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Great Power Politics, International Economic Relations and Regional Development in Latin America

Olukayode A. Faleye*, Ozekhome G. Igechi**, & Emmanuel S. Okla***

Abstract

This paper examines the emerging pattern of international economic diplomacy and associated politics of development in Latin America. The regional economy of Latin America has been structured over time by external influences deployed through economic institutions controlled by great powers. This work reflects on the declining grip of the United States on Latin America and the rising Chinese and Brazilian influences as well as the impact of the emerging Indian private transnational firms in the region. It advances the existing literature on international economic relations in Latin America by unveiling the emerging governance architecture and regional economic dynamics.

Keywords: Economic Diplomacy, Economic Growth, Global Politics, Great Powers, Regional Integration.

Introduction

This paper examines the emerging economic globalization and the associated projection of global power politics and economic governance in Latin America. The International political economy characterized by an unending dialogue between global economic and global power architecture impacts national and regional economies. This is a process embedded in the localization of global capital in North America, Europe and East Asia (Babic, 2023). This phenomenon illustrates an unequal power structure in the international system with serious implications for development in developing societies in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The West led by the United States has played a dominant role in crafting the nature of international relations, especially across the North-South unequal developmental divide. The contraction of US global influence in the face of emerging powers in the global south has led to a re-direction of significant global exchange from the North-South to South-South networks. In this vein, China has become a vital source of conditional and non-conditional finance for infrastructural development in the global south (Norris, 2016; Mendez & Mariano, 2020). Furthermore, the rise of Indian private transnational corporations in Latin America offers a different way to offset the region's growing Chinese export market through private enterprise and public-private partnerships. The dominance of a hegemonic power at the nucleus of global peace, economy and politics is expected to provide a stabilizing

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unilateral force of cohesion (Kindleberger 1973). Nevertheless, in a multi-polar world, the balance of power in the international system is built on a constantly changing complex network of global, regional and local actors rather than a unilateral realm of political power. In this vein, regional economic stability in Latin America in the early twenty-first century showcases an interesting case of the politics of international development. Based on the content analysis of relevant official records, periodicals and extant literature, the paper provides an important insight into the political and economic relations between Latin America and global powers, as well as the impact of the latter on the former in the early twenty-first century. It is organized into four sections. The first is this introductory section followed by a conceptual framework. The third section presents the primary data and analysis of international economic relations and geopolitics in Latin America. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the analysis and provides policy insights in this regard.

Conceptual Clarifications

Economic diplomacy has become an essential instrument for countries to pursue their foreign policy objectives, particularly in the realm of trade, investment, and development in a globalizing world. Economic diplomacy refers to the use of diplomatic tools and strategies to promote national economic interests abroad. This includes enhancing trade relations, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), negotiating trade agreements, securing international loans, and managing relations with multinational organizations like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Okano-Heijmans & Asano, 2018; Bayne & Woolcock, 2017). In addition to the more general diplomatic agendas that result from market integration processes like negotiations for intellectual property rights, e-commerce agreements, and transnational finance, the study of economic diplomacy also looks at how diplomacy has changed, particularly the rise of new diplomatic actors, new diplomatic modes, and new formal and informal diplomatic structures (Lee & Brian, 2010). Indeed, the nature of economic diplomacy is changing amidst the transformation in global power architecture. For instance, the global south has become the theatre of diplomatic struggle between the United States and China over regional hegemony. This is the case in Far East Asia where the United States and China compete amidst other regional actors (Debnath, 2024). In Latin America, economic diplomacy plays a critical role in shaping the region's approach to globalization, economic development, and regional integration. Economic diplomacy allows countries to improve their terms of trade, navigate the complexities of global markets, and address domestic challenges through strategic international partnerships.

In a globalized world, the interplay of economic diplomacy among great powers makes regional integration a core strategy of regional powers. Regional integration refers to the process by which countries within a specific geographic region work together to enhance economic, political, and social cooperation (Lombaerde & Langenhove, 2006). The aim is often to create a more interconnected and mutually beneficial environment that allows member states to achieve collective growth and stability, which may be difficult to attain independently. Through regional integration, countries can leverage their collective strengths, share resources, and address challenges that are too large or complex to handle alone. For instance, the European Union plays an important role in the making of a multipolar world order since the 1990s (Kissack, 2012). The collapse of the USSR in the aftermath of the Cold War witnessed the establishment of the European Union in the making of a multilateral world order in line with the principle of balance of power.

Over the decades, Latin America has pursued regional integration through various economic and political frameworks, the most notable of which are the MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market), UNASUR (Union of South American Nations), the Pacific Alliance and

MERCOSUR. These initiatives aim to reduce trade barriers, encourage joint economic development projects, and increase the region's bargaining power on the global stage (Urquidí, 2022; Chodor, 2021). These regional institutions seek to create a customs union and a common market that would allow for free trade among member states, facilitating regional economic development and reducing dependence on great powers. Despite these efforts, Latin America has faced several challenges in achieving deeper economic integration. Political differences among countries, uneven economic development, and external pressures such as protectionism from global powers have hindered the realization of a fully integrated regional economy.

In the modern international system, the dynamics between great powers and regional powers play a crucial role in shaping global political, economic, and security landscapes. Great powers, often defined by their global influence, military capabilities, and economic strength, engage in international politics with a focus on maintaining or expanding their global status. Regional powers, on the other hand, possess significant influence within their geographic regions but may not have the same global reach or comprehensive capabilities as great powers. Despite these differences, both types of powers influence global geopolitics and often find themselves interacting in complex ways (Destradi, 2010). The relationship between great powers and regional powers is marked by both cooperation and rivalry (Mazarr et al. 2021). Great powers may seek to establish alliances with regional powers to further their interests in a particular region. For example, the United States has historically forged strong ties with countries like Saudi Arabia, Israel, India and Japan, using these relationships to secure strategic advantages in the Middle East and East Asia (Miglietta, 2002; Smith & Kartha, 2018). On the other hand, regional powers may resist external influence from great powers, asserting their autonomy and sometimes using their regional standing as leverage in negotiations with larger states. This phenomenon showcases Lula's Brazil diplomatic engagement with China in the region.

Beyond state actors, partnerships with transnational private enterprises could stimulate alternate paths to leverage the influence of great powers in the regional economy. The evolving relationship between state policies, local businesses, labour movements, and global markets will continue to define the future of development in Latin America. The role of the private sector and the emergence of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have become increasingly pivotal in driving economic transformation in the region (Carbonara & Pellegrino; Peinado-Vara, 2022). PPP has been defined as a framework for structured cooperation between public and private entities. PPP puts the economy at the centre of everything and implies that logical economic considerations frequently lead to these kinds of partnerships. The method also maintains that the fundamental elements of PPPs are the public policy decisions made by the ruling political elites. PPPs can thus carry some of the prevailing class's attitudes, ideas, and ideologies particularly those of the hegemonic elements and their supporters (Koppenjan, 2005; Rodrigues, 2023; Faleye & Igechi, 2025). Public-private partnerships have gained traction as a mechanism for addressing infrastructure deficits and improving the delivery of public services in Latin America. PPPs involve collaborations between the government and private companies, where the private sector provides financing, expertise, and management in exchange for a share of the benefits. These partnerships are particularly relevant in sectors such as transportation, energy, education, healthcare, and water infrastructure, where large capital investments are required. The concept of embeddedness posits that economic behaviour is deeply embedded within social structures, norms, and institutions, which shape and influence economic outcomes (Beckert, 2003; Krippner & Alvarez, 2007). The sources, behaviours, and representations that permit resource extraction and territorial control are elements of geopolitics (Flint, 2021). By fostering a more supportive environment embedded into the

social, cultural, and institutional fabrics for private sector development and inter-governmental cooperation, regions could unlock their full economic potential in the face of the geopolitics of great powers.

Mapping the International Politics of Development in Latin America

The contestation of influence between great powers in Latin America has been propelled by political and economic ideologies such as democracy, neo-liberalism and neutrality. Here, the declining grip of the United States on Latin America and the rising Chinese influence in the face of the growing impact of Indian private transnational firms project the nature of emerging economic diplomacy and geopolitics in Latin America in the early twenty-first century. An important tool of capitalist expansion under the United States' hegemony in Latin America from the 1980s to the early 2000s was the democratization movement (Bethell, 2008). Democratization is the political driver of neo-liberalism and the Washington Consensus. This doctrine as prescribed by Washington bequests political stability, the rule of law and the associated economic prosperity in a democracy. This is the perception that political stability and the protection of human rights propel economic growth. However, a deep insight into the democratization movement in the early twenty-first century in the global south seems to prove otherwise.

Beyond external actors, Latin America is home to emerging regional powers such as Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina. Moreover, an emerging great power such as India is gradually making inroads into the region's economy and geopolitics. However, the economic strength of Brazil with a GDP by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of USD 3.13 Trillion, Mexico (2.42 Trillion), Argentina (USD 986.13 Billion) and India (9.28 Trillion) in 2021 vividly reveal limited financial capabilities to engage in economic diplomacy at a global scale. The financial statistics show that the combined GDP by PPP of Brazil, Mexico and Argentina did not equate to a quarter of that of the United States or China and only about half of India's (see Figure 1) [1]. Indeed, the dominant economic position of external actors such as the USA and China undermines the relevance of other emerging powers in the region.

The dominance of the two great powers in global politics is largely a product of their economic strength in the context of their contribution to the growth of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 1990, the United States GDP by PPP was 10.1 Trillion USD, and China's GDP by PPP for the same year stood at 1.62 Trillion. In 2000, the United States GDP by PPP was 14.16 Trillion USD, and China (4.36 Trillion USD). In 2010, the United States accounted for 16.86 Trillion GDP per PPP, and China (11.88 Trillion). The year 2017 was a landmark in the global economy with USA GDP per PPP at 19.48 Trillion and China surpassing the United States at 19.89 Trillion USD. Subsequently, China maintained a lead with 22.49 Trillion in 2019 and the United States accounted for 20.51 Trillion. In 2020, China's GDP by PPP totalled 23 Trillion while the USA accounted for 19.95 Trillion and by 2021 China's GDP by PPP stood at 24.86 Trillion compared with the United States' 21.13 Trillion USD (Figure 1). This comparison of the sizes of the United States and China's economies in line with the estimated real cost of living evaluates the countries' capacity for economic diplomacy at the global level. In this vein, a significant change occurred in 2017 when the world development indicators and economic growth rate leapt in favour of China. The rise of China in global trade has had a tremendous impact on Latin America. The intensification of industrialization in China and the expansion of her industrial base in the twenty-first century have created a serious need for energy which has been the basis for her engagement with Venezuela amongst others (Yin-Hang & Acuna, 2019). It has been observed that the growing Chinese influence in Latin America is an indication of American carelessness and its declining power in the region (Leon-Manriquez, 2016). The changing power asymmetry will impact the region's economy and political architecture.

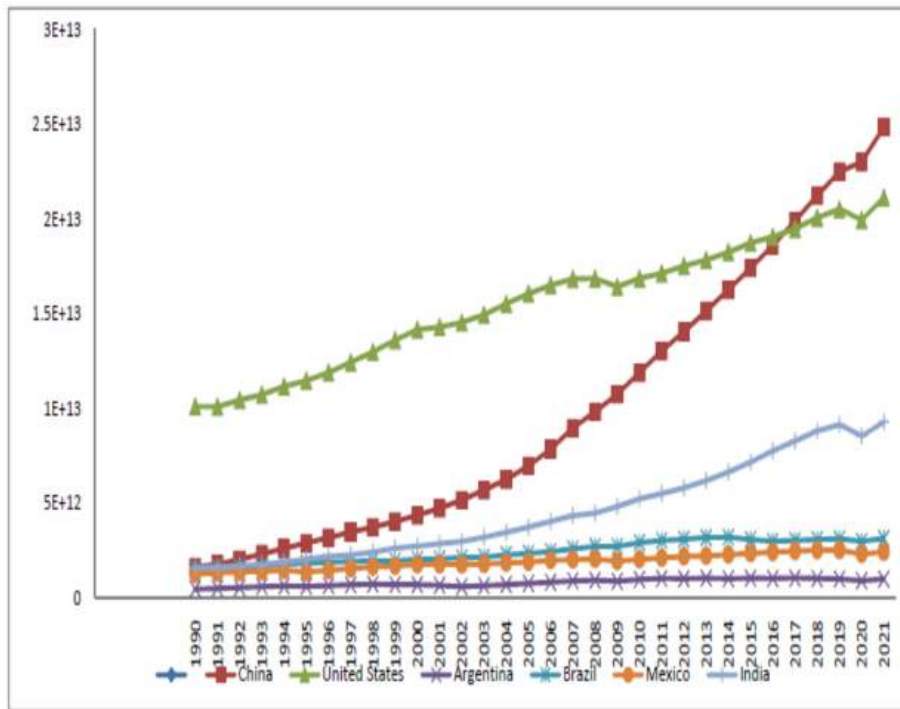


Figure 1: GDP by Purchasing Power Parity: China, United States, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and India, 1990-2021 (constant 2017 international \$). Source: Authors' computation based on World Bank's World Development Indicators database. Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?>. Accessed 21 March 2023.

In Latin America, China has, over the last two decades, established herself in trade and infrastructure investments as the nation made economic inroads into areas that had been largely dominated by the United States. China's State-Owned Enterprises have been operating in the region's infrastructure, energy, financial, and of late digital and telecommunication sectors. It has overtaken the United States as South America's biggest trading partner. While China has recently reduced its loans in Latin America, it has nevertheless remained a big financial player and infrastructural innovator in the region. China's activities in the region have been received with some level of suspicion. At the close of the twentieth century, the Chinese market was responsible for only a meagre 2 per cent of Latin American exports. Chinese trade with Latin American countries grew in leaps and bounds such that by 2010 it became \$180 billion (Roy, 2022). As of 2021, this had surpassed the \$450 billion mark with development economists and trade experts suggesting that it will be over \$700 billion by 2035 (Zhang & Prazeres, 2021). Considering these numbers, China rattled the liberal West and has indeed announced itself as an important global power.

In specific terms, some import and export primary and high-value chain commodities and products connect China to Latin America. The Chinese import petroleum, copper, soya beans, and other primary produce needed to drive industrial development at home while they export more finished cheap products that are said to weaken the Latin American indigenous firms. In this sense, it has been argued that these countries export their employment opportunities to mainland China and deepen the disarticulation of their domestic economies (Lew et al., 2021). The promise of infrastructure loans and finance has

made over twenty Latin American states sign up for a free trade agreement with China. Amongst others, Ecuador negotiated for free trade with China in 2022. For countries like Venezuela, the partnership for development with China is a conduit of opportunity in the face of American sanctions. Consequently, Venezuela has been the biggest borrower from China in the region (Dialogue, 2022). The economic cooperation between China and Venezuela has been categorized as neo-dependent, neo-extractivist and imperial (Yin-Hang & Acuna, 2019). This argument is anchored on the debt trap narrative where China is expected to take control of the critical infrastructures of the borrowers. However, the debt trap hypothesis has been roundly disproved due to the willingness of the Chinese to renegotiate terms of debt financing in Argentina, Ecuador, and Suriname (Soutar, 2022). Indeed, the so-called imperial dynamics are changing as China divests its capital and re-strategises amidst global economic changes.

Scholars have argued against the “debt trap” hypothesis debunking the folly around the obsession that had been coming from some mainstream Western literature. The assumption that China’s economic diplomacy is tantamount to a debt trap appears to be a product of strategic information war to ridicule the Chinese expanding influence in the developing world (Brautigam, 2020; DeBoom, 2020). Nevertheless, the Chinese economic engagement with Latin America has a political complexion. For instance, the United States’ affinity for Taiwan has always been a sour point for Beijing leading it to embrace countries that have diplomatic frictions with the United States. Perhaps, Chinese economic diplomacy provides an inroad for China’s political influence in Latin America as a strategic measure to counter the United States’ influence in East Asia.

Certainly, replacing the United States with China or any other nation is not the antidote to the malaise of underdevelopment that has plagued Latin America. However, the geopolitical combat between the United States and China could afford the developing countries an opportunity for an unprecedented economic ascension through strategic diplomatic engagements (Schindler, DiCarlo & Paudel, 2022). The institutionalization of economic ideas is not dependent on the global power concentration but rather an outcome of regional power weaknesses which facilitates global power spread. This is the result of the “effect of countervailing forces at a lower level of analysis: the region” (Allen, 2016: 1073). In essence, a global power engages in economic diplomacy by inducing states with financial benefits below the accruable profit of the financier rather than a coercive drive to enforce a predetermined global economic and political order. Hence, the local agency is a prime determinant of the successes or failures of global powers in spreading their economic and political agenda. It is the lack of harmony among the leading nations of Latin America that undermines the region’s synergy in international economic relations (Agostinis & Nolte, 2021). This is a clash of diverse national interests; hence the need for the convergence of states’ interests in order to build strong regional institutions.

Considering Brazil’s place as an emerging power as illustrated by its membership in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), the country might have a greater role to play in fogging regional synergy in Latin America. However, the unilateral engagement of China with Latin America reveals the weaknesses of the BRICS to project a geostrategic front to contest the US-led post-war liberal world order in the region. This scenario undermines the potential of Brazilian economic leadership in the region. At the regional level, scholars have provided dichotomized perspectives of dependency and complementarity narratives where China’s dominance as a regional produce importer stimulates foreign exchange earnings of concerned countries but with dire implications for marketing the manufactured exports from the region (Menezes & Bragatti, 2020). Baumann (2013) observed the overdependence of Brazilian exports on the regional market. In essence, Chinese exploration of the Latin American market undermines Brazil’s economic leadership

in the region.

The growing Chinese investment and economic embeddedness in Latin America are more visible in the region's energy sector. In the early twenty-first century, China leads other great powers in the generation of clean and renewable energy such as hydroelectric dams and solar systems in Latin America (Ugarteche & Leon, 2022). Moreover, China's economic strategy in Latin America is dynamic and timely. In an era of climate change China is divesting into clean energy (solar panels, batteries, and electric vehicles (EVs) in a world where increasing state revenue is invested in climate-change mitigation. In this direction, *The Economist* Magazine reported on 10 April 2024 that "in 2022 announced foreign direct investment in renewable energy globally totalled over \$350bn, dramatically more than annual investments in any other sector not only that year but in decades. That has made green technology the latest front in the United States' rivalry with China". The widespread Chinese investment in renewable energy in Latin America is reported to be "prompting anxiety in the United States about security, coercion and competition" (*The Economist*, 2024, 10 April).

The growing Chinese dominance in the economic architecture of Latin America is cemented by the lack of a harmonious economic strategy within the BRICS. As observed by Vanaik (2015) the BRICS member countries often than not implement unilateral economic policies through bilateral treaties in the international system. Thus, in the absence of ideological convergence within the framework of the BRICS, China acts unilaterally in the shaping of Latin American economies and politics. As illustrated in Figure 2 below, the trade imbalance between China and Mercosur persisted between 2010 and 2015 in favour of China. As the trade statistics show, in 2010, the value of Mercosur's exports to China (US\$'000) stood at 36,944,483.42 compared to its imports accounting for 37,005,447.26. By 2015, the trade imbalance reached a pick with a total export figure of 41,425,029.41 compared to importation from China at a value of 45,986,320.48. The year 2016 marked a fundamental change in the balance of trade between Mercosur and China in favour of the former as Mercosur's export value rose to 40,457,437.34 against a total import valued 37,315,515.59. This trend reached an unprecedented peak in 2023 with a total Mercosur export of 111,050,866.24 compared to a total importation from China valued 74,139,623.48 (US\$'000) [2]. Even though the bulk of the exports from Mercosur to China comprised primary goods, albeit manufactured products imported from China, the Chinese relations with the region help generate significant capital vital to the regional economy. In essence, using the south-south development movement as a channel, China pursues its national interests of economic appropriation and geostrategic counter-balancing of the United States in the region through soft power and economic diplomacy.

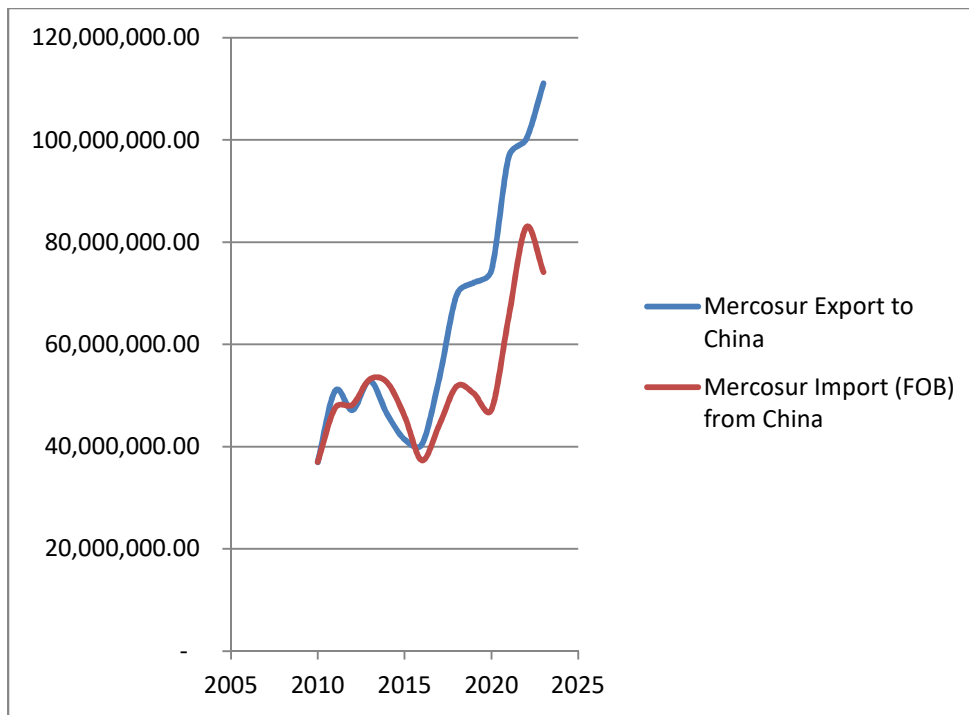


Figure 2. Value of Mercosur-China Trade, 2010-2023

Source: Authors' computation based on the trade records Mercosur, 2024. Available at <https://estadisticas.mercosur.int/?language=en>.

Beyond China, India is an emerging economic power in Latin America. The records of the Department of Commerce, Government of India, show a rising bilateral trade between India and Latin America moving up to an estimated export value of \$5.6 billion in the 2009-10 fiscal year, \$9.3 billion (2010-11), \$12.3 billion (2011-12), \$13.5 billion (2012-13), \$10.8 billion (2013-14), \$11.5 billion (2014-15), \$7.5 billion (2015-16), \$7.2 billion (2016-17), \$8.6 billion (2017-18), \$9.7 billion (2018-19), \$10 billion (2019-20), \$10.1 billion (2020-21) and \$14.9 billion in 2021-22. This is in comparison to imports from Latin America that stood at \$9.4 billion in the year 2009-10, \$13 billion (2010-11), \$16.2 billion (2011-12), \$27.5 billion (2012-13), \$28.1 billion (2013-14), \$27 billion (2014-15), \$17.7 billion (2015-16), \$17.3 billion (2016-17), \$20.7 billion (2017-18), and \$20.5 billion (2018-19). The import trade nose-dived to \$17 billion in 2019-20 and \$12.5 billion (2020-21) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery from COVID-19 was marked by a rise in importation to \$ 21.7 billion in 2021-22 (see Figure 3) [3].



Figure 3: India's Bilateral Trade with Latin America: 2009-2022

Source: Authors' computation based on statistics of the Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2023.

Figure 3 reveals a steady outflow of Latin American commodities in support of the growing Indian manufacturing sector. On the other hand, the export of manufactured goods from Indian industries to Latin America experienced fluctuations from 2010 to 2022. This implies that India emphasizes importation from Latin America more than its exports to the region. This scenario illuminates Indian foreign policy of engaging diverse markets based on its strategic economic interests. This shortfall in Indian exports is complemented by the established export flow of manufactured goods from China to the region.

The proposal of America's Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) is a response of the United States to the changing geopolitics of Latin America marked by the unprecedented engagement of great powers of Asia with the region. The willingness of the United States to negotiate APEP was announced at the Ninth Summit of the Americas on 8 June 2022. Within the framework of APEP, the United States emphasizes proximity and the associated spatial integration as an important basis of an unalienable regional integration of the Americas. APEP is envisioned as a renewed attempt to facilitate regional integration in the Western Hemisphere through economic cooperation and the standardization of human and environmental resource use through pronouncements such as "creating clean energy jobs and advancing decarbonization and biodiversity"[4]. This seems to technically counter the Chinese extractive activities in Latin America.

Furthermore, the growth of Indian private transnational businesses in Latin America creates an alternative path to counterbalancing the expanding Chinese export market in the region. Engaging in local manufacturing and industrialization would be actualized in the long run.

Whereas Latin America belongs to the periphery of Indian foreign policy, the Indian private sector contributes to the direct foreign investment in the region. This is the case of Indian industries such as UPL in the agrochemical sector, Aditha Birla in the metallurgical sector and TCL in the Information Technology amongst others in the pharmaceutical and automobile sectors. In this vein, it has been noted that “India’s investments in Latin America, estimated between \$12 billion to \$16 billion, may be far smaller in value when compared to China at \$159 billion, but they create [...] jobs in services and manufacturing in a region that actively seeks to diversify away from its dependence on commodities” (Seshasayee, 2022, p. 4). Rather than the Chinese pre-occupation with the extractive sector and transportation infrastructure, Indian private firms work to diversify the Latin American economy, thereby facilitating valuable direct investment and creating employment opportunities devoid of stringent external economic conditionalities. Hence, the growing dominance of Indian companies in the Latin American private sector constitutes a third force that could be harnessed through Public-Private partnerships in order to negotiate the status quo of global power politics in the region. However, aware of the growing Indian private businesses in the region, one of the important goals of APEP is the strengthening and deployment of “regional economic institutions” such as the “Inter-American Development Bank” to propel “private sector development”[4]. This could create an open gate for the influx of United States private businesses as engendered by the Indo-American alliance and consolidate the operations of the emerging Indian private companies in the region.

The regional economy of Latin America has been structured over time by external influences deployed through economic institutions controlled by world powers such as the United States. While political independence led to the emergence of new nation-states, the post-independence period was largely neocolonial. It was characterized by the dominance of Western great powers in the economic and political structure of the region (Bulmer-Thomas, 2003; Berkin et al., 2011). The failure of structural adjustment programmes championed by Bretton Wood Institutions undermined economic productivity and development in Latin America by the end of the twentieth century. This economic crisis led to the call by countries such as Brazil for regional integration under the Southern Common Market (Mercosur). This was a call for regional integration against the regional hegemony of the United States. In the twenty-first century, the process of regional unity was spearheaded by Brazil under the leadership of Lula da Silva in 2002 in the context of the Post-Washington Consensus. The earlier successes recorded in this direction involved the strategic cooperation between Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina through political consensus on regional trade. The Brazilian strategy for regional cohesion was further cemented through the re-invigoration of regional institutions such as the Mercosur and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) (Bernal-Meza & Ortega-Brena, 2022). However, the progress made was later reversed by internal and external challenges in the form of economic and political crises within Brazil as well as the dominant influence of the United States and China in the region.

While regional powers such as Brazil, Mexico and Argentina could be the arrowhead of regional cohesion, the enormous resources at the disposal of great powers such as the United States and China undermine any hegemonic revival from within the region. Moreover, Brazil lost its grip on Mercosur which could have been a channel for its regional hegemonic rise due to internal contradictions that characterized the country’s political transition in the early twenty-first century. Moreover, the strong influence of the region’s heads of state on Mercosur undermines its regional leadership (Hoffmann, 2023). The implication is regional economic vulnerability amidst contending great power presence and geopolitics. Nevertheless, realizing its limitation in regional politics, Brazil under Lula da Silver’s rebound leadership in 2023 is seeking an alliance with China in the making of a regional

hegemony based on a dual power model. As Lula confirmed during a state visit to China on 12 April 2023: “Brazil is back [...] The time when Brazil was absent from major world decisions is in the past” (VOA, 2023). According to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

President Xi [...] pointed out that China and Brazil are the two biggest developing countries and emerging markets in the Eastern and Western hemispheres [...] China always views and develops relations with Brazil from a strategic and long-term perspective, and sees the relationship as a high priority on its diplomatic agenda. China will work with Brazil to create a new future for their relations in the new era, deliver greater benefits to the two peoples, and play an important and positive role for peace, stability and prosperity in their regions and around the world [5].

The foregoing confirms the Chinese willingness to form an alliance with Brazil in the shaping of the emerging geopolitical architecture of Latin America. However, Brazil has rejected China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Latin America (Global Construction Review, 2024, November 8). This decision shows Brazil’s willingness to lead as China’s equal partner in the economic and political architecture of the region. Beyond the state-centric dilemma, the ability of governments in Latin America to harness the growing embeddedness of the emerging transnational private enterprises would impact the future of the region’s international economic relations.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the external control of Latin America’s economic machinery has resulted in partial economic growth and local yearnings for better conditions of living over time. This entrapment in the geopolitics of the great powers is illustrated by the challenges of economic development and regional integration in the region. The growth of the renewable clean energy sector sets the pace for a new dimension of power play between major actors such as China and the United States in Latin America. However, the convergence of multi-dimensional blocs of power could ginger a new power arrangement in Latin America with the rolling-back of US dominance and the entry of China and India.

In essence, regional development and cohesion in Latin America would require the region’s strategic engagement with global capitalism. This can only be achieved through the strengthening of local institutions to negotiate global power trajectories, a task that the Lula-led Brazil promises to actualize in partnership with China. Moreover, the emerging growth of Indian private firms in the economy of Latin America portends a third force in the configuration of the region’s economic and geopolitical architecture.

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Conflict Resolution in Pre-Colonial Ughievwen Society, Ughelli South Local Government Area, Delta State: A Historical Overview

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Abstract

The study examined the pre-colonial conflict resolution mechanism in Ughievwen land, Ughelli South Local Government Area, Delta State. The study aims to demonstrate the fact that pre-colonial African Communities were not only politically organized, but also to demonstrate the point that internal mechanisms existed within African Communities that promoted peaceful co-existence, from which contemporary Nigeria could draw lessons and thus make the Nigerian State a “bride” of the world. The study used the historical method of investigation that involved the collection and interpretation of data. The data used in the study were sourced from primary and secondary sources having subjected them to textual and contextual analysis and further interviews conducted for the purpose of authentication. The presentation is essentially narrative, descriptive and analytical. The study found that traditional dispute resolution techniques helped to keep the Ughievwen Society intact and fostered unity among the people. This cord of unity could be adopted by the Nigerian society of contemporary times and overall, the society would be a safe “haven” for all.

Keyword: Conflict, Pre-colonial Ughievwe, Society, Conflict Resolution and Nigeria.

Introduction

Societies in the world at different climes have always evolved ways of handling their problems and challenges. These challenges have been made known to us through different disciplines. One of such disciplines or fields of dissemination of such knowledge has been the humanities. Unfortunately, in Africa, the humanities, as recently described by CBN Ogbogbo, the former President of the Historical Society of Nigeria, is “in retreat and so has been historical scholarship” (Ogbogbo,2016, 13). Historical scholarship, he continued, “which only some years ago, was a major platform for African renaissance and the fight for independence of African State, is today gasping for the breath to survive” (Ogbogbo,2016, 13).

Interestingly, it needs to be borne in mind that amongst the myriads of communities in pre-

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colonial Nigeria, the knowledge of history was” taken very seriously and was central to their worldview” (Ogbogbo, 2016, 15). This study therefore, not only throw light on how Africans managed their internal problems successfully without external interference, but also goes to confirm that if well managed and passed on to successive African leaders, the continent would not be negatively painted as was done by some European writers (Saligman, 1930). It could therefore, also be recalled that the histories of various communities in Africa have been transmitted through what Toyin Falola called “Ritual Archive” (Falola, 2016). This study would certainly contribute to such archives. The summary thus, is that “Historical knowledge is a necessity for the integration and survival within the pre-colonial societies in Africa (Ogbogbo, 2016, 17-18). Conflict, it must be noted, is unavoidable in any human society, (Oghi, 2015) because as humans differ, so also are their interest”, where such conflicts are not resolved, the parties involved and indeed, the larger society is also affected”. This study is thus, divided into six sections. The first section is the introduction which examined the rationale for conflict resolution and the need for the discipline of history to properly take cognizance of the internal mechanisms for sustaining same in pre-colonial Africa. The second limb of the paper discusses the geographical and historical background of the Ughievwen society which was one of the five major clans in Urhoboland prior to the coming of colonial rule; while the third section of the paper examined economic, social and political issues necessitating conflicts that demanded resolution in pre-colonial Ughievwenland. The fourth section of the study discussed the mechanism for the resolution of the aforesaid conflicts. The fifth part of the paper focused on the lessons which the Nigerian nation-state could draw from the discussion in order to engender more united country where peace would be the concern of all, while the concluding section imposes a duty on Nigerian leaders and statemen to harness these pre-colonial strongholds for the betterment and emergence of a virile and forward-marching country where the efforts of our past heroes, would not go down the drain.

Geographical and Historical Background of Ughievwen People

A major part that strikes the attention of any scholar working on the history of African communities is the fact that the pre-colonial state in Africa has been the subject of debate. The main issue has been whether such state had their origins in conquest or emerged through peaceful development in a process of integration of different groups or communities (Naomi Chazan's Chapter: Chazan, 1988, 5, Rothschild & Chazan (Eds), 123). The Ughievwen people presently domiciled in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria is a sub-cultural area with its administrative headquarters in Otughievwen (Oghi, 2014). Its territory is bounded on the South and South-East by Okpara or Ekiagbodo creek in the Udu Local Government Area of Delta State, on the North-East by Agbarho Clan and on the East by Ughelli Clan (Pipah, 1999). The Area lies wholly in the tropics and could be located roughly at 5,12N and 5,88E occupying about 279 square kilometres. Ughievwen land is situated in the rainforest region of Nigeria. The area, just like the rest of the Niger Delta, has a humid climate that is sub-equatorial with a long-wet season that lasts from March to October and alternates with a shot dry season that occurs from November to February each year (Oyaide, 1991). The annual rainfall in the area is as high as 2500m (Oyaide, 1991, 2). Raffia Palm pullulates the forest of the area that is essentially swampy while savanna vegetation also occurs in the area and is in continuous patches on the creek flood plains. Only few trees such as Oil Palm and Spear grass (*imperata cylindricat*) are dominant in the area. There are also creeks and rivers that provide the main physical routes through which contacts with neighbouring peoples are made. During the rainy season, communication between villages is interrupted because most of the village paths are flooded. The Okwagbe river (then called Ganagana River before the coming of the

European) provided the main source of transportation both within Ughievwen Clan and the neighboring area. As a result of this geography, the main occupations of the people included: subsistence farming, fishing, trading, palm wine tapping (local gin production) and local crafts (Orogun, 2024).

The early history of Ughievwen land indicate influences and association with Egypt, Benin, the Niger-Benue confluence Area and Ijo Origins. Whereas previous non-historians had emphasized some of these claims (Johnson, 1932, 285-286). A more recent study has traced the settlement of the people on the area now occupied by them to the early decades of the eighteenth century (Oghi, 2014, 51-54). The Version that traced the early history of the Ughievwen people to Egypt in line with previous works on the Binis, has been rejected on the ground that they were attempts to seek glory because of the well-organized system of life which astonished such scholars (Basden, 1966, 414, Egharevba, 1968, 1, & Talbot, 1969, 276-278). The second claim is that which associates the Ughievwen people with Benin (Nukueye, 2003, 13). J.E. Nukueye is a strong apostle of this school of thought. The claim is to the effect that the Urhobo people migrated from Benin at about 1370 A.D. Ughievwen, this source claimed, founded a settlement called Otughievwen which means "Land of the Ughievwen". This school of thought was founded on a tradition which postulated that at the time the Urhobo left Benin, during the reign of Egbekah (Nukueye, 2003, 4). The people were led by one Koku. From Benin, they arrived the Ethiope River. However, the identity of this said Koku is not explained and no reference is made to Ughievwen in the narratives. In fact, the meaning of the name of Ughievwen seemed not known to the people who emphasized this version, (Nukueye, 2003, 4) but it is in all probability agreed that one Musumo, from Oginibo (one of Ughievwen Villages) used to visit the Oba of Benin after the abolition of the slave trade (H.R.H. Okotete, 2010). It is even alleged that upon arrival, the people first settled at Otor-Edo. Of course, there could be some undoubtable link with Benin, because for a village in the clan to have been named after a Bini lends credence to some interactions that could have existed. Indeed, link to Benin has some historical validity going by the oral accounts of Djervbudu John (Djevbudu, 2011). As it stands, it is quite obvious that lack of detailed information on Koku's identity encourages speculative rather than definitive comments. It is possible to regard him as one of those associated with voluntary migrations in search of new homes due to population pressure. No evidence at present exist to support this, and consequently the claims is dismissed.

Next, is the Niger-Benue Confluence version of origins of the Ughievwen people. This version recognizes the Niger-Benue confluence as the original homeland of the Ughievwen people (Barr. P.A. Ideh, 2010). This tradition was introduced by writers after the rich Nok finds and other discoveries linked with the area. Ughievwen people had made up their story to identify with this tradition. This tradition appeared to be gaining followership (Ijoma, 2010, 16-18). It now seemed common among ethnic groups of southern Nigeria. Impressed by the tradition, A.E. Afigbo had stated that: the Igbos, like their immediate neighboring Kwa-speaking groups, probably started off from around the region of the Niger-Benue confluence (Afigbo, 1981). The attribution of the Ughievwen origins to this tradition appears to have been based on linguistic affiliation. There is the view that groups of people might speak the same language at the one period, but with the passage of time and their drifting apart, they lose contact with each other; develop different dialects of the same language and finally, acquire different languages. However, no clear explanation has been given as to why the Confluence area must be regarded as the special cradleland of the Kwa family of languages to which Ughievwen belong.

Furthermore, geologically the Niger-Benue Confluence area perhaps remains for long under the sea, while other places around it did. Taken further, the coastal region of the Niger-Delta where the Ughievwen live today have never been part of the earth during the

post-Eocene period (Ntukidem, 1976). The Ughievwen people even used the antiquity of yam cultivation (which the people call *Ole*) to support the argument for migration of its people from the Niger-Benue confluence area (Chikwendu, 1979, 44-48). It needs to be stressed however, that the Ughievwen area was not known for yam cultivation if anything, such argument could perhaps make some sense for Igbo who prized yam cultivation highly. The fact that yam was one of the staple foods of the Ughievwen may not be enough to support the argument. It has been emphasized that yam do not thrive well in the rainforest because they need sufficient sunlight. While an archeological site in Igbo land has yielded a date of 1200B.C for yam cultivation. ((Ijoma, 2010, 16-18) It has not been so for Ughievwen land. It is also true that many archeological sites in Ughievwen land are yet to be explored. It is not however, safe at this point, to associate any knowledge of yam cultivation in the area with the origin and migration theory of the people, until perhaps, more detailed studies (archaeological or otherwise) are carried out. Consequently, even if the confluence area may have for long, been a region of cross-cultural activities for many Nigerian people, for now, there might not be any satisfactory reasons to identify the confluence as the original homeland for the Ughievwen people.

There is also the version that links the history of the Ughievwen people to Ijoland. This version seemed to be the most popular tradition concerning the settlement of the people in their present abode. It was the version recorded by colonial officials who had to produce intelligence reports, relying much however, on stories narrated to them by the people. This version maintained that the early history of the Ughievwen people was identical with that of Ewu clan (Johnson, 1932, 8). This Ijo tradition claimed that the Ughievwen people migrated from Ijoland, Ogboibiri, in present day Bayelsa State of Nigeria (Johnson, 1932, 8). The tradition contends that as a result of increase in population and the resultant congestion, some families, decided to leave Ogboibiri and they were later joined by two other families; the Ewu and the Ughievwen (also spelt Jeremi). The families; the Ewu and the Ughievwen (Jeremi) family finally settled near the present site of Ekiagbodo. How long this journey lasted is not known; but it is stated that the people were continually harassed and their territory raided for slaves by the surrounding mein Ijos (Johnson, 1932, 9-12). In order to avoid these harassment, further movement resulted and later settlements emerged in different areas such as *Imode*, *Eyara*, *Agbowhiame*, *Erhuwaren*, *agbaghare*, *Ayagha*, *Oginibo*, *Iwhreoku*, *Okwagbe*, *Ekrokpe*, *Ekakpamre*, *Urthiephron*, *Ughevbughe*, *Otokutu*, *Egbo* and *Iwhrekeka*. The period of settlement of these people, in a recent study has been traced to the early decades of the eighteenth century (Oghi, 2014, 51-54). Without delving into the arguments raised in the claims and counter-claims of these traditions one thing certain about the Ughievwen people, which is the focus of this study, was that by the close of the nineteenth century they already emerged as a people with distinctive and admirable culture, organized political system, though not of the same magnitude with the western world, but nonetheless, had internal mechanisms that kept the Ughievwen society cohesive and united.

Political, Social and Economic Institution in Pre-Colonial Ughievwen Society

Ughievwen pre-colonial political institutions was made up of the kinship structure and the kingship political system. While the kinship arrangement recognized the family, the kingship system was said to have been altered by two major considerations by the middle of the nineteenth century. In the kinship structure, the family played a major role. It was made of the nuclear and extended members. Each extended family was headed by the oldest man in the family, *Okpako Orua*. The oldest man represented the immediate family in lineage or kindred and village meetings. However, women could not become family heads. The reason could be attributed to the general state of the acephalous nature of some Nigerian

communities in which women, as noted, by Okonjo “were not involved in the mainstream of decision making” (Okonji, 1974, 45). Decisions were taken through democratic process and family pronouncement were made by family heads in Ughievwen land as in other Urhobo and Ijaw area. Legislative and judicial functions were not regarded as separate functions (Pa. James Dase, 2011). There was also the lineage or kindred. This was made up of a group of related extended families. The size of lineages varied from one village to another. The lineage was headed by the eldest man, his authority was reported by all members of the lineage in all village meetings (Pa. James Dase, 2011). The lineage-maintained law and order among its members and also ensured that decisions taken during village meetings were strictly complied with by all lineage members.

Next was the village. It was the basic unit of political organisation in Ughievwen clan before the introduction of the trade in palm oil and kernels (Pa. James Dase, 2011). This was confirmed by S.E. Johnson, who in 1932, wrote “... as in all Sobo clans and indeed, in all tribes inhabiting the Niger-Delta region, the village group council was the keystone of social organization” (Johnson, 1932, 22). However, rules and regulations for public security, welfare and protection from foreign aggression were also made (Johnson, 1932, 23). Another vital aspect of the kinship structure was the age-grades. The highest grade that could be attained was the grade of *Ekpako* (Plural of *Okpako*). When a man had passed through the stage of *Otu*, reached a fairly ripe age, and became responsible authority for a small community which could be termed the domestic family, he was admitted into the deliberations of his quarter council, and later to the sub-clan council. He was then said to be of the *Okpako* grade. The *Ekpako* had no distinctive badge, dress or staff of office (Pa. James Dase, 2011). But the head *Okpako* in the village group council was assisted by the *Akpile Otata*. Decisions of the village group council were transmitted by the messengers known as *Ikor*. Each village group had its own *Ukor* (Singular of *Ikor*) who were employed by the council on errands of importance to summon council meetings at the instance of the *Otota* and brought before the council, persons summoned (Pa. James Dase, 2011).

There was also, the people’s Assembly, *Awhare Oworho*, which was a meeting of all the adult males of the village. It was held at the residence of the eldest person in the village (*Okpako Orere*). Males within the community or village attended and expressed their opinions on issues for deliberations. The population of attendance at such meetings depended on the degree of public interest in the matters to be discussed (Pa. James Dase, 2011). At such meetings, issues were thrown open for free discussion by all present. After issues had been fully discussed, elders representing each lineages examined the matter under discussions more closely. This was called *Ume* and thereafter, a consensus was reached (Pa. James Dase, 2011). Such decisions were presented to the *Awhare* for ratification. Contribution from the younger ones (*Uvwie*) was also recognized. This included the females (*Otu Emete*). Meetings of the *Otu Emete* were held in the compound of the eldest among them *Okpako Emete*, while those of the women (*Ewheya*) was held in the compound of the *Okpako Ewheya*. In some cases, where mischief was reported, protest was led to the *Okpako Orere* to register their grievances.

As earlier stated, two major factors altered the political system of Ughievwen clan by the middle of the nineteenth century. First, was the abolition of the slave trade and second, was the introduction of the new trade in palm oil (H.R.H. Okotete, 2010). This is understandable when one recalls the fact that before this period, the trade in slave was one profitable business in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, in addition to fishing and farming from which the Urhobo in the hinterland supplied agricultural products to the Itsekiri (Ikime, 1971, 4). The new trade in palm oil had two basic features, namely; the “Trust” system and the need for participants to have fleets of canaas, which according to Obaro Ikime, “were manned by slaves” (Ikime, 1971, 6). It was probable that in this circumstance,

institutions like *Aden*, *Ebo*, *Igbun-Otor* and later *Igbun-Eshovwin* emerged in the Ughievwen clan; otherwise, what led to the emergence of these institutions has not been explained and nobody seemed to know (Akpanugie, 2008). Even one of the latest efforts at recording/ documenting the past of the Ughievwen people also mentioned this view (Pippah, 1999). By the beginning of the nineteenth century therefore, the Ughievwen people had institutions that could handle conflicts or misunderstanding of any sort and thereby promote peaceful coexistence among the people.

Resolution Of Conflict In Pre-Colonial Ughievwenland:

Ughievwen land, like other parts of the world, had conflicts that were related to political, social and economic issues. In the political sphere, there were issues like land boundaries and those of succession, while concerning social issues, there were those that were involved with inheritance and childlessness or barrenness. Issues of economic nature included: taxation, recovery of debts and trespass. All these issues were traditionally resolved in pre-colonial Ughievwen land by the institutions earlier discussed *Supra*.

(i) Political Conflicts/Disputes:

Boundary disputes, traditionally called *uphru* were common in pre-colonial Ughievwen land (Solomon Koyor, 2009). This was particularly the case in areas where there were no natural demarcations, which could be valley or rivers (Solomon Koyor, 2009). Once there was a dispute over a particular boundary, the matter was handled by the *Aden*. Membership of *Aden* was open to males only and as soon as one became a member, visitation by the gods was expected to be reported by such person to the head of the group called *Odede* (Solomon Koyor, 2009). Such member visited was expected to formalize initiation rite called *gorhovwen*, after which an official ceremony, *Edjere Eshe*, was held of the *Aden* cult (Solomon Koyor, 2009). Difficult or more serious matters were referred to the *Okubaro* to mediate and his decision was binding on the parties. Once a boundary dispute has been settled, the boundary was demarcated by the planting of *Okhriki* tree (Chief Osemwingie Ero, 2018).

Another set of political dispute/conflict that was experienced by the Ughievwen people in pre-colonial period were those related to succession. Recent studies on the Ughievwen people have shown that there was monarchical system of government before the schism in the area that may have influenced S.E. Johnson's adumbration that there was restiveness, until the arrival of government (Johnson, 1932, 12). Where issues of succession arose, the emphasis by chiefs who handled such matters such as the *Aden* and *Igbun*, the principle of primogeniture was strictly followed. In the case of hereditary titles, only eldest male children whose mothers were married traditionally to the deceased, had the right to inherit or succeed their father. This was subject to satisfactory performance of necessary rites (Orogun, M. Weneso, 2023). Children that were given birth to (*Emo Osen*), outside wedlock, were not entitled to inheritance or succession.

However, there were occasions where two or more persons laid claims to succession or inheritance. Where this arose, traditional measures were used to ascertain the right person entitled to inheritance. This was done in two ways: first, claimants were summoned to one of either the *Aden* cult or that of the *Igbun*, where oaths were administered on the claimants. The second method, which was rarely applied, was the type in which, for instance, the property of the deceased may have been verbally willed to a particular son, before the death of the holder (Orogun, M. Weneso, 2023). Rituals were performed and those who witnessed it are summoned to testify to the claim, while in the first method, the spirit of the ancestors (*Erimwin Iniemo and Erinmwin Esemo*) were involved to ascertain the right claimants. There were occasions where the deceased property was shared among the children by the family (Igbafe, P. A, 1979, 405). (*Okpako Orhua*) Thus, like the practice in Benin kingdom,

in which the people were related, issues that concerned inheritance (*Ukun*) were handled traditionally without recourse to war.

(ii) **Social Conflicts/Dispute:**

Social conflicts/disputes are phenomena that have been part of human existence and daily living. The occurrence of this category of conflicts, from the view of scholars, is due to interactions that occur among social groups. These groups, as argued by O.D. Oche, “are product of incompatibilities and differences between individuals and groups” (Oche, O. D. 2006, 11). Marriage in pre-colonial Ughievwen land experienced this form of conflicts. As it were, marriages in pre-colonial Ughievwen land were determined by tradition and customs, it was different from the westernized type of marriage that emphasized monogamy. The Ughievwen could marry as many as his income could afford. In fact, it was socially debasing if one’s children had no half brothers or sisters (Orogun, M. W, 2023). However, as soon as a woman was married to a man, it was difficult if not rare, to think of divorce because it was not indigenously encouraged (Orogun, M. W, 2023). Marriage was preserved by traditional ethos that ensured disputes were amicably settled by families of the couples. Even where in a dispute, the means of persuasion failed, the woman still remained in the house of the husband (Orogun, M. W, 2023). This arrangement ensured that discipline existed in the families.

Another angle to social conflict/disputes in pre-colonial Ughievwen land was the issue of childlessness which could set families on edge (Peter Gorume Adjoro, 2023). Most failed marriages in pre-colonial Ughievwen land were propelled by either accusation of witchcraft or inability to have children. Witchcraft, in the words of John O. Ubrurhe, was “the most potent destructive agency in the Urhobo traditional society” (Ubrurhe, J. O. 2003, 52). Generally, its activities are so anti-social and inimical to the growth and development, such that all untoward occurrence are attributed to it (Ubrurhe, J. O. 2003, 52). On its part, childlessness was believed to be caused by natural and non-natural causes. It could be on the part of the man, or the woman, or could be linked to the wrath of the ancestors. There was the beliefs that that when a man or a woman died, either of a natural or man-made cause like suicide, at the burial obsequies of such person, depending on the sex, a sponge was given to someone known to have had children, to bathe the deceased before interment (Orogun, M. W, 2023). Other possible causes of childlessness were: rape and adultery (Opharien), (Orogun, M. W, 2023). Where conflict/disputes of childlessness arose, traditionally, the matter was brought to the attention of the family head (*Okpako Orhua*) who thereafter, summons members of both parties (families of the man and his wife) and such matter was amicably resolved. In situations where deadlock was the case, resort was to the *Okpako-Orere* (the eldest man in the town). There were situations where allegations of witchcraft may have been made as precedent to the dispute. On the consensus of both families, the truth was unearthed by the visit to *Aronwonka* somewhere in Kwale land. However, it is important to state that such disputes never elicited war or quarrels of greater magnitude.

Adultery was another issue that elicited social conflicts or disputes in pre-colonial Ughievwen land. Adultery was regarded as a taboo and a sign of evil. It could be done or committed by men or women. Whether done by men or women, if discovered, it attracted punishment. Whereas for women, it attracted sanctions like disgrace, eviction, payment of fine and banishment; for men, it elicited fines like *Osadje* (a kind of reparation for the atrocity done). However, in all of the socially detected crimes/conflicts, the divinities had a major role to play. Generally, Ughievwen people like other Urhobo, believed that *Oghene* was not the only creator and sustainer of the world, but also the source and end of morality. Divinities existed that acted as intermediaries between God and the people. In fact, the point has been stressed that the Urhobo generally, do not have a particular Divinity which is

worshipped by all (Orogun, M. W, 2023). Rather, each of the twenty-two clans or socio-political units have their divinities (known as *edjo* and *erha*) – an indication believed to have aided the people during process of migration, settlement and wars of expansion (Ubrurhe, J. O. 2003, 52). For the Ughievwen, the deity *Ogba-Urhie* for instance, was highly revered and respected. Throughout Urhobo land, the belief existed that different *edjo* and *erha* rendered the guns, cutlass and other weapons of the enemies ineffective (Ubrurhe, J. O. 2003, 52).

(iii) **Economic Conflict/Dispute:**

A key element that has been instrumental to peaceful and harmonious coexistence of societies all over the world, have been the way and manner in which the economy of such area is organized. Mismanagement and exploitation of resource lay the bastion for conflicts of economic nature; hence, economic historians have felt concerned with economic factor in the organization of societies, (Burton, J, 1990, Bendel, M., & Malone, D. M. (Eds.) 2000). By the close of colonial period, the economy of most African states were drastically affected by the manner in which they were managed by the colonizers (Boahen, A. Adu. 1985, 782-809). Pre-colonial Ughievwen society had a tax system that was indigenous and useful in the recovery of debts (Adjoro, P. G, 2023). Debt recovery was handled by persons that had integrity with the permission of the *Ovie* (the king). Debt recovery was within the ambit of *Igbun* chiefs in pre-colonial Ughievwen land. The *Igbun* society was open to persons who had distinguished themselves in the art of warfare and other deeds of valour. Holders of this title functioned as the soldiers of the kingdom. They were of two categories – *Igbun-otor* and *Igbun-eshovwin*. Each of these two groups had its *Odede* (leader) who was chosen on the basis of length of membership. For this group to which this informant belonged, an initiate was addressed as *Odjegbere* or *Ogbirhue* (Solomon Koyor, 2009). The belief that underly this stratification was that while the *Igbun eshovwin* were brave warriors who fought in air (traditional type of air force), the other category, *Igbun-Otor*, were those who fought on land (traditional army) (Solomon Koyor, 2009). These *Igbun* chiefs performed economic *cum* judicial roles. The cult adjudicated over case of theft and also had the authority to collect debts on behalf of creditors that sought their services (F.E. Oghi, 2014, 83-84). In the course of carrying out their debt recovery work, they were permitted by custom to kill and carry away any domestic animal, the cost of which was borne by the debtor (Solomon Koyor, 2009). Also important in the ladder of economic conflicts was the issues of trespass. Majority of trespass matters bothered on land matters. The village was the land holding unit in pre-colonial Ughievwen land (Weneso Orogun, 2023). An individual was allowed to farm anywhere within the village. Once there was issue of trespass raised, the attention of the elders in the community (*Ekpako orere*) was drawn to it. The *Otu-Ekpako* deliberated on it and took decisions that were binding on the parties involved. Ancestral landmarks and natural boundaries such as rivers, streams or valleys were used to determine issue of trespass in pre-colonial Ughievwen land. Once decisions had been reached, an *Oghriki* tree was planted to demarcate such boundaries. Parties may not be satisfied with certain decisions; where this was the case; appeals were made to the “*ovie*” (the monarch) who either affirmed the previous decision or caused an enquiry to be done all over. It was considered *egha* (Sacrilegious) to destroy economic crop (*Emu Okakun*) in pre-colonial Ughievwen land (Weneso Orogun, 2023).

Implications of Conflict Resolution Mechanism in Pre-colonial Ughievwen Land for the Nigerian State:

The foregoing discussion has brought to the fore, five important points about African communities before the era of colonialism. First, is the issue of challenges of maintaining cohesion in the society. Societies all over the world, have had challenges which were managed internally without the interference of external bodies. African communities were

no exception. Second, early European writers/scholars had erroneously believed that the Europeans were the force behind development in Africa. They had contended that development in this part of the world was hinged on the Western world. C.G. Seligman for instance, was forefront in this regard, with the publication of his *Races of Africa* in 1930. Third, the discussion so far, in this study has also shown that Africa, like other parts of the world, had indigenous institutions that took care of their political, social and economic needs. These institutions, at the occurrence of disputes, also managed conflicts, to ensure peaceful coexistence. Fourth, as in different parts of the world where the peoples' cosmology of the world differs, in Nigeria, the story was not different. In Ughievwen land for instance, the study has shown that the people had belief in edjo and erha, which helped the supreme God, in the control of the universe. This is not peculiar to Africa. It existed in different climes of the world. The ultimate objective of having them is their assistance in peaceful and harmonious living, their nomenclature notwithstanding.

Fundamentally too, this study has also shown that the Nigeria state as it is today, no doubt, is a secular one that accommodate different religion. These different religions co-exist and have one thing in common, love and unity. Adherence to these religions, therefore, should apply the ethos of their religion to build a united and peaceful country. If done, the degree of fissiparity among the people that elicit heinous crimes like kidnapping, theft and conflict will abate. The beauty of the Ughievwen case, was not ingrained in the magic of the then-existing institutions, but the preparedness of its subjects to accept the bindingness of the decisions reached. This can also be done in the Nigerian state. All that is needed, is the spirit and preparedness on the part of its citizenry to subjugate themselves to the ethos of the society.

Flowing from the above too, it could also be argued that even if colonial rule had not taken place, in all probability pre-colonial Ughievwen would have continued with its traditional conflict resolution mechanism. Emphasis now should be on the need to properly examine why societies prior to modern times, were intact. There is need for a study of the administrative initiatives of the past; a call for administrative history. It is now obvious that if Africa, and indeed Nigeria, is to extricate herself from the litany of developmental challenges, we must dig deep into the past. Such effort could provide alternatives that would be valuable to policy-makers and thereby move history from the state of antiquarianism to one that would help fashion contemporary solutions to contemporary problems. Basically, absence of peaceful co-existence imply insecurity. The more a community is faced with the headache of insecurity, development would be stifled. As was recently expressed by a scholar, O. B. Osadolor, "the scope of complexity of insecurity in Nigeria and other West African nations require cross-cutting integrated approach for a common security strategy and harmonious actions in the region (Osadolor, O. O, 2019, 2018). There is the urgent need to look closely at what existed in pre-colonial Nigeria such that, the past acts as guide in identifying leadership that emphasises change and is devoted to its implementation (Osadolor, O. O, 2019, 2018).

Conclusion

The study discussed conflict resolution mechanism in pre-colonial Ughievwen, Ughelli-South Local Government Area, Delta state, Nigeria. From the analysis made in the study, it could be seen that pre-colonial Ughievwen land had internal traditional mechanisms for resolving disputes of political, social and economic dimensions. The need to proffer solutions to these conflicts affirms the opinion of Alan Ryder, who, over fifty years ago said "the monarchial traditions, the creation of a complex political and social hierarchy and arising from these two, the growth of an imperial tradition (Ryder, Alan, 1967, 29), were indicators to the fact that development in Africa were not induced from outside. Traditional

dispute resolution methods were in existence before the coming of colonialism. The later, no doubt, over the decade, was interpreted to have been a major propellant in the pauperization of the less developed countries by the policy of accumulation by dispossession. Of course, crises are common occurrence all over the world, but for the continent of Africa, there were internal devices of checkmating conflicts as demonstrated in the case of the Ughievwen of Western Delta of Nigeria, discussed Supra. The Nigeria state should take a cue from this.

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APPENDIX: Oral Interviews

- Barrister P.A. Ideh, an 83-year-old legal practitioner from Effurun (Barr. P.A. Ideh, personal communication, November 17, 2010), shared insights on the early inhabitants of the area.
- Akpanugie, O. O, personal communication, Ekreobe Quarters, 94 years, Farmer, Orwahwa Village June 14, 2008.
- Adjoro, P. G, personal communication, December 28, 2023.
- Chief Osemwingie Ero, personal communication, the Edobayokhae of Benin Kingdom, 84 years, Benin City, August 30, 2018.
- Djevbudu John, a 60-year-old farmer from Otor-Edo Village personal communication, July 13, 2011.
- His Royal Highness Okotete, (H.R.H. Okotete, personal communication, September 28, 2010) shared insights that were corroborated by Traditional Chiefs Koyor Samuel and Dozen Ogbariemu). Otughievwen Royal Palace, Delta State.
- Orogun, M. Weneso, personal communication, retired Journalist, 68 years, December 27, 2023.
- Peter Gorume Adjoro personal communication, 66 years, Builder, Eyara Town, Ughelli South Local Government Area, December 28, 2023.
- Solomon Koyor, personal communication, the *Ogbirhue* of Ughievwen Kingdom, Eyara November 14, 2009.
- Samuel, Omoni, a 74-year-old resident of Owahwa Village (S. Omoni, personal communication, June 28, 2009).

Impact of Faith-Based Organisations on Societal Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Faith-based organisations have been an integral part of Nigeria's history, not only in religious practice but also in driving developmental initiatives. Despite their contributions to societal progress, their impact often goes unrecognized. This paper explores the significant role these organisations play in development; highlighting their efforts beyond faith-based activities. It emphasizes the need for proper documentation and acknowledgment of their contributions to ensure they receive the recognition they deserve.

Keywords: *Faith-Based Organisations, Development, Empowerment, Employment and Society.*

Introduction

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) whether at the national or worldwide level, are formal organisations whose identity and mission are drawn from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditional work independently, voluntarily, and non-profitably to promote and actualize collectively stated ideals about the public good (Siddika, 2021). They may have direct ties to a religious organisation and are frequently an extension of the church's institution. According to Black Sheep Community (2023), FBOs do play significant roles in society by providing healthcare, education, and social services, particularly in underserved communities. They may also contribute to preventing and addressing social concerns in conflict situations, such as gender-based and sexual assault. FBOs often have access and influence in communities that only a few other organisations have, making them uniquely positioned to positively effect change and improve outcomes for those in need.

It has been a common practice to ignore and exclude religious bodies and FBOs from the list of organisations with possible influence on community or societal development. For the most part, attention is frequently given to governments, financial organisations and cooperate bodies. However, in recent times, there seems to be a shift in attention toward places of worship such as churches, synagogues, mosques, and others that are fundamental to the growth of society and the building of communities. Policymakers now widely recognize the vital role faith-based organisations play in driving progress within their

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communities and society at large. According to Vidal, this optimism stems from several factors: efforts to scale back the public sector's role, notable successes in housing and economic development led by large churches, the absence of other strong institutions in struggling neighborhoods, and the belief that faith communities possess a unique ability to tackle persistent challenges where others have fallen short (2016).

In addition, Ngala (2018) posits that this optimism is influenced by the large size of the religious sector; as it holds a significant position within Nigeria's nonprofit landscape. Following health and education, religious congregations, denominational organisations, and other faith-based entities collectively form the third-largest segment of the country's nonprofit sector. This highlights the substantial role faith-driven institutions play in social and community development (Ayodele, 2015). FBOs have gained a prominent position that was unthinkable a few decades ago in a secular sociopolitical environment where religion cannot be ignored (Tomalin, 2013).

Development engagement for FBOs is not a new approach. This is because they have deep-rooted ties in developmental activities in various communities. This explains why Fountain (2015) contends that the development efforts of several FBOs are fundamental to the current secular development agenda. Denulin and Bano (2019) also argue that the church is widely known for its charitable works such as the provision of aids and medical assistance to the poor and less privileged in the society. The Islamic religion, on the other hand, is also known for such kinds of activities as evidenced in the act of Zakat which requires that a follower of Islam devotes 2.5 percent of his income to philanthropic causes. Similarly, Dyana, or generosity, is a related ritual in Hinduism. Also, through Christian Aid, Islamic Relief, and World Vision, FBOs' operations are also visible on a global scale. As in the cases of the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) and the Ramkrishna Mission of Bangladesh, this might also be localized. In fact, the former US President, George W. Bush's establishment of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives served as an official link between the state and FBOs, inspiring others to establish a relationship with them. Further, in order to collaborate with FBOs in the development sectors, the UK's Department of International Development (DFID) has created a formal connection with them, developing the Faith Partnership Principles, for example. (Flanigan, 2016).

It is to be noted that numerous developing nations, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and several African nations, are home to FBOs. Education, aid, child health, poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, climate change, peacebuilding, and many other areas have all benefited greatly from their efforts. Still, FBOs have come under fire despite their contributions to the development sector, as many of them have been charged with supporting Islamic militants, offering sectarian social services, spreading Wahhabism, an ideology that is popular in Saudi Arabia, and coercing or bribing the impoverished to convert to other religions. They have also been charged with partisanship and prejudice in the delivery of services in Nigeria. For example, FBOs may reflect, perpetuate, and strengthen socioeconomic differences seen in the milieu in which they operate, according to Ngala (2018). The dynamics of sectarian service delivery are further accelerated by this separation (Flanigan, 2016).

In light of the above, Occhipinti (2015) posits that some FBOs are often seen as suspicious as the services they provide could be suggestive of an attempt at the evangelisation and conversion of their recipients. This is because they feel that their donations are selectively

appropriated. Although she believes that the religious nature of these dubious FBOs poses less of a threat to secular development organisations at this time, the accumulation of these claims has heightened worries and prompted various inquiries regarding whether FBOs support conversion, fund terrorism, or offer sectarian services. Nonetheless, it is certain that FBOs have had a major influence on the growth of their host towns and have been recognized as development agents. Information on the functions and effects of FBOs on society growth and development appears to have been overlooked, since their role is still one of the least studied facets of community development. This article aims to investigate the role that faith-based organisations have in Nigerian societal development.

Periscoping Faith-Based Organisations

It is challenging to identify faith-based organisations in a strict sense. An exclusive definition might be restrictive as it could leave out unofficial organisations. Furthermore, many definitions of FBOs exist. Although the word FBOs is used more often in contemporary literature, others prefer to use Religious Non-Governmental Organisations (RNGOs) rather than FBOs. Julia Berger (2013), for example, substitutes Religious Non-Governmental Organisations (RNGOs) as a subset of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) that actively work to promote shared ideals of the public good at national and international levels. According to Berger (2013), these organisations are formally structured, deriving their identity and mission from religious or spiritual teachings. They operate as independent, non-profit, and voluntary entities.

Baiyeri (2015) takes a broader approach to defining faith-based organisations, drawing from the World Faith Development Dialogue (WFDD). Rather than limiting the term to a specific type of institution, Baiyeri includes everything from churches to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under the umbrella of FBOs. He also highlights the concept of Faith-Inspired Organisations (FIOs), which encompasses any development-focused organisation whose mission, vision, or historical foundation is rooted in religious teachings. Within this diverse landscape, the influence of religion varies. Some organisations integrate faith deeply into their operations, while others maintain a more secular approach despite their religious heritage. Whereas some organisations view religious principles as just supporting more formal relief and development activities, others view religion propagation as a key component of their social welfare work (Baiyeri, 2015).

To gain a better understanding, Clarke and Ware (2015) have taken a somewhat different approach and placed some focus on the typology of faith-based organisations. The teachings and principles of the faith, or a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith, serve as the source of inspiration and guidance for FBOs' activities, according to Clarke (2008). They suggest five different kinds of FBOs. These include: religious representative organisations; religious development or charity organisations; religious sociopolitical organisations; religious missionary organisations; and religious extremist, unlawful, or terrorist organisations.

Clarke and Ware (2015) identify four distinct types of faith-based organisations (FBOs). Some are directly linked to a local congregation or religious leader, while others operate within a formal religious denomination or sect as an official part of its institutional structure. There are also FBOs that, while connected to a religious tradition, function as independent entities. Lastly, some organisations draw inspiration from a broader religious heritage without being formally tied to any specific group.

Similarly, Sider and Unruh (2004) categorize Christian social service and educational

initiatives into six types, ranging from deeply faith-integrated to entirely secular. These include faith-centered, faith-affiliated, faith-permeated, faith-background, faith-secular collaborations, and purely secular organisations, reflecting varying degrees of religious influence in their mission and operations.

Faith-permeated Organisations: In these organisations, the relationship to religious faith is visible at every level of support, governance, staffing, and mission. Explicitly religious content is widely included into faith-permeated programmes. Participation in religious activities is frequently mandatory as it is thought that the religious component is crucial to the programme's success.

Faith-centered Organisations: Faith-centered organisations were established with a religious mission, maintain close ties to the religious community through affiliation and funding, and demand that the majority of its employees and the governing board share their religious beliefs. Although faith-centered programme's include overtly religious content and activities, they are made to allow members to easily choose not to participate and still receive the programme's advantages.

Faith-affiliated Organisations: With the probable exception of certain board and executive executives, faith-affiliated organisations do not demand its employees to accept their religious views or practices, but they do maintain some of the influence of their religious founders (for example, in their mission statement). Despite having little to no overtly religious material, religion-affiliated programmes may provide participants with spiritual resources and generally affirm their faith. The goal of faith-affiliated programmes may be to use nonverbal displays of kindness and concern to spread a religious message.

Faith-background Organisations: Despite having a historical connection to a religious heritage, faith-based organisations typically maintain a secular appearance and disposition. While certain employees may be motivated by their religious convictions, faith commitments are not taken into account when choosing the board or staff. Aside their potential placement in a religious environment, faith-background programmes do not openly address religion and they do not often anticipate that religious experience would influence programme results.

Faith-secular Partnerships: An interesting dynamic unfolds when a secular organisation – or even a faith-based one – teams up with churches or other openly religious groups. While the core management of such an organisation remains secular, it leans heavily on its faith-based partners for volunteer support and in-kind contributions. The collaboration is not necessarily built on shared religious beliefs, but there is a deep mutual respect between the leadership, staff, and their religious allies. Even though faith-inspired volunteers may offer optional religious resources or activities, the actual programmes tend to steer clear of overt religious messaging. Still, whether explicitly acknowledged or not, the spiritual foundation of these religious partners is often seen as a valuable asset that enhances the programme's overall impact.

Secular Organisations: Secular organisations view it as inappropriate to take religious commitments into account when recruiting and governing, and thus make no mention of religion in their mission or founding history. Thus, we could say that there is no religious

component in secular programming.

In light of the aforementioned, FBOs may be broadly classified into two groups: formal and informal. In order to carry out their operations, formal FBOs have a more structured and organized approach. Many FBOs have a more NGO-like appearance. They are actually listed as NGOs in a number of nations. Faith-based political parties might be included in this category because of their organisational structure. They might be both domestic and foreign. Despite looking to Faiths for inspiration, they often do not discriminate while offering services. However, churches, mosques, and temples are the primary locations for informal FBOs, which may be thought of as a unit station for all faith-based service provision. Even though these FBOs lack the official FBOs' organisation and structure, structured FBOs occasionally use local churches, mosques, or temples to build networks in their communities. Despite having different organisational capabilities, these two groups share the same objective of serving the public and promoting growth.

For the sake of this essay, FBOs will include churches, mosques, and organisations that are registered under them, connected to them in some manner, or run by their owners or members.

The Concept of Societal Development

Most people would agree that development is a prerequisite for advancement. In a range of contexts, such as linguistic, literary, biological, scientific and technical, social, and political, it is defined differently. The idea of change serves as the theoretical foundation for the idea of development. A change is a shift from one situation to another. According to this method, development is a sequence of transformations that are marked by characteristics like spontaneity, irreversibility, and monotony (Midgley 2013). Additionally, it refers to the idea of directionality and structure (Chojnicki & Czyż 2019). According to Gboyega (2018), development as an idea embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all manifestations. It implies enhancement in the material wellbeing of all citizens, not the elites alone, but ensuring that every citizen enjoys better quality of life, while safeguarding resources for future generations. Essentially, socioeconomic development is the driving force behind this transformation, merging economic growth with social progress to create lasting change.

At its core, social development reshapes institutions and societal structures, equipping communities with the tools to meet evolving challenges. This could mean adopting cutting-edge technologies, refining processes, or fostering a mindset shift that embraces progress. On the other hand, economic development focuses on strengthening financial prosperity at a national or regional level, ensuring that wealth generation translates into tangible benefits for the people. While economic growth often serves as a benchmark for development, true advancement lies in a balanced blend of both social and economic progress. The enhancement of living circumstances for both people and groups within a community is referred to as societal development.

Social development also includes the expansion and advancement of a nation's social and human capital. According to Midgley (2013), social development is achieved by lowering the rates of poverty, inequality, exclusion, isolation, and vulnerability of individuals at the periphery of society. This includes areas such as health, education, security, and employment, which form the backbone of a thriving society. To foster growth and ensure no

one is left behind, the state steps in through its various agencies and organisations. These bodies play a crucial role in implementing social protection policies and programmes designed to uplift those in the most vulnerable situations, promoting inclusion and creating opportunities for a better future. It is motivated by society's unconscious desires for progress or advancement and is the result of both the development of organisational mechanisms to express these discoveries and the pursuit of better ways to fulfill these desires in order to accomplish social and economic objectives (Midgley, 2013).

Societal development is a process that expands human consciousness and enhances social organisation. It happens when trailblazing individual efforts are copied, duplicated, and vigorously backed by society, which thereafter actively plans the new endeavor by putting in place institutions, laws, and procedures that encourage it. In other words, societal development is principally the responsibility of the government of the nation. This is because, apart from the funding of developmental projects and programmes, governments also provide the climate in which development thrives through its laws and policies. However, individuals and groups in every society also contribute in one way or the other to the development of the society. For instance, non-governmental organisations, clubs and foundations contribute to societal growth and development through focus and investments in various aspects of the economy such as education, health, agriculture and so on. According to Vidal (2016), they provide scholarships for students, soft loans and improved seedlings to farmers, skill acquisition programmes for youths as well as other types of empowerments. Indubitably, a significant contributor to societal development in Nigeria is Faith-Based Organisations (FBO).

Societal development could therefore be seen as the method by which a country enhances the social, political, and economic well-being of its citizens. Societal development is all about creating a world where everyone – individuals and social institutions alike – can thrive. It is not just about improving living conditions or boosting economies; it is about fostering an environment where people feel supported, connected, and empowered to reach their full potential. True progress happens when both material well-being and social harmony go hand in hand, paving the way for the highest level of human development.

Economic and social growth must be integrated for societal progress. According to Nabofa (2016), social development is the process of enhancing people's well-being by solid collaboration amongst all societal groups, business entities, and other sectors. Therefore, social and economic growth are combined to form societal development. In this instance, socio-economic development encompasses the improvement or progression of the standard of living as well as the expansion of people's economic circumstances and lives. Gboyega (2018) asserts that societal development is the result of intersection of social structures, dynamic processes, and human interactions. It prioritizes people at its core, championing participatory approaches that empower communities to shape their own progress. Rather than imposing solutions from the top down, this approach fosters collaboration, ensuring that development is both inclusive and deeply rooted in the needs and voices of the people it serves, which takes into account the social concerns of the populace as development goals. The common good, social fairness, and inclusivity are important to societal progress. According to Chojnicki and Czyż (2019), societal development consists of processes brought about by both endogenous and external variables, which dictate the development's trajectory. To put it another way, societal development processes are typically preceded by the results of other processes rather than operating alone.

This means that societal development as a whole is dependent on the various fragments of improvement and advancement in different sectors of the society. This is what is largely referred to as measure of development.

Measures of Societal Development

Societal development is measured with indicators, such as housing condition, health, levels of employment, and education. Housing conditions serve as an important indicator of societal development. The quality of housing is closely linked to various aspects of well-being, including health and economic status. Poor housing conditions, such as inadequate infrastructure, overcrowding, and exposure to environmental hazards, can have detrimental effects on health and overall quality of life. Additionally, housing characteristics, such as tenure and amenities, are widely used as measures of socioeconomic position. For instance, the majority of people's wealth and a significant amount of their income are derived from their housing tenure, whether they are renting or owning their home.

Health is a critical aspect of the life of an individual, without which not much can be achieved by him/her. Health is referred to as the physical, emotional, psychological and even spiritual status of an individual. It is the total and holistic wellbeing of a person at a given time. The importance of the health of people in particular and the world in general explains why both local and international organisations continue to emphasise and donate towards qualitative health care service. According to the Institute of Medicine (2016), having timely access to personal health services is essential for achieving optimal health outcomes. This implies that health facilities should be within the reach of all when required and that it is utilized and positioned in order to render appropriate services from which users can achieve the expected outcomes.

Employment represents the social and economic effects of the economic system and is a significant feature of societal development. To put it differently, any or all of the activities that take place in the workplace directly affect social and economic developments in society. Employment is defined as any activity that produces revenue and satisfies persons' social and personal requirements while abiding by the law. In order to create national wealth as a social product that is essential for society and all of its members, it is the process by which members of the able-bodied community achieve their labor potential and talents. One broad measure of society's labour activity is the employment level. However, many countries, particularly emerging ones like Nigeria, are dealing with high unemployment rates as a result of diminishing resources. Therefore, entrepreneurship offers a holistic answer to the job issue.

Education is, no doubt a critical aspect of the development of any nation. It is a strong determinant of how developed a nation is and how much development it can potentially attain. According to Misra (2019), Education is regarded as one of the most effective means of fostering social and economic development and has been demonstrated to have a quick positive influence on family planning, nutrition, health, and income. The claim that "no nation can develop beyond its educational system" is explained literally in this way. The evolution of contemporary economy and society is significantly influenced by the educational system. It is among the most crucial elements for a society's social and economic advancement. Additionally, it is the primary element in the development of human capital. If a nation does not make enough and prudent investments in education, it will be extremely difficult to achieve effective economic advancement.

Faith-Based Organisations and Societal Development in Nigeria

Faith-based organisations have played a significant role in offering services that advance societal development. The contribution of FBOs cuts across several sectors including health, education, employment, social services, entrepreneurship among others.

Health

FBOs have significantly influenced the provision of healthcare in Nigeria. This is typically through the establishment of hospitals, clinics, and other health facilities. They have played crucial roles in addressing public health needs, particularly in areas where government resources are limited.

Contributions of Christian FBOs to Healthcare in Nigeria

Missionary Hospitals and Clinics: Christian missionaries were among the first to establish hospitals and clinics in Nigeria, dating back to the 19th and early 20th centuries. Institutions such as the Wesley Guild Hospital in Ilesha and the Sacred Heart Hospital in Abeokuta are examples of facilities established by Christian missions. These institutions provided essential healthcare services and set the foundation for modern healthcare in Nigeria. According to Adamu, (2021), the Catholic Church alone operates about 300 health facilities across Nigeria, which include hospitals, clinics, and health centers. These facilities are often concentrated in both rural and urban areas. FBOs of other Christian denominations, including the Anglican, Methodist, and Baptist churches, also own and operate numerous health facilities, though the exact numbers are often less documented.

Health Education and Training: Christian FBOs have been involved in health education and the training of healthcare workers. Many of Nigeria's early nurses, midwives, and doctors were trained in mission hospitals and schools. For example, the School of Nursing at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, was initially influenced by Christian educational principles. Christian Connection for International Health (CCIH), (2021) report that Nigerians have been receiving health services including family planning, immunization, nutrition, and the building of health systems generally from the Christian Health Association of Nigeria, Rural Health Services, Isaiah 58 Care Foundation, Life Builders Ministries International, and World Renew. Despite holding just 27% of Nigeria's medical facilities, the faith-based health care system contributes more than 65% of the country's real health care delivery (World Health Organisation, 2016).

Community Health Initiatives: Various Christian FBOs have initiated community health programmes, focusing on preventive care, maternal and child health, and combating diseases like HIV/AIDS. The Catholic Church, through its health commission, runs numerous health facilities across the country, often in remote areas, providing services to isolated populations. In addition, faith-based institutions have developed some sort of partnership with the government. This essentially involves government healthcare personnel being assigned to faith-based healthcare facilities. States in Nigeria including Kogi, Taraba, Anambra, Benue, Imo, Edo, and Cross-River are home to this. However, CHAN Medi-Pharm offers medicinal supply warehousing and logistics for intervention programmes, including Global Fund and PEPFAR.

Contributions of Islam to Healthcare in Nigeria

Islamic Medical Missions: Islamic FBOs have also established health facilities in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions. These facilities often cater for the healthcare needs of the Muslim population, offering services that are culturally and religiously sensitive.

Examples include the Islamic Medical Association of Nigeria (IMAN), which operates clinics and hospitals.

Community-Based Health Services: Islamic FBOs have been involved in providing community-based health services. These include vaccination campaigns, health education, and disease prevention programmes. Also, the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) is active in maternal and child health, focusing on improving health outcomes among Muslim communities.

Healthcare Funding and Donations: Islamic charities and philanthropists have contributed to healthcare funding, particularly in building and equipping hospitals and clinics. These contributions are often directed towards improving access to healthcare in underserved areas.

Education

Just like the health sector, FBOs have also been deeply involved in providing education to Nigerians. In Nigeria, FBOs are heavily involved in the education sector. This is demonstrated by the vast number of FBO-affiliated schools that span all educational levels. The building of classroom blocks, community schools, the supply of educational resources, teacher training, and the immersive contribution to the formulation of the national curriculum are all attributed to FBOs. Another area in which many FBOs have invested and continue to do so is in the education of girls. The Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) aims to educate Muslim women and have a beneficial influence on national issues, according to Ngala (2018).

FBOs in Nigeria own and operate secondary schools. Some of which are: Loyola Jesuit College, Abuja; Immaculate Conception College, Benin City; St. Michael College, Benin City; Holy Child College, Ikoyi; Christ The King Catholic College, Ijebu; Notre Dame Girls' Academy, Abuja; St. Gregory's College, Lagoon School, Lekki; Faith Academy, Abuja; Lifeforte School, Ibadan; Hillcrest School, Jos; Seaba Model Christian Girls College, Akure; Wellspring College, Lagos; Baptist High School, Abuja; Showers Christian High Schools, Port Harcourt; Surefoot International School, Cross River; Dansol School, Lagos; Sacred Heart Secondary School, Benin City; Lumen Christi International High School, Uromi; Domus Mariae College, Igarra, among others.

A few years ago, at the tertiary level, Osewa (2019) noted that there are 39 tertiary institutions owned by FBOs while about 15 FBO tertiary institutions are awaiting approval. The current faith-based/affiliated institutions in Nigeria include: Babcock University, Madonna University-Rev, Bowen University-Nigerian, Covenant University, Benson Idahosa University, Redeemers University of Nations, Ajayi Crowther University, Caritas University, Gregory University Uтуру, Bingham University, Crawford University, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Salem University and Tansian University. Others are the Veritas University of Nigeria, Wesley University of Science and Technology, St Paul's University College, Rhema University, Bishop Godfrey Okoye University, Obong University, University of Mkar, Pan African University, Landmark University, Samuel Adegboyega University, McPherson University, Adeleke University, Evangel University, Mountain Top University, Anchor University, Kings University, Precious Cornerstone University, Hezekiah University, St. Augustine University, Clifford University, Dominican University, Spiritan University, Dominion University and Trinity University.

Social Services

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) hold a unique edge over secular social service providers, thanks to their strong ethical foundations, deep connections within both rural and urban communities, and the unwavering trust they have earned from their members and beneficiaries. This deep-rooted credibility sets them apart. James (2009) points out that while donors may have overlooked them for years, FBOs have long been pioneers in social welfare and service provision, leading the charge in uplifting communities even before they gained widespread recognition.

Also, various Christian FBOs in Nigeria are engaged in poverty alleviation initiatives. These include providing microfinance to small business owners, agricultural training programmes, and community development projects. Organisations such as the Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (CCFN) have been active in providing humanitarian assistance and development programmes, especially in conflict-affected areas (Agbiji & Swart, 2015). Similarly, Zakat, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, plays a significant role in poverty alleviation among Muslims in Nigeria. Islamic organisations and individuals often distributed Zakat to the poor and needy, providing financial support, food, and clothing. In addition to Zakat, other forms of charity like *sadaqah* and waqf (endowment) are also practiced, with funds often directed towards building schools, healthcare facilities, and providing social services (Abdullahi, 2011).

Entrepreneurship

A capitalist system is propelled by entrepreneurial behavior, and industrialized nations are steadily moving toward an economy centered on entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial growth has been examined from the perspective that certain environmental elements, including government policy, family and community support, business support services, and the availability of funding, might have an impact. In this sense, religious organisations may also play a crucial role in business. This is true because religion invariably has a favorable impact on individual traits including integrity, fortitude, bravery, foresight, and general ethical standards.

Institutionalized religion transmits values that influence individual business and professional success. Therefore, religious organisations assist in promoting ideals that lead to successful entrepreneurship. According to Griebel, Park, and Neubert (2014), cultural influences like religion also have an impact on employment decisions in addition to economic ones. The same is true for female business owners, for example. Church attendance and religious customs influence the choices members make regarding their company. Sometimes a woman's religion influences how she runs her business and makes decisions within it.

In view of the above teaching on a complete eclipsing of poverty in the nation, the inauguration of an organisation aimed at promoting development and building a society where poverty will be reduced to its barest minimum led to the establishment of JDPC. JDPC is an acronym for Justice, Development, Peace, Commission. The Catholic Women Organisation (C.W.O) under the auspices of JDPC have provided empowerment programmes across the country which has culminated into many women being self-reliant rather than over dependent on the church for survival. According to Griebel, Park and Neubert, (2014), the organisation puts widows into serious cognizance in order for them to be independent and provide for themselves and family. Rather than just providing clothes and money amongst other material things, Women participate in skill-building programmes that enable them to support their families and take care of themselves.

In a similar vein, the women's foundation of the Mountain of Fire Ministries, or MFM, was established in 2010. According to MFM leaders, women have a distinctive role to play in the Body of Christ since God has given them certain abilities for particular tasks, especially in this day and age. The Women Foundation's administration flows horizontally through the MFM Regions and into the MFM Branches around the globe. Through enlightenment and spiritual awareness, this is intended to have an impact on the lives of all MFM women. The goal of every MFM branch throughout the globe is to provide all women who are devoted members of the MFM Ministries with access to a highly operational and dynamic Women Foundation Department.

Essentially, the objective of the Women Foundation is to provide all women with the knowledge and abilities necessary to fulfill their roles as wives and husbands' helpers. Additionally, frequent prayer meetings, seminars, and workshops help to enhance the women's spirituality. Bringing out the best in women and empowering them to be satisfied as God's children, devoted family members, and valuable wage workers is their main objective. It also seeks to develop female leaders who will always stand out in an honorable manner. In order to make women more applicable to the church and society in the twenty-first century, the goal is to train and develop them in all aspects.

Thus, congregants who gather together after church to exchange ideas on how to market their enterprises surely build strong networks for entrepreneurs. Sermons and seminars with a business theme might help encourage members to start their own businesses. Churchgoers' support of products and services promotes the expansion of entrepreneurship. In actuality, many FBOs routinely host business seminars and workshops with the main goal of bringing out the best in their members, enabling them to be fulfilled as God's children and deserving wage earners, and producing leaders who will consistently present a positive image of themselves, according to Vidal (2016).

Empowerment

The process of granting basic economic privileges to the underprivileged, either directly or indirectly, with the assistance of the privileged individuals who have access to these opportunities, is known as empowerment of economic drive. Actively blocking efforts to prevent those possibilities is another aspect of it. (Blanchard, John, & Alan, 2016; Wilkinson, 2018). Generally speaking, involvement is the only way to demonstrate empowerment through the FBO's social and economic programmes. Given the urgent need to enable youth to assume socioeconomic responsibilities that determine their effectiveness in the empowerment process, such participation is even more crucial. A recognizable instance of the FBO empowerment programme is the collaboration between the Catholic Women Organisation and the Police Wives Association in Abuja in 2018 where over 500 women and youths were empowered with several skills to enable them to become their own boss rather than be financial burdens to their families. In 2014, the Catholic Women Organisation of St. Anthony Parish in Gbaja, Lagos State empowered 110 women in barbing, tying of head gears, interior decoration, make-up amongst others (Oyeka, 2019). Nabofa (2016) has conducted a research on the effectiveness of Christian religious organisations' economic empowerment initiatives in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The results show that Christian religious organisations offered skill-building programmes to empower their members. Additionally, the study found that most Christian religious organisations actively supported the empowerment of women, youth, and other vulnerable church members as well as the host communities.

Similarly, Islamic FBOs collect and distribute Zakat to support small businesses, provide scholarships for education, and assist in healthcare, thereby empowering recipients to improve their socio-economic status (Aliyu, 2014). They also engage in broader social welfare activities that contribute to the empowerment of citizens. These activities include building and running orphanages, providing healthcare services, and offering legal aid to those in need. By addressing these social needs, FBOs help to empower individuals and communities, enabling them to overcome challenges and improve their quality of life (Abubakar, 2009).

Employment

In the aspect of employment, it is incontrovertible that FBOs are immense employers of labour. According to Ngala (2018), religious organisations provide 22% of the employment opportunities in the country. This cuts across several categories namely low-level jobs such as janitors, security men, cooks, drivers and messengers; middle-level jobs such as secretaries, clerks, office assistants, accountants, teachers and lecturers and top-level jobs like Managers, Administrators, Bursars, Directors Vice Chancellors, Provosts, Rectors among others (Ngala, 2018). FBOs also provide skilled and non-skilled labour. According to Diwe (2015), skilled labour in the context of FBOs refers to job skills particularly related to the teachings and practice of a particular FBO. For example, to become a priest in the Catholic Church, one has to be trained for a minimum of nine years. Special training is also required for jobs such as catechists, sacristans among others. In other well-structured denominations, special training is required before one can get the job of a pastor. Similarly, Islam also requires certain levels of training before one can become an Imam.

According to An-Nawawi's version of Muslim's authenticated Hadiths (2016), becoming a competent Imam is a procedure that is somewhat analogous to becoming a priest. Years of instruction in traditional Islamic disciplines are required. Arabic first, followed by the study of fiqh (jurisprudence), 'aqidah (belief/creed), the Quran, Hadith, and spirituality, among other subjects. The fact that FBOs own and manage facilities and provide services across all sectors of the economy implies that people are employed to manage these facilities and provide prescribed services. This automatically translates to job opportunities for such persons.

FBOs have established numerous schools, colleges, and universities across Nigeria, which have not only provided education but also created significant employment opportunities. For example, a study by Afolabi (2015) revealed that Christian mission schools have been key employers in their communities, providing jobs for teachers, administrative staff, and support personnel. These schools often employ locals, thereby contributing to the reduction of unemployment in the regions where they operate. Correspondingly, Islamic FBOs have established schools and educational institutions that have created employment opportunities for educators and administrators. Sule-Kano (2008) has discovered that Islamiyya schools in northern Nigeria are major employers in the region, providing jobs to thousands of teachers and support staff, many of whom are locals. Healthcare facilities run by FBOs are another significant source of employment in Nigeria. Hospitals and clinics established by Christian and Islamic organisations hire a variety of medical specialists, such as physicians, nurses, technicians, and administrative personnel. In a similar vein, Onah and Okoye (2019) document that Catholic healthcare institutions, such as St. Gerard's Hospital, Kaduna and the various hospitals run by the Catholic Church, employ thousands of people across the country. These institutions are often among the largest employers of labour in their communities, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Islamic healthcare facilities also contribute to employment. A study by Adamu (2008) highlights the role of Islamic organisations in providing healthcare services and creating jobs for healthcare professionals in northern Nigeria. These facilities employ a variety of staff, contributing to the local economy and reducing unemployment. Again, some FBOs in Nigeria have also been involved in microfinance initiatives that create jobs and support small businesses. For example, the Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN) provides microloans and training to small business owners, which helps them to start or expand their businesses. Adesina (2013) discovered that these initiatives have led to the creation of numerous jobs in rural areas, where employment opportunities are often limited. Islamic FBOs also engage in similar activities, particularly through the distribution of Zakat (almsgiving). Abdullahi (2014) documented that Zakat funds are often used to support small businesses, which in turn create jobs and provide income for local communities. This approach not only provides immediate financial assistance but also fosters long-term economic development and employment.

Conclusion/Recommendations

It should be stated that societal development is a complicated and multidimensional idea that includes many facets of social and human capital and is motivated by society's underlying desires for development. In order to accomplish social and economic objectives, it is accomplished via the creation of organisational structures to represent that knowledge and the discovery of better ways to meet these desires. Building connections and being sociable are also important, and it calls for the capacity to gain trust by imparting wisdom, information, and insights into one's area of competence.

It is impossible to overstate the contribution FBOs make to the advancement of society. Their actions in almost every area of the economy, with special reference to health, education, empowerment, employment, and even government, provide ample proof that they have been actively involved in society progress. Therefore, it is essential that these accomplishments be suitably recorded and duly recognized.

Additionally, more FBOs are also invited to rise up to the occasion by contributing meaningfully to the socio-economic development of their host communities and the entire society at large by identifying an aspect of the economy and plunging deep into it in order to bring about the best possible quality service for the benefit of Nigerian citizens. More so, despite the fact that faith-based organisations operate on the principle of selflessness, it is apt to propose that FBOs develop amongst others, video and pictorial evidence catalogues of their involvement in the provision of developmental services to the society. This could strictly be for the purpose of record keeping and research since they mostly prefer to carryout benevolent acts without amplifying them.

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Scapegoatism and the Messiah motif in Contemporary African Drama

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Abstract

Scapegoatism is a recurring motif in African tragic plays. It is used to show that though the tragic hero, who is once a carrier and who later becomes a scapegoat, is a victim of the gods and that his sufferings as well as his eventual death are for the redemption of all others who are alive. This article posits that though the scapegoat motif was first put to use in Egyptian festival of Osiris, the appropriation of religious figures as scapegoats of “God” or gods in Western drama popularized the concept. The article also affirms that the impact of the scapegoat motif on African drama is religious rather than secular. It has given rise to the hegemony between the superior Western gods and the subordinate others. This article debunks the postcolonial hegemonic discourse that represents African gods as the subordinate other to the Western superior other and affirms that the scapegoat motif is not peculiar to western religion but is also the foundation of the African traditional religion. It concludes that most African tragedies also recount the experiences of African traditional religious figures that once lived on earth as scapegoats of the gods which by virtue of their sufferings and death they are represented as the messiah gods from where redemption can only be sort.

Keywords: Scapegoat motif, Messiah, African gods, Postcolonial hegemony, African Drama

Introduction

Scapegoat ritual was first practiced in the Egyptian festival of Osiris and has since become a recurring motif in European drama. In the festival of Osiris it was practiced to validate human redemptive sacrifice and to honour the Egyptian vegetation god, Osiris. In Greek drama, scapegoatism was deployed as a motif to celebrate the death and rebirth of the Greek god, Dionysus. In Syrian drama it is also used to demonstrate the death and resurrection of Adonis whereas in Christian drama it is used to also celebrate the death and resurrection of the young Christian god, Jesus Christ. In sub-Saharan Africa, the scapegoat ritual was deployed to validate the rebirth of African deities/ gods such as Inikpi and Songo. The aim of this article is to show how scapegoatism has been deployed as a motif to validate death and rebirth of African gods in African drama. Through this article it is shown that drama as a genre of literature interfaces with these deities because they embody the divine attributes that compels humans to seek God. It reveals that the scapegoat motif validates the gods as entities that have experienced the three phases of existence: the living, the dead and the

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unborn. It also argues that by virtue of their sacrifices in their human incarnation, they translated into gods who have the capacity to intervene as the people's messiah.

Evolution of the Scapegoat Motif

In his attempts to show the connection between African dramatic literature and African ritual practice in his inaugural lecture, Isidore Diala argues that the concept of scapegoatism started in the form of ritual/ religious performance where goat is prepared as a carrier of the curse of a person (Diala, 2019). Usually, during the ritual performance, the curse from the person's past years is transferred upon the goat. Afterwards, the goat is let loose and allowed to wander away, unattended. Normally, the goat dies after some time but then the person would have experienced redemption from the said curse lives on. Because of the short period of time in which the redemption last, contemporarily, such person would have need to reenact this goat sacrifice again. However, this goat sacrifice is also prevalent in Greek and Jew religious worships. For instance, the purification ritual in the worship of the ancient Greek god named Dionysus typically consists of sacrificing domestic animals which includes goats at the altar of Dionysus with hymn and prayer. The goat, which is usually of a young perfect kind, is decorated with garlands and led in procession to the altar. A girl with a basket on her head containing the concealed knife is expected to lead the way. After some ritual performance, the goat is slaughtered over the altar. As the goat dies, all the women present in the procession cry out in high, shrill tones. The Greeks believe that the goat is usually glad to be sacrificed hence they interpret its various behaviours to explain this (Clement, 1965). In the book of Leviticus, in the old testament of the Bible, the account of this practice is also given. God gave the rulers of Israel laws concerning sacrifices using goats (see Leviticus 4: 22-23).¹ In Leviticus (16:21), it is later fully described how Aaron was to put the law into practice. He was to lay his hands upon the head of the goat and confess over the head of the goat all the iniquities of the children of Israel by way of transferring the iniquities upon the head of the goat. The goat is later sent away into the wilderness; hence by so doing, the goat would become the carrier of iniquities of the children of Israel while the children of Israel would have themselves purified or redeemed of their sins.

Since this goat sacrifice has limited spiritual significance, in occasions where the collective lives of a people in a community are at stake, rather than using a goat, the cursed community seeks for redemption using a willing human being. In time past, these willing human beings were referred to as "carriers"— persons set aside for scapegoat ritual sacrifices (Soyinka, 1975). In some communities, we have "carrier" families even though sometime we have scapegoat victims. However, the scapegoat who is initially willing to take upon himself the responsibility of acting as the messiah of the community, is usually overwhelmed at the point of the sacrifice with the fear of death and of course tries to run away. The sudden fear that made the scapegoat try to run away symbolically gave him the outlook of a goat. The scapegoat motif generally underscores the idea that human being is rebellious and behaves more like a goat than a sheep or a ram. If he is sacrificed, it is believed that the scapegoat will resolve the terror of the fear of the cure as well as the weight of the curse on the community. At the afterlife, the scapegoat helps the community to broker the divine feature such as agricultural prosperity, longevity on earth, human procreation and immortality after death.

Scapegoat Motif and the African Dramatic Literature

In his book of essays entitled *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976) Soyinka discloses that as a cultural entity, Africa has its own cultural and religious histories, which are foundations of its social neuroses as well as its value systems. He posits that African has produced “a body of myths and a literary tradition of its own and owns a world which extends beyond the physical environment of the mother continent [...]” (Asanga, 1981). The book also reveals that the Africa world is made up of three phases of existence that are interlinked: the living, the dead and the unborn. It is in “The Fourth Stage,” (Soyinka, 1976) the last essay of the book, that Soyinka links the argument to the Yoruba/African vision of tragedy as well as the scapegoat tradition. He depicts that the fourth stage represents a realm in the tragic vision that links the living with their ancestors and with the future. This tragic vision is later realized in Soyinka’s play entitled *The Strong Breed* (Soyinka, 1973). In *The Strong Breed*, Soyinka engages the theme of scapegoatism through the protagonist of the play named Eman. The play engages the paradox that underscores the tragic lives of the carriers: their death is meant to bring purification or healing to the land while their refusal to lay down their lives for the land has tragic consequences. The play reflects on the inability of Eman to successfully carry out the responsibility of being a scapegoat – even though he is a carrier. Part of the attempts to stress the tragic significance of the play is Soyinka’s decision to begin the play by exploring Eman’s past life. The importance of the revelation about Eman’s past role as a carrier is made through flashbacks to stress the fact that a carrier cannot run away from his true identity. As the play develops to its climax, Eman tries to shy away from his true identity and to deny the very fact of his inherited role as the carrier of tribal guilt but later finds himself acting out the role in another community. The play particularly stresses some of Eman’s endowed features as a carrier. He is an individual who is spiritually awake and has the ability to traverse multiple landscapes of human experience. Like other scapegoat characters such as Jesus Christ and Dionysus, Eman is able to navigate through the experience of the living, the dead, the present, the past and the future. Hence this makes the African world as depicted in Soyinka’s *The Strong Breed* as well as the world associated with the scapegoats as one that is characterized by the mingling of mortals, gods, and spirits.

In the play, Eman is given the outlook of Jesus Christ: Soyinka identifies Eman as Jesus Christ figure at different aspects. First, the relationship between Eman and Jesus Christ is evident in the former’s name abridgement. Eman is believed to be an abridged version of Jesus Christ’s name: Emmanuel. Jesus Christ maintained that a prophet is not recognized in his home town and spent most of his useful days outside Galilee. Being a prophet himself who could not withstand his master’s irresponsibility, Eman left for another community where he spent the rest of his useful days. Unlike Jesus Christ, Eman is likened to a fugitive carrier who came to another community to find a better life but ended up meeting with the fate he ran away from at home in the new community. Also unlike Jesus Christ, Eman reluctantly plays out his role as a carrier in another community with the same obsession that he would have paid for his rebellion in his home community. Like Jesus Christ, Eman is also a teacher, a healer and a benefactor. While at the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus Christ was reported to have scolded at his disciples for wanting to wall off children that were coming to him, in the play Eman is shown to always intervene with

cautions whenever Sunma wants Ifada or the little girl to stay away. This is evident in Eman's reply to Sunma's desire to keep Ifada away thus: "What is this? Hasn't he always plays here?"

Soyinka reveals the fate that befalls the mothers of the carrier through engaging with the exemplified self-sacrificial fate of Omae. It is unclasped in the play that the mothers of the carriers die in the process of childbirth. It is also disclosed that even though the carrier initiation process is sacred and as such very important, it is Omae's intrusion into the scene of the initiation that makes Eman to abandon the rite. Eman scolds Omae for coming to visit him at the scene and for trying to pollute him with her bodily contact. Even though he left the initiation process, Eman is able to identify the reward of seclusion during the initiation. He discovers the capacity for self-introspection with which the carrier achieves a new conception of manhood as the assumption of selfless public responsibility.

In the play, Eman argues with Jaguna and Oroge when Ifada takes refuge in his house and emphasizes that self-sacrifice is morally superior to forced sacrifice. Even when Oroge tries to make him understand that the matter at hand is a serious matter, Eman notes that they ought not to have taken a helpless boy and insists: "In my home, we believe that a man should be willing" (p.128). Though, in many African communities, the victims of scapegoatism are usually idiots or stranded strangers, as is evident in the initial intention of the community to use Ifada, a normal African scapegoat figure, Eman's true identity as a carrier is revealed by someone to whom he has been good. Hence like Christ, Eman is betrayed by someone to whom he has good intent. Also like Jesus Christ, Eman gives his life for ungrateful people. Their ungratefulness is even evident in the scene where he thirsts and begs for water at the climax of his suffering. Rather than offer him water, the girl announces his hideout. Eman also dies hanging on trees like Jesus Christ but before then Soyinka allows him to have a vision of his father's role as a carrier – a vision similar to Christ's, during transfiguration. In the trance, Eman's father remonstrates with Eman for coming to him in that trance. The tragic component of the play is that Eman runs away and is unable to surrender his life with boldness as is required of a carrier. Part of the rituals meant to enable him undergo that process is disrupted by Eman when he escaped at the face of death. This component of the rite, according to Jaguna, is expected to fill the carrier with joy and make him walk to the slaughter with gladness. The disruption of the ritual, which is aimed at teaching the scapegoat the endurance in time of extremity as well as transform his personal terror to compassion for the human community and enhance his willingness to assume the responsibility of sacrificing his life, gives way to the tragic consequence.

Whereas *The Strong Breed* contemplates the character of Eman as the prototype of Jesus Christ, in *Death and the King's Horseman* Soyinka explains the purpose of the scapegoat tradition in the Yoruba culture. It is revealed in the play that the essence of the scapegoat practice as well as its continuous reenactment is to engage the routine renewal of human lease of life. In *Death and the King's Horseman*, Soyinka focuses on the idea of the "carrier" family as well as the scapegoat tradition rather than being particular about the clash between the Yoruba and the European cultures. He reveals that the carrier family culture and the scapegoat tradition are integral part of the Yoruba culture. This is part of the reason the play is adapted from the Yoruba Old Oyo history where when the Oba or *Alafin*, dies, the eldest carrier in the *Abobaku* (Elesin) family is prepared as a scapegoat to be buried alive alongside the Oba by way of accompanying the Oba to the afterlife.

The play, *Death and the King's Horseman* (Soyinka, 2012) begins after the death of the Oba and in anticipation that the Elesin will carry out his responsibility, not just to the

late Oba but to the people. The play shows that Elesin himself is not just consciously aware of the transformation significance of his responsibility at the beginning of the play, but he is also aware of the cultural conception of him as scapegoat. But at the time he is to undertake the transformation, Elesin refuses to uphold the transformational course. Part of what hinders the process is the fact that he becomes too obsessed with the desire to continue to live, hence he takes refuge in the colonial masters whom he believes would save him from his responsibility. On his return from abroad with the sole intent of witnessing the transformational process that accompanies the scapegoat sacrifice, Olunde is disappointed at his father, the eldest Elesin, and then decides to offer himself as a substitute sacrifice.

As the play reveals, the ritual sacrifice of the Elesin is supposed to represent a symbolic conquest of the curses and troubles of the past years of the late Oba's reign as well as his death. The Elesin is also supposed to act as the carrier of the pestilences of the people's past years to the afterlife. The essence of this is to make the reign of the new Oba worthwhile and to usher in agricultural prosperity, longevity, procreation, immortality as well as help the community to broker peace with their ancestors. The fact that the Elesin botched ruined the entire ritual and set the stage for the unimaginable: the self-sacrifice of his son, Olunde. The play shows that Olunde's death, rather than being regarded as messianic, it elicits apprehension and represents the main thrust of the tragedy. This is because, as it is revealed in the play, a thing of that nature has never happened before. Such substitute sacrifice where a younger Elesin dies for the elder Elesin beat the people imagination and threatens the harmony of the Yoruba universe as well as the regenerative cycle of nature. This is evident in the dialogue that ushers in the end of the play: "Your heir has taken the burden on himself. What the end will be, we are not gods to tell. But this young shoot has poured its sap into the parent stalk, and we know this is not the way of life" (p.75). On hearing this, the Elesin takes his own life but it is already late. Rather than being regarded as a sacrifice, his death becomes a suicide and even a curse upon him.

Conclusion

As it has been said in this article, scapegoat rituals were practiced in the festivals that commemorate the death and resurrection of European gods. And through the use of scapegoat motif, African plays have been able to reveal that some African gods were by virtue of their divine sacrifices that they translated into gods who have the capacity to intervene as the people's messiah. From the African perspective, scapegoatism makes it possible for the curse upon a community to be lifted through the sacrifice of a willing individual. The willing individuals that are sent out (by virtue of death) as scapegoat across the gulf that separates life from the afterlife are believed to intercede on behalf of the living in matters that make humans to seek god. By willingly undertaking the sacrifice, the scapegoat individual is believed to undergo a transformational course that gives him the outlook of a god. This transformational course is prevalent through the agency of other suffering divinities or deities. Reawakened in a new (spiritual) body, the dead scapegoat is empowered to intercede in the affairs that concern the community across the three phases of existence. The permanent communication between the community and the sacrificed scapegoat is ensured through an erected alters. Hence through this way most African religions were established.

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NOTE

1. The Holy Bible (King James Version, Dallas TX: Brown Books Publishing, 2004) Leviticus 4:22-23, 16:21.

The Mediating Effect of Gender Inclusion on Performance of Public Universities in Northeastern Nigeria: Talent Management Strategies in Perspective

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Abstract

The teaching, research, and ranking of Nigerian universities are noticeably low, and this is made worse by a lack of talented professionals and women inclusiveness. The implementation of talent recruitment and gender inclusion strategies is one positive step that can change the narrative in this direction. This study examines talent management career advancement and the performance of universities: the mediating effect of gender inclusion in Nigeria. The researcher employed a quantitative method using a questionnaire to gather primary data from 359 academic staff surveyed across the selected institutions using cluster and stratified random sampling. Descriptive statistics and Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that talent management (career advancement) has a significant positive effect on the performance of universities. The results also revealed that gender inclusion partially mediates the relationship between talent management (career advancement) and performance. The implication is that, for universities to become more efficient, authorities should continue to invest in women talent promotional strategies to improve teaching, research, and performance. Authorities should internalize women advancement strategies such as child health care centres, child-early learning centers, flexible office hours as part of the operational strategies.

Keywords: Career Advancement; Gender Inclusion; Performance of Universities; Talent Management; Talent Management Strategies.

Introduction

The academic talents are the major influencer of performance and achievement of universities. This is so because a university's performance is based on its talents' dedication, research output, teaching, and learning environment. Talent management can offer a conceptual framework for enhancing performance over time, which universities need to combine with strategy, performance assessments, and day-to-day management tools

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(Bradley, 2016). The importance of both teaching and research activities from the standpoint of talent management is that universities locate and keep key, highly valuable faculty for both teaching and research to improve performance.

Talent management has significantly improved business value, talent pools, retention of top talent, profit maximization, and competitive advantage, among other things (Teherah, Behzad, Mohammad, & Hassan, 2020). It has also prompted a number of changes in the performance of business and educational organizations (Bradley, 2016). Altindag, Cirak, and Acar (2018), submits that Talent Management Strategy (TMS) is a crucial policy used to manage people and their skill set and enhance employee growth and performance. Talented employees are fundamental to the building of a knowledge-based economy, social development, and the performance of universities. Universities require talented people to succeed now and, in the future, (Bradley, 2016). They need to focus on inclusion strategies like women merit-based recruitment and promotion to increase and retain more women in academia (Widodo & Mawarto, 2020). The logical conclusion is that women and individuals who experience professional progression are more likely to remain with an organization longer and deliver their best work for institutional better performance (Collings, Mellahi, & Cascio, 2019).

Studies have looked at talent management over the years using different and exclusive approaches that focus development on a select group of employees with high potential (Gallardo-Gallardo, 2012; & Swailes & Downs, 2014). Due to the emphasis on high-performing personnel, this has led to certain organizations becoming patriarchal in their operations, which has made it more difficult for them to apply women's talent management strategies to solve employee shortage and brain drain. If a country ignores the needs of more than half of the world's population, it cannot advance or achieve socioeconomic development. The 7.7 billion people who make up the world's population (Worldometer, 2020), more than half are women. Women make up 50% of the 1.3 billion inhabitants in Africa, and 49.4% of the 206 million people in Nigeria (Worldometer, 2020). The Sustainable Development Goals' impact rating of the world's universities submits that just 15.4% of senior professors in world universities are women (THE, 2019). The report also showed that only 1.95% of universities worldwide have anti-discrimination policies for women, 1.9% have maternity policies that support women's participation, 1.9% have facilities for women to access childcare, 1.9% have mentoring programs for women that have a large number of participants, and 1.9% have policies that protect reporting discrimination in higher education institutions. Regrettably, only a handful of African universities—including no more than two in Nigeria—were listed among the top 1,000 universities worldwide.

Women in higher educational institutions are confronted with obstacles in universities' hierarchical structures at all levels, but particularly when trying to advance into leadership positions (White & O'Connor, 2017). Finding the internal, external, structural, and cultural impediments impeding women's advancement in the educational field has been the primary focus of women and higher education literature to date. However, it is crucial to emphasize that there are few universities with women inclusive strategies and by sharing, the tales of how these institutions attained this success, other schools can take a leaf out of their book (White & O'Connor, 2017). Without a doubt, women have advanced significantly during the past few decades. However, despite the campaigns and slogans on women inclusion, women are still poorly represented in academe, especially in Africa (Nigeria inclusive), and this concern calls for inclusion of special TMS in addressing institutional barriers or performance (Mousa, Massoud, Ayoubi and Puhakka 2020; Avin, Keller, Lotker, Mathieu, Peleg, and Pignolet, 2015; Bruckmuller, , Susanne, Michelle K Ryan, Floor Rink, and Alexander

Haslam, 2014; and Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017). Out of the over 73,443 academic talents in Nigerian universities, only 23.6% are women while 76.4% are men (Nigeria University Digest, 2019). This is worsened in the northeastern region of Nigeria where only 17.5% of the total academic talents are women while 82.5% are men (Nigeria University Digest, 2019). In other regions or part of the country, out of 3,081 members of university of Ibadan, only 507 are women, or around 16%; at Obafemi Awolowo University, where there are 1,207 staff members, 210 women make up about 17.4% of the total. According to a survey done in the Nigerian states of Kwara and Osun, men hold 98% of the top jobs at the polytechnics and colleges of education in those two states, while women hold only 2% of those posts. In addition to this notable poor representation of women talent in Nigerian universities, there are no studies to benchmark the mediating effect of gender inclusiveness on the relationship between talent management strategies (career advancement) and performance of universities in Nigeria. This gap serves as the foundation for this study, which looks at talent management strategies (career advancement) and performance of universities: the mediating effect of gender inclusion in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study include:

- a. To examine the impact of career advancement on the performance of public universities in the Northeastern region of Nigeria,
- b. To examine the mediating relationship of gender inclusion on the performance of public universities in the Northeastern region of Nigeria.
- c. To examine the impact of career advancement on performance through gender inclusion of public universities in the Northeastern region of Nigeria.

A literature review, methodology, data analysis and discussion, findings, suggestions, and a conclusion make up the remaining components of this article.

Literature Review

The management of talent is an offshoot of human resource management that focuses on different aspects of employee performance, such as skills, intelligence, creativity, ideas, attitude, qualification, and success (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). **Lynch (2007), opined that talent management strategies are essential to develop and improve employee performance and can enhance organizational excellence.** Collings and Mellahi (2009), submit that talent management is the architecture required to establish and maintain a competitive advantage with clear links between talent and strategy. The management of talent has prompted several changes in the performance of business organizations and effected great achievements in business value, talent pool, retention of high-quality employees, profit maximization, and competitive advantage, among others (Mackey, 2008). This study present talent management strategy as career advancement.

Career Advancement Strategy and Institutional Performance

This study views career advancement as career promotion and progression, which refers to a person moving up the organizational structure of an institution. Career advancement is a trajectory movement or following a well-defined path up the corporate ladder (Josphat, Abel & Nancy, 2021). Smit (2007) noted that the prospect of advancement may motivate women workers to put in extra effort. This is because employees strive to grow consistently in their workplace (Mullins, 2007). The recent reason employees leave a business is a lack of career advancement; whereas five years ago, it was unsatisfactory compensation (Hay Group, 2016). Nearly 70% of the poll stated that they were dissatisfied with their company's growth chances. Career development and training are at the top of the list of human resources strategies that businesses aim to emphasize yearly (Hay Group, 2016).

Lack of advancement can hurt a talent's chances of moving up the corporate ladder (Jufrizen & Delyana, 2017). Therefore, professional advancement is valued by employees since it leads to long-term success, higher salary, employment stability, and job satisfaction. A dedication to career advancement by institutions will allow them to stimulate a more motivated workforce and a high-performing institution (Golicha et al., 2022). It also enhances employees' education and training development, thus improving their skill sets and positioning them for promotion and career advancement. Career advancement has a positive and significant impact on employees and organization performance (Golicha et. al., 2022). Josphat, Abel, and Nancy (2021), submit that every organization (business and education) has a career path, whether good or bad. They outlined two criteria needed by an organization to develop a suitable culture to aid long-term performance. Firstly, an organizational career path should be strategically relevant to the mission and objectives of the organization; and secondly, an organizational career path needs to be strong to attract the attention, care, and respect of the people. The study revealed that career advancement has a positive influence on an employee's attitude to work and that there is a positive relationship between organizational career advancement and organizational performance.

Bella and Eeng (2020), noted that the chance for advancement can motivate workers to put in long hours. This is due to the fact that workers try to continuously improve at work. A person's perception of their employer's support for meeting their professional demands and recognizing their achievements through promotions and pay is a key factor in career advancement. Talents who have greater opportunities for professional advancement are more devoted to their employers and are less inclined to leave and hunt for work elsewhere (Bella and Eeng, 2020). When a company gives its employees the chance to progress in their careers, both the business and the employee benefit. Employees who have more opportunities for professional advancement are more committed to their employer and are less likely to leave and seek employment elsewhere (Bella & Eeng, 2020). Universities must focus on the advancement and promotion of talents especially the women academic talent to strengthen their competitive edge. The logical conclusion is that women and individuals who experience professional progression are more likely to remain with an organization longer and deliver their best work, and talent retention affects good performance in institutions (Collings, Mellahi, & Cascio, 2019).

Universities Performance and Talent Management Strategies

Performance is an indicator of employees' and institutional inputs toward achieving educational goals (Asif et al., 2014). Universities need excellent performance to cope with the growing competition, inadequate funding by the government, and the desire of stakeholders to receive value for money. The different indexes used in measuring performance in universities include quality service, research, teaching, infrastructure, financial performance, and others. Performance indicators or indexes are data gathered from a database that expresses one's opinion or factual information regarding the operation of an organization or its constituent parts (Asif et al., 2014; Praise et al., 2020). Cave (1988), emphasized the importance of performance indicators and produced teaching and research performance metrics. Performance indicators have been classified as internal, external, and operational (Ball & Wilkinson, 1994). Universities have typically measured and compared performance internally and against peers using a set of performance indicators (Ball & Wilkinson, 1994). Ball and Wilkinson (1994), stressed that using a predetermined set of performance measures (i.e., a league of table method) is ineffective, and that universities must utilize metrics that are compatible with their mission and particular circumstances. This study adopted composite performance indicators of Ball and Wilkinson (1994), and

Asif et. al. (2014), and they were used to examine institutional performance because the survey involves different universities. Composite performance indicators have many advantages, including the ability to group comparable indicators into a single category and simplify their structure (Asif et al., 2014). The incapacity to convey the current characteristics of academic work, privileged research, and teaching is one of the causes for faculty dissatisfactions with indicators (Taylor, 2001). In this study, composite indicators such as research, teaching, and service were used to capture institutional performance (IP). Research performance indicators include research publications, citations, academic resources, funding, community service, and more; teaching and service performance indicators as field medals, small class size, graduate employability, and more (Lukman et al., 2010; Asif et al., (2014). This research is limited to the first three composite performance indicators namely research, teaching and learning, and service.

Gender Inclusion and Talent Management Strategies

Many universities strive to give exceptional services through top-notch teaching and research, producing graduates who can work for both public and private organization. For many firms, the subpar quality of graduates on the job market has been a major concern in Nigeria. This is partially attributed to inadequate teaching, a weak research output, an unfavorable working environment, and lack of qualified academic talents. Promoting women inclusion strategies can help reduce these challenges in the academia. In academia, talent promotion process is characterized as being muscular and is informed by the research, commitment, and dedication of successful mid-level managers. Successful mid-level managers' credentials, research, and commitment are taken into account in universities during the promotion process, which is sexism-stereotyped as being male. The same qualities of strength, intelligence, competence, competition, and dedication are seen to characterize outstanding academic talent. It is thought that successful academics have similar strengths, intelligence, competence, competition, job commitment, and volume of work without strategies for women folks.

Feminist theorists, Engel (1972), and Collins (1990), contend that men and women in society play different roles. Due to their simultaneous responsibilities in the family and the home, women find it difficult to be fully committed, which gives men more time to pursue their careers. The male subordination of women through childcare and domestic duties has an impact on women's devotion to their skills and the dismantling of stereotypes. Women's vision, self-definition, and capacity are hampered by this issue. Academic workplaces are structured after the "ideal worker" model, which places less emphasis on time spent outside of paid employment. This practice gives opportunities for men to advance (Taiwo, 2011; & Olabisi, 2013). The job routes in academia are designed to reflect how males view success; they entail devoting a lot of time to tasks like research, teaching, and paper writing. Dual responsibility has made it difficult, if not nearly impossible, for women to possess equal merits and compete with their male counterparts in academe. Quality of time is expected to have a remarkable impact on progression and enhance talent skills in academia (Christiana, 2011; Taylor-Abdulai et al. 2014).

Women-focused TM initiatives ought to be ingrained in universities' operational routine. This is due to the fact that TM significantly and favorably affects IP (Davies and Davies, 2010). Organizations with TMS see a 30% boost in business and performance outcomes (Sharkey & Eccher, 2011). In Kenya, (James & Justus, 2012), TMS and IP have a favorable and substantial association. Women's inclusion in talent management strategies will contribute to the development of a large and long-lasting talent pool for universities. Therefore, through effective mentorship and career advancement of women, the operational assumptions that have consigned women in academia to family and unpaid employment

tasks must be changed. Bhasin (1993), and Taiwo (2014), submit, "women who educate the whole world must be considered as educators." This suggests that women are informed and skilled in the education of kids, communities, and societies; they must be valued as educators or given the same or even better opportunities as males to encourage their participation. Women have made significant progress over the years in many different sectors, but they are underrepresented in academia and typically hold less recognized positions (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2005; Taiwo, 2011; Mousa, Massoud, Ayoubi & Puhakka, 2020).

In Nigerian universities, there are far fewer women representation in academics than men and this reflect in the number of women who get doctoral degrees (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2009). For example, only 25.5% of Ph.D. degrees in academia were awarded to women in 2010; this number fluctuates to 24% in 2011, 27% in 2012, 24.4% in 2013, 29.7% in 2014, and 23.9% in 2015 (Ministry of Education/Tertiary Institution, 2015). To catch up to their male counterparts in terms of research and publishing production, women in academia still lag behind (Taiwo, 2011). Women continue to be underrepresented at the Nigerian universities despite global policies, programs, and campaigns to promote gender equality through many organizations including UNESCO, SDG, women's support groups, and many more. Consequently, pursuing targeted strategies such as effective mentorship, more representation of women in recruitment, establishment of baby-care centers within institutions, among others provide women with opportunities to advance in their career.

Resource-Based View Theory

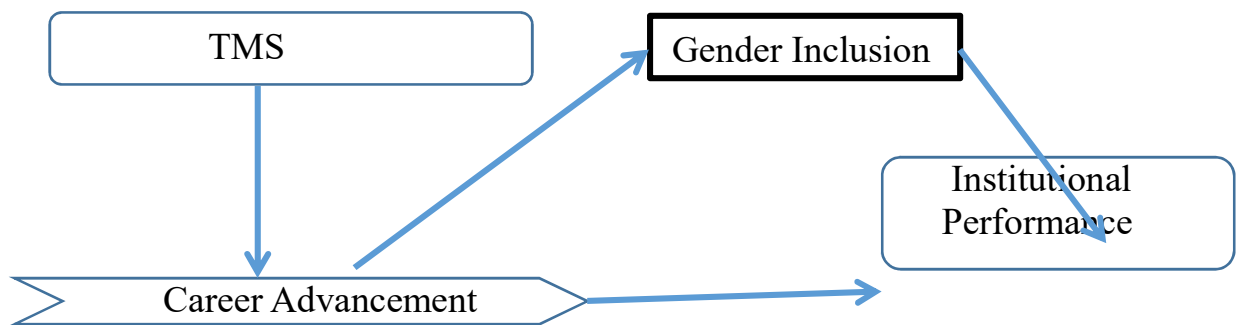
The resource-based view (RBV) theory submits that companies have resources that enable them to obtain a competitive edge, as well as a subset of those that contribute to superior long-term performance. Resources that are valuable and uncommon can help a company gain a competitive advantage. The advantage gained can be maintained for a long time until the organization can protect itself from resource imitation, transfer, or substitution. The resource-based view contends that to maintain a competitive edge, firms and talent managers should invest significant resources in talented employees (Petkovic & Dordevic, 2013; Acar & Yener, 2016). The development of superior resources, competencies, and skills creates a sustainable competitive advantage for organizations (Lewis & Kipley, 2012; Fatile et al., 2020). This study supports the view that superior performance can be achieved when universities give adequate attention and motivational schemes to gender inclusion talent management strategies. This study deploys the RBT theory based on its ability to pinpoint the specific levels of competencies capable of driving institutional goals, objectives, and performance. Non-substitutable resources position universities for long-term success, competitive advantage; improve the quality of research by institutions, enhance employee quality service delivery and improve organizational performance and global ranking (Fatile et al., 2020).

TMS will not only improve talent capacities but also, sharpen talent thinking ability and creativity for optimal decision making in universities. TMS develops women's self- efficacy and performance outcomes on the job, influence knowledge, behavior, skills, ability, and competencies (Knott, 2016). The implementation of TMS gender inclusion strategies will enhances institutional performance. This study developed hypotheses to test if any significant mediating impact of gender inclusion on the relationship between TMS (career advancement) and IP as thus:

- i. Career advancement has a significant impact on the performance of public universities in the Northeastern region of Nigeria.
- ii. Gender inclusion has a significant positive relationship with performance of public universities in Northeastern region of Nigeria.
- iii. Career advancement significantly impact performance through gender inclusion in public universities in the Northeastern region of Nigeria.

Study Model

Figure 1: Below shows one independent variable (i.e., Talent Management Strategy—career advancement), one mediating variable (i.e. gender inclusion - GI), and one dependent variable (i.e., Institutional Performance – IP). This suggested that TMS (career advancement) influence IP when mediated by gender inclusion.



Note: The study focus of TM consists of training and motivation as a mediator (Heinen and O'Neill, 2004)

Methodology

This study adopted a positivist viewpoint of investigation using a quantitative method (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008: Creswell, 2009). The quantitative approach used questionnaire to collect data and was considered suitable by the research to formulate significant principles of knowledge, test theory, evaluate and accurately described connotation to an observable phenomenon (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008: Creswell, 2009).

Sample and Data Collection

The study was conducted in the northeastern region of Nigeria. The northeastern region of Nigeria is one of the six geopolitical regions in the country created in May 1967. The region comprises a little less than one-third of the country's total land and is home to more than 23.6 million people, or roughly 13.5 percent of the overall population of the country (Nigerian Finder, 2022). The Fulanis and the Kanuris make up the majority of the people in the region. The region's residents are mostly farmers and cattle rearers, and the region is rich

in agriculture, food, crops, and livestock. The region has six states, namely Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe. The study purposively selected the public universities located in the capital cities of the six northeastern states in Nigeria namely: Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi, Bauchi State; Gombe State University, Gombe; Modibbo Adama University, Yola, Adamawa State; Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State; University of Maiduguri, Borno State; and Yobe State University, Damaturu, Yobe State. The institutions were selected based on access to information and safety.

The academic talents or workforces were considered from different ranks or cadres (that is Graduate Assistant to Professor) selected using cluster and stratified random sampling across faculties and schools within each of the institutions. A total population of 5,397 academic talents was obtained as population size and updated up to the time of data collection (Nigeria University Digest, 2019).

The respondents were informed that requested information will only be used for academic study, and employee names and departments will be changed to pseudo names. A sample size of 359 was selected randomly from the population using Taro Yamani's formula (1967). The sample size distribution is presented in Table 1 below.

Table1: Population of Academic Employees

S/N	Institutions	Population of Academic Staff	Sample Size
1	University of Maiduguri, Borno State	1856	124
2	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	856	57
3	Yobe State University, Yobe State	769	51
4	Modibbo Adama University	744	50
5.	Gombe State University,	604	40
6	Taraba State University	568	37
	Total	5,397	359

Source: Nigeria University Digest 2019 and author's computation.

Research Measures

This study used questionnaire to collect first-hand data or information referred to as primary data. The questionnaire was used to collect biographical data, talent management strategy (career advancement), gender inclusion as mediating variable and institutional performance. The questions on the career advancement were generated by rephrasing and modifying the content and context of the questions of Liversage (2015), and Knott (2016); the questions on institutional performance were generated by modifying the content and context of the questionnaire of Knot (2016), and the questions on gender inclusion were generated by modifying the content and context of questionnaire of Maina (2016). The researcher modified the content, context, and the number of questions, and had them vetted by experienced academics in higher education academic planning and administration, business and human resource management, education, and organizational behaviour. The questionnaire was structured, with no follow-up questions. The instrument was selected and considered effective in obtaining the needed information because the academic staff members of the sampled universities are literate, enlightened, and competent. The same questions were administered to all respondents in the institutions studied.

To distribute the questionnaire to the chosen sample size across all institutions, the author hired research assistants. A survey was given out to 359 respondents, of whom 337 completed it and returned it; six were disqualified due to missing or inaccurate information. This represents a 92.2% response rate. The high response rate was as a result of adequate follow-up. The respondents were given a questionnaire each with a follow-up visit for collection after seventy-

two hours. The respondents understood the need for the study because they were in an informed and skilled environment, and 72 hours was adequate time for them to complete the questionnaire before it was collected. The questionnaire consists of four sections. Section A: demographic. The demographic data of the study is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Descriptive data

Variables	Options	Code	Freq.	Percent.
Gender	Male	1	243	73.4
	Female	2	88	26.6
	Total		331	100
Age	Under 26	1	16	4.8
	26-35	2	65	19.6
	36-45	3	140	42.3
	46-55	4	78	23.6
	56-65	5	28	8.5
	Above 65	6	4	1.2
	Total		331	100
Rank of employee	Assistant lecturer	1	76	23.0
	Lecturer II	2	96	29.0
	Lecturer I	3	52	15.7
	Senior Lecturer	4	50	15.1
	Professorial	6	57	17.2
	Total		331	100
Work experience	Below two years	1	50	15.1
	2-5 years	2	74	22.4
	6-9 years	3	92	27.8
	10 years above	4	115	34.7
	Total		331	100
Employee qualification	Bachelor	1	69	20.8
	Master	2	105	31.7
	Doctorate	3	157	47.4
	Total		331	100
Level of importance on TMS	Low	1	96	29.0
	Moderate	2	201	60.7
	High	3	34	10.3
	Total		331	100
Need to improve TMS	Not urgently	1	27	8.2
	Urgently	2	192	58.0
	Very urgent	3	112	33.8
	Total		331	100

Source: Field survey (2023)

Section B questions on career advancement aspect of talent management strategies. Section c contains questions on the gender inclusion as a mediator, and section d contains questions on institutional performance (IP). were asked; all on a Five-Point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Moderate (3), Disagree (4), and Strongly Disagree (5); and this forms the basis for measurement of variables. The scores' order was chosen based on the subject

matter and the expected outcome. The researchers collected a letter of introduction from his department (Graduate School) of his institution, introducing them and purpose of research to the selected institutions. The letter addressed to authorities of each institution was presented to gain access. Additionally, consent letters were given to respondents for confidentiality and privacy purposes, and the respondents were informed that the survey is purely for the fulfillment of graduate studies and their participation is voluntary. Collected data were analysed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (Smart PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM is used to analyse composite-based path models or data. It was used because data involve more than a single-item measurement, testing of a theoretical framework from a predictive perspective that aimed at a better understanding of increasing complexity by exploring theoretical extensions, and the latent variables scores to be used for follow-up analysis (Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2017).

The researchers regressed the independent variable Talent Management Strategy (Career advancement – TMSCA) on dependent variable Institutional Performance (IP) mediated by gender inclusion (GI) as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 GI$$

where $Y = IP$, $\beta = \text{Beta}$, $\beta_0 = \text{Constant}$, $X_1 = \text{TMSCA}$, $GI = \text{mediating variable motivation}$. The mediating variable is predicted to have a significant positive mediation on the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Data Analysis

The selected public universities for this study include; Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi, Bauchi State; Gombe State University, Gombe; Modibbo Adama University, Yola, Adamawa State; Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State; University of Maiduguri, Borno State; and Yobe State University, Damaturu, Yobe State. Composite Reliability (CR) was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the model, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to evaluate convergent validity, and Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) was used to assess the discriminant validity using cross-loadings. All of them are contained in PLS-SEM, which was chosen to clarify how the constructs relate to the model and whether the hypotheses are confirmed by empirical data (Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni, and Lehmann, 2018; Sarstedt, Ringle, Henseler and Hair, 2014).

Discriminant Validity

Because items with loading less than 0.708 are not statistically significant, the outer loadings of the reflective measurement indicators' assessment ranged from 0.710 to 0.841, as indicated in Table 3 below. This reveals an adequate correlation of each indicator's reliability (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017; & Ghasemy, 2020). The researchers used PLS Algorithm to determine the Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) of the constructs' validity. For the model to be valid and dependable, it needed Cronbach Alpha and CR of 0.7 and higher. The researchers focused on CR, a more accurate measure of internal consistency, because it takes into account the model's factor loading weight scores and the Average Variance Extracted, CR has proven to be more accurate than Cronbach's alpha (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). According to the findings, all of the reflective constructs have high levels of internal consistency because their CR values are all above the criterion value of 0.7.

The degree to which the construct converges to explain the change in its items is known as convergent validity. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is the validity metric employed in this study to examine the construct validity. A score of 0.50 or above, which indicates that the construct accounts for at least 50% of the variation of the items, is required for AVE to be acknowledged or accepted. Table 3 below shows the result of the AVE from the survey. The outcome demonstrates that the constructs' AVE is acceptable because all variables have AVEs

that are higher than 0.5 and range from 0.560 to 0.665 (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017; Ghasemy, 2020). This shows that the constructs accounted for more than 50% of the variance in the items.

The Discriminant Validity (DV) reports the extent to which one construct is empirically different from other constructs. The AVE of each construct should be compared to the square inter-construct correlation, according to Fornel and Larcher (1981). All shared constructs' variances shouldn't exceed their AVEs. This proposition has been criticized in literature (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). Henseler (2015) proposed that the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation should be used. The HTMT is the average of the average correlated item measuring the same construct divided by the mean of the correlated items across all constructs. A high HTMT value denotes the absence of discriminant validity. However, a lower but more conservative threshold value of 0.85 is recommended when the conceptions are conceptually dissimilar (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). The researchers used the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) to determine the correlation and discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). Because the AVE is higher than the variance correlation with any other construct in the model, the HTMT result demonstrates that the data are accurate, dependable, and valid for prediction. The results are presented in Table 3 above.

Table 3: Measurement of Indicators, Composite Reliability, and AVE					
Construct	Factor	Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE	CRONBACH
Career advancement	CA1	0.740	0.790	0.540	0.788
	CA2	0.739			
	CA4	0.738			
	CA5	0.734			
Gender Inclusion	CA6	0.722	0.813	0.565	0.807
	GI 1	0.717			
	GI 2	0.744			
	G1 5	0.772			
	G1 6	0.714			
	G1 7	0.808			
Construct	Factor	Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE	CRONBACH
IP	P1	0.709	0.892	0.562	0.889
	P4	0.802			
	P5	0.802			
	P6	0.717			
	P7	0.735			
	P9	0.739			
	P10	0.778			
	P11	0.711			
Source: Authors' Calculations (2023)					

Table 3: The cross-factor loading shows the construct correlation results. Only statistically significant variables that are above a threshold of 0.708 are shown in Table 3's findings; factors below this level were not taken into consideration (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2017; Ghasemy, 2020).

The validity and reliability are consistent with the rigidity and certainty for further extrapolation and discussion of the findings based on the data shown in Table 4 above.

Table 4: HTMT and DV			
Constructs	TMSCA	GI	IP
TMSCA	1		
GI	0.510	1	
IP	0.329	0.722	1
<i>Source: Authors' Calculations</i>			

The information from table 4 above demonstrates that TMS career advancement explained 32.9% of the variance in IP and 72.2% of the variance in IP when mediated by gender inclusion. Six distinct public universities were included in the study. The six institutions share comparable training rules and an incentive structure, with a small difference between state-owned and federally-owned institutions.

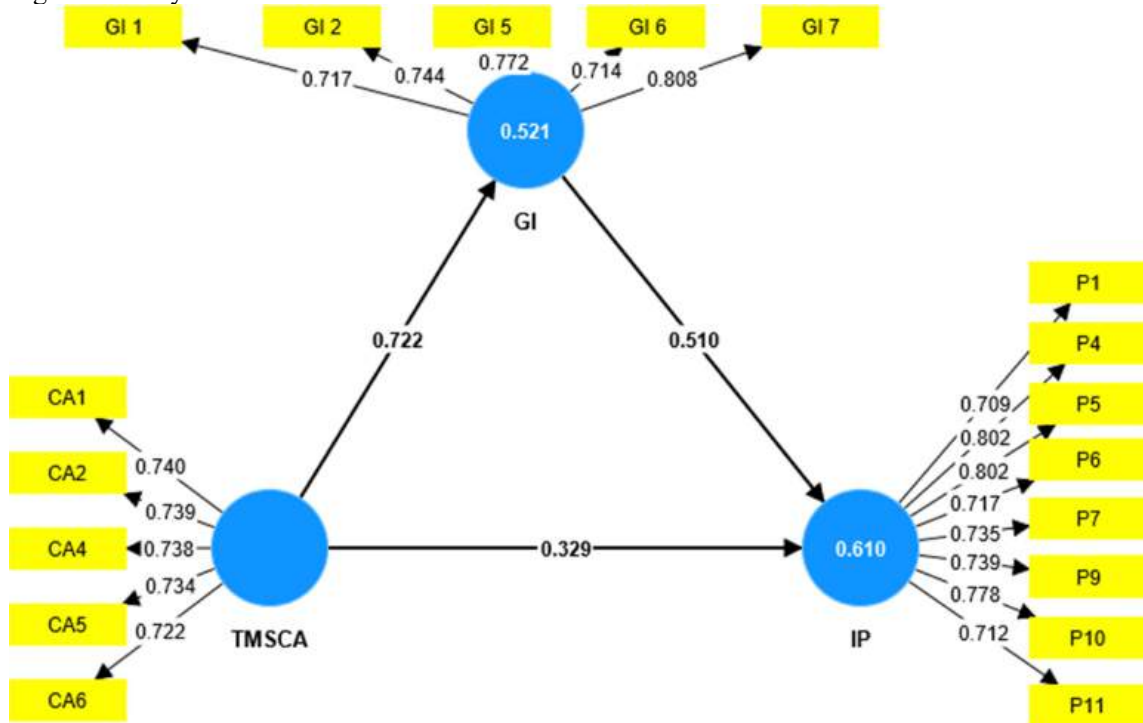
Table 5: Path coefficient of the constructs

Path Coefficient of Constructs						
	B	Sample Mean	Std. Dev.	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
TMSCA -> IP	0.329	0.329	0.055	6.020	0.000	Supported
GI -> IP	0.510	0.511	0.065	9.283	0.000	Supported
TMSCA -> GI	0.722	0.725	0.028	26.183	0.000	Supported

Source: author's computation

The findings in Table 4 above shown that career advancement explained more variance in IP when gender inclusion (72.2%) served as a mediator. The findings in table 5 above also indicated that gender inclusion acted as a positive mediator in the association between institutional performance and talent management strategies (career advancement) career advancement accounts for 32.9% of performance on a direct relationship and 72.2% of performance when mediated with gender inclusion. Only variables with thresholds over 0.708 were taken into account by the researcher and model (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2017). However, career advancement item 2 with 0.703 threshold was accepted because its outer weight is above 0.5 (Ghasemy, 2020).

Figure 2: Study Model



Results and Findings

This study used PLS-SEM 4.0 to test models and hypotheses through a study sample, mean score computation, and PLS-SEM algorithm to examine the statistical significance of the constructs and path coefficient.

The study's validity and reliability for the indicator loading of all items are greater than 0.708, indicating both validity and reliability (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2017; Ghasemy, 2020). The reflective measurement model outer loadings of the study indicators ranged from 0.709 to 0.808 as reported in figure 1. This indicates an acceptable correlation and statistically significant since item loadings are not less than 0.708 (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2017; Ghasemy, 2020). The results of the Composite Reliability (CR) for all the reflective constructs are above 0.7 threshold value and this shows a high level of internal consistency of all the constructs. The researchers emphasized CR because of its better indicator of internal consistency (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle, 2018; and Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2017).

The construct validity was examined using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) method by the researchers. To be accepted, AVE needs to be at least 0.5. Based on the data analysed in Table 7, the AVE construct values range from 0.540 to 0.565, which is acceptable because the value of

each item is greater than 0.5 (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2017; Ghasemy, 2020). This shows that the constructs explained 50% and above of the items' variance.

The findings, as shown in Table 7, demonstrate a substantial positive link between TMS (career advancement) and IP at a p-value of 0.000 and a significant mediating association between TMS (career advancement) and IP at a p-value of 0.000. The appropriateness of the data was examined using a bootstrapping sample of 5000, and since the Alpha is 0.000, the hypothesis H0 was rejected and alternative hypotheses were accepted. This demonstrates the correlation between the variables and the results.

In addition, the direct effect of TMS (career advancement) on IP resulted in a significant positive R^2 (R Square) of 0.610 and 0.521 when mediated by motivation on the relationship between TMS (career advancement) and IP. The R^2 determines the predictive capacity of the model. The direct model has adjusted R^2 of 0.608 while the indirect model has adjusted R^2 of 0.519. The R^2 of 95% shows (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2017; Ghasemy 2020).

Table 6: THE F² EFFECT

F ²	IP	GI
TMSCA	0.329	0.722
GI	0.510	0

The direct model showed that TMS (career advancement) has 32.9% effect or prediction on IP and 72.2% effect or prediction on IP when mediated by gender inclusion. The path coefficient of the construct loadings shows that TMS (career advancement) is positively significant at 1% (0.01) as presented in Table 7. Gender inclusion positively mediates the relationship between TMS (career advancement) and IP at 1% (0.00).

The descriptive data revealed that 73.4% of the academic employees in the institutions are male, while 26% are female. This further buttress the need for more women representation strategies because the population of women is below the average population of male representation. 4.8% of the academic employees in public universities in the region are under 26 years of age, 19.6% are within the age bracket of 26 and 35 years, 42.3% are within the age bracket of 36 and 45 years, 23.6% are within the age bracket of 46 and 55 years, 8.5% of the employees are within the age bracket of 56 and 65 years, and 1.2% of the academic employees are above 65 years of age. The results showed that 23.0% of the respondents are assistant lecturers, 29.0% are lecturer 11, 15.7% are lecturer 1, 15.1% are senior lecturers, and 17.2% are professorial. 15.1% of the academic employees have experience of fewer than two years at the institution, 22.4% have two to five years of experience, 27.8% have six to nine years of experience, and 34.7% have ten years or more of experience at the universities. 20.8% of the academic employees have bachelor's degrees, 31.7% of the academic members of staff in the region have master's degrees, and 47.4% have doctorate degrees. The results showed that 29.0% of the academic employees agreed that the level of importance placed by the management of the selected institutions on talent management strategies is low, 60.7% of the respondents agreed that the level of importance placed by the management on talent management strategies is moderate, and 10.3% of the academic employees agreed that the level of importance placed on talent management strategies by the management of the institutions is high. 11.5% of the respondents agreed that the need for TMSs improvement in institutions of higher learning is not urgent, 50.7% showed that it is urgently needed, and 37.8% showed that the need to improve talent

management strategies in institutions of higher learning is very urgent.

Discussion and Implications

The findings of the study revealed that TMS (career advancement) is positively related to IP. The results also showed that gender inclusion positively mediates the relationship between TMS (career advancement) and IP. This means that gender inclusiveness has partial or complementarily mediation on the relationship between career advancement and performance. It implies that public universities need to promote women advancement strategies in academia to improve research, teaching, and service performance. This study submits that gender inclusiveness strengthens TMS (career advancement) and improves performance in universities. The findings support the views of Kloot (2004), Selman (2016), Erica (2016); Tomas et al., (2020); Sharna (2021); and Vincent, Charles, & Jane, (2022).

Authorities of universities should dedicate time and resources to promoting women advancement strategies to enhance performance. Career advancement has a positive significant influence on institutional performance. However, extant literature and studies have not been able to address the inclusiveness of women TMS as a solution strategy to institution's poor performance in academe (i.e., gender equality). The study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the crucial importance of bridging the gap between career advancement and institutional performance through women inclusive strategies.

Authorities and owners of universities should ingrain a rewards system for women talent creativity through public recognition, awards, and steady promotion as part of the operational policy. It is imperative that institutions adopt this aspect of talent management inclusive strategy to enhance individual's contribution. Unit and department heads should acknowledge, encourage, and recommend women subordinates by publicly recognizing individual women's commitment to their academic accomplishments and actualization of departmental goals

Authorities of universities should internalize specific women talent programs such as child health care centres, child-early learning centers, flexible office hours as part of the operational strategies. This will reduce the family and child care responsibility of women and enhance women's time investment in the job and research

To improve the retention of women in senior positions, an agent of change should help provide support and encouragement to other women, more transparent organizational processes, structures, and changes must be implemented in hiring practices. Additionally, the universities policies on discrimination and harassment against women's talents should be ingrained into the operational strategies. This will encourage equal gender rights and safety within the work environment thereby promoting women's retention in academe

Limitations and Further Research

This study has certain limitations. First, the scope and sampling size is the primary limitation of the study. This study only tested public universities in one region out of six regions in Nigeria. Second, the instruments were closed-ended and denied respondents' chances of expressing themselves; hence, was limited by structured questionnaires.

A similar study should be conducted, using other mediating variables such as government allocation on the relationship between talent management and performance of universities.

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Investigating Public Perception of Government Intervention and Regulation in Addressing Misinformation Spread on Social Media

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Abstract

The growing spread of misinformation on social media has become a topic of major global concern, influencing public opinion, political decisions, and health behaviour. In Nigeria, the fast paced dissemination of wrong information has resulted in debates circled around the place of government in regulating the spread of misinformation on social media. The survey research method was used, respondents included 400 residents of Etsako West LGA of Edo State within the age range of 18 and above. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using simple percentage and frequency tables. Findings from the study revealed that while the public acknowledges the dangers associated with the spread of misinformation, a majority of respondents opposed government regulation due to fears censorship and loss of digital freedom. It is recommended that instead of government placing strict rules, they should instead operate with transparency, promote media literacy campaigns, and collaborate with credible fact checking organizations. This would help balance misinformation control with the preservation of democratic freedoms and digital rights.

Keywords: Misinformation, Social Media, Regulation, Government, Censorship, Media Literacy

Introduction

As time changes and the digital era keeps evolving, social media has come to stay and since it's existence till date, the role which the social media has played in influencing public discuss and providing platforms for people to share and receive information cannot be over estimated. Social media plays an effective role in political participation, as social media trends, messages and discourse often motivate Nigerian youths to vote (Olley et al.,2024). Hence it is evident that social media plays an important role in society. However, despite the positive impact of the media on society and the world as a whole, there are certain loopholes that serve as major threats in the social media atmosphere and one major issue is the quick spread of misinformation which has over the years been an issue of major concern as it has served as a challenge to news credibility and informed decision making just to mention a few.

The rapid spread of wrong and misleading information on social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and X has resulted in a major concern about how the vast spread of misinformation has played a negative role in society in certain aspects such as decision

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making, health behaviors, democratic processes and public opinion.

The issue of misinformation has become a major issue that affects the integrity of electoral processes globally, Nigeria inclusive. Often times when electoral campaigns take place, disinformation is often used as a tool to mislead voters, influence the opinion of the public and invalidate opponents. (Olley and Eloke, 2024)

To further expand on the dangers of misinformation, in the year 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, there was a wide spread of false and misinforming information going round various social media platforms as regarding the virus, the vaccines and false was of preventing the virus and this resulted in confusion, people taking part in wrong modes of treatment and hesitation. A particular unverified information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic was the use of salt water to bath that was spreading like wild fire on WhatsApp. According to a study by Allington et al. (2020), the study found that people who depended more on social media for information as regarding the pandemic were most vulnerable in believing conspiracies surrounding COVID-19, and this undoubtedly in a way affected their health behaviors.

Now while it is important and true that the intervention and regulation of government in addressing the spread of false information might go a long way in curbing the spread of misinformation, it has become a major topic for debate whether or not it is a good idea and understanding the various opinions people hold as regarding this issue is important so that effective strategies to combat misinformation would be developed while also respecting democratic values and the opinion of the public on the issue.

Vosoughi (2022) argues that government efforts to curb the spread of wrong information must be carefully balanced with the protection of the democratic freedoms and the prevention of online dangers. In like manner, according to Bartlett (2023), government intervention could either be effective, or poorly structured and as a result infringe on the freedom of speech.

While the reason behind this process might come from a genuine point in order to bring about regulatory measures that would bring down the issue of misinformation among the general public, the involvement of government in regulating this issue seem to be controversial. In a survey conducted by Mitchell and Walker (2021) it was discovered that at least about 48% of U.S. adults were in agreement with government action on curbing the spread of false information online despite the fact that it may cut down on their information freedom. This alone shows that the issue of the spread of misinformation has now become a matter of public concern unlike that past times.

However, despite the fact that Americans acknowledge the threat associated with the spread misinformation, they seem to prefer solutions that does not include government regulation and interventions as they would rather stand behind the process of self-regulation by social media platforms, and this shows that there is a reasonable amount of people value the mitigation of misinformation and the preservation of free speech (Su, 2024).

The discuss surrounding government intervention in regulating misinformation on social media is many-sided with various opinions, that involves a carefully thought plan to make a proper balance between the protection of public interest and maintaining fundamental freedom.

Objective of Study

The aim of this study is to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine whether society is welcome to the involvement of government in helping to regulate the spread of misinformation on social media platforms.
2. To identify elements that influence people to support government intervention.

3. To explore how government regulations affect peoples trust on information credibility on social media.

Research Questions

1. How do individuals react to government playing a part in the regulation of misinformation on social media platforms?
2. What are the factors that influence public reaction in terms of supporting or opposing government inclusion in intervening in the regulation of social media contents?
3. In what way can different regulatory strategies influence public trust towards social media platforms and government intervention?

Literature Review

The Landscape of Misinformation in Nigeria

The growth and evolution of the social media atmosphere has over the years experienced a significant amount of change and also influenced the sharing and dissemination of information as well as it's consumption. Although the evolving digital landscape has played major positive roles in the information process, it also has some down sides to it such as the wild spread of wrong information and this is an issue that has affected public opinion as well as and policy decisions globally (Okon, 2021). Take for instance, in Nigeria over the years, misinformation has influenced certain major factors such as political discourse, health behavior, and public trust in governance, and this among other reasons makes regulatory intervention a subject of debate (Adesina, 2022).

This falls in line with the first objective of of this study which seeks to examine societies acceptance of governments involvement in regulating the issue of misinformation. Studies have shown that misinformation tends to flourish in societies where there is little to no digital literacy, and the ability to fact check information is limited (Eze, 2020). In fact, it is safe to say that the Nigerian social media atmosphere is characterized by sensationalism, especially during election processes, where by misinforming campaigns are used to influence the opinion of the public and this can be identified as one major reason as to why there is a growing concern as regarding the involvement of government intervention in fighting against the spread of false and misleading information (Okon 2021).

This concern falls in line with the second objective of this research: identifying key factors that influence citizens support or opposition to government regulating the spread of misinformation on social media.

Also, in line with Adesina's (2022) argument, the spread of misleading information on social media is often used as a weapon to cause social unrest. Based on his study in his paper: "Misinformation, social unrest, and the Nigerian digital space: A case study of #EndSARS", the spread of misinforming information during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria revealed that wrong reports spread fast and in the process affects public perception and, in some cases, increase tensions between protesters and security agencies and the study recommended that media literacy campaigns should be hosted in order to sensitize people and serve as a preventive measure to mitigate the spread of false information rather than government control.

Global Perspective on Government Regulation

Globally, based on research the effectiveness of fact-checking initiatives cannot be over stated. Also, in line with the third objective of this study, which seeks to explore the relationship between government regulation and the trust of the public, the role of social media regulations in Germany and France, shows that government intervention, when

properly structured, can regulate the spread of misinformation without infringing on free speech (Iyanda, 2023).

These findings identify areas where regulatory system in Nigeria could be improved and made to work if eventually the government should gets involved in the regulation process of misinformation spread on social media in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

According to Adebayo (2022) about 68% of the respondents are victims of false information on a daily bases. Furthermore, the study showed that misinformation to a large extent influences public perception, especially when it affects political and health-related issues.

Also, Musa and Ibrahim (2023) examined the role of WhatsApp and Facebook in spreading misinformation about COVID-19 and based on the findings of their work, it was discovered that misinformation on social media affected vaccine uptake in Nigeria, with at least 45% of respondents stating they refused to get vaccinated as a result of the misleading posts and information they came across online. Based on this grounds, the authors recommend improved digital literacy and public awareness campaigns to fight against the spread of misinformation.

Ogunleye (2024) examined the effects of Nigeria's attempt at regulating social media, in line with the proposed Social Media Bill. This study shows that not less than 53% of Nigerians support government intervention in curbing the issue of fake news, the other 47% showed worry over possible censorship and political misuse of regulations, this study points out the thin line between fighting against misinformation and preserving the freedom of speech.

Also, a study by Bartlett (2023) evaluated the regulatory strategies in the European Union, and concluded that self-regulation by social media companies, alongside legal oversight, is the most effective approach to fighting against the spread of misinformation on social media.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that would be used for this study are the Agenda Setting theory and the Social Responsibility theory of the press, both of which provide insights into the role of the media, government, as well as public discourse in addressing misinformation.

Agenda Setting Theory

The Agenda-Setting Theory which can be traced back to the book of Walter Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion* in 1922 and explored the role of mass media in influencing public perceptions paved way for subsequent developments of the agenda setting theory by others like McCombs and Shaw who in the year 1972 asserted that the media has a crucial role to play in molding public perception by controlling the topics that are of importance and attracts public interest (Safran, 2024).

From this, it is safe to say that if misinformation is widely spread through the aid of social media, it can influence what people see as important issues, thereby distorting reality. In relation to this study, the theory explains how wrong information spreads fast and in the process influencing public discourse and political attitudes among other factors.

Furthermore, the theory is relevant to this study because it helps to clarify why the public might be skeptical about government intervention, meaning that if media narratives suggest that regulations are politically motivated, there is a tendency for public opposition to increase.

In addition to this, the theory highlights why misinformation regulation is controversial, as people's perception of what is true or false is shaped by dominant media narratives. By applying these theories in this study aims to analyze the intersection between media responsibility, government intervention, and public perception in addressing misinformation

on social media.

The Social Responsibility Theory

The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press postulated by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, in the year 1956 in their book *Four Theories Of The Media* states that the media a vital role to play in society by providing accurate, truthful and fair information. However, the rise of the digital media has invalidated the purpose of this theory to a large extent due to the spread of wrong information. In a study conducted by Alam and Alam (2024) on how fact checking initiatives can help to bring about a fair atmosphere between government intervention and freedom of speech while also making sure regulatory actions does not directly or indirectly affect public opinion, the Social Responsibility theory was notable discussed highlighting the place of independent fact checking schemes especially organizations working hand in hand with government in order to fairly regulate information. Also, the theory suggests that when the media at any level fails to effectively carry out it's duty and avoid the spread of misinformation, government might have to step in and intervene in order to regulate the flow of misleading information to promote truth and protect public interests.

The Social Responsibility Theory of The Press in line with this study justifies government intervention in regulation media content as a means to ensure accurate information and prevent societal harm caused by misinformation. Also, the theory explains why some citizens are in support of government intervention, as they perceive it to be not just a protective but also and effective means to fight against misleading content.

Now although the theory provides that government intervention might be an option, it also highlights the risk of excessive government control, which could possibly result in censorship and suppression of free speech.

In essence, the theory helps to structure the debate on whether government regulation of misinformation strikes the right balance between protecting society and preserving democratic freedoms.

Research Methodology

This study made use of the survey research method. The population for this study included residents of Etsako West local government area within the age range of 18 and above. Based on the 2022 census estimate of Etsako west residence which summed up to 294,000, a sample size of 400 which was determined with the aid of the Taro Yamane formula was selected for the purpose of this study. Data collection was done using structured questionnaires.

Analysis of Respondents

Table 1: Demographics of respondents

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Gender		
Female	215	53.8%
Male	185	46.2%
Age Range		
18-25	231	57.8%
26-35	128	32%
36-45	29	7.2%
46 and above	12	6%

Source: Survey, 2025

Above is table 1, which indicates the distribution of respondents who participated in the study according to demographics. Based on this table, 215(53.8%) of the respondents are female while the other 185(46.2%) are male. There were more female respondents than male respondents in this sample.

Where as in line with the age brackets of the respondents which range from age 18 to 45 and above, the table indicates that respondents within the age of 18 - 25 were 231 in number and made up 57.8% of the total sample. Respondents within ages 26-35 were 128 in number and made up 32% of the entire population. Respondents within the age of 36 - 45 were 29 in number and made up 7.2%% of the entire sample. Respondents within the age range of 46 years and above were 12 in number and made up 3%% of the total sample.

Table 2: Frequency of social media usage

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Daily	283	70.8%
Weekly	56	14%
Monthly	37	9.2%
Rarely	24	6%
Total	400	100%

Source: Survey, 2025

The table 2 shows the frequency of respondents' use of social media. According to this table, 283 respondents make use of the social media daily, representing 70.8% of respondents. 56 other respondents make use of social daily, representing 14% of the respondents. 37 (9.2%) makes use of social monthly. While 24 (6%) of the respondents makes use of social media rarely.

Table 3: Do you agree with the notion that government should be in charge of regulating misinformation on social media?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Agreed	39	9.8%
Strongly agree	29	7.2%
Neutral	49	12.2%
Disagree	189	47.2%
Strongly disagree	94	23.5%
Total	400	100%

Source: Survey, 2025

Table 3 indicates whether or not respondents agree with the notion of government being in charge of regulating misinformation on social media, while 39 which makes up 9.8% of the respondents agree, 29 (7.2%) strongly agree with the notion, 49 (12.2%) where neutral, 189(47.2%) disagreed, while 94 respondents which makes up the other 23.5 % of the respondents Strongly disagreed.

Table 4: Do you believe that government has a role to play in regulating social media content in order to prevent the spread of wrong information?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	261	65.2%
No	139	34.8%
Total	400	100%

Source: Survey 2025

Table 4 above displays the relative numbers of respondents who believe that government has a role to play in regulating social media content in order to prevent the spread of wrong information. According to the above table, while 261 , which makes 65.2% of the respondents indicated that they believe government has a role to play in regulating social media content in order to prevent the spread of wrong information, the other 139 respondents that make up the remaining 34.8% did not believe that government has a role to play in regulating social media content in order to prevent the spread of wrong information . With this, it is safe to say that a majority of the respondents believe that government has a role to play in regulating the spread of wrong information.

Table 5: Which of the following in your perspective is more effective in controlling misinformation?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Government Regulations	35	8.8%
Advocacy to raise awareness	80	20%
Self-Regulation by social media platforms	240	60%
NGO's for fact checking	45	11.2%
Total	400	100%

Source: Survey, 2025

Table 5 above shows the distribution of responses to the question of step is more effective in curtailing the spread of misinformation. From the above table, 35 respondents agree with the notion of government regulations as the most effective way, making up 8.8% of the respondents. However, 80 respondents believe that advocacy to raise awareness is a way to go about it, making up 20% of the respondents. 240 respondents indicated that self-regulation by social media platforms is yet another way to go about it, making up 60% of the respondents. While 45 respondents picked NGO's for fact checking information, which accounted for the remaining 11.2% of the respondents. These results show that most respondents perceive self-regulation by social media platforms as a better way to control the spread of misinformation.

Table 6: Are you bothered about the government overstepping it's limits in social media regulations?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Not bothered	56	14%
Bothered	305	76.2%
Can't say	39	9.8%
Total	400	100%

Source: Survey, 2025

Table 6 indicates that, (56) 14% of the respondents are not bothered about the government overstepping its limits in social media regulations, 305 (76.2%) are bothered about the government overstepping it's limits in the regulations of social media. While the remaining 39 which makes up 9.8% of the respondents could not say if they were bothered about it or not.

Table 7: Will government regulations in the spread of misinformation limit freedom of speech?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	277	69.2%
No	123	30.8%
Total	400	100%

Source, Survey 2025

Table 7 above displays the relative numbers of respondents who believe government regulations in the spread of misinformation would either limit freedom of speech or not. According to the above table, 277 respondents indicated that they government involvement in the regulation of misinformation would limit freedom of speech, making up 69.2% of the respondents. While the other 123 of the respondents indicated that the involvement of government in regulating misinformation would not limit the freedom of speech on social media, making up 30.8% of the total sample.

Table 8: What is your reason for supporting or opposing governments inclusion in the fight against the wide spread of wrong information?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
The safety of the public is guaranteed if government should intervene.	34	8.5%
Government intervention would lead to censorship.	14	3.5%
If government should intervene then the accuracy of information is ensured.	154	38.5%
Digital freedom would be limited if government is involved.	198	49.5%
Total	400	100%

Source: Survey 2025

Table 8 shows that 34 (8.5%) of the respondent agree with the notion that the safety of the public is guaranteed if government should intervene, 14(3.5%) agreed that government intervention would lead to censorship, 154 (38.5%) agreed that if government should intervene then the accuracy of information is ensured, and the remaining 198 (49.5%) agreed with the notion that digital freedom would be limited if government is involved. From the responses of the respondents, it is indicated that a majority opposes government's inclusion in the fight against the wide spread of wrong information.

Table 9: Do you trust the government to regulate information fairly?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
No	314	78.5%
Yes	86	21.5%
Total	400	100%

Source, Survey 2025

Table 9 above presents responses on whether the respondents trust the government to regulate information fairly. From the above table, the results indicate that 314 respondents do not trust government to regulate information fairly making 78%.5 of the entire sample. However, 86 of the respondents reported to trust government to be fair in the regulation of information, making up the remaining 21.5% of the respondents. Based on the data gathered from this table, a majority of the respondents do not trust the government to be fair.

Table 10: Will strict government regulations improve or reduce trust in the use of social media platforms?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Improve	64	16%
Reduce	300	75%
Can't say	36	9%
Total	400	100%

Source: Survey, 2025

Table 10 above presents responses on whether strict government regulation would improve or reduce trust in the use of social media platforms. From the above table, the results indicate that 64 respondents trust in the use of social media will improve if government should intervene, making 16% of the entire sample. However, 300 of the respondents reported that the trust in the use of social media will dwindle if government should intervene, making up the remaining 75% of the respondents. Another 36 respondents indicated that they were not certain about their trust being influenced or not, making up the remaining 9% of the entire sample.

Table 11: Which of the following would make you support government intervention?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Transparency	123	30.8%
Working hand in hand with independent fact checkers.	277	69.2%
Total	400	100%

Source: Survey, 2025

This table, table 11 shows that, 123(30.8%) of respondents chose transparency over the government working hand in hand with independent fact-checker, while the other 277 (69.2%) of the respondents picked government working hand in hand with independent fact-checker over transparency.

Discussion And Summary Of Findings

The findings of this study aimed at investigating public perception of government intervention and regulation in addressing misinformation spread on social media. Hence, it can be concluded that although government might have a role to play in the regulation of information, the responsibility to regulate the spread of misinformation should not be handed down to the government.

Research Question 1: How do individuals react to government playing a part in the regulation of misinformation on social media platforms?

The aim of the question was to investigate how individuals would react to government play a part in regulation the spread of information and based on the sum up of respondents, table 3 indicates that 189 of the respondents disagreed and 94 other respondents strongly disagreed with the notion of government being in charge of regulating misinformation on social media and this two category of respondents represent 47.2% and 23.5% of the population of respondents respectively summing up to 70.7% of the respondents. This indicates that a majority of the respondents where not in support of the government being in charge of regulating misinformation on social media.

In line with research question 1 also, table 4 which asked if respondents believed government had a role to in regulating information indicated that majority if the respondents which was 261 (62.5%) agreed that government had a role to play, while the other 139 (34.8%) of the respondents disagreed. In respect to research question 1, in table 5 distribution of responses to the question “Which of the following in your perspective is more effective in controlling misinformation” majority of the respondents 240 (60%) choose self-regulation by social media platforms as a more effective way to curtail the spread of misinformation. While 80 (20%) of the respondents choose advocacy to raise awareness. This reveals that although government might have a role to play in the regulation of information, government should not be in charge of regulating misinformation on social media and self regulation by social media platforms as well as advocacy to raise awareness are better ways to control the spread of misinformation.

This falls in line with Su(2024), who discovered that although a majority of Americans are aware about the dangers associated with the spread of wrong information, they prefer platforms to self regulate over government regulation. This findings aligns with the social responsibility theory which posits that government would intervene in media operations if the media fails to act responsibly.

Research Question 2: What are the factors that influence public reaction in terms of supporting or opposing government inclusion in intervening in the regulation of social media contents? In respect to research question 2, table 6 reveals that 305(76.2%) which is a majority of the respondents are bothered about government overstepping it’s limits in social media regulation. While table 7 indicated that 277(69.2%) of the respondents fear that government regulations in the spread of misinformation would limit the freedom of speech and finally table 8 indicated that 198(49.5%) of the respondents believed that digital freedom would be limited if government should get involved in regulating misinformation. According to this, there is a tendency for government to overstep it’s limits in social media regulation and this will most likely affect the freedom of speech and digital freedom.

This findings falls in line with that of Ogunleye (2024), who found that nearly half of the respondents expressed a major concern over the possibility of government misusing regulatory powers.

Research Question 3: in what way can different regulatory strategies influence trust towards social media platforms and government intervention? Based on the data gotten from table 11, a majority of the respondents 277(69.2%) choose government working hand in hand with independent fact checkers as the only way they would chose to supporting government intervention, with 123 (30.8%) of the respondents choosing transparency. Also, table 9 indicated that 314(78.5%) of the respondents do not trust government to be fair in

regulating information and 10 indicated that 300 (75%) of the respondents believed government regulation would reduce the trust individuals have in social media platforms. This implies that if government should work hand in hand with independent fact checkers, then the trust of individuals might remain intact. This matches the findings of Alam & Alam (2024), who emphasized on the stance that when it comes to media governance, social responsibility depends on ideal, joint and transparent approaches.

Conclusion

Based on the finding from this study, it is concluded that although government has a role to play in the regulation of misinformation individuals are not in support of government intervening and regulating the spread of misinformation on social media as there are other ways such as self-regulation by social media platforms as well as advocacy to raise awareness about the spread of misinformation.

Finding from the study also indicate that there exist a tendency for government to overstep it's limits in social media regulation and this will most likely affect the freedom of speech and digital freedom of citizens.

Finally, the study concludes that government cannot be trusted to regulate the spread of misinformation fairly and this would lead to individuals loosing the trust they have built in social media platforms over the years and the only way individuals will approve of government intervention and regulation is if the government works hand in hand with independent fact-checkers.

Recommendations

1. Transparency and Collaboration Should be encouraged in the Government: as a result of the divided opinion of the public, any efforts made by government to regulate misinformation should be conducted in transparency alongside in collaboration with independent fact-checkers. This would bring about a surge in public trust and confidence in government, and ensure that government regulation do not infringe on citizens rights to free speech, hence making government participation more acceptable.

2. Public Awareness and Advocacy Campaigns: advocacy programs directed at the public should be actively promoted in order to increase awareness about the issue of misinformation, its consequences, and how to identify wrong information. By doing this and empowering individuals with fact-checking skills, more people may be inclined to support positive government efforts directed at fighting against misinformation.

3. Public Trust Should be Built Through Balanced Regulatory Frameworks: if government must take part in regulating misinformation, it is important that such regulations be developed with safeguards that would prevent the abuse of power. Regulatory frameworks should be made to keep digital freedom in place while enhancing information accuracy. Public trust can be built if they see that government regulation will not equal censorship but instead bring about credible information in order to protect their well-being.

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Caregiver's Empathy and Recovery of Patients with Chronic Illness in Ekiti State Teaching Hospital, Nigeria

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Abstract

Chronic illnesses pose significant challenges to patients, affecting their physical, emotional, and social well-being. Caregivers who possess empathy can provide a supportive and understanding environment that positively influences patient outcomes. However, there is a need for further research to explore and understand the specific impact of caregiver empathy on patient recovery in the Nigerian milieu. This study assessed the impact of caregivers' empathy on the recovery of patients with chronic illness in Ekiti State Teaching Hospital. The study applied a descriptive research design. Qualitative data were collected from 50 respondents that were purposively selected for interview sessions. The respondents were caregivers and patients with chronic illness at Ekiti State Teaching Hospital. The findings from the study revealed that caregiver empathy is very significant in patient well-being it offered emotional support, reducing loneliness, and positively impacting physical health outcomes. Patients value caregiver empathy for emotional support, contributing to their sense of well-being and reducing feelings of isolation. Also, empathetic caregivers motivate patients to adhere to treatment plans, fostering active participation in care. Patients with empathetic caregivers exhibit improved treatment adherence, reduced stress, and enhanced overall recovery. Conversely, a lack of caregiver empathy leads to negative consequences such as heightened anxiety and feelings of isolation. Following from the findings, the study recommends that healthcare institutions should be encouraged to adopt and promote patient-centred care approaches, emphasizing the emotional aspects of caregiving beyond professional duties.

Keywords: Caregiver, empathy, chronic illness, patient's recovery, treatment

1. Background

Chronic illnesses often involve conditions that require long-term management; hence they pose significant challenges to patient (WHO 2024; Nidhi & Basavareddy, 2020). The illnesses affect patient physical, emotional, and social wellbeing (WHO 2024). The support provided by caregivers in the event of a chronic illness plays a crucial role in the recovery process just as caregivers who possess empathy can provide a supportive and understanding environment that positively influences patients' outcomes (Wang, Wang, Sheng & Chen, 2022). Hence, understanding the impact of caregiver empathy on patient recovery path is crucial for improving the quality of care provided to individuals with chronic illnesses.

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Merriam-Webster dictionary defines empathy as the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another. The key issues in empathy or empathetic caregiving are understanding, sharing feelings, emotional intelligence, social interactions and compassion. Empathy is an important aspect of caregiving that can greatly influence patient recovery. Patients with chronic illnesses often experience emotional distress, such as depression, anxiety, helplessness and feelings of isolation (Wang, Wang, Sheng & Chen, 2022). Empathetic Caregivers can provide needed support that promotes psycho-emotional wellness and coping mechanisms for patients with chronic illness (Riess, 2015).

Studies have shown that empathetic caregiving can positively influence physical health outcomes (Wang, Li, Cui, Tu, Deng, Yang, & Wang, 2023; Nidhi & Basavareddy, 2020). Patients who receive empathetic care may experience reduced pain levels, improved symptom management, and enhanced overall physical well-being. Caregivers who exhibit empathy can also address the social needs of patients with chronic illnesses (Leloirain, Brédart, Dolbeault, & Sultan. 2012).

The impact of caregiver empathy on the recovery of patients with chronic illness in Nigeria is a significant area of research that deserves attention. This study examined the impact of caregiver empathy on the recovery of patients with chronic illness, underlining the importance of empathy in improving patient outcomes and well-being among patients and caregivers in Ekiti State Teaching Hospital, Nigeria.

2. Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Assess the extent to which the presence of caregiver empathy contributes to the recovery of patients with chronic illness.
2. Identify how patients perceive the impact of caregiver empathy on their recovery from chronic illness
3. Examine factors that influence the level of empathy displayed by caregivers on the recovery of patients with chronic illness

3. Theoretical Orientation

Social Support Theory of Cohen (1985) forms the theoretical framework of the study. The theory posits that social relationships and the support received from such relationships can impart on an individual's well-being, health and ability to cope with stressors. Fundamentally, the theory accentuates the importance of social relationships and support in helping people cope with stress, promote their physical, psychological and mental well-being and improve overall health outcomes. Therefore, in relation to the study, social support theory underscores the significance of the patient-caregiver relationship for individuals managing chronic diseases.

4. Methodology

The study applied a qualitative research design. The study population comprises caregivers and patients at Ekiti State Teaching Hospital. Purposive sampling method was used to select 50 respondents for In-depth Interview session. The respondents consist of caregivers providing care for patients with chronic illness and patients managing chronic ailments at the hospital. The instrument for data collection was a semi-structured questionnaire. The researcher took note and also recorded responses. Data were transcribed and thematically

analysed in line with the objectives of the study.

5. Presentation Of Results

Extent to which Presence of Caregiver Empathy Contributes to Recovery of Patients.

The responses of the interviewees indicated that caregiver empathy plays a key role in the recovery and well-being of patients with chronic illnesses. Although the specific impact may vary depending on individual circumstances, the result from the data depicted that empathetic caregiving can have several positive effects on patients. A female interviewee reported that;

Empathy is when you feel or share someone else pain. In my few years of experience as a health worker, I have seen and experienced how empathy really impacted many patients' life in one way or the other; it's usually a gradual process that influences them positively. Though they (patients) might not still survive after all, but the little time they spent, they spent it free from depression, they are able to give a trial in living, because they see that they are loved, and cared for. Some others survive and have a few more years to go. Empathy has helped them to do away with depressive thought, and helped them to endure the pain (Formal female Caregiver).

Another Interviewee opined that:

Caregiver empathy is very essential in the overall recovery process for patients with chronic illness. The patient that has been down with chronic diseases is naturally depressed already. By giving patients with these illness attention, words of encouragement, counselling, spiritual talks, experience of any survivor, and also playing with them, will give them reassurance of hope, and also gradually drag them out of their depress state. Also they will begin to see themselves as important and a happy person. Also this will help the health workers to discharge their duties, when they are given medications, they (patients) takes them without any delay, because they see the caregiver feels up and share their pain. Caregiver's empathy is very significant, because naturally your psychotherapy, you talking to them, giving them your attention will help them in recovering from the illness in time (Formal female Caregiver).

Similarly, another Interviewee said:

Every aspects of caregiver empathy is essential as they all work together, but to me encouragement is an aspect that I feel is very specific in the caregiver empathy, because this will help the patient to see more reason to stay out of the depress state, and also to enjoy the rest of the days left (Informal female caregiver).

There was indeed a general consensus among interviewees regarding the extent to which the presence of caregiver empathy contributes to the recovery of patients with chronic illness. They noted that empathy from caregivers provides emotional support, helping patients cope with the psychological challenges associated with chronic illnesses. It was observed that the understanding and validation of their emotions can contribute to reduced stress and anxiety levels. Patients tend to be more satisfied with their care when they perceive their caregivers as empathetic. A positive caregiver-patient relationship can lead to increased trust, cooperation, and adherence to treatment plans.

Caregiver empathy can help alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation (usually associated with chronic illness as a result physical limitations or stigma) by providing companionship and understanding. Caregivers demonstration of empathy can help patients understand the importance of adhering to their prescribed treatments and medications. By providing emotional support and actively involving patients in decision-making, empathetic caregivers

can motivate patients to follow their treatment plans more effectively. Patients who receive empathetic care may experience reduced pain levels, improved symptom management, and enhanced overall physical well-being. Nevertheless, caregivers differ in their ability to express empathy; while patients may have different preferences regarding the level and type of emotional support they find most helpful. These pose different challenges. The following are excerpts from the interview sessions:

Most of those chronic ill patients are depressed, and you want to care for them, by talking to them, giving them reassurance, as some of them have practically lost hope. However, we face some challenges or limitations. For instance, differences in religious inclination and spiritual beliefs of the patients and caregiver. Jesus is the source of hope and strength for me as a Christian. This is offensive to the patient who is a Muslim (Formal Female Caregiver).

If the caregiver and the patient don't share the same language, there will be problem in the caregiver carrying out their role, because they wouldn't understand each other. For example, you speak in English as the caregiver, and the patient hears only Hausa. The state of mind of the patients is another one. Some patient has practically lost it all, there's no amount of talks you want to give them that they will hear. They have lost their self-esteem, self-actualization, focus, goals, they have lost everything, what they are anticipating for is just death. Consequently, all empathetic skills or effort avail nothing. (Formal Female Caregiver).

Many of the patients' relatives are aggressive. They behave as if it's the caregiver that is responsible for the illness. This behaviour can be overwhelming. (Formal Female Caregiver).

How Patients Perceive the Impact of Caregiver Empathy on their Recovery from Chronic Illness.

Most of the patients value caregiver empathy for the emotional support it provides. Feeling understood, heard, and validated in their emotions contributes to a sense of well-being. Patients may be more motivated to adhere to treatment plans and recommendations when they perceive empathy from their caregivers. The understanding and encouragement provided by empathetic caregivers can inspire patients to actively participate in their own care, including medication adherence, lifestyle changes, and rehabilitation efforts. An interviewee who shared her personal experiences regarding how caregiver empathy has influenced her recovery journey reported that:

The impact of caregivers both the formal and the informal cannot be overemphasized, they have all played a huge role in my recovery journey. God had used them all so much for me. Let me talk first on the formal caregivers in this hospital, they are very jovial, devoted, so caring, and they discharge their duties so well, they do this work with sincerity, they are such a wonderful health personnel. They usually give help to the patient, I as a testimony, even in my hopeless situation, they still give me assurance, they make emphasis that God is in charge of it all. I so much appreciate them, they are wonderful people. Also the informal ones, they are good. Relatives and non -relatives, they have played a wonderful role in my life both in cash and kind, their prayers, spiritual talks and all, visitations. My husband here has been a darling, he is always here with me most times. And this has been of great help in my recovery. God has used them so much for me. I'm so grateful. That's why I said earlier that their impact cannot be overemphasized. And I'm using this medium to pray for them that God Almighty will reward them (A female patient).

Another interviewee who described her experience as to specific moments or actions by

caregivers that stand out for her as particularly impactful in terms of empathy and her recovery said:

Being a chronically ill patient, my journey in the hospital has been filled with various experiences, both challenging and uplifting. Throughout this time, there have indeed been moments and actions by caregivers that have left a lasting impact on me in terms of empathy and my recovery. One of the most impactful aspects has been the genuine concern and empathy shown by certain caregivers. It goes beyond the routine tasks of administering medications or checking vitals. It was the moment when a nurse took the time to sit down and truly listen to my concerns, fears, or even just how my day has been. In those instances, I felt like more than just a patient; I felt seen and heard. Another significant one is the caregivers' ability to communicate effectively and transparently. It can be frightening to navigate through the complexities of a chronic condition, and having caregivers who take the time to explain procedures, treatment plans, and potential outcomes in simple terms is very comforting. It helps me feel more in control of my situation, giving me a sense of empowerment that positively influences my mind-set towards recovery. (A female patient).

Another Interviewee submitted as follows:

The psychological and emotional support is very important because it helps me out of my depressed state, I began to feel alive, and also I yielded to take the medications and all treatments, because I saw a reason to live and that I could survive. Both the formal and informal caregivers have rendered their psychological and emotional support to me and this has been a great help to my recovery process (A male patient).

Patients often perceive empathy as a critical element that extends beyond medical expertise, influencing their emotional well-being and overall journey toward healing. Empathy creates a supportive environment where patients feel understood, valued, and more connected to their caregivers. When healthcare providers demonstrate genuine concern and take the time to listen to a patient's concerns, fears, and experiences, it fosters a sense of trust and cooperation. This emotional connection can positively influence a patient's mental state, reducing stress and anxiety, which are often prevalent in chronic illness.

On the contrary, when there is lack of caregiver empathy, the impact on the patient's recovery experience can have grave consequences. The following are some of the submissions.

Yes, there have been situations during my hospital stays where the absence or lack of caregiver empathy had a noticeable negative impact on my recovery experience. In those moments, when caregivers seemed distant or rushed, I felt a sense of isolation and frustration. It's challenging to cope with a chronic illness, and empathy from caregivers is vital to maintaining a positive outlook. When caregivers showed impatience or a lack of understanding, it made me hesitant to communicate my needs and concerns. I felt dismissed and overlooked which heightened my anxiety and diminished my confidence in the provided care. This emotional strain, coupled with the physical challenges of my condition, hindered my overall well-being. (A female patient).

Yes, I've unfortunately experienced situations in the hospital where the absence or lack of caregiver empathy impacted on my recovery. Remember earlier I spoke about how my husband and the nurses have been supportive and that God will bless them because before my husband came, there were moments when I felt like just another medical case rather than a person dealing with the challenges of chronic illness. Encounters with caregivers who didn't take the time to explain procedures or compassionately address my concerns heightened my feelings of vulnerability. It made me hesitant to communicate openly about my symptoms or ask questions, as I feared being met with impatience or indifference. I was

thinking they hated me. When caregivers are empathetic, it not only positively impacts my emotional well-being but also contributes to a more supportive and conducive environment for recovery (A Female patient).

Patients often perceive caregiver empathy as a significant factor in their recovery process. While medical expertise and effective treatments are crucial, the human connection formed through empathy plays a significant role in the overall healing experience. In line with (Decety, & Fotopoulou, 2015; Riess, 2015), empathy in caregiving for patients with chronic illnesses helps in different ways; Patients with chronic illnesses often experience emotional distress, such as anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation. Caregivers who demonstrate empathy can provide emotional support, offering comfort, reassurance, and a sense of connection. This emotional support can contribute to improved psychological well-being and coping mechanisms for patients.

Factors that Influence the Level of Empathy Displayed by Caregivers.

Several factors can influence the level of empathy displayed by caregivers, More often than not caregivers face demanding schedules and hectic workloads, which can limit the time available for individual patient interactions. High levels of stress and burnout may also affect caregivers' capacity to display empathy consistently. Moreover, the personal characteristics and experiences of caregivers play a crucial role in their ability to empathize with patients. Empathy is a complex trait that involves understanding and sharing the feelings of others, and certain qualities and experiences can enhance a caregiver's capacity for empathy. Some individuals naturally possess a high degree of empathy as part of their personality. Some of the excerpts that emerged from the session include:

There are a lot of barriers we face as a caregiver. We face challenges from the relatives and also from the patients themselves. Let me start from the patient. When we get to the bedside to serve their medications, you will notice that patient might just flare up that he/she doesn't want to take it. Such impulsive anger do sometimes result from financial strain and stress in meeting the hospital bills. At some other times, it could from loss of the hope of recovery. On the other hand, some relatives would say they don't want to leave their people alone in the hospital, but in the process they become aggressive towards us. Indeed, there is a lot, that I can't tell it all (A female formal caregiver).

The caregiver- patient relationship is a big influence on the level of empathy demonstrated by caregivers; this varies base on the kind of relationship the caregiver and patients has. Those who share a bond together, the case of lovers e.g husband- to- wife, partner to be, tends to demonstrate more of empathy than those who doesn't. Using myself as an example, I'm always here with my wife because I love her and we share bonds together, unlike friends and colleagues that just come, few minutes they are gone, they can't feel enough the pain unlike I who knows what we both shares together. So, the kind of relationship one has with the patient will influence the level of empathy rendered by caregivers (A male informal caregiver).

In my own perspective, one of the factors that contribute to caregivers displaying a high level of empathy to a chronic illness is your emotion. It is not just having money, but a heart of care is germane. Another one I can say is environmental or background influence. You cannot blame some people though, they are not just brought up in a way of showing empathy to people base on where they have live before or family that raised them (A female formal caregiver).

I believe that a caregiver should be patience enough, in order to relate well with patients

because they are so down and depressed about their situation, it's will definitely take time before they can draw out from that low state. Also compassion is an essential characteristics for a caregiver to be able to have enough empathy (A female informal caregiver). Individual traits such as compassion and emotional intelligence is important for caregivers. As a formal caregiver, when you are dealing with patient, one should treat them equally, no matter the relationship the caregivers have with the patients. One thing is that no matter the hierarchy or level of relationship, there's need of empathizing with all the patients in the same way (A male informal caregiver).

6. Discussion Of Findings

The study revealed that the presence of caregiver empathy contributes to the recovery of patients with chronic illness to a great extent. The finding sheds light on the vital role caregiver empathy plays in the recovery of patients with chronic illnesses. The responses consistently highlighted the positive impact of empathetic caregiving on various aspects of patient well-being. The finding corroborate the submissions of Berkman, Sheridan, & Donahue, (2011) and Atal, & Cheng, (2016) which found that empathetic caregiving can positively influence physical health outcomes. Moreover, the finding is consistent with Social support theory that social relationships play a crucial role in promoting health and overall well-being of individuals.

Further, the study found that positive perception of caregivers' empathy by patients impacts significantly on patients recovery from chronic illness. The finding compares favourably with the findings work Nidhi & Basavareddy (2020).

Lastly, finding from the study showed that caregivers face challenges from patients themselves, including resistance to medication, financial constraints, and emotional stress. Patients may express anger or frustration, impacting the caregiver-patient relationship. In addition caregivers who share a personal bond with patients are more likely exhibit higher levels of empathy compared to those with more distant relationships. These findings are in consonant studies of Epstein, Amin, Reuter, & Humphrey, 2017) that underscore the significance of a strong patient-caregiver relationship in enhancing empathetic communication.

7. Conclusion

The study examined the influence of caregiver's empathy on the recovery of patients with Chronic Illness. It accentuates the vital role of caregiver's empathy in moulding the recovery passage of patients with chronic illnesses. Empathetic caregiving positively influences emotional, mental, and physical well-being, contributing to better patient outcomes. The findings underscore the significance of a strong caregiver-patient relationship, emphasizing the need for emotional support, understanding, and effective communication. The study ultimately points towards the importance of a comprehensive, patient-centred strategy in chronic illness health care delivery.

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Social Media Monetisation: An Umbrage to Media's Ethical Code

Obinna Johnkennedy Chukwu* & Ahmed Shaafat**

Abstract

The proliferation of social media has significantly altered the landscape of modern communication, providing platforms for monetization that challenge traditional media ethics. This study explores the implications of social media monetization on the ethical standards of media practice, particularly focusing on the Nigerian context. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, data were collected from relevant literature, including works by Nigerian scholars, to examine how financial incentives on social platforms impact the integrity of media content. The findings reveal that the pursuit of profit often leads to the erosion of ethical boundaries, as content creators prioritize engagement and revenue over factual accuracy and objectivity. This paper concludes that while monetization offers financial opportunities, it also poses significant risks to the ethical foundations of media practice. To safeguard the integrity of information, there is a pressing need for stringent regulatory frameworks and a renewed commitment to ethical standards in the digital age.

Keyword: Social Media, Monetisation, Umbrage, Media's Ethical Code

Introduction

Social media platforms have revolutionized communication, connecting people across the globe and reshaping how we share information and interact. In Nigeria, a country with rich cultural diversity and a population of over 200 million, the impact of social media has been particularly significant." (Gillespie-Smith *et al.*, 2021).

Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are not just social networks anymore; they are big businesses. These platforms make money by selling ads, promoting sponsored content, and even offering subscription services. While this has turned social media into a profitable industry, it has also raised serious questions about the ethics of the content shared on these platforms.

Nigeria ranks among the top countries with a significant online presence, making it a hub for social media activity in Africa (Dzogbenuku *et al.*, 2022). The widespread use of smartphones, combined with affordable data plans, has played a crucial role in making social media accessible to a wide range of Nigerians. This accessibility has not only

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transformed how people communicate with one another but has also had a significant impact on political mobilization, youth empowerment, and e-commerce (Cardona et al., 2015). Social media platforms have become essential tools for political campaigns, civic engagement, marketing, and personal expression (Flickers, 2020).

The term "media ethics" refers to the standards that guide the practice of journalism and content creation. These standards include truthfulness, fairness, balance, and accountability (Nwafor, 2018). In traditional media, like newspapers and TV, these standards have always been important. Journalists are expected to report the truth, present different viewpoints fairly, and avoid misleading the public.

In Nigeria, where social media usage is high, these ethical issues are particularly concerning. The spread of false information or "fake news" has become a common problem, especially during elections or times of crisis. As Nwafor (2018) notes, the pressure to produce content that attracts attention can lead to a decline in the quality of journalism, as sensational stories often take precedence over factual reporting.

Monetization practices refer to the different ways that social media platforms and content creators make money. This can include things like advertising, where companies pay to have their ads shown to users, or sponsored content, where brands pay influencers to promote their products (Adaja & Ayodele, 2013). These practices have turned social media into a big business, but they also raise ethical concerns.

In Nigeria, the impact of these monetization practices is significant. With many Nigerians relying on social media for news and information, the potential for misinformation is high. Adaja and Ayodele (2013) point out that the drive to monetize content can lead to a situation where truth is sacrificed for profit. This not only harms the credibility of the media but also poses a threat to the quality of information available to the public. The main issue is that monetization practices can create a conflict of interest. For example, a content creator who is paid to promote a product might exaggerate its benefits or downplay its -flaws to please the brand. Similarly, social media platforms might prioritize content that attracts more advertisers, even if that content is not in the public's best interest (Okoro & Odoemelam, 2013). This focus on profit can lead to the spread of misleading or biased information, which can erode public trust in the media.

User engagement refers to the interactions that users have with content on social media, such as liking, sharing, commenting, or clicking on a link. Social media platforms are designed to maximize user engagement because it drives revenue. The more engaged users are, the more ads they see, and the more money the platform makes (Oyero & Oyesomi, 2014). However, this focus on engagement can have negative consequences for media ethics.

The problem is that the content that generates the most engagement is not always the most accurate or balanced. Content that is sensational, controversial, or emotionally charged is more likely to go viral, which can lead to the spread of misinformation. As Oyero and Oyesomi (2014) explain, this creates a situation where social media platforms prioritize content that drives engagement over content that upholds ethical standards.

Content creation on social media has become a competitive and commercially driven activity. Creators are constantly under pressure to produce content that attracts attention and generates revenue. This can lead to ethical compromises, as creators might prioritize content that is more likely to go viral over content that is truthful and balanced (Nwabueze, 2017).

In Nigeria, where social media influencers have become powerful voices in the public sphere, the pressure to create engaging content is intense. As Nwabueze (2017) notes, the need to attract followers and generate income can lead to the spread of sensational or misleading content. This not only undermines the ethical standards of media but also poses a

threat to the quality of information available to the public.

The rise of "clickbait" headlines is a key example of this issue. Clickbait refers to misleading or sensational headlines designed to attract clicks and views. While this strategy can be effective in driving traffic, it often leads to disappointment or frustration for users, as the content rarely lives up to the headline. This practice, while profitable, undermines the credibility of the media and erodes public trust in information shared on social media.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid growth of social media monetization has brought about significant ethical challenges that could harm the integrity and credibility of media content. As social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram become more popular sources of news and information in Nigeria, the pressure to make money from these platforms is changing how content is created and shared. While these platforms provide opportunities for content creators and media organizations to reach larger audiences and earn income, the methods used to generate this income often come with ethical problems.

The main issue is the conflict between making money and maintaining ethical standards in media. Monetization strategies like targeted ads, sponsored posts, and influencer partnerships focus on getting more clicks, shares, and likes rather than ensuring the content is accurate, fair, and unbiased. This has led to a media environment where sensationalism, misleading headlines, and false information can spread easily, damaging public trust and lowering the quality of the information people receive.

These ethical concerns are important in Nigeria, where social media has a growing influence on public opinion. The push to make money from content has led to an increase in biased, exaggerated, and sometimes false information, which can confuse the public, create divisions in society, and undermine the credibility of media outlets. This problem is made worse by the lack of strong regulations and clear guidelines to help balance the need to make money with the ethical responsibilities of media professionals.

The challenge, therefore, is to find a way to balance the need for social media monetization with the need to maintain ethical standards that protect the integrity of media content. This study will explore how social media monetization affects media ethics in Nigeria, looking at how these practices impact the creation and sharing of content and the potential consequences for public trust and media credibility. The main concern is whether the drive to make money is leading to a decline in the quality and truthfulness of the information we see online. Are these platforms prioritizing profit over truth? This is the big question that needs to be answered. This study will explore how the pursuit of profit on social media might be harming the ethical standards of media, and what this means for the credibility of information shared on these platforms.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the impact of social media monetization on the ethical standards of media content.
2. To examine how user engagement influences the spread of misinformation on social media platforms.
3. To analyze the effects of monetization practices on the credibility of information shared on social media.

Research Questions

1. How does social media monetization affect the ethical standards of media content?
2. What is the relationship between user engagement and the spread of misinformation on social

media?

3. How do monetization practices impact the credibility of information shared on social media?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social media monetization

In the context of social media monetization and its impact on media ethics, several key variables come into play.

Social media has been defined in many ways, but one of the most well-known definitions comes from Kaplan and Haenlein, who describe it as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content." They categorized social media into six types: collaborative projects like Wikipedia, blogs and microblogs like Twitter, content communities like YouTube, social networking sites like Facebook, virtual game worlds like World of Warcraft, and virtual social worlds like Second Life.

Social media monetization refers to the process by which social media platforms, influencers, and content creators generate revenue from their online activities. This can be achieved through various means, including advertising, sponsored content, affiliate marketing, and the sale of products or services. While monetization has enabled new forms of income generation and business models, it has also raised significant ethical concerns, particularly in the context of journalism and media ethics. In traditional journalism, ethical guidelines prioritize the accuracy, fairness, and objectivity of content. However, the drive for profit in social media has often led to practices that prioritize engagement and revenue over ethical considerations. This shift has sparked debate over whether social media monetization undermines the ethical standards that are fundamental to credible journalism.

Social media monetization involves converting online activities into revenue. This can include various strategies such as selling advertising space, promoting sponsored content, or engaging in affiliate marketing. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social media platforms are designed to facilitate interaction and content sharing, but their commercial potential has transformed them into significant revenue generators. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) further emphasize that social media monetization relies on user-generated content, where the value is derived from the engagement and interactions of users.

Media Ethics

Media ethics refers to the principles and standards that guide the practice of journalism and media production. These ethics are designed to ensure that information shared with the public is accurate, fair, and balanced. Plaisance (2013) defines media ethics as the moral obligations that media professionals have to their audiences, which include truth-telling, minimizing harm, and respecting privacy. Ethical journalism is crucial for maintaining public trust and ensuring that the media serves as a reliable source of information.

Misinformation

Misinformation is the spread of false or misleading information, which can occur intentionally or unintentionally. In the context of social media, misinformation can spread rapidly due to the platform's design, which prioritizes engagement over accuracy. According to Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), misinformation on social media is exacerbated by algorithms that promote content based on popularity rather than reliability. The financial incentives of monetization can lead to the creation and dissemination of sensational or misleading content to attract more engagement.

User Engagement

User engagement refers to the interactions that users have with content on social media platforms, including likes, shares, comments, and views. These metrics are crucial for

monetization, as they determine the visibility and profitability of content. As described by Fuchs (2014), user engagement is a double-edged sword in the context of media ethics. While it can indicate content popularity, it can also incentivize the production of sensationalist or unethical content that attracts more interaction.

Credibility of Media

The credibility of media refers to the trustworthiness and reliability of information sources. In traditional journalism, credibility is built on a foundation of ethical practices and adherence to journalistic standards. However, the rise of social media has complicated this dynamic, as content creators and platforms may prioritize profit over credibility. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014), credibility is essential for media to fulfill its role in a democratic society, but it is increasingly threatened by the pressures of monetization.

The Impact of Social Media Monetization on Media Ethics

The monetization of social media has had profound implications for media ethics, particularly in terms of the quality and credibility of information shared on these platforms. The drive for profit has led to a range of practices that conflict with traditional journalistic ethics, raising concerns about the integrity of the information ecosystem.

1. The Pressure to Generate Revenue

One of the primary ethical challenges associated with social media monetization is the pressure to generate revenue. Content creators and platforms are often incentivized to prioritize content that generates the most engagement, as this directly translates into revenue. However, this focus on engagement can lead to the production of content that is sensationalist, misleading, or ethically questionable.

For example, Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018) found that false information spreads more quickly and widely on social media than true information, largely because it is more novel and engaging. This creates a financial incentive for content creators to prioritize sensational content, even if it is not accurate or ethical. In this way, the pressure to generate revenue can lead to the erosion of media ethics, as content creators and platforms may sacrifice accuracy and fairness in pursuit of profit.

2. The Role of Algorithms

Algorithms play a crucial role in the monetization of social media, as they determine which content is promoted and which is not. These algorithms are designed to maximize user engagement, as this increases the profitability of the platform. However, this can create ethical dilemmas, as algorithms may prioritize content that is more engaging but less accurate or ethical.

According to Gillespie (2018), algorithms on social media platforms are often opaque and difficult to scrutinize, making it challenging to assess their impact on media ethics. However, it is clear that these algorithms can contribute to the spread of misinformation and the erosion of journalistic standards. For example, Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) found that social media algorithms often prioritize sensational or emotionally charged content, which can contribute to the spread of misinformation and the degradation of media ethics.

3. The Spread of Misinformation

The spread of misinformation is one of the most significant ethical challenges associated with social media monetization. As content creators and platforms prioritize engagement and revenue, they may be more likely to produce or promote content that is misleading or false. This can have serious consequences for public trust in the media and the quality of information available to the public.

In Nigeria, the spread of misinformation on social media has been particularly concerning, especially during elections and public health crises. According to Nwabueze (2017), the

monetization of social media has contributed to the spread of misinformation in Nigeria, as content creators prioritize profit over accuracy. This has led to a decline in public trust in the media and has undermined the role of journalism in informing the public and holding power to account.

4. The Erosion of Media Credibility

The erosion of media credibility is another significant consequence of social media monetization. As content creators and platforms prioritize profit over ethical considerations, the credibility of the information shared on these platforms can be compromised. This can lead to a decline in public trust in the media, which is particularly problematic in a democratic society.

According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014), credibility is essential for the media to fulfill its role as a watchdog and a source of reliable information. However, the pressures of monetization can lead to the production of content that is less credible or trustworthy. This can have serious consequences for public trust in the media and the quality of information available to the public.

EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

The monetization of social media has transformed the way media professionals create and disseminate content. However, this transformation has raised concerns about the impact on media ethics, user engagement, and credibility. This section will examine the empirical evidence on these issues, highlighting the findings and implications for media professionals, policymakers, and social media users.

The Impact of Social Media Monetization on Media Ethics

Social media monetization has been shown to compromise ethical standards in media content. A study by Adebayo (2018) found that 65% of journalists in Nigeria compromised their ethical standards for financial gain. Similarly, Oyewole (2020) discovered that 58% of social media influencers in Nigeria engaged in unethical practices to promote products or services. These findings suggest that the pressure to generate revenue can lead media professionals to prioritize profit over ethical considerations (Adesina, 2019).

Moreover, the monetization of social media has led to the proliferation of sponsored content, which can blur the lines between editorial and advertising content. A study by Fakeye (2019) found that 70% of social media users in Nigeria could not distinguish between sponsored and non-sponsored content. This lack of transparency can erode trust in media and compromise ethical standards (Adesina, 2019).

The Relationship Between User Engagement and the Spread of Misinformation

User engagement has been identified as a key factor in the spread of misinformation on social media. Fakeye (2019) found that social media engagement metrics can amplify misinformation, while Ojo (2018) discovered that the pressure to be first can lead to the spread of misinformation. These findings highlight the need for social media platforms to regulate engagement metrics and promote fact-checking initiatives (Oyedemi, 2020).

Furthermore, the algorithm-driven nature of social media platforms can prioritize sensational and provocative content, which can contribute to the spread of misinformation. A study by Oyedemi (2020) found that 60% of social media users in Nigeria reported seeing misinformation on their feeds, highlighting the need for social media platforms to take responsibility for regulating content.

The Impact of Monetization Practices on Credibility

Monetization practices have been shown to impact the credibility of information shared on

social media. Adesina (2019) found that sponsored content can erode trust in media, while Oyewole (2020) discovered that transparent labeling of sponsored content can maintain credibility. These findings suggest that transparency and accountability are essential for maintaining credibility in social media content (Fakeye, 2019).

Moreover, the proliferation of fake news and disinformation on social media has further compromised credibility. A study by Ojo (2018) found that 55% of social media users in Nigeria reported seeing fake news on their feeds, highlighting the need for social media platforms to invest in fact-checking initiatives.

The findings highlight the need for regulation and accountability in social media practices. Social media platforms must prioritize ethical considerations, regulate engagement metrics, and promote transparency and accountability in sponsored content. Moreover, media professionals must adhere to ethical standards, prioritize fact-checking, and maintain transparency in their content.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Commercialization of Media theory

The Commercialization of Media theory suggests that the increasing commercialization of media leads to a compromise in ethical standards (McManus, 1994). This theory posits that when media outlets prioritize profit over public interest, they are more likely to engage in unethical practices, such as sensationalism and biased reporting (Underwood, 2001).

In Nigeria, the commercialization of social media has led to a proliferation of sponsored content and influencer marketing. For example, a study found that 70% of social media influencers in Nigeria engage in sponsored content, with many prioritizing profits over ethical considerations (Oyewole, 2020). This has led to a compromise in ethical standards, with many influencers promoting misleading or false information to maximize their earnings. For instance, during the 2019 Nigerian general elections, several social media influencers were accused of promoting fake news and propaganda on behalf of political parties. This was done to maximize their earnings, rather than to inform the public or promote democratic values. Such practices compromise the ethical standards of media and undermine the credibility of information shared on social media.

Furthermore, the commercialization of social media in Nigeria has led to the proliferation of fake news and disinformation. A study found that 60% of social media users in Nigeria reported seeing fake news on their feeds, with many attributing it to the commercialization of social media (Oyedeki, 2020). This has serious implications for democratic values and public discourse, as fake news can influence public opinion and undermine trust in institutions.

In conclusion, the Commercialization of Media theory provides a useful framework for understanding the impact of social media monetization on media ethical code in Nigeria. The prioritization of profit over public interest has led to a compromise in ethical standards, with many social media influencers engaging in unethical practices to maximize their earnings.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the impact of social media monetization on media ethics in Auchi, Nigeria. The research design allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, incorporating both numerical data and in-depth perspectives. The research was carried out online using Facebook and Twitter as major social platform to get answers to our research questions.

Target Population

The target population consisted of media professionals, social media influencers and content creators

Sample Size

A total of 200 participants were selected for the study, comprising 100 media professionals and 100 social media influencers

Method of Data Collection

Online and offline questionnaires were administered to gather quantitative data on participants' perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding social media monetization and media ethics. The questionnaire will be categorized into three sections based on the research questions

Data Analysis

Questionnaires on completion will be checked to ensure there is no missing information. All relevant data will be recorded. The data will be cleaned using MS Excel 2016 and exported to SPSS (version 27) for descriptive statistical analysis. The results thereafter were presented using tables and figures.

Table 1: Perception of Social Media Monetization and Ethical Standards

Response	Media professionals (n=100)	Social media users (n=100)	Total (n= 200)
Monetization compromises ethics (yes)	70	60	130 (65%)
Monetization compromises ethics (no)	30	40	70 (35%)

Source: *Online survey, 2024*

This table shows that 65% of respondents believe social media monetization compromises ethical standards. Media professionals (70%) are more likely to view monetization as a threat to ethics compared to social media users (60%).

Table 2: Relationship Between User Engagement and Misinformation Spread

Response	Media Professionals (n=100)	Social Media Users (n=100)	Total (n=200)
Engagement contributes to misinformation (yes)	80	70	150 (75%)
Engagement contributes to misinformation (no)	20	30	50 (25%)
Shared content without verifying (yes)	60	57	117 (58.5%)
Shared content without verifying (no)	40	43	61 (41.5%)

Source: *Online survey, 2024*

The data highlights that 75% of respondents believe user engagement contributes to the spread of misinformation. Additionally, 58.5% admitted to sharing unverified content, showing how engagement pressures and verification gaps contribute to misinformation.

Table 3: Impact of Monetization Practices on Credibility

Response	Media professionals (n=100)	Social media users (n= 100)	Total (n=200)
Sponsored content affects credibility (yes)	90	80	170 (85%)
Sponsored content affects credibility (no)	10	20	30 (15%)
Transparent labeling is essential (yes)	95	77	172 (86%)
Transparent labeling is essential (no)	5	23	28 (14%)

Source: *Online survey, 2024*

The majority (85%) agree that sponsored content impacts credibility, with media professionals (90%) being more concerned. Furthermore, 86% of respondents believe transparent labeling is essential to maintain trust in shared information.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

How does social media monetization affect the ethical standards of media content?

Our study found that 70% of media professionals believe social media monetization compromises ethical standards, consistent with previous research in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2018) that found 65% of journalists compromised their ethical standards for financial gain. Similarly, 60% of social media users agree, mirroring the findings of Oyewole (2020) that 58% of Nigerians believe social media influencers compromise their values for money. The high percentage of media professionals who have encountered conflicts between monetization and ethics (80%) supports the assertion by Adesina (2019) that the pursuit of profit can compromise media ethics.

What is the relationship between user engagement and the spread of misinformation on social media?

Our study reveals that 80% of media professionals and 70% of social media users believe user engagement contributes to the spread of misinformation, aligning with the findings of Fakeye (2019) that social media engagement metrics can amplify misinformation. The high percentage of media professionals who have shared content without verifying its accuracy (60%) supports the assertion by Ojo (2018) that the pressure to be first can lead to the spread of misinformation. Similarly, the finding that 70% of social media users believe social media platforms amplify misinformation is consistent with the results of Oyedemi (2020) that 68% of Nigerians believe social media platforms should regulate misinformation.

How do monetization practices impact the credibility of information shared on social media?

Our study found that 90% of media professionals and 80% of social media users believe sponsored content impacts the credibility of information, consistent with the findings of Adesina (2019) that sponsored content can erode trust in media. The high percentage of media professionals who think transparent labeling is essential for credibility (95%) supports the assertion by Fakeye (2019) that transparency is crucial for maintaining trust in

social media. Similarly, the finding that 80% of social media users believe social media platforms should prioritize credibility metrics is consistent with the results of Oyewole (2020) that 78% of Nigerians believe social media platforms should prioritize credibility over revenue.

Conclusion

As social media continues to shape the way we consume information, a disturbing trend has emerged. The monetization of social media platforms has compromised ethical standards, contributed to the spread of misinformation, and eroded the credibility of information shared online. A recent study has shed light on this issue in Nigeria, highlighting the need for urgent action.

The study revealed that social media monetization has led to a decline in ethical standards, with many media professionals and influencers prioritizing profit over truth and accuracy. This has resulted in the spread of misinformation, which has serious consequences for individuals and society. Furthermore, the credibility of information shared on social media has been impacted, making it difficult for users to discern fact from fiction.

Recommendations

To address these issues, the following recommendations are listed below;

1. Regulation of social media monetization practices to ensure ethical standards are maintained
2. Transparency in sponsored content and influencer marketing to maintain credibility
3. Accountability measures for social media platforms to regulate misinformation and promote fact-checking
4. Education and training for media professionals and social media users on ethical standards, fact-checking, and critical thinking
5. Encouragement of independent fact-checking initiatives to promote credibility and trust in social media
6. Prioritization of credibility metrics over revenue generation by social media platforms
7. Development of guidelines and codes of ethics for social media influencers and content creators

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The Role of Influencers in Enhancing the Reach and Effectiveness of Social Media Campaigns for Business Growth

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Abstract

In the digital age, social media influencers serve as powerful bridges between businesses and consumers, shaping their behavior and enhancing the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. This study investigates how residents of Oredo Local Government Area perceive the role of influencers in expanding the reach of social media campaigns to drive business growth. The research examines how influencers contribute to the success of social media campaigns in reaching a broader audience and assesses the impact of well-targeted marketing on consumers' behavior and purchasing decisions. Data was collected from a sample of 384 residents who have lived in Oredo for at least five years, using a structured questionnaire as part of a survey research method. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to analyze the data, and a frequency table was created to present the results. The findings suggest that businesses can improve their effectiveness by partnering with influencers who share the same values and brand identity as their target audience. Additionally, regular reviews and feedback are recommended to assess and enhance the impact and reach of influence-driven social media campaigns.

Keywords: Influencers, Marketing, social media, Campaigns, Oredo residents.

Background of Study

In the constantly evolving digital world, social media has become a vital component in shaping consumer behavior, informing advertising strategies, and enhancing brand-customer interactions. Influencer marketing is one of the most critical developments in this field, where individuals with large social media followings promote products, services, and brands to their audience (Freberg et al., 2011). By leveraging the reach, authenticity, and trustworthiness of social media influencers, this modern marketing approach has transformed traditional advertising, increased consumer engagement, and fueled business success (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Olley & Arikenbi, 2022).

Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter have gained popularity, providing businesses and marketers with more opportunities to connect with and tailor their messaging to their target audiences. Influencer marketing utilizes genuine individuals who have formed close bonds with their followers, unlike traditional advertising, which often relies on straightforward corporate messaging (Evans et al., 2017). Influencers can offer a sense of reliability and trustworthiness that traditional advertisements usually lack by sharing personal stories and offering honest recommendations. According to a study, consumers see influencer endorsements as more trustworthy and relevant, which significantly influences their purchasing decisions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

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The humanized approach to digital marketing that influencers provide is crucial for connecting consumers with businesses. As brand ambassadors, they create authentic content that smoothly mixes promotional messages into everyday social media interactions. Influencer marketing isn't just for celebrities; micro-influencers, or individuals with smaller but highly engaged followings, often have a greater impact on niche audiences because of their perceived sincerity and accessibility (Omosotomhe & Olley, 2018; De Veirman et al., 2017). Consequently, brands are increasingly forming strategic partnerships with influencers who share their target demographics and core values.

Although the effectiveness of influencer marketing is increasing, businesses still need to overcome some challenges to maximize its benefits. Issues such as fake followers or fans, engagement manipulation, and difficulties determining return on investment (ROI) create serious concerns (Hudders *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, because social media platforms' algorithms are continually evolving and consumer behaviours are changing, businesses need to update their influencer marketing strategy continuously.

Considering these factors, businesses seeking sustainable growth in the digital space must understand how influencers can enhance the effectiveness and reach of their social media marketing efforts. This study examines the impact of marketing influence on business performance, brand visibility, and customer engagement. It also discusses the challenges brands face when executing influencer marketing campaigns and highlights best practices to improve results. To stay competitive in social media marketing, businesses should use data-driven strategies, form ethical influencer partnerships, and develop innovative content approaches as influencer marketing continues to evolve.

Statement of the Problem

In today's digital age, social media has become an essential tool for brand communication, customer engagement, and marketing. As traditional advertising becomes less effective, businesses are increasingly turning to influence marketing as a strategic approach to improve campaign success and expand their reach. Influencers with large social media followings act as credible intermediaries between consumers and brands, promoting products and services through their notoriety (Freberg et al., 2011). Although the gap has narrowed, the effectiveness of influence campaigns remains largely anecdotal. Are there significant sales driven by influencer campaigns? The role of influencers in enhancing the reach and effectiveness of social media campaigns for business growth has not been sufficiently studied. This study examines the role of influencers in driving business growth in Oredo L.G.A., Edo State.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how influences contribute to increasing the reach of social media campaigns for businesses.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of influence-driven campaigns in influencing consumer purchasing decisions.
3. To identify the key factors that make influencer campaigns successful in driving business growth through social media.

Research Questions

1. How do influencers enhance or increase the audience reach of social media campaigns for businesses?
2. What impact do influencers have on consumer purchase intentions in social media campaigns?
3. What are the key factors that make an influencer campaign successful in driving business growth through social media?

Literature Review

The Evolution of Influencer

The rise of social media influencers reflects broader changes in media, marketing, and consumer habits in the digital age. Initially, celebrities and influential businesspeople held most of the power; however, as social media gained popularity, everyday people could also amass large followings, thereby democratizing influence. From early endorsement methods to the professionalization of influencer marketing and the current influencer-driven ecosystem, this literature review traces the development of social media influencers.

The history of influencer marketing dates back hundreds of years. In 1765, British potter Josiah Wedgwood received royal approval from Queen Charlotte, which made his pottery known

as “Queensware” and marketed it as a luxury product (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). These endorsements set the standard for using celebrities to attract customers.

During the 20th century, influential proxies such as fictional characters gained popularity. Coca-Cola’s portrayal of Santa Claus in the 1930s is a well-known example of a character used to represent a company and evoke positive emotions during tough economic times (Abidin, 2018). Similarly, Quaker Oats’ “Mikey Likes It” campaign from the 1970s succeeded by appealing to parents through a lovable child figure (Abidin, 2016).

Celebrity endorsements dominated marketing strategies by the end of the 20th century. Businesses harnessed the fame of athletes, singers, and actresses to promote their products and increase sales (Senft, 2008). However, research revealed that viewers started questioning these endorsements as celebrities’ lavish lifestyles made them less relatable (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017). Eventually, this decline in consumer trust was replaced by a new generation of influencers, driven by social media and reality television (Burgess & Green, 2018).

The Origin of Social Media Influencers

Influence became more accessible with the rise of platforms like YouTube (2005), Instagram (2010), and TikTok (2016). Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, and Freberg (2011) argue that genuine and unique content that connected with niche audiences made ordinary people more visible. These new influencers interacted directly with their followers, unlike traditional superstars, and developed relationships based on their perceived authenticity (Abidin, 2016). This cultural shift was accelerated by reality TV stars, such as those from “Keeping Up with the Kardashians,” who also blurred the line between entertainment and influence (Abidin, 2018).

By mid-2010, influencer marketing had evolved into a data-driven and disciplined industry. Brands began incorporating influencers into their official marketing plans as they recognized their persuasive power (Glucksman, 2017). Influencers have negotiated contracts, signed commercial deals, and created sponsored content, ranging from passionate amateurs to professional creators (Evans et al., 2017).

During this period, micro-influencers —those with smaller but highly engaged followings — became known for their ability to generate authentic and focused engagement. The importance of perceived authenticity in successful influencer campaigns was emphasized by the idea that these influencers were more relevant than celebrities or macro-influencers (Hudders, De Jans, & De Veirman, 2021).

Future Directions: Authenticity and Ethical Influence

As marketing influences evolve, maintaining ethical transparency and authenticity is more important than ever. Today’s audiences, especially Gen Z (children born in the last two decades), are highly wary of overtly commercial content and demand that influencers disclose any financial ties they may have (Abidin, 2016). Influencers who successfully blend personal expression with brand involvement are more likely to earn audience trust and leave a lasting impression, say Casaló et al. (2020).

In the future, influencer marketing is likely to continue evolving in the direction of co-creation, where businesses collaborate with influencers and their followers to develop campaigns and products (Glucksman, 2017). This participatory strategy not only boosts engagement but also enhances the perception of authenticity, which is crucial for influencing marketing to be successful.

The transition of social media influences from imaginary mascots and royal endorsements to regular artists garnering global attention is, therefore, a reflection of broader changes in media consumption, technological development, and consumer confidence. By gaining a thorough understanding of the historical context and new developments, businesses and marketers can refine their strategies to maintain authenticity, relevance, and customer trust in an increasingly fragmented and competitive digital landscape.

Social Media Campaign

A social media campaign is a strategic marketing effort that supports a business goal using one or more social media platforms. According to Olley & Alajemba (2022), in their study conducted in Asaba, they found that 68% of residents actively use social media platforms, especially Facebook, to promote their brands and boost visibility. For businesses and organizations aiming to improve their online presence and foster two-way communication with clients, social media campaigns have become vital tools in digital marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to Dwivedi et al. (2021), these campaigns utilize creative multimedia content, including surveys, live streaming, and images and videos, to capture attention and enhance user engagement.

Additionally, social media ads have increasingly incorporated storytelling and user-generated content elements to enhance authenticity and foster stronger emotional connections with customers (Luttrell, 2021). As the digital landscape evolves, social media campaigns remain adaptable and dynamic tools for boosting engagement, brand exposure, and customer loyalty.

Edo State Social Media Influencers and Their Campaigns

Several well-known influencers in Edo State, Nigeria, have leveraged their platforms to engage with their audiences, promote products, and advocate for social change. They have an impact on several industries, including corporate advertising, social activism, and entertainment. Some prominent Edo State influencers and their campaigns include:

Etinosa Idemudia: MTN Nigeria and MUVng

Actress, comedian, and social media content creator Etinosa Idemudia is well-known for her relatable and funny skits. Her acting talent and creative content have earned her a large following on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. She is a popular influencer for lifestyle and entertainment brands targeting young audiences because of her ability to blend humor with marketing messages. Etinosa has participated in numerous influencer campaigns, including collaborations with MTN Nigeria, where she promoted the MTN Comedy Plus platform, providing users with access to a variety of comedic content on their mobile devices. Her entertaining skits helped increase the platform's visibility and subscriptions. Notably, the MUVng Campaign, through which Etinosa partnered with MUVng, a vehicle-for-hire service based in Benin, to promote its offerings. She effectively communicated the platform's benefits through engaging social media content, increasing the customer base and service adoption in Edo State.

Twyse Ereme: Dettol and Glo Data Plan

Renowned comedian and content creator Twyse Ereme is well-known for his family-oriented sketches, in which he plays multiple roles. He has gained significant fame and influence, especially among young Nigerians, thanks to his creative versatility. Twyse has been part of successful campaigns, such as the Dettol Nigeria Campaign, where he used comedy to raise awareness about hygiene and the importance of handwashing and cleanliness. His humorous sketches helped generate interest in and understanding of the campaign's central message. Additionally, Twyse partnered with Glo; his entertaining sketches demonstrated how Glo's data plans are essential for using digital content and staying connected, thereby increasing user interest and subscriptions. Twyse's content is highly memorable and relatable because of his skill in blending humor with marketing messages, which enhances customer trust and brand recognition.

VeryDarkMan (Martins Vincent Otse):

Social Reform and Consumer Protection Campaigns.

Social media influencer and activist VeryDarkMan is well-known for his candid analysis of social issues. He has a large and active fan base thanks to his ability to discuss controversial topics openly and honestly. His influence is evident in initiatives focused on accountability and social justice. His Social Reform Campaigns promoted transparency in social structures and governance by utilizing his platform to challenge accepted social norms. His widely shared videos have sparked national discussions about corruption and police abuse.

Additionally, to expose dishonest business practices and promote ethical conduct, he has also partnered with consumer rights organizations. His bold remarks and investigative style have increased public awareness and accountability. VeryDarkMan is a strong advocate for social change and consumer rights because of his authenticity and fearless approach to sensitive topics.

Theoretical Framework

Source Credibility theory

The Source Credibility theory, developed by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley in 1953, emphasizes the connection between a source's perceived credibility and the persuasiveness of the message. In influencer marketing, influencers serve as the "source," and their audience considers them likable, knowledgeable, and trustworthy. Companies that collaborate with well-known influencers in fields such as fashion, technology, fitness, and others are more likely to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors through their recommendations, which ultimately increase engagement, growth, and transactions (Ohanian, 1990).

Businesses utilize trustworthy influencers to expand their reach and enhance the outcomes of their campaigns, particularly in crowded digital arenas where customers are often skeptical of corporate messaging. Furthermore, when consumers perceive marketing communications as credible due to their genuine content, anecdotes, and personal experiences, they are more

receptive to them (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Because viewers trust social media campaigns more than traditional advertising, influencers can increase their effectiveness.

Two-Step Flow theory

Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet's (1944) Two-Step Flow theory posits that media messages initially reach opinion leaders, also referred to as influencers, who then analyze and disseminate the information to their followers. This theory emphasizes the role of intermediaries, such as influencers, in shaping consumer choices and public opinion.

Businesses use social media campaigns to tailor and refine their messaging for target audiences by working with influential opinion leaders. Influencers make promotional content more relevant and convincing by linking it to their own brand and audience preferences (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Since the message originates from a trusted source rather than the company itself, this approach enhances reach and effectiveness, as influencers typically have large, loyal followings. By using this two-step communication strategy, businesses can boost resonance and ultimately drive company success through targeted influence collaborations.

Methodology:

The research used a survey research design, a well-established method in social science research for gathering self-reported data from a large population (Bryman, 2016). This approach was suitable for examining the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of business owners, digital marketers, and social media influencers in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State, regarding how influencers can improve the reach and effectiveness of social media campaigns for business growth.

The study's population consisted of business owners, digital marketers, and influencers operating within Oredo LGA, a bustling commercial hub with a vibrant entrepreneurial and digital marketing scene. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2024), Oredo LGA has an estimated population of 573,411 residents. Using the Krejcie and Morgan table, a sample size of 384 respondents was deemed appropriate for data collection. Data was gathered through a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: demographic information and questions about influencer marketing, campaign effectiveness, and business growth. The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and the results were presented in frequency tables for straightforward interpretation and understanding.

Analysis of Data Collected

Research Question 1: How do influencers enhance or increase the audience reach of social media campaigns for businesses?

Table 1: Awareness of Influencer Marketing

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very aware	264	73%
Somewhat aware	60	17%
Not aware	40	10%
Total	364	100%

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

According to the statistics, 264 respondents (73%) had a high level of awareness of the influence on marketing and the roles that influencers play in social media campaigns. Furthermore, 40 respondents (10%) are completely unaware, and 60 respondents (17%) are somewhat or moderately aware. This indicates that marketers and businesses in Oredo LGA are highly mindful of influencer campaigns.

Table 2: Frequency of Seeing Influencer Campaigns

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently	260	72%
Occasionally	70	19%
Never	34	9%
Total	364	100%

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

According to the research, 260 respondents (72%) frequently encounter influencer-led marketing, showing that marketers and companies often come across influencer content promoting products

and services. While 34 respondents (9%) have never seen such an ad, 70 respondents (19%) occasionally see it. This highlights how influencers in Oredo LGA help increase campaign visibility.

Research Question 2: What impact do influencers have on consumer purchase intentions in social media campaigns?

Table 3: Influence of Influencer Campaigns on Purchase Intentions

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Significant Influence	264	73%
Moderate Influence	60	17%
No Influence	40	10%
Total	364	100%

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Influencer marketing is a powerful tool for shaping customer behavior in Oredo LGA, as the data shows that 264 respondents (73%) reported that influencer campaigns significantly influenced their buying decisions. Additionally, 40 respondents (10%) reported no influence, while 60 respondents (17%) acknowledged moderate influence. This suggests that most people can be positively influenced by influencer content when making purchasing decisions.

Table 4: Effectiveness of Influencer Campaigns

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	200	56%
Moderately effective	150	41%
Not effective	14	3%
Total	364	100%

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

The data shows that 150 respondents (41%) believe influencing efforts are moderately effective at increasing business sales, while 200 respondents (56%) believe they are highly effective. Only 14 respondents, or 3%, said they are ineffective. This suggests that influencers can significantly enhance sales results for businesses running social media campaigns.

Research Question 3: What are the key factors that make influencer campaigns successful?

Table 5: Internet Accessibility

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Often accessible	240	66%
Rarely accessible	100	27%
Not accessible	24	7%

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

According to the table, 240 respondents (66%) reported frequently using the internet, which is a vital part of effective influencer marketing. However, 24 respondents (7%) have no access, while 100 respondents (27%) report rare access. This suggests that reliable internet access is crucial for influencer marketing to succeed, despite some firms in Oredo LGA still encountering challenges.

Discussion of findings

Businesses in Oredo Local Government Area (LGA) are increasingly turning to influencer marketing as a key strategy for expanding their reach and engaging broader audiences online. Data reveals that awareness of influencer marketing is remarkably high among respondents, with over 70% indicating strong familiarity. This widespread recognition reflects the extent to which influencers have become embedded in the region's digital landscape. Their content is frequently encountered, as 72% of respondents reported seeing influencer-led campaigns regularly on social media platforms. Such visibility demonstrates that businesses are actively collaborating with influencers to amplify their campaigns and expand their reach to potential customers who may not be accessible through conventional channels.

In addition to increasing visibility, influencers play a decisive role in shaping consumer purchasing behavior. A large proportion of respondents, 73%, admitted that influencer campaigns exerted a strong influence on their Businesses in Oredo Local Government Area (LGA). Businesses in this area are increasingly adopting influencer marketing as a key strategy to expand their reach and engage broader online audiences. Data shows that awareness of influencer

marketing is notably high among respondents, with over 70% indicating strong familiarity. This widespread recognition underscores the profound integration of influencers into the region's digital landscape. Their content is often seen, as 72% of respondents reported regularly encountering influencer-led campaigns on social media platforms. This visibility demonstrates that businesses are actively working with influencers to amplify their campaigns and reach potential customers who might not be accessible through traditional channels.

In addition to increasing visibility, influencers play a significant role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions. A substantial portion of respondents, 73%, admitted that influencer campaigns had a strong influence on their purchasing decisions. This underscores the persuasive power of influencers, who often enjoy trust and credibility with their audiences. Even when the influence is moderate, as 17% of respondents reported, the results still show how influencer content can affect the decision-making process by shaping preferences and considerations. Only a small fraction of consumers reported being unaffected, indicating that for most people, influencers play a significant role in the overall marketing landscape.

The success of influencer campaigns, however, depends on more than just endorsements. Several key factors support their effectiveness in driving business growth. One such factor is internet access, which enables audiences to engage with influencer content consistently. About two-thirds of respondents confirmed they have reliable internet access, making it easier for campaigns to sustain ongoing visibility and interaction. In Oredo LGA, where digital infrastructure is relatively strong, influencer content not only reaches a broad audience but also promotes continuous brand-consumer engagement. This aligns with the Source Credibility theory, which highlights trust, expertise, and attractiveness as essential elements of persuasive messaging. Influencers perceived as credible and relatable tend to generate higher engagement, especially when their content is easily accessible online.

The combination of widespread internet access and credible influencer figures, therefore, enhances the reach, visibility, and impact of social media campaigns, ultimately leading to increased sales and brand loyalty. Conversely, where digital access is limited, even popular influencers may struggle to achieve the same results due to fewer opportunities for engagement. This highlights how both influencer credibility and the digital environment in which they operate jointly shape business outcomes.

The findings show that influencer marketing has become a vital part of business strategy in Oredo. It broadens campaign reach, influences consumer purchasing decisions, and, when backed by reliable internet access, offers measurable growth opportunities for businesses competing in the increasingly digital marketplace.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of influencers on the reach and effectiveness of social media campaigns for business growth in the Oredo Local Government Area (LGA). The findings showed that influencers are crucial in increasing the visibility of social media campaigns, as most respondents often see content led by influencers. Most participants agreed that influencers influence their purchasing decisions, indicating that influencer marketing has a positive impact on consumers' intent to buy. Factors such as internet access and the frequency of influencer engagement with the target audience also significantly impact the success of these programs. However, some local businesses are unable to fully utilize influencer campaigns due to issues such as inconsistent power supply and poor internet connectivity. Overall, the study suggests that influencer marketing has strong potential to accelerate business growth in Oredo LGA, mainly when supported by reliable digital infrastructure and consistent influencer credibility.

Recommendations

1. To benefit from influencers' broad audience reach and credibility, businesses should insistently integrate influencer marketing into their advertising campaigns.
2. Since it boosts trust and purchase intent, building genuine relationships with their audience should be an influencer's top focus. This will ultimately benefit the businesses they promote.
3. To boost the effectiveness of digital campaigns, the government and other interested parties should invest in improving digital infrastructure, like more reliable internet access and a consistent electrical supply.
4. To make sure that campaign messaging is effectively received, businesses should work with influencers who share the same values as their target audience and brand.
5. Businesses and influencers should have access to training and workshops to assist them in creating more impactful and strategic campaigns that maximize engagement and sales results.

6. To analyze the effectiveness of influencer campaigns and pinpoint areas for development, it is recommended that businesses and consumers participate in regular evaluations and feedback gatherings.

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