves the roasting of

agama lizard. When the child eats it, the mother chants incantations invoking the spirit to leave the child. This is repeated until it leaves the child. I received my knowledge of treatment of diabetes from the dream, while the others I learnt from other healers."

Ishaya Kwache, a medicine man specializing in diabetes, whooping cough, and dermatitis, emphasizes the specificity of traditional healing practices. The use of particular plants, such as the leaves of "ndwei" for diabetes and the bark of the shear butter tree for dermatitis, underscores the knowledge of local flora that has been passed down through generations. This aligns with the assertion by the World Health Organization (WHO) that traditional medicine often incorporates local knowledge about medicinal plants (WHO, 2013).

The spiritual component of traditional healing is evident in the treatment of whooping cough, where the roasting of an agama lizard is combined with incantations. This practice reflects the deep-seated belief that healing is not solely a physical process but also a spiritual one, resonating with the idea that the health of individuals is intertwined with their community's spiritual beliefs (Adesina, 2019). This perspective is consistent with findings that traditional healing often includes spiritual elements, which are vital for the cultural acceptability of the treatment (Ozioma & Chinwe, 2019).

The African Traditional Medicine practices also have specialists for specific ailments. One of such cases is the traditional bone healer, which is not oblivious to the Kamwe society. Kwada Zira (personal communication, 19 November, 2024), a specialist in bone treatment, stated that:

> "in the treatment of broken bones among the Kamwe people, "*hobi*" is rubbed on the wounded and wrapped with sticks and piece of wrapper or bandage. Antibiotics are administered in the process of the treatment to facilitate healing. Adult patients are kept with the healer for two months, while children are kept for about one month for monitoring. In some instances, some healers apply shear butter cream or they first cover the wounded area with chicken skin before wrapping/ bandaging. Also, in the olden days, the fats of python are applied on the surface of the affected area after treatment to prevent scarring and enhance blending of the skin. I learnt as an apprentice under a traditional healer."

The reliance on community knowledge and practices is highlighted by Kwada Zira, a specialist in bone healing. His description of using "hobi" and the application of traditional methods, including wrapping and monitoring patients, speaks to the communal nature of healthcare among the Kamwe. This community-oriented approach is essential, especially in rural settings where access to modern healthcare may be limited (WHO, 2022).

Cultural, Social, and Spiritual Foundation of the Kamwe Traditional Healthcare System

Most traditional medicines are tied to myths of spiritio-cultural underpinnings that highlights the origin and practice of traditional healing and the traditional healthcare system. For the Kamwe people, their approach to healing is deeply spiritio-cultural, combining traditional healing practices with spiritual practices.

In the view of Iliya Tari Tumba (personal communication, 21 November, 2024), a retired civil servant conversant with traditional healthcare system in Kamwe land, the healing practices are both cultural and spiritual. He stated that:

> "the use of herbs and animals in our traditional medicine and traditional healthcare system is rooted in our culture and belief, and most of the plants used in the treatment occur in our land. The use of animals in healing practices, especially the case of agama lizard and the accompanying chants is spiritual. If not, why is chicken or any other animal not used in the treatment of whooping cough" The practice rooted in the culture of our people."

The responses from the interviewees emphasize that the Kamwe traditional healthcare system is deeply rooted in the cultural beliefs of the people. Tumba's assertion that the use of local plants and animals is tied to the community's identity illustrates how traditional medicine serves not just as a healthcare system but also as a cultural cornerstone. The cultural specificity of these practices often

dictates their efficacy and acceptance within the community (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Also, Ishaya Kwache stated that:

> "despite the administration of herbs and animals in the traditional healthcare system of Kamwe, we hold the belief that the actual healing is carried out by "*Hyela Temwe*" (supreme being). In certain instances, when an ailment persists after different treatment regimens, they are attributed to witchcraft and referred to diviners. It is believed that only the diviners can be able to treat such cases, and they actually do."

The belief in "Hyela Temwe," the supreme being responsible for healing, reinforces the idea that traditional medicine is not merely about herbal remedies but involves a spiritual dimension that must be acknowledged. The referral of persistent ailments to diviners highlights a holistic understanding of health that incorporates spiritual, physical, and communal aspects, aligning with traditional African healing practices (Kelechi, 2024).

Challenges Facing the Kamwe Traditional Healthcare System

Several challenges bedevil the use of traditional healthcare system in the wake of modernization and increased exposure of individuals to advanced healthcare systems. Margret Alison (personal communication, 20 November, 2024), observed that:

> "with the advent of modern medicine, most people do not patronize traditional healers. Some see them as inferior and substandard due to lack of proper compounding, dispensing and dosing. Also, most of the patronage for the traditional healthcare system is from rural dwellers who have poor access to hospitals."

Margret Alison's observation regarding the decline in patronage of traditional healers due to the advent of modern medicine resonates with wider trends in healthcare. Many individuals view traditional practices as inferior, influenced by the dominance of Western medical paradigms that often disregard indigenous knowledge systems (Bodeker & Kronenberg, 2002). This trend poses a significant challenge to the sustainability of traditional healthcare practices.

The reliance on traditional medicine among rural dwellers, who often have limited access to modern healthcare facilities, highlights a critical gap in healthcare equity. The challenges faced by these communities in accessing quality healthcare underline the necessity of integrating traditional and modern practices to create a more inclusive healthcare system (Gbadamosi & Okolosi, 2013).

Potential for Integrating the Kamwe Traditional Healthcare System with Modern Medical Practices for Improved Healthcare Delivery

According to Gideon Usman (personal communication, 22 November, 2024),

> "people patronize the use of traditional healing practices in the treatment of bone issues because it has been proven to be effective and cheaper. With this, if the government can incorporate traditional specialists in this fields, it will enhance the treatment and its effectiveness of bone treatment."

The potential for integrating the Kamwe traditional healthcare system with modern medical practices is an avenue worth exploring. As noted by the respondents, the effectiveness and affordability of traditional treatments could be enhanced through collaboration with government and health institutions. The integration of traditional healers into the formal healthcare system could foster mutual respect and recognition, allowing for a more comprehensive approach to health that benefits all community members.

CONCLUSION

The traditional healthcare practices of the Kamwe people reflect a rich cultural heritage that is deeply intertwined with their social and spiritual beliefs. While these practices face challenges from modernization and changing perceptions, their significance remains strong within the community. Recognizing the value of traditional medicine and exploring pathways for integration with modern healthcare, stakeholders can work towards a more inclusive and effective healthcare system in Nigeria.

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CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

CORRELATION BETWEEN TEACHERS ATTRITION AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE: IMPLICATOIN FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENES

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Executive Summary
Students academic engagement is a crucial factor in determining students learning outcome and academic success. However, students academic engagement has been comprised by high rate of teachers attrition in some public secondary .The study was conducted to determine the relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of students in public secondary schools in Anambra state. The study was guided by three research question and three null hypotheses. The study adopted a correlational design. The population of this study consisted of 19,042 respondents in the public secondary schools in the six Education Zones in Anambra state. A sample of 504 students were used in the study. Stratified and simple random sampling technique were used to draw the sample. The researcher's structured instrument titled Teachers' Attrition questionnaire and adapted questionnaire titled Students' academic Engagement questionnaire were used for collection of data. The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation. The reliability of the instruments were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient and the result yielded a coefficient value of 0.85 and 0.89 for Teachers' Attrition questionnaire and adapted questionnaire titled Students' academic Engagement questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for research question and test of significance of Pearson Product Moment Correlation for hypotheses. Results show that there exist a negative and significant relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of public secondary students in Anambra state. Based on the findings of the study, it was that the state government should offer attractive salaries , benefits and incentives to retain top talent in teaching profession.

Key words: Attrition, academic engagement, secondary education,**Correlation**

INTRODUCTION

Students' academic engagement appears to be an essential factor in determining student's learning and individual development in secondary education. There is a rising recognition of the importance of understanding student's academic engagement and the problem of academic disengagement in secondary institutions because of the conception that education has very strong and effective impact on boosting the development of a country. Most students participate in academic and non-academic activities at school, and develop a sense of belonging with their friends and establish good relations with teachers and other students, but many students are not engaged. Gradually these students withdraw from school life and become disaffected from school.

Students' academic engagement has been described as the level of interest demonstrated by students, how they interact with others in the course, and their motivation to learn about the topics (Briggs, 2015). It further refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (Amber & Peterson, 2015). The term student's engagement has grown in popularity in recent decades, most likely resulting from an increased understanding of the role those certain intellectual, emotional, behavioral, physical, and social

factors play in the learning process and social development (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2023).

Student engagement is a multifaceted concept that has identified several components of student engagement (e.g., behavioral, emotional/psychological, cognitive, & academic (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Although there is no consensus on which of these components is important, most studies have included behavioral and emotional components (Carmen, 2021; Archambault, 2014). Behavioral engagement refers to the students' participation in academic and non-academic activities at school (Carmen, 2021). Emotional engagement refers to the students' sense of belonging at school and identification with school (Archambault, 2014).

The researcher perceived   academic engagement as encompassing the depth and intensity of students' involvement in their academic tasks and learning experiences, reflecting their motivation, concentration, and persistence in the pursuit of knowledge

Evidence from literature has shown Lack of student engagement at school especially in public secondary in Anambra State. It is a serious concern for educators and policy makers because disengaged students are more likely to struggle academically, to drop out of school, and to have problem behaviors. Researchers, educators, and policymakers have increasingly focused on student's academic engagement as the key to addressing problems of low academic achievement, student boredom and alienation, and high dropout rates, still the problem with poor academic achievement of students still persists because of poor academic engagement by the students.

Teachers' attrition is a phenomenon that is characterized by teachers leaving work in the classroom to take up and pursue other professional responsibilities inside or outside the educational system (Miller & Chait, 2018). It is the educational sector labor mobility by which, among other reasons, teachers seek professional 'greener pastures' which in turn leaves the school bereft of much needed teaching staff. High attrition has damaging impact on the quality of schooling. Schools with high attrition rate are more likely to get inexperienced teachers or unqualified teachers who are likely to be less effective (Bao et al., 2022), thus, possibly impacting students' academic engagement. In the context of this study, teacher's attrition is the depature of teachers from teaching profession, resulting in a shortage of qualified educators.

Gender is a core characteristic of human beings (Hyde, 2014). According to the Interest as Identity Regulation Model (Latsch, & Hannover, 2014), individuals are more likely to engage in activities or domains that correspond with gender-related stereotypes, for instance to avoid social sanctions. Gender differences in student engagement encompass many different areas. For example, in some educational settings, boys lag behind girls on indicators of educational success, such as leaving certificates and type of school attendant. Male students have been known for putting more interest on technical subject than the female students.

Lack of student's engagement at school is a serious concern for educators and policy makers because disengaged students are more likely to struggle academically, to drop out of school, and to have problem behaviors. The relationship between teachers' attrition and student's academic engagement in secondary school students has not been empirically researched in enough detail. The researcher believed that it is necessary to examine the issue of academic engagement in secondary education with more in-depth and its relationship with teachers' attrition. The impact of teacher attrition on student academic engagement and achievement can have significant implications for a country's global competitiveness (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). A well-educated workforce is essential for driving economic growth and innovation, and teacher attrition can undermine efforts to develop human capital (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

Hence, there is need to research on factors like teachers' attrition to see its relationship with academic engagement of students and ascertain whether working on factors like the teachers' attrition will help develop in the students a cognitive sense of commitment and engagement with their academics and enhance their academic achievement level. Diverse studies have explored

teachers' attrition and academic engagement, but to the best of the researchers' knowledge no study has investigated the correlation between these two variables hence the problem this what is the relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of students in public secondary school in Anambra State using gender variables

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between teachers' attrition and engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Investigate the relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of female and male SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent is the relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra State"
2. What is the extent of relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of male and female SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra State"

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra state.
2. There is no significant relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of male and female SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Method

The study adopted a correlational research design .Hassan (2023) stated that a correlational research design is a type of research that examines the relationship between two or more variables . It is a non-experimental research design that seeks to establish the degree of association or correlation between two or more variables. The area of the study is Anambra State. Anambra State nicknamed light of the nation is one of the 36 states in Nigeria with its headquarters at Awka and shares common boundaries with Delta on the west, Enugu on the east, Abia on the southeast, and Imo State on the South, whereas its capital city is located in Awka. The State is densely populated with a population of over 8.5 million people (Africapolis, 2020).

The population for this study comprised 19,042 students. (Source: Post Primary School Service, Awka, 2021. See Appendix B)The sampling for this study consisted of 504 students. Multistage sampling procedure was used to draw the sample. The public secondary school in Anambra state was first grouped into six education zones. Proportionate random sampling technique was then used to draw samples from each stratum representing the same proportion as in the population. The use of proportionate stratified random sampling technique was to ensure students from the various zones in the state which form the strata were represented in the same proportion as they existed in the population. Two instruments titled: Teachers Attrition Questionnaire (TAQ) and Students' Engagement Instrument (SEI) were used for data collection. TAQ was constructed by the researcher while SEI was adapted.

*Teachers Attrition Questionnaire (TAQ):*Teacher Attrition Questionnaire was constructed by the researcher with twelve items based on the insight gained from the reviewed literature and information of the study.

*Student academic Engagement Instrument (SEI):*SEI was developed by Appleton et al., in the year 2006 and was adapted by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The 19 items collected

information on academic students' engagement. Students answered each item on a 4-point Likert scale (Appleton et al., 2006): The response option of the questionnaire was structured using four points rating scale of; Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE). Face and construct validity of the instruments were ascertained.

The reliability with the internal consistency of the instrument was measured using cronbach alpha because reliability coefficient is suitable tool for determining the internal consistency of an instrument. The reliability test yielded coefficient values of 0.85 and 0.89 for teacher attrition and student engagement scale respectively. Thus, indicating that the instruments are reliable, for it is within the range of 0.61 - 0.90, which Creswell (2014) considered high.

The researcher visited the sample schools with the aid of five briefed research-assistants who were given proper orientation on what was required, how to administer and retrieve the copies of the questionnaire to teachers and students in their respective schools. In addition to the instructions written on the questionnaire, the respondents were given verbal instructions and clarifications where necessary The research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient while hypotheses were tested using the test of significance of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient   at 0 .05 level of significance. In answering the research questions, the coefficient (r) and the size of the relationship were interpreted using the interpretation of correlation coefficient based on Schober*et.al* (2018) as shown:

±0.00 to 0,09   =   Negligible Correlation
±0.10 to 0.39 =   weak Correlation
±0.40 to 0.69   =   Moderate relationship
±0.70 to 0.89   =   Strong relationship
±0.90 to 1.00   =   Very strong relationship

        While the negative coefficient indicates a negative relationship or correlation between the variables, positive coefficient indicates positive relationship or correlation.

The null hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance. If the obtained probability value (p-value) is equal to or less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected, but where it was greater than .05, the null hypothesis was not rejected

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA
This   dealt   with the presentation and analysis of data collected for the study. The data obtained from the field by the researcher were presented and analyzed in relation to the research questions and hypotheses in the study.

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State"

Table 1; Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis on the extent of relationship between teachers' attrition and Academic engagement of SSII students in   Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

		Teachers' attrition	engagement of SSII students	Remark
Teachers' attrition	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.64[**]	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	Moderate negative relationship
	N	504	504	
academic engagement of SSII students	Pearson Correlation	-0.64[**]	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		
	N	504	504	

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The data in Table 1 showed that there is a moderate negative relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State. **This deduction comes as a result of the 'r' having a negative value, r =- 0.64 and n =504. Hence, the study concluded there is a moderate negative relationship between** teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State

Research Question 2 What is the relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of male and female SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis on the extent of relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of male and female SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State.

Correlations

Gender	Variable			Remark
Male	Teachers' attrition			*
	academic engagement of SSII students	252	-0.37	weak negative relationship
Female	Teachers' attrition		*	
	academic engagement of SSII students	252	-0.71**	Strong negative relationship

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 presented an analysis which showed that there exist, a negative relationship between attrition and academic engagement of male and female SSII students in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra .**This deduction comes as a result of the 'r' having a weak negative value, r = -0.37 and** Strong negative relationship **r = -0.71 for male and female students respectively. N = 252 for both groups respectively. Hence, the study concluded that there exists a weak negative and** strong negative relationship **between** teachers' attrition and academic engagement of **male and female** SSII **students** in Public Secondary in Anambra State

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis 1:   There is no significant relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State"

Table 3: Test of Significance of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis on the extent of   relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State

Correlations

		Teachers' attrition	engagement of SSII students	Decision
Teachers' attrition	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.64[**]	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	
	N	502	502	Significance
Academic engagement of SSII students	Pearson Correlation	-0.64[**]	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01		
	N	502	502	

   Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 -tailed).

Table 4 presented an analysis which showed as a result of the 'r' having a negative value, r 0.64 and n = 504. Hence, the study concluded   that there exists a strong negative relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SSIIstudents in Anambra State .**Since the p-value 0.01 is less than the stipulated 0.05 confidence level, the null hypothesis is rejected and thus is decided that** there is a significant relationship between**.** teachers' attrition and engagement of SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between teachers' attrition and engagement of male and female SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State

Table 4: Test of Significance of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis on the extent of relationship between teachers' attrition and engagement of male and female SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State

Gender	Variable	N	r-coefficient	P-value	DECISION
Male	Teachers' attrition		[*]		
		252	-0.37		Significance
	Academic			0.01	
	engagement of SSII students				
Female	Teachers' attrition		[*]		
		252	-0.71[**]	0.00	Significance
	Academic engagement of SSII students				

Table 4 presented an analysis which showed 'r' having a weak negative value, r = -0.37 and Strong negative relationship r = -0.71 for male and female SSII **students respectively. N = 252 for both groups. Since the P-value 0.01 and 0.00 are less than the stipulated 0.05 confidence**

level, the null hypothesis is rejected and thus is decided that there is a significant relationship between**.** teachers' attrition and engagement of male and female SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State

Summary of Findings

       The following are the major findings from the study:

1. **There exists a   moderate negative relationship between** teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State.
2. **The study concluded that there exists a weak negative and** strong negative relationship **between** teachers' attrition and academic engagement of **male and female** SSII
3.   **students** in Public Secondary in Anambra State

Discussion of the findings

The findings of this study were discussed in line with the research questions and hypotheses raised in the study. It is carried out under the following subheading

1. The relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SS11students in public secondary schools in Anambra state.
2. The relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of male and female SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra state. male and female SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State.

The relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

Findings on the relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra state showed that there is **a moderate negative relationship between** teachers' attrition and academic engagement of urban SSII students in Public Secondary in Anambra State. Hypothetically, there is significant relationship between teachers attrition and academic engagement of SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra state. Teachers' attrition has shown to harm students' academic engagement and discourages educators. This shows that increase in teachers' attrition leads to decrease in academic engagement of SS1 students. Teachers' attrition has a damaging impact on schooling. Schools with high attrition are more likely to get inexperience or unqualified teachers who are likely to be less effective, thus impacting negatively on the academic engagement of students. This is also in line with Mabeya et al., (2019) whose finding revealed that attrition does not only affect students' academic engagement but also the quality of teaching and learning in schools. It also revealed that learners took time to adjust and adapt to the techniques and methods employed by the new teacher.

The relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of male and female SS11 students in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

Findings of the relationship between teachers' attrition and academic engagement of male and female SS11 students of public secondary schools in Anambra state indicate that there **exists a weak negative and** Strong negative relationship **between** teachers' attrition and academic engagement of **male and female** SSII **students** in Public Secondary in Anambra State Findings also indicates there is significant relationship between the variable when tested hypothetically. This shows that increase in teachers' attrition equally leads to decrease to the academic engagement of male and female students. This finding could be as a result of cultural standard/value placed on both gender which in turn affects their academic engagement in school. The findings of this study also aligned with the study conducted by Kessels (2014) that gender differences in students' interest emerge as a consequences of the perceived fit or misfit between a students' gender identity and the gendered stereotypes ascribed to academic domains. The relationship between the variables (teachers' attrition and academic engagement) is weak when performed in gender as a measure of academic engagement of the students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concluded that teachers' attrition had a negative relationship with academic engagement of students in public secondary schools in Anambra state. The higher the attrition rate of teachers, the lower the academic engagement of students. These outcomes are not just inconvenient for schools but teacher attrition also affects students' academic engagement, discourages educators and more expensive for the state education. In order to maximize student academic engagement and minimize teachers' attrition, the school system needs to develop long-term solutions to help retain efficient professional teachers.

Recommendations

Based on findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The state government should offer attractive salaries , benefits and incentives to retain top talent in teaching profession.
2. State Ministries of Education should provide regular training, mentoring and opportunities for career advancement to support teachers growth.
3. Teachers should foster supportive relationship between them and students to increase students engagement
4. School administrators should foster a positive and collaborative environment among teachers and student

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